pendragon

Journal of
The Pendragon Society

Arthur abroad

XXXII No 1

Editorial

Arthur abroad

From Sarmatia to Scotland, from the Old World to the New, Arthur has been laid claim to or celebrated, migrating or mutating as required, whatever the medium. This issue attempts to illustrate some of that diversity and to reflect some controversy.

Contributors to **Arthur abroad** include John Matthews, historical adviser on the Disney *King Arthur* film (now on DVD and video) and a noted Arthurian author; Dave Burnham, a local authority Head of Information with a degree in Mediaeval and Modern History; Charles Evans-Günther, formerly editor of Dark Age magazine *Dragon* but now an English Language teacher in Japan; and Dan Nastali, an American academic who has just co-authored a magisterial chronicle of Arthurian writings in English.

Plans proceed apace for the 2005 **Round Table**, and details appear elsewhere, plus the usual news, views, reviews and previews. Exchanges are re-instated; *Talking Head* is back next issue.

Coming soon

Next issue we plan to feature, among other items, Merlin in the Rhineland. papers on druidry, courtly love and Dark Age celestial phenomena, and poetry under the umbrella title of **Merlin's study**. Events nearly always overtake us, however – as I write, claims are sufacing that the Shepherds' Monument at Shugborough has been deciphered (see last issue's *Old News*), while I belatedly note that James MacArthur, recognised as chief of Clan Arthur in 2002 (see this issue's "I shall return!"), died on April 1st this year – so expect the unexpected!

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COMPETITION

To win a giant poster of the film, answer the following question: *Who directed Jerry Bruckheimer's* ***King Arthur****? Send your solution to the Editor by the end of January and the first correct answer out of a hat wins!*

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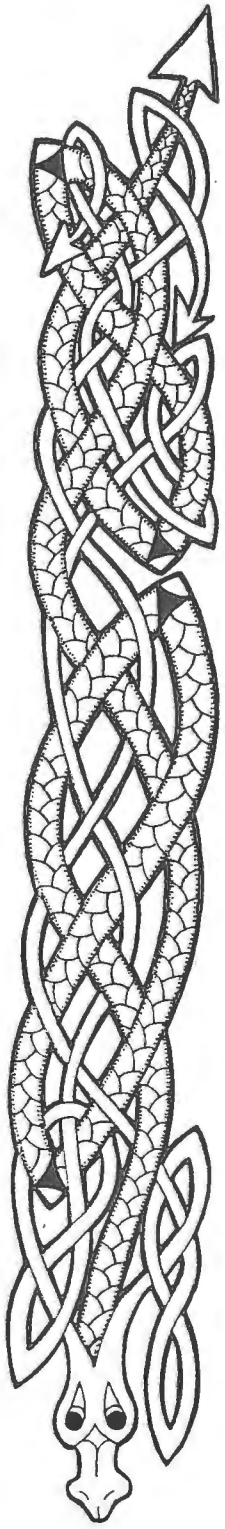

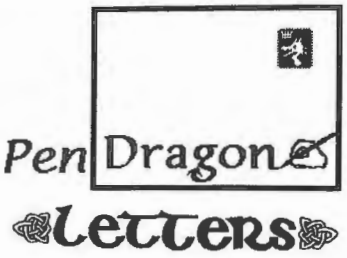

AVALON, MONSALVAESCHE, ROTHESAY AND COCKAIGNE

The Grail Castle issue was fascinating. Alastair McBeath's note (my thanks for his kind remark about me) was a most interesting addition to Avalonian geography.

In his longer piece, he mentions Wolfram von Eschenbach's odd phrase for the grail-stone – *lapsit exillis*. Since the good knight surely knew no Latin, the first word looks to me like a simple mis-spelling of *lapis* ("a stone"). But, as McBeath observes, the phrase 'has exercised many minds over the years'. In their translation of Wolfram's romance, Helen M Mustard and Charles E Passage make the following comment in a footnote:[1]

'Such interpretations have been made as: *lapsis ex caelis*, "stone from the heavens"; *lapsit ex caelis*, "it fell from the heavens"; *lapis elixir*, which would correspond to the philosopher's stone. Stapel suggests that Wolfram, depending on memory only, ran two words together, ... the full phrase having been *lapis lapsus ex caelis*, "a stone fallen from heaven".'

Eileen Buchanan reports yet another candidate for the Grail found at Rothesay Castle in Bute, where King Robert III spent his last years.[2] The Grail is a famous source of food and drink, but it did nothing for Robert's unfortunate eldest son and heir, David, Duke of Rothesay. In 1402, the Prince, aged only 24, was imprisoned and murdered by his wicked uncle, the Duke of Albany.[3] In *The Fair Maid of Perth*, Scott gives us a gruesome account of the fiendish circumstances of the poor young man's murder. A large piece of salt meat was lowered into his underground dungeon, followed, some time later, by – an empty cup.

To end this letter on a more cheerful note, the Editor has given us a mouth-watering account of the Land of Cockaigne in the same issue. It occurs to me that this Land has an echo in the 20th century, in the greatest of all comic strips, Al Capp's immortal *Li'l Abner*. In one sequence, the hero encountered the Schmoos. The supreme ambition of these lovable creatures was to give pleasure by being eaten. If I remember rightly, they were happy to transform themselves into whatever kind of food was preferred.

W M S Russell, Reading, Berkshire

Re the mention of the Big Rock Candy Mountain as the American version of Cockaigne (as an aside, there used to be a pub in Great Ancoats in Manchester named after another British variant, The Land O' Cakes), I've often wondered if, given the large number of Germans among early settlers in the States, that name stemmed to some extent from the Glass Mountain of German folklore, a parallel to the Celtic glass castle.

The idea of food falling from the sky has an ongoing reflection in the occasional accounts of showers of fish – supposedly a genuine phenomenon with a rational explanation, that certain wind phenomena can pluck fish from the surface of the sea or lakes and drop them elsewhere (there was a case on the news very recently, from Herefordshire if memory serves) although the American phenomenologist Charles Fort, who gave his name to the *Fortean Times*, used such fish and frog falls as indicators of the truth of his wilder theories about the universe!

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

[1] Mustard, H M and Passage, C E *transl* (1961) *Parzifal by Wolfram von Eschenbach* (New York: Vintage Books) 251 *n*11

[2] Lynch, M (1992) *Scotland: a New History* (London: Pimlico) 141

[3] *Ibid* 140–141

LEONARDO AND THE GIRLY HALO

I have greatly enjoyed the journal and have been impressed with the level of knowledge and erudition of its contributors, even in the letters to the editor.

I wondered if anyone has reviewed the very interesting theories proposed by Adrian Gilbert in *The Holy Kingdom* that Arthur (a conflation of two Arthurs) was the direct descendent of Jesus, through the marriage of a granddaughter of his mother, Mary, to a Welshman, Arviragus. It is another version of the ideas of Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln in *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* that the Sangrail was Mary Magdalene carrying the child of Jesus to France after escaping Palestine with Joseph of Arimathea.

I have read Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and greatly enjoyed it. It spurred me on to other reading, like the book by Baigent *et al*. I am reading Dan Burstein's *Secrets of the Code*, a fairly academic and fascinating guide to the historical underpinnings of Brown's book. I highly recommend it. I wondered what others think of these theories and their connection to Arthur.

Jane V Perr, Huntingdon NY, USA

Just received *Pendragon XXXI* No 4 and I like the idea of the competitions – not that I can come up with anything worthy for either. But [the] review of *The Da Vinci Code* set me thinking about an anagram competition (*Girly Halo*?).

I too approached the book determined not to like it, but Dan Brown's combination of two immensely popular genres is very clever, rattles along and provides immense fun for people like me who have read some of the 'source' material. I got carried away trying to work out the anagrams, codes and linguistic allusions within the narrative (Aringarosa = red herring for instance) and succumbed, much to my disgust, to buying one of the da Vinci Code 'commentaries' on sale now – which as I suspected are a rip-off. I'm still left wondering what the purpose of the anagram of Leguladec (C. De Gaulle) can possibly mean!

Dave Burnham, Bolton, Lancs

Just before the latest issue arrived I'd finished reading *The Da Vinci Code* and had come the same opinion as you – almost exactly. I saw the book in a shop about a month or so ago and thought do I really want to read this? But since there had been such a reaction to it I thought maybe I should read it. I was pleasantly surprised – I quite enjoyed the adventure. Of course, the background is basically rubbish but a good story. I find it difficult for anyone to take it seriously but there are so many who are easily led or not in the know. I couldn't believe the amount of material on the Net about this book – for and against. Anyway, I think you gave it as much space as it deserved.

As for the rest of the journal – Prof Russell does his usual excellent job and there are some interesting bits and pieces. However, I grow more convinced that the Holy Grail thing has grown out of all proportions. I have reread Chrétien's work, I am pretty sure that the depth of the tale is quite shallow. He was writing a wonder tale, not hiding some mysterious secret. He seems to have done similar things with his other tales. People love mysteries and maybe Chrétien was catering to an audience so used this kind of adventure. The Arthurian genre was at its height and he made good use of it to tell an interesting adventure.

However, I believe the roots of the grail go no deeper that that of Camelot. From one line masses of words have been written on Camelot, which likely was just a name and probably not even a real place at all. Chrétien used various genres to produce his tales and I am sure there is very little to the grail – certainly less than what it has grown into. I don't find any of the material convincing when trying to find the roots of the grail, especially bloodlines and hidden treasures.

Having said that all that followed is interesting reading, but I feel it should be remembered that there may well be no foundation beyond Chrétien. I still believe a more careful look at the actual period would probably shed more light on the works of Chrétien and others of this time. There can be no doubt that much of the genre got the

support of the family of Eleanor of Aquitaine and that her influence should not be ignored. Even Phillip of Flanders' first wife had connections with Eleanor through Petronella her sister. Here is a region of history that could well answer some questions.

I don't find convincing the use of late material to pinpoint actual places on the British landscape and especially material that was composed in France. Maybe a careful study of the geography known to writers like Chrétien would answer some questions. Trying to find grail castles I find interesting but unrealistic. The grail tale doesn't belong in a real landscape but that of the world of imagination – a place where anything goes and we can find many wonders. But then to try and locate these magical places in the real world may be a complete waste of time.

I think Chrétien was just writing a good yarn and that the tales should be separated from real history and geography. They fit in the history of literature and aspects such as Eleanor of Aquitaine's influence will probably explain some of these stories.

This may sound pessimistic but I believe we have strayed much too far from the point on many subjects. For example, it is my belief that Arthur should be divorced from the grail tales since some people try to find real grails when there never was one. The holy egg cup [Graham Phillips' 1995 *The Search for the Grail*] is an excellent example of this. But what is worse is the constant regurgitating of the holy blood and holy grail rubbish and the Priory of Sion, which can be proven to lack any real roots before the mid 20th century. People seem to accept the ridiculous and ignore research that proves such material to be false.

I am interested in the grail but I don't believe it has anything to do with Arthur, bloodlines or the like.

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

• *Dan Brown's book was reviewed last issue, and the Baigent and Gilbert books soon after they appeared (*Holy Blood, Holy Grail *in 1982 and* The Holy Kingdom *in 1998). As reviewer of all of these I have to say that I thought the Brown book very entertaining, the Baigent book preposterous but entertaining, and the Gilbert book preposterous and badly written!*

A big problem with the supposedly non-fiction works is that they imagine that people in Late Antiquity and later were like us moderns, only in fancy dress. At least the Brown book was wonderfully tongue-in-cheek: for example, the name of one of the characters is an anagram of Michael Baigent, and Dave Burnham draws attention to other examples of punning word-play. See next issue for the Girly Halo anagram competition.

SWORDS AND SOURCES

I read Alistair McBeath's letter on the solar eclipses with interest and have corrected my timeline accordingly. I am looking forward to reading Alistair's article detailing astronomical and meteorological events during the Arthurian period as I read his review of Mike Baillie's *From Exodus to Arthur* (*XXVIII* No1 Summer 1999, pp 40–41) and this sent me in search of his referenced sources to read more for myself. I was fascinated by his comments in this article about tree-ring evidence from 530s–540s supporting a volcanic or maybe an El Niño event during the Arthurian era, and wait in anticipation for any more references on such natural phenomena.

Dan Nastali's comment in the BookWorm section is certainly true (*XXXI* No 4 Summer 2004, 42). Every issue of *Pendragon* definitely points to works that might otherwise have been missed. I always find I conclude reading *Pendragon* with a visit to the library requesting sources cited in *Pendragon* or buying books second hand from Amazon.

On Fred Stedman-Jones' recommendation in his article on "Voyages of Arthur" (*XXXI* No2 Winter 2003–4, 36–9) I purchased a copy of Michael Scott's and Gloria Gagham's *Navigator* and Tim Severin's *The Brendon Voyage*. It was a journey in itself for me to compare Severin's voyage from Ireland with the fictional account documented in *Navigator*. I plan to order the epitome of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* to read more for myself about the two documented solar eclipses as well as

trying to persuade them to acquire copies of *The Arthurian Annals*.

Dennis Oldham of Milton Keynes made a very good point that doubles of Arthur were probably appointed but I reckon it was a lot more than two. Readers may be interested to know that *Charmed* this week (23 October 2004) featured the sword in the stone and Piper's baby Wyatt was found to be the next King to wield the sword.

Anita Loughrey, Thatcham, Berks

SEA BIRDS AND BEASTS

In the Grail Castle issue, DJ Tyrer notes that the word *penguin* could have a Welsh origin when applied to a Northern bird with a white head. I am glad to report he is fully supported by no less an authority than Skeat:[4]

'The word appears to be W. *pen gwyn*, i.e. white head. If so, it must first have been given to another bird, such as the auk (the puffin is common in Anglesey), since the penguin's head is black.

'The original penguin' was 'the great auk', and this now extinct bird had a large white patch on its head.[5]

In the same Grail Castle issue, Steve Sneyd suggests that 'a plausible real world source for later writers' ideas of the Grail castle' may have been the great temple complex of Lydney Park, a place of healing apparently sacred to the Celtic god Nodens, associated with Aesculapius and also, rather oddly, with Mars. The Wheelers, who excavated the site, consulted Tolkien about the god's name; he could only suppose it to mean something like 'the Catcher'; perhaps the many dog figurines found on the site represented hunting hounds. Nodens seems a rather versatile god.[6]

Sneyd gives an excellent account of the stages in construction of the complex. To illustrate this, there is a useful plan in a book by Martin Henig,[7] which distinguishes the different building periods. The complex included, as Sneyd notes, facilities for dream incubation, as in the corresponding Greek cult centres at Epidaurus and Lebades. Nora Chadwick has shown that dream induction was as widespread among the Celts as among the Greeks.[8]

The mosaic of sea animals mentioned by Sneyd is of great possible interest for cryptozoology, as first suggested by Costello and further elaborated by me.[9] The mosaic only survives, as Sneyd also notes, in a careful drawing published in 1879. And as Sneyd mentions, it was donated by one Titus Flavius Senilis and his assistant

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[4] Skeat, W W (1993) *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions) 342 *sv* penguin

[5] Flannery, T (2002) *The Eternal Frontier* (London: Vintage) 301 and Plate facing page 273

[6] Russell, W M S (1994) "Greek and Roman Monsters. Part 2" *Social Biology and Human Affairs 59*, 1–9, especially 4

[7] Henig, M (1984) *Religion in Roman Britain* (London:Batsford) 56

[8] Chadwick, N (1968) "Dreams in Early European Literature" in Carney, J and Greene, D (eds) *Celtic Studies* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul) 33–50

[9] Russell (ref 3) 3–5, *qv* for references; the long quotation comes from this passage

Victorinus. The inscription in the drawing is incomplete, with only the letters *pr* and *rel.* Collingwood, consulted by the Wheelers, expanded this as *Praepositus reliquationis*, or
'commander of the fleet base. Recently there has been an alternative expansion to *praepositus religionis*, or superintendent of the cult, but there seems no very good reason to prefer this, and Collingwood may well have been right in making the donor of this marine mosaic a man with some experience of the sea. ... There are a number of marine mosaics in Britain, and Professor Michael Fulford has pointed out to me ... that they tend to be concentrated in the western half of Britain. He has shown that throughout Roman times there was a flourishing sea trade route up the Irish Channel and the west coast of England and Scotland as far as the Solway and sometimes the Clyde. There would, then, have been ample opportunities for sightings of unusual animals on this sea route, by people familiar with the usual animals to be found there.

'Some of the other marine mosaics in Britain show sea-monsters, but they are the usual composites, sea horses and sea panthers at Fishbourne, a triton at Rudston, a variety of mixtures at Great Witcombe. The monsters at Lydney Park are quite different, and indeed quite unique. They are unlike any other ancient monsters, and certainly have nothing to do with any of the legends.'

Besides some ordinary sea animals, there are these two strange creatures:
'They are a pair of seal-like creatures, with very long snaky necks, intertwined. Now Claire Russell has shown that intertwining snakes can signify the cross-matings through the generations between two groups of clans. The excessive lengths of the Lydney monsters' necks may therefore be due to the exigencies of symbolism. We are therefore entitled to reduce them somewhat. When we do so, we are left with a possible but hitherto unknown animal species, best described as a long-necked seal.

'Now this was first proposed by A C Oudemans, in 1892, as a possible real basis for reported sightings of sea serpents, and later cryptozoologists have taken the idea further. Costello and Heuvelmans have published slightly different versions. Either would fit the Lydney monsters very well if we somewhat reduce their necks. Heuvelmans finds the long-necked seal reported very widely, but his map shows a concentration of sightings along Fulford's sea-route. Costello proposes his long-neck as the basis for the monster reports of nearby Loch Ness.'

All this may be a far cry from the Grail – but perhaps not from the Fisher King?

W M S Russell, Reading, Berks

101 SARMATIANS?

It's intriguing, from various pre-information, that the new Arthur film adopts the "Sarmatian thesis" – surprising that Hollywood is digging so deeply and obscurely. Also, in view of Iran being part of Bush's "axis of evil", that they weren't worried about Sarmatians being Iranian-speaking!

Their surviving descendants, Ossetes (from whom the tale of the hero associated with sword-into-water-at-death *etc* was collected to generate parallels in the first place) are back in the news [July 2004], with the visit of the President of Georgia to the UK, as he's currently involved in a stand-off with South Ossetia (and the Russians pulling strings behind the scenes, from the sound of it). They're clearly a people with plenty of troubles, since North Ossetia is having to cope with hosts of refugees from Chechnya.

Their part in the *Volkerwanderung* was wide-ranging, the Alans of the confederation teaming up with the Vandals and Suevi and getting into Spain and North Africa before vanishing from history. But I hadn't realised till I looked up Sarmatians in the index of Sheppard Frere's *Britannia* (Routledge & Kegan Paul 1967) how some had indeed ended up in Britain – part of the clan of the Sarmatian confederation called the Iazyges that Marcus Aurelius had defeated on the Danube. In 175 he shipped over here 5000 of the 8000 cavalry they supplied as part of the peace terms (Frere: 162).

He says a *numerus* of them was in garrison at Ribchester in the next century (where – page 186 – Sarmatian veterans were given a block grant of land), and archaeological evidence of them was found at Chesters on the Wall, but he thinks the bulk of them left Britain with Clodius Albinus when he bid for the Empire in 196, and never came back. So the community at Ribchester could have kept cohesion / cultural identity into the Dark Ages.

I am reminded again of Bates' theory in his *History of Northumberland* that the Arthurian stories of defeating foreign kings could be explained, in fact, by defeating kinglets whose power base was one or another ex-Roman garrison unit of originally foreign origin (an identity kept in the way, for example, the Romany have kept theirs for hundreds of years here, or settlers in America from different origins who keep their identities, like the Irish-Americans).

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorks

• *Troubled Ossetia was in the news again with the distressing events in Beslan in early September.*

STONEHENGE VIEWPOINT

As a wych I say this. The story of Merlin destroying that circle [Stonehenge] was either produced as a cover story for the shame of the Christians' desecration or those Masons in white robes made up the story when a certain pompous bard bought the deeds. I'm not Druid and I'm not buying it. It was made by our people. We were wych[es] and guarded it with our lives. Who gave them rights to buy our grandmother's heart? Who said Arthur's Merlin was a man? He was his Mother and Father. Not so silly when the women were just as fearless in battle ...

PO Box 5, Lostwithiel, PL22 0YT

• *We don't usually print anonymous letters, but readers might be interested in the issues raised here.. Who owns ancient monuments? Those who have title by law, or those who claim it on the basis of being "ancestor incarnates" – as this Lostwithiel correspondent elsewhere declares? There is much outrage and distress expressed elsewhere in this letter (lightly edited for clarity) over the Stonehenge landscape plans, but does it matter that details in the Merlin story and subsequent history of the site appear distorted or just plain wrong? This issue's Old News has more on this.*

MEA CULPA

In correcting a widespread error, I have to admit to making two errors of my own. In two recent papers in *Pendragon*,[10] [11] I drew attention to the error, found in many books by historians, of calling Alessandro Farnese *Duke* of Parma in 1588 or earlier. I correctly observed that he was only the *Prince* of Parma until he became Duke in 1592. But I incorrectly stated he succeeded his elder brother. I had forgotten what I read in Motley as a teenager (admittedly that was some 63 years ago!). On consulting him afresh,[12] I find that the previous Duke, Ottavio, was not the general's brother but his father.

A more serious error was my calling the general an honourable man, and comparing him with Rommel. Alas, Alessandro was no more honourable than his vile employer, Felipe II of Spain. There is no doubt the general was a willing accomplice of Felipe in the plan to murder William the Silent; he had personally paid a number of murderers (most of whom took the money without doing anything) before he finally found Balthazar Gérard, who did the abominable deed.[13]

W M S Russell, Reading, Berkshire

• *Letters to the Editor are always welcome, by e-mail or snail-mail (details on the Contents page). If some or any of your correspondence is not for publication, please indicate this clearly.*

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[10] W M S Russell (2001) "Arthurian Literature, Chivalry and Violence" *Pendragon 29* No 2, 34–36, especially 36

[11] W M S Russell (2004) "Folklore, Fakelore and History; Arthur, Glastonbury, Pagans and Witches" *Pendragon 31* No 4, 11–18, especially 13

[12] J L Motley (1906, first published 1855) *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* (3 vols, London: Oxford University Press and Humphrey Milford) Vol 3, 299

[13] *Ibid*, Vol 3, 527–39

WHO ARE THE BRITISH?

A team of Oxford University scientists – led by Sir Walter Bodmer and including professors Peter Donnelly and Lon Cardon – have begun a lengthy £2 million study, funded by the Wellcome Trust, into the genetic make-up of the peoples of Britain.

Blood samples from volunteers in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will supply both mitochondrial DNA and Y-chromosome details to help researchers to identify the **genetic history** of regional populations, as well as patterns of inherited predispositions to various diseases. As urban populations are "far too mixed up" to enable the team to "tease out their genetic roots", only individuals in rural populations who can show residency in a locality going back two or more generations can take part.

Recent studies in the Orkneys, for example, suggest from DNA evidence that Vikings took local brides between the 9th and 14th centuries rather than bring their own families on raids and colonising expeditions. This new study – which will investigate about 2000 genetic variations or markers – will extend such research to the whole of the UK. It is expected to address such problems as the extent of **Celtic** relic populations in lowland Britain, the influence of **Saxon**, **Viking** and **Norman** incursions and which gene variants are associated with particular common ailments. It may even, incidentally, help to eradicate that unhelpful term *race* which journalists and science editors (who ought to know better) still persist in using. *CL*

• Robin McKie "Scientists go in search of the true Brit" *The Observer* August 15 2004

A PORTRAIT OF ARTHUR?

A centuries-old image of a Dark Age horseman is being claimed as proof that the legendary Arthur not only existed but may even have been buried in a Glasgow suburb, at the church of St Constantine.

Govan Old Parish Church (the present building dates from 1883–8) houses a remarkable stone sarcophagus, discovered in the graveyard in 1855 (Ritchie 1994 *passim*). Amongst much exquisite interlace patterns and zoomorphic carvings is a hunting scene – a stag is being pursued by a dog and a man on horseback. The long-haired bearded horseman wears a short tunic, and a short sword hangs from his belt. A charming stylised image, otherwise unremarkable except for one detail.

On the left flank of his mount is a letter *A*. It is unsurprising that the notion ***A for Arthur*** — voiced in connection with her finding of a Roman gilt bronze votive letter at Cadbury-Camelot in the 1960s by Jess Foster, founder of the Pendragon Society – may instinctively have also occurred to another Arthurian-minded student of legendary history. On the Clann Arthur website, Hugh MacArthur suggests that the carving represents **Arthur, son of King Aedan**, killed in the battle against the Miathi in the late 6th or early 7th century and subsequently buried at Govan in the sarcophagus.

There are problems with this ingenious identification, however, mainly to do with dating and with iconography. First, the Arthur identification differs from the fanciful claim made, on an early 20th-century inscription, that it is "the reputed shrine of Saint Constantine K[ing] and M[artyr], founder of Govan Church, AD 576" (Constantine was Arthur's successor, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth). It also differs from the opinion of Charles Thomas, Alan Macquarrie and others (Ritchie 1994) that the foundation of Govan, and the carving of the sarcophagus, must be dated to much later. On historical and stylistic grounds they opt for around the late 9th century, when the first Govan church may have held the "translated" relics of the original St Constantine (whoever he was).

Secondly, the huntsman pursuing the stag may not only represent someone of high status but may also be of Christian allegorical significance. The letter *A* on the horse's flank could represent a branding, as MacArthur suggests, but may equally be of religious significance, as with *A*s and *Alpha*s of a similar form from Northumbrian sculpture of the late 7th century onwards. The letter may even be a secondary feature, added at any later time.

Whose royal portrait could this be? Macquarrie suggests Kenneth's son **Constantine**, king of Scots, or Constantine's son **Donald**, both late 9th century. Just a little too late for Arthur. *CL*

• Paul Kelbie "King MacArthur: Scots lay claim to the legend of the round table" *The Independent* July 12 2004; www.clannarthur.com

• Anna Ritchie *ed* (1994) *Govan and its Early Medieval Sculpture* (Alan Sutton Publishing, Stroud)

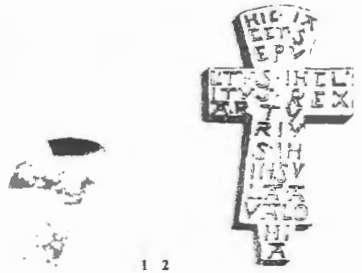
• R Michael Spearman "The Govan sarcophagus: an enigmatic monument" in Ritchie 1994

EAST SAXON ROYAL BURIAL

Not far behind Sutton Hoo in importance is a rich burial at an Anglo-Saxon cemetery at **Prittlewell**, near Southend in Essex. Apart from its own instrinsic interest, this 2003 discovery may also have implications for the so-called **grave of Arthur** at Glastonbury.

Two Merovingian coins – sadly lacking any rulers' names – can be dated to around 600–630 (such coins were only minted between 570 and 670). A gold buckle, possibly designed to hold a relic, is of a type most popular between 600 and 640. Two Kentish-style squat glass jars are dated 580–630, and the grave also included two squat jars in blue glass paralleled by others from contemporary graves in the south-east. A fine cast bronze flagon from the eastern Mediterranean shows what appears to be a saint on a horse, and a so-called Coptic bronze bowl is also datable to the first half of the 7th century.

These and other items – two cauldrons, eight wooden cups with gilded mounts, a large casket, lyre, Christian ritual spoon, Mediterranean folding stool, sword and shield, for example – testify to the burial of an important male individual, in a wooden chamber 4 metres square and 1.5 metres high. Who may he have been?



Though the acid soil has left no body to investigate, the excavators suspect the deceased to have been either **King Sigeberht**, who converted to Christianity in 653, or the earlier **King Saeberht**, converted in 604. The prime reason for chosing Christian kings in preference to pagan is the presence of two little gold-foil crosses, each just over an inch long and the first such to have been discovered in England. Lack of perforations meant they may not have been sewn onto clothing or a shroud but simply laid on the corpse (*figure 1 after MoLAS*).

With its splayed head and arms the outline of the Latin cross shape may seem a little familiar, as will their association with a regal burial (Lovegrove 1997). While there are many differences – precise shape, material, inscription, size – the practice of placing such an object above the body of an important personage makes the lead cross reportedly found in "Arthur's" tomb at Glastonbury a rather less suspicious find (*figure 2, 19th century version*).

A charitable interpretation of the Glastonbury cross – that it was "a tenth-century falsification" – is supported by the discovery of an equal-armed lead mortuary cross from Bishop Giso's 1088 tomb at Wells Cathedral (Rodwell 1989: 18–19). The latter cross, though rather less elegant than the Arthurian example, also exhibits splayed extremities. *CL*

• "Prittlewell: Treasures of a King of Essex" *Current Archaeology 190* (February 2004) 430–436

• www.southendmuseums.co.uk/history/saxonking/saxonking1.htm and www.molas.org.uk (accessed 3/09/2004)
• Karl Wittwer "New royal burial found" *Widowinde 133* (Spring 2004) 16
• Chris Lovegrove "Arthur's Cross?" *Pendragon XXVI* No 4 (Autumn-Winter 1997) 17–19
• Warwick Rodwell (1989) *Church Archaeology* (B T Batsford / English Heritage)

WHO BUILT STONEHENGE?

For many years archaeologists and others have pointed out Geoffrey of Monmouth's "remarkable story of how **Merlin** brought Stonehenge piecemeal from Mount Killaraus in Ireland to Salisbury Plain (viii.10–14) and its resemblance to the parallel account of the carrying of the bluestones by sea and overland from the Prescelly mountains which is given by modern archaeologists" (Thorpe 1966: 19).

Recent discoveries and research have reinforced this notion that "the legend may retain elements of the original Bronze Age story," according to Andrew Fitzpatrick of Wessex Archaeology.

At the very beginning of the Bronze Age – four thousand and more years ago – an individual from Central Europe was, with a companion, given an extraordinarily rich burial near Stonehenge. A metalworker, the earliest known in Britain, he became known, from finds interred with him, as the **Amesbury archer**. At nearby Boscombe Down, less than half a kilometre away, a contemporary burial has now been found to be no less unusual though very different. No less than seven individuals were buried in a mass grave, three adult males, a male teenager and three children. From five barbed-and-tanged flint arrowheads found with them, these individuals have become collectively (and alliteratively) known as the **Boscombe bowmen**. A boar's tusk found in the mass grave (several were found in the Amesbury burial) may have been a metalworking tool, representing their collective expertise. But there is more.

One child had been cremated, but four of the other's disarticulated skeletons had been disposed around the eldest man. His thighbone had been badly broken and, despite healing, would have forced him to walk with a limp. From cranial studies it seems likely that all the males were related. From studies of their tooth enamel, which showed high proportions of strontium, they must have come not from the Wessex chalk downs but from an area with a high *radiogenic* background. From analysis of levels of oxygen isotopes in their teeth enamel they must have originated from either the Lake District or Wales.

Because the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire are the geological source of the Stonehenge bluestones, and **Bedd Arthur** ("Arthur's Grave") on the Hills is a similar if smaller version of the Stonehenge Bluestone Oval, it's been suggested that the Bowmen migrated from Pembrokeshire, accompanying the bluestones on their way to transforming an existing temple, according to Fitzpatrick. But why Preseli?

Copper exploitation by Beaker Folk at Ross Island, Lough Leane, in Ireland's County Kerry, seems to have begun around the same time. The Preselis were a distinctive landmark and, with their almost unique Milky Way spotted dolerite stones, would have been a link in the journeyings of the new metalworkers who built the earliest phases at Stonehenge. The story of the transportation of the Giants' Ring in Geoffrey's *Historia* from Ireland to Salisbury Plain certainly has elements that parallel the metalworking links between Ireland and Wessex and the bluestone and human links between the Preselis and Wessex in the early Bronze Age.

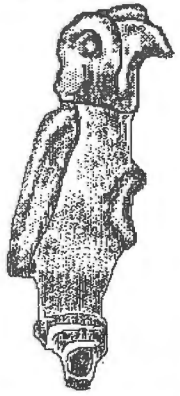
But could such a tradition be passed down over three millennia during changes of religions, cultures and languages? Geoffrey's mention of secret religious rituals and medical properties associated with the stones could of course reflect folk practices of his own time, and supporters of the theory have to resort to selecting facts that suit their purpose: few, for example, mention that Geoffrey writes of the stones being in Africa before giants took them to Ireland! More work needs to be done before Geoffrey can be fully vindicated, and before any intriguing associations with the ailing Fisher King, wounded in the thigh, can be substantiated. *CL*

• Lewis Thorpe *transl* (1966) *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Penguin, Harmondsworth)
• A P Fitzpatrick "The Boscombe bowmen: builders of Stonehenge?" *Current Archaeology 193* (August-September 2004) 10–16

WHOSE PAST IS IT ANYWAY?

Concern has been expressed that artefacts that may have been stolen or looted from sites are ending up auctioned on the internet auction site, eBay. Known as *nighthawks*, some metal detectorists may be anonymously offloading illegally excavated finds in this way, as a *Sunday Telegraph* investigation has revealed.

Detectorists are legally obliged to report gold and silver finds over three centuries old under the 1996 Treasure Act, but items mentioned in the paper's exposé were not officially recorded. *The Sunday Telegraph* was thus able to purchase a silver Early Medieval so-called **parrot brooch** with no provenance for £220. Though described on eBay as 7th-8th century, an officer with the Portable Antiquities Scheme said the 6.1cm Anglo-Saxon brooch, bought from a Suffolk treasure-hunter, was "a very rare thing dating from the **fifth century** with few close parallels in England". The lack of context for the find "may be at least as important as the loss from public ownership of the artefact itself" (which has now been recorded and offered to the British Museum).



• Fiona Govan "What am I bid for this rare antiquity?" *The Sunday Telegraph* September 12 2004

THE SIRENTE CRATERS: BAA-D NEWS

A new twist to the story of the Sirente crater-field in the Abruzzo Mountains of central Italy came in the April 1 2004 issue of *Meteoritics & Planetary Science* (vol 39, no 4, 635–649: 'An anthropogenic origin of the "Sirente crater", Abruzzi, Italy', by F. Speranza, L. Sagnotti and P. Rochette). Far from the craters resulting from a cluster of historically-recorded meteorite impacts during the 4th or 5th centuries AD, as was suggested back in 2002-03 by Ormo, Rossi and Komatsu (see *Pendragon XXXI* No 2, 34–35 for references and notes), it seems these "craters" are actually man-made **water reservoirs** for use in the seasonal migration of sheep flocks, a long-standing method of agriculture in the region, dating back to *c* 2000 BC, if not earlier.

The limestone karst terrain of the area means most surface water vanishes underground, so these ponds set into largely impermeable material and fed by diverting natural springs nearby, were essential to the survival of livestock. This new paper suggests that many of the ponds probably date to the most active phase of this practice, from the 12th to 17th centuries AD, and also notes that tens of similar small lakes can be found elsewhere in the Abruzzi highlands.

In a more recent development ("It Came From Outer Space?" by David Schneider, *American Scientist*, Nov–Dec 2004; traceable at www.americanscientist.org), it seems the original authors may have been a little "economical with the truth", since their unpublished data apparently contain a radiocarbon date for one of the craters in the third millennium BC! They have refused to comment on this so far, but a statement attributed to them by David Schneider's article suggests they are now rapidly back-pedalling on their original definite conclusions of a historically-identifiable impact event being behind the craters' formation.

Alastair McBeath

• A useful synopsis of all this and more was in the Cambridge Conference Network e-mail summary, CCNet 128/2004, for October 8 2004

More items / follow-ups in the next Old News!

A Knightly Endeavour:

the making of Jerry Bruckheimer's *King Arthur*

John Matthews

The call came in February 2003. "We're making a movie about King Arthur," I was told. "It's going to be very different, set in the Dark Ages and its main focus will be on the Sarmatian Theory." Was I familiar with it? Well, I was, and thought it an interesting idea. For the benefit of those who are not familiar with the theory – first proposed by Kemp Malone in 1922 – it concerns a Roman officer named Lucius Artorius Castus, the commander of a group of warriors from a nomadic tribe known as the Sarmatians. This warlike people collided with the armies of Rome, led by the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, in the second century AD. Having suffered a resounding defeat, they were, as was the common practice at a time, drafted into the Roman legions, and posted to the furthest borders of the Empire. One group, some 5000 strong, were posted to Britain, and in particular to the settlement of *Bremetanacum* (now modern-day Ribchester in Lancashire). From there they were posted to various parts of the country, including Hadrian's Wall, where some became part of the garrison at a fort known as *Camboglanna* (modern day Birdoswald in Cumbria).

This much is historical fact; the theory goes on to suggest that the deeds of Lucius Artorius Castus and the Sarmatian warriors lived on in the form of tales and legends that were the seeds from which the stories of Arthur emerged. A number of parallels exist between the history and beliefs of the Sarmatians and the later Arthurian legends. Not only did the Sarmatian cavalry fight under a dragon standard closely similar to that carried by Arthur, their stories also contained references to a magical cauldron, a Lady of the Lake, a mystical leader not unlike Merlin, and a warrior whose magical sword was thrown into a lake at the end of his life.

Such strong parallels are too obvious to ignore. It seems more than likely that memories of the Sarmatian warriors, their deeds and stories, were still remembered long after they were gone. The wandering bards and storytellers of the Celtic peoples would have been familiar with tales of these remarkable mounted warriors, famously skilled with bows and lances, led by a charismatic Romano-British commander named Artorius. Even the name of Arthur's sword, Excalibur, may have originated from the far-off lands of the Sarmatians. A tribe originating from the same part of the world, and famed for their skills in smithcraft, were known as the Kalybes. The oldest name for Excalibur is Caliburn, a word that originates from *chalybus* (white), and *eburnus* (steel).

Accuracy

So much for the theory. This, I was told, would form the background to the new Arthurian movie. The filmmakers were looking for an Arthurian expert, and my name had come up as the author of numerous titles on this subject. How would I like to go up to Hadrian's Wall and show producer Jerry Bruckheimer, director Antoine Fuqua, writer David Franzoni, and various other members of the crew around the remains of the forts on Wall?

Already I was thinking back over the numerous Arthurian films that I'd seen over the past 20 years, and how very few of them lived up to the original power of the legends. Hollywood seemed incapable of making a good Arthurian movie. Could this be different? I decided to find out. I arrived at Hadrian's Wall and stood in the snow watching for a limousine. Instead, a bright yellow helicopter descended from the sky, and disgorged its cargo of Hollywood moguls. I spent the rest of the day showing them round the remains of Hadrian's Wall and the Roman forts at Vindolanda and Houseteads.

I soon found that this particular group of filmmakers were very serious in their intent to make the most accurate Dark Age movie ever, and the first really accurate portrayal of Arthur and his men. Here was no light-hearted, entertainment-first-historical-accuracy-afterwards approach. Rather, I found everyone, from the producer down, very determined to do justice to the Arthurian legends.

On location

At the end of the day, having discussed many aspects of the legends, we went our separate ways. I hardly expected to hear from them again. However a couple of months later, I was invited to come out to the location, a few miles outside Dublin, where the film had already begun shooting. On that first morning, I drove over from the Base Camp – a scattering of caravans, lighting vans, kitchen facilities and tents containing a huge wardrobe for a veritable army of extras – to the set, a huge open expanse of ground where a 1.5 mile stretch of Hadrian's Wall had been built, along with a complete Roman Fort and a village with shops and tavern.

I remember staring up at the huge Wall towering above me, touching the great gates – so heavy they had to be pulled open by horses. And I remember walking around the fort early in the morning, climbing to top of the Wall and looking out across the fields to the hill that would become the site of Arthur's great battle against the Saxons – Badon Hill. It was literally like stepping back in time. After more than 30 years studying the Arthurian legends, suddenly I was inside them, seeing for myself what it felt like to live in those times.

Back at the Base Camp my favourite place to be was the armoury, always busy and filled with the noise of hammers, drills and sanders. Hundreds of spears stood in giant bins, rack upon rack of black painted crossbows jostled for space with mounds of Roman shields, helmets and swords. In a small room at the back of the huge tent in which all this was housed were the weapons belonging to the individual knights – Lancelot's two swords, which he wears slung across his back and draws one over each shoulder; Tristan's strangely curved blade, designed to look just a little bit Eastern to reflect his Sarmatian background.

From here on I was regularly on the set for various periods of time throughout the next 18 months. I advised on everything from the original Arthurian stories, to the reconstruction of the Pictish language (in fact my wife, Caitlin, provided several lines of reconstructed 'Pictish' for the finished movie). I supplied Pictish designs on which the body paintings seen in the movie were based. Within a day of arriving on the set, I had redesigned a description of Arthur's sword – changing it from hugely inappropriate Saxon runes, to an Ogam inscription reading 'Defender of the Land'.

I found that everyone I met on the set was as dedicated as the producer, director and writer to create the most accurate portrayal of the Arthurian period ever attempted. Now that I was officially the historical adviser to the movie, I found that I could look at every aspect of production and comment upon them. I also found that my comments were not only listened to, but in many cases acted upon.

At times I would sit in what was about the only bit of shade in the whole area – the actor's tent. There I could talk with Clive Owen (Arthur), Keira Knightly (Guinevere), Ioan Gruffudd (Lancelot) or Ray Winstone (Bors) and the others about their conception of the Knights and how these might or might not differ from the stories that existed about them. For much of the time I felt as though

I was sitting down with the real Knights of the Round Table!

I watched at the role of Guinevere, played with great relish by 19-year old Keira, evolved from more traditional character into that of a warrior, fighting alongside Arthur and his men for the freedom of her people. I watched in awe as the great battle scenes were painstakingly put together – almost everything you see in the movie was made with extras rather than CGI. Clouds of black smoke hung over the battlefield throughout the day, and set dressers walked round with pails containing spare body parts, blood bags, and mud. Mounds of fake bodies lay about on the field, and for days I kept apologising for almost stepping on them before I realised they were not real.

Dozens of extras, dressed as Roman legionaries, took shelter from the baking heat in the shadow of Wall. Every day as I drove past them to and from the unit base camp, they were there. It was a delight to see them smoking cigarettes, wearing sunglasses, and speaking into mobile phones! On other days, the entire Saxon army marched to and from the refreshment tent. They made a fierce and impressive sight. As the heat soared into the 90s a lone ice cream seller ventured up from the nearby town of Ballimore Eustace. Almost immediately a queue formed, and just as quickly a group of Arthur's knights, in full battle gear, arrived and made their way to the front of the queue by the simple expedient of drawing their swords and looking threatening!

Reality

King Arthur is a film that challenges us on many levels. Those who know and love the Arthurian legends, who have worked with them for many years, will see where most of it is coming from – though I think David Franzoni is the first person to make Guinevere Merlin's daughter: a strikingly original idea, which makes sense of Merlin's dynastic dreams. Not everyone will agree with the way the movie has been made, or for that matter with the storyline, and will doubtless find faults, which, for one reason or another, could not be corrected – mostly because we were making an entertainment rather than a documentary. The story also ends before the whole tale is told, so I hope for a sequel to round off the whole. However, one thing above all others I believe to be true: this version of the Arthurian story will make everyone who sees it think. It will, I hope, encourage people to reconsider the Sarmatian theory, as it certainly has in my case. Whatever we may think in the end, it cannot fail to excite and impress us with the energy with which the actors and the director were driven to produce such a powerful statement.

By no means everything of the original Arthurian stories has gone. No story of Arthur would be complete without Excalibur, and having long since decided that there would be a Round Table at which the knights would meet, we were delighted to find that the Sarmatians liked to eat – and dance upon – circular tables. The great love story of Lancelot, Arthur and Guinevere is also present, though in more low-key form than in the later medieval versions. There is little time for love in the harsh and uncompromising times in which these people lived. Yet even here, in the midst of battle and warfare, respect gives way to tenderer feelings, and one can see clearly enough how the story might have begun. Everywhere in the movie there are echoes of the original Arthurian legends, and it is certainly not hard to see how Dark Age reality became medieval fantasy.

It is this reality, dark and brutal, that makes this new account of the legend so powerful. I remain convinced that Arthur and his knights were real people, and that something not unlike the struggle portrayed in the film really took place. Working on it, seeing it brought to birth, was an extraordinary experience. It is changed me, and every word I write about the Arthurian story from now on will be touched by memories of my involvement in the making of this remarkable movie.

John Matthews INTERVIEW WITH DAVID FRANZONI

Ian Brown

David Franzoni is a successful screenwriter, responsible for *Gladiator* and *Amistad* among others. *King Arthur* is his latest project and during the filming he and I spent a lot time talking about myth and the Arthurian stories. It was clear to me then that he has a lot to say on the subject, and that his approach to the myth of Arthur was refreshingly original. When the opportunity arose recently for us to sit down and have a conversation about the background to the writing of the screenplay, I jumped at the chance. Here was an opportunity for the writer of the film to put his own case directly to the Arthurian community, and to explain the thinking behind some of the decisions that went into the finished work. The following is a lightly edited transcript of that conversation.

So where did your association with the Arthurian legends begin?

When I first came to Los Angeles as a struggling screenwriter, I was living in North Ridge and used to go to the California State Library there because I couldn't buy many books at the time. I came across a student's dissertation, which proposed – not necessarily for the first time – that Lucius Artorius Castus might have been the seed for the Arthurian myth. At the time I just filed this away. Then when I was in Rome working on *Gladiator*, I began to do some research. Not so much going back to the original sources or reading Lucius Artorius Castus' diary [laughter] but following up on that one little hint. Of course I came across *From Scythia to Camelot* by C Scott-Littleton and Linda Malcor, and that was the first time that I realised it wasn't just about Lucius Artorius Castus but the whole Sarmatian thing as well. That's what was most compelling to me, that this might be the foundation for the whole Arthurian legend. Of course I learned that other scholars, having gotten up before I did, realised this a long time ago, but until fairly recently they hadn't been able to figure out just how they were connected. Now of course we know about Marcus Aurelius defeating the Sarmatians and sending them

over to Britain. That part interested me, but it was reading Ovid, the Roman poet, how when he was exiled to the Black Sea by Augustus, lived right next door to the same tribe from which our Sarmatians evolved. It was like some Truman Capote from Rome living next to the Hell's Angels and describing in exquisite detail how horrible it was. So you had this wonderful irony – that these gallant, polished knights, who were cruising around Britain solving inscrutable mysteries and rescuing bored Beverly Hills housewives from themselves, were actually descended from the Hell's Angels! After that it became for me the American GI experience – strangers in a strange land, killing to stay alive and hating doing it. I saw that this was how it must have been for Arthur, going to Britain with ideals, believing in Rome, believing you're right, but having that belief stripped away, sword stroke by sword stroke, and serving with a bunch of guys who completely hate what they're doing, who are surrounded by people who hate them, and who are longing to go home. That makers it real, and to get me up in the morning to write something historical, if it isn't about us today as people it isn't worth doing. We can never really know what it was like to be them, but we do know what it's like to be us, that shared human experience. So it seemed to me more truthful to try to capture that. When I saw who the Sarmatians were, how they were led by a Roman, I thought of the American GI experience. I've been asked over and over if the movie is about Baghdad. The obvious answer is that it's not, because I wrote it before war, its just based on universal experience.

Was this one of the reasons you decided to do a new take on Arthur? Because of the truths underlying the original stories?
It had a lot to do with who Arthur was. The thing I disliked about other Arthur movies is that Arthur was never anything but a symbol, he was never a human being for me. Presuming that this great myth started with a human being, he must have been a hell of a human being. And that means of course, he had dirt under his fingernails, and probably didn't wash very often. It doesn't make him a great myth but it does make him a great man. It kind of like what Kazanzakis tried to do in *The Last Temptation of Christ*, I'm not saying that's what Scorsese did in the movie version, but I think what Kazantzakis tried to do was represent Christ as a human being. The Arthur myth is one of those myths that although it's heroic, is virtually a religious myth – that transcends borders, cultures, languages, everything. Arthur is in every country, in every language, I can't think of anything – except perhaps ancient Greek myth – that has that kind of power.

Really Arthur is a national hero for Britain.
I think he's a national hero for the World. I think he's somebody who, though he's recognised as British, is really more than that. I found that the American critics were far more upset with the fact that we had somehow defiled Arthur by taking away his mythical status. I think the British have come to be pleasantly amused by what we've done, because everywhere you go in Britain, there are 'King Arthur's Slept Here' notices, whereas in America we still reverence it all without question. I can't think of any other myth in our consciousness that's powerful as Arthur.

So would you say you believe there was a real, historical Arthur?
Yes absolutely.

You also took a very radically different view of Merlin. How did that come about?
Once you start down this road, once you start asking what could have happened, what could they have been doing, then Merlin inevitably comes out as a great leader. In my mind I think of Ho Chi Min as a model for Merlin because of the kind of war they both fought. Merlin couldn't have just been a shaman. It always seemed to me that for him to have the ability to teach Arthur, who was a military man, Merlin had to be a military man too – or at least the charismatic leader of a warrior people. The shaman aspect was secondary to me and needed to be de-emphasised.

One thing that interested me is that you're obviously very passionate about myth, but you've also demythologised Arthur in this version of the story. Do you see any conflict in that?
But have we, though?

I mean by concentrating purely on the historical side of things.
We may have denied a particular myth, but I love going back to the origins of things. I mean, whether Arthur really arose from Lucius Artorius Castus or a predecessor nevertheless it seemed to me that the Sarmatians are clearly linked to the Arthurian myths, and if indeed, as seems likely, they were the ones that fought and died at Badon Hill is, it would certainly be nice to give them back their place in history.

How do you feel about the finished film?
There's a lot to love. It's the Horsemen of the Apocalypse rather than tin cans cruising around the neighbourhood. The battle scenes, especially the one on the frozen lake, are spectacular. One review even called it the greatest battle scene in cinema history. Sometimes I think that the 'R' rated version was better – it was a fleshier version. The Hollywood version was cut to the bone. There have been cuts because of the violence, and others for more inscrutable reasons that I'd rather see restored. Hopefully they will be in the DVD version. Some of these are about honouring the triangle between Arthur, Lancelot and Guinevere. I'm not in love with the opening of the movie – that was done by someone else. It smacks too much to me of an American cowboy film. In my original piece the knights were much darker, their relationship was much darker, they really hated Arthur, who was doing everything he could to control them. They wanted out. It's like in Vietnam, when often the only thing a lot of those guys did they were together was fight well. In the movie it's through that trial that the relationship between the guys gets mended. And then because of Guinevere, because of Merlin the whole thing moves to a higher plane. That's why they stay and fight and die. So I feel that although that was in some ways there, the set-up was wrong. I don't like cowboy movies. Put it this way, I like *Top Gun*, but this shouldn't be *Top Gun*. I think some of the riffs between the knights at the beginning took us out of the period.

You mentioned the battle on the frozen lake. I believe you were inspired by Classical literature when you wrote this?
Everyone asks did I take this from Eisenstein. But there is actually an eyewitness account of the Sarmatians being defeated by the Romans around 75 AD. And it took place on either a frozen lake or a frozen river. Although it's not exactly like our battle it did inspire me.

And how about the names in the script? I know you went for the medieval names, because if you'd used older ones no one would have known who you were talking about. But what about the particular selection? Were they chosen at random or did you have something else in mind?
No, they weren't random. Remember there was an original draft – and I'm not saying it's better or worse – but there I tried to find characteristics that defined the knights. I thought the knights we chose had definable characteristics. What unfortunately happens when you're writing a script, you have to do everything, get the story, the dialogue, the characterisation, and so on. Fortunately, I think because we had almost a completely UK cast, and they were pretty familiar with who their characters were, they were able to bring some of that magic through their own personalities. But it was a conscious decision to try and find definable knights, and there were a helluva lot of knights.

I was thinking for example of Galahad, who is very different in the original stories.
That was part of the idea. We were moving away from the polite version of Arthur. If someone's a great warrior, that means they're also a great killer. You don't become a warrior by sitting at home and macraméing. You're taking heads, living and sleeping rough, cleaning your sword at night and probably not sleeping much, but those are the people who become great warriors. These guys were killers – we were

just moving in the opposite direction from the original stories.

Is there anything you'd like to say to the Arthurian community, those who know and love the story so much?
Well, I'm a dilettante compared to those to scholars such as yourself. But I want to draw a line here in the sand. On one side are historians, who in my view are protectors of things that they don't necessarily understand any longer. Then there are scholars for whom history is never a dead thing. Every time they go back to the sources, they're not afraid to look at them and see things that may contradict some of the things they thought before. For these kind of scholars taking a new approach to Arthur has never been a problem. The myths of Arthur that emerge from whatever the true story was – we're not trying to invalidate those, or to short-circuit them – they have a glory of their own. Obviously, our intention was not to defile them, it was just to go back and try and find the source. The source had to be magnificent – not only for those myths to be so grand, so universal that they cross borders, but for them to survive at all.

Some have seen your version of the story as too revisionist. I don't agree with that myself, but what is your answer?
The question I would like to ask of the Arthurian crowd is why, over the years, has there been so much irrational resistance to the idea of the Sarmatians and their connection with Arthur? There's so much evidence to support this, and so little anywhere else. I just don't understand this. Its one of the reasons I made the remark about British archaeologists spending too much time chasing mummies in Egypt. If they hadn't they might have solved the mystery of Arthur by now. But where else do you find a Sword in the Stone, a Round Table, a Lady of the Lake and so on, all in one culture? Only in the Sarmatian and Arthurian myths – it seems to me there is compelling evidence – so let's look at it.

What about Pelagius? Why did you bring him into the story?
Well, first of all because he was, apparently, a British monk – though I know there's a question mark about that – and the ideas he had about being able to interface with God directly. His teachings on honour and good deeds and humanity seemed to me to smack of Arthurian chivalry. So it seemed a great idea to make Arthur a Pelagian. It was important that Arthur be something because as a Roman we'd have all that baggage, which was recognizable. But it seemed to me he needed to have personal convictions, and in the movie the journey to the north was where those convictions get stripped away and we arrive at the man and the hero. When everything else is stripped away Arthur can make the decision to stay and fight. So I had to have somebody be part of that political religious set up. Pelagius seemed a great example. In the original script there was more interplay between Arthur and the Bishop over this issue. Because it was important for us to recognise that although Arthur was a Christian, he still had that rebellious nature that made him slightly untrustworthy in Roman eyes. There's a seed of a great hero inside him, and given enough of the right input it's going to break out. Arthur is someone who would naturally gravitate towards the idea of free will and interfacing with God in a direct way. He doesn't free the villager from his chains because he's a Pelagian. He does it because he instinctually does those sorts of things. I think that's who Arthur is. When he sheds all that duty to Rome stuff and finds himself alone in the land, he can make the decision to stay and fight. Someone who would bow to Rome, who would disavow his heretical beliefs, would never be able to be Arthur. Someone who would buy into the predetermined relationship with God, who'd never heard of Pelagius, to me could never be Arthur. Certain to be a Christian at the time, it seemed to me that he would choose some heretical version which defied the Augustinian approach.

It's interesting that you decided to make Arthur a Christian. Most of the more recent versions that have taken the Dark Age road have made him pagan.

It's interesting that if you look at the family of Lucius Artorius Castus, they were actually involved in a cult of the Virgin. Then you have the reference in Nennius of him carrying a shield with the image of the Virgin on the inside. That seemed to me to point in the same direction.

If you had to sum up what the underlying theme or themes of the movie might be, what would you say?
The underlying theme for me is that any individual can shed the stuff that he believes make up his personality, his religion or his culture, so that you can take an honest look at the real person underneath, and that person can have free will and become a hero. This happened to George Washington, who was a Deist, and to Leonides of Sparta. I believe that being in charge of the Greek coalition was a purely political decision. Being on that front line with those guys helped him shed all that. Politicians don't stay and fight to the death. This seems to work for the kind of person Arthur would have been. We have to do that ourselves – look at every way our culture has moulded us and try to see who we are. The philosopher Wittgenstein says that we are all just words, nothing more than our language, and that language in its purest form is nothing but a conveyance for images. That we can't go to a prehistoric cave and look at the drawings without being able to carry those images in some form. But the invention of language takes us in a whole other direction, conveying concepts rather than images. He believes that in many ways those are fraudulent, that they don't really exist outside language. The images of course do. We are in unique position, in our time, to be able to take the vessel of language that carries our images and re-energize them through film. In the movie *Troy* for example, though I'm not wild about the way it came out, those language images from Homer's time that have been transported through the ages get translated back into images on the screen.

Arthur himself to such an iconic figure. There are moments in the movie, such as when Arthur rides out of the gates of the Wall through the smoke with his sword shining in his hand, or when he's on top of Badon Hill with the dragon standard – those are iconic moment. They resonate in our minds at a very deep level.
This is all part of the transition between man and myth. In the movie Arthur is never really portrayed as a monarch, but as a man struggling to control the knights, to fight a guerrilla war against overwhelming odds. This is another underlying theme. If we look for greatness in ourselves, if we look back at the experiences in our lives, we find it's there. But people are so willing to default to the images and stories they find in movies and television because they contain stars, whom we worship, that we forget to default to our own experiences. I'm so tired of seeing movies about other movies. I'm more interested in making movies about the lives people have really lead. It's the same with Arthur. Even in the myths, when he's a young boy and pulls the sword out of the stone, he doesn't believe it. He's not a greedy politician, or a charismatic hero – he's just a guy. That's what I wanted to say in this movie.

• *Recorded in London on 15th July, 2004*

Arthur is British. We all agree on that: romantics, Celticists, poets, painters, historians, Welsh, Scots, Cornish, English. OK, Arthur may have been brought up in Brittany ... and 'buried' in Avalon which may not be in Britain. And early tales may have been written by Bretons, Frenchmen and a Jerseyman, followed quickly by Germans and Italians, the Spanish, Dutch ... and many others. He may have forged an Empire from the Denmark Strait to The Alps and is sleeping still in caves from Finisterre to the shores of the Mediterranean. But Arthur's still British. He's British today at any rate ... apart from those Arthurs created by Sinclair Lewis, John Steinbeck, Mark Twain, Howard Pyle, Jean Cocteau, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Jerry Zucker and now Jerry Bruckheimer.

Is Arthur British at all?

Foreign Exchange Dave Burnham

Watching *Die Hard* dubbed into Italian with Arabic sub titles was a rare treat. Courtesy of a rainy afternoon in our Tunisian holiday resort I was able to appraise this shoot 'em up classic as never before. I realised that at heart *Die Hard* is a reworking of the abduction of Guinevere. Alan Rickman plays a richly evil Meleagent / Melwas, holed up in his magical glass tower with hostages including Bonnie Bedelia, Bruce Willis's estranged wife. Willis, a rough and ready Arthur lays siege to the crystal fortress, destroying it bit by bit before throwing Rickman to his doom and reclaiming his bride. Willis is a strange Arthur, but we Britons are used to offbeat Arthurian images from across the Atlantic. While we should glory in any triumph of imagination, some US Arthurs do challenge us, for the tone of the various Arthurs sent from the new world is different from our old world originals.

Of course, we have much in common. Late twentieth century American portrayals, such as those of Stephen Lawhead and Marion Zimmer Bradley have been popular on both side of the Atlantic. And a hundred years ago Tennyson and Malory, when exported, triggered as much enthusiasm for their high mediaeval Arthur in the US as in the UK. The establishment of student societies such as Dartmouth College's *Casque and Gauntlet* in the US was one of the more obvious signs of such acceptance. The strength of chivalric ideals in the US a century ago can be judged by the reaction. Mark Twain's 1889 riposte, *A Connecticut Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, was a violent satire, but it did not dent the US attachment to chivalric notions. These survived through the twentieth century, whereas British chivalry was dealt a fatal blow by the Great War. Thus in the 1950s and 1960s when British writers and historians were dragging a brutish dark age Arthur to life, John Steinbeck was still rewriting Malory almost word for word. And Dartmouth's *Casque and Gauntlet* society exists to this day.

More was offered to children in the US a hundred years ago as well. In the UK W T Stead's *Books for Bairns* series included an Arthurian volume and many junior versions of Malory were printed at the time, but G A Henty did not include Arthur in his 80 or so British historical adventure stories. In the US however the reworkings of Malory for children by Lanier and particularly Howard Pyle were immensely popular. And the comic craze, starting in the US in the thirties, has always included Arthurian themes. Somehow American Arthurs have been more fun than British ones.

These two strands, fun and chivalry, occasionally come together in the US and are demonstrated admirably in the New Orleans Mardi Gras commemoration club *King Arthur's Krewe*. Thousands of people take part in Mardi Gras, preparing elaborate costumes and tableaux for floats. *King Arthur's Krewe* prepares a float each year, but also has officers elected annually to be King Arthur, Guinevere, Lancelot and so on.

All this confirms American readiness to bend base material into new forms. This radicalism may well be part of the American psyche, whose joy is played out often in breaking 'old world' shackles. But it also may be because, for Americans, Arthur and his friends are merely characters in cracking

yarns. There is no geographical resonance for them and none of the ethnic rivalry we have in Britain which has so enriched and enraged Arthurian debate here.

This is confirmed by the third strand of difference: the US approach to the academic consideration of Arthur. The major Arthurian academic society, The International Arthurian Society, is American-based and American-led, publishing *Arthuriana*, the only properly refereed academic journal which concentrates entirely on matters Arthurian. Thus it's no surprise that many current leading lights in Arthurian study (Alan Lupack, Barbara Tepa Lupack and Christopher Snyder for instance) are American. Although not concentrating entirely on one aspect of Arthuriana, the study of mediaeval literature seems to be the core of this academic enterprise, which has expanded to encompass everything else. In contrast many books published about Arthur in the UK over the last generation have had the idea of a historical Arthur at their centre and use topographical evidence as a heavy selling point.

There are problems with this US academic dominance. First of all, set against the fun many Americans have had with Arthur, much American scholarship is extraordinarily earnest. Some books and articles are snared with more references than can possibly be useful, as if the authors are saying, 'see, I've quoted a thousand sources – now you have to take me seriously'. This earnestness makes for dull reading. Secondly, and this is a subtle point, there is sometimes a political agenda that makes the scholarship questionable.

A prime example is Littleton and Malcor's *From Scythia to Camelot*. This contains the assertion that the Arthurian legend cycle derives from myths of Scythian origin, carried across to Britain in 185 AD when Marcus Aurelius had 5000 Sarmation horsemen transported to Britain and deployed as part of the northern defences. Legends from the Caucasus, near to where the Sarmation horsemen originated, have a hero named Batraz, some of whose adventures bear a striking similarity to Arthur's. So, it is argued, the Sarmations brought these tales with them, releasing into British society in the second century the whole cycle, almost fully formed.

This engaging construct is almost done to death in the book by the academic overkill, there being so many endnotes it makes for an uninspiring and jerky read. Littleton and Malcor take a *Life, the Universe and Everything* approach, sweeping up in their thesis all Arthurian ideas that can be claimed for their Sarmation connection. The authors allow some parts of the cycle to have Welsh or Irish origins, but I was left with the distinct impression the authors felt that cultural heritage derived indigenously was somehow unacceptable. This impression is confirmed in a review of the book by Victor Mair[1] who suggests that it should 'convince the most obdurate xenophobe that not all European history and culture was locally self-generated'.

Myth and legend tell of common human challenges and pains. Where people from different cultures meet myths and tales and folk-lore will be shared and exchanged, blend and develop. The question Littleton and Malcor leave begging in *From Scythia to Camelot* is about the 'receiving' culture. What did the Britons believe? What were their tales? Did the Sarmations, when they married and mingled learn nothing from the British? So determined are Littleton and Malcor to prove their point they have not allowed the British to have any influence over their own emerging hero tales. The authors not only sever Arthur from his British roots; they treat Britain as an empty page to be written on, with no indigenous culture allowed.

[1] See *Heroic Age*, Issue 2, Autumn/Winter 1999 (www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/2/ha2tf.htm)

A more likely example of foreign exchange was suggested to me in the same hotel where I met Bruce Willis's Arthur. Sitting at my window I could see, through the rain, the town of Sousse, from whose port the Aghlabid dynasty launched their invasion of Sicily in the ninth century. Islam then held Sicily until it was conquered at the end of the eleventh century by the Normans. After that a Norman 'County of Tripoli' was established on the coast of North Africa, which lasted from 1102 to 1187. This political and military 'exchange' became something more positive with subsequent kings of Sicily, Norman by descent, acclimatising to the Byzantine, Muslim and Jewish influences in the central Mediterranean. Through the twelfth century in Sicily Christian and Moslem lived and worked together, traded and even married.

In twelfth-century Italy Arthur was already a figure of some significance. Various manifestations demonstrate this including the:

- sculpture in Modena Cathedral (1130?),
- mosaic in the Norman cathedral in Otranto in Apulia (c. 1165),
- 'sword in the stone' hermitage at San Galgano (begun in 1195),
- naming of the mirage that appears in the straight of Messina as the Fata Morgana,
- several assertions that King Arthur rests under Sicily's mount Etna, and
- report by Roger of Howden that on March 6th 1191 Richard I gave Tancred of Sicily Caliburn as a gift.

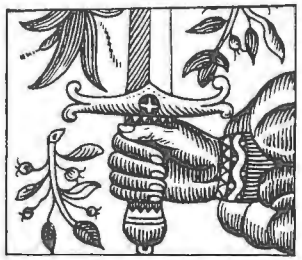
This last is especially odd. Why was Tancred – a small player on the world stage, with not much chance in the long run of hanging onto Sicily – be worthy of such a gift? Arthur in 1191 had not reached the zenith of his military reputation, but he was, as we have seen above, a figure of huge stature. Perhaps Tancred was considered worthy of Caliburn because it was thought to have some association with Sicily. Could there have been tales circulating in Sicily at the time about such a sword and the king under the mountain? And could the Islamic presence in Sicily have influenced such tales? In particular was there a special sword or a tale of a cave holding a sleeping king in the Islamic tradition? Consideration of non-European provenance for early aspects of the Arthurian cycle (Sarmations excepted) has never been extensively debated. While there has been discussion of an Ethiopian origin for von Eschenbach's vision of the Grail as a stone, and Robert de Boron's introduction of Joseph of Arimathea implies a Levantine origin for the Grail story, there seems to have been no debate about possible Islamic sources.[2]

There are hundreds of Islamic story sources; Persian collections such as *The Shahnameh*, Turkish stories such as *The Book of Dede Korkut*, animal tales such as *Lalila Wa Dimna*, but the most renowned and best known in the west is *The Arabian Nights*. Could there be base material here for a Sicilian Caliburn? The template of *Alf Layla Wa Layla* (*A Thousand Nights and One Night*) from which early European translations derive, is thought to have been written in Syria at the end of the thirteenth century. However there is copious evidence that a book called *Alf Layla* was available as early as the ninth century. So tales from *Alf Layla Wa Layla* were written early enough to influence western literature and it was also thought to have been ubiquitous in the Arab speaking world from an early date. We also know that versions of *Alf Layla* tales were used by mediaeval European writers. The Squire's Tale in *The Canterbury Tales* is a version of a tale from *Alf Layla* as are a couple of Bocaccio's tales featured in *The Decameron*. The tale of *King Sinbad and The Falcon* could easily be a template of the story of Prince Llewelyn and his dog Gelert, and could the frame from *the Taming of the Shrew* come from *Alf Layla*? The trouble is, of course, that there are European variants on many such tales and stories will flow this way and that across cultures if the stories have any wit or pace about them. One *Alf Layla* tale includes the exploit of a grand lady riding through her city unveiled, while he husband commands the citizens not to look on – much like Godiva. When Roger of Wendover wrote his daring tale of the lady

[2] I'm certain someone can show me I'm wrong.

of Coventry in the twelfth century, did he draw from a kernel of local history and had his tale developed in other countries, or did he use a template from elsewhere?

When I found a comprehensive translation of *Alf Layla Wa Layla* I ploughed into the text. The edition I borrowed has nigh on three thousand pages, so I have barely read a tenth of it. But I have read enough to say that *Alf Layla Wa Layla* is a delight. It is a complicated nest of stories, one set within another; some short; some intricate; some dull. But many are funny and enchanting. Despite the Disneyfication of the few *Alf Layla* tales we are familiar with in the west (Aladdin, Ali Baba and the voyages of Sinbad) it is certainly not for children. Many of the tales are sexually explicit and grossly violent. Neither do the tales make concessions to western sensibilities. Women are often portrayed as cunning harlots, different races are dismissed with crude caricature, disabilities are always the fault of the victim and losers die in the most gruesome manner. Nothing's fair. Allah and fate rule all.

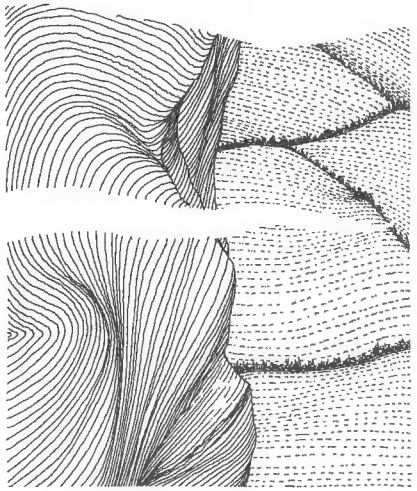


The sword and the cave? Well I didn't find anything. I was wrong.

But I did find something more interesting. Look out your own copy and read the *Tale of the Fisherman and the Jinni*, the final section, from the point where the coloured fish in the frying pan claim they are still faithful, on the sixth night of Sherzahd's tale telling.

Tell me if it brings anything to mind ...[3]

[3] See also Ian Brown (2001) "The Arabian Knights of the Round Table?" *Pendragon XXIX* No 3, 33–4. Dave Burnham is the author of "The Willing Suspension of Disbelief: R G Collingwood and the historical King Arthur" *The Historian* Autumn 2004, 36–42. *Ed*



Ian Brown

I shall return! King Arthur in Scotland

Charles W Evans-Günther

The search for Arthur (king or otherwise) has taken us all to many places and sometimes we may even have felt quite convinced by what we read. However, so far, Arthur continues to be as elusive as he was when Joseph Ritson attempted a reasonably sane investigation in the nineteenth century. What follows will not be an "I've found Arthur" article. Most of this article is based on material gleaned from various chronicles and manuscripts. Nevertheless, much of this information is what folk believed rather than history. I will leave it to the reader to make up his or her mind as to whether there is any value to what I have written. The first half is set in Scotland while the second part will take us to the United States, the Philippines and Japan.

Any study of King Arthur must be clarified with a short note about whether there was a historical Arthur. This is the topic that has spawned numerous books and innumerable articles. It would be fair to say that there is no real evidence. Gildas, who was said to have been writing in the mid-6th century, makes no mention of him. There are those who have given explanations of this, including a family feud between Arthur and Gildas and that Arthur was a household name, so didn't need to be named. But it is more likely Gildas had never heard of Arthur. That doesn't mean Arthur didn't exist, only that his fame was yet to be created. There may have been a Dark Age warrior who fought battles for the British kings, but he may well have not risen to the great heights of a superhero until well after Gildas.

Arthurian localities

A few years ago Alistair Moffat, in his *Arthur and the Lost Kingdoms* (1999 Weidenfeld & Nicolson), made an interesting attempt to locate Arthur in Scotland. Before that, Norma Goodrich did her bit for Scottish tourism (and the Isle of Man) and there have been a good number of shots at an Arthurian Scotland dating back to Skene and Glennie in the nineteenth century. Often the writer has felt it necessary to move everything, lock, stock and barrel, to beyond Hadrian's Wall.

Evidence for Anglo-Saxon settlements in Scotland, as far as I am aware, is virtually zero, even though the *Historia Brittonum* records Octha and Ebissa settling around the Wall "that is called Guaul". Equally, there seems to be little to support a series of battles in Scotland fought by Arthur. If we accept the list in Chapter 56 of the *Historia Brittonum* as being based on historical fact, then I think it would be safe to place them in what is now England, and probably towards the east coast, possibly Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. Only one battle sounds Scottish – Celyddon Wood, but it could have been anywhere. Not included in the list, but which may have been nearer Scotland, is Camlan. this battle has passed down in Welsh bardic tradition as a thing of chaos, indicating a possible civil war. The name would seem to mean a crooked glen, and it fits fine with a place of that name on Hadrian's Wall – Cambloglanna – Castlesteads with its Cam Beck.[1] Another suggestion is Camelon, near Falkirk, but a study of its place-name origin is necessary.

So what is there to point towards Scotland for Arthurian connections? The possible oldest reference to Arthur seems to originate in a poem composed about an abortive attack on Deira by troops of the Gododdin, centred on Edinburgh.[2] Then it would seem that the part of the *Historia Brittonum*, which includes Chapter 56, has a

[1] Cambloglanna was first thought to be Birdoswald; both places have crooked brooks and were occupied in the Dark Ages.

[2] *The Gododdin* was believed to have been composed by Aneirin. The oldest existing manuscript is in Cardiff Library but is based on a much older version.

strong Northern connection. A good part of this document is concerned with events related to the northern part of Britain. In a gloss of the *Historia*, and a possible lost version, a monument said to have been built by Carausius near the River Carron, Falkirk, is called Arthur's Palace. The description obviously points to what was called Arthur's O'on (Oven) – once a rare example of Roman architecture destroyed in the 18th century to build a dam.

Scotland has a good number of such place-names said to have Arthurian connections (one source numbers 200 sites). Here are just a few that use the name Arthur: Arthurlee, Arthur's Cairn, Arthur's Face, Arthur's Ford, Arthur's Fountain, Arthur's House, Arthurlee, Arthur's Oven, Arthur's Seat (possibly five of these), Arthur's Well, Ben Arthur (The Cobbler) and *Castrum Arthuri* (Arthur's Castle – Dumbarton Castle or nearby).[3]

The oldest recorded site is Arthur's O'on, mentioned in the *Historia Brittonum* in the ninth or tenth century and by Lambert of St Omer when quoting from a lost version of the above-mentioned chronicle, in 1120. There can be no doubt that this link with Arthur was not influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth, having been written down about 20 years before *The History of the Kings of Britain* appeared, and based on much older material. Arthur's Oven, with Arthur's Fountain, is mentioned again in 1293 and *Castrum Arthuri* was recorded in 1367. These dates are pretty significant since many other Arthurian sites throughout Britain don't see the light of day until the seventeenth century.[4]

Of the above, Dumbarton Castle has evidence of Dark Age occupation. It is known to have traded for Mediterranean wines since fifth century pottery shards have been found. Chronicles, including Welsh, Irish and Anglo-Saxon, also record its existence. The site was occupied continually until 870 when a Viking raid brought its life to a sudden and fiery end. St Patrick is said to have written a letter to the headman in Dumbarton during the mid-fifth century; he called him Coroticus and it is likely that this character is Ceredig Wledig of Welsh tradition and genealogies. His predecessors have unusual names including Cynlop and Confer, while his descendants included Dyfnwal Hen and Rhydderch Hael. The latter was part of a confederation of Celtic nations in a war against the growing threat of Northumbria. These included Rhydderch of Strathclyde, Urien of Rheged, Gwallwag of Elmet and Morgant, possibly of Gododdin. Of these only Strathclyde survived and despite being attacked both by Saxons and Vikings continued until 945 as an independent country, and was eventually integrated into the kingdom of Scotland in 1034.

Scottish Arthurs

In the same area as where there are a good few Arthur place-names can be found evidence of connections between that name and at least two clans. The clan system goes back a long time, but what follows is from material related to the Clan Campbell, with which the Clan Arthur (more commonly known as McArthur or MacArthur) is supposedly linked and which dates mainly from the 15th century onwards.[5] However, historical records do show that the name Arthur was more widespread and popular in Argyllshire in the Dark Ages and Middle Ages than it has ever been in Wales.

Dark Age materials record only one certain Arthur in Wales, other than the one who entered Welsh folklore, and that was Arthur the son of Pedr of Dyfed, great-grandson of the Vortipor mentioned by Gildas. This Arthur was descended from an

[3] A number of suggestions have been made concerning the sites in Scotland, including that of John Rhys that Arthur replaced an older hero called Airem. Also many of the place-names are in Gaelic.

[4] An interesting account can be found in the 15th century *Scotichronicon*, with Caesar being the builder but Arthur using it as a hunting lodge.

[5] The Clan Arthur believes that it is older than the Clan Campbell and supports this with evidence from medieval documents that show the MacArthurs as being more powerful and owning more land in the Argyll area than the Campbell. The MacArthurs had supported Robert the Bruce and had been given extensive estates in the area.

Irish family that had migrated to South West Wales.[6] However, in Scotland a bevy of Arthurs appeared in Dark Age chronicles all from roughly the same area and within a few centuries. That was the area settled by the Irish Dalriada. These include Arthur son of Aedan McGabran, Arthur son of Bicor, Arthur son of Conaing (son of Aedan), Arthur, the son of the king of Galloway, and a number of others found in stories linked with Ireland. By the Middle Ages the name had become popular with several families in South-west Scotland including the Campbells, McArthurs, MacNaughtons and Galbraiths.[7] All claimed links with British Celts as well as Irish Celts. Records and poetry connected with the Campbell clan talk about an Arthur "who was the famous king of the Britons". This material uses versions of Scottish history owing a lot to Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose works were considered by many to be genuine history. However, there are differences that are both interesting and somewhat intriguing.[8]

Campbell family trees

There are a number of versions of the Campbell family history – some just lists, others family trees with odd notes – but at least one long version, put together in the 18th century and printed in the 19th, is quite full. The picture of Arthur here is, at first, Galfridian, including the date 542 for his death, but goes off at a tangent. Most Scottish chronicles, such as Boece, also wove stories that were more Scottish and may even have been anti-English! This is probably due to the emphasis Edward I, hated by the Scots and Welsh alike, put on his links with King Arthur and the lands conquered by Geoffrey of Monmouth's hero. King Arthur is portrayed as something of a usurper, with Modred – who is said to have been a Pict – having a better claim to the leadership.

The Arthur of the Campbell clan history is called the son of Uther and Igerna, but is married to a daughter of the king of France. His first wife, un-named, was said to have been barren. The child of his second marriage was Smerviemore, and he was born at Dumbarton Castle. Another version is more specific about the king of France and his daughter. He is called Childobert, fifth in descent from Pharamond, and the daughter is named Elizabeth.[9] From what I have been able to piece together, the king can only be the Frankish king of Paris, Childebert I, described as "the best son of Clovis". Sure enough, he is, as mentioned above, fifth in descent from Faramond, by way of Clodion, Meroveus, Childeric and Clovis. As for Elizabeth, though Childebert did have daughters, the name doesn't suit this period. Childebert, who was married to Vultrogotha and had at least two daughters Chlodberg and Chlodsind, died without a male heir in 545.

Returning to the Campbells, Smerviemore (also called Smerbi and even Mervin) was born on the south side of Dumbarton in the Tower of the Red Hall. In the Middle Ages Dumbarton Castle, consisting of two hills projecting into the River Clyde where it is joined by the Leven, had a number of buildings of which little can now be identified. These included the white Tower, the Windy Tower, St Patrick's Chapel and the Red Hall.[10] In Scottish tradition the family of Galbraith, said to be British, is also linked with this hall. Arthur is often said to live, not at Camelot, but at the Red Hall in Irish tales. Smerviemore, we are told, didn't succeed his father but was wild and lived in a forest. It has been suggested that he is a version of the Merlin who went mad after the Battle of Arderydd. However, he did find time to marry the un-named sister of Aedan, king of the Scots.

[6] One other Arthur appears in the Llandaff Charters but he is likely to be the same Arthur ap Pedr, Lord of Dyfed.

[7] An Arthur was recorded in 1154 to have betrayed King Malcolm and was killed in single combat on 27th March of that year.

[8] A look at the Scottish versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's work could be interesting but may have little historical value.

[9] This is from *The House of Argyll*, published anonymously in 1871.

[10] There is little or nothing left of the medieval structure, and nothing at all from the Dark Ages. It is, however, an impressive site. Nearby is Dunbeck, where there is an "Arthur sleeping under a hill" story.

This is an interesting statement because two of the Arthurs mentioned above were the son and grandson of Aedan McGabran. He was a Dalriadan, descended from Irish settlers who still had strong links with Ireland, but it is said that his mother was British. The Dalriada came to Scotland around 500 under Fergus Mor, who died soon afterwards and was succeeded by his son Domangart. He also lasted a short time – five years until 506 when it is recorded he ended his life as a "churchman" and "died in religion". He was followed by his eldest son Comgall. Comgall died in 537 and was followed by his brother Gabran, who was murdered in 558. He was succeeded by Comgall's son Conall, and Conall by Gabran's son in 574. We are told that when Aedan, possibly the most powerful of the Dalriadan chieftains, died in 607, he was a very old man, in his 70s or 80s. Therefore, it is easily possible then that a sister of Aedan could have lived in the first half of the sixth century.[11]

After Smerviemore things get complicated. The son of Smerviemore was called Fferrither, and he married a daughter of the Duke of Valentia. Their son was Duibhnemore, who is said to have married a daughter of Duke Murdoch, and they had a son called Arthur Oig – Young Arthur. His son was another Fferrither, and his son another Duibhne, called Fallt Dhearg – Red Hair. There is a lot of confusion with this Duibhne. His son was yet another Fferrither, and then two more Duibhnes, father and son – Dhearg (Red) and Donn (Brown). The latter's son was Diarmid, who became mixed up with the famous Irish hero of the same name. His son, however, was called Dhuine Deaudgheal – Whitetoothed – and Dhuine's son was Malcolm. Here, according to the genealogy, there was a move to France, presumably after his wife, Dirvail, gave him three sons: Gilmory (from whom came the Clan MacNaughton). Corcaruo, who gave rise to Clan Uilins in Ireland, and Duncan Drumanach, from whom came the Drummonds.[12]

At this point the name Campbell is explained as being from the Latin *Campo Bellus*, because Malcolm married a Beauchamp (the French version of *Campo Bellus*?). One of their sons stayed in France, taking the name Beauchamp, and another returned to Scotland. This one, Gillespic, married Eva, a cousin, the only child of Paul An Sparran, and from their son Duncan came the Campbells. Duncan was followed by a Colin, and his son by another Gillespic, then another Duncan, whose son was Dugald. At this point we are getting into genuine history. Dugald's son, another Gillespic, married Efferic, the daughter of the Lord of Carrick. Their son was Colin Mor (*d* 1296), from whom comes the House of Argyll. Gillespic's brother Duncan had a son called Arthur, whose descendants are the MacArthur Campbells of Strachur.

There is another group of lists which are much older and give no extra details, just names. Most of them cross-reference well, but one changes form before Arthur. Here is the standard list (*m* = son of):

Colin Mor m Gillespic m Dubgail Cambel[13]
m Donncach (Duncan) m Gillaspic m
Gillacolaim (Malcolm) m Duibne m Feadorig
m Smerbi m Artuir m Uibhir m Ambros m
Considin m Amgcel m Toisid m Conruirig m
Considin m Artuir na laimh ("of the Hand") m
Laimlin m Artuir laimderg ("Red Hand") m
Bene Briot m Artuir

and so on, with two more Artuirs, down to Fergus Leithderg and Nemed (one of the earliest to arrive from Ireland according to legends).

However, amongst the lists is one by a seventeenth-century Irish genealogist named Duald MacFirbis, and it includes some interesting variants. Arthur is usually called son of Iobhair (or versions of this name) son of Ambros son of Considin, which looks like Uther son of Ambrosius son of Constantine, but the MacFirbis list is different. It has

[11] A study of Aedan MacGabran would I am sure be worthwhile.

[12] The Clan Uillins could well be the MacQuillins who claim they were Welsh or British and descended from King Arthur. During the Middle Ages the name Arthur was very common amongst the McNaughtons.

[13] This is Dugald Cambel, and it has been suggested that this is the origin of the Campbells – the *p* was added at a later date. *Cambel* means crooked mouth.

Arthur the son of Iobhair m Lidir m Bearnaid m Muiris m Magoth m Coeil m Catogainm Cadimoir m Catogain m Bende m Mebrec m Grifin m Briotan m Fergus leithderg son of Nemidh.

Seemingly MacFirbis made nothing of it, just recorded the list of names. Though the last two are from Irish legends, the rest are of some interest. It is possible that this is a more realistic list and that the rest show the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Is this the real Arthur, father of Smerviemore?

When you compare the long list with the short ones, rather than going back to the 6th century they only go back to the 10th. If you make a rough calculation with the longer list, it goes back to an Arthur in the mid-7th century. Since the later part of these genealogies can be dated quite precisely, neither go back to the 6th century, but someone has had a good try at making one go back a good distances. The Norman connection has been disclaimed by many scholars, so if there is anything to these lists, it is probable Smerviemore was the son of a 10th century Arthur rather than a 6th century one. Sellars actually suggested that the ancestor of the Campbells could have been a Strathclyde Briton from the 10th century. This, then, is unlikely to be the Arthur mentioned in *The Gododdin*.

Ian Brown

Clan Arthur

The Clan Arthur is said to have been very old, and there are a number of sayings about them. "There is nothing older than the hills, MacArthur or the Devil," and "The hills, the streams and the MacAlpines, but whence came the MacArthurs?" The clan is recorded from at least as early as the 13th century when they took part in Scotland's war against the English, and in the years following they became very powerful. The problem is, who were these MacArthurs? There are various opinions, but it is known that the clan was leaderless from the early fifteenth century when Iain MacArthur was executed by King James I of Scotland. Nevertheless, MacArthurs have been found in many parts of Scotland, including the Lochawe and Loch Fyne area of the Highlands and in Glasgow.

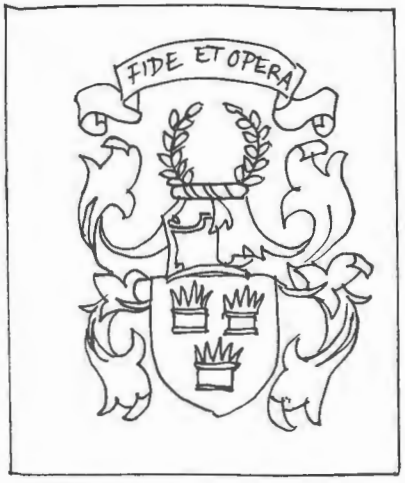
Like most clans the MacArthurs have their own tartan, badge and coat of arms. The latter is interesting in that it shows a cross surrounded by three crowns. This is similar to the coat of arms given to King Arthur in the Middle Ages. However, the MacArthur arms can only be traced back to 1775, though it has been suggested it is based on the arms of the first Chieftain. No trace of this can be found, but records before 1296 were taken away from Scotland by King Edward I to the Tower of London and never seen again!

Today (2003) the Clan Arthur has a new chief – James Edward MacArthur, who was originally appointed to that post of commander in 1991.[14] Considerable research has been done to find links between him and members of the family of the last chieftain of the MacArthurs. Hugh Preskett has delved through twelve generations to discover a link. On the basis of this, a claim to make Commander MacArthur chieftain was placed before the Court of the Lord Lyon. This was accepted at a ceremony in April 2003. However, not everyone agrees that he should be chief.

[14] I met the then Clan Commander MacArthur and his wife Pat in Edinburgh in 1995, and we discussed the Clan and Arthur over tea and coffee in the cafeteria of the National Museum of Scotland.

The Clan Arthur itself is, from what I understand, a combination of all families with the surname MacArthur and its variants. Some can be linked with medieval Arthurs such as the MacArthurs of Strachur, but there are those who link the name to King Arthur, and even the Clan's newsletter is called *The Round Table*. There is little certainty, and some members of the Clan consider the Arthurian links to be nonsense. It has also been suggested that the name comes from Arthur son of Aedan McGabran, but it is more likely it is medieval rather than Dark Age.

There has been a considerable rivalry between the Campbells and the MacArthurs. The Campbells consider the MacArthurs to be a sept of their clan, while the MacArthurs believe themselves to be older than the Campbells. After the death of Iain MacArthur, whether a member of the Campbells of Strachur or not, the Campbells grew in power and dominated the area the MacArthurs once held. This rivalry spilled over into feuding, and there was at least one case where a group of MacArthurs were killed in a fight with the Campbells. In an article for *The Highlander*, Alastair Campbell of Airds re-inforced the seniority of the Campbells and said that many of the MacArthurs were recorded as being in the clerical profession rather than Highlanders.



Duke of the Picts

Whatever the truth, the Clan Arthur exists now and soon will have its own chieftain after 500 years. Whether the Campbells, the MacArthurs or any other Scottish clan is descended from Arthur is something that needs further research. If the material mentioned above has even a little truth behind it, the MacArthurs and the Campbells may be descended from a common ancestor. And if the part of the genealogy with Diarmid having two sons – Duncan and Arthur – is true, it is possible that the Campbells came from Duncan, and the MacArthurs from Arthur. If this is the case then the MacArthurs are not a sept of the Campbells.

The story of an Arthurian connection with Scotland, however, doesn't end here. Before moving on to a more modern time and a number of different countries, I have to return to Lambert of St Omer, who was mentioned earlier. This Belgian cleric had been able to copy from a document that was extant in about 1120. It was a version of the *Historia Brittonum* which differed a little from those that have come down to us. We have already seen that he recorded that there was a palace belonging to Arthur near the River Carron, as a part of a list of wonders in the British Isles. The list is longer than all other versions, containing a few new wonders including Illtud's stone altar. This document also gave the Chapter 56 battle list, though leaving out a mention of Lindsey and Bassas and making Glen into Gleuy. But what is much more interesting is an addition concerning Arthur himself (not being a Latin scholar I apologise for this translation):

Then Arthur, duke of the Picts of Interior Britain, ruling like a king, a strong man, an energetic campaigner, seeing the English attack from everywhere and good land pillaged, many taken captive or sold and from their inheritance expelled, with the British kings courageously drove the Saxons from the land ...

Conclusions

Was Arthur a Pict, a Briton or a Scot? There are some intriguing references to Arthur in Medieval Welsh poetry. Arthur is always connected with Camlan, usually used as someone to be compared favourably to, but never seemingly linked with Badon. Medraut, the Mordred of later tales, also appears in Welsh poetry and is not accused of betrayal until after Geoffrey of Monmouth became popular in Welsh. Despite the use of Geoffrey of Monmouth, it may be possible (and I emphasis only possible) that an Arthur connected with what is now Scotland gave rise to the legend. From Strathclyde, fighting probably in England, he returned to die in a battle either at Castlesteads or Camelon, near Falkirk. The latter would give reason for connecting him with the Roman monument that once overlooked the Firth of Forth. In fact, that monument could be an answer to the enigmatic line in the Welsh *Stanzas of the Graves*: "a wonder the grave of Arthur." (To be fair, the Welsh words used in this line are difficult: *anoeth* can mean a mystery, a task or a wonder.) One scholar has even suggested that Arthur's Oven was Arthur's grave.[15] The Latin for Arthur's Oven is *Furnus Arthuri* – a mistake for *Furnus Arthun*?

another possibility is that Iobhair (or its other version) is from the same root as *ebor*, as in *Eboracum*, Roman York. Could there be a chance that the name Arthur son of Iobhair meant Arthur of York – Arthur of Eboracum or Caer Efrawg? In that case, one could produce a scenario that has a British warrior from York, after helping the kings of Britain against the Saxons, carving a territory for himself from Strathclyde,[16] taking it from an existing chieftain and making his capital Dumbarton. In the ensuing civil war Arthur is killed and Strathclyde reverts to its previous leader. This could answer both the father's name and an Arthur being connected with Dumbarton. Of course, it is pure speculation!

Is there any evidence for Arthur in Scotland? The question can also be asked, Is there evidence for Arthur anywhere else? and in both cases the answer must be in the negative. The earliest mention of Arthur may come from Scotland, but it doesn't locate Arthur. Later material, the *Welsh Annals* and *The History of the Britons*, gave plenty of place-names to play with, but none have been located successfully. After that we enter the world of folk tales, mainly from Wales. There Arthur is usually located in Cornwall. Then along comes Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Arthur is born in Cornwall but his capital is Caerleon in south-east Wales. Later, that is moved to Winchester or to Camelot. Some tales even have Arthur in Carlisle.

The oldest stories say Arthur lived at Celliwig in Cornwall, the latter being Cernyw in Welsh. However, the name is later, as is the English name Cornwall. The oldest reference to Cernyw can be found in the poem *Armes Prydein*, which was composed in the early tenth century.[17] Cornwall is mentioned for the first time, under that name, in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 891. Cornwall's oldest known name would seem to be Dumnonia, and Gildas linked it with a character called Constantine. What is interesting is that the name Constantine was also popular with Scottish rulers, and strangely enough there was a Dumnonia in Scotland. The Dumnonii tribe were located in the area of the River Clyde, and this became the Strathclyde of the Dark Ages. Is it possible that the tales of Arthur were brought to Wales from Northern Britain and then mixed up with another Dumnonia? It is certain that Geoffrey of Monmouth didn't create the link between Arthur and Cornwall, but was it *Cornwall*?

To be concluded

[15] This was suggested by George Eyre-Todd in *The Scots Magazine* in 1931.

[16] One scholar suggested, using hints from Caradoc of Llancarfan, that he overthrew Caw, which may have given rise to a family feud.

[17] In *The Welsh Annals* there is an entry for the Cornish fighting a battle in 722, but like the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* the *Annals* were composed at a much later date. However, if they were based on recorded events written down annually over hundreds of years, it is possible that this is the oldest reference for Cornwall.

Key Dark Age sites *Map: CWE-G*

Tracing a Tradition: *The Arthurian Annals*

Dan Nastali

In July, 2004, *The Arthurian Annals*, an 11,000-entry, million-word chronological bibliography of the Arthurian tradition in English from 1250 to the year 2000, was published by the Oxford University Press (1). I was asked recently why my co-author, Phil Boardman, and I ever undertook such a project—one which consumed over twenty years of research and writing. The short answer is that it's the reference book I always wanted and it didn't exist. The long answer is a bit more complicated.

For one thing, we didn't know quite what we were getting into back in the 1980s when we decided to trace the development of the tradition from the Middle Ages to the present day by documenting and describing the contents of every Arthurian literary work. Based on the relatively few efforts by previous bibliographers and scholars dealing with post-medieval Arthuriana, we estimated that we would likely compile a listing of some 3,000 works, and we rather ingenuously believed that through our own efforts and those of a small group of consultants—scholars, specialist book-sellers and collectors—we could take a first-hand look at every item.

As it turned out, both because we underestimated the task at hand and because the scope of the project was enlarged at several points, the final product was far more expansive than that originally envisioned. To our advantage was the fact that until the project drew towards a close, we proceeded without a strict timetable or deadlines, a circumstance which allowed us to attend to other responsibilities and to work on the Annals at an unhurried pace. It also permitted us the luxury of devoting as much time as necessary to properly research and write the entries.

But let me step back further in time, to the early 1960s, to mention the impetus behind the project (I will spare you a further recession to the 1940s and my childhood introduction to the legend). While taking a university course in the Middle English romances and discovering that there existed a number of Arthurian works beyond *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, I managed to steal some time from my studies to read two very different treatments of the legend that had just appeared in paperback: T H White's *The Once and Future King* and Edison Marshall's historical novel, *The Pagan King*. They made me wonder how we got from the medieval works to such modern treatments of Arthur's story. What was the process by which a body of stories, characters, themes and symbols passes down through the centuries?

I won't pretend that the question consumed me, but it did linger in my mind for years, and it became something of a vocation to track down information about, and to collect when possible, copies of post-medieval works. I recorded the information that I gathered on file cards with the vague intention to someday consolidate it in a published bibliography, but it was only when some editorial duties came to an end in the early 1980s that I had the opportunity to devote more time to the project. Contacting a number of experts to serve as consultants, I immediately heard from Phil Boardman of the University of Nevada, Reno, who was considering a similar project of his own and offered to pool his information with mine in a partnership.

Our early research was conducted in a pleasant, old-fashioned manner (which book-lovers everywhere will understand) in the reference rooms and stacks of several libraries and the shelves of countless bookstores. We ran checklists of Arthurian names and terms against tables of contents and indexes as well as exhausting every sort of reference work, from periodical guides to concordances of the works of individual authors. Eventually a list of "unseen works" was drawn up and shared with our consultants who were able to furnish copies of or reports on dozens of works unavailable to us. Phil Boardman, far ahead of me on the computerization curve, was already building the database which

would become the repository for our findings.

As the database grew, so did the scope of the project. It became apparent to us that although the Arthurian tradition is essentially literary—or more accurately, narrative—in nature, its development through the centuries was also dependent on a multitude of extra-literary factors as well. If we were to trace the tradition as it spread through our culture over time, we should consider all of the ways in which it has been placed before the public. There were poems, plays, and fiction, certainly, but there was also folklore, history, travel writing, juvenile literature, art, music, and the many other manifestations of the legend in popular culture.

Admittedly, others preceded us in this approach—the scholars James Merriman (*The Flower of Kings*, 1973) and Roger Simpson (*Camelot Regained*, 1990) to name only two of the most notable—with studies which ranged well beyond purely literary works. And as research into popular culture became increasingly legitimated in academic circles, more latter-day scholars were publishing studies on such subjects as Arthurian films and comics. The Annals, we came to believe, could encompass all of these areas, and by arraying our entries chronologically, we were, in effect, documenting the genealogy of the Arthurian tradition.

We have realized all along that our approach might be frowned on by some who would like to restrict Arthurian studies to "serious" literature. Modern scholarship is still grudgingly opening its doors to works of debatable artistic merit, especially if they lack the respectable patina of age. For example, a recent collection of excellent essays on the Arthurian legend in music concentrated almost entirely on operas and a few classical pieces with only a nod to some works of the musical stage, all but ignoring the hundreds of popular Arthurian albums and songs of recent years. And indeed, our approach results in some strange juxtapositions—delicate poetry next to comic books, critical editions of medieval works next to computer games, the sublime next to the silly. We can only say, in defense of our approach, that we are reporting what we have found. The Annals simply display, in almost graphic fashion, the way the tradition has evolved, for better and for worse.

As our project entered the 1990s, our research took a quantum step forward with the use of the ever-expanding internet. As well as providing access to the on-line catalogues of major university and public libraries, the internet offered a bounty of information on commercial and institutional websites, all of which enabled us to check and verify data obtained from a multitude of sources. Search engines let us undertake three sub-projects (in which we concentrated on music, films and television, and comics) and to explore them with a thoroughness in months which otherwise would have taken years and which would still have yielded skimpier results.

The internet, of course, also simplified and expedited communications with a host of people all over the world—authors we have queried, experts who have offered help, and friends who have volunteered information on Arthurian discoveries of their own. Many are listed in the acknowledgements in the Annals, and several have connections to *Pendragon*, which has been one of my favorite sources of information on Arthurian matters for years.

The Arthurian Annals close with the year 2000, and among the entries for that year are a representative number of works presented to the public through such media as electronic texts and print-on-demand books, a sampling included merely to hint at the bounty of Arthurian material now available to seekers. And as for the internet, a quick Google search on the term "King Arthur" today turns up some 2,280,000 hits—including some sites which undoubtedly have genuine merit and which deserve a permanent place in our culture, but most of which are fated to vanish forever as interests and the internet itself change.

One trusts that Arthurian novels, poems, plays, and films will continue to be produced in forms with more staying power, thus justifying a record of their existence in

works like the Annals for future researchers and lovers of Arthuriana, but at this point in time it would take Merlin-like foresight to confirm such a prediction. One need remains obvious to the compilers of the Annals, however—a similar record of Arthurian works of the past in languages other than English. Phil Boardman and I hope that the tradition in French, German, Spanish, the Scandinavian languages and others might someday be documented in companion works to the Annals. To the explorers who undertake such projects, we wish long, happy, fruitful journeys (2).

Notes

(1) Philip Boardman and Dan Nastali *The Arthurian Annals*, 2 vols OUP

(2) A more detailed account of the background and research which produced the Annals is given in our co-authored essay "Searching for Arthur: Literary Highways, Electronic Byways, and Cultural Back Roads," *Arthuriana 11:4* (Winter, 2001), 108-122

"The Landing of the English"

Reviews

Francis Pryor
Britain AD: a quest for Arthur, England and the Anglo-Saxons
HarperCollins*Publishers* 2004 £20.00
0 00 718186 8 hb 268pp illus

Interface or interlace? This is the main theme of Francis Pryor's new book which accompanies a three-part Channel 4 TV series.[1] What happened in the Dark Ages? Was post-Roman Britain swamped by waves of immigrants who ethnically cleansed what later became England? Or was there continuity in Late Antiquity, a process of cultural evolution which saw new fashions in dress, language and religion without a substantial change in population?

The classic view of Britain after the Romans hasn't changed much from the Victorian era, and has persisted in the popular imagination up to now[. An illustration from *A Simple History of England*, published in 1900, shows Angles and Saxons (sporting those ubiquitous horned or winged helmets) as proto-Vikings, one of a series of waves of newcomers to this "much-invaded" island. "So they wrested from the Britons (or Welsh, as they called them), whom they had come to help, land on which they and their families might settle ... and thus drove the Welsh into the north and the west of the country". Despite being "little better than savages in life and manners" they embraced Christianity enthusiastically in 597, legitimising their actions, until the naughty Vikings came along in their turn. And the cowardly Britons deserved all they got, just as Gildas and Bede had said.

Alright, we're a little more sophisticated now, and we don't believe in such simplistic scenarios any more, do we? And in fact both archaeology and critical analysis of the surviving literature have in recent years cast doubt on the accepted picture, to the extent that evidence for widespread destruction, death and disruption is not only missing, but may have never been there in the first

[1] *Britain AD: King Arthur's Britain* C4 September 6, 13 and 20 (producer-director Timothy Copestake for Diverse Productions)

place.[2] Pryor takes the next, logical step by denying the Anglo-Saxon invasion ever took place.

What? Surely that's going too far? Pryor doesn't believe so, and his archaeological credentials – he is current President of the Council for British Archaeology – give his opinions some weight. As a prehistorian, looking for evidence of cultures without the benefit of a documentary record, he has doubts when British Roman and post-Roman specialists rely on the primacy of the written word to determine more than the broad sweep of history, let alone fill in the gaps which archaeological limitations leave.

He may have good reason, as this book shows, to question the accepted view of insular breakdown and invasion promoted by some Continental chronicles, Gildas and subsequent writers, and to point to continuing research that shows that Britain was a flourishing part of and contributor to the period known as Late Antiquity. I feel, however, that his lack of detailed discussion of the relative worth of Insular writings, combined with his apparent unquestioning acceptance of contemporary documentation in relation to Continental historical developments, is a mistake, even in a polemical book such as this.

A letter in a recent *BBC History Magazine* may be typical of incredulous reactions to Pryor's hypothesis, and comes to the root of the book's other main weakness. "Surely it is a more logical conclusion," writes Stephen Sheridan, "that there was a mass-migration which sufficiently overwhelmed the local British to erase their language and most of their culture, but did not exterminate them completely."[3] Pryor suggests that language, as an aspect of culture, can rapidly mutate or change due to fashion, as much as the architecture, jewellery or clothing seen in the material remains, without requiring invasion or a similar influx of peoples to explain it (think of English as a *lingua franca* in India, or McDonald's outlets in China).

[2] *eg* Ken Dark (2000) *Britain and the End of the Roman Empire* (Tempus Books, Stroud)

[3] Francis Pryor "Invasion, what invasion?" *BBC History Magazine 5* No 9 September 2004; Stephen Sheridan's letter in *Vol 5* No 10

However, he barely touches on what the mechanisms involved in language-change might be, and what evidence there might be for pre-modern English replacing Brythonic without a change of population. This is offset by a passing but potentially significant mention in the third of the TV programmes. Interestingly, aspects of the structure of Old English show affinities with the structure not of Continental Germanic languages, as you might expect from a mass migration hypothesis, but with Welsh. This idea is not new – as long ago as 1955 J R R Tolkien's lecture "English and Welsh" drew attention to examples in both Old English and Welsh of parallels in morphology (the verb "be") and phonology (vowel mutation) – and more discussion of these issues in *Britain AD* would have been fascinating.[4]

But it is principally from an archaeological viewpoint (and related scientific techniques such as DNA and isotope analysis) that Pryor writes. The increase, in quantity and quality, of material from excavations and its interpretion will continue to challenge pre-conceived notions of what happened in the so-called Dark Ages. It may be that, instead of being shocked by such re-interpretations, we may come to wonder why it was not so obvious sooner.

Chris Lovegrove

Christopher Gidlow
The Reign of Arthur: from history to legend
Sutton Publishing 2004 £20.00
0 7509 3418 2 hb 268pp

Here is yet another attempt on that compulsive puzzle, the historicity of Arthur's Dark Age origins – gnawing yet again at those classic "Big Six" questions, *who, what, why, when, where* and *how?*

What, then, does this book do that should make someone interested in "the great Arthur puzzle" want to add it to the – perhaps already groaning – shelves? Perhaps the answer had best begin with what it does *not* do. To use the recent

[4] J R R Tolkien (1983) *The Monsters & the Critics* (George Allen & Unwin; HarperCollins 1997)

jargon, it's not sexed-up: it doesn't, for example, dramatically propose yet another new candidate for the "real" historical Arthur. Instead, it assesses, in a sanely balanced way, what conclusions can plausibly be drawn from those early sources we do have – including one often neglected, the Welsh triads – in the process also soberly weighing the main previous suggested theories.

It would be an understatement to say that this is an entirely new way of proceeding. However, *The Reign* has the particular strength that Gidlow seems both conspicuously fair-minded, and, faced by the voluminous mass of previous theorising, notably thorough in assessing all the likelier possibilities.

On that point, it is worth remarking that he avoids any involvement with the later chivalric romances – it is often suggested that they embed, in garbled form (rather as Stephen Hawking now thinks information can escape from a black hole), traces of far earlier Celtic matter, but steering clear of such hard-to-focus speculation greatly helps in keeping the book's length manageable, without any conspicuous omissions in considering the earlier material.

There, Gidlow analyses all "the usual suspects" in the way of primary sources: Gildas, Arthur's first mention in *The Gododdin*, Nennius (although Gidlow suggests that several compilers, not just one, were involved there), the *Annales Cambriae*, Saints' Lives that mention Arthur, the *Preiddeu Annwfn*, *The Mabinogion*, the triads, and so to Geoffrey of Monmouth.

To begin with that last, he plausibly suggests, with indicative evidence, that Geoffrey's claim to draw on a mysterious book in the British language, often dismissed as an attempt to conceal how much of his "history" is his own fantasising invention, is likelier to have a basis in truth, *ie* that he did genuinely draw on earlier material. Gidlow shows how some of Geoffrey's unlikelier statements could stem from misunderstandings or misreadings of such sources – for instance mistaking Hibernius for Hiberius could have led him to convert plausible conflict with an Irish raider into a preposterous war against a Roman emperor!

On our first source, Gildas, Gidlow is extremely interesting, both in the way he goes back to Biblical references to tease out what message the sharp-tongued monk may have intended when he used animal imagery to describe the kinglets-cum-warlords he denounced,[5] and how he explores the possibilities raised by "the dogs that weren't barked at", *ie* other British rulers who must have existed but were spared by the querulous monk's flaying tongue. He also examines the question of where Gildas was based when he wrote, and how that factor could have affected both what he said and didn't say.

Indeed, sensible geographical analysis is a recurrent strength in Gidlow's work. He makes intriguing use, for example, of how the way the Roman administrative structure subdivided Britannia could have affected what came after, when examining both the specific, ever-vexing, question as to where in Britain Arthur "belonged" and, more generally, how it may offer clues as to the nature of the authority wielded by post-Roman rulers.

It would be possible to quote many more examples of how Gidlow's approach informs and enlightens without trying to force possibilities to become certainties. To cite just a handful more: his "re-trial" of the accusation that the Glastonbury monks faked Arthur's grave; his rediscovery of, and tentative support for, a forgotten but plausible Victorian candidate for the location of Badon; his analysis of alternative explanations for the strange fact that the first two leaders of the West Saxons both had Celtic names; and another genealogical puzzle, which I can't recall having seen specifically raised before (although Gidlow proffers no answer), as to why later Celtic rulers never claimed descent from Arthur – after all, although a little more restrained than the Saxons who tended to begin their with the god Woden, Welsh royal genealogists were eager enough to claim descent from the rebel emperor Magnus

[5] Chris Gidlow "Another look at Gildas" *Pendragon XXVI* No 4 (Autumn-Winter 1997) 20–23

Maximus, so why did none instead dare claim descent from their own great war-leader?

Finally, two of Gidlow's explorations of marginal Arthurian curiosities illustrated particularly well, for me, both his thoroughness and his willingness to look afresh at what most would pass swiftly over: his examination of the two "Wonders" of Ercing in Herefordshire, the stone with the pawprint of Arthur's hound, and the size-and-shape-changing grave of Arthur's son, both usually briskly dismissed as evidence of Nennius' gullibility in the face of foolish folklore; and the first plausible explanation I've ever seen as to why a triad listed Arthur as one of the "three frivolous bards of Britain".

It should be added that the book's style, while unadorned, is clear and easy to read; the maps are clear, also, and the photographs, while few in number, interesting. The author, currently Events and Live Interpretation Manager for Hampton Court and the Tower of London, was president of Oxford University Arthurian Society during his history degree.

Steve Sneyd

John Matthews
Merlin: shaman, prophet, magician
Mitchell Beazley 2004 £17.99
1 84000 988 8 hb 176pp illus

Merlin is a splendid introduction to this multi-layered and multi-facetted technicolor figure of legend. Shaman, prophet and magician, it is true, but also, as Matthews points out, lover, sage, poet and contemporary archetype: Merlin is all of these, and it is hard not to be attracted to one or other of his personae.

But however much we can appreciate the circumstances that create each aspect of his character – Merlin's bastard birth, Myrddin's despair after his patron's death in battle, and so on – there remains a sense of him remaining an outsider, not quite human (as befits the son of a devil), and of his various faces being just masks to hide an enigma. Matthews captures this otherworldliness well as he analyses the origins and analogues of the different Merlins.

As well as new versions of poems ascribed to Merlin in his original Welsh bardic guise, this volume includes a useful bibliography and index. A particular delight of many of the Matthews' titles is the profligate use of attractive illustrations, and *Merlin* is no exception. While there are one or two quibbles (such as *Affalannau* for the expected *Afallennau*, partly down to proof-reading), this is a title well worth conjuring up for your shelves.

Chris Lovegrove

Andrew Collins
Twenty-first Century Grail: the quest for a legend
Virgin Books 2004 £20.00
1 85227 1396 hb 260pp illus

Andy Collins came to our attention in 1982, when his Essex Earth Mysteries magazine *Earthquest News* and his occasional publication *The Supernaturalist* were listed with other exchange journals. He gave a talk to the Society's Bristol group, but interests diverged and we lost touch.

Collins pursues a technique he dubs psychic questing, whereby hidden knowledge and even objects are revealed by trance mediumship, dreams and waking visions. Starting with *The Sword and the Stone* in 1982 – which detailed the finding of a copy of a Tudor dagger and a jewel-like stone – he has documented this technique's successes in a series of books (as has his friend Graham Phillips).

Whatever your views on the validity of this technique and the veracity of psychic questers' claims, there is always the physical evidence of actual objects to help quell the cynicism of Doubting Thomases. Collins and his colleagues receive help from spirit guides such as Aleister Crowley in their researches which, *inter alia*, eventually focus on the so-called Marian Chalice that Graham Phillips discovered and recorded in *The Search for the Grail* (Century 1995). Collins establishes this as an *alabastron* or scent jar which he believes belonged to the Magdalene – a grail of sorts.

This is a much richer and intriguing book than this inadequate synopsis suggests, full of fascinating facts and bewildering by-ways. Though Collins doesn't come across

as either gullible or a charlatan, I have reservations about his reporting style, however. Does he have a phonographic memory or does he take a dictaphone everywhere with him to play back for his daily diary? Detailed conversations and activities often appear as a breathless fictional read, leading to suspicions that much has been reconstructed. This *caveat* aside, if secret histories are to your taste then this is very much worth a read – even if it has nothing really to do with Arthur!

Chris Lovegrove

King Arthur
2004 *dir* Antoine Fuqua
Touchstone Films / Jerry Bruckheimer Films

I must admit that the build-up to the film, *King Arthur*, did nothing to encourage me to see it; in the end, it was a feeling of duty as a lover of legend and myth that broke the deadlock. Though admittedly, it was as such that I went to see *Troy*, which was a horrible experience, and nearly broke my resolve.

Perhaps the best thing to say about *King Arthur* is that very few of us with an interest in the subject would recognise it as connected to the Arthurian mythos. There are a few tell-tale signs, but they amount to little more than calling the characters Arthur, Bors, Guinevere, Gawain and so on, and having them sit at a round table with a famous sword. The other characters in the cycles are conveniently disposed of before the film starts, saving on actors' fees.

The worst thing to say about it is that it resembles *Troy*, in that the powerful mystical thread within the stories is downgraded to almost nothing. This is the new reductionism, in which warriors are simply hard men and all they really care about is women and good times, caring no more for the gods and spirits than for the souls of the dead. As unsympathetic to legend as Tesco is to town centres.

In other words, before you go to this movie, it is best to put on one side everything you know and appreciate about Arthurian material, as it will only be a distraction. Imagine seeing a film made in a language you know well, with subtitles in another language you also know well – and realising quite soon that the subtitles don't match what's being said.

These knights are Sarmatians, from the southern Steppes, drafted into the Roman legions – oh, never mind the whole story – and posted to Hadrian's Wall. After fifteen years they are ready to go back to the yurts we see in opening shots, but are blackmailed by the dastardly Romans, who are just about to desert Britain, into a *Saving Private Ryan* exercise north of the wall, just as thousands of scruffy vicious Saxons with bad hairstyles and harsh voices are landing on the coasts – we soon recognise these as the Hollywood cartoon version of the English. They're nasty buggers, and they're coming to take the land from the rightful heirs, a bunch of muddy freedom-loving Celto-Pictish rebels led by a fellow called Merlin. Guinevere is their main weapon of mass destruction, a fearsome archer with a sultry smile and lean body. To emphasise the point we get a silly leather proto-bikini (think the Princess' bikini in *Star Wars* for a precedent) – you can almost see the 'Celtic Babe' designer label. The connection between Arthur and the Britons comes through his mother, who married a Roman and died in a rebel attack – and oh, I nearly forgot Excalibur! It's a sword that happens to be stuck in a stone near the fort and the boy Arthur yanks it out and runs back to the burning fort. This minor episode in the film somehow means the rebels look to this Christian Roman warrior as their saviour, somehow, if ever he stops being Roman and joins them, which, of course, he does. The small band takes on the rampaging hordes and proceeds to whittle them down... and I'll say no more.

The climate was interesting in those days – three days' ride from a leafy summery Wall zone takes the band into snowy mountains and a frozen loch for a battle with the Saxons, who do seem rather far north; and then they escape back into the summerlands. Must be the token bit of symbolism, I suppose.

I should be trashing *King Arthur* in the way I would more than happily trash *Troy*, because – although the Sarmatian hypothesis has been bandied around – I don't think it has much to do with Arthur at all. Perhaps John Matthews, historical adviser on the film, can enlighten us, or maybe Michael Wood in a TV follow-up.

However, actually I enjoyed the film once I dismissed the Arthurian connection as a bogus media ploy and forgot about the extreme microclimates. As a swashbuckling tale of horse warriors with issues making temporary mercenary alliances with a bunch of muddy downtrodden rebels against a common foe with caricatured viciousness, it's not a bad action and adventure film. Depth? Magic? Leave it out.

John Billingsley

• *John Billingsley is editor of exchange journal* ***Northern Earth****, currently celebrating its 100th edition. Congratulations to all for achieving this milestone! The journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group (established in 1979) is probably the longest-surviving earth mysteries periodical, and describes itself as a neo-antiquarian magazine dealing with sacred landscapes, traditions and folk cultures in Northern Britain and elsewhere. Its longevity is well justified!*

Stonehenge

What strange and eerie silhouette
appears so
unexpectedly
upon the skyline like a ghostly dream
an echo from prehistory?

So out of time and place you seem
but a silent power emanates
from your broken circled megaliths
that slowly watch our seasons change

Your outlying Station Stones
guard the perimeter
like sentinels
and the Sarsen Circle upright stands
between the bloodless ages of the sun and moon

Do you entomb our past in stoic stone
unwilling to reveal the truth
Or is the future holding you
to some dark purpose in the runes?

How did you ever come to be
in a Neolithic age of clay and myth?
What strange forces brought you here
– or are you one of Merlin's gifts?

Were you a temple of the ancient ones
a living monument to the dead ...
What unknown hands have prayed to you
from your Slaughter Stone of sacrificial
dread?

Were you placed here by another race
with an Avenue to
guide the lost
Or to measure space between dark and light
a mighty observatory of forgotten gods?

Through the turning centuries you have
survived
history's nameless ceremony
And mankind still fails to comprehend
for despite all our technologies

We cannot unlock your mystery!

Steve Gunning

the board

BIG SCREEN

Previews and reviews of ***King Arthur*** inexplicably seemed to tax the powers of headline writers (for the broadsheets, at any rate), but at least proved they couldn't ignore the film!

Publicity interviews produced gushing statements about the actors ("Clive Owen has the eyes," wrote John Patterson, "Knightley can sword fight, axe fight, ride a horse, bend it a little bit like Beckham, [and] shoot a bow and arrow halfway straight" declared Zoe Williams). John Matthews, historical adviser on the film, emphasised its eternal topicality: "Every age need its hero. These tales have adventure, romance and a spiritual side." Writer David Franzoni saw Arthur "as being like someone drafted to Vietnam, who goes there full of ideas and gung ho, then gets it all shot away and comes down to himself."

Some reviewers were unduly po-faced. "Dourly revisionist" was Peter Bradshaw's judgement, but he did note the "big Tolkieny journeys across fabulous landscapes" and Keira's "funky woad face paint like a Glastonbury Boudicca". After *Troy* and *The Last Samurai*, Tim Robey was suffering from "celluloid combat fatigue" but Nicholas Barber decried the loss of the expected: "swords-and-sorcery enthusiasts will miss the customary magic, while anyone looking for historical veracity will be disappointed, too." Yes, but did you like it, Nicholas? "*King Arthur* succeeds as strapping summer entertainment – there are a couple of savage battle sequences that pack a bigger punch than anything to be seen in *Troy*." That'll be a yes, then. Conversely, Damon Smith thought that, "as an action romp, the film is a bore".

Keira enjoyed it, though: "I get to kill eight or nine people. I felt like a little boy playing a fantastic war game." Despite this tomboy trait, she was voted "sexiest movie star of all time" in a recent *Empire* magazine poll. Celts may, however, baulk at her "cut-glass English accent, as if Cheltenham Ladies' College were running a summer school down in the dungeon" (as Peter Bradshaw observed). "Would her accent really have been so much like the Queen's?" questioned Nicholas Barber. Zoe Williams thinks her success may be something to do with "her Enid Blytonish quality; the suggestion that she embodies a golden age of pure Englishness; which is what, at least partly, must have suggested her for Guinevere". Guenevere as Enid Blyton? Gosh!

Whatever the critics thought, public interest ensured that in its opening weekend *King Arthur* gained the No 1 spot in Screen International's UK/Ireland box office chart, ahead of *Spider-Man 2* and *Garfield*.

Directed by David Lister, ***The Sorcerer's Apprentice*** is a 2001 American children's movie which has somehow escaped our attention. The plot runs something like this: Morgana (played by Kelly Lebrock) returns every century to claim Fingall's talisman from Merlin (Robert Davi) so as to destroy the world (you won't be surprised that she has already failed fourteen times). In the present day young, magically talented Ben Clark (Gideon Emery) makes friends with his elderly neighbour Milner (guess who?) and subsequently has to decide between good and evil. I wonder which he will choose? And is Ben Clark's name an echo of Superman's *alter ego*?

Little has recently emerged of the Ridley Scott-produced ***Tristan and Isolde*** film announced in June last year. Directed by Kevin Reynolds, the movie was shot on location in the west of Ireland and in Prague September–October 2003. James Franco, Sophia Myles and Rufus Sewell star. The Irish king Donnchadh "brutally subjugates tribal England", begins the *Tristan and Isolde* synopsis; with the hero given the French version of his name, Isolde the German version, and Marke the Hollywood version, we're not looking for any authenticity or consistency. Co-produced by Octagon Films and Scott Free Productions, *Tristan and Isolde* is in rivalry with another film, the similarly-named ***Tristan and Iseult*** (directed by Rupert Wainwright and co-produced by Davis Films / Intermedia / Metropolitan Filmexport).

• Peter Bradshaw, film releases *The Guardian* July 31 2004; Nicholas Barber "If history is bunk, what do you call this? 'Braveheart 2'?" *Independent on Sunday* August 1 2004; Tim Robey "Prithee, good sirs – no more bloody battle scenes" *The Daily Telegraph* July 30 2004; Damon Smith "Weak knights out" *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* July 30 2004; John Hiscock "How Keira the warrior queen invaded Hollywood" and Sheila Johnston "Arthur on screen" *The Daily Telegraph* July 17 2004; Stewart Lee "He was a dark and stormy knight" *Sunday Times* July 25 2004; John Patterson film preview *The Guardian Guide* July 25 2004; Zoe Williams "Keira pulls it off" *The Guardian Weekend* July 3 2004; "Keira voted sexiest movie star ... ever!" *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* September 30 2004; *BBC News Online* "King Arthur wins box office fight" 3/08/2004

• www. bbc.co.uk/leicester/entertainment/movies/2001_ and *BBC News Online* June 13 2003 (accessed 22/07/2004)

SMALL SCREEN

Glastonbury Abbey featured in Channel 4's ***Lost Buildings of Britain*** series (August 23, *dir* Ian Leese, *prod* Jenni Butterworth). Presented by Simon Thurley, the programme included a full-scale mock-up of King Arthur's 13th-century tomb. Originally placed in front of the high altar, the tomb was described by John Leland shortly before its destruction three centuries later as of black marble, with lion supporters, a cross and inscriptions.

TV channel Five aired ***Search for the Holy Grail: the True Story*** on September 8 2004. (Surely Fulcrum TV executive producers Tracey Gardiner and Sandra Gregory must know by now that the viewing public sneers cynically at anything with "true" in the title?) Authors and authorities were paraded for expert soundbites: Andrew Sinclair, Michael Baigent, Juliette Wood, Daniele Cacagno, Antonio di Fabbio and a curiously credulous academic Simon Kirk.

Was the grail a physical object like the Nanteos cup, a Templar vessel from Rosslyn, the sardonyx Santo Caliz from Valencia ("the only grail officially recognised by the Vatican"), the Sacro Catino from Genoa (probably 16th-century Venetian) or the Antioch chalice (dated to the 6th century)? Or was it a spiritual idea, like a sacred bloodline or the divine presence in the eucharist or an idealised relic? *The True Story*, if it had the answer, didn't really say.

Francis Pryor's series ***Britain AD: King Arthur's Britain*** (produced and directed by Timothy Copestake) was transmitted on Channel 4 over three weeks in September 2004 (S4C a week later). Using a mix of expert opinion, location shots and computer graphics they underlined his view that British culture survived the Roman withdrawal and that the Anglo-Saxon invasions never happened. Thankfully this meant no cast of dozens recreating battles, or looting and pillaging (also see Reviews).

Channel 4 re-screened ***Hitler's Search for the Holy Grail***, a sobering account from a few years back of Nazi beliefs, on October 2/3 2004. Presented by Michael Wood, this long programme outlined the origins of Nazi ideology via the Thule Society, World Ice theories and Atlantis, and chronicled how Himmler set up Wewelsburg Castle as a spiritual headquarters while teams went looking for the grail in Iran and in Cathar country. Himmler's SS also drafted scientists and archaeologists into Das Ahnenerbe ("the ancestral heritage"), sending them on expeditions to Iceland, Peru, the Canaries and Antarctica (the Indiana Jones films have familiarised us with these quests) to find proof for Nazi Aryan creeds.

After the war the head of Das Ahnenerbe was found guilty of crimes against humanity for his sanctioning of "experiments", but many of his colleagues returned to academia. Colin Renfrew regretted that crucial issues of ethnicity were not really dealt with in the post-war years, and chilling interviews with unreconstructed Nazis who had survived to a ripe old age showed that their Master Race beliefs had not simply faded away.

BROADCAST

From Camelot to Birkenhead was the intriguing title of an extended talk, produced by Rob Ketteridge, on BBC Radio 3 (August 9 2004). Jeremy Noel-Tod sought out the origins of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (hence the programme's title), examined the approach of poets Simon Armitage and Bernard O'Donoghue as they embarked on new translations, and explored its modern significance.

There was also, *writes Steve Sneyd*, discussion about whether Ludchurch was the Green Chapel or whether, as Julia Wogan-Brown suggested, the site was the cave at Wetton Mill (I don't know whether she meant Thor's Cave, which is the best known of the ones there, although there are others nearby). More on this next time.

Sean Bean began a seven-part reading on digital radio channel Oneword of Benedict Flynn's ***King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table***, beginning on October 20 2004. The same week saw a six-part drama series entitled simply ***Arthur*** on BBC Radio 4's Afternoon Play slot. According to writer Sebastian Baczkiewicz, "the best part of writing for radio is that there's nothing you can't do and nowhere you can't go."

Set in 5th-century Britain, the series concentrated on the fatal flaw of a tribal leader bringing stability to 5th-century Britain, and featured Jean Lapotaire as Morgan and Ian McDiarmid as Merlin. Bit soap opera-ish in feel, noted Steve, and an unsettled mix of Dark Age and chivalrous settings, but with some interesting twists on the tales (though he could have done without Morgan's narration and the generally OTT acting style).

THE BOARDS

"As fluffy as thistledown" was how one reviewer described a new production of Lerner and Loewe's ***Camelot*** performed at the Open Air theatre, Regent's Park in July. Despite some "delicious silliness" Suzi Feay felt that "the central trio were compulsively watchable", especially Daniel Flynn's "masterly" Arthur, while Domenic Cavendish also singled out Flynn's "fine upstanding Arthur", Lauren Ward as Jeni and Russ Abbot as Pellinore.

Purcell's opera ***King Arthur*** was staged in the ballroom of Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex in August. A cast of sixty young people, aged from 15 to 24, had spent up to two years in workshops plus a residency in France. The project was the start of an arts centre development near the castle's Isaac Newton Observatory.

There was a talk by Ian Gourlay in Winchester on the tree-ring dating of the **Round Table** on October 24th 2004, which found the table was constructed in the 1270s, at the beginning of King Edward I's reign. He was due to do a similar slide presentation "Tree Ring Dating (Dendrochronology) and King Arthur's Round Table" in Launton Parish Hall, Oxfordshire on 9 November 2004, reports Anita Loughrey.

- Suzi Feay review in *Independent on Sunday* August 1 2004; Dominic Cavendish "More myth than hit" *The Daily Telegraph*
- "Opera performers gather at castle" *BBC News Online* August 8 2004 (acc 30/10/2004)

MERLIN'S MART

The autumn edition of the Hunter Pole home shopping catalogue invites you to "hark back to medieval times" by purchasing the **King Arthur Brazier**. This "fabulous" black steel fire basket is reportedly "ideal" for chilly evenings or for incinerating garden refuse, and comes with a tray – just as well because, at £59.99 plus £4.50 delivery, it's approaching a king's ransom. Order from www.hunterpole.co.uk or on 020 8560 7999, quoting code HP-969. Or try their *Deluxe Gothic Arch* with its authentic black polyester coating and "majestic" gothic pinnacles (£29.99).

Though not an entry for last issue's Holy Grail competition, Alastair McBeath draws our attention to an transient grail item on the BBC's Ceefax pages. Adrian Scripps Ltd of Kent have unveiled a new variety of green **eating apple** that can tolerate the British climate. The introduction of the Greenstar apple, a hybrid of Granny Smith and Delcorf varieties bred in Belgium and developed over ten years, is "being likened to **finding the Holy Grail**".

Alastair wonders about the statistic that

"99% of green apples sold in the UK have to be imported from countries with warmer weather" – perhaps an element of make-believe is involved – and laments that the story originated in Kent and not Somerset (though he imagines they'd have been cider apples anyway). "If only the apples had been developed in Brittany ..."

During one of Anita Loughrey's web searches she found *The All-Purpose Baking Cookbook* using **King Arthur Flour** "voted by both *Food & Wine* and *People* magazines as one of the best cookbooks of 2003", plus "from Christmas cookies and pancakes to chocolate cake and sandwich bread, *The King Arthur Flour Baker's Companion* will be there to guide home bakers every step of the way".

- "'Holy Grail' of apples unveiled" *BBC2 Ceefax* page 124, October 7 2004 and *BBC News Online* (accessed 30/10/2004)
- http://www.countrymanpress.com/titles/KAFBakersCompanion.html

BOOKWORM

The full title of John Matthews' recent book tie-in with the *King Arthur* film is ***King Arthur: Dark Age Warrior and Mythic hero*** (Carlton Books £14.99 128pp 184 2229 346). Tempus Books continue to produce titles relevant to Pendragonry: David Petts' ***Christianity in Roman Britain*** (£17.99), for example, follows through into post-Roman Britain, emphasising it as the dominant belief of the ruling classes and its distinctive development in these isles.

John M Ford's long poem "Winter Solstice at Camelot Station" reset Arthur and the Round Table into the last days of steam railways, and won the 1989 Rhysling Award and a World Fantasy Award, reports Steve Sneyd. It is included in a new collection of Ford's poetry, ***Heart of Fusion***, published by Tor/Forge in August 2004, and can be ordered in the UK from amazon.com

- Steve Sneyd "The Once and Future Poem" *Pendragon XXIV* No 4, 6

PEOPLE AND PLACES

The 250-year-old Shepherd's Monument at the National Trust Staffordshire property **Shugborough Hall** allegedly provides clues to the whereabouts of the Holy Grail, as we reported last issue. Sadly, a group of youths climbed on top of the structure in early May, in broad daylight, and smashed finials made of ornamental sea shells before escaping. Police called it "a mindless attack", so conspiracy theorists at least can rest easy.

The mansion where many believe the Grail once resided was put up for sale in May. **Nanteos Mansion** near Aberystwyth is a Grade I listed 18th-century Palladian mansion that was languishing as a run-down B&B before being bought by "an educational facility" in excess of the asking price of £1.25 million. A *Telegraph* article repeated the not-so-old traditions of Glastonbury monks carrying the relic there in the mid-16th century and of Wagner visiting it (both stories being just that – stories, as Fred Stedman-Jones has long pointed out) while allowing it a 12th-century origin as a Crusading artefact. Nowadays Nanteos may be just as famous for having had the Incredible String Band performing on its roof.

New visitor facilities were opened on May 23 2004 by English Heritage at **Tintagel Castle** in Cornwall after six months preparation, and featured "the myths and legends that surround the castle's history" – including the conception of Arthur.

The death of **John Cullen Murphy** on July 2nd at the age of 85 was recently announced. He had been, since 1970, the American artist / illustrator of the Arthurian ***Prince Valiant*** comic strip. Hal Foster, artist for the "Tarzan" strip, began *Prince Valiant* 67 years ago, and Chicago illustrator Gary Gianni has already taken on the mantle. The Arthurian strip was first suggested by newspaper magnate **William Randolph Hearst**, who re-christened the hero after objecting to Foster's choice of Derek, son of Thane. (Derek, in the form of Theodoric, is of course a genuine Early Medieval name, unlike Valiant.) The weekly installments, distributed by King Features Syndicate, had reached No 3517 by the time of Cullen's death.

Fans of the *Asterix* comics will remember that the favourite exclamation of the diminutive Gaul was "By Toutatis!" **Toutatis**, or Teutates, was perhaps originally a generic name for Celtic tutelary tribal gods,

and may have been sacrificed to at Samain, November 1st (MacKillop 1998). Nowadays the name might be more familiar as the 3-mile-long asteroid which was involved in a near-miss with the earth on September 29, 2004. (More accurately, it was a *near-hit* – if you can call 1.5 million km a near-hit.) If you missed it, you can catch it again in 2562.

The appearance of Toutatis reminded me of a quite interesting mention, on BBC Two's panel game *QI*, of Earth's *second* moon **Cruithne**. Discovered in 1997 by a team from London's Queen Mary and Westfield College, the 3-mile-wide "Trojan" asteroid – now one of several – completes an eccentric horseshoe orbit every 770 years around the Earth (last coming within 15 million km of our planet in 1900), and will continue to do so for another five millennia.

Scientists Fathi Namouni, Apostolos Christou and Carl Murray may have named this "temporary" moon after the daughter of an Irish smith who was infatuated with hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. More likely Cruithne takes its name from the Q-Celtic form of the P-Celtic name for **Britain** (Welsh *Prydain*), though it is sometimes limited to the area inhabited by the Picts – modern Scotland, ancient Alba. Britain in orbit round the Earth? Now I've heard everything.

Mrs Jan Thumwood spotted a mention of member **Laurence Main** in Reading. He, readers may recall, has been trekking around the terrestrial Britain to mark The Vegan Society's Diamond Jubilee. Laurence, a member of the Council of British Druid Orders, and known as Sir Derfel after being knighted by **King Arthur Pendragon**, recounted a particular leg (yes, I know) of his journey to a local paper in which he received royal assent, crossed a perilous bridge, faced a beast and met a tempting maiden. It was In Perthshire that he encountered Prince Charles, traversed a delapidated footbridge over the Tay and awoke to find a bull by his tent. Full details of the temptress adventure were not recorded, however. Sir Derfel's thousand-mile odyssey finished on October 30.

Finally, Steve Sneyd recently heard a radio item in which it was reported that footballer Chris Waddle, during his time at Marseilles, was nicknamed **Merlin** for his ball skills. (No, not Myrddin – in France that would have just been rude.)

- "Vandals attack historic monument" *BBC News Online* 19/05/2004
- Adam Edwards "On the Grail trail" *The Daily Telegraph / Property* May 8 2004
- Wolfgang Saxon "John Cullen Murphy, 85, Artist Who Illustrated 'Prince Valiant' *New York Times* July 8 2004; James McKillop (1998) *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (OUP, Oxford & New York): 357: "Teutates"; 101: "Cruithne"; 324: "Picts"
- Alex Morales "Asteroid comes closest to Earth since 12th century, NASA says" http://quote.bloomberg.com (accessed 2/10/2004)
- "Earth's 'second moon' in a 'minage [*sic*] à trois'" European Space Agency website http://sci.esa.int (accessed 2/10/2004)
- Sarah Dave "Druid's big UK trek is pure magic" *Reading Evening Post* October 20

PETS CORNER

King Arthur reigns supreme was the headline in a West Wales paper, proclaiming news that might appear a little stale. It turns out however that this particular monarch is a 50-year-old Shetland pony, confirmed by Guiness World Records as the **oldest pony in the world**.

The Chester owner of **King Arthur** was so impressed with the work of the Veteran Horse Society that she donated him to the Pembrokeshire-based group. The pony, said to be "in excellent condition" despite his age (35 is the usual life expectancy), will be shown on open days at St Dogmael's.

Still in Pembrokeshire, **Merlin** was found alive and well in August – in an orchard. The five-year-old rescue beagle from Staffordshire was stung by a wasp on a beach at the appropriately-named Wiseman's Bridge, and ran away. After two weeks and much local publicity he was finally heard barking by the owner of the orchard near Stepaside, and the rescue dog was himself rescued from a prison of brambles. Despite his being very frightened and very thin, his grateful owners report he is recovering well and putting on weight.

A correspondent to *Current Archaeology* asks why "the **White Horse of Uffington** has always been considered to be a horse" when it is clearly "much more feline" due to its long tail, long back, square head, prick ears and springing attitude. Morris Marples commented on its "very unequine appearance" in 1949, but favoured a dragon image. Can it be that the St George of Uffington folklore slaying a dragon on Dragon Hill doesn't really refer to the Levantine saint but to the Welsh tradition of King Arthur defeating a **wild cat**?

- "King Arthur, 50, reigns supreme" *Western Telegraph* September 8 2004
- "The beagle has landed" *Western Telegraph* August 25 2004
- M J Visick "The Uffington white cat?" *Current Archaeology 194* October-November 2004; Morris Marples (1949) *White Horses and other Hill Figures* (Alan Sutton, Gloucester 1981)

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

In W M S Russell's feature review last issue ("Folklore, Fakelore and History") there were two unfortunate editorial omissions and several character mistakes: *mea maxima culpa*. Paragraph 2, page 12, should have read, in part,

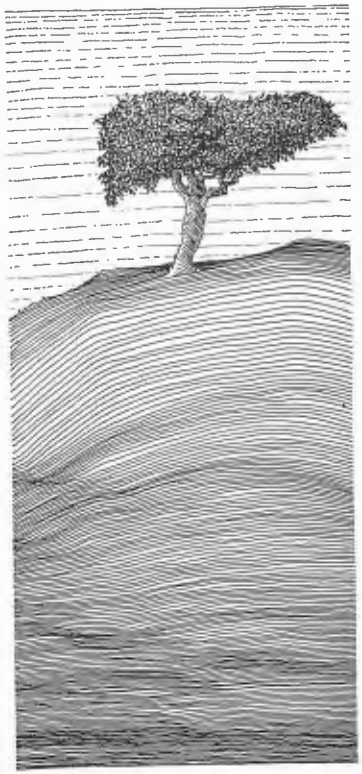
"The real man of this name [Twm Sion Cati] was a respectable antiquary, but in fakelore he has become a sort of Robin Hood outlaw, actually derived from *a couple of completely fictitious novels. I might add to this a tale heard in the South Atlantic about a ghost ship and an albatross, actually derived from* Hauff's story ..."

The second omission occurs in paragraph 2, page 16, which should read, in part,

"Hutton takes us on a fascinting 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 *in Moorish Spain and Sicily, the West European translators and scholars* influenced by all this ... showing us a host of interesting sights on the way."

The final result in **100 Welsh Heroes** was not as reported last issue. **King Arthur** came in at a more creditable 70th position with 94 votes (40505 votes were cast in all). Top three? Nye Bevan, Owain Glyndwr and Tom Jones. Catherine Zeta-Jones, in 13th place, was the highest placed woman and Dark Age St David got to 47th position.

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd



Pendragon Round Table 2005

Books, Food, Music, Talks, Debate, Fellowship and Good Company , see YOU there?

Members are invited to join us at Hay-on-Wye for a Round Table to be held on the weekend of 17th, 18th June 2005.

Hay has become world famous as the World's largest second-hand and antiquarian bookshop centre and many of these stay open late on summer evenings, an extra bonus to what is likely to prove our most stimulating and varied Society occasion for many years. Most of those members who attended the very successful Caerleon Round Table in 2003 have already expressed their intention of attending.

We have made arrangements for members who wish to join in a 'house party' atmosphere to book at the Baskerville Hall hotel at Clyro, the home of the Baskerville family with whom Conan Doyle stayed on several occasions and is said to have based his story of the spectral hound on family legends told about the South Radnorshire area. There are a variety of room prices, Executive, Standard and Economy grade rooms, double and single, at reasonable rates, as well as more basic hostel and camping facilities. Breakfast is included and there are spacious grounds and a heated indoor swimming pool. When we are not pursuing Arthur there will be ample opportunity for socialising in a way seldom possible on previous occasions. Alternatively, if you would prefer to book accommodation for yourself in Hay itself we can help you to do this.

We shall hold our Saturday afternoon and early evening activities, which are a self-contained programme, in Hay itself - allowing those who can drive to Hay for the day to take part without staying the night or joining in Sunday activities.

Highlights will be an audio visual presentation on *Owain Glyndŵr* by Chris Barber and a talk by Laurence Main on *Camlann in Wales*. Dr. Karen Ralls and Anne Lister will also be with us to entertain us with their musical talents. Other activities planned are short papers given by members attending , followed by lively discussions, and an Arthurian Team Quiz hosted by Dave Burnham, a successful Mastermind competitor.

Baskerville Hall Hotel

An information pack is available from Fred Stedman-Jones by writing to:

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King Arthur's Stone