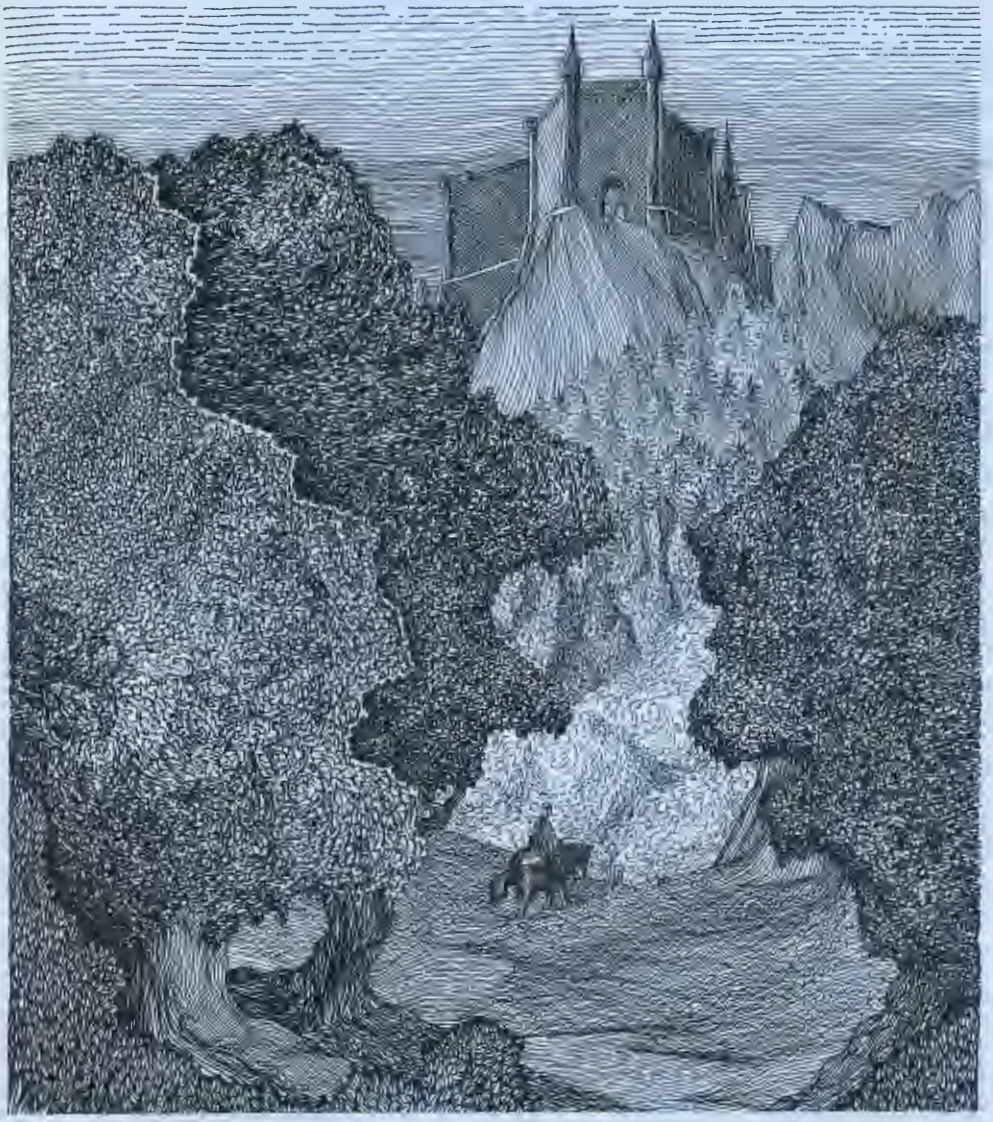

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Journal of
The Pendragon Society

Grail Castles

XXXI No 4 *Summer 2004*

Editorial IB

Themes

They seek them here, they seek them there, they seek **Grail Castles** everywhere. The names are almost immaterial, and what the strongholds protect is controversial, but that doesn't stop valiant efforts to locate and identify said fortresses. Confused? You will be!

Arthur Abroad is planned as the next theme, and there might still be space to squeeze in any shorter items on this topic. Material squeezed out this issue will appear then too, plus background on the *King Arthur* movie and on the Anglo-Saxons. On the other hand, **Arthurian Beasts** has a cover illustration but no contents as yet, so who will pick up the gauntlet? We also have a number of submissions which don't fit neatly under a theme, so we may yet have an issue with no name – perhaps the winter edition.

Acknowledgements and apologies

Thank you to the journal team – Fred Stedman-Jones and Simon and Anne Rouse – which sets up the printing and ensure the subsequent dispatch of each issue.

Thanks also to Ian Brown for the cover art, to Steve Sneyd for numerous Arthurian items appearing in the regular features, and to Alistair McBeath and Bill Russell for a recent plethora of interesting pieces. Especial thanks are due to all contributors, both old and new, for the current healthy state of the editor's in-tray. Please keep it so!

Apologies to exchange journals for not listing them this issue; they will be reinstated next time!

Competition No 1

Private Eye has its Neophiliacs Column (*eg* "Pink is the new black"); *Pendragon* has its **Panacea Spot**. Have you come across a memorable metaphor for the **Holy Grail**? You know the sort of thing. Here's a recent example from the *Times Educational Supplement*:

> *Ever in pursuit of the great Holy Grail of teachers – a way of coping with stress – I have started going to a yoga class…*

Send your favourite to the Editor (with source please) and the most arresting analogue (*ie* the most ludicrous) will be rewarded with a copy of ***The Grail Anthology***. The closing date is the end of **October 2004**, and the winner will be announced in the winter 2004 issue.

• Kay Smith "Calm of a yoga junkie" *Times Educational Supplement* April 30 2004

Competition No 2

Can you describe your favourite Arthurian book in 25 witty words or less? For example, T S Eliot's ***The Wasteland*** could be

> *This place is completely deserted.*
> *Or is it a beach? It's perverted.*
> *Is it all Dada?*
> *No, it's much harder.*
> *Notes keep you all disconcerted.*

Or ***Beowulf***: *Do the monster mash. Do the monster's mother's mash. Swear, sworn, sword. Then get mortal with a dragon, fifty years later. Great stuff.*

Do you get the picture? Then send your original blurb to the Editor by the end of **December 2004** and will receive a copy of Stephen Evans' 1997 Dark Age study *Lords of Battle*, donated by Professor Russell. Results in the spring 2005 issue.

• Bill Greenwell *The Independent* March 19 2004

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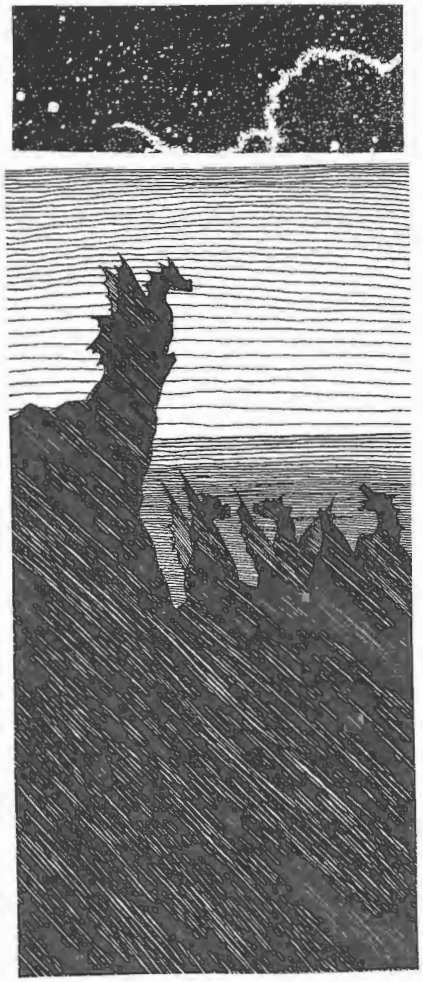
Letters



THE 538 AND 540 SOLAR ECLIPSES

While happily leaving others far better versed in texts Arthurian and historical to comment, if needs-be, on the bulk of Anita Loughrey's fascinating 'Arthurian timeline' (*Pendragon XXXI* No 3, 26-30), my attention was drawn to the two solar eclipses in the final lines of her table. Both are well-known, and derive from the epitome to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, although they appear recopied elsewhere from Bede, for instance in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

The 538 date is actually a day out, as the eclipse fell on the early morning of February 15, and neither this nor the 540 eclipse relate to observations made in the British Isles, since even in south-east England, neither eclipse saw much over two-thirds of the Sun's disc covered by the Moon, unnoticeable for a casual witness. Bede's comment that the stars appeared during the 540 June 20 eclipse is probably accurate, since for the brighter planets or stars to be seen during a total solar eclipse, the sky needs to be both very clear, and the eclipse very deep, and this was a deep eclipse, lasting at Rome for five-and-a-quarter minutes, compared to the theoretical maximum solar eclipse duration – applicable only for a site on the equator in any case – of 7 mins 30 secs. Mid-eclipse was around 9:10 a.m. for Rome, nicely fitting to Bede's record that the stars became visible around 9 a.m.

Both the 538 and 540 eclipses were visible as total from parts of the Mediterranean lands, and Bede's sources included texts brought back from trips to Rome by his abbot Benedict Biscop to the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow monasteries, so it is not difficult to see where the information must have derived. This seems to have been a common practice. The 12th-century *Annals of Ulster* for instance features two solar eclipses, in 497 and 512, which were not readily visible from Ireland, but which were well-seen from the Mediterranean, while failing to record the eclipse of 507, which should have been seen from Ireland.

The 540 eclipse, with stars visible during it, is intriguing. The speculation about supposedly thick, years-long, 'global dust veils', in some quarters suggested as due to one or more impacts between the Earth and a comet or comet-fragment, in or around 540, becomes rather less plausible as a result, since even a very thin haze layer, almost unnoticeable before the total phase began, is sufficient to hide the stars and brighter planets during such an eclipse, as observations in recent years have demonstrated. This fact suggests that whatever cloud or haze caused the dimmed Sun, Moon and stars, and the dismal weather, recorded in Italy amongst other places, in *c* 536-537, it must have completely

dissipated before the observations of the 540 eclipse were made from Italy that June.

I am most grateful to astronomical computer Jean Meeus for a series of extremely detailed discussions concerning these two eclipses back in the summer of 2001.

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

• *A well-researched article by Alastair detailing astronomical and meteorological events during the Arthurian period will appear soon in these pages.*

AVALON TO CAMELOT...

Longtime members of the Pendragon Society may remember *Avalon to Camelot*, the magazine of the early 1980s which featured article by scholars and enthusiasts and covered Arthurian topics medieval and modern.

I've just heard from Freya Reeves, the publisher of *Avalon to Camelot*, who has decided to put her stock of back issues up for sale and has created a nice website to do so. Anyone interested should take a look:

http://www.avalontocamelot.com/

Dan Nastali via e-mail

... AND ASTOLAT TO DUMBARTON

Geoff Sawers had asked for further information on Astollat allegedly being old Norman French for Dumbarton.

Mike Dixon-Kennedy refers to it in his book *Arthurian Myth and Legend: an A–Z of People and Places* under "Astolat", but I'd read this some years ago when I was looking at the local history of the area in which I live. I recall thinking that it must have been from information handed down: it may have been from I M M MacPhail's *Dumbarton Castle* (1958) or his *A Short History of Dumbartonshire* (1962); W Metcalfe's *A History of the County of Renfrew* (1965); or Crawford, G and Semple, W (1792) *The History of the Shire of Renfrew*. Sorry I can't be more specific as I'd borrowed these books through inter-library loan.

Bernard of Astollat was the father of Elaine; I find that interesting as Bernard means "Strong or Courageous Bear", and the Scots ballad "Child Rowland" refers to a Lady Ellen as Arthur's daughter. A few miles away from Dumbarton is the area known as Bearsden. Helen, Ellen, Eileen and Eilidh are forms of Elaine, depending on which language you're using, and of course this area is a melting pot of Welsh, Scots and Irish Gaelic, English and Scots.

West of Dumbarton is Helensburgh, a town which could perhaps be set upon a much earlier Elaine site; on the peninsula opposite is North Ailey, Ailey being how the Gaelic *Eilidh* is pronounced; a few miles north-west of Dumbarton, in the hills, is Dunellan beside the Black Loch, and a bit further west again we find Bumellans flowing into Greenside Reservoir.

The area of Bannog (Benoic?) was just to the east of Dumbarton, and comprised the Old Kilpatrick Hills, the Campsie Fells, Kilsyth and The Fintry. My friends and I have listed around forty Arthur place-names in Scotland which Hugh McArthur has compiled and mapped (see the Clan Macarthur website at www.clannarthur.com).

If you wish to examine Scottish sites, I recommend *Collins' Scotland Atlas and Gazetteer* (HarperCollins 1999, £10.99, ISBN 0004488431). It lists over 17,000 places.

Eileen Buchanan, Houston, Scotland

• *In a subsequent letter, Eileen locates the original source of the identification as John Rhys'* Studies in the Arthurian Legend *(1891) and referred to in Lewis Spence's* The Magic Arts in Celtic Britain *(1945): Astolat (in its various versions, such as Old French Escalot) "is certainly one and the same with Alclut" or Alclud, the British kingdom of the Clyde, centred on Dumbarton, "the fort of the Britons". On the other hand, Steve Sneyd reminds us that Malory thought Astolat was Guildford in Surrey; the Great Tower of Guildford Castle has recently been restored (according to the Castle Studies Group Newsletter Vol 6 No 1, Summer 2004). More on Elaine appears in a review next issue.*

NOT WANTED ON VOYAGE?

As regards the old *penguin = pen gwyn* claim, I did read somewhere (unfortunately I forget where) that *penguin* was applied originally to Northern Hemisphere puffins and similar birds; later it was used for similar birds in the Southern Hemisphere, eventually becoming restricted in use to them only. If true, "penguin" *could* have a Welsh origin after all – *if* there is a puffin-type bird for which the term "white head" is suitable.

D J Tyrer, Southend-on-Sea, Essex

• *Alastair McBeath also reminds us of the fallacy in the theories of historians Wilson and Blackett concerning southern hemisphere penguins featuring in the northern hemisphere poem* The Spoils of Annwn.

ARTHUR'S EIGHTH BATTLE

Back home for a few days in between monthly stages of my walk through Britain [The Board, *Pendragon XXXI* No 2], I have two things to write to you about.

My walk took me to Stow-in-Wedale [April 17th]. This is where Chris Barber locates Arthur's eighth battle in his book *Journey to Avalon*. I found a wonderful Lady Well here with a sign emphasising its importance to early Christian pilgrims and stating that a rock that once was nearby had the footprint of Mary the mother of Jesus on it. Just the place for Arthur to put the image of Mary on his shield. The church was locked but I 'phoned the new minister who knew nothing about a fragment of King Arthur's shield being kept in it. She referred me to the previous incumbent who also said there was no shield in the church, but he did know of a tradition linking Stow-in-Wedale with an Arthurian battle. I definitely felt I had come to the right place.

I received a review copy of a book just before setting out on my walk through Scotland, so I penned a short review after reading it in my tent [*see Reviews*].

Laurence Main, Machynlleth, Wales

• *The Stow tradition stems from the so-called Sawley Glosses, marginal additions to Geoffrey of Monmouth's* Historia *from the late 12th or early 13th-century by a North Yorkshire author, conveniently quoted in Coe and Young's* The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend *(Llanerch 1995). This seems to conflate two separate stories that Arthur carried either an image of the Virgin Mary or the cross on his shoulders or his shield, the former associated with Castle Guinnion, the latter with Mount Badon.*

The final relevant sentence in one gloss is: "And [Arthur] himself carried the image of Holy Mary, the pieces of which were thus saved in great veneration at Wedale." That an ancient Marian icon was long associated with Wedale seems highly plausible; but that it was a genuine artefact connected with Arthur may be more questionable.

THE SECRET LIVES OF 'KING ARTHUR'

The battles fought by King Arthur were – so we're told – twelve in number (Blake & Lloyd *The Keys to Avalon*, 99). An impressive tally for him to have survived but, I think, made virtually impossible to believe by the hand-to-hand – not to mention sworded (sorry!) – nature of warfare in those days and, furthermore, by Arthur's exposure, as a prime target, at the head of his army.

But if we believe that the legend of Arthur, and his triumphs, is substantially accurate, then we may reasonably wonder if such a charter of great deeds could really be attributable to Arthur alone – or was there more than one 'Arthur'? Whilst that may sound a ridiculous proposition, who would know exactly what Arthur looked like anyway? Therefore, if the man standing before his army was the man they expected to see, had a suitable retinue, and declared himself to be 'King Arthur' who would say him nay?

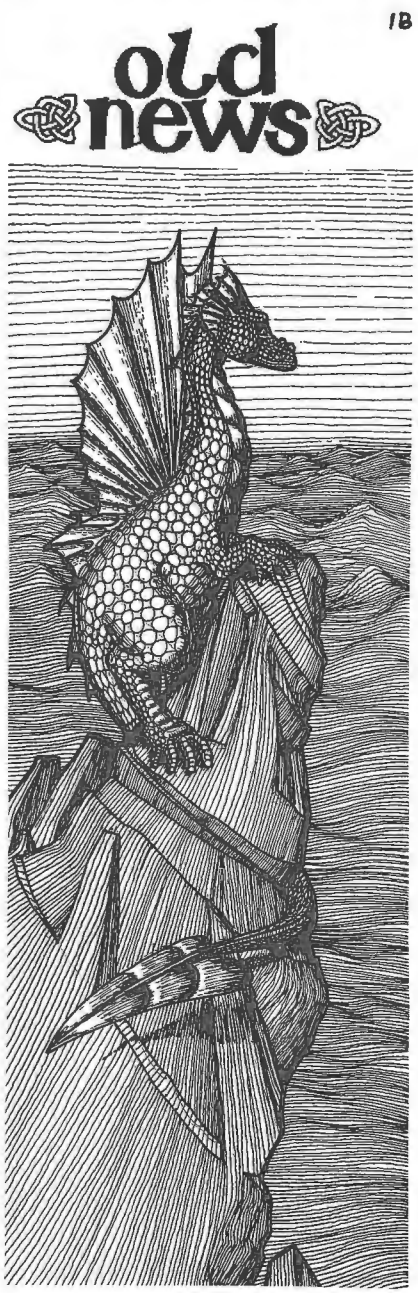
To my mind, the answer might be very simple. For nigh on a thousand years historians have been attempting to identify the real Arthur, which has proved impossible with an absolute degree of certainty. But Arthur could be explained in a totally logical – if rather clandestine – way.

The troubles confronting Arthur, in the 5th/6th centuries, were many and far-flung. He was the rallying point for his armies, and if their services were needed in the South-West, Wales or Scotland they had to fight there and, most importantly, be triumphant.

So – in the greatest secrecy – he appointed two *doubles* to act in his name for military campaigns. It would be true to say that the armies in question would have fought better, knowing – or at least believing – that Arthur was at their head. But the man they acknowledged as their *Dux Bellorum* might not have been the true King! Therefore 'King Arthur' could be in three places at one time. His doubles would have been knights of almost equal prowess, and strikingly similar in appearance – something by no means impossible to achieve I would imagine. So who would have doubted that they were not looking at the great man himself!

Could such a scenario have contributed to the legend of 'King Arthur'?

Dennis Oldham, Milton Keynes



THE GRAIL CODE

A Grail story that was weird enough even for Channel 4's *Richard and Judy* show was aired in May. If you've read *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* you'll know immediately what this is about.

The Earl of Lichfield's back garden was the setting for "a pair of octogenarian World War II codebreakers" to assault a 250-year-old monument and its alleged Grail links, reported a *Daily Mail* article (spotted by Ian Brown). Oliver and Sheila Lawn were invited by managers at **Shugborough Hall** in Staffordshire to "decipher a cryptic inscription some believe may point the way to the Grail".

The retired Bletchley Park veterans will examine the **Shepherd's Monument**, built on the estate in around 1748 by Lichfield's ancestor Admiral George Anson. The stone monument includes a marble relief based on a mirror image of one of Poussin's *Et in Arcadia Ego* paintings.

Carved under the relief are the letters

O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V.

D. M.

Richard Kemp, Shugborough's general manager and an archaeologist, suggests the letters could be a clue to the Grail's whereabouts because of Anson connections with the Knights Templar. "The Ansons were a family who we know liked secret societies and there are documents connecting them with the Knights Templar, although nothing has been proven. There is certainly something odd about the monument. It is the only one of the eight garden monuments that isn't modelled on a piece of architecture from around the world."

"Then there's the question of why in the original painting the shepherds are pointing at a letter R on an inscription showing the painting's title but on the relief they're pointing to an A. It's all very mysterious."

Oliver Lawn declared that this was "the hardest [code] I've tackled, but I'll have a bash at anything. It's a totally different genre of code to what I'm used to. It will need some classical knowledge, which I'm lacking, and a lot of ingenuity. I've no doubt it's a code. In the 18th century they were keen on puzzles, which they sometimes used to hide secrets from their families or to make jokes and tease. It'll take some time to get to the

bottom of it, and we'll need to study documents in the house and get some help from classical scholars. But I've been reading up on the Holy Grail, and it's wonderful to think this could unlock its secret."

Christine Large, Bletchley Park's director, declared "It's a tough one, but when we were asked for our help it was just irresistible.' *CL*

- David Wilkes "Can Enigma codebusters crack Holy Grail mystery? Intelligence veterans recruited to unlock secrets of fabled monument" *The Daily Mail* May 12 2004

CAMELOT AND TEMPLARS

Ever since reading, in the article about Camlet or **Camelot Moat** in Enfield in *Pendragon*, the mention of Geoffrey de Mandeville's ghost (along with a headless dog!) appearing there, I've puzzled, since he supposedly died in the Fens after being wounded while attacking King Stephen's men at Burwell Castle in 1144, why his spirit (since such tales usually represent some echo of a real event) would manifest so far away, even if Camlet did belong to him.

Recently, I read an account of his death, and the events as given are so odd that I began to see a possible scenario. Appleby (1969) quotes contemporary chroniclers as saying that, after the arrow hit Geoffrey in the head, his men took him to Mildenhall, 11 miles away across the Fens. There, Abbot Walter of Ramsey appeared to demand his abbey back from Geoffrey's villainous "warband". He found Geoffrey "had neither voice nor sense", yet, oddly, came away with a letter, supposedly from Geoffrey, to his son Ernulf, instructing him to hand back the abbey, which happened.

Meanwhile, some Templars arrived (they had Denny Abbey, fairly nearby). One of them covered Geoffrey, by now supposedly dead, with the cloak of the order (red cross on white), and they then took the apparent corpse to London. As he was excommunicate, they could not bury it in sacred ground, so they either threw it into a pit outside the walls of their commandery or, stranger still, put it in a lead coffin and hung it in a wild apple tree!

What I'm speculating is: was Geoffrey merely shamming coma and then death? Did the Templars smuggle him past his royal enemy, and if so why should they assist such an unforgiven enemy of the Church as well as the monarch? Had they been promised the treasure he had looted from Ramsey Abbey, the churches of Cambridge *etc*? Did he perhaps tell them it was hidden at Camlet, and then some confrontation there led to his death (the Templars, finding they had been fooled, and there was no treasure in the well or wherever, kill him and throw him in; or perhaps even that the pre-existing wound finally killed him, there, and the well was a handly place to hide the evidence)?

A very indirect relation to Arthuriana – except perhaps to the extent that the aristocratic ultra-violence of the Anarchy, of which Geoffrey was the ultimate example, may have helped shape medieval pictures of the Round Table world – but intriguing all the same, I thought. Such a speculation would fit well with the Templar tendency to be a law unto themselves throughout their existence.

Steve Sneyd

- Nick Grant (2003) "Camelot was in Enfield Chase" *Pendragon XXX* No 3, 14–15
- John T Appleby (1969) *The Troubled Reign of King Stephen* (G Bell & Sons)

AVALON NEW-FOUND(LAND)

It would be interesting to know how – or indeed if – the Newfoundland **Avalon**, as ably described by W M S Russell,[1] might tally with the geological ancient *terrane* **Avalonia**, partly in the same general region (including Nova Scotia, parts of new England and Britain), as previously mentioned in *Pendragon*.[2]

In my venerable *Muir's Historical Atlas: Medieval and Modern*,[3] the map showing the early European colonisation of North America on page 45, dated as 1607-1689, marks the *whole* multi-limbed peninsula of south-east Newfoundland as "Avalon", which dating clearly tallies with W M S Russell's findings. Unfortunately, the actual settlement is not marked on this map, but I'm happy to report Avalon, as the Avalon Peninsula, is still alive and well, and remains this part of

[1] W M S Russell (2004) "Avalon Found" *Pendragon XXXI* No 3, 33

[2] Chris Lovegrove (2002) "Avalon finally located" *Pendragon XXIX* No 4, 32

[3] Eleventh edition 1969, R F Treharne and H Fullard *eds*, George Philip & Son

extreme south-east Newfoundland today, according to my *Reader's Digest Illustrated Atlas of the World*[4] at least.

Intrigued, and checking the gazetteer, I discovered one other "Avallon", which turned out to be in central France, on the western fringe of Burgundy, a little over 50 km west of Dijon, but only some 10 km WSW of Montreal. Given that the Avalon Peninsula and its attached part of mainland Newfoundland were claimed as British possessions in the dash for the New World, while the remainder of the island, and much of mainland eastern Canada were seized by the French, I wondered if the title "Avalon" for the settlement and peninsula might have originated with the British or with the French. Rather a neat parallel with much of the Arthurian legendary generally.

Alastair McBeath

SAINT GAWAIN AGAIN

The Italian **Sword-in-the-Stone** story refuses to go away. The Discovery Channel announced on March 1st *Tuscan 'Excalibur' Mystery to be Unearthed*, soon after we reported Mario Moiraghi's Arthurian theories.

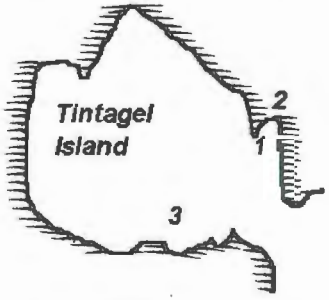
Luigi Garlaschelli of the University of Pavia announced that – following tests in 2001 which confirmed the sword at **Montesiepi** was indeed 12th century and not a modern fake – archaeological excavations around the rock in which the sword is held have been given the go-ahead.

Ground penetrating radar analysis has already revealed a room 2 metres long and nearly a metre wide under the sword. If this is indeed Saint Gawain's tomb, then the mystery surrounding the existence of the knight-turned-hermit may well be solved: Galgano Guidotti's historical identity has never been established in contemporary documents, despite his canonisation not long after his supposed death.

Dr Garlaschelli, good academic that he is, of course says that this will not prove that the Italian 'Excalibur' is the prototype of the Arthurian sword-in-the-stone tales: this is for multi-disciplinary studies to decide. (Excalibur, by the way, was not originally the sword in the stone described by Robert de Boron.) *CL*

- http://dsc.discovery.com/news.briefs/20040301/sword.html (accessed March 11th 2004) by Rossella Lorenzi
- http://www.sangalgano.info/spada_it.html
- "Arturo d'Italia' *Pendragon XXXI* No 2 33f

[4] 1997, 161



POST-ROMAN TINTAGEL

Professor Charles Thomas persuaded Channel 4's *Extreme Archaeology* team to investigate three areas of potential Early Medieval date located in relatively inaccessible positions on Tintagel Island, and was rewarded with 66.6% success. Believing Tintagel's 11 acres to be more than just a high status site, Thomas looked for evidence of widespread occupation on the promontory (which is fast becoming an island) that could indicate a royal centre.

Site 1 was 150 feet above a beach where recent and future slippage threatened to lose any recoverable archaeology. Working from ropes, the team – in the first ever archaeological investigation of this site – searched for evidence of a suspected sixth century terrace. Under scraps of 13th century slate and medieval pottery were found sherds of grooved ware from an East Mediterranean amphora and pieces identified by Carl Thorpe as from a Phocean bowl of early 6th century date imported from Turkey. These were all associated with a terrace that further investigation suggested went around the headland. Below the wall supporting the terrace was a sterile layer, underlying the commitment of a strong authority to the enlargement of Tintagel in the post-Roman period.

Site 2 was more disappointing. This was at the so-called Iron Gate, where Thomas hoped for evidence of a early medieval date for a rock platform which could have functioned as a natural quay, with the face of the rock shelf "falling almost vertically down

into deep water" (Thomas 1993: 41). However, a rock-cut socket was almost certainly a product of the slate-mining industry, and any potential early remains below water would have been worn away or dispersed by the strong swell. Still, there were possible traces of stone clearance at the base of the rock, and 60-ft Mediterranean vessels could conceivably have moored there at a time when sea levels were 3 metres lower than at present.

Site 3 was a sloping terrace on the south where a 1983 brush fire had revealed the outline of 13 buildings (area 7 of post-Roman plan, Thomas 1993: 89). The team's geophysical survey of some 3500 square metres had pinpointed a likely area for excavation, where slate slabs on a clay layer and supporting turf walls would have been evidence of post-Roman occupation. As it was, behind the front wall of a building, in the rubble collapse, were found not only the hoped-for Mediterranean sherd but also some Romano-British native black ware.

The team recovered a total of 51 pieces of imported Mediterranean pottery, justifying the exercise and proving to be "a valuable piece of rescue archaeology". For romantics though there was no souvenir of Arthur. *CL*

• Charles Thomas (1993) *Tintagel: Arthur and Archaeology* (Batsford-English Heritage)

EARLY CELTIC CHRISTIANS

Another programme in the recent *Extreme Archaeology* series ("Bay of Bones" July 25th 2004) examined an Early Christian site threatened by erosion in the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path Park, at **Longoar Bay** near St Ishmael's.

Cist graves were exposed in the sandstone cliffs, inaccessible for the usual archaeological investigation and necessitating a suspended platform. East-west orientation, with the heads to the west, implied Christian burials, a theory supported by Park archaeologist Phil Bennett and the Dean of St Davids Cathedral, Wyn Evans, himself an archaeologist.

Subsequent radar surveys in the area behind the cliff face built up a 3D picture which revealed a score or more potential cist graves and therefore a probable Early Christian cemetery, possibly from an extended family group. Excavation confirmed around five of these graves, at least one of which was a child's burial. The underside of a capping stone of one of the cists was incised with an equal-armed cross typical of the 6th century, with differentiation in weathering which suggested it was originally a grave marker before re-use.

Figure *Sketch of re-used 6th-century grave marker, Longoar Bay.*

Though around 80% of the bones had been destroyed by the acid soil, enough remained of skulls and other bones to allow some osteoanalysis and a C14 dating of around 734 AD. The hypothesis was that a cemetery of the 6th century continued in use to at least the 8th century, after which burial practices were transferred 3 miles inland to St Ishmael's church, where the extant church itself was begun in the 11th century. In the building are now housed various Early Christian carved stones from the vicinity, some tomb markers, some boundary markers (the latter important for indicating where ecclesiastical sanctuary began.

Still on Celtic Christians: shortlisted for an award jointly sponsored by *Current Archaeology* and the Royal Archaeological Institute was Michael John Calder's further education dissertation on **early Celtic saints**. Calder looked for evidence of "very obscure" Celtic saints whose names were preserved in unusual church dedications in Somerset. These included Street's Holy Trinity church which held lands at **Lantokay** (St Kea?), St Paul's church at **Kewstoke** (St Kew?), St Decuman's church at **Watchet**, and **Carhampton** church links with St Carantoc. We know of early medieval evidence at some of these sites, for example the presence of East Mediterranean pottery at Carhampton. Calder also identified places where further archaeological investigation could usefully be carried out. *CL*

• Wendy Davies (1982) *Wales in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester UP, London) 188ff

• "The CA/RAI Dissertation Award" *Current Archaeology 191*, 496

Folklore, fakelore and history

Arthur, Glastonbury, pagans and witches

W M S Russell

Ronald Hutton is a distinguished authority on 17th-century Britain and on paganism, magic and witchcraft throughout European history. In his latest book,[1] he has tackled nine distinct but related subjects. The amount and variety of fascinating ideas and facts packed into this marvellous book could fill many volumes, but there is no sense of congestion or clutter, thanks to Hutton's lucid and attractive style. A mass of useful bibliographic information in support is supplied in 54 pages of notes.

Perception and invention

His first chapter, on false beliefs and their genesis, opens with the observation that 'tribal peoples tend to describe things as they should be, not as they actually are' (1), and that of course this is not confined to tribal peoples. One is reminded of Sophocles saying he portrayed people as they ought to be, and Euripides portrayed them as they are.[2]

Hutton then gives examples of not perceiving what is there and perceiving what is not there. The Abbé Cau-Durban looked for Palaeolithic remains in the cave of Marsoulas, and failed to see the Palaeolithic paintings all around him, because Palaeolithic art was not yet recognised. The Abbé Breuil drew a vague blur on a cave wall as the clearly depicted 'sorcerer' of Les Trois Frères (Plate 3). In 1953, I and three colleagues discovered an important central nervous feature of the mechanism of perception,[3] and I have shown how this causes our perceptions to be influenced by verbal descriptions and cultural expectations, so that 16th-century European travellers not only thought of Hindu gods as devils, but actually saw them as such.[4]

Hutton continues with a brilliant account of the pseudo-history and pseudo-ethnology of the British Isles. He describes the invention of the kilt and tartans by three Englishmen and a Scottish soldier. He continues with the invention by several people, including that old rogue Iolo Morganwg, of the *gorsedd*, 'Welsh' costume, and the supposed Welsh national instrument – the Italian harp! – so much, incidentally, for the Minstrel Boy. Then he describes the pseudohistory of Irish Gaelic Catholic nationalism, widely believed in Ireland, whereas in fact virtually all the nationalists were Anglo-Irish, and most of them Protestants (as were also the authors of the Celtic Twilight of the 1890s), and two important Gaelic chieftains were loyal to the English. To balance this, I may point out that the present-day Ulster Orangemen are probably mostly ignorant of the fact that Pope Innocent XI, having quarrelled with Louis XIV, gave diplomatic support to William III and his Allies.[5]

Hutton then turns to the Irish demonisation of Cromwell, with invented, but widely believed, atrocities at Drogheda and Wexford. In fact, as Hutton notes, Cromwell killed most of the mainly English royalist garrisons of the two towns (except that 300 men of the Wexford garrison were drowned trying to escape in boats) after they had refused merciful terms and been warned of the consequence. (The Irish rebels slaughtered the English garrison of

[1] Ronald Hutton (2003) *Witches, Druids and King Arthur* (London: Hambledon and London) £29.99 1 85285 397 2 hardcover *pp* xviii + 365 *illus*

[2] Aristotle *Poetics* 25.11

[3] Hayes, J S, Russell, W M S, Hayes, C and Kohsen, A (1953) 'The Mechanism of an Instinctive Control System: a Hypothesis' *Behaviour 6* 85–119

[4] Russell, W M S (2002) 'Reafference and Prosensory Input. 1, 2' *The ASCAP Bulletin 3* No 1, 7–13, *3* No 2, 14–18

[5] Western, J R (1972) *Monarchy and Revolution: the English State in the 1680s* (London: Blandford Press) 246, 250, 251 *n*1, 257

Enniscorthy without any offer of terms or warning, having taken the castle by trickery.)[6] A few civilians may have perished in the fighting in both Drogheda and Wexford, but 'not a single woman or child' (Hutton, 9). Royalist propaganda vigorously invented atrocities by Cromwell. They reprinted a letter of his listing the enemy officers and soldiers killed at Drogheda, calmly adding 'and many inhabitants'![7] The most picturesque of the invented atrocities, recorded in his famous history by Lord Clarendon (Charles II's minister and James II's father-in-law) was that of, in Carlyle's words, '"Two hundred women in the Marketplace of Wexford", who in modern times have even grown to "Two hundred beautiful Women" (all young and in their Sunday clothes for the occasion), who figure still, in the Irish imagination, in a very horrid manner ... the "Two hundred women" and some other things, I persuade myself, will profitably vanish from the Market-place henceforth!'[8] Alas, Carlyle was an optimist; Hutton tells us that, in the 1980s, the Irish Tourist Board was assuring visitors that Cromwell killed every man, woman and child in Drogheda. To be fair to the Irish, Hutton found completely false traditions about Cromwell all over England.

Fakelore and antiquity

Hutton then discusses false folk beliefs derived from works of literature, citing the valley of Taipi-vai in the Marquesas, whose history, for both tourists and inhabitants, is still based on the fictional history in Melville's *Typee*, and fakelore he had himself collected in Wales about a character called Twm Sion Cati. The real man of this name was a respectable antiquary, but in fakelore he has become a sort of Robin Hood outlaw, actually derived from Hauff's story *Die Geschichte von den Gespensterschiff* and of course *The Ancient Mariner*; also the legend of Drake's Drum, invented in a poem of Newbolt – the drum was actually *heard* in both World Wars.[9] In Salzburg, my late wife and I observed children playing an Everyman game, pretty certainly derived, not from the medieval play, but from Max Reinhardt's production of it![10] [11]

Hutton then turns to deliberate fakelore, typified by the story of Llywelyn's dog Gelert, who killed a wolf to save his master's baby, and was killed by Llywelyn before he realised what had happened. This story was invented by an inn-keeper to attract tourists – even supplying a grave for the dog. 'This is a widely distributed tale: there is a version from India with a mongoose as hero and a snake as villain'.[12]

In discussing the antiquity of folktales, Hutton mentions a 9th-century Chinese tale as the earliest Cinderella, but the slipper test goes back to Strabo, where it is recorded of Rhodopis, a courtesan of the Greek trading post of Naucratis in Egypt, who lived in the 6th century BC.[13]

Hutton gives a number of good examples of the fallibility of spoken tradition. But he is rather too sweeping about this. Spoken traditions can be preserved accurately for very long periods. Van Gennep mistakenly proposed an upper limit for accurate folk memory of 200 years, based on observations of several peoples, including the Eskimos. Now 'in his voyages of 1576–8, Martin Frobisher made unsuccessful attempts to mine gold on Baffin Island. In 1860, Hall was led to the sites of his min-workings by the oral traditions of the local Eskimos'.[14] At Seddin, in Brandenburg, local legend about a burial mound told of a king buried in a threefold coffin. When the mound was excavated, a burial was found dating to

[6] Carlyle, T (nd) *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches with Elucidations* (London: Ward, Lock & Co, 2nd edn) 343–4
[7] *Ibid* 302
[8] *Ibid* 331

[9] Russell, W M S (1981) 'Folktales and the Theatre' *Folklore 92* 3–24, especially 6
[10] Russell, C and Russell, W M S (1988) 'Max Reinhardt and Folklore' *Folklore 99* 124–5
[11] Porter, J R (1988) 'Reinhardt's "Everyman"' *Folklore 99* 251
[12] Russell, W M S and Russell, C (1978) 'The Social Biology of Werewolves' in Porter, J R and Russell, W M S (eds) *Animals in Folklore* (Ipswich and Cambridge: D S Brewer for the Folklore Society) 143–182, 260–269, especially 161–2
[13] Russell (ref 9) 8
[14] Russell, W M S (1993) 'Greek and Roman Monsters. Part 1' *Social Biology and Human Affairs 58* No 2, 13–25, especially 14–15

about 1000 BC. The ashes were in a bronze vessel in an earthenware container in a stone chamber.'[15] N W Ovenden showed that the Northern constellations were so chosen that they would set at fixed points on the horizon, and so could be used for navigation. He showed, therefore, that they must have been chosen in the Eastern Mediterranean at about 2500 BC. By the 4th century BC, when Eudoxus described them, they no longer worked for navigation, but they had been faithfully preserved by spoken tradition for over two millennia. Ovenden suggested that this helped Hipparchus to make his great discovery of precession.[16]

But of course Hutton is right in stating that spoken tradition can be manipulated. Many spoken traditions of dynastic history include very long sequences of father-son succession, in one Indian case for 121 consecutive reigns. D F Henige 'examined 5574 successions in 328 well-documented dynasties.' He found no instance of father-son succession extending for more than 15 consecutive generations.[17]

Hutton's last category of false beliefs contains those due to repeating a completely wrong statement in a publication. His most striking illustration is the statement in a German publication of 1793 that the witch-hunt of the 16th and 17th centuries killed over 9 million witches. (I calculate this meant killing one-ninth of the probable population of all Europe, including Russia, in AD 1500.) Hutton shows that this preposterous figure was still being repeated in the 1980s!

I can add two examples. In about AD 1590, Cardinal Baronius announced that in the year AD 1000 there was a European panic about the end of the world. This was repeated by historians right up to the 19th century, anticlerical ones adding that the Church provoked or exploited the panic to attract gifts of land by terrified laymen. Not only is there not a shred of contemporary evidence for either the panic or exceptionally numerous land donations, but I have shown that a continent-wide panic was impossible, since different regions had different dating systems, in some cases differing by a whole year.[18]

My other example concerns Alessandro Farnese, the brilliant commander and honourable man who served the infamous Felipe II of Spain;[19] he reminds one irresistibly of another 'devil's general', Erwin Rommel. Almost every modern book on the period I have seen, back to 1908 (Neale is an honourable exception) refers to the general in 1588 or earlier as the Duke of Parma. I don't know exactly when the error first appeared – Motley, for instance, knew better – but once made the error was repeated again and again. In fact, the general was only the *Prince* of Parma until he succeeded his elder brother as Duke in 1592.

This category ends Hutton's very illuminating survey of false beliefs.

Arthur and Glastonbury

His second chapter is entirely devoted to the historical Arthur. As background, Hutton goes over the familiar ground of the relevant evidence – the sources (Gildas, Nennius and son on), and the excavations at South Cadbury (with honourable mention of the Pendragon Society) and Tintagel. But then comes something entirely new and immensely valuable, which alone makes this book an indispensable addition to Arthurian libraries. This is a systematic history of the changing attitudes to the historical Arthur throughout the twentieth century, their vicissitudes and oscillations, in both scholarship and popular culture. The course of this important cultural development is vividly described, analysed with penetration, and supported by a rich documentation in the notes. Hutton shows very clearly that the attitudes have covered a very wide spectrum, ranging from wild extravagances to equally wild scepticism.

An example he gives of extravagant speculation is Collingwood supplying Arthur

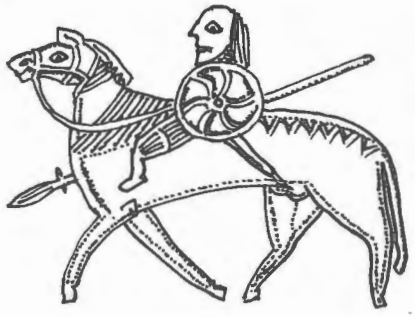
[15] Russell, C and Russell, W M S (1982) 'Cultural Evolution. 1. Culture, Culture Transmission and Culture Change' *Social Biology and Human Affairs 47* No 1, 17–38, especially 29–30
[16] Ibid
[17] Ibid

[18] Russell, W M S (1990) 'The Non-existent Panic of the Year AD 1000' *Folklore 101* 228–230
[19] Russell, W M S (2001) 'Arthurian Literature, Chivalry and Violence' *Pendragon 29* No 2, 34–36, especially 36

with a force of *heavy* cavalry, like the Byzantine cataphracts. Now, as I have pointed out, the cavalry of the Roman army was so predominantly Celtic, including British, that commands were given not in Latin but in Gallic or Ibero-Celtic throughout the service. 'By the end of the second century [AD] there were twenty-eight Roman cavalry units of Celtic origin',[20] including units from Britain. 'So there were surely British veterans with cavalry know-how left behind' when the legions left Britain. 'After the Gothic victory of Adrianople (AD 378), the balance in warfare shifted from infantry to cavalry' for about a thousand years.[21] So we can well understand Arthur's victories over the Anglo-Saxon infantry, and a mobile force of light cavalry would, from its nature, win victories scattered over Britain. Whatever is thought of John Morris's book *The Age of Arthur* as a whole,[22] his archaeological maps put a sustained setback for the Anglo-Saxon advance beyond doubt. However, as I also pointed out, it is *excessively* unlikely that the big powerful horses that carried the heavily armoured Byzantine cataphracts were available in Britain, whereas several people have shown that horses suitable for light cavalry *were* available there.[23]

In concluding his history, Hutton has an admirable comment on the tendency of the sceptical extremists 'to write off Arthur altogether. It begs the enormous question of how a character who may never have existed came, within three hundred years of his presumed lifetime, to be the greatest hero of his people' (58).

These sceptical extremists put me in mind of what Dumas has to say about William Tell. When the apple story was found in Saxo Grammaticus, ascribed to a Danish king, the sceptical brigade promptly began to deny the *existence* of the Swiss hero. But fortunately, in this case, 'the archives of Altorf' (Altdorf?) 'conserve the names of 114 people who were present, in 1380, at the erection of the chapel of Tellen Plate (Tell Stone), and who had personally known William Tell. His family, besides, was only extinct in its male line in 1684, and in its female line in 1720. Jean Martin Tell and Verona Tell are the names of the last two members of his family'.[24]



The Arthurian theme is continued in the third chapter, devoted to Glastonbury. After describing the Abbey, the Tor and the Chalice Well, Hutton gives an excellent account of the gradual growth of the legends about them, associated with Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail, implying an early foundation for the Abbey, and with Arthur and Guinevere, whose bodies the monks claimed to have exhumed in 1191. Hutton lists all the suspicious circumstances surrounding this claim, and mentions that in 1419 the monks were preparing to claim they had found Joseph's body. Both in 1191 and 1419 there were good propaganda reasons for these claims. I have noted that 'Angevin exploitation of the legend' of Arthur 'went to the length of (pardon my pun) *forging* a sword' – in 1190 (just before the alleged exhumation) Richard I presented what he said was the original Excalibur to the bastard usurper of Sicily.[25] The name of the Chalice Well, so suggestive of the Grail, 'is a recent corruption of the medieval "Chalkwell", simply indicating a limestone spring' (76).

[20] Dent, A and Goodall, D M (1962) *The Foals of Epona: a History of British Ponies from the Bronze Age to Yesterday* (London: Gallery Press) 10, 37
[21] Russell, W M S (1999) 'Arthur as a Cavalry Leader' *Pendragon* 27 No 4, 4
[22] Morris, J (1995) *The Age of Arthur: a History of the British isles from 350 to 650* (London: Phoenix)
[23] Russell (ref 21)
[24] Dumas, A (1982) *Impressions de Voyage en Suisse. 1. Du Mont Blanc à Berne* (Paris: François Maspero) 476 (my trans)
[25] Russell, W M S (1999) 'Excalibur in Sicily' *Pendragon* 27 No 4, 6

After the classical legends, so to speak, Hutton describes the very recent fantasies of leys, zodiacs and so on. The chapter concludes with a very thorough study of the actual history and the archaeology of the site. Both the documentary and the archaeological evidence agree in strongly suggesting an Anglo-Saxon foundation of the Abbey, possibly by King Centwine of Wessex. Apart from the structure on the Tor which is most probably a maze, and whose date is completely unknown, the only pre-Anglo-Saxon building excavated is a settlement of the 5th or 6th century on the top of the Tor. Hutton supposes that, though this cannot be definitely proved, the most likely function of this settlement was as a look-out post, not against Anglo-Saxons, but against Irish raiders. Taken as a whole, this chapter is worth a whole book, as the best survey I have read of *all* aspects of Glastonbury.

Religion and magic

The fourth, fifth and seventh chapters are all, in different ways, about the interaction, intergradation and interpenetration of polytheism and monotheism, paganism and Christianity. The fourth chapter begins by describing the gradual growth of the monotheistic tendency in Greece, Egypt and the Near East, beginning in the latter as early as the 2nd millennium BC. Where I take issue with Hutton is over his claim that Neoplatonism led a decisive advance of this monotheistic tendency in the later Roman Empire. This seems to me to have been a period of decisive setback in the progress of monotheism. The return of the repressed polytheism in Christianity is brilliantly described in the famous twenty-eighth chapter of Gibbon: 'Final Destruction of Paganism – Introduction of the Worship of Saints and Relics among the Christians'.[26]

'The MONARCHY of heaven, already clouted by metaphysical subtleties, was degraded by the introduction of a popular mythology which tended to restore the reign of polytheism.'[27]

[He adds, in one of his inimitable footnotes, 'Mr. Hume (Essays, vol. Ii p. 434) observes, like a philosopher, the natural flux and reflux of polytheism and theism.']

In Neoplatonism, it seems to me, the return of repressed polytheism took the form of populating the universe with a vast multitude of daemons, some of them demons in our sense. The great Jacob Burckhardt writes of Neoplatonism: 'This latest philosophic sect of antiquity ... shows no advance whatever in the direction of monotheism, which was far more developed in many earlier thinkers than in the "One", the "absolute One", or whatever other novel designation was given to the supreme deity or prime being which was conceived as ... immanent in the world ... All of polytheism, furthermore, was included in the system in the form of a belief in daimones who, as subordinate deities, held dominion over individual countries, nature, and conditions of life.'[28] Porphyry tried to halt the proliferation of daemones in the school, 'which regarded him with suspicion in consequence' (Burckhardt),[29] but Iamblichus soon brought the daemones back.

Still, this difference between our views may be merely a matter of emphasis. Hutton produces a host of interesting facts in support of his view, and he does admit that 'to Iamblichus ... the earth and its underworld teemed with spirits that were at best dangerous and at worst actively malevolent' (134).

The second half of this chapter is about magic. After considering the niggling objections of lesser scholars, Hutton returns essentially to the distinction between magic and religion drawn by the great ones, Tylor, Frazer and Malinowski, merely stipulating that there are interactions and intergradations between the two. He then proceeds to provide an excellent history of magic in the ancient world, notably in Graeco-Roman Egypt, and he is surely right in claiming that magic, uniformly disapproved of by earlier pagan authorities, was being made respectable by the Neoplatonists (other than Porphyry) in the demon-haunted later Roman Empire. He usefully recalls the little-known Roman witch-trials of the early

[26] Gibbon, E (1910) *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire Vol 3* (London: Dent) 119–147
[27] *Ibid* 145
[28] Burckhardt, J (1956) *The Age of Constantine the Great* (*transl* Hadas, M; Garden City, NY: Doubleday) 178
[29] *Ibid* 181

2nd century BC, in which 2000 and 3000 people, respectively, were executed, which surpasses, as he notes, the slaughters in any single witch-trials of early modern Europe. This history of early magic, again, is as good as a whole book, to set beside books on medieval and Renaissance ritual magic by, for example, Flint and Butler.[30] [31]

The fifth chapter turns to the other side of the coin, and considers the infiltration of paganism into certain aspects of the culture of Christian Europe. Hutton takes us on a fascinating circuitous route through the city of Harran, with its peculiar special Sabian religion, the Syriac and Arabic translators from Greek under the Caliphs, the co-operation of Moslem, Jewish and Christian scholars influenced by all this, the scholar-poets of Chartres, and later Marsilio Ficino and his followers under the Medici, showing us a host of interesting sights on the way. This was well doing anyway, but as a supplement to this picture, it is worth noting that there was also a more direct and certainly more continuous line of pagan influence within Europe all the way from classical times: the forms of survival of the Olympian gods revealed in the great book of Jean Seznec.[32]

Seznec showed that the ancient philosophers developed three interpretations of the Olympian gods, related to euhemerism, astrology and allegory: all three are represented in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum* (On the Nature of the Gods). Astrology and allegory are self-explanatory, and Hutton, in the course of his tour, has much to tell us about the gods as planets in astrology. Euhemerism was the work of Euhemerus, who served Cassander and the early Ptolemies in the late 4th and early 3rd centuries BC. He wrote a Utopian novel which suggested the Olympian gods had originally been great human beings, deified for their contributions to civilisation. This idea horrified pious Olympian-worshippers such as Callimachus, but was eagerly taken up by Jews and Christians (and, for the opposite reason, by Hellenistic rulers who wanted to be deified). 'These ideas came into their own in modern times, when Herbert Spencer revivied the idea that dead ancestors could become gods, and Grant Allen proved the point with evidence from all over the world.'[33] [34] Seznec traced all three interpretations continuously from ancient times through medieval and Renaissance literature and art. Perhaps the most interesting form of survival of the gods, in both Hutton and Seznec, is as planetary deities (we still use their names) with astrological influences on human life. Hutton mentions Frances Yates's suggestion that when Jupiter and Mercury descended from heaven in a ballet at the court of Catherine de Medici, this was seen as a magic means of securing a favourable conjunction of these planets. The third interpretation, in which the gods stand for ethical or philosophical ideas, is also well demonstrated by both Hutton and Seznec in medieval and Renaissance literature and art.

On to Sarras!

In the seventy chapter, Hutton examines the influence of pagan themes on two writers usually considered profoundly Christian, two of the 'Inklings' club, C S Lewis and J R R Tolkien. By studying their early readings and writings, he conclusively proves the importance of pagan influence on their work, and he is finally able to classify them not with straightforwardly Christian writers such as Chesterton and Belloc, but with such writers as Blackwood and Yeats.

Hutton omits to mention one very important pagan characteristic of Lewis, his pathological hatred of science. In spite of occasional persecutions of individual scientist, Christianity has generally favoured science: we owe our calendar to a Pope, and our knowledge of electricity and magnetism to a Plymouth Brother. Pious pagans, on the contrary, really hated science, and in late 5th century (BC) Athens they succeeded in

[30] Flint, V I J (1991) *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press)
[31] Butler, E M (1971) *Ritual Magic* (Hollywood, California: Newcastle Publishing Company)
[32] Seznec, J (1972) *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (Bollingen Series 38, *transl* Sessions, B F, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press)
[33] Russell, W M S (1984) 'Heroes in Ancient Greece' in Davidson, H R E (ed) *The Hero in Tradition and Folklore* (London: The Folklore Society) 112–141, especially 124–6
[34] Russell, W M S (1975) 'Saints, Tribes and Ancestors' *Biology and Human Affairs 40* No 3, 118–130, especially 119–120

making it a criminal offence.[35] This aspect of Lewis's paganism is chiefly expressed in his three anti-science fiction novels. In this connection, I cannot resist repeating a true anecdote I have told elsewhere:[36]

'I think it was in the summer of 1947 that I was climbing the stairs with my tutor to his rooms in Magdalen College, Oxford. My tutor was to be Sir Peter Medawar, Nobel Laureate for his wonderful discoveries about tissue grafts. I happened to make a derogatory remark about C S Lewis (as a novelist: I have always admired his writings about literature, and he had not yet published his fine novel *Till We Have Faces*). "Hush!" said Medawar with a smile, pointing to door we were just passing, "he's in there now, making me the villain of his latest novel".'

I wonder that Hutton did not choose for his investigation Charles Williams. Not only are his six great novels far better than any of the fiction of the other two 'Inklings', but they are full of motifs highly relevant to the subjects of Hutton's book, for instance, Neoplatonism in *The Place of the Lion*, the Tarot in *The Greater Trumps*, hallucinogenic witch ointment, and ritual magic versus religion in *War in Heaven*. T S Eliot classified him, not with Chesterton but Poe, Le Fanu and Machen.[37]

Charles Williams is of special interest to Arthurians, because in *War in Heaven* the Grail turns up in a country church, and is stolen for an evil purpose by one of the nastiest villains in all literature. There is a wonderful moment when the publisher, the Duke and the Archdeacon are escaping in the Duke" car, having rescued the Grail from the villain, and the publisher sees them as 'Bors and Percivale and Galahad'.[38] 'On, on to Sarras!' he cries, and to their pursuers he calls out: 'Sarras! We shall meet at Carbonek!'

Ah well, perhaps Hutton will turn to Williams another time. I hope so.

Pagans and witches

The sixth, eighth and ninth chapters are all related to Hutton's brilliant and highly original study of modern paganism and witchcraft, reported in an earlier book of his.[39] In the sixth chapter he traces the history of ritual nudity, which he had found commonly practised in some forms of modern witchcraft. He finds ritual nudity occurs only occasionally in the history of religion, usually in initiation ceremonies, but is closely connected with ritual magic. In this respect, therefore, modern witchcraft follows a magical rather than religious tradition.

This chapter contains the only factual statement in Hutton's book to which I would take exception. It concerns the courtesan Phryne of Thespiae, who practised in Athens. She was the favourite model of Apelles (the great painter) and Paxiteles (the great sculptor), and by all accounts the most beautiful woman in the ancient world. Hutton writes:

'Before initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries, celebrants all bathed in the sea, although this seems to have taken place after dark and with some modesty; when the courtesan Phryne did so in full view of other participants, *proud of her beauty, she got into serious trouble*' (199).

It is the passage I have italicised which simply does not fit with everything we know about Phryne. William W Sanger, citing Aelian and Alciphron, writes:[40]

'Phryne was a prodigious favourite with the Athenian people. She played a conspicuous part in the festival of Neptune and Venus. [Poseidon and Aphrodite, of course.] At a certain point in the ceremony she appeared on the steps of the temple at the sea-side in her usual dress, and slowly disrobed herself

[35] Russell, C and Russell, W M S (1989) 'Cultural Evolution. 8. Athens and Florence' *Social Biology and Human Affairs 54* No 1, 20–37, especially 29
[36] Russell, W M S (1994–5) 'Voltaire, Science and Fiction: a Tercentenary Tribute' *Foundation* 31–46, especially 41
[37] Eliot, T S (1981) 'Introduction' in Williams, C *All Hallows' Eve* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans Publishing Company) ix–xviii, especially xiv
[38] Williams, C (1991) *War in Heaven* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W B Eerdmans Publishing Company) 120
[39] Hutton, R (1999) *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
[40] Sanger, W W (1910) *A History of Prostitution: its Extent, Causes and Effects throughout the World* (New York: the Medical Publishing Co) 60

in the presence of the crowd. She next advanced to the water-side, plunged into the waves, and offered sacrifice to Neptune [Poseidon]. Returning like a seanymph, drying her hair from which the water dripped over her exquisite limbs, she paused for a moment before the crowd, which shouted in a phrensy of enthusiasm as the fair priestess vanished into a cell in the temple.'

Athenaeus, in the passage to which Hutton refers, simply states:[41]

'At the great assembly of the Eleusinis and at the festival of Poseidon, in full sight of the whole Greek world, she removed only her cloak and let down her long hair before stepping into the water; she was the model for Apelles when he painted his Aphrodite Rising from the Sea.'

If nudity ever had got Phryne into trouble (and I know of no evidence for this), it would certainly have got her out of it. On one occasion a certain Euthias prosecuted her on some charge.[42] This was the routine procedure of clients who wanted to avoid paying a courtesan's fee; no wonder Athenian courtesans invented worry beads.[43] Phryne was defended by one of her lovers, the great orator Hyperides, but in this case he did not need to exert his oratorical powers. He simply uncovered her incomparable breasts, and the jury (all men of course) acquitted her at once. According to Alciphron, this trial had the good effect that courtesans after this had their fees legally guaranteed.[44]

Since writing the above, I have found that Euthias's charge is known: fragments of his prosecution speech survive. It was nothing to do with nudity, but it was to do with religion. He accused Phryne of introducing a new god called Isodaites, and collecting a group of people to celebrate him with cult gatherings. The Athenians did not object to new gods as such: they paid Sophocles the honours of a hero after his death, not for having written great plays, but for having helped to introduce the worship of Asclepius. But unauthorised cult gatherings were regarded as subversive. Besides the crucial act of exposing her breasts, Hyperides impressed the jury with Phryne's *traditional* piety by representing her as a sacred servant of the well-established goddess Aphrodite.[45]

The eighth chapter is about druids, not the real ones we know of from Greek and Latin writers and the archaeology of Celtic religious sites, nor the 18th-century fantasies associating druids with megaliths, but the strange modern druid orders, of which Hutton provides the first comprehensive study. It is rather surprising to see a photograph of Churchill being inducted into a druid order in 1908 (Plate 8).

The ninth and last chapter is about the scientific and social problems Hutton encountered when making his great study of the history of modern paganism and witchcraft, and the various reactions after his book was published. Among the most astonishing reactions described is the announcement to Hutton by a semi-educated person (described as a 'distinguished historian') that modern witches sacrifice babies (275)! (Many 'distinguished historians' are indeed at best semi-educated, like the scholar described by A E Housman as " native of Magdeburg, a city famous for its geese'.) Tertullian was presumably directing his *Apology* to pagan readers who were at least semi-educated enough to be literate.[46] So we may suppose (from what Tertullian tells us) that if Hutton had lived in the late 2nd century AD, a semi-educated pagan (perhaps a 'distinguished rhetorician') would have announced to him that Christians sacrificed babies. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.*

Even in this long feature review, I could do no more than pick out the points that stimulated my comment. I could not begin to do justice to the wealth of information and enjoyable reading in this magnificent book. Apart from its special interest for Arthurians, I am sure it will reach the very wide public it deserves, and give a host of readers a great deal of pleasure and profit.

[41] Athanaeus, 13.590
[42] *Ibid*
[43] Russell, W M S (1991) 'A Funny Thing Happened ... Humour in Greek and Roman Life, Literature and Theatre' in Bennett, G (ed) *Spoken in Jest* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press) 83–115, especially 113
[44] Sanger (ref 40) 46
[45] Parker, R (1996) *Athenian Religion: a History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) 162-3, 184-5, 217; Athanaeus, 13.590
[46] Tertullian, *Apology* 7–9

the board

SMALL SCREEN

A revised repeat of a BBC2 ten-minute programme in the ***Ancient Voices*** series claimed on Monday 29th March to tell the historical truth behind the **Holy Grail**. Needless to say, it did nothing of the kind, and even managed to throw in a few new factually incorrect details.

Over on Channel 4, on the same day, a ***Secrets of the Dead*** programme (produced by Alex Hearle) posed the old question *Shroud of Christ?* While working on the "secret" restoration of the Turin Shroud in 2002, textile expert Mechthild Flury-Lemburg spotted a stitch pattern that re-allocates the dating of the cloth back to the beginning of the Common Era. This throws fresh doubt on the 1988 carbon dating that appeared to assign the shroud to the medieval period.

With climbing, abseiling and diving on the agenda, Channel 4's ***Extreme Archaeology*** looks and sounds more like Indiana Jones than Mick Aston, but Mark Davies, Katie Hirst, Alice Roberts, Meg Walters and others are serious about achieving results. On 'The Tintagel Connection' (July 18 2004) they examined three areas identified by Professor Charles Thomas as deserving investigation into their possible Dark Age provenance (for details, see this issue's Old News).

Only a stone's throw (it seems) from the Eiffel Tower is the Musée Rodin, housing many examples of that great sculptor's output, including The Thinker, The Gates of Hell and The Kiss. ***The Private Life of a Masterpiece: The Kiss*** (BBC2 19th January 2004; producer Bob Bentley) focused on this last iconic work in its various versions, especially that exhibited in Tate Modern in London, exploring its history, quirks and particularly its emotional power.

Why mention a century-old French masterpiece in *Pendragon*, though? The answer comes from a little-noticed detail in the sculpture. At its base can be seen a book which has been discarded by the lovers. This detail betrays the work's origins in a component in Rodin's Gates of Hell. This piece was inspired by Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 5, where **Francesca da Rimini** and her lover **Paolo Malatesta** succumb to adulterous passion and embrace. Paolo's cuckolded brother immediately murders them both, which is how they make their way to Hell at the moment of their act of betrayal.

What has motivated their short-lived love? The answer lies in the previously mentioned book. This tells of the immoral relationship between **Lancelot** and **Guinevere**, of which the Arthurian characters eventually repent. Paolo and Francesca's sin lay as much in their not reading the moral contained in the romance as in the kiss itself, for which they pay the ultimate price. It is this surprising link of *The Kiss* with Arthurian legend that I was hitherto unaware of, and I mention this for the possible edification of other innocents like me.

The History Channel International has been airing new Arthurian programmes, according to American group The Fellowship of the Arthurian Mysteries. ***History's Mysteries: The Knights of Camelot*** claimed to "unravel the Arthurian legend" and to explain "why the yearning for Camelot and chivalry survives (9th April). April 13th saw ***Ireland, Great Britain, Brittany: Journeys of the Celtic Legends*** (in the History Traveler series), describing Brittany as "a land of adventure" in which "one cannot escape the legend of King Arthur, Merlin, the Magical Forest, or the Whispering Ponds." (The Whispering Ponds?) "Believer or doubter, we'll transport the traveler to a land of magic and secret rituals." Finally, ***Investigating History: The Holy Grail*** pursued the Holy Grail bloodline hypothesis, declaring that "history or legend is about to change" as a result of permission being granted to dig in Rennes-le-Château (19th April).

BBC2's ***Mastermind*** programme on July 26 included a contestant answering questions on **the legends of King Arthur**, though these seemed to be based exclusively on Malory. She scored only 8 points in this, her specialist round.

Channel 4 repeated their **Time Team** special on ***The Real King Arthur*** on August 1st, to coincide with the UK release of the Disney *King Arthur* film. Working backwards from Tennyson, through Malory, the French romances, Geoffrey of Monmouth and the early Welsh material, Tony Robinson and the team interviewed academics Ray Barron, Richard Barber, Miranda Green, Chris Morris and others, and visited Tintagel, Glastonbury, Cadbury, Winchester, Llyn Cerrig Bach and Lodge Hill hillfort near Caerleon in a workmanlike if predictable programme. Rather more dubiously, they followed Geoffrey Wainwright's suggestion and manufactured a Bronze Age sword in a mould to explain the origin of the sword-in-the-stone motif – a muddling of myth and history to produce mythstory, perhaps.

Finally, 'Touched', one of the final ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer*** episodes (the second from last in fact, notes Steve Sneyd), has Buffy confronting evil preacher Caleb: "she ends up, as she later puts it, **King Arthuring** a great shiny axe from a stone".

• http://sodalicium.org (The Fellowship of the Arthurian Mysteries)

• "Shut your hellmouth: John Connors on the last eight episodes ever of *Buffy*" *This Way Up #7*

BIG SCREEN

And now: some follow-ups to recent items about Arthurian films in *The Board*. Firstly, if, like Ian Brown, you watched this year's BAFTA film awards, you will be well aware that **John Boorman**, the director of ***Excalibur*** (among many other distinguished films) was presented with a Fellowship of the Academy. A magical charm from the film is being widely circulated, though which Celtic language it originates from – possibly Old Irish – is anyone's guess. Merlin, then Morgan Le Fay, uses it as a powerful spell:

Anál nathrach	Breath of dragon
Orth 'bháis bethad	charm of death and life
Do chél dénmha	thy omen of making

Secondly, the Jerry Bruckheimer film ***King Arthur*** was brought forward from December to July 2004. "The last scene to be shot," reported John Matthews (who advised on the film), "involved the burning down of the house occupied by the young Arthur and his mother. It was dramatic to begin with, and became more so as the set almost all went up in flames!" Some American reviews seemed to shoot the film down in flames; for Pendragon reactions and an article, see next issue.

A poll of 7000 film fans named the 1975 film **Monty Python and the Holy Grail** as the best British picture of all time, with a quarter of the votes. Announced on February 12 to coincide with the BAFTA film awards, the poll was conducted by Amazon UK and the Internet Movie Database. Meanwhile, plans for the Broadway musical based on the film proceed apace. On July 8 it was announced that Tim Curry, *Frasier* actor David Hyde Pierce and *Simpsons* voice Hank Azaria will star as Arthur, Sir Robin and Sir Lancelot respectively. **Spamalot** will open in Chicago in December 2004 and preview on Broadway in February 2005.

The *Animate The World* animation festival at the Barbican in London (April 2–4) included a feature-length cartoon of ***Tristan and Isolde*** – one of a series of family-friendly movies – but further details of this film have proved difficult to obtain.

A feature on Ed Harris declared he is *a great actor*, whose performances are "compact and densely wrought" and with the capacity to "make you understand things merely by suggesting their potential to be expressed". He first came to attention as the Arthur figure in George Romero's ***Knightriders***, a 1981 reworking of the Round Table story featuring bikers.

• Britomartis "The Charm of Making" *Raven Newsletter* Eostre 2004

• *Hallowquest Newsletter 55*, December 2003

• "Animate The World" *The Guardian Guide* March 27 2004

• John Patterson preview in *The Guardian Guide* May 8-14 2004

BROADCAST

BBC Radio 3's ***Morning on 3*** programme recently ran a mini **Arthurian season**, as both Alastair McBeath and Steve Sneyd have kindly pointed out. From Monday February 16th to Friday 20th presenter Penny Gore introduced a variety of Arthurian-themed musical items, the whole held together by the featuring of an act a day of Purcell's *King Arthur or the British Worthy*, performed by Les Arts Florissants.

☐ Monday featured Ron Goodwin's *Theme from Lancelot and Guinevere* and Arthur Sullivan's *Incidental Music to King Arthur*.

☐ On Tuesday listeners heard Edward Elgar's *Incidental Music to King Arthur* and Joseph-Guy Ropartz's *La Chasse du Prince Arthur*.

☐ Wednesday opened with Billy Mayerl's *Piano Impressions from The Legends of Arthur* and Arnold Bax's *Tintagel*, followed a little later by MacDowell's *Lancelot and Elaine*.

☐ Ernest Chausson's *Viviane*, Benjamin Britten's *Incidental Music to King Arthur* and Richard Addinsell's *The Isle of Apples* were in Thursday's line-up.

☐ Albeniz's *Merlin Prelude* was the only Arthurian offering on Friday other than the final act to Purcell's *King Arthur*.

Arthurian author **Bernard Cornwell**'s choice of book on ***Desert Island Discs*** on St George's Day (BBC R4) was John Cowper Powys' mammoth *A Glastonbury Romance*, reports Steve Sneyd.

• This particular *Morning on 3* playlist was on at http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/playlists/2004janmar/mon30407.shtml (accessed 25/03/2004)

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Wagner's Valkyries at **Glastonbury Festival** (or *Glasto* as I suppose we must now refer to it) for some resurrected memories of **Rutland Boughton** and his association with the original Glasto of the early 20th century. His communist beliefs, womanising and cantankerousness were as celebrated as his Celtic opera *The Immortal Hour* (according to *Grove's Musical Dictionary* and Michael Hurd's 1992 *Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals*) but sadly "various phases of his Arthurian cycle ... have not been performed at all". Next year, Glasto?

Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (see *Reviews*) is raising attendance levels at key sites in the novel, particularly the Louvre in Paris and **Rosslyn Chapel** in Midlothian (the latter with a 56% increase on 2003). Despite the fact that it is a work of fiction about the search for the **Holy Grail**, the novel has reportedly caused panic amongst conservative Christians in the US.

Former BBC Director-General **John Birt** discussed his former teachers at St Mary's College, Liverpool, run by the order of Irish Christian Brothers. (Speaking from personal experience, they were not always Irish, very Christian or even related to each other, but we'll let that pass.) A certain brother, who taught Latin, had "a sadistic sense of humour. He would drag a boy to the front of the class and lift his black leather strap – which he called **Excalibur** – high, drooping it over his shoulder, then whipping it down ferociously on the culprit's hand ... It was education within a climate of fear." Excalibur, one suspects, was a popular name for straps – I had a close acquaintance with one such.

A 37-year-old druid called Fred is also a knight of the **Loyal Arthurian War Band**. He made his way into the news by occupying a 30-ft oak due to be felled at the site of the new **Wembley Stadium**. Supported by warrior princess Modric, he declared on the eve of St Valentine's Day that he was "prepared to stay up here as long as it takes". Or until the landowners' injunction took effect.

Whether or not Presidential hopeful **John Forbes Kerry** really is "the new JFK", the US rumour-mongering machine certainly

portrays him as a Democrat in the traditional mould. One political analyst suggests that usually *intern shenanigans* and *military service* are "the two **Arthurian tests** of American politics – misdemeanour in either area is always credited with the power to bring a candidate down". However, these litmus tests are increasingly proving less reliable; even political rhetoric (used "non-pejoratively to mean words strung together to form thoughts") may play "an ever-dwindling role in the overall process".

A review of Channel 4's ***Prince Charles: the Bachelor Years*** repeated the story told of the young heir to the throne by his former polo chum Luis Basueldo. This was that Charles' girlfriends were encouraged to call him not Sir but **Arthur** "in moments of intimacy" (Arthur of course being his third forename). This story first surfaced in Channel 5's *Charles and Camilla* in 2001, and we reported it in *XXIX* No 3.

According to a *Guardian* review ("Dead reckoning" by Colin Burrow, July 10 2004) the records of writer **Christopher Marlowe**'s life "don't help much in pinning [him] down... His name appears in many forms (Marlin, Merling, Marley, even the magical sobriquet **Merlin**) in a collection of documents that are exceptionally hard to interpret."

The 2004 Chelsea Flower Show featured as one of its show gardens **The 4head Garden: from Merlin to Medicine**, created by Marney Hall. According to the Royal Horticultural Society's website this design was "inspired by the legends of King Arthur and Merlin" while also being contemporary, and celebrated "the timeless, mystical and medicinal properties of plants."

The garden was dominated by a waterfall which emptied into a pool, partly concealing the entrance to a cave. Behind it a path meandered through meadows and terraces, leading to **Merlin's Tower** surrounded by "a colourful riot" of medicinal herbs. Sculptures included carved sentinels and a fence of swords encircling the tower.

Despite the name, **Avalon Fruit Farms** have nothing to do with Glastonbury or even Somerset, though they do trade on the association with apples. Operating from Toddington, near Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, they press fresh fruit (particularly apples) to make blended and single-variety soft drinks with no additives. Using fruit from unsprayed or organic orchards in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, the fruit farms select apple varieties such as George Cave, Bramley Seedling, Blenheim Orange, Worcester Pearmain, Ashmeads Kernel and Laxtons Fortune from orchards of all ages.

Also nothing to do with Glastonbury (but maybe Glasto?), on the other side of the pond, in Boston, Massachusetts, is the **Avalon Ballroom**, described as "a skuzzy punk dive" by DJ Phil Jupitus.

- Boughton notes from Smallweed column *The Guardian* July 3 and July 10 2004
- Kirsty Scott "Search for holy grail enters new chapter" *The Guardian* July 3 2004
- John Birt "My best teacher" *Times Educational Supplement* April 30 2004
- *Guardian Sport* February 14 2004
- Zoe Williams "Sex, death and votes" *The Guardian* February 17 2004
- Sam Wollaston "He's a royal knockout" *Guardian G2* May 11 2004
- www.rhs.org.uk/chelsea/2004/exhibitors/show_gardens/4head.asp (accessed 02.06.2004
- Phil Jupitus "I lost my heart in Boston" *Guardian Travel* March 20 2004

WIZARD NEWS

On February 25 2004 it was announced that a £110,000 donation to **Carmarthenshire County Museum** at Abergwili had only just come to light after nearly sixty years. George Arbour Stephens was a Swansea doctor who wanted to fund an annual lecture in Carmarthen on its connections with Arthurian legend and especially **Merlin**, but although he died in 1945 his bequest went unnoticed. £40,000 will be put aside to generate income for the annual lecture and the remainder will help fund projects at the museum.

Following a successful one-day Merlin event in 2003, in early June Carmarthen began a week-long **Merlin, Magic and Mystery Festival** which it hoped would rival Brecon Jazz and the Hay-on-Wye book festival. Attractions included magic shows – naturally (or should that be supernaturally?) – street entertainment, historical re-enactments, a 'culture village' (?) and shows.

Merlin's traditional connection with astronomy has been utilised to provide a name for the proposed updating of an array of six English radio telescopes. Merlin stands

for Multi-Element Radio-Linked Interfometer Network, a project that since 1980 has provided detailed celestial images by linking up through microwaves Jodrell Bank in Cheshire and Merlin telescopes elsewhere in England. Welcome now to **e-Merlin**, which by 2007 will instead be employing optical fibres to use 100% rather than just the present 0.5% of the signal data collected by each telescope.

Arthur's wizard is also associated with another kind of Milky Way. In Milton Keynes – famous for its concrete cows – farmer Rachel Paton has installed a robotic milker at Hill Farm which responds to each cow individually through a transponder in a leg tag. When a cow presents for milking, the robot, called **Merlin**, assesses on the basis of information received on yields and timing whether the milking should go ahead. Since Merlin's introduction each cow has – it was reported on April 4 – been producing up to four more litres a day. And that's magic!

- *All items from BBC News, bbc.co.uk*

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Among the thirty guest ales featured at The Great Wetherspoon Beer Festival in May 2003 was **Hampshire Pendragon**, produced by the Hampshire Brewery in Romsey. At 4.8% strength, this brew was described as "a smooth-drinking, fruity, premium ale" and was praised for its balance of malt and Challenger, Goldings and Progress hops as evidenced in its aftertaste.

Better known as singer-songwriter Badly Drawn Boy, Darren Gough's latest album is entitled *One Plus One Equals One*. According to Alexis Petridis' review ("Plus points" *Guardian* June 18 2004) "What may be the single risk in rock music [is] the employment of a winsome northern children's choir as backing vocalists". On one track he apparently pulls it off; on **'Closer Holy Grail'** however "the result is a disaster of terrifying proportions" and "a pretty demoralising way to end an album".

A consortium of former T&S Stores executives and an Icelandic bank called themselves **Lancelot** and made a 40% bid for corner shop company Londis. Lancelot's bid seemed not to be serious enough to at least one commentator, however; the name was regarded as well chosen: "the bravest and best of the knights, according to the Arthurian legend, also created splits and schisms in the Round Table".

Cambrian Routes Ltd offer so-called trace-and-tour holidays in West Wales, working with a local genealogist to enable tourists to find their ancestral roots, as well as the more usual tours. Their contribution to Welsh tourism has earned them a **Merlin Award**, one of several presented for the first time this year, organised by Prime Cymru to support over-50s setting up in business.

On-line voting for ***100 Welsh Heroes*** revealed that **King Arthur** came only 93rd, and that only with 42 votes. This contrasted with polling for last year's *Great Britons* where Arthur achieved 50th position. Despite aspirations expressed on the website (such as "He needs reclaiming as Welsh"), the voting perhaps revealed that the Welsh are more hard-headed romantics than previously realised. A book is due to be published.

www.100welshheroes.com

How do **Arthurian keywords** rate, relatively and absolutely, in the popular consciousness of English-speakers? A quick survey, on June 8th, of ten words with Arthurian resonances on the Internet, using four different search engines (Yahoo!, Google, Alta Vista and BBC), came up with the following results, in reverse order: *Gawain, Guinevere, Arthurian, Pendragon, Lancelot, Grail, Excalibur, Camelot, Merlin* and – at the top – *Avalon*. Any surprises?

Only single words were used, not combinations like *holy+grail* or *King+Arthur*. Other single words, like *Morgan*, were omitted as common to many contexts, and site-specific names like *Tintagel* and *Glastonbury* were also avoided. *Camlann* and *Badon* were way below in terms of hits. As a comparison, on the same day mentions of football fest *Euro 2004* came behind *Merlin*, and the *transit of Venus* came in between *Arthurian* and *Guinevere*.

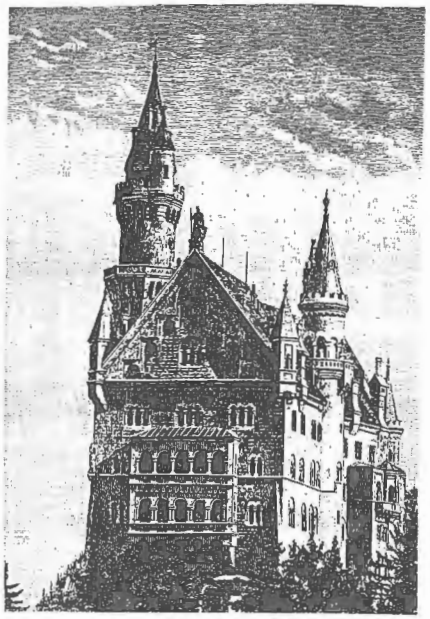
- "Knight's tale" *The Guardian* May 25 2004
- "Magical history tours get back to their routes" *Western Telegraph* June 9 2004

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

Exchange listings will re-appear next issue in a revised format: apologies for any inconvenience

Grail Castle or Grail Temple?

Alastair McBeath



There is no doubt that the Arthurian "Fisherman's Hut" is typically described as a castle in the surviving Grail tales. For instance, Chrétien de Troyes in his *Perceval* gave it a tower that "... was square, built of dark grey stone, and flanked by two smaller towers. The hall was in front of the keep and the galleries in front of the hall" (Owen 1993, 414), while Wolfram von Eschenbach set it with "Many towers, many a high wall stood there with marvellous battlements" (Lefevere 1991, 58), in Book 5 of his *Parzival*.

Chrétien's tale is the earliest featuring the grail, or *graal*, dating to *c* 1190. Wolfram's is a little later, part of the explosion in interest in grail stories from the 1190s to the 1230s, probably constructed in the first decade of the 13th century. Wood (2000) provided a valuable synopsis and extensive discussion of the extant grail stories.

Religious setting

However, no matter how fortified the Grail Castle was said to have been, some of the events within had all the trappings of a mysterious religious ceremony. The presentation of the wonderful, if dubious, sword to Perceval; the curious procession of the blooded lance, the candle-bearers, the magical grail and its beautiful female porter; Perceval's silence, embarrassed to admit his ignorance of the events passing before him; the bright, almost gaudy, sumptuousness of the furniture, utensils, food and drink. All these point to a temple-like place. Even Chrétien's word-choice to reinforce the magnificence of the tablecloth – "No legate, cardinal or pope ever dined off one so white" (Owen 1993, 417) – works to enhance an image of a religious setting.

Wolfram von Eschenbach carried the idea still further along this road. His castle was guarded by a grail-chosen warrior band called the "templars" (described in Book 9). While entirely separate from the historical crusading Templar knights, this is an interesting term to select. It is unclear if the twenty-five young maidens who were also picked by, and tended, the grail were called "templars" too, though all were expected to retreat from the world in general to serve the grail, and to remain chaste, much as their badge of many small turtledoves (in Book 15) would suggest. The medieval bestiaries described the turtledove as both solitary and, when widowed, perpetually chaste (*cf* T H White's translation of a 12th century bestiary: White 1992, 145-146). Only the "high priest" and "high priestess", the Grail King and Queen, might marry.

Wolfram's grail was a curious object too. Even in Chrétien de Troyes' exposition, it is far from obvious as to whether the grail was really meant as a Christian object or not. In Wolfram's universe, the grail's history was known only by a heathen astrologer of Israelite stock, Flegetanis (Book 9): "He said there was a thing called the grail, whose name he had read among the stars, without question as to what it was called. 'A host of angels left it on earth; they rose up high above the stars, because their innocence drew them back there. Since then baptized sons of men must guard it with the same flawless breeding. Men who are called forth to the grail are always honorable'" (Lefevere

1991, 121-122). In Wolfram's Book 15 is related how Parzival's piebald, heathen brother Feirefiz was unable to see the grail at all until he was baptised, for which purpose the baptismal font was filled with holy water by simply tilting it slightly towards the grail. This implies for the audience pre-Christian, or at least non-Christian, knowledge of the grail, plus sanctified circumstances to surround "the thing" and its activities.

Moreover, Wolfram's grail was no wondrous, golden, gem-set dish or chalice, suitable for holding an object, or for catching the blood of Christ in, but an almost entirely undescribed "pure" stone, if one which magically provided food and drink for those who served it. It also gave perpetual life and youth to those who saw it regularly. Wolfram reinforced this by allowing the stone's power to be responsible for the fiery renewal of the mythical phoenix as well, its death and more beautiful rebirth an ability adapted in the bestiaries to serve as a symbol of the Christian resurrection (White 1992, 125-128). The stone grail communicated at need with its servants by the appearance of a magical inscription on its outer edge (shades of Ogham?), which faded once read. There is little in this which derives directly from Christian beliefs, but it is all mystically-significant enough.

As for the stone's power source, that was a small white wafer, brought to it each Good Friday by a pure white dove, which descended from heaven, and then returned to it. This "holy battery" lasted the year until the next Good Friday. The dove was the closest to a Christian bird in the bestiaries, and was commonly likened there to the best preachers (*op cit* 144-145).

Fallen from heaven

This grail-stone was also called *lapsit exilis* in Book 9, a phrase which is nonsense as it stands, and which has exercised many minds over the years. Wood (2000, 179) called it *lapsis exilis*, and suggested this might be "a deliberate distortion of the Latin term *lapsis ex caelis* (that which fell from heaven)". This explanation, right or wrong, does fit with the idea that the stone was left on earth by angels, as Flegetanis was reported as saying.

Objects said to have fallen from heaven, some of which had magically protective powers attributed to them, had been long venerated in ancient Greco-Roman beliefs, tales which Wolfram could no doubt have heard, and incorporated into his grail story. Not all of these were stones.

Perhaps the most famous was the Palladium of Troy, the small wooden image of Pallas Athene which fell from heaven when the eponymous Ilus was about to build his new city of Ilium or Troy. He kept this image in a special temple in the citadel, and Troy was said to be secure from capture so long as the image was in the city. Troy fell after Odysseus and Diomedes stole the Palladium, and it later ended up in Rome, brought there by Aeneas, and kept in the temple of Vesta, where it was regarded as a similar guarantor of security. Apollodorus' "Library", Book III, XII.3, *eg* (Frazer 1921, 36-43), and Ovid's "Fasti", VI.417-436, *eg* (Frazer 1931, 350-353) cover all of this.

One ancient sacred stone said to have fallen from the sky, was called the Idaean Mother (named after Mount Ida, near the site of Troy), the Great Mother, or Cybele. It was brought from Pessinus in Phrygia (modern north-west Asian Turkey) to Rome in 204 BC, during the war with Hannibal. At Rome it was maintained in the temple of Victory until 191 BC, then in the newly-dedicated temple of the Great Mother. This was because a Sibylline oracle was found indicating the Italians should defeat any foreign invader, and drive them from Italy, as long as the Idaean Mother was kept at Rome. It certainly worked against Hannibal, as his forces were driven out of Italy in 203 BC. See Appian's "Roman History", Book VII.IX.56 (White 1912, 390-393) and Livy's "Annals", Book XXIX: x.4-8 and xiv.2-14 (Moore 1949, 244-249 and 256-263).

Although neither the wooden Palladium nor the Great Mother stone had specific powers of sustenance associated with them, the ancient Greek and Roman temples, like the medieval Church, survived and flourished because of donations from the populace and state. As these donations were for the support of the idol and the building around it, in a real sense, the temple and its staff were indirectly sustained because of the magico-religious nature of the idol within.

Ambiguity

These two examples may give some clues as to where Wolfram derived part of his concept of the grail from. That such venerated objects, gifts from the gods, or perhaps the deities themselves, fallen from heaven, were preserved in temples seems reflected in *Parzival*, although naturally, there are many other elements at work in the story besides this.

In examining Chretien's and Wolfram's grail works, the earliest surviving one and maybe the most original of the non-Arimathean early-flowering grail tales, respectively, it seems we get a glimpse too of the uncertainty or ambiguity about whether the magical grail should be a mysterious, wild, non-Christian object, or a tamer Christian one. Such ambiguity strengthens the mystery of the grail, as well as hinting at a more ancient origin, giving additional power to it, very much in the storytelling tradition. Miraculous powers would fit neatly into the Christian religious background of course; magical powers, which might be manipulated by human actions, would not. Whatever the case, it might give some fresh insight to think of the grail castle as being also, at least in certain respects, the grail's temple.

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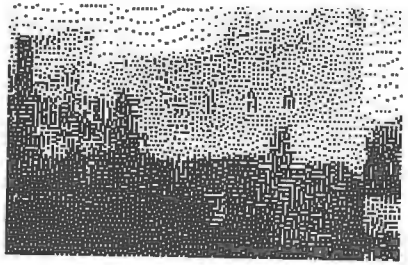
A Scottish Grail Castle?

Eileen Buchanan



Colonel Alex McAdam has spent over sixty years on his Arthurian studies and told me this: the Holy Grail is thought to be the wooden cup rimmed in silver and mounted on a silver stem known as the Bute Mazer.

The Bute Mazer was commissioned by King Robert I (The Bruce) to commemorate his victory at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 CE. Inside the cup at the base of the bowl is a sculpted silver lion supposedly denoting the Lion of Judah, and there is a carving of the coats of arms of the six followers who supported Bruce: Sir John Menteith, John Fitzgilbert, Susanna Crawford, Sir Walter Fitzgilbert, Walter the Steward and Sir James Douglas (The Grail Families perhaps?). The silvered areas are said to bind the worn parts of the wooden cup.[1]

The Mazer is now in The Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, having been found in Rothesay Castle, Bute, which Alex calls The Grail Castle. Rothesay Castle is circular, and it's from this site that HRH Prince Charles takes his title, Duke of Rothesay; when in Scotland he insists on being referred to by this title.

Robert the Bruce was associated with the Knights Templar who had owned extensive lands in Scotland since David I's reign, and was believed to have given refuge to the Order as he was excommunicate at the time of its dispersal.

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[1] These websites show different aspects of the Bute Mazer:
www.nms.ac.uk/galleries/kingdom/kingdom4.htm and
www.stewartsociety.org/objects.htm

The Grail Castle within

Pamela Harvey

How to capture a castle? And why? These are questions warriors through the ages asked. When viewing the awesome ramparts of a fortress, many of which were Roman, built to guard the precious treasure of ambition, the Empire, marauding Saxons or Vikings may have hesitated at first. If they were experienced, they could undermine all the weaknesses, with sufficient numbers overcome the opposition and capture the castle, climbing the walls and smashing the inner doors. The quest for the Grail, epitomised by Perceval, is different in many ways from the belligerence of these Northern invaders.

The Grail Castle, by definition, might not have been merely the property of another nation or tribe. We cannot be certain what it originally was, or how its image evolved. Certainly it originally would have been Pagan, but gained Christian connotations in medieval times or perhaps earlier. The quest of Perceval for the sacred Cup emphasised the sacred focus, and further enhanced its image of the unattainable place housing the eternally inviolate object. Perhaps in the remote past the castle had been a fortress like Maiden Castle in Dorset, the biggest hillfort in Britain, which the Romans laid siege to and overcame. Perhaps the Grail itself was at first the treasure of a rival *Ricon*, or tribal king, sacred to both subjects and enemies, because the High Kings were the descendants of the Gods and the Earth Mother. This Celtic tradition is especially epitomised in the stories of the Irish Tuatha de Danaan, the divine children of Danu, Goddess of the Land.

Force

The Romans were good soldiers and strategists, but the sustaining of their conquests was not entirely due to suppression of vulnerable peoples. They were aware of how fair play and learned counsel and respect for others could simmer down the heat of rebellion more than the impact of armies. Many of them preferred to defend rather than be the aggressor. History, and Hollywood, has dwelt on their misdeeds far more than on their virtues. Which is not to say that 'might is right'. The aspirations of the soul, or the deepest intuitive part of all our personalities, are the surest way to a

better world, not the assumption that if we are strong enough to take it, why not?

As John Milton put it in *Paradise Lost*, 'Who overcomes by force hath overcome but half his foe'. These words he gave to Satan in the context of the poem, and later said: 'Oh, shame to men, Devil with Devil damned firm concord holds. Men only disagree of creatures rational, though under hope of Heavenly Grace; and God proclaiming Peace, yet live in hatred, enmity and strife among themselves, and levy cruel wars, wasting the Earth, each other to destroy.'

Seeking the Ideal

Remorse for the lack of moral virtue of humankind, reaching beyond belligerence and into more personal aspects of everyday living, convinced early Christian Man that the declining vision of the Ideal should be seriously sought, within and without, in Pilgrimage and in thought and prayer. This was not new, of course; awareness of our faults has been with us since the dawn of Time. But Christianity laid stress upon 'sin', which has been translated as 'lack', and is now often thought to refer to sexual morality, or the lack of that, more than anything else! This attitude came from the 19th century, mainly, fostered in Victorian times to offset the lax mores of the past, especially among the idle rich!

The idea of the Grail Castle does not appeal strongly to the 'fat cat' materialists of *our* age, with their pots of money and lack of sympathy with the poor, sick and underprivileged. They will not storm its ramparts, or they might get the goldfish bowl of the anger of the masses emptied over their heads. While thus wet, or even worse, they would have to contemplate the state of the world and how they were adding to it, taking from its resources while giving nothing back.

We are all, however, imperfect, and the unattainable is indeed our perfection as beings, or so it seems. Most of us don't aim that high, though. But we do like to feel that the object of supreme desire exists in some form. Many of us, however vaguely, would like to identify with the Quest of Perceval. Whether or not our sins, whether great or small, can be overcome by God and forgiven is the subject matter of religion. (I am not trying to discuss religion here. The unattainable can be the stars themselves, or the planets, or our life's ambition, which, if not selfish, may have a useful part to play in our world.)

It is difficult to think of the Grail Castle without introspection, which leads some cynics to see in this attitude the shades of a Viennese consulting room. Psychoanalysis seeks answers, though, in the deeper levels of human feelings and thoughts. If of doubtful value unless presented by very skilled people, it does seek to uncover the aspirations, the failures and the hurt in these failures which we have all experienced. We all can understand Perceval, if perhaps we do not all share his determination.

Meaning

Ultimate goodness is a difficult concept to appreciate, in any sense. It is easier to prefer to some degree the earthiness of 'humanity', though it is noticeable that the Gods of Pagan times were often as 'naughty' or even as disagreeable as humans! But these days we are not adept at interpreting myth, or discerning deeper meanings in apparently trivial or unexpected behaviour in these old stories. Arthur finds Guinevere unfaithful, Tristan and Iseult experience a forbidden love, Arthur himself seeks his sister, Merlin is seduced by Vivian, and the Round Table collapses. Or does it? It is round, circular, the symbol of eternity. It has no beginning and no end. But it does need the support of those with compassion for the mistakes of others, awareness of their own weaknesses, and loyalty to friends. What else is new? And by what standards of morality does this 21st century judge us all? Mostly it prefers not to. Perhaps this is progress – if selfishness is not the prime mover, where sympathy, understanding and compassion are the losers.

So much for the analysis of our collective psyche! If we ever give up the 'impossible dream' or feel ourselves totally insignificant in this realm of six billion people, we will lose sight of the alluring focus of meaning in life. Which leads us onward in our Earthly journey, encouraging us in our evolution, reaching like the Sun to warm our inmost being. We are not just the ignorant, huddled masses. We inherit the stars; if we look for the sunlight of wisdom we are part way there.

The Dog-god's temple in the sky

Steve Sneyd

Walking between low stone walls, massive in their grey heaviness, on this high plateau, I have curious company – pheasants wander about everywhere, undisturbed by my presence, though deer among huge old trees further up move swiftly away.

The place is a long, wide, steep-sided promontory hill. Looking back across the narrow valley from which I have climbed, another hill faces me, topped by mounds among trees; beyond is a glimpse of silver of a wide silver river. Other hills appear more distantly, half hidden in mist and low rain cloud.

Here, where the level ground is grassy, there is much scattered worked stone, lost, doubtless, from those surviving ordered remains of great structures. Much of the hilltop, though, is overgrown with deep bracken, particularly towards the sides and towards where the promontory rises to a higher narrow neck. There, a huge tree grows beside the wide gap in a massive, again bracken-grown, earthen bank. That had seemed far higher from within than looking back from the higher ground without; beyond, facing the dense woods uphill, the dip of a ditch, another lower, damaged-looking, bank, another dip of ditch.

Back towards the remnant structures, a ditch runs from a hollow to a great maze-like cluster of foundations lying beside the steep drop westward off this height. Cutting across the site south-easterly from there, past a thickly overgrown low mound, a gap right at the very corner of the hill lets me look down the face of a strong wall of mortared stone still several feet high to either side, onto a curve of the path that led me up here. Then the rain starts again, more heavily – it's time to descend out of this lost past.

This place has had many names. Today, it is Camp Hill. The superstitious of earlier generations saw in its remote ruins, its mysterious tunnels, the homes of strange and supernatural beings; to them it was Dwarf's Hill, or the Devil's Chapel.

Far earlier still, it was the fortified temple of a forgotten god who, among his many attributes, was a god of hunting, making it oddly appropriate that, today, the land's owner, Viscount Bledisloe, should use the ruins as a place where his pheasants, raised for the shoot, are fed, a fixed point to lure them back should they stray deeper into the

wildwood of the widespread Forest of Dean, at the edge of which we are.

Where we are is in the Lydney Park Estate, a little south-west of the small Gloucestershire town of Lydney, near the Severn's north bank, a river, in Late Roman times so much wider than today that it came almost to this hill's foot.

The low remaining walls and foundations are those of the temple itself, and its great baths, fed by tank and trough now visible as that small dip and ditch. The gap at the corner is where, once, pilgrims would have entered through an ornamented gate in a wall both impressive and able to deter unfriendly approaches, as would the ramparts at the hill's throat. The guesthouse, excavated with the rest of the site by Sir Mortimer Wheeler in the 1930s, was, unlike the rest of the structures found, covered with earth again – that low overgrown mound.

That excavation uncovered not only a great temple-cum-healing centre, but also a fortress used for many decades after Rome left. Could it also have found the template for something of great significance for later Arthurian story? Could this have been the original of the Grail Castle?

Castle

To take the second part first, could a medieval writer have seen the place as adequately castle-like? More specifically, do its setting and shape fit in with how the various writers described the Castle of the Grail?

The excavation showed that the masonry wall surrounding the temple complex, still partly visible, particularly along the hill edge, and the double earthwork bank cutting off the neck of the promontory, then extending southward along the eastern edge of the hill to meet the north-east corner of the masonry wall, were both late or post-Roman, although the dig also revealed that the inner, higher, earthwork bank incorporated an Iron Age rampart of around 100 BC. Although not precisely dated, the temple complex's defence wall clearly postdates what it surrounds: an original outer verandah of the large guest house had been in the way of the intended wall line and so had had to be demolished when it was built. On three sides this wall was formidably assisted by the steep drop of the hill, as was the rampart along the hill's east side running north from it.[1] The Iron Age rampart had been only 1.5 metres high and 6 metres wide; it was doubled in size during the reconstruction, and, further reinforced by a lower outer bank and second ditch, created overall a formidable 35m-wide defence system.

The combination of the natural defences of the 1.8-hectare site and its fortifications would have created a hard nut to crack in Dark Age times, when siegecraft techniques were at a low point. The main potential weakness, that the summit of Camp Hill slightly overlooks the plateau, is countered by the size and height of the ramparts and the ditches. As to whether it could convey the impression of a castle to a medieval writer, the stone surrounding wall rising steeply above the slopes would have been given added visual impact, already dramatically dominating the valley, further enhanced by surviving walls of the various temple complex structures rising within. In particular, the main temple had had a central *cella*, a tower- like structure which, if substantial ruins then survived, could well have appeared to the observer as like a castle keep.

Oddly, if it remained standing into the twelfth century, it would have faced an actual newly-built castle keep across the intervening valley. For such was the unexpected discovery made during the 1929/30 excavation of the defensive works on the twin heights just to the east, Little Camp Hill, which had until then been thought to be the ramparts of an Iron Age or Roman outpost of the main complex. Instead, beneath soil and rubble accumulations, lay the foundations of stone walls, those of the keep and defended courtyard of a previously unknown, and historically unrecorded, late Norman castle, its oven, lined with recycled Roman hypocaust bricks and tesserae, having been found previously in 1831 but mistaken for a mosaic. However, the suspected Roman signal station-cum-watch

[1] The only apparent gap in the defences, on the west side of the hill between the wall's north-west corner and the promontory neck rampart, was presumably felt to be sufficiently protected naturally by the steepness of the drop there.

tower lying deeper still remains to be confirmed by a further dig.

Descriptions

Comparing descriptions of the Grail castle by various of the early writers brings home how much, despite considerable variations of detail, associations with a high place and with water tend to be common features; both clearly also would have fitted Camp Hill when the Severn all but lapped its base.

In the *Perlesvaus*, for example, the Grail castle is on a mount, and reached by bridges over surrounding swift water. (It also has the unique feature of a gateway like a rood screen, which could be a very garbled description of the sort of elaborate formal entrance a temple like Lydney's would have possessed). In *Peredur* (which, unusually, conflates Grail castle and Castle of Wonders) it is reached over a mountain – the higher ground of Camp Hill's summit? – but is in the middle of a lake: a confused view of the wide Severn, perhaps. Certainly *Peredur* translator Meirion Pennard, in his Introduction, interprets the description as meaning sea-girt (although from that concluding that in fact Glastonbury is meant).[2] The *Sone de Naunsay*'s Grail castle, Galosche, is also on an island; Robert de Boron's description has it near a beautiful river, with the tip of a tower peeping between two peaks at the edge of a forest. Albrecht von Scarfenbury in *The Younger Titurel* sets his Grail castle, Muntsalvasche, on a mountain in a forest, adding that the top of the mountain had been levelled to construct it (the area where Lydney temple stands is thought to have been been levelled when it was constructed). Wolfram's Munsalvaesche had walls smooth as if lathed (the mortared Lydney temple precinct wall must once have been as smooth as this) with numerous towers and palaces (the various great buildings of the temple complex?) was moated (the ramparts at Lydney have defensive ditches) and is clearly on a height, since the help of wind or wings would be needed for a successful attack. Again, too, sharing the factors of water and high ground, both *Conte del Graal* and *Queste* position the Grail castle on a mountainous promontory beside the sea.

As well as the Grail castle itself, incidentally, two other fortresses in Arthurian story can be associated with the Severn, and possibly with the Lydney site. The Castle of Maidens (also known as Severn Castle) is one. Encountered by Grail questers in Malory and elsewhere, it had deep ditches and two gates (as said, the Lydney defensive complex also had two), and was located somewhere near Gloucester (a Lydney link would also permit a tentative explanation for the Maidens: that the healing activities, to be discussed later, continued into the dark Ages, with females becoming predominant in the role). The other, Rosche Sab(b)ins (Rock of Severn?), in Wolfram, has a river on two sides, moats, and many lofty towers.

Corbenic

Along with such descriptions, it is also worth considering one of the names used for the Grail Castle, namely Corbenic. Various interpretations of this name have been suggested, including castle of the ravens and castle of the blessed horn, heart or body *etc*. However, if it be taken as stemming from a garbling of Caer Bannauc, meaning the horned castle (*bannaug* in Modern Welsh, as a synonym for *corniog*), the name could be explained if the fortress associated with the Grail story had in some way a horned appearance. Two Dark Age fortresses, Deganwy and Dumbarton, each resemble a pair of vertical horns, in both cases their defences ascending a pair of spiked hills – but both were royal fortresses, lacking traditions associating them with the mysterious or the holy.

However, it does not require a vast feat of the imagination to apply the description Horned Castle to the twin hills of the Lydney site: seen from what would then have been the river, *ie* below the "mouth" of the valley between them, the two promontories looming over the wider Severn of the time, could have appeared like the horns of a bull, charging, head down, towards you. This may

[2] Somewhat illogically, it seems to me, since the action of the story all appears to take place in an area between Arthur's court at Caerleon and the witches' base at Caer Loyw (Gloucester). Lydney is within this area, whereas reaching Glastonbury would have involved Peredur in a boat journey he does not take.

seem overfanciful, but is, I suggest, fully in keeping with the Celtic taste for animal metaphor. The bull, moreover, the likeliest beast to associate with horns, was not only important as a Celtic symbol, but equally meant potent strength, physical, sexual, political, and in terms of wealth, in terms of the cult of Mithras, which had adherents throughout the Roman Empire, including many in Britain. That the Lydney hill had bull associations, indeed, appears indicated by the discovery there of an iron bowl, thought to be of around 100 BCE,[3] designed to stand upon three feet – each foot being a beautifully shaped bull's head. This magnificently mysterious object, perhaps, remotely ancestored Grail envisionings.

Healing

Earliest occupation of Camp Hill, predating the hillfort by two hundred years, was marked by huts associated with the start of iron mining here around 300 BCE. The Romans, having soon after their arrival possibly erected an auxiliary fort on Camp Hill, considerably expanded such mining, the Forest of Dean becoming one of their two main British centres for it and for manufactures in this metal. Here, in sheds of around 270 AD, were made nails, tools, and weapons (an association reminiscent of the frequent Arthurian story trope of the healing – *ie* reforging – of broken swords) from mines just north-east of the later temple, also further uphill and on the next hill.

The first association of the hill with healing was probably also due to the presence of iron; its iron-rich springs would cure such results of iron deficiency as fatigue and general debility caused by anaemia, and would also help with diarrhoea and bleeding, skin sores and ulcers.

Finds indicative of growing prosperity on the site increase during the latter part of the third century; perhaps services were already being profitably provided to those attracted by word of the site's healing benefits. Around 350, the great temple complex was begun, its precinct occupying the southern half of the summit. Here is evidence of a pagan resurgence, at least in this part of Britain, twenty years after Constantine the Great had made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. However, the motive may have been as much commercial as religious: on a site already having sacred and healing associations, the new establishment could expect to attract the offerings of worshippers and cure-seekers from afar, arriving by land or water. (A Roman slipway was found, buried under twelve feet of silt, just south of the two hills.)

Later constructional activities, particularly the defensive improvement mentioned earlier, cannot be precisely dated, but the site continued in use well past the Roman departure in 410, probably till late in the fifth century; there is no clear evidence of occupation continuing into the sixth. The circumstances of its abandonment are unknown; evidence of fire among the ruins and a large hoard of buried coins might indicate an attack. The finding of an altar thought to be from the Lydney temple, defaced with Christian graffiti, in a well at St Briavels, further west in the Forest, may indicate action taken at some unknown date to defuse any lingering non-Christian sacred associations of the site. In 1723, when the temple site was enclosed within a deer park (that hunting association again) the temple walls were still three feet high; clearly, in the first centuries after its abandonment, much more impressive remains would have continued to be visible.

As well as the temple itself, the basilica layout resembling those both of earlier middle-eastern mystery cults, and later Christian churches, the walled complex also included a central basin-cum-funnel (recorded but later destroyed during the 1805 excavation, probably used for libations to the underworld), the large guest house, and massive bath house, comparable in size to those of Rome itself, with cold, tepid, hot and sweat rooms (sauna), all fed by the large water tank nearby.

That the temple had a healing role is confirmed by numerous finds, among them oculist's salve jars, and ear scoop, such items as model limbs, a bone image of a woman pointing at her distended stomach, a figure with clawlike hands (possibly a symptom of iron deficiency) *etc*, to indicate where on the body treatment was needed (or

[3] Found in three pieces, perhaps having been ritually broken, though now mended by Museum of Wales experts.

had succeeded), and votive offerings such as numerous pins, common also in Mediterranean healing temples of the era. The many small statues of dogs – in stone, bronze, bone *etc* – found, may relate to worship of the temple's dedicatee, Nodens, in his role as hunting god, and as guides to the underworld, but may have have represented how the animals were given healing roles, both therapeutically, for patients to stroke to relieve stress, and by being encouraged to lick wounds and sores so that their saliva could hasten improvement.

Dreams

Another treatment technique considered likely to have been employed at Lydney, as it was popular throughout the classical world, was that of incubation; patients were given drugs which would induce sleep and, more particularly, dreams: a professional dream interpreter would then derive from them explanations for the illness and suggestions for its treatment. The long hill-edge suite of treatment rooms at the west side of the complex, within the *temenos* or religious precinct, is likely to have been used as such a ritual dormitory in which such supposedly divinely inspired dreams were sought, the type of structure known as an *abaton*.

Lingering memories of such a healing method having been used could explain aspects of the experiences in the Grail castle of Gawain and Perceval: for example, that questions needed to be asked as part of the healing process (the dream interpreter's role); that the visiting knight falls asleep during the feast (*eg* in *Conte del Graal*, *Diu Crone* and *Perlesvaus*) could reflect the giving of a drugged drink; and the curious processions and other phenomena seen could have echoes of the dreams induced. Indeed, the Grail itself could be the vessel which purveyed the medium, be it drink or food or both, which contained the vision-inducing drug.

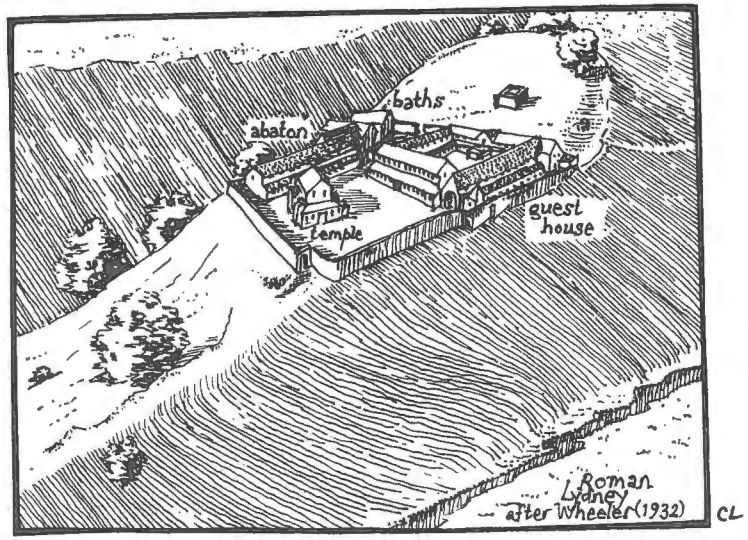
That the temple was consecrated to the Celtic god Nodens is known from the dedication of the main mosaic uncovered in the centre of the temple during the early 19th century excavation, and carefully recorded, along with a detailed drawing of the mosaic itself, at the time (the mosaic itself is now lost). Financed by the officer in charge of the nearby Roman fleet supply depot, Titus Flavius Senilis, and supervised by Victorinus, an interpreter on the governor's staff, it showed fish and other water creatures, including multi-tailed monsters, indicative of Nodens' role as a sea- and river-god. He appears, as with other Celtic divinities, to have had a variety of other roles – as said, a hunting god, a sun god, a god of mining and underworld gateways generally, and, particularly relevant at Lydney, of healing.

Intriguingly, as well as giving health, he could be called on to withhold it – a lead curse left by Silvianus found on the site called for ill-health to be suffered by those named Senicianus till a stolen ring be returned. Such a role as punisher via illness could be seen as relevant to the Grail story element of the physically wasted king or kings, and the parallel wasting of the land. Insofar as such a role implies vengeance, it may also be relevant to note that, in *Peredur*, the Grail is borne to the feast carrying a severed head, as a cry that it be avenged is heard. It is also of interest that the name of this god was not forgotten in post-Roman times. The first half Nodens or Nudd (the Irish Nuada), the same variant which appears in one of the name lists in *The Mabinogion*'s Arthur-linked story of *Culhwch and Olwen*, namely Lludd, is there qualified as Silver Hand – memories of a healing hand, perhaps?

Mystery

Although the connection clearly cannot be proved, I feel enough has been said to indicate that the Lydney temple-cum-fortress deserves consideration as a plausible real world source for later writers' ideas of the Grail castle. A speculative Dark Age "history" for the location could involve the last high priest, after Roman authority ended, turning local chieftain, with the temple as his stronghold; the lingering, if gradually dwindling, healing skills and knowledge of the inhabitant could well have still continued to profit, in kind if no longer cash, from an ongoing clientele from nearby shrinking but still-surviving urban centres like Gloucester, Caerleon and, nearer still, Caerwent. Even well past Arthurian times healing activities at Lydney's temple might have continued in a small way; perhaps local "wise women",

perhaps, went on peddling traditional nostrums to those attracted by garbled memories of the cures of the past. Such lingering associations, abiding links connected with the crumbling, once-mighty ruins could well have focused the imaginative creation of that structure, so inspiring the elements of mystery and wonder in the Matter of Britain, the castle of the Grail.



Note

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Location

Landranger Sheet 162, *Gloucester and Forest of Dean*. SO 616027: Camp Hill / temple; SO 617025: Little Camp Hill

Corbenic, Cockaigne and carbuncles

Chris Lovegrove

Three great themes seem to dominate not only the Grail legends but studies of them too. One is Sex, and its related field, Fertility (I'm thinking here for example of the Wounded King and of the barren Wasteland). Another theme concerns Power, that is, control over the self and over others (traditional knightly pursuits are included here, of course, but also magic and self-enlightenment). Finally, there is the theme of Food and, related to it, Shelter, epitomised by the Grail itself and the centres it finds itself in – variously castles, cities and temple-like citadels.

Naturally, these themes are not exclusive, and it is a poor story or study that does not treat of all these areas to a greater or lesser extent, but it is the third theme – of Food and Shelter – that is the principal focus here.

Best loved meat and drink

Most Arthurians will be familiar with Malory's description of the first appearance of the Grail at King Arthur's court:

Then entird into the halle the Holy Grayle coverde with whyght samyte, but there was none that myght se hit nother whom that bare hit. And there was all the halle fulfylled with good odoures, and every knyght had such metis and drynkes as he beste loved in thys world. Now, seyde sir Gawayne, we have bene servyd thys day of what metys and drynkes we thought on...

Later in the tale the Grail appears at "the castell of Carbonek":

Ryght so as [kynge Pelles and all the felyship] sate at her dyner in the chyff halle, hit befylle that the Sangreall had fulfylled the table with all metis that ony harte myght thynke...

This virtue of the Grail, that you had only to think of your favourite food or drink and the vessel would provide it, was not of course Malory's invention. He had found it in his French source, *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, which dated from the early 13th century (Matarasso 1969). The Grail first entered through the great door of Arthur's court, "and all at once the palace was filled with fragrance as though all the spices of the earth had been spilled abroad". As it passed along the great tables "each place was furnished in its wake with the food its occupants desired". In Corbenic, before King Pelles' court had sat down to eat the Grail "had already loaded the tables with such a wealth of dishes that a more plenteous spread were past imagining". Malory of course had to condense, but it is as well to remember what the *good odoures* were in the original, and that the feast at Corbenic was beyond imagining.

Other early 13th century authors sounded similar themes. Manessier's continuation of *Perceval* described how at the Fisher King's castle the Lance and the Grail "passed before the tables whereupon they were filled on every side with the most delectable dishes". For Wolfram, his Gral was "a cornucopia of the sweets of this world and such that it scarcely fell short of what they tell us of the Heavenly Kingdom". Whatever you stretched out your hand for in the presence of the Gral was waiting, "dishes warm, dishes cold, new-fangled dishes and old favourites, the meat of beasts both tame and wild", and the same applied to the drink.

What is extraordinary, however, is that this almost fairytale quality of the Grail was hardly present in the first ever story of the Grail, Chrétien's 12th-century *Perceval*. True, as each course was served to Perceval in the hall of the Fisher King a bejewelled grail was carried before him on its way to a side chamber, but though the meal was of a regal standard and frequently exotic there is – at first – no suggestion of anything magical or miraculous, and certainly not due to the agency of the grail. And the 13th-century *Perlesvaus* author also eschews anything as frivolous as a free lunch, particularly where his grail, the receptacle of Christ's precious blood, is concerned.

Where did the concept of the magical buffet come from? Many authors, such as

Loomis and Rhys, have rightly pointed out parallels in the folktales and literature of the insular Celts, and it is not the intention here to reiterate these. However, the average medieval European was perhaps less concerned than we imagine with ancient mystical pagan concepts from beyond the edge of the continent, and more with contemporary obsessions, such as those which will be examined here.

Cockaigne

If the evidence of the chronicles is to be believed, the medieval mind was worried about the spectres of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, namely destruction by war, famine and pestilence. In other words, he or she was anxious about the imminence of the Wasteland, where natural and human justice were absent, a sign of God's punishment for humankind's real and imagined sins (concerns, of course, not unknown to the modern either).

And yet the likelihood of food scarcity, for example, was more apparent than real, as historians have pointed out: "In fact, famine in the Middle Ages was not that much of a problem. Hunger in the third world today is probably much more widespread and certainly more frequent" (Pleij 2001: 102). What problems there were often were localised and short-lived. Rather, it was the *fear* of famine that most affected the medieval, and one way to counterbalance this fear was to fantasise about an excess of food, and a place where such excesses could be indulged in.

What were the features of just such a place? By the 15th and 16th centuries we read (Pleij 2001: *passim*) of walls and fences made of sausages, windows and doors made of fish, tabletops of pancakes, jugs made of beer, doorposts made of carbuncles, beams and joists of butter, spinning utensils of cracknel, benches and chairs of pies, attics of gingerbread, rafters of eels, roofs tiled with tarts. The outdoor environment also lends itself to ease of eating: it rains custards, pancakes, pies and tarts, the rivers flow with wine and beer, the streets are paved with ginger and nutmeg, hedges are woven of lampreys, wild animals can be caught with the bare hand, geese roast themselves, meats, fish and fowl cook themselves – indeed, roasted fowl fly into open mouths, ready roasted pigs walk around with a knife stuck in their backs. In winter it hails sugared almonds and snows powdered sugar.

This, it seems, was the peasant's fantasy, seen through the distorting lens of monastic or bourgeois literacy, it is true, but based on three popular vernacular motifs: eternal idleness, superabundance of food, and edible architecture (Pleij 2001: 55). These motifs had been "circulating in countless forms and in a host of languages since Hellenistic times" but in the medieval period they become the attributes of the Land of Cockaigne. The routes to this Neverland and its analogues were various, sometimes by eating your way through a mountain of porridge three miles thick, or as in the Middle English text *The Land of Cokaygne* by travelling "far in the sea, to the west of Spain", to arrive at an island monastery. The name *Cocagne* was circulating from at least the second half of the 12th century, and may be related to many similar words in Europe referring to cooking, cakes and the like – something monks were particularly fond of, in popular belief!

The Cockaigne theme has percolated down to post-medieval times. For example, the Grimms' fairy-tale of "Hänsel and Gretel" (No 15) related how, during a period of famine, two children lost in the woods encountered a witch's hut built of bread and covered with cakes, with windows of clear sugar. "Then good food was set before them, milk and pancakes, with sugar, apples, and nuts ... and Hänsel and Gretel ... thought they were in heaven".

Chapter 6 of Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863) described the contents of *The History of the great and famous nation of the Doasyoulikes.* Among the luxuries available to the Doasyoulikes were roasted pigs who ran around crying "Come and eat me". In Carlo Collodi's 1883 fairy-tale *Le Avventure di Pinocchio*, the puppet in Chapter 31 visits a place variously called in English translations the Land of Boobies, Toyland, Land of Plenty or "the land of Cocagne". The Disney 1940 cartoon version not only emphasised the attractions for lazy boys but also its culinary delights, no doubt influenced by the descriptions in the American folksong *The Big Rock Candy Mountain.* Modern fast-food obsessions and

the growing prevalence of obesity show not only that the lure of Cockaigne continues but that it has to a large extent been realised in the West.

Fasting and feasting

Side by side with dreams of superabundance were more abstemious approaches to food, often sanctioned by the Church: luckily, the rewards for fasting in this world were believed to be feasting in the next. Many too were the deranged fantasies associated with the eucharist. The institution of the feast of Corpus Christi ("the body of Christ") in 1246 was a culmination of intense interest in the miraculous transformation of a wafer of bread into the body of God-made-Man (Rubin 1991: *passim*), and strange beliefs about the sustaining power of the host are reflected in the Grail tales.

At the end of the previous century Chrétien's *Perceval* includes an episode embedded in the account of Gawain's adventures in which Perceval's hermit uncle explains that the ailing king who is served from the grail is not given pike or lamprey or salmon, as one would expect from a wide dish like the grail. Instead,

"he's served with a single host which is brought to him in that grail. It comforts and sustains his life – the grail is such a holy thing. And he, who is so spiritual that he needs no more in his life than the host that comes in the grail, has lived there for twelve years without ever leaving the chamber which you saw the grail enter" (Bryant 1978: 69).

We are asked to believe that not only did the host from the grail spiritually nourish the king, but he was also astonishingly kept alive for twelve years with this diet! The medieval mind had no problem with this sort of concept, but it is clear from the *Quest of the Holy Grail* and other romances of the 13th century that the Grail as dispenser of fast food and sweet smells for the assembled company was also a desirable thing – as close to paradise on earth as the holy vessel could muster.

That intriguing cleric Rabelais only once mentioned the Grail (*Le Quart Livre XLII*), but these two elements – gluttony and abstemiousness – are echoed in his tales about the giants Gargantua and Pantagruel. Excessive consumption naturally features in the early books, but by the fourth (Joukovsky 1993) the now man-sized Pantagruel and his companions set off westwards in quest of *l'oracle de la dive Bouteille Bacbuc*, the Oracle of the Holy Bottle Bacbuc. A very inferior completion of the quest was made after Rabelais' death in which journey's end is achieved, at the Temple of the Holy Bottle (Motteux 1695).

Sited on an island, the temple was approached through a vineyard, under a triumphal arch, through an arboured alley, and down a frescoed vault. The underground temple was reached by spiral steps and through a jasper portal. A mosaic depicting Bacchus' victory over the Indians covered the walls and vault, and in the centre, located under a wonderful lamp, was a "fine, fantastic Fountain" surmounted by a cupola. At the apex of the cupola was a pearl fleur-de-lys, and "a *Carbuncle* jetted out of its Calix or Cup, as big as an *Ostridge's* Egg ... the sight of it had like to have made us blind". Those who drank from the fountain found that, despite being water, the miraculous liquor tasted "like any Wine that you shall fancy you drink". Finally, the Oracle of the Bottle itself was in an adjacent circular chapel. Here are echoes of the voyage of St Brendan, of the realm of Prester John, of Cockaigne and, in the Holy Bottle itself, perhaps of the Grail.

Unlike the Cockaigne tales, which in essence were a reflection of peasant fantasies, the Grail stories were products of both high-born and clerical imaginations. Naturally, then, the settings in which the Grail manifested itself did not involve gluttony in the countryside but rather feating at courts and quasi-religious rites in chapels. In the Vulgate Cycle (written in French prose) two sites are named as the temporary home of the Grail: Sarras and Corbenic.

Sarras

In the Vulgate *Quest of the Holy Grail*, Galahad and his companions eventually arrive at the mysterious city of Sarras. The name of the city reflects medieval pseudo-etymologies by providing an origin for the Saracens ('Sarrasins') from a city supposedly named after Sarah, wife of the patriarch Abraham. Skeat (1871: 55) suggests, however, that the name Saracen

derives, through Latin and Greek, from *sharkeyn*, Arabic for 'eastern people'.

The European form of the city's name may have been influenced by that of Sarras, a small town on the Ardèche river in France. This town appears to be the source of Andrew Sinclair's mysterious Kingdom of Sarras in southern France, to fit in with his Grail theories. This identification seems however to run counter to the concept of Sarras as a Middle Eastern port in the medieval texts. Various *Joseph of Arimathea* romances (Skeat 1871) make it clear that this is not the same as Jerusalem: Joseph in fact leaves Jerusalem to arrive at Sarras, and the city, on the coast, is clearly adjacent to both Babylon and Egypt.

Sarras, we discover, is in the hands of a pagan king, Escorant, who incarcerates Galahad and his companions. For a year, until Escorant's death, they are sustained by the Grail which visits them in prison. When Galahad succeeds Escorant as king, the three companions continue to visit the Holy Vessel, now housed in a tabernacle-like golden ark set on an altar-like silver table in a "spiritual palace" in Sarras. A year later, at mass, Galahad has a final vision in the Grail – now used as a eucharistic vessel – and expires in spiritual ecstasy. As the vessel and the lance are taken up into heaven, we may be seeing the final transformation of the Grail from pagan cornucopia to Christian cup.

Corbenic

While Sarras is the site of a "spiritual palace", Corbenic is the Grail Castle *par excellence*, for it is here that is found a palace of adventures. In the Vulgate Cycle Galahad was raised here and the Holy Grail resided within its walls, where it was visited both by Galahad and his companions and by Lancelot during their quests, often by boat.

Rhys (1891, 1996) drew attention to a mountain in North Wales called Bannawc, mentioned in *Culhwch and Olwen*. This he related to Modern Welsh *bannog* ("having points, peaks or horns") and to Scots Gaelic *benn* ("mountain"). Rhys suggested that Bannawc became Benoic in French romance and Benwyk in Malory, home to Lancelot's father King Ban, and that in the form Caer Bannawc it supplied the romancers with a name they interpreted as Corbenic.

Loomis (1963: 242ff) argued however that Corbenic is the result of a French misunderstanding. Corbenic (Malory's Corbyn or Carbonek) appears in French and Dutch manuscripts variously as Cambenoyc, Cambenoyt, Cabenoyt and Corlenot. "It is a fair guess that the source of all the forms was Corbenoit, a compound made up of the objective case of *cors* and *benoiz*, meaning 'blessed horn'".

He offers only two pieces of evidence as corroboration. The first is the Vulgate *Estoire*'s statement that Corbenic means *saintisme vaissel* in the Chaldean language, 'most holy vessel'. The second is that the First Continuation of *Perceval* mentions a magic drinking horn called Beneoiz or Beneïz or 'Blessed', which tested the chastity of members of Arthur's court.

Loomis' ingenious explanations – much more detailed than given here – seek to relate Celtic tales of miraculous vessels with contemporary concerns over the Eucharist. An argument for Celtic origins is very plausible, given the otherwise apparent arbitrariness of themes and names when related purely to what we know of Continental medieval Christian culture. Difficulties remain however due to lack of evidence in lines of transmission, and Loomis' admission that his explanation for Corbenic is only "a fair guess" is honest but telling.

There is another possible influence on the choice of Corbenic as a name for the Grail Castle which, as far as I know, does not seem to have been mentioned before now. In ancient times, the *carbuncle* was any bright red, pebble-shaped gem. Invariably unfacetted (*en cabauchon* is the French term), the name derived through Old French from Latin *carbunculum* ("small piece of coal") and ultimately from *carbo* ("coal"). Thus carbuncle meant any precious or semi-precious stone which, like coal, appeared to glow in the dark, giving off a bright red light. What is remarkable is its apparent use as building material.

The various descriptions of the New Jerusalem in the Bible are rarely consistent with each other, but while the gates in Revelation (xxi 21) are of pearl, in Isaiah (liv 11-12) we read: "I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." Indirectly this may have even influenced a Middle Dutch Cockaigne text – where, in the midst of much edible architecture, "all the doorposts are made of carbuncles" (Pleij 2001: 414) – and also Rabelais' Temple of the Holy Bottle.

The medieval legend of Prester John developed contemporaneously with that of the Grail (a coincidence brilliantly exploited in Umberto Eco's novel *Baudolino*), and Wolfram even makes Prester John the nephew of Parzival. Around 1165 a letter was supposedly sent by Prester John, the Christian ruler of an eastern land, in which he describes his palace, "built after the pattern of that which the apostle Thomas erected for King Gundafor" in India (Silverberg 2001: 44). "The roof is of ebony, which cannot be injured by fire. At the extremities, above the gables, are two golden apples, set in each of which are two carbuncles, so that the gold shines by day and the carbuncles shine by night ..."

City, temple, palace: these edifices conspicuously featured carbuncles, popularly believed to shine as bright as or even brighter than the sun. Is this not reminiscent of that Pentecost in Camelot when, prior to the Grail's entry, into the hall came "a sonnebeame, more clerer by seven tymys than ever they saw day"? And of Lancelot's approach to the Holy Grail Chapel at Corbenic itself in the *Quest*, with a "great light flooding through the opening, as if the sun had its abode within" and which lit the whole palace as if "all the candles on earth were burning there"?

Perhaps this grail shelter did take its name from a divine carbuncle, like those of the gates of the New Jerusalem, rather than from Caer Bannawc or Corbenoit, but we may never really know.

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Reviews

Nigel Bryant *compiler and translator*
The Legend of the Grail
D S Brewer, Cambridge 2004 £25.00
Arthurian Studies LVIII
1 84384 006 5 hb 304pp

Nigel Bryant imagines what a monkish redactor or scribe in, say, the 1240s would have done when confronted with the many different French versions of the Perceval romance. Would he not have done something similar to Malory more than two centuries later and prune, conflate and effect concordance?

This, then, is what Bryant himself does. He takes "eight great French romances" composed during a period spanning half a century – Robert de Boron's prose *Joseph of Arimathea*, Chrétien's unfinished poem *Perceval*, the four mostly independent continuations of *Perceval* (two anonymous, and one each by Gerbert and Manessier), the Glastonbury-linked *Perlesvaus* and the prose tale *Quest of the Holy Grail* (the last two also anonymous). He then re-forges them into a continuous narrative, as if they were the pieces of a broken sword, and presents them as *the* medieval legend of this mysterious object. *The Whole Book of the Holy Grail*, as it were.

Does it work? Yes, I think it does. Bryant has already translated for the same publisher *Perceval* and selections from the Continuations, *Perlesvaus* as *The High Book of the Grail*, and *Joseph of Arimathea* as part of *Merlin and the Grail*. He is thus in an ideal position not only to draw on his earlier translations but also to compare, select and edit. And, without recourse to the obscurist mock archaic language used by Sebastian Evans and his contemporaries a century or so ago, he does so in a fine, flowing, modern prose style that still manages to capture a medieval sense of mystery.

Inconsistencies there are, of course, but this is not Bryant's fault but that of the romances, which often contradicted themselves as well as each other. The problem of the Grail's visible form, for example, is not resolved. In *Perceval* it is a "beautiful, bejewelled vessel" like a flat dish to serve fish, but later it serves a single mass wafer. In *Joseph* the vessel in which Christ "made the sacrament" (a chalice is meant) is compared to a stone tomb, with the eucharist's *paten* as the tomb lid and the *corporal* as winding sheet. In *Perlesvaus* it appears as chalice, child, or crucifix.

The translator's selection of episodes gives in particular a vivid sense of the bewildering encounters that Perceval, Gawain, Lancelot, Bors and Galahad are subject to. Some adventures are pre-ordained, others unexpected; some are murderous, others almost comic; some have an allegorical significance, others have a fairytale quality. All in all, Bryant's *The Legend of the Grail* is part ripping yarn and part religious myth, re-told in a seemingly seamless narrative with verve and panache, true to its sources but eminently accessible to a modern audience.

Chris Lovegrove

Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd
The Lost Legend of Arthur: the untold story of Britain's greatest warrior
Rider 2004 £8.99
1 84441 3222 6 pb 309pp illus
• Originally published in hardback in 2002 as *Pendragon: the definitive account of the origins of Arthur*, and reviewed by Charles Evans-Günther in *Pendragon*

These enthusiastic authors do our subject a service by stripping away medieval romance to seek an Arthur based on early Welsh sources. Sadly, they also seem to lose the vision that grants perception. There is an abiding sense of narrow parochialism, a sort of Arthurian myopia.

Their best finding is to locate the Battle of Camlan near Dinas Mawddwy. The evidence stacks up so strongly that it is too hard to refute. Yet they fail to grasp the situation. Their Arthur is supposedly from North Wales, indicated by a hillfort near Deganwy given the name Din*arth*. There's no mention of Pen*arth* in South Wales, incidentally. If only they had looked at the church at Mallwyd, close to the site of Camlan. It was founded in 520 by St Tydecho, a saint from the very Brittany that these parochial authors presume Arthur couldn't have travelled to (but then Gwynedd bards wouldn't record events in Brittany, or against Saxons in what is now England). Hywel of Brittany can't have helped Arthur win his battles, then.

Read the Life of Tydecho and Hywel is revealed to be the saint's uncle, being the brother of Amwn Ddu. The latter is recorded as marrying Anna *of Gwent*, sister of King Arthur. So didn't Arthur come from Gwent too?

Dinas Mawddwy is the obvious strategic spot for a battle between Gwynedd and invaders coming from the south-east. It wasn't Arthur who held court at Deganwy but Maelgwn, the succeeding Pendragon. Hywel may not be mentioned, but his son Derfel Gadarn (born in Brittany) is – but only as a local Gwynedd saint and a survivor of Camlan. Work out how and why Derfel was there and you have the answer to the Arthurian enigma. This has eluded Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd. Oh, by the way, isn't Nerth ap Cadarn the son of Derfel Gadarn?

Laurence Main

DJ Tyrer *ed*
grail
Atlantean Publishing 2004
£3.99 Overseas: £5.99/8.99 Euro/$10.99
38 Pierrot steps, 71 Kursaal Way,
Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS1 2UY

This small press production is an anthology of poetry and fiction by contemporary writers that presumably have not made their way into mainstream literary works. That is not to say that the material presented is not worthy of inclusion in anthologies published by major publishing houses. Several of the pieces presented are well written and entertaining. There is something for every grail seeker, no matter what definition is endorsed, in this unpretentiously bound booklet.

Opening with a simple, straightforward poem, *The Grail*, about the grail and man's attempt to attain it by Aeronwy Dafies, the editor chooses to close with a weighty poem, Steve Sneyd's *Of a care in what you wish for*. Steve ponders the quest for uniqueness by human beings, while demonstrating, using a substantial number of myths and legends, the universal sameness of individuals and life.

Between the two poetic offerings, we have seven short stories. DJ Tyrer's *The Stone of Heaven* presents an ecclesiastical origin of the grail. The consequences of an attempt to deceive true believers in the grail are disastrous and unexpected in Chris Lovegrove's entertaining short story, *Fallen From Heaven*. Two tales can be directly associated with the Arthurian legend: *Island of the Dawn* by Pamela Harvey follows the fate of a group of Romano-Celts during the Saxon takeover of Britain and DJ Tyrer gives us a humorous interpretation of the truth behind Galahad's attainment of the grail in *Ye Tale of Ye Grale*. A malevolent grail is encountered in DS Davidson's science fiction story, *The Grail of Derwandir* and a 'grail' to set right the many dimensions of the world is sought after in Neil K. Henderson's science fiction / fantasy story, *Magusto & The Fulcrum*. Lastly, a child's encounter with the Fisher King and her chance to change the fate of the world is related in Aeronwy's *The King Fisher*.

A unique volume that entertains, *grail* should be read by lovers of fantasy and fiction and a must-have for those who hope to own everything in the way of Arthurian literature.

Larry Mendelsberg

Dan Brown
The Da Vinci Code
Corgi 2004 £6.99
0 552 14951 9 pb 593pp
• *Also available as a 6-hour CD audiobook, read by Jeff Harding (Orion Audio Books, £16.99)*

I was disinclined to enjoy this 2003 novel after all the signs pointed to a reliance on the pseudo-mystery of the Priory of Sion. But, following a friend's recommendation and a subsequent reading, I have to admit that I shouldn't really have judged this book by its cover alone. Most of the action takes place within 24 hours, about as much time as it took me to race through it, testament to a well-paced and well-written thriller for which, despite myself, I developed a sneaky admiration.

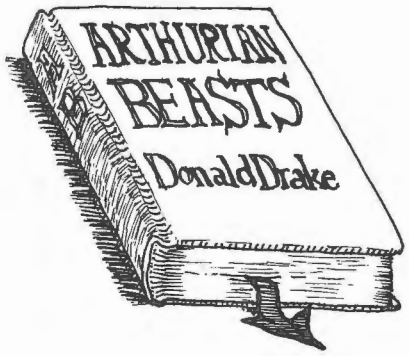
This is not to say that there are not faults. Professor Robert Langdon is supposedly a Harvard academic specialising in symbology, but even I was ahead of the game in spotting some of the obvious clues in this chase through crypto-history. If you've read *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* you will know the sort of fictive facts that the plot is predicated on: sacred bloodlines, devious anagrams, artful pentagrams and secret masters. Add the obligatory pretty but

intelligent and feisty female (called Sophie, for those with a love of etymology), weirdo assassins, sinister organisations, modern technology and sting and counter-sting, and you have an easy read with just a hint of intellectualism.

Just how does the Holy Grail link not just to obvious sites like Rosslyn Chapel but also to the Louvre, Saint-Sulpice, Westminster Abbey and London's Temple Church? I'm not sure I'm any the wiser, but *The Da Vinci Code* certainly furrowed my brow.

Chris Lovegrove

bookworm



FACTUAL

Member **Dan Nastali** of Kansas City, Missouri, writes with some exciting news. "As promised, here is my shameless announcement about the publication of the literary reference book that Phillip Boardman and I have written, ***The Arthurian Annals***, [...] published by Oxford University Press in June. With over 11,000 entries chronologically arranged from the year 1250 to 2000, the work is essentially a literary history in the form of an annotated bibliography. From another angle, it might be considered a sort of genealogy of the tradition in English."

Dan is pleased to say that *Pendragon* is well represented in the *Annals* with many entries on articles and poetry as well as an entry for the journal itself. "As a long-time subscriber, I owe much gratitude to *Pendragon* for serving as a major source of information on British publications and dramatic works, especially in the years before internet searching became available. Every issue still points me to works I might otherwise have missed."

Aiming for the library market, the publishers have priced the two-volume set at a cost "that may be prohibitive for anyone with less disposable income than, say, a member of the royal family. But it would be wonderful if *Pendragon* readers would encourage their local libraries to acquire copies." *The Arthurian Annals* (0 19 860725 3) retails at £295.00, and consists of two volumes: the Annals and the Indexes. More information can be found at the publisher's website:

http://www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-860725-3

Chris Gidlow, long associated with the Oxford Arthurian Society (an article of his also appeared in *Pendragon*) has authored a new book on Arthur, published by Sutton. A review by Steve Sneyd will appear next issue.

Boydell & Brewer have made available again Richard Barber's excellent ***King Arthur: hero and legend*** (£14.99 pb 224pp 0 85115 254 6) to coincide with the issue of the 2004 Disney film. The same author's ***Myths and Legends of the British Isles*** is newly in paperback (1 84383 039 6); at £14.99 for 604pp this is outstanding value, with its authoritative translations of Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and medieval key texts. Of equal value is Barber's ***Legends of Arthur*** (£14.99 pb 488pp 0 85115 950 8) with tales of Arthur, Gawain and Tristan told in contrasting pairs.

Available in paperback are Nigel Bryant's unique translation of Robert de Boron prose trilogy as ***Merlin and the Grail*** (£14.99 180pp 0 85991 779 7). Another Grail study, ***The Grail Legend in Modern Literature***, is due from the same publishers later in the year.

According to *Hallowquest Newsletter*, two of John Matthew's books – ***King Arthur***, and a study of Merlin published by Mitchell Beazley – were planned as tie-ins with the appearance of the Jerry Bruckheimer film *King Arthur*. Thoth Books have published a revised and updated edition of ***The Grail-Seeker's Companion*** by John with Marian Green as co-author. Finally, John Matthews' edition of Malory's ***Morte d'Arthur***, with colour paintings and black-and-white graphics by member Anne-Louise Ferguson, is now available in paperback, published by Cassell.

Right-wing philosopher Roger Scruton has authored ***Death-Devoted Heart*** (Oxford UP £17.99 238pp). Subtitled ***Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's* Tristan and Isolde**, Scruton's book reportedly makes the opera into "an essentially sacrificial drama, in which the lovers seek death for the sake of the other, embodying his idea of redemption". But reviewer Tom Lubbock (*Guardian Review* May 1 2004) feels that, despite the claim that the opera proves that "religion could live again in art," a *Tristan*-based secular religion as outlined by Scruton is a non-starter.

Paul Devereux's ***Fairy Paths & Spirit Roads*** (Vega paperback £12.99 224pp 1 84333 704 5) was published in 2003. Subtitled *Exploring Otherworldly routes in the Old and New Worlds* and profusely illustrated, there is much to interest the Arthurian reader, as next issue's review will suggest. Also reviewed will be a new edition of Danny Sullivan's ***Ley Lines: the greatest landscape mystery*** (Green Magic pb 2004 £9.99 200pp 0 954296 34 6).

FICTION

Umberto Eco's 2002 novel ***Baudolino*** (Vintage paperback 2003 £7.99 522pp 0 099 42239 5) has inexplicably escaped mention by until now, but it is no secret that it draws in the Holy Grail and miscellaneous other medieval fantasies along the way. A review will appear in due course.

"An elegant, readable and trustworthy gloss" is how the *Guardian Review* (February 2 2004) described W S Merwin's ***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: a new verse translation*** (Bloodaxe £8.95 192pp). "This is the ideal way to read the poem – in the original, with a good crib," wrote Jeremy Noel, for the complex rhyme scheme and alliteration conspire with "semi-redundant stock phrases" to deny a faithful but accessible modern translation of the medieval Cheshire poem. More antique poetry with Arthurian echoes appears in editor Steve Sneyd's ***Opening the Ellen files*** (published with Jimmie Dickie's ***A Dark Horse Fantasy*** by Hilltop Press £1.75 / $4.00 pb 16pp 0 905262 33 6): review in due course.

Arthur is reincarnated in modern times and retreats to a small farm in the American Midwest in Molly Cochran's ***The Third Magic*** (Forge Books hb 2003 $24.95 444pp 0 312 86440 X). This is the latest of three novels, the first two of which – *The Forever King* and *The Broken Sword* – were co-written with Warren Murphy. Does it all end on Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado?

"The Realm is an England that is still magical" a thousand years after Arthur, proclaims the blurb for Robert Carter's ***The Language of Stones*** (HarperCollins £10.00 hb 0 00 716 923 X). This alternative history fantasy is claimed as "a mythology for England" which Tolkien envisaged but never wrote. Much more than cursory glance is required to determine if Carter is successful.

Mike Don (in *Dreamberry Wine* March-April issue) reviewed SF writer Stephen Baxter's new novel on the theme of hive minds (Baxter gave a very interesting talk on his research for this at an SF convention in Northampton in 2003), *writes Steve Sneyd.* The "historical Arthur" reportedly appears in ***Coalescent*** (Gollancz) which, although mainly set in the present / near-future, has a backstory as to how the hive-mind entity arose – that it was from the actions of a "stong-minded woman" in post-Roman Britain (*always-blame-the-woman* syndrome again!).

Australian author Sophie Masson's ***In Hollow Lands*** (Hodder £5.99 304pp) was favourably reviewed by Adèle Geras in the *Guardian Review* on April 24 2004. This children's novel mixed Breton folktale elements and Arthurian legends in a manner that thoroughly enchanted the reviewer.

An interview of the author of *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* by Maya Jaggi in *Guardian Review* (May 29 2004) revealed that the only literary works Jean Winterson was allowed in her strict upbringing were the Bible and **Malory**. Much of the first she had to learn by heart, the second she had read to her. In her recent novel ***Lighthousekeeping*** the chapter entitled "Some Wounds Never Heal" is apparently a retelling of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. Jaggi tells us that all Winterson's fiction "celebrates redemptive love".

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

Talking Head *Fred Stedman-Jones*

CASTELL DINAS BRÂN

Englyn and harp and harp-string and the lordly feasts, all these have passed away; and where the nobility of Gwynedd used to be the birds of night now reign. **Anon, 17th-18thc.**

Earlier this year I discovered on the Welsh BBC website news that, *'following the recent revelation that King Arthur was from North Wales, a group of keen Belgian Arthurians (was) coming to Wrexham in search of their Holy Grail'* and that *'the forty-strong group comprised the entire cast of* Camelot *the musical, five Arthurian competition prize winners and their spouses and ten journalists from the Belgian press'.* The article adds that Steve Blake and Scott Lloyd have shown in their book, *The Keys to Avalon,* that it is only in North Wales that all the (Arthurian) places can be identified and these two researchers would accompany the party throughout, taking the group to Llangollen to spend the Saturday examining the sites there. This reminded me that the invitation we received from Steve at Caerleon last year for us to hold our Round Table in North Wales this year, and which he and I discussed later, did not ensue - otherwise this might have been a full report of a similar expedition by Pendragon members. Perhaps another year, Steve!

In the Blake/Lloyd book there are several photographs of the Castle, one captioned *'Castell Dinas Brân – the Castle Corbenic of the Grail Romances and home to the Holy Grail'*, another, *'Dinas Brân, the original Castle of the Grail, sits high above the Abbey of Vale Crucis, dominating the skyline from the valley below'*. The very colourful and attractive publicity leaflets issued by the Llangollen Tourism Association also reflect the certainty of these researchers' theories, *'in recent years the claims of Llangollen as the one time home of the Holy Grail have been strengthened by new research and Castell Dinas Brân has been identified as the Grail Castle portrayed in the Medieval Romances...in returning these stories to their original location you can now journey through landscape born of ancient historic texts, lost sagas and heroic traditions in which the authentic traditions of the True Avalon (Ynys Afallach) have remained hidden until now'*. Steve and Scott have put them firmly on the Arthurian map.

In fact *The Keys to Avalon* doesn't really

make a new historical case for the presence of the Grail at Llangollen - how could it? - but the authors can be very poetically beguiling and weave a true Celtic enchantment around their theme:

'We watched the sun as it rose slowly over Mabon's Hill and the land of Modron, its first rays illuminating the Vale of Llangollen. In the dawn light the mist rose wraithlike from the valley floor, obscuring the ruins of Valle Crucis Abbey and the waters of the sacred River Dee, the primordial Waters of the goddess. Above the sea of mist stood an island crowned by the dark silhouette of the timeworn walls of Castell Dinas Brân. For a while we contemplated the view in silence, for when seen like this in the early morning light the ancient stronghold of Dinas Brân evokes the archetypal image of the magical Grail Castle, the Castle of Wonders, spoken of in the Arthurian romances, more eloquently than any words'.

This is the language of the Llangollen leaflets, beguiling us to visit North Wales's places of magic and mystery and that is the real point, for when these authors speak with the voices of Merlin and Taliesin we would follow them *over hill, over dale, through bush, through brier* - as the Belgian Arthurians probably did and felt as near the Grail as they ever will anywhere in their lives as they sat panting in the ruins of Brân's castle, looking down on the beautiful Vale of Llangollen (Avalon) below.

As Malcolm Godwin writes, *'to seek an actual historical location is to miss the point, and yet the two worlds do cross at certain sacred places'.* There is no doubt that the configuration of the land, of sky, water, trees and ruins can be uniquely numinous in certain places. The White Horse Hill and Delphi are two places where I have felt very near to the Grail - the Tor at Glastonbury too, if you can ever find a moment to be alone there! Dinas Bran is such a place, *'the site which fits most descriptions and has an impeccable degree is that of Castell Dinas Brân'.*

'Castell' is Welsh for 'castle' of course; *'Dinas'* once meant 'fortress' but is now taken to mean 'city'; *'Bran'* refers strictly to a 'crow' but as *'cigfran'* it may be taken as 'raven'. The crumbling ruins of the medieval stone castle are perched on a crag 1,000 feet above the river Dee; George Borrow said of them in 1862, *'they bear no slight resemblance to a crown'*, later writers have seen them as jagged teeth on the skyline. It is a steep climb to reach the castle from most directions but once there the panorama is magnificent. As Michael Senior writes, *'Dinas Brân, even in the shape of its present fragmented ruins, proclaims power and grandeur...the two tall windows of the Great Hall on the south side look out over the Dee valley with a distinct air of dominance'.*

The site of the castle is the key to the defence of the Valley of the Dee and a principal gateway into the heart of Wales. The place has been occupied since very early times, triple rings of Bronze Age earthworks surround the site and four bronze axe heads have been found on the slopes of the hill. In the 8thc. it became the stronghold of Eliseg, a prince of Powys whose name survives in the tall stone near the ruins of the Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis in the valley below. When the fallen column was re-erected in 1779 the remains of a very tall man are said to have been found.

Later the Welsh princes of Powys Fadog, once the name of this area, ruled here for a short period. The last documented references to the medieval castle are to its capture from the Welsh in 1277 and again in 1282 by Edward I's forces Shortly after, the Castle and the lands of Bromfield were granted to John de Warenne, a formidable Marcher lord, but the castle was never restored. By the time of Henry VIII it was long a ruin and Leland told of a fierce eagle that nested there and attacked anyone who approached its nest.

Other tales tell of a secret passage and a cave full of treasure guarded by a giant raven: *'Oxen, cows, swans, peacocks...all of fine gold,* the finder of which will be a boy followed by *'a white dog with silver eyes, for such can see the wind'.* Perhaps this is our cue to cross between the two worlds at this numinous site. How does a tangible castle with a history and precise location turn into the Castle of Wonders, the home of the all-healing Grail?

To quote the Llangollen leaflets again, *'the link between the Grail castle and Dinas Brân is the name* Corbenic, *the old French*

word meaning crow or raven and in Welsh the word for raven is Bran, so Dinas Brân is little more than a Welsh version of the French name Corbenic. The geographical setting of the romances is that of Wales and the Border regions, Dinas Brân was the physical inspiration behind the Corbenic Castle of the Grail Romances'.

One of the early Grail stories, the *Didot Perceval,* names the Fisher King - the occupant of the Grail Castle - as Bron and local Welsh tradition claims Dinas Bran to be the home of the legendary King Bran Fendigaid (the Blessed). Also, near Llangollen is Land's End where another prehistoric hillfort is called Caer Bran. In the mythical *Mabinogion* tale of *Branwen,* the giant king Bran went on a knight-like quest to recover the magical vessel, a Cauldron of Rebirth, and was wounded by a poisoned spear - a wound that would not heal. The Celtic spear is a central hallow in the story of the Fisher King, the spear which both wounds and heals.

A Celtic origin for the Grail stories has long been championed by R.S. Loomis and Richard Cavendish among other scholars, *'We have a story bearing an uncanny resemblance to later Grail romances. There is a worthy, charmed king in possession of a life-sustaining cauldron. He is afflicted by an agonizing wound that directly correlates to the desolation of his domain. For a time he presides over an Otherworld feast at which his followers are regaled with food and drink while oblivious to grief and worldly concerns. Based on these similarities, It is hard to refute Bran as the likely forebearer of Chretien's Fisher King '.*

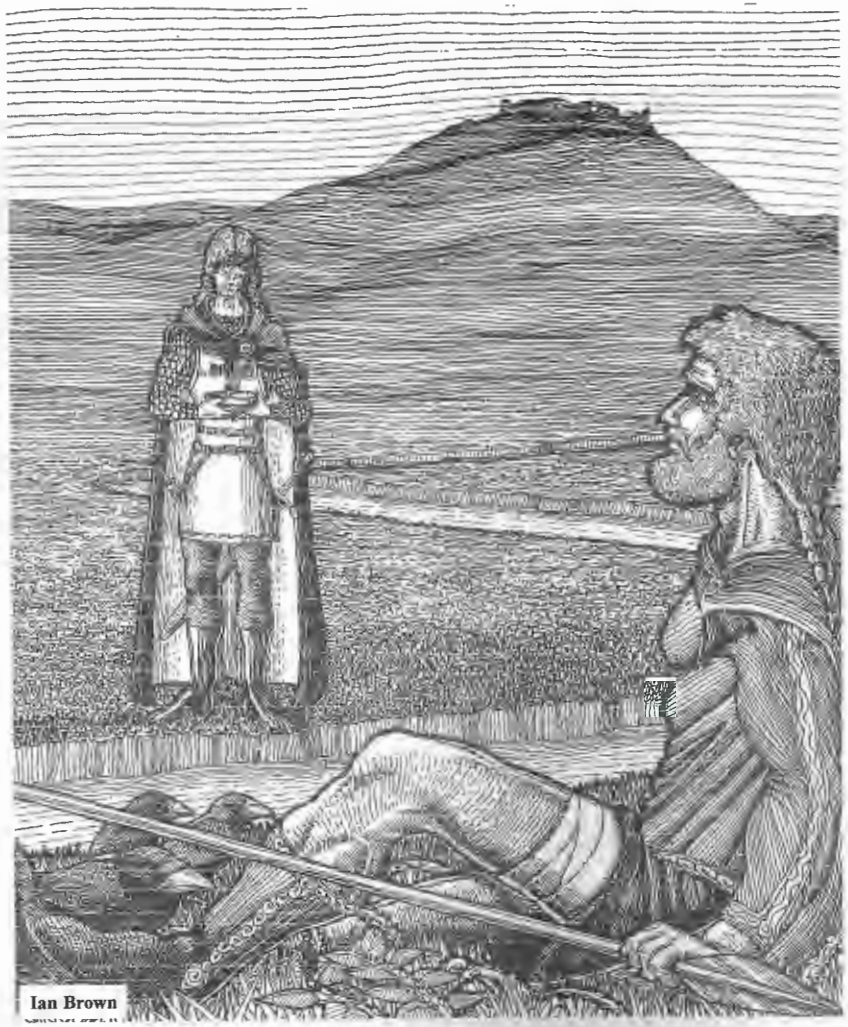
Remember the story? Perceval rides for a day and reaches a wide river with no ford. There, a fisherman in a boat directs him to a mighty castle nearby where his host welcomes him warmly and turns out to be Bron, the lame fisherman himself - he has arrived at his elusive destination, Corbenic. The Dee is a fine fishing river, I'm told.

A *'Castle of Wonders,'* is another element in the medieval Grail stories, a place where errant knights find themselves involved in strange adventures. Interestingly, *Chastiel Bran* occurs as such a place in the medieval Norman-French *Romance of Fulk Fitwarine,* you will remember that Dinas Bran was held by the Warenne family at one time. William I, touring his newly conquered kingdom, comes to Llangollen and sees the towering walls of a deserted city - Chastiel Bran. He asks why it is deserted and is told that an evil giant Gogmagog lives there and causes havoc locally. A brave knight, Payn Peveril - an ancestor of the Fitz Warines - climbs up alone to fight the giant and eventually defeats him. He learns that Gogmagog's body had been reanimated by a devil who wishes to gain his treasure - he drives it out. *(For a good atmospheric retelling see Ref. 8, but it's not a bedtime story for children!)*

Perhaps the boldest move in the Blake/ Lloyd book for a North Wales take-over of the Arthurian legends is to 'reclaim' St. Collen for Llangollen. They argue that the founding saint of 'Llan-gollen', who is buried in the church there named after him, has been misplaced in the familiar history of his Abbacy of Glastonbury. His expulsion of the King of the Underworld, Gwyn ap Nudd, and his attendant spirits from Glastonbury Tor is transferred to Llangollen itself. There is another story which tells of his defeat of a giantess who terrorised the area. After vanquishing her he washed the blood off his sword in a spring which is still there, Ffynon Gollen – Collen's well.

It is true that more is known about the saint in legend than fact, all we really know comes from a 16thc. manuscript, but they draw the sword truly on this and stand their ground with the resolve of Owain Glyndŵr himself! Michael Senior wonders whether St.Collen brought the Grail to Llangollen with him when he moved there from Glastonbury but Steve and Scott will have none of this faint heartedness - they dismiss altogether the notion of Collen as head of an Abbey in the south-west of England, 200 miles away. For them, Collen was sometime Abbot of Glaestingburh, known in the 17thc. as Glasfre - the Town of Glas - from which he dispersed Gwyn and his followers and where he had his cell. This abbey was a Celtic/Saxon foundation over which the Cistercian Valle Crucis Abbey was built, circa 1200.

As one who loves the Vale of Llangollen, Dinâs Bran and Valle Crucis, I'd love to hold a Round Table there, I want to believe!



Ian Brown

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