pendragon

Journal of
The Pendragon Society

Arthurian Beasts

XXXII No 3

editorial

XXXII No 3 *Spring 2005*

This issue's theme

Simon Rouse's magnificent cover design, with its horses, hounds and wild boars, beautifully encapsulates the theme of this issue's contents, namely **Arthurian Beasts**. Boars, dragons, giants, goshawks, hounds, choughs, wild cats and numerous other fauna roam freely through these pages. Some loom large, others provide fleeting glimpses as these feral creatures scuttle in and out of peripheral vision. How many can you spot in amongst the other items which don't ostensibly fit in with the theme?

Other themes

Last issue, entitled *Merlin's Study*, produced many responses, as evidenced by the letters pages. In particular, the Merlin of the cover reminded Fred Stedman-Jones of George Bernard Shaw and Steve Sneyd of Gerald England, long-time editor of *New Hope International Review* ("wonder if he's a reincarnation of the wizard!"). Other responses discuss *King Arthur*, Excalibur, Arthur's Cross, Scotland, folk memory and the imagination, but discussion of the grail-as-metaphor should now appear next issue, along with *BookWorm* and *Old News*. Unforeseen glitches unfortunately make this a *Late* Spring issue.

King Arthur's mother **Igraine** is summer's theme, **Heroes & Villains** – another miscellany issue – is autumn's, and the winter issue should feature **The Treasures of Britain**. Themes are a not always satisfactory way of providing a focus for the often very disparate submissions we receive, but *Pendragon* has used this as a ploy since 1977 (and even before) to stimulate some original approaches to seemingly jaded Arthurian topics. Sometimes, however, this can mean postponement of submissions trailed the issue before, and apologies are due if your item doesn't appear as expected.

Acknowledgements

As for this issue, grateful thanks are due to Marguerite Rivers for a generous contribution to Pendragon funds, to the efficient Stedman-Jones & Rouse journal team, to Steve Sneyd for his indefatigable trivia pursuit, and to all correspondents and contributors.

Kilpeck Church wyvern Chris Lovegrove

Hay-on-Wye Round Table

A report on this very successful 2005 event is elsewhere in this issue. Particular thanks must go out to Fred Stedman-Jones and Dave Burnham for their donkey-work in initiating and organising the Round Table, to the special guests who were so generous with their time, to the individuals who willingly braved the lion's den by volunteering for the website team, and to all those who thought, "Let's make it to Hay while the sun shines". (Well, *somebody* had to say it.)

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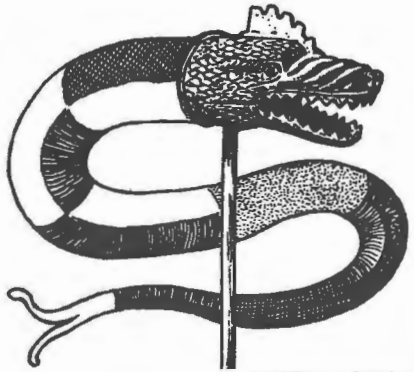
PEN-DRAGON

Letters



C W Evans-Günther

101 (OR IS IT 5500) SARMATIANS?

With *Pendragon XXXII* No 1 almost as much an "Arthur in Film" as an "Arthur Abroad" issue, I'm sure that I'll not have been alone in picking up on the whole Sarmatian cavalry theme. I looked into this a few years ago with a Romanian colleague Andrei Gheorghe (see our "The Dacian Dragon Standard, King Decebal, Emperor Trajan and King Arthur" in *The Dragon Chronicle 12*, 1998: 13-19), as both the Dacians and their Rhoxolani allies (one of the ancient Sarmatian tribes) who fought several wars with the Roman Empire in the late 1st and early 2nd centuries AD, used the wolf's-head-and-windsock-body dragon standards. These standards were later taken-up by the Roman army, which eventually used the draco as the badge of the cohorts. Exactly when the draco was so adopted by the Romans is unclear, but it seems to have been relatively soon after Trajan's final defeat of King Decebalus in 106 AD. Whether the standard derived ultimately from the Dacians, the Sarmatians or the Parthians, all of whom used it, and all of whom Trajan fought against, cannot be established. However, the heavy Rhoxolani cataphract cavalry appeared in ancient Roman art, such as on Trajan's Column in Rome (plaster replicas are displayed at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London), as if both horse and rider had their skins covered with close-fitting draconic scales, which may be suggestive, if physically impossible as armour.

The Romans certainly had particular problems against the Sarmatians, notably a tribe called the Iazyges / Iazuges, who very effectively attacked the Romans several times. As with so much else, quite when Sarmatians were first taken into the Roman army was not clear. Some examples follow. Vespasian took the ruling chiefs of the Iazyges into service with the army to help guard Moesia (roughly modern north Bulgaria), though not the bulk of their cavalry, partly as hostages for the good behaviour of the remainder, in 69 AD (Tacitus, *Histories* 3.5). This followed the defeat of the Rhoxolani in Moesia earlier that year, when the Romans caught them on melting wet snow, where the horses were at a disadvantage (*op.cit* 1.79).

During the Dacian Wars, in 104, Dio Cassius (*Roman History* 68.11.1-3) mentioned the problems Decebalus had with desertions among his troops to the Roman side, and his attempts to prevent this. Although the Sarmatians were not specifically mentioned, it would seem possible some fought alongside the Romans at this time.

When Hadrian was dying in 138, he arranged for Mastor, his huntsman, one of the Iazyges who had been captured but later employed by the Emperor, to promise to kill him to alleviate his suffering. Mastor, obviously a trusted man, ultimately was too afraid and refused (*op cit* 69.22.2). It has been generally assumed by modern historians that Sarmatian cavalry were probably first employed in numbers by the Roman army during Hadrian's emperorship, or between the end of the Dacian Wars and the end of Hadrian's reign, but the evidence from surviving texts is otherwise lacking. Dacian troops served in the army from Hadrian's time as attested by inscriptions, including in Britain (*cf* Guy de la Bedoyere's *Companion to Roman Britain*, Chapter 2[1]). Whether these Dacians included any Sarmatians is unknown.

The transfer of 5500 defeated Iazyges' cavalry to Britain in 175 by Marcus Aurelius thus seems rather late for at least some Sarmatians to have first appeared among the Roman forces. Even so, it was clear from Dio's comments in this regard (*Roman History*, Epitome of Book 72.16; see also 13 and 14) that the Iazyges were not considered trustworthy, and the sending of so many – 5500 of 8000 troops agreed as part of a peace settlement – seems to have been as much to stifle any thoughts of rebellion as anything else. Britain was the furthest-flung corner of the Empire then, after all. The paucity of recovered inscriptions about any (not necessarily these) Sarmatians, or cataphract cavalry, from British sites, has led some to suggest they may not have been in Britain for very long.

The unreferenced 'battle on the ice', also mentioned in this respect in the Autumn 2004 *Pendragon*, was probably that in Dio's notes where the Romans pursued the Iazyges onto the frozen River Ister (= Danube), where their superior training allowed them to defeat the Sarmatians in 172 or 173 (*op cit* 7).

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

EXCALIBUR IN SICILY, AGAIN ...

One small thought, on Dave Burnham's mention of Tancred being given a supposed Caliburn by Richard I ["Foreign Exchange" *XXXII* No 1: 22-25]. Although in no way disagreeing that the gift to a Sicilian monarch makes sense only if Arthur was already associated in story with the island, on the suggestion that Tancred being "worthy" of the gift was involved, I doubt that value judgement came into it. Richard had, after all, shown open contempt for Tancred upon his arrival at the island, erecting a kind of Portacastle at his landing spot without the king's leave, and giving it the insulting name Mategrifon – the use of the abusive term *Grifon* for Greek likely to refer to Tancred's having a Greek mother, and thus also to his illegitimacy, injury added to the insult of delaying going to court to greet Tancred in the first place.

Simon Rouse

But Richard could well have had a purely material purpose. He clearly wanted to re-supply his fleet in Sicily for the rest of the journey to the Holy Land, if possible without paying for the supplies, and he also wanted to lay his hands on the 20,000 gold piece dowry of his sister, who had been married to Tancred's predecessor William I. I suspect the supposed Caliburn[2] was a sweetener, rather as Victorian explorers attempted to fob off chieftains in remote places with gewgaws, or, to go back to earlier times, some Roman envoy doubtless gifted a (no doubt second-best) purple cloak to win the loyalty of Padarn Pesrut beyond the Wall. I also wonder if Tancred himself soon came to doubt its provenance, since I've never come across any further mention of it, as if it was quickly buried in the deepest vault as an embarrassing reminder of how he'd been exploited and humiliated by Richard.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorkshire

[1] Guy de la Bedoyere (1999) *Companion to Roman Britain* (Tempus) Chapter 2, 68-69 for the few undated Sarmatian and the more numerous, sometimes dated, Dacian inscriptions.

[2] Did Richard himself believe it genuine, I wonder – if he did, it seems unlikely he would have parted with such a rare treasure, given the value of the Arthurian story to the Plantagenet political agenda, even to serve his short term fiscal ends?

... OR IN HAMPSHIRE?

A couple of days ago I was browsing through a recent acquisition of mine, *The Encyclopaedia of Ghosts and Spirits*, and came across an item attributed to the *Daily Mirror* in 1952. Briefly, it refers to a family who were on holiday in Beaulieu in the New Forest in Hampshire and came across a lake while driving through a network of lanes. In the centre of that network was a boulder, and embedded in it was a sword reminiscent of Arthur's Excalibur. Between then and 1969 they'd made some 250 visits but never found the lake again. No doubt you know of the 'sighting', but I thought I'd mention it.

Dennis Oldham, Milton Keynes

• *Of course, Excalibur wasn't the sword in the stone; it was given to Arthur by the Lady of the Lake. But it's a common-enough notion and nigh impossible to eradicate now.*

GREEK AND MESOPOTAMIAN ASTRONOMY

Besides congratulating the Editor and contributors for another fine issue, I should like to thank Alastair McBeath for his comment on my review of Ronald Hutton's book.[3] The other examples I gave seem to me adequately to refute Van Gennep's two-century limit for accurate folk memory, and I could have mentioned yet others. But Ovenden's thesis of long-term exclusively spoken transmission of the constellations is itself refuted by Alastair McBeath's account, very interesting in itself, of the written Mesopotamian records of them. We are fortunate in being given access to Alastair McBeath's vast knowledge of astronomy and its history, shown in other contributions and especially in his magnificent astronomical and meteorological chronology for the Arthurian period, published in the same issue.[4]

A point he probably thought too obvious to need mention is the extent to which these Mesopotamian records were available to the Greeks. Luigi Pareti has shown that Greek astronomers were quite familiar with, and often influenced by, their Babylonian opposite numbers.[5] They knew of some of the work of the man they called Kidenas (Kiddinu?), and this raises a question that has often interested me, though I am not equipped to answer it, and on which I should value Alastair McBeath's views. Did Kiddinu (if that was his name) discover precession before Hipparchus, and if so did the Greek know of the Babylonian's discovery?

W M S Russell, Reading, Berks

WHERE *DID* SCOTLAND START?

Alastair McBeath's letter on the Anglo-Scottish frontier ["Where does Scotland start?" last issue, 9] opens an enormous can of worms – it very much depends when you snapshot the situation. Yes, there were times when Northumbrian controlling influence went west into Cumbria and Galloway, and certainly the kingdom ruled the Lothians. But, on the first aspect, the Brythonic state of Strathclyde certainly had periods of revival to run well south from its Clyde heartland, with Rheged (Cumbria) as a subkingdom: to pick one instance, the report of a monk, emissary of King Pepin of the Franks, who was still in Strathclyde territory as far south as what is West Yorkshire (Bradford area).

The Scots kings, as inheritors of Strathclyde, were dominant in Cumbria at least till the time of William Rufus – the Rere Stone on Stainmore Pass marking the boundary between England and Scotland – and as late as the time of King Stephen, to get the Scottish King's support in the Anarchy, he made an agreement which (briefly) restored Scots control as far south as the Ribble.

And, in terms of Northumberland itself, the Scots kings long maintained a claim to it, which had been assigned to them by the Earls of Dunbar and March, vassals of theirs who had inherited the claim from the House of Bamburgh, who controlled the rump of Northumbria left by the Viking invasions until the Conquest. Parts of Northumberland, Upper Redesdale if memory serves in particular, remained in Scots hands long after the claim to the whole county was effectively abandoned.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorkshire

[3] McBeath, A (2004-5) "Long-term Oral Traditions and the Constellations" *Pendragon 32* No 2: 7-8

[4] McBeath, A (2004-5) "An Annotated Timeline..." *Pendragon 32* No 2: 17-20

[5] Pareti, L, Brezzi, P and Petech, L (1965) *History of Mankind: cultural and Scientific Development: The Ancient World from about 500 BC to the Christian Era* (*transl* Chilver, G E F and Chilver, S; London: Allen and Unwin) 409-411

I don't think I can add much to what I said about Alastair McBeath's comments about Scotland and the Wall. I had to reread the article, as I hadn't read it in years. I don't actually state that Hadrian's Wall was the border and I think was clear that I was not aware of Anglo-Saxon settlement recorded in Scotland. What I should have emphasized was I meant at a early period – the time of or before possible dates for Arthur. There is nothing sure about Bernicia before Ida in 547 and I don't know what archaeological evidence there is for early 'English' settlement in Scotland. Until recently I haven't had good access to the Net and even then when I did a quick search to see if I could find something on the subject, but couldn't.

Concerning Alastair's *Timeline*, I once did something similar myself in *Dragon* but with the proviso that the Arthurian links to certain astronomical phenomena belong to Geoffrey of Monmouth. He mentions only the death of Uter Pendragon from the Ulster Annals, yet it is quite clear from the reference that this is very late. "Death of Uter Pendragon, king of England, to whom succeeded his son, King Arthur, who instituted the Round Table." King of England? Round Table? History?

Charles Evans-Günther, Japan

INSIGHT, IMAGINATION AND IMAGES

Keep up the good work! *Pendragon*'s great!

Karen Ralls, Oxford

I agree with Pamela Constantine, whose fine poems appear in this Winter's issue, that *Pendragon* feeds the life of the imagination. And I have quite a lot of that!!

Pamela Harvey, Edmonton, London

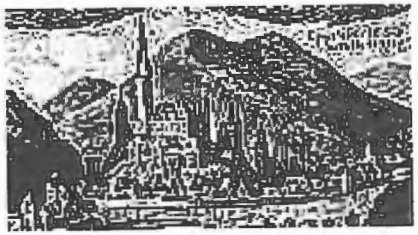
Many thanks for the Winter issue of *Pendragon*. I am grateful for the inclusion of my poems and publication of my letter, and, as usual, found all contents rewarding reading. I must commend Dr Strode for her excellent article, in which she refers with much insight to the universal quest. Splendid reading.

Pamela Constantine, Upminster, Essex

• *More of Pamela's work appear this issue.*

Re the fascinating Dumas article [W M S Russell "Dumas and Merlin in the Rhineland (1)" *XXXII* No 2, 27-30], I loved the story of St Goar's conversion methods, with its echo of the papal legate in the Albigensian Crusade's reply of "Kill them all – God will know His own" when asked how to distinguish between the faithful to be spared and heretics to be slaughtered at the fall of Béziers.

Coincidentally, the editor of a German Hawkwind magazine I get lives in Eppstein – perhaps Dumas was being economical with the facts again, or perhaps the built-up area has grown considerably since, but the (quite well-preserved) castle of Eppstein, far from being buried in the forest, according to the pictures I've seen actually rises on its height from the town itself.



It's been a very great many years indeed since I was in Merlin's Cave at Tintagel, but Ian Brown's evocative drawing brings it back very vividly. Mentioning that cave, Michael Moorcock, in one of his sagas of that ever-troublesome traveller between alternative modern histories Jerry Cornelius, 'The English Assassin', has a direct Arthurian echo, when the character is found in a coma, washed up by the tide there.

Anyway, yet another enjoyable and interesting issue (I should have that statement on a rubber stamp, since it seems to apply every time!).

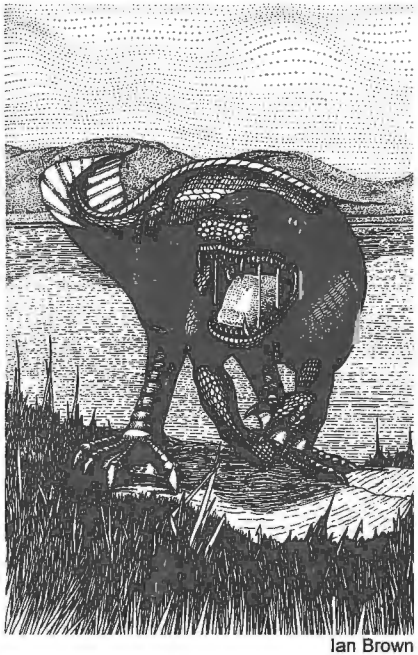
Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorkshire

• *In a follow-up note, Steve reports that his Eppstein contact suggests that Dumas fastened on the place as a setting because in the 19th century Eppstein had a very successful spa. Its mineral waters attracted rich tourists, and hence became a market for Dumas' tale. However, "one side of the castle faces town, the other side faces the forest, so Dumas' description is half-right". The second part of "Merlin and Dumas in the Rhineland" will appear next issue.*

A concise Arthurian Bestiary

Chris Lovegrove

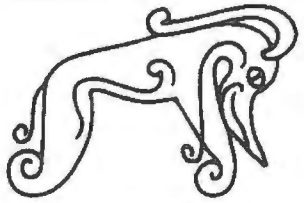
This concise (but by no means exhaustive) listing is a mere sampler of beasts appearing in Arthurian narratives: significant omissions are inevitable, and the scope excludes, for example, Dark Age saints and their association with animals. Main illustrations by ***Ian Brown****.*



Ian Brown

Addanc or **Afanc** *?Castor fiber*

1. In a folktale from the middle of the 19th century, Arthur comes to Llyn Barfog in Gwynedd to kill an *afanc*. This, supposedly, was a crocodile, but though *afanc* means "beaver" in modern Welsh, a rather more monstrous water creature is to be understood in folklore and in the medieval tales: Llyn Barfog ("Bearded Lake") may even have been *Llyn y Barfog,* or "Lake of the Hairy Monster" (Rhys 1901). The hoof print of Arthur's horse on a nearby rock is supposedly evidence of the battle between Arthur and the beast. This *afanc* is rather like the water-horses of Celtic tradition, such as the Welsh *ceffyl dŵr* and the Scottish *kelpie* (which, precursor of the Loch Ness monster, St Columba may have encountered on the River Ness). There is a Bedd Afanc (Avanc's Grave) in Pembrokeshire's Preseli Hills, but with no Arthurian legend attached.



So-called Pictish "elephant", perhaps a kelpie, depicted on Scottish inscribed stones, and possibly based on body of stranded dolphin

2. Rhys (1901: 431) suggests that the etymological equivalent of Welsh *afanc* is Irish *abacc* "dwarf", and this makes sense of an adventure the hero has in *Peredur.* The Empress of Constantinople gives Peredur a stone of invisibility with which to combat the *Addanc of the Lake*, who lives in a cave by a lake. The Addanc lies in wait unseen behind a stone pillar to slay anyone with a poison dart. With the stone of invisibility Peredur can see the Addanc without being seen. He pierces it with a lance and cuts off its head. This malevolent water-creature in a cave behaves much as Grendel and his mother behave towards Beowulf, or the hag towards Arthur and his men in the last of the tasks set in *Culhwch and Olwen*. The Addanc gets its come-uppance too.

Bear *Ursus arctos*

The early Anglo-Saxon settlement at West Stow in Suffolk produced the remains of wild animals, including the bear (Dark 2000: 131), evidence that this creature was probably hunted in the woodlands in the east of the country, and no doubt elsewhere. That this fierce creature, which appears to hibernate for part of the year, definitely existed in the Dark Ages adds significance to the names of legendary warriors such as Beowulf ("bee-enemy") and Arthur (Welsh *arth* "bear").

Cat *Felis silvestris* or *Lynx lynx*

1. Arthur's companion Cai goes to Anglesey to destroy ***lions*** in the early 12-century poem *Pa gur.* Immediately afterwards we are told "His shield was polished / against Palug's Cat. / When people ask / Who pierced Palug's Cat? / nine score warriors / used to fall as its food." The juxtaposition between lions and *Cath Palug* suggest they are one and the same, perhaps memories of lynxes.

In the *Welsh Triads*, the supernatural sow Henwen gave birth to a kitten at Caernarfon, which swam the Menai Strait and – unfortunately for Anglesey – was raised by the sons of Palug. *Cath Palug* (which may actually mean "the clawing cat") was defeated by either Cai or Arthur, according to either Scottish or English accounts, maybe by use of the polished shield.[1] See ***Swine***.

2. In the medieval *Suite de Merlin*, Arthur fights with the giant cat *Capalu* near Lake Bourget in the Pre Alps. East of the lake (and visible to skiers landing at Chambéry airport) is the long ridge of the Mont du Chat, the peak of which is the Dent du Chat. On the north is the Col du Chat, leading down to la Chapelle-du-Mont-du-Chat, and on the west of the Col is the suggestively named village of Chevelu.[2] In the late 12th-century *Romanaz de Franceis* Arthur was killed by *Le Capalu* in a swamp, French *palu* (Coghlan 1991: 62).

Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

Robert Hunt bemoaned the "scarcity of traditions connected with King Arthur" in Cornwall and, despite spending autumn 1863 in Tintagel and Camelford, couldn't obtain *one* Arthurian story in these areas (1865: 303). However, he reports (1865: 309) that "The tradition relative to King Arthur and his transformation into a ***raven***, is fixed very decidedly on the Cornish Chough, from the colour of its beak and talons. The—

Talons and beak all red with blood

are said to mark the violent end to which this celebrated chieftain came."

The decline of the Cornish Chough from the 19th century onwards was a matter of regret for a county which bore the bird as a crest on its arms, but it made a welcome return to Cornwall in 2002 after nearly a half-century's absence. In Wales the chough is known as *brân goesgoch* (the "redshanks crow") and sometimes as *brân Arthur*, but this latter name is of indeterminate age and certainly not universal. Choughs at RSPB sites, such as South Stack at Gors Goch and at Ynys Dewi (Ramsey Island, where their numbers have been increasing steadily), encourage confidence for their future, in Wales at least.[3] See also ***Puffin***, ***Raven***.

Crow *Corvus corone*

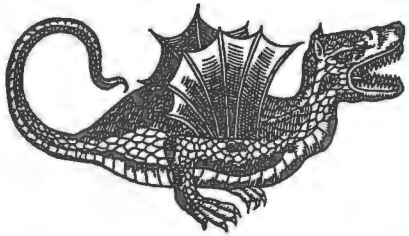
1. *Morfran*, because of his ugliness, was said (in *Culhwch and Olwen*) to have escaped the Battle of Camlan. (There is a Carnlan not far from Bala Lake, presumably named Llyn Tegid in Welsh after Morfran's father.) In a 17th-century folktale, Morfran was also the son of the witch Ceridwen, who intended him to swallow three drops of a magic brew to gain knowledge of the past, present and future. Little Gwion, however, was in the right place at the right time, and Morfran – nicknamed Afagddu ("Blackness") – was not. *Morfran* may mean "Great Crow" (hinted at by his nickname), but perhaps it really means "Sea-Crow", hinting at a cormorant or some such bird. Most corvids seem to be called *brân* in Welsh, though other than the ***raven*** and ***chough*** they lack specific Arthurian lore.

2. *Morgan le Fay*, because her name is similar to the Irish goddess Morrigan, might have also been associated with carrion crows. However, Morrigan means "Great Queen" while Morgan seems instead to have derived her name from Breton water-fairies called Morgans (Coghlan 1991: 165).

Dragon *Draco occidentalis*

1. The battle between the red and white dragons, noted by Nennius in the 9th century, is repeated by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th and alluded to in the Mabinogion tale *Lludd and Llefelys.* The red and white dragons corresponded to the Welsh and the Saxons respectively. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*, when Uther Pendragon, following a fiery portent in the sky, has two dragons made, they are golden rather than red or white (see ***Wyvern***).

[1] Patrick Sims-Williams "The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems" in Bromwich *et al* (1991)
[2] Institut Géographique National map 53
[3] "Island life is a boon for birds" *Y Barcud* (Spring 2005) RSPB Cymru



2. Uther's epithet, Pendragon, may not necessarily refer directly to the beast. In Early Welsh usage *dragon*, *dragwn* and *draig* regularly were applied to warriors or war-leaders: Maelgwn was *insularis draco* or "Dragon of the Isle", and Owain ap Urien is called *Owain ben draic* or "Chief Dragon" (Lofmark 1995: 44). When Arthur is referred to in glossed copies of Nennius as *mab uthr*, this may mean not "Uther's son" but "awesome youth", and some such phrase as *Arthur mab uthr pen dragon* may simply be "Arthur, awesome youth, chief warrior" rather than "Uther Pendragon's son" (Lofmark 1995: 52).

Saint Jacques, Perros-Guirec Chris Lovegrove

3. Dragon-battling Arthurian characters include Tristan in Ireland and Arthur himself in Brittany. On the pink granite north Breton coast is the beach of Grève de St-Michel where Arthur fruitlessly fought a dragon. His Irish cousin St Efflam used prayer to defeat the monster, which vomited blood and then drowned in the sea. At nearby Perros-Guirec a worn capital on the south porch of the 12th-century church of Saint-Jacques exhibits two men attacking a dragon, one with a shield thrusting his spear into the monster, the other brandishing a sword. Local lore has it that these represent the warrior saint and Arthur, but which is which?

Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* or *Haliaeetus albicilla*

1. The *Eagle of Gwernabwy* (Golden Eagle or Sea Eagle?) was the oldest animal in the world, according to *Culhwch*. Arthur's men asked for news of Mabon son of Modron from the Blackbird of Cilgwri, the **Stag** of Rhedynfre and the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd before they were directed to the Eagle. Even the Eagle hadn't heard of him, so they went to the ***Salmon*** of Llyn Llyw (a lake near the River Severn) who was able to inform them.
2. In the *Dialogue of Arthur and the Eagle* (12th century?), Arthur encounters an eagle in Cornwall which first stares then laughs from the top of an oak. It gives Arthur some religious instruction and then reveals itself as Eliwlod, son of Arthur's brother Madawg. The tale is paralleled by one where the roles are taken by Gwydion and his nephew Lleu.[4]

Horse

1. *Llamrei* is the name of Arthur's mare in *Culhwch*, and is declared elsewhere to be "fearless" and that it "used to cause hurt".
2. *Passelande* is the name of Arthur's mount in Beroul's *Tristan*. He rides it whilst talking with Yseut's squire Perinis.
3. A *Dun Stallion* is the horse of Arthur's which haunts the County Durham village of Castle Eden (Coghlan 1991: 81).
4. *Gringolet*, Gringalet or Guingalet is Gawain's horse in Chrétien de Troyes' *Erec* and *Perceval*. In Welsh and Breton this is Ceingalad and Keingalet respectively, meaning "hard back" or similar.
5. *Lluagor* ("Host-splitter") is Caradoc's horse in the *Triads*, and (as Loriagort in *Le Livre de Caradoc*) Caradoc's monstrous step-brother.
6. King Mark is called *March ap Merchiawn* ("Horse, son of Horses") in Welsh tradition. In Beroul's *Tristan* he has horse's ears (like Midas). In Breton tradition he rides a winged horse or *mormarc'h* when the sea off Penmarc'h is stormy (Coghlan 1991: 154).
6. *Black Horses* were the native ponies ridden by Arthur's men and commemorated by the numerous Black Horse pubs on the frontier with the Anglo-Saxons, according to

[4] Patrick Sims-Williams "The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems" in Bromwich *et al* (1991)

S G Wildman – an attractive theory, which doesn't sufficiently take into account other more plausible explanations.[5]

Hound

1. Cabal is Arthur's hunting dog in Nennius (where he hunts the boar Troyt or Troynt) and, as Cafall, in *Culhwch* where he hunts the boar Ysgithrwyn (see ***Swine***). He might perhaps be named from the Latin *caballus* ("horse", French *cheval*) because of his size.
2. Drudwyn or Drutwyn is the hound used to hunt Twrch Trwyth in *Culhwch*. To control him he needed leash, collar, chain and Mabon as huntsman to be obtained, each a task in itself. The leash was variously described as that of Cwrs Cant Ewin or made from the beard of the giant Dillus the Bearded. This hound may be humorously named after Welsh *drudwen* "starling".
3. *Crop-eared dog* is the hero of an Irish romance, transformed into an animal by a wicked step-mother. He aids Gawain in tracking down his step-mother's son after the latter has humiliated Arthur, and forces him to transform him back to Alexander, heir to the throne of India (Coghlan 1991: 72).
3. *Cwn annwn*, the Hounds of Hell, who are said to accompany Arthur in the Wild Hunt.

The Knight of the Lion Ian Brown

[5] Chris Lovegrove (1994) "The Sign of the Black Horse" *Pendragon XXIV* No 4, 14-16

Lion

1. In the early 12th-century Welsh poem *Pa gur* "Cai the fair went to Anglesey / to destroy lions". See ***Cat***.
2. Chrétien's *Yvain* is called the Knight of the Lion. As in the story of Androcles, Yvain succours a lion who then gratefully aids him in killing a deer, battles Laudine's seneschal and brothers and helps Yvain defeat the two giant demons of Pesme Avanture.

Parrot

Arthur's pet, in the medieval *Knight of the Parrot* (Coghlan 1991: 176).

Arthur's Parrot

outlived five caesars,
ten pretenders; villafall
I outflew, old wings
singed: crude kinglet now drags me,
renamed Raider's Luck, along,
pretends can't grasp my
civilised tongue's cursing:
he too I'll outlive.

Steve Sneyd

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*

In Cornish lore, the puffin is an alternative to ***raven*** or ***chough*** as Arthur *redivivus* (Coghlan 1991: 185).

Glatisant Ian Brown

Questing Beast *Beste glatissant*
Modern French *glapissant*, from *glapir* "to yap, yelp", indicates the sound the *beste glatissant* originally made. In Book I of *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory* King Arthur encounters "the strongeste Beste that ever he saw or herde of". The noise from its belly was like the baying or "questyng of thirty coupyl houndes". This Questing Beast was being pursued by King Pellynore (and later by Palamede and Perceval), and was the offspring of a devil and a maiden. In appearance it had a snake's head, a leopard's body, a lion's hindquarters and a hart's feet, and the sound of a pack of questing hounds issued from its belly – this only stopped when Glatissant drank.

The Questing Beast
my horrid young won't
go forth be born instead no
end hunt my innards
round rush through my hid in-self
yapyapyapping for Grail prey
Steve Sneyd

Raven *Corvus corax*
1. *'Have you not read, sir,' answered Don Quixote, 'the annals and histories of England, wherein are recorded the famous exploits of King Arthur, whom, in our Castilian tongue, we always call King Artus; of whom there goes an old tradition, and a common one, all over that kingdom of Great Britain, that this king did not die, but that, by magic art, he was turned into a raven; and that, in process of time, he shall reign again and recover his kingdom and sceptre, for which reason it cannot be proved that, from that time to this, any Englishman has killed a raven?'*[6]

Don Quixote's library included the Catalan 1490 romance *Tirant lo Blanc*, which recounts a curious incident. A black-clad Morgan le Fay arrives at the Greek emperor's palace looking for her 'brother' Arthur. He is eventually found as an anonymous lord lodged in a silver cage, and before being released he is inspired by gazing at Excalibur to utter inspired philosophical sayings. Morgan and her party, re-united with Arthur, doff their black clothes before departing home. Karr (1997: 50) finds all this suggests a connection with ravens.

In the 1790s a young man in the neighbourhood of Penzance in Cornwall was "walking along Marazion Green with his fowling-piece on his shoulder ... saw a raven at a distance, and fired at it. An old man who was near immediately rebuked him, telling him that he ought on no account to have shot at a raven, for that King Arthur was still alive in the form of that bird."

Robert Hunt, who quoted this story in 1865, "questioned people in every part of Cornwall in which King Arthur has been reported to have dwelt or fought, and especially ... in the neighbourhood of Tintagel, which is reported to have been Arthur's stronghold. Nowhere do I find the raven associated with him, but I have been told that bad luck would follow the man who killed a ***Chough***, for Arthur was transformed into one of these birds."

Kate Pollard

2. Arthur was reported in the medieval *Welsh Triads* to have exhumed the talismanic head of Bran the Blessed from the Tower of London, claiming that he alone would preserve Britain from invasion. The name of the hero Brân – whose story is told in *The Mabinogion* – can mean "raven" (Modern Welsh *cigfran* "meat-crow"). Now, it's usually stated that "it was Charles II who gave the first ravens to the Tower, and the belief [that the ravens' presence safeguards Britain] may only date from his time" (Simpson & Roud 2001: 291). The official historian at the Tower of London, Geoffrey Parnell, has suggested however that the famous Tower ravens were donated as late as the 19th century by the Earl of *Dunraven*, a neo-Celtic enthusiast – the earliest reference to them there is not until 1895 – and that the well-known legend that their survival is linked to that of the kingdom is therefore very late.[7] Any possible Arthurian link with the Tower ravens may therefore be spurious.

3. In the medieval *Mabinogion* tale *The Dream of Rhonabwy* ravens are associated, not with Arthur, but with Owain.[8]

Ian Brown

[6] From Jarvis's translation of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, quoted in Hunt (1865)

[7] *Guardian* November 15 2004

[8] The association of corvids with royalty and death continues to the recent past: 'As the Duke of Windsor lay dying in May 1972 his private nurse Oonagh Shanley kept vigil for 72 hours before his death. Early one morning a "sickening thud and crash" from a bathroom "shattered the silence... Some night creature was hitting against the window." The Duchess's French maid said "Oh, it's the *corbeaux*, though I've *never* heard them in the night before... But then, they're Royal birds, aren't they?" The maid meant the huge, shiny black ravens Oonagh had often seen in the garden, and Oonagh recalled childhood lessons of the Danish war God's fatal ravens and the ravens in *Macbeth* prophesying a royal death. "Some things don't change... Even if I'd had no medical training, because of those ravens I'd still have known the end was near." ("A King's Story" *Woman* July 5 1980, 24)

Salmon
The salmon is portrayed in Celtic literature and lore as a store of supernatural wisdom and ancient knowledge, inhabiting the threshold of salt and fresh water, ascending waterfalls with its prodigious leap and resembling humans with its pink flesh. In *Culhwch*, the giant Salmon of the mythical lake Llyn Llyw by the Severn tells Arthur's men that Mabon is imprisoned in Gloucester (Caer Loyw) and aids them in freeing the youth from the fort.

Stag
1. One of the oldest animals in the world, according to *Culhwch*, is the *Stag of Rhedynfre*, though he directs Arthur's men to an even older creature, the Owl of Cwm Cawlwyd. See **Salmon**.
2. Ridden by Merlin after he is driven mad.
3. The hunt for a white animal, particularly a White Stag, may symbolise the ancient Celtic theme of a king seeking the sovereignty of the land, ultimately in the guise of a woman. In Chrétien's *Erec*, Arthur revives the custom of hunting a stag – whoever kills it must kiss the fairest maid at court. In Malory (Book 3) a white hart (rather than a stag) is chased by Nimue's white brachet into Arthur's marriage feast, followed by thirty black hounds, perhaps belonging to Nimue's abductor Sir Horitzlake of Wentland. (Nimue is eventually rescued by King Pellinore.)

Swine *Sus scrofa*
1. *Ysgithrwyn Penbaedd* ("White-Tusk Chief Boar") is the name of a wild boar hunted by Arthur in *Culhwch and Olwen* for his tusk and brought down by Arthur's ***hound*** Cafall.
2. *Twrch Trwyth* ("Hog Trwyth") is another boar hunted by Arthur's men in *Culhwch and Olwen* for his comb and scissors (or comb, razor and shears), though he escapes with his life after great slaughter. He is the son of the Irish prince Taredd transformed into a monstrous beast for his sins, and is chased over from Ireland and across South Wales before disappearing in the sea off Cornwall. Twrch appears as *Torz, le fiz le roi Arés* in Chrétien's *Erec* (Bromwich *et al* 1991: 280) and as *Tortain*, born at the same time as the eponymous hero of the *Livre de Carados* (MacKillop 1998: 41; Arthur 1996: 6 and 47).
3. *Henwen* ("Old White One") in the *Triads*

was originally a sow hunted by Coll son of Collfrewi from South to North Wales. Perhaps a parody of the hunt for Twrch Trwyth designed to poke fun at North Walians, the narrative has the pregnant sow litter an ear of wheat and a bee in Gwent, an ear each of barley and wheat in Pembrokeshire, and a wolf-cub, an eagle and a kitten near Caernarfon. The kitten was raised by the sons of Palug in Anglesey after it swam there, growing into a monstrous cat which ravaged the island. In a later version of this tale, Coll is replaced by Arthur as the hunter.

4. In the *Black Book of Carmarthen* Myrddin addresses his heartfelt prophecies *Oianau* ("the Ohs of Merlin") to his *aparchellan* "little piglet". Some of the stanzas are old, but others were inserted as late as the 13th century (Pennar 1989). The young sow appears to ignore his dire warnings.

Wolf *Canis lupus*

1. According to the *Welsh Triads*, a wolf-cub is unnaturally littered by *Henwen* in North Wales (see ***Swine***). In *Culhwch and Olwen* a greyhound called Rhymhi, which when it transforms into a she-wolf devastates Pembrokeshire, is hunted by Arthur's men for her cubs in a cave near Milford Haven in that county. The wolf-cubs are Arthur's men transformed, perhaps as werewolves.

2. *Gorlagon* is a werewolf who appears in the 14th century Latin tale *Arthur and Gorlagon* (Markale 1976: 312*f*). A hunted wolf befriends Arthur, who later discovers from an animal interpreter that Gorlagon's wife had used, then hidden, the magic wand which turned him from man to beast and back again. The name appears to be related to Welsh *gwr* "man" and French *loup-garou* "werewolf" (*loup* "wolf" and *garou*, from English "werewolf"). The tale is based on the motif of the taboo against a supernatural bridegroom revealing his origins. In outline it is the story of one of Marie de France's *lais*, but in *Bisclavret* the king is not named, and Bisclavret's wife keeps her husband transformed by merely hiding his clothes.

Wyvern

Never to be confused with the four-legged Welsh **dragon**, the biped winged heraldic wivern or wyvern is related to Welsh *gwiber* and English *viper*, even though the adder has no wings or eagle's claws! According to Geoffrey of Monmouth *Historia* (VIII, 14), Uther Pendragon took his battle standard and epithet from the star "of marvellous bigness and brightness" which appeared at his brother Aurelius' death, one ray of which was "a ball of fire spreading forth in the likeness of a dragon" issuing further rays from its mouth. When Uther becomes king, he has two gold dragons made, one to be kept in Winchester Cathedral, the other as a battle standard (VIII, 17). It is clear from Roman and early medieval descriptions and illustrations that the "wind-inflated battle-dragon" was in the shape of the biped wyvern. For this reason, when it was founded in Winchester in 1959, the Pendragon Society chose a golden wyvern on a blue field as its badge and symbol.

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Arthurian Beasts

Anita Loughrey

Sea serpent Anita Loughrey

In the Otherworld, animals talked, moved like humans, joked, warned and shape shifted. Animals functioned as teachers and druids used them for divination. The Celts relied on beasts for their survival, respected them, learned from them and honoured them by decorating their jewellery, weapons and monuments with intricate zoomorphic designs.

Wild beasts such as dragons and giants play an important supporting role in the Arthurian legends. They are called beasts because of the violence they rage, and are wild because they are free to roam where they wish. They embody the fears and anxieties of the characters that pursue them and reflect attitudes specific to when the romances were written.

Dragons

This reptilian beast was no simple creation. Legends grew from stories told by travellers. Giant squid and octopus became fire breathing serpents and dragons. Every region of the world, every period of history has their own dragons.

According to Gardiner and Lawrence, the dragon of Celtic mythology emerged from the crocodile of the ancient Egyptians and was considered holy as the Pharaohs were anointed with crocodile fat.

In China, the dragon is one of the four highest animal forms. The Oriental dragon has no wings, an elaborate mane and a drooping mustache. This protective spirit is a symbol of powerful force. It represents the Yang force of the Yin-Yang duality. This snake-like dragon is associated with water and viewed as wise and lucky.

In the legends, the dragon has a snake-like appearance similar to the Oriental dragon but characteristically it is described as a creature of great cunning with poisonous breath, similar to the Scandinavian worm. Whereas, the European dragon is depicted with four clawed legs, iron-hard scales, a barbed tongue, sleek ears, and leathery wings. This is the dragon adopted in children's fairy tales and the type of dragon St. George is said to have fought. Such dragons represent evil and the devil.

The serpent in the Garden of Eden was dragon-like in appearance in that it had legs until banished to crawl on its belly [Genesis 3:14]. They inhabited the sea and God protected mankind by wounding or slaying them by breaking their heads in the water. [Isaiah 27:1; 51:9; Psalms 74:14]. The dragon of Europe came to embody evil and suffering. Dragons were shown as fanged, clawed, humanoid demons in medieval art.

The Anglo Saxon epic *Beowulf* portrays the dragon as a guardian of treasure. The dragon is used to highlight Beowulf's bravery and show he died with honour, defeating the beast with the help of the youth Wiglaf. When Beowulf was fatally wounded by the dragon, Beowulf was nearly a hundred years old.

In the *Mabinogion* tale *Lludd and Llefelys*, the second plague that Lludd sought Llefelys' advice on was a shriek that came every May-eve and drove people mad. Nobody knew where the terrifying shriek

came from. Llefelys told his older brother that it was a British dragon fighting a foreign one and to get rid of it Lludd had to dig a pit in the center of Britain, lower a cauldron of Mead into it and cover the pit with a satin sheet. When the dragons grew tired of fighting they would turn into pigs, fall on the satin, land in the mead and get drunk. Lludd would then be able to capture them in the sheet and bury them in a safe place.

Vortigern attempted to build a stronghold over the site where Lludd had buried the sleeping dragons and the towers kept sinking and collapsing. Merlin revealed a hidden pool beneath the foundations and the two dragons resumed their fight. The red dragon represented the Britons and the white dragon the Saxons. The red dragon was victorious meaning the Britons would defeat the Saxons.

Vortigern declared himself Pendragon or 'head dragon' in 425AD and adopted the red dragon as his emblem. Dragons were often used in this way as symbols of power. Viking warships had dragons as figureheads and a dragon decorated Henry VII's crest. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, Uther Pendragon had a dragon made of gold to carry into battle, and medieval heralds believed his arms were two green dragons, back to back. Today the red dragon still graces the Welsh national flag.

Slaying or banishing a dragon was a quest no brave knights would refuse. Arthur was asked to rid the country of the dragon beast that lived in the marshes of Carhampton in Somerset. He was hunting the huge and terrifying serpent-like beast that had destroyed local farms and homelands, when he came across St Carantoc looking for his alter. Arthur agreed to give the stone alter to Carantoc in return for him getting rid of the monstrous dragon. Carantoc prayed to God and miraculously the serpent came straight to him like a child to its mother. Carantoc put a collar around the dragon's neck and led it away.

Such serpent and dragon slaying is a symbol of the triumph of good over evil. This concept is maintained by much of the children's literature produced today. For example, Harry Potter slays the basilisk and saves Hogwarts from evil. The dragon in the Arthurian legend of St Carantoc can be seen as moral-evil being overcome by a follower of God and reflects medieval attitude of the time.

In the Arthurian romances, the dragon often represents a murderous, unreasoning, self-destructive rage. Tristan kills a dragon shortly before meeting Iseult and asking for her hand in marriage to his uncle King Mark. Iseult heals him of the wounds he has received from the dragon's fire and blood but despises him for killing the giant Morholt. They mistakenly drink the love potion intended for the wedding couple and fall in love. Sometimes, the love potion Tristan and Iseult drink is said to be dragon's blood. The passion that the dragon symbolizes in the Tristan tale is an uncontrollable emotion, driving Tristan and Iseult to their adulterous and tragic love. The dragon symbolism is linked to deadly sin.

This is also true for Lancelot who must slay the dragon in order to rescue Elaine. He then sleeps with her in the mistaken impression that she is Guinevere. Lancelot makes this error either because he is drunk or because, like Tristan, he has been given a potion that clouds his intellect. Whether it is an act of rage or passion, the dragon's presence indicates the hero has stepped outside the bounds of rationality.

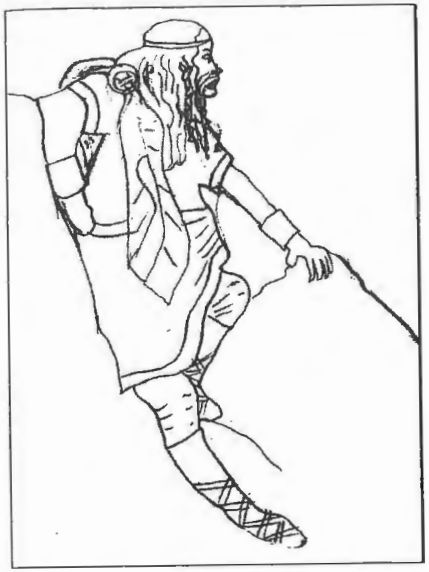
In *The Spoils of Annwn*, Arthur and his seven brave knights' battle the sea serpent that guards the Otherworld. The reptilian figure in this story is used to reflect the hopelessness of retrieving the thirteen treasures of Britain. It has a supporting role to emphasise the braveness of the knights in the face of such an impossible quest.

Giants

It is more often giants than dragons that appear as superhuman adversaries in Arthurian literature. In Celtic mythology, the Fomorians were a race of giants who were the occupants of Ireland before the Gaels. They were the earliest inhabitants of Britain and reputed to be descendents of Noah's 'bad' son Ham. They lived in Britain for six hundred years until their numbers dwindled and only a few remained, mostly in Cornwall.

It is difficult to distinguish the fairy tale giants from the giant of legend. Sometimes rocks and land formations are claimed to be petrified giants, or objects dropped by giants. Cornish giants in particular are depicted as stupid and given to aimless fighting with

boulders. In Cornwall, huge rocks are preserved to show where they played at trap-ball, hurling and other athletic games. As with dragons, brave knights sought out giants to glorify their name.



Giant Anita Loughrey

One such Cornish giant is the cannibal Cormoran, of St Michael's Mont. Both Bedwyr and Cai supported Arthur in his fight against Cormoran. This fearsome giant was finally slain by Jack the Giant killer after being trapped in a well. Jack the Giant Killer was a farmer's son at the time of King Arthur seeking to make his fortune. Cormoran was terrorising the surrounding area and stealing cattle. Jack dug a pit near Morvah, disguised the pit with sticks, and lured the giant to the pit by blowing his horn. The giant fell into the hole. Jack dispatched him with a blow from his pickaxe, and then filled in the hole. Even today, there is a large stone near Morvah church marking the Giants Cave, and sometimes it is said voices are heard coming from it.

A variation of this tale, found in Briggs' *British Folk-Tales and Legends*, is that Jack the Giant Killer worked for King Arthur's son and Jack's uncle was a huge and monstrous giant with three heads. Jack persuaded his uncle to hide from Arthur's son in his vault and whilst he lay quivering underground, they made merry with his wine and other dainties in the house. After they have rested, Jack releases his uncle from the vault but requests a reward for protecting him from Arthur's son.

The Giant of Portreath is another terrible Cornish giant who lived in a huge cavern known as his cupboard. He would wade out to sea, grab whole ships, tie them to his belt and take them back to his cupboard. The stones he hurled at ships trying to avoid him can still be seen at low tide forming a dangerous reef off Godrevy Head. The unfortunate sailors were eaten for his supper. The cupboard has since lost its roof, but can still be seen near St Ives.

Another Cornish giant is the Giant Bolster, who was outwitted in an attempt on the virtue of St Agnes. He was a bad tempered man, who terrorised the countryside and fell desperately in love with St Agnes. When she rejected his advances, he persecuted her, until in despair she demanded proof of his love. She asked him to fill a hole in the cliff with blood. Unknown to him, the hole opened at the bottom into the sea and so he bled to death.

In contrast, the legend of the Giant of Grabbist Hill in Somerset portrays him as a comical figure that is kind and protective. He came to Somerset from Cornwall because his cousins were too rough compared to the friendliness of the people in Somerset. He was well known for his legendary stone throwing and fighting against the devil. Tarr Steps and many of the standing stones of the Quantock Hills and Porlock Common have laid claim to being the remains of their tournaments.

The people of Dunster became fond of this giant and would wave to him when he sat on the knoll on Grabbist Hill with his feet either side of Dunster castle, where King Arthur is said to have spent his childhood. The hillside terrace is known as the 'Giant's Chair' and when he sat in this position he could wash the mud off his legs in the River Haune.

Heroes are often described as giants to show their greatness. Finn MacCool and Bran, son of Llyr are two examples. When Bran waded across the Irish channel to fight the Irish he was likened to a mountain. They become larger than life. This is also true of

King Arthur. There are stories how Arthur sat on King's Crags in Northumberland and threw a boulder at Guinevere on Queen's Crags, half a mile away. On another occasion, walking through Camarthen, he felt a pebble in his shoe and tossed it away. It flew seven miles and landed in high ground in the Gower peninsula, where it remains as one of the many Arthur's stones. It rests on several smaller stones and apparently weighs 25 tons.

More often than not, it is the enemy who are portrayed as giants. When Arthur hears of Gawain's death, he swears to avenge him and chases after Mordred and his army. Arthur, with eight hundred knights, charges ahead, and finds an army of sixty thousand warriors in seven battalions. A great battle ensues. They fight these 'giants from Argyle' and although they are greatly outnumbered, they are victorious.

Ian Brown

Traditionally, giants were thrown out of heaven for the sin of pride. Uncivilized and ungoverned, they represent men unconfined by societies' limitations and let loose to express their bestial nature. Giants are portrayed as big, male, and aggressive. They rape women and eat children. Significantly, it is the characteristics of such enemies that reveal the hero's true character.

Arthur has a fierce encounter with the giant Ritho, who had made himself a cloak from the beards of chieftains he had slain. Ritho challenged Arthur for his beard and was defeated. This victory showed our hero to be a courageous, virtuous and strong King. In the Chrétien de Troyes poem *Erec and Enide* we not only see that Erec is good at fighting but he is also brave to put himself at risk against two giants for a maiden, thus fighting when greatly outnumbered or outsized.

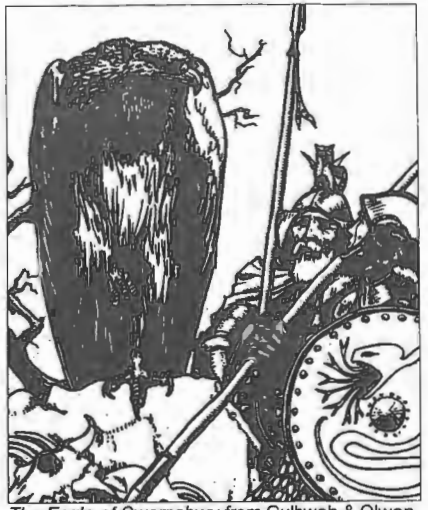
The third plague in the *Mabinogion* tale *Lludd and Llefelys* is the vanishing of royal provisions. Llefelys informs his brother the culprit is a giant who lulls the guards to sleep by enchantment whilst he plunders the stores. He suggests Lludd should keep watch himself and have a bathe of cold water ready to revive himself should the giant try his tricks. Thanks to the cold bath, he is awake when the giant enters the storeroom and beats the giant into submission. The giant in this story is used to show how wise Llefelys is and how brave Lludd is.

The giant Ysbaddaden from the *Mabinogion* story *Culhwch and Olwen* is uncivilized, uncouth, bloated and disgusting, so much so that his eyelids have to be propped up with forks. His resilience to injury emphasises his animal-like nature and eradicates any connection to being human.

Forty extraordinary tasks are set before the young Culhwch by the Giant Ysbaddaden, whose daughter, Olwen, Culhwch seeks to marry. Yet, Culhwch must do more than complete these tasks. He enlists the help of King Arthur and his knights, who too eagerly accept the challenge of the impossible. The quest for the forty wonders, are a life and death struggle. The crux of the story is that when Olwen marries, Ysbaddaden dies. Once nature becomes civilized, it is no longer a threat.

The retrieval of the grooming implements Twrch Trwyth carries between his ears, become an important part of the story's symbolism. Twrch himself is a man transformed. He is a king in exile, exiled inside the body of a Boar. The savage boar has a kind of stubborn nobility the giant lacks. It is giant Ysbaddaden, rather than the boar, that represents the uncivilized surroundings Arthur's court must struggle against.

Arthurian beasts, such as dragons and giants are used to portray our heroes at their finest. Their characters shine through the destruction of these monsters. Without such creatures and dangerous feats, there could be no heroes.



The Eagle of Gwernabwy from Culhwch & Olwen, *John D Batten (Joseph Jacobs* Celtic Fairy Tales)

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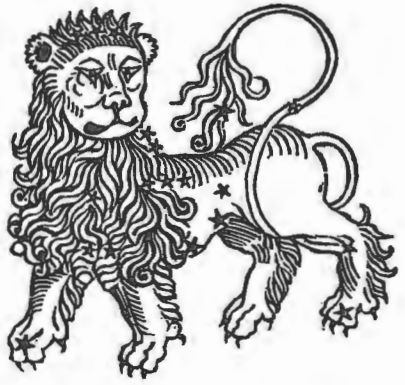


An Echoing in Heorot

Grendel's mother's blood
gives blademelt, leaves just jewelly
hilt in Bee-wolf's grasp:
puzzles instant whyhow sure
held before, already Bear –
thought-shiver how'd to
first-dying first give back, thrown
to hand young slim sure
not such hag's caught nor lost lake
tunnel sea root so womb-far:
and breath more forgets,
trophy head to take then up,
light's rebirth calling

Steve Sneyd

The Fish Knight

what knight more flawless
one whole hoofpad to helmcrest
horsemanarmoursword?
I dumb swimmer reshaped self
so, to serve if Table sink.

Steve Sneyd

Brownie, Silver and Gos

Arthur's Beasts

Dave Burnham

Tim White aged 24

Our hero was born in a faraway land by the sea, the only child of ill suited parents; his father a judge, his mother such a fierce character that the son in later life described her as a witch. His father died when the boy was young and his mother sent him away to be fostered. An idyllic interlude followed with kindly guardians only to be shattered when he was sent to a brutal boarding school. Having escaped that, he found a mentor and embarked, fitfully at first, on a career as a writer. He set himself up in a woodland retreat with a peculiar fellowship of beasts and birds and took up the task of learning how to live with animals, learning how to make himself useful and learning how to live with himself[1].

He enjoyed the notoriety brought by the late success of *The Once and Future King (TOFK)*,[2] which was only published in a single volume in 1956. He travelled in later life, spending much time in Italy and even New York where he advised on the production of the stage musical *Camelot* in 1961. But for his everyday life he sought solitude. From the early 1930s T H White lived alone. He moved to more remote homes, from the grounds of Stowe School, to Ireland and finally after the war, to Alderney in the Channel. He never shared his home except for friends passing through and housekeepers.

The reasons for this are various. Firstly he didn't like living in cities – most of his interests arising out of country living. Second was his need to cut himself of from social commitment. His stay in Ireland for instance coincided precisely with the war years and the obvious conclusion to draw from this was his wish to avoid committing himself to any sort of war work or complicity with the national struggle. The pacifism, so recognisable in the pages of *TOFK*, was a response to his circumstance rather than a position of unshakable principle. He came down on the side of the angels only after great personal struggle. Third were the more intimate struggles within himself, which led to bouts of uncontrolled drinking followed by periods of perfect abstinence. He occasionally submitted himself to self flagellation – literally beating himself. This behaviour disturbed and embarrassed him, so living close by others was not an option. Sylvia Townsend Warner, a friend later in life and a sympathetic biographer, confirms that he was confused about his sexuality and was probably attracted to boys. It seems he was determined to thwart any consequences of this temptation, for both himself and the objects of such desires – strong enough reason in itself for living far from both deliberate and accidental company.

Despite this deliberate solitude he was never alone. Apart from a vivid inner life, demonstrated by his dairies, regular correspondence and visits from friends, he always had animals. He kept pets all his life – although he shunned that word – but also without being blind to his foibles.

[1] See Sylvia Townsend Warner (1967) *T H White: A Biography* (Cape and Chatto & Windus). Townsend Warner, a poet herself, was a friend of White and sympathetic to him

[2] T H White (1956) *The Once and Future King*

hunted, stalked, killed, cured, studied, nurtured, saved and trained wild creatures. Animals also directed his professional output. Though the *TOFK* tetralogy is what Tim White is remembered for, his best work, his forte, were those books that had animals at their heart. If you exclude the last three volumes of *TOFK* the overwhelming bulk of his mature work (from 1935 onwards) had two characteristics; it was autobiographical and animals were at the core.

White came to the attention of the literary world with *England Have My Bones (EHMB)*, 1936[3] in which he records his sporting activities from April '34 to March '35. By sport he does not mean activity with stick or bat – which he regarded as arid. Sport for him was field sport. He structured the book chronologically around four chief activities through the year – salmon fishing, flying aeroplanes, shooting and hunting. OK, flying is hardly a field sport, but in White's mind it counted because it was 'dangerous' and/or 'thrilling' and had technical aspects which required determination to learn. It seems to me that for White to consider any activity worthwhile there had to be something in it for him to 'conquer'. In *EHMB*, and in other books, he gets so wrapped up in his own enthusiasm he turns some chapters into technical guides to whatever activity he is learning. But there are also plenty of meandering asides. My favourites are White's idiosyncratic catalogue of trees and a painstaking account (for an entirely middle class readership) of the rules of darts.

EHMB also contains denunciations of all that he found rank about twentieth century life, especially the creeping urbanisation of the twenties and thirties; the arterial roads, electricity pylons and mock Tudor road houses. He has the people of his locality, which he describes as 'The Shire', as more capable and more human than his menagerie of *bêtes noires*; intellectuals, communists and town dwellers – referred to as 'Wenmen'. White's 'Shire' is the same as Tolkien's; unspecified geographically[4], unsullied by the machine age or suburban values, and populated by ruddy faced yeomen, content in their traditional ways, the labourer as hearty as the landlord[5].

Although *The Goshawk*[6] was published after the war White wrote the record of his attempt to emulate the mediaeval austringer in 1938. White's attempts to train this huge and aggressive creature were determined and manic. He gave over weeks of effort, lost night after night of sleep and describes the techniques of falconry in extraordinary detail. When he was finally getting somewhere Gos escaped, flying in view for days over nearby treetops, just out of reach of a grief stricken, enraged and baffled austringer. White promptly bought another bird, Culley, and started again.

One feature of his attitude to animals was that he treated them as equals. In his books he rails against anthropomorphism and even though he kept several animals in his home for no other reason than affection – animals that anyone else would refer to as 'pets' – White would have none of it. He demanded that his relationship with such creatures was one of mutual dependence; cats, birds, dogs – even snakes! And when he slipped from his principles and named companions the names he gave were prosaic. His greatly loved Irish Setter was 'Brown' (later Brownie) because of her colouring, his mount for the hunt was 'Silver' and 'Gos' was a simple shortening of Goshawk. Only the owl he had shortly before the war, Archimedes, has a whimsical name.

A key characteristic of each of these books (and indeed *The Elephant and the Kangaroo*, published in 1947 and *The Godstone and the Blackymoor*, 1951) is that in all these activities White presents himself as a pupil. A gillie in Scotland teaches him to fish for salmon in *EHMB*. He learns about training his Goshawk by trial and error from books, one of which was 300 years old! He is familiar with the hunt, but talks of himself

[3] T H White (1936) *England Have My Bones*

[4] It is southern Northamptonshire, northern Buckinghamshire.

[5] Was there a connection? Tolkien had *The Hobbit* formed as a story for his children in the early thirties, although it was not published until 1938. Could he have read *EHMB* and borrowed the name? I doubt it. It's more likely that these two conservatives, both hankering after a countryside and attitudes fast disappearing, hit upon the same ubiquitous name as a vehicle for their yearnings.

[6] T H White (1951) *The Goshawk*

as a follower rather than anything grander. Similarly, he hosts his own shoots occasionally but speaks of himself as a tyro. His pattern of learning was consistent. He read up on a subject and then found himself a mentor, whom he either discarded as no good or came to idolise. He was uniformly self deprecating about his skills and often castigated himself for a dunce. A sometime schoolmaster himself he eschewed formal teaching. The echoes here with the Wart's lessons and style of learning in *The Sword in the Stone* (*TSITS*)[7] are rich and regular. In that sense *TSITS* is of a piece with *EHMB* and *The Goshawk* and in my view *TSITS* was intended primarily as a set of animal tales loosely connected by the Wart's childhood. Never the most calculating of authors, even Tim White knew that by the mid thirties celebration of King Arthur was at a low ebb. Tennyson was out of fashion, made laughable by the New Criticism of Leavis and Eliot, and Arthur was considered archaic by the upper class audience to whom he had appealed before the Great War[8]. White knew this and concentrated on the comic elements of Malory's world in *TSITS*, dealing with the sword being drawn from the stone as quickly as possible at the end of the book and concentrating on the humour in the use of plate armour without offering any championship for the notion of knightly chivalry. Despite subsequent comments about a lifelong commitment to Malory, it is conceivable that the young Arthur was merely the vehicle White chose for the enchanting animal tales that are the centrepiece of most chapters. He had no plan to rewrite the whole of Malory until *TSITS* became successful. The suggestion that White was more interested in the animals and childhood learning content in *TSITS*, may partially explain why the subsequent volumes of *TOFK* are so lifeless compared with *TSITS* – he wrote them out of a sense of duty rather than with the passion that shines from most of his writing. He certainly returned to his animal roots as soon as the tetralogy was complete.

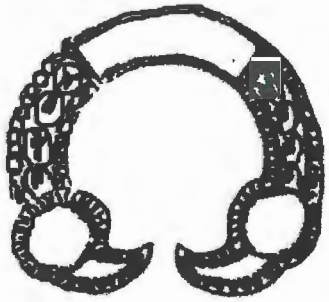
It has been argued that in *TSITS* White is rehearsing a perfect education for a Prince[9]. There may be an element of this, but much stronger is the experience of an eager spirited child, on the edge of adult control, learning in free form, by experience, aided by a trusted mentor. My insight, not much of one perhaps, is that the Wart is White himself – taking himself back to learn properly those skills and attitudes which he feels his formal education beat out of him and which he had to struggle so fiercely to learn as an adult. Perhaps *TSITS* is more honest than his other books, in that he presents himself not just as a pupil, but as a child.

Confirmation of this is the prevalence of strong autobiographical elements in many of White's books. He was much the most comfortable writing with an undisguised personal narrative voice. In *EHMB*, *The Goshawk*, and *The Godstone and the Blackymoor*, White writes as himself. *The Elephant and the Kangaroo* is a fantasy set in Ireland and begins as an angel comes down the chimney and instructs an Irish couple and their English lodger to construct an Ark in preparation for another Flood. This is not written in the first person, but the narrative voice is that of the Englishman, who is referred to throughout as 'Mr White'. There's learning here too, as Mr White has to find out to build an ark, and tiny illustrations accompany detailed accounts of the carpentry required. Many incidents in the book are obviously drawn directly from life, but it makes an uncomfortable read today, for affectionate as White's portrayal is of his landlord, landlady and Doolistown society, the book is littered with pantomime Irishmen who are feckless, stupid and dominated by daft superstitions.

But perhaps he was getting his own back, having at last escaped his Irish exile in 1945, for he had suffered an ignominy at the hands of Irish officialdom just as the war began. He had taken Brownie to Belmullet on the Mayo coast and as was his wont took her on great wanderings at all times of the day and night. Belmullet is an isolated place but Tim White did his best to fit in. Apart from his constant rambling and regular appearance at the local pubs he showed real enthusiasm for all things Irish; the language, Catholicism and local folklore. This naturally endeared him to the locals. But these were tense times, for the Englishman's stay on the west coast of Ireland took place in August and September 1939. And an Englishman with such strange habits caused some suspicion in County Mayo. He was up and along the beach at all hours. Was he signalling to submarines? And that dog, the red setter, 'Brownie' he called her, what did she have that peculiar coat on for? Secret plans I'll bet!

The police got to hear the pub talk and questioned this expansive but perplexing fellow about his activities. And so it was that a writer whose life's work has a distinctly pacifist tone was advised strongly by the Irish authorities to leave the coast because they thought he might have been engaged in undercover war work.

So this Arthur surrounded himself with beasts, retreated to solitude and tried to learn the skills he thought he needed for his rural life. A man of great ability and flashing enthusiasms he became adept along the way at sailing, diving, British Sign Language, gliding and all the other skills referred to above. He just couldn't do face to face long term relationships with people. His tragedy is our gain as his struggles with his beasts and himself are still a joy to read.



Of Eagles and Boars

Eileen Buchanan

It's strange how coincidences occur. My *Pictish Arts Society Journal* issue 16 has just arrived and contains an intriguing case for interpreting the Scoonie and Brodie stones as each depicting a bear and an Arthur inscription. Stuart Kermack's article 'An Attempt at the Meaning of the Pictish Symbols III' presents an interesting argument.

Coincidence number two provides a little more information on Dunadd in Argyll (NR8393 on the map). I'd been watching the Scots Gaelic *Na Ceiltich: The Celts* which has English subtitles when I noticed that Dunadd is written by the Gaels as *Dinard*. *Din* or *Dyn* signifies a more major centre of power and government than *Dun* and the *D* in *ard* is soft, sounding 'art': *Dyn Art*. Dr Ewan Campbell of Glasgow University published 'Dunadd: an early Dalriadic Capital' in which he finds that Dunadd was a late 6th / early 7th-century major production site of double-headed eagle brooches infilled with blue enamel. Gorlasser, 'Blue Enamel', was Uther Pendragon according to Taliesin's *Death Song of Uther Pendragon*. Mass production of eagle-headed brooches: insignia for his warriors?

Continued on page 33

[7] T H White (1938) *The Sword in the Stone*
[8] Read for instance Evelyn Waugh's dismissal of all things Arthurian in his 1934 novel *A Handful of Dust* – Waugh at this time being a modish young buck, rather than the dire curmudgeon he declined into so soon after the war).

[9] See Elizabeth Brewer (1993) *T H White's Once and Future King* (DS Brewer). This is worth looking at for the influences on White of Richard Jeffreys, Masefield and Kipling – and the bridge *TSITS* provides between Victorian and Edwardian children's fiction and the post war revival in children's fantasy.

Here be Dragons

or There's a Place For Us

Pamela Harvey

There is a road nearby called Green Dragon Lane. It heads up a hill that gets steeper near the top. Around it the whole area undulates in small hills and valleys, but one is aware of the whole being a big hill. My imagination sees in it, perhaps in the Ice Age, being not the top of an iceberg but rather a mountain. Perhaps the foundations of this prehistoric mountain are hidden beneath house and shops, the outflow of commercial enterprise which was unrestricted in building terms in the 1930s.

This volcanic eruption of building was erected on – yes, instinctively I feel it to be – a volcano. In the long ago Jurassic Age I visualise dinosaurs roaming its slopes, browsing where our dwellings stand, even plunging into what are now underground streams hidden and lost to use. I imagine their caves perhaps stretching in laces to lofty heights beneath the curves of today's hills, where the buses wind their way up and down.

There is a pub at the bottom of Green Dragon Lane which used to be called *The Green Dragon*, not surprisingly. Equally not surprisingly – in this day of compulsive change no matter what – the name has been changed with new ownership. Soon we shall get pub names like *The Computer's Arms* or *Superhighway Superstop*, but, thankfully, not quite yet.

I read once that the word 'Dragon' in place names can come from a Latin word which is similar and is thought to have come down from Roman times, and refers to eating house or tavern (my knowledge of Latin does not permit me to be sure). I am excited by anything Roman, but in this case I find the idea of real dragons more romantic. I see them as the dinosaurs, now by some palaeontologists thought to be still around in a few cases in the days of the first humans. Possibly the Green Dragon volcano was still smoking then, and occasionally flames belched from its cone – now (perhaps) around World's End Lane! On eating the succulent grass on its verdant slopes, a ravenous dinosaur might have burned its nose a little and, returning near the human dwellings of caves or huts, coughed to clear its throat of smoke. The sight of the flame also emitted from its flaring nostrils may have really impressed the villagers. The irritated 'dragon' may have let out a roar of pain, or just anger. Not directed at the humans, but possibly singeing some of them a little. In such ways legends can be born, and tales grow with the rapidity of Chinese whispers.

But perhaps it is far more esoteric than that. Dragons have always been a symbol of courage, strength, mystery and aggression. While it is quite possible the fiercest of them are emanations in the minds of story tellers of Tyrannosaurus Rex, as a person who loves dinosaurs I prefer to think of them at least equally as the gentle giants of prehistory – the Stegosaurus, Apatosaurus and Triceratops. But you did have to avoid their tails, and thereby hangs a tale.

In some traditions around the world there are stories of Dragonmen – note the old word for 'interpreter', *dragoman*. These Dragonmen supposedly came from Outer Space or another dimension. Also called Serpents, they may be behind the Garden of Eden story. They were synonymous with Wisdom and enlightenment rather more than temptation to fall into moral evil. But with Enlightenment comes decision-making which in any case humans, merely by being sentient creatures, ought to realise cannot be avoided in a responsible and civilised society. If we are truly wise, we are responsible not only to ourselves but to other people. If we decide on anything for them, we should mentally pt ourselves in their place.

The term *Pendragon* means 'Chief Dragon' and is the title of both Arthur and his father Uther. It is likely it goes back to the mists of prehistory, and the legend of Arthur and Uther may go back, too, as far perhaps as the star system Draco in time and space. They may have seen the emergence of Man as a thinking creature, and their leadership and wisdom acknowledged even then.

In all of us biologically there is a vestige of dinosaur DNA. Only a small part of our inheritance, but was it beings from beyond Earth who gave it to us, in whatever quantity it remains? Or was it also the dinosaurs? People have equated dragons with something to be be fought, and some psychologists equate our reptile ancestry with something which fights our higher, evolutionary principle as humans. If so, it is equally likely that in our galaxy there still exist other races where it is not considered an impediment, rather a necessary step toward Enlightenment. Whatever we think, or wonder, in the Age now beginning we are pretty sure to find the answer eventually. Whatever the human race becomes, may it be wise in its own right and determination – and it will need plenty of that – and may it flourish on Earth and perhaps elsewhere until we hand the torch of evolution to another species, as the dinosaurs did to our long lost small mammalian ancestors. After that big meteor that famously destroyed all of them (who do you think you're kidding?). They were the big boys and girls and still are – but where? And who? And how? If I knew, would I tell? We inherit a lost world, but we can all imagine, can't we?

The Dragons of Dinas Emrys

Tom Byrne

When the triple god is worshipped in the cloister
And the landscape has been drained of the divine
They will claim we honoured trees and stones and rivers
They will never know the resonance sublime, for

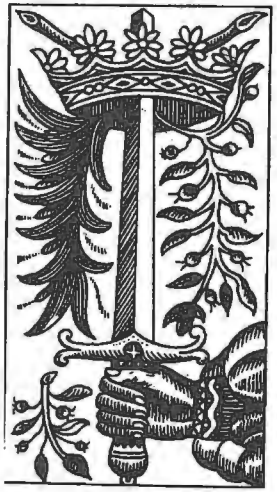
Scored, scarred, scattered, shattered,
Grass grown, ground down
Weather worn, a mossed remainder,
Left, lost, long-lapsed, levelled,
Strewn prone stone dune
Wailing winds hail Dinas Emrys

They will never know the wholeness in the many
They will never see the Word by world expressed
They have made the Source an emperor in heaven
They have fleshed the Word and seen it die distressed, and

Scored, scarred, scattered, shattered,
Grass grown, ground down
Weather worn, a mossed remainder,
Left, lost, long-lapsed, levelled,
Strewn prone stone dune
Wailing winds hail Dinas Emrys

Now is not the time for leisured speculation
Now is not the time for structured argument
Now's the time for tales through famine, plague and struggle
Trapping subtleties in lyrical cement, for

Ian Brown



Scored, scarred, scattered, shattered,
Grass grown, ground down
Weather worn, a mossed remainder,
Left, lost, long-lapsed, levelled,
Strewn prone stone dune
Wailing winds hail Dinas Emrys

Once King Ludd resolved to crystallise all conflict
And entrust it to the Druids' final care. He
Gathered all the souls at Albion's island centre
There they felt the writhing thickening the air, then

Screeched, scratched, scalded sky-skin
Mind worms grew firm
Solid spewed from upturned foreheads
Clasped, clawed, slinging, clashing
Vast vat sealed fast
Thence interred at Dinas Emrys

There we stored the writhing conflict in its cavern;
Dinas Emrys kept that chaos stoutly sealed, and
While our guardianship was vigilant those dragons
We were confident would never be revealed, for

Screeched, scratched, scalded sky-skin
Mind worms grew firm
Solid spewed from upturned foreheads
Clasped, clawed, slinging, clashing
Vast vat sealed fast
Thence interred at Dinas Emrys

You may think that dragons buried, coiled, forgotten
Lurk indefinitely, tranquil in their lair, but
Dragons have a way of catching the complacent
Snapping suddenly before you know they're there, then

Breached, burst, boiling, brawling
Ground gashed, walls smashed
Sinuously serpents struggle
Furned, frothed, fluxing, flexing
Worm forms storm squirm
Flailing flight quails Dinas Emrys

Once King Vortigern came struggling to the mountains
With his tattered army, fleeing from its foe
There he found the ancient stones of Dinas Emrys
Tumbled down the spur to valleys far below, and

Breached, burst, boiling, brawling
Ground gashed, walls smashed
Sinuously serpents struggle
Furned, frothed, fluxing, flexing
Worm forms storm squirm
Flailing flight quails Dinas Emrys

"What is causing this, the rupture of my stronghold?"
None could answer, save the Word within a youth:
"Alas your sovereignty is shaken by the struggle;
Look below the soil, and face the squirming truth, for

Breached, burst, boiling, brawling
Ground gashed, walls smashed
Sinuously serpents struggle
Furned, frothed, fluxing, flexing
Worm forms storm squirm
Flailing flight quails Dinas Emrys

The blood on those dark stones
Will mortar your flesh to your doomed bones!
The stones of this tower are set in a soil which dissolves,
For under the soil is a turbulent pool boiled by dragons:
The red and the white whose continual struggle destroys.
The state you created will crumble along with your tower,
Till the red and the white in the Isle of the Mighty find peace.
The Church you established will crumble along with your state,
Till the white and the read in the head and the heart
Of each living part of Albion's body are one."

Guardian-Companions

There was a time when Man was fancy free,
An innocent child, open and full of mirth,
When all the realms were joined in harmony
And singing dragons danced upon the Earth;
And even when then the unfolding child became
A questing being, ardent for the truth,
Dragons travelled with him on the path,
Guardian-companions to the growing youth:

Everywhere, dragons – coiled at castle gates,
Draped before temples, poised beside the well,
Part of the early world still holy, whole,
Till from Man the true awareness fell.

And then, Man stood alone. He could not see
His former friend, and legend by degree
Turned truth to fiction: dragons were remembered
As cruel avengers, masters of infamy;
And Man shall never reach his adulthood
Or know again his high and holy worth
Till he regains the truth, and the time returns
When singing dragons dance upon the Earth.

The Prophecy

When Albion's vast chalky cliffs
crash down into the Channel
and firedrakes fall headlong
upon the wasted earth
where pestilence and famine
prey on enfeebled peoples
and wolves in human form
fall hungrily on hopeless wights

Then might the Lion have lain
down with the Lamb
but Britain's saviour in vain
shall search high and low
for a nation to welcome him
welcome him
welcome him home

For the late king
will be too late
Long live the King?
The King is dead

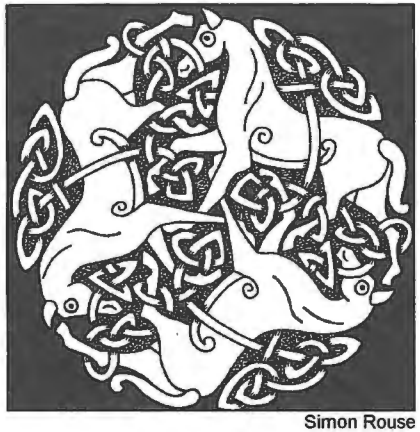
Chris Lovegrove

Pamela Constantine
First published in *The Dragon Chronicle*; reprinted in *Silver Wheel*

SIX DOES AND £500 OF DAMAGE

Caludon Castle's Malory connection

Steve Sneyd



Simon Rouse

On July 20, 1451, Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel broke into Caludon deer park in Warwickshire (allegedly, at least – he never faced a jury or was found guilty), with a band of men, stole six does, and supposedly did $500 worth of damage – an amazing amount, given the value of that sum at that time. Although he was already accused of various crimes, it was this episode that led to his arrest, and began the long years of imprisonment during which, eventually, he wrote an Arthurian masterpiece – assuming, as seems likely, that of the Thomas Malorys of the time, this individual was indeed the "knight-prisoner" who wrote the *Morte Darthur*.

Caludon, then, has a very special Arthurian connection. But what is there to see today, if anything? Head into the eastern suburbs of Coventry (as I did in June 2004 while in the West Midlands for the annual Poetry Convention) and a couple of miles from the city centre you find the unobtrusive signs for Caludon Castle Recreation Ground.[1] This is a park of considerable size, mostly grass with a few trees, surrounded by housing. And in it, just past some children's play equipment, a slight rise brings you onto a roughly rectangular area of grass outlined by trees and bushes on the other three sides. As you look to the west along it, on your right (draped in scaffolding when I was there, and therefore initially hard to take in properly) is a spectacular piece of stonework – a high wall pierced by two massive arched windows, tall enough to grace a great cathedral.

That window-pierced medieval fragment – some thirty feet high, about six feet thick, with, unobtrusive below, the much smaller windows of a former basement level – is all that remains of the great hall of Caludon Castle. Look round that greenery-rimmed rectangle of land on which it stands and you discover that beyond the line of bushes lies, along three sides (north, west and south) a wideish ditch, with at the bottom the odd damp patch or puddle. This is what remains of the castle moat. And that, really, is it: no trace remains above ground of the defences that earned the designation of castle, built either after the first crenellation license of 1305 or the second of 1364. Probably all their stone was robbed after they were wrecked, it seems, in an obscure Civil War siege, which makes it even more remarkable

[1] *Finding Caludon Castle (OS reference SP 374801): It is around 2 miles ENE of Coventry city centre, just south of the A46(T). Turn right off this – Anstey Road – onto Arch Road, and the park begins just after Farren Road to your left. By public transport, there are buses from Coventry along Anstey Road, and more frequently along Belgrave Road, just south of the park. At the southwest corner of the park is another largish moat site, marked by a rectangle of trees, which was probably an enclosure to pen or protect animals – perhaps those six does came from there.*

that so dramatic a fragment of the hall somehow survived. And that one spectacular stretch of wall, unloved looking as it is now in its prison of scaffolding,[2] those dramatic windows (the hall must have been freezing in winter, unless tapestries were draped over the glass?) provide unmistakable evidence that, although described as just a "hunting lodge", this was clearly a grand one indeed, intended to display aristocratic wealth and power to the world. And that fact, perhaps, made it a particularly tempting target for a raid designed to display contempt for its occupier.

Ambush, escape and arrest

At the time of the outrage, that tenant was the Duke of Buckingham, although Caludon's actual hereditary owner was the Duke of Norfolk, and the then Archbishop of Canterbury had some sort of share in the park, since his name too appeared on the charge sheet when Sir Thomas Malory was accused.

Even before the raid, there was clearly bad blood between Buckingham and Malory, although the motive – personal or political – is unknown. In any case, in that murky time when lawless acts were rife as feuds between rival aristocrats and their followings steadily escalated towards the all out conflict of the Wars of the Roses, personal and political were usually inextricably linked. At any rate, in January 1450 Malory was said to have set an armed ambush with 26 men (a curiously precise figure) for Buckingham in the woods of Combe Abbey, although oddly no attempt seems to have been made to arrest him for that, or a variety of lesser crimes laid at the knight's door during the year or so prior to the Caludon episode.[3]

But this time, perhaps just because "attacking deer-parks was a recognised form of magnate baiting", as Field puts it,[4] and therefore to ignore the insult would be an unacceptable loss of face, Buckingham acted. Riding out with sixty men, on July 25, he found Malory, either over-confident or for some reason thinking himself immune from arrest, at his home, Newbold Revel. Seizing him, Buckingham took him to his then base, Maxstoke Castle, northwest of Coventry, then on July 27 handed him over to the Sheriff of Warwickshire, Sir William Mountford, whose own home was a couple of miles west of Maxstoke, at Coleshill Hall.[5]

Here the story takes another very odd turn. Malory escaped that night – did Mountford really try very hard to hold onto him? – supposedly by swimming across the hall's moat, and by the next night, having already collected a gang of ten men, broke into Combe Abbey – revenge on the Abbot for bearing witness to Malory's supposed ambush there the year before? – looted the place. Then, not content, he came back the next day with a hundred men (how was a fugitive managing to recruit a gang so speedily?) to finish removing all portable valuables. Less than a month later, by August 23, he was back in custody, and by the New Year had been moved to a London prison, and then those long locked-up years had begun that were to turn him into the greatest synthesiser of Arthurian romance.

For Arthurians, then, Caludon's Malory connection should be enough of a lure – but, if another temptation to visit is needed, the castle has another memorable literary link: it was from here that, in 1398, Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, rode "upon St Lambert's Day" to Gosford Green, just outside Coventry city centre, to duel with John of Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, after each had accuse the other of treason – and this non-event, since King Richard II stepped in, forbade the duel, and exiled both, is where Shakespeare's tragedy of that unfortunate king really begins.

[2] As with the litter in the moat, and the absence of any explanatory signage about the site, the place is clearly not a priority for Coventry council, who have owned it since 1915.

[3] Was Malory, probably in his mid-30s at this time, having, in modern terms, his "midlife" crisis early?

[4] F J C Field (1993) *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (D S Brewer)

[5] OS reference SP 191883. See also Mike Salter (1989) *The Castles and Moated Mansions of Staffordshire and the West Midlands County* (Folly Publications)

the board

News, views and previews of Arthurian matters in popular culture

BEASTLY UPDATES ...

"Kynge Arthur is nat dede," Malory famously proclaimed, but the same cannot be said of his equine namesake. We have previously reported on the Veteran Horse Society's rehabilitation centre at St Dogmaels in Pembrokeshire, one of whose ponies, 50-year-old Shetland **King Arthur**, was officially named the oldest living pony in the world by *Guiness World Records*. Sadly, King Arthur has since died of pneumonia.

The Cornwall Bird Watching and Preservation Society provides updates on their website on the return of the **chough** to Cornwall. A pair of these crows successfully nested on the Lizard in 2002 for the first time in 50 years, to the delight of conservationists in Cornwall (where the chough features on the county's coat of arms). The birds "were probably blown across the English Channel from the small population in Brittany," and the resultant chick was subsequently ringed.

One of the two males from the 2003 brood was seen at the Minack Theatre in 2004, while the three survivors of the 2004 brood (a female may have been taken by a peregrine) were sighted from Kynance to Porthleven. By late 2004 the orignal adult pair were still in the Lizard Point-Kynance area, and a mystery unringed bird was seen with the remaining three 2004 youngsters in the Porthleven area. Locals believe that the soul of **King Arthur** resides in the Cornish Chough, and the re-appearance of *balores* is timely in encouraging the resurgence of a Cornish sense of identity.

What was claimed as the year's very first **big cat** sighting was made in Pembrokeshire in March. A "black panther-type animal" was seen near Haverfordwest, the latest of about a dozen that have been made over the last ten years, some linked to sheep killings. A big cat and its cub were seen in the county in 2002, but the assumption is that they represent either misidentifications (*eg* large otters) or escaped exotics rather than that they are felines of the spectral or folkloric variety, like **Palug's Cat**.

• "Pets corner" *Pendragon XXXII* No 1 (2004): 46; Natalie Betteley "Old age ponies" *Pembrokeshire Country Living 1* (Spring 2005) 38-9; http://www.cbwps.org.uk/chough_updates.html (accessed 24/01/2005); Camilla Horrox "Big cat sighted" *Western Telegraph* March 16 2005

... AND ARTHURIAN CONNECTIONS

This year, for the first time, awards dubbed the **Arthurs** will be awarded for "memorable achievements in space science and industry" by the British Rocketry Oral History Project. Named after not Rex Quondam Rex Futurusque but the progenitor of the telecommunications satellite **Sir Arthur C Clarke**, the BROHP awards will take the form of little glass obelisks in homage to the iconic monoliths of *2001; a Space Odyssey*.

It won't have escaped your notice that **Ellen MacArthur** (or Dame Ellen, as she is now) literally sailed into the record books on February 7 2005 as the fastest ever round-the-world single-handed sailor. As Charles Evans-Günther has pointed out, some Clan MacArthur members claim Arthur as an ancestor, though whether Dame Ellen does so is not clear.

Evolutionary biologist **Ernst Mayr**, who recently died at the age of 100, kick-started his distinguished ornithological career on an expedition to New Guinea between 1928 and 1929. During this trip, he noticed in his diary that a lunar eclipse was imminent and tried to make a big impression on the locals with a trick from Mark Twain's novel, ***A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court***. Mayr announced the moon was about to go completely dark. The elderly local chief said: "Don't worry, my son, it will soon get light again."

The medievalist **Richard Fletcher** also passed away recently. As well as authoring

studies on El Cid, the Christianising of Europe and the relationship between Christendom and Islam, he brought out "the very useful" ***Who's Who in Roman Britain and Anglo-Saxon England*** (1989). When he died he was working on a new account of the decline of the Roman Empire.

The new film *Young Adam* is based on the novel of the same name (1954 and 1966) by Scots writer **Alexander Trocchi** (1925-84). After settling in Paris in 1952 he became founding editor of a modernist magazine called ***Merlin***, though it is not clear what Arthurian connection it had, if any.

• "Who deserves an Arthur?" *Guardian Life Supplement* February 10 2005; C W Evans-Günther (2004) "I shall return! King Arthur in Scotland" *Pendragon XXXII* No 1, 26-33; Brian Unwin "Ernst Mayr" obituary, *Guardian* February 5 2005; Geoffrey Wheatcroft "Richard Fletcher" obituary, *Guardian* March 18 2005; Andrew Pulver "Adaptation of the week" *Guardian Review* April 4 2005-06-05

HOLY CLICHÉS

Too late for our competition, Ian Brown noticed on a *Horizon* TV programme (BBC2 February 16 2005) that **fusion reaction** was described by the narrator (while discussing nuclear fusion as a clean and sustainable source of energy) as "... one of the Holy Grails of modern science". It looks like the Grail is gradually replacing the philosopher's stone as a metaphor for the ultimate scientific quest, Ian observes, "but then Wolfram von Eschenbach might have been describing the Grail as exactly that, with his *lapsit exillis*, so perhaps the coincidence of metaphors is apt in some way".

More grails – some *very* ludicrous – have been sighted recently by Steve Sneyd. "The **moment of the universe's inception** is one of science's Holy Grails," proclaims a blurb on Martin Gorst's *Measuring Eternity: the Search for the Beginning of Time*; while "**intelligent voice recognition software** has long been the holy grail of technologists," eager to improve on such low-tech interfaces as the keyboard, mouse and remote control, the Holy Grail for some marine researchers "is the **irrigation of plants in salt water**".

A "meteor poem" by David R Keedy was performed at the 2003 International Meteor Conference at Bollmannsruh and included the immortal lines

My notebook plainly tells the tale
Of the celestial show that really did fail
From the confines of that hill and dale
A six-meteor count, *my Holy Grail.*

A remark by a presenter of a Radio 2 Funk programme on October 5 2004 referred to "the Holy Grail of funky reggae music, thumpy bumpy music." A preview of BBC4's *Cast and Crew: Quadrophenia* declared that the film based on The Who's album ***Quadrophenia*** – now 25 years old – "gave voice to working-class culture and became the holy grail for mods everywhere". And a review of a TV programme suggested that "the holy grail for maritime adventurers" is the **Northwest Passage**. Still on a watery theme, ***Jaws*** "was the first film to pass the holy-grail of $100 million in ticket receipts".

Much more ludricously, the **definitive "no make-up make-up" product list** is supposed to be the holy grail of grooming. Finally, footie fans should be able to confirm if sports presenter Matt Smith has occasionally fronted a "historic Saturday night highlights slot" on ITV1 entitled *The Holy Grail*. More of these and the winning entry appear next issue (no space this time).

• Voice recognition item: *The Guardian* February 26 2005; *Cast and Crew* preview in *Guardian Guide* March 22 2005, 77; Northwest Passage item by Peter Etchell on Parkinson show, Radio 2 March 20 2005; *Jaws* assessment by John Connor in *This Way Up #15* February 2005; salt water irrigation: *Today* programme, Radio 4 March 29 2005; "Tricks of the trade" *The Guardian Weekend* April 2 2005, 48

MERLIN'S MART

Plethora Solutions Holdings, a company which is developing products to improve sexual stamina and incontinence, is part-owned by biotech investment group **Merlin Bio-sciences**. Merlin retained a large stake in snigger-inducing Plethora products when it was floated on the Alternative Investment Market recently.

A call has been made for Wales to be branded once again **the land of Arthur and Merlin** to attract visitors ... and make money. John Wake of Cardiff-based Capital and Region Tourism declared that "Arthur is too important for Wales to ignore" and that Wales should be "more aggressive" in joining the market that promotes sites in

England, Scotland, Brittany and elsewhere. Professor Brian Morgan of Cardiff Business School calculated that a 1% increase in visitors to **Cardiff** could result in an £5m if Arthur and Merlin links were exploited in the capital. **Caerleon** was already promoting itself as Arthur's capital by re-enacting Arthur's coronation at the Ffwrwm Arts Centre as part of the run-up to its Arts Festival in July 2005.

• Heather Tomlinson "Aim listing for company with staying power" *Guardian* March 18 2005; Aled Blake "Call for legend of Arthur to mount challenge for tourists" *Western Mail* May 12 2005

MEDIA KNIGHTLIFE

The *Babylon 5* spin-off TV series ***Crusade*** (13 episodes on the Sci-Fi channel, and set in 2267) has as hero Captain Matthew Gideon, whose ship (in a story of the search for a way to combat a lethal virus unleashed on the Earth by an alien race, the Drakh) is the **Excalibur**.

An episode of Radio 4's series ***The Rapid Eye Movement*** on October 12 2004 involved the transforming of Chester's mind into a King Arthur period state. This resulted in a daft mini-repeat of the story, full of corny jokes: the tavern called The Lake (hence the Landlady of the Lake) serving X-Caliber lager, and Modred's response to being called "You bastard": "Yes, I am" *etc.*

Spamalot opened in Chicago to mixed reviews. Richard Christiansen reported that in moving "from low-budget film to big-budget musical" it has transmogrified "in attitude and appearances," and he sees problems in the replacement of the movie's sharp satire with a "series of spoofs of Broadway shows and stars" and in the politically-incorrect jokes about gays and the Jewish input on Broadway musical productions. Nevertheless, a Radio 4 news feature on its transfer to New York noted that the revamped show was appealing to new audiences, some traditionally apathetic to Broadway such as young nerdy males.

• Richard Christiansen "Big knights, big city" *Guardian G2* January 11 2005

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The traditional but no less regrettable sins of omission occurred in Prof Russell's pieces last issue. In "Excalibur in Sicily again" (6-7) paragraph 3 should have read in part "in 1152, *the head of the Hohenstaufen was the Emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa,* the head of the Welf was Heinrich the Lion..." and in paragraph 5 Tancred usurped the throne of Sicily in 1190, and not as published. Paragraph 3, page 28 of "Dumas and Merlin in the Rhineland" should have read in part that in *La Dame de Monsoreau* "*Dumas makes* [*Bussy d'Amboise*] *one of his noblest heroes. Conversely,* Cagliostro was found completely innocent" of taking part in a famous swindle. There were also a number of footnote errors, including *Kinder* for *Kün* (*n 18* page 7) and, in *n 9* page 28, 715 instead of 786, for which apologies are due.

PERIODICALS

Formerly *Monomyth Supplement*, ***The Supplement*** is an idiosyncratic mix of litcrit news, views and reviews which occasionally overlaps with *Pendragon* spheres of interest. *Supplement 21* includes Cardinal Cox's informed *and* informative romp through comicbook treatments of the Matter of Britain while Steve Sneyd's Merlin investigation shows his usual enthusiasm and lateral thinking on matters Arthurian. This number features the recent *Doctor Who* TV series, and editor DJ Tyrer comments that 'back in 1988's "Battlefield" story the Doctor's future incarnation was revealed to be Merlin!' In a way all the Doctor's incarnations have been Merlin-like: quixotic and quizzical, prophetic and prescient, childish and adult. All the Doctors have travelled in time and space, much as later developments of the Merlin story have indicated for Arthur's wizard, and the Doctor's Tardis is of course Merlin's observatory-cum-retreat *par excellence.* 80p gets you *The Supplement* from 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2UY. Arthurian poetry and fiction is also featured in ***Awen Online*** issue 3 at www.geocities.com/dj_tyrer/awen_online.html

Earthquest News is the newsletter detailing Andrew Collins' interests in what he calls *revisionist history* and especially in the Questing Conference he has been involved in over nearly two decades. QuestCon05 takes place on Saturday November 5 at Cecil Sharpe House in London and features speakers on alternative and revisionist histories including Jeremy Narby, Stan Gooch, Colin Wilson, Graham Phillips and others. For further information write to Andy Collins at PO Box 189, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 1NF or see www.questcon.org

Isse 57 of exchange journal ***Meyn Mamvro*** notes that the 10th-century church of St Piran (patron saint of Cornwall) "near to where St Piran is supposed to have arrived from Ireland on a millstone in the 6thC" is due to be rescued from Penhale Sands. Last seen in 1835, the church may be the successor of a 6th-century oratory.

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

JOURNALS AND SOCIETIES

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Hallowquest *Caitlin & John Matthews' publishing and teaching programmes* £8.00 (£16.00) "Caitlin Matthews", BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX *www.hallowquest.org.uk*

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Northern Earth *Journal of the Northern Earth Mysteries Group* £1.95 / £7.50 (£10.75 EU, £14.00 RoW) "Northern Earth Mysteries Group", John Billingsley, 10 Jubilee Street, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W Yorks HX7 5NP *www.northernearth.co.uk*

The Round Table *Occasional Arthurian poetry and fiction* Alan & Barbara Tepa Lupack, The Round Table, Box 18673, Rochester NY 14618, USA (enclose IRC)

Wiðowinde *Periodical of the English Companions: Anglo-Saxon literature, history and culture* £3.50 "Ða Engliscan Gesiðas (The English Companions)", BM Box 4336, London WC1 3XX *www.tha-engliscan-gesithas.org.uk*

Of Eagles and Boars continued

How do you pronounce Gorlois? I say it very much the same as I do Gorlasser, which has long made me think that Duke Gorlois and Uther Pendragon were one and the same. Nearby Dunadd is the old parish of Glassary commemorated in the name Kilmichael Glassary (NR8593). South of this is Badden at NR8589. In Aedan's generation his cousins formed the Cenel Badon or Tribe of Baoden (who was one of Loairne's grandsons).

Finally, I'd like to remind you of Geoffrey of Monmouth's description of Gorlois as the Boar of Cornwall, or Cornubiensis to be exact. The royal Boar of Dalriada is still a current emblem here and is incised in the living rock on Dunadd's summit beside a roack-cut basin and inauguration footprint. Cornubis is to be found on the island of Islay, part of Dalriada in the 6th century where King Aedan's cousin Hector Eachern (Hector Horseland) lived. Sir Ector was Arthur's foster father in the tales: Sir Ector de Maris, Ector of the Seas. Look across the water and you'll see The Garvellochs, the Islands of the Seas. Quite a number of coincidences, aren't there?

Eileen Buchanan, March 2004

Reviews

Alchemy, Arthur and this Sun of York (1)

W M S Russell

Jonathan Hughes
Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: the Kingship of Edward IV
Sutton Publishing 2002 £30.00
0 7509 1994 9 hb xiv + 354pp illus

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York...[1]

Arthurians are familiar with the use of Arthurian legends for political propaganda by the Angevins and the Tudors. Coote has shown that identification of the king with Arthur was made in the reigns of Edward I (he had the alleged body of Arthur reburied at Glastonbury in 1278), even Edward II (until they realised his very un-Arthurian personality), Edward III and Henry IV.[2] But it now appears that the most copious, powerful and sophisticated use of the Arthurian legends was made by Edward IV and the writers he commissioned. Even more novel is the discovery that alchemy, its symbols and images, played an enormous part in the politics of the 15th century. These discoveries are the subject of an utterly fascinating and brilliantly original book by Jonathan Hughes,[3] richly documented, copiously and beautifully illustrated, and based on the positively heroic study of 223 manuscripts, besides numerous primary and secondary printed works. *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy* is extremely dense, with dozens of facts on almost every page, but they are all so interesting it is never tedious. However, this means that it would take another book to do justice to the content of the book of Hughes. Even in this long feature review, I can only pick out some salient points, and add a few comments and some supplementary material.

It was believed that the founder of alchemy in Britain was none other than Merlin (19 – simple figures in brackets refer to pages of Hughes's book). The corrupt expression for the Grail in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal*, *lapsit exillis*, is emended by some scholars to *lapis elixir*. This would mean the philosopher's stone,[4] the panacea aimed at by the alchemists as one of their goals (the other was the manufacture of gold). Marshall has pointed out that this emendation would fit with the rest of the paragraph in which it occurs, which presents the Grail as a panacea, and refers to the phoenix,[5] a very ancient alchemical symbol for metaphorical rebirth.[6] Whether or not these links between the two things helped, Hughes shows that alchemy and Arthur worked splendidly together in the propaganda that built up support and enthusiasm for Edward IV.

Hughes himself dislikes the word *propaganda*, since he thinks Edward took all of it seriously and believed it himself (156). I take leave to doubt this, and in the next generation I am sure Machiavelli would have shared my scepticism (especially in view of his praise of Ferdinand of Aragon and Spain for 'Always using religion as a plea, so as to undertake greater schemes').[7] But whichever view is taken, the commissioned works certainly did make excellent propaganda, and anyway we owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Hughes for unearthing and displaying the mass of evidence about all this.

[1] *Richard III*, Act I, Scene 1, lines 1-2
[2] L A Coote (2000) *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press) 31-4, 91, 135, 175
[3] *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy: The Kingship of Edward IV* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing)
[4] W M S Russell (2004) "Avalon, Munsalvaesche, Rothesay and Cockaigne" *Pendragon 32* No 1, 4
[5] P Marshall (2002) *The Philosopher's Stone* (London: Pan Books) 264-5
[6] J Lindsay (1970) *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (London: Frederick Muller) 267-8, 413, 422
[7] W K Marriott *ed transl* (1908) *The Prince, by Nicolo Machiavelli* (London: Dent) 173-4

Alchemy and Henry VI

Henry V, in spite of his Monmouth birth, made little or no use of the Arthur legends. I suspect this may have been a reaction to the rebellion of Owain Glyn Dwr. As Prince of Wales, Henry issued savagely anti-Welsh ordinances at Chester in 1401, and as king he ground the Welsh down with what the Welshman Adam of Usk called the 'unbearable and grievous taxation of the people'.[8]

In any case, Hughes shows that Henry V preferred to be an avatar of great Romans, or their supposed Trojan ancestors, including the legendary Brut and above all Julius Caesar who conquered Gaul. Hughes gives an interesting list of the Latin epics and books of Roman history which just at this time had become available in French and English translations. Henry V and his educated subjects seem to have been especially impressed by the compilation of writings on military tactics by Flavius Vegetius Renatus, written some time between AD 383 and 450.[9] Henry himself commissioned a translation of Benoit de Saint Maure's Trojan romance, which launched the Matter of Troy in medieval literature (24-5).

Alchemy did not flourish under the first two Lancastrian kings; Henry IV outlawed it in a statute of 1403 (49). They may have suspected that it could be politically subversive; if so, how right they were, as we shall see. But under Henry VI, who granted licences to practise alchemy, it suddenly became respectable, and the result was a boom that made the 15th century the great age of British alchemy.

This may well have been helped by the virtual fusion of alchemy with medicine that occurred in 15th-century Britain. The early alchemists, in Graeco-Roman Egypt, took over in their theories the elements of Empedocles and the qualities of Aristotle.[10] Since one of their aims was a panacea (the philosopher's stone), they had to be interested in physiology, so at some stage they absorbed the theory of the humours. These are first found in one of the so-called Hippocratic writings, whose date is unknown, but surely after Aristotle formulated the qualities, which are basic to the humours.[11] Further studied by Herophilus[12] and Galen,[13] the humours were given their definite form by the *alchemist* Jabir ibn Hayyan[14] at the 8th-century court of Harun al-Raschid.[15] Transmitted to Europe, the humours dominated physiology until the 17th century, as the elements dominated physics and chemistry, but the humours lasted even longer, being still invoked by some as late as the early 19th century.[16] The relationship between the three things[17] is best expressed in a Table.

Qualities, Elements and Humours

Qualities	*Elements*	*Humours*	*Temperaments*
hot and dry	Fire	yellow bile	choleric
hot and wet	Air	blood	sanguine
cold and wet	Water	phlegm	phlegmatic
cold and dry	Earth	black bile	melancholic

These foursomes can be traced to totemic systems of belief in tribal societies. 'Totemism became involved with man's first attempts to form a coherent view of the social and natural worlds, and in this view the two were inextricably confused.'[18] [19] So the early pseudoscience of civilised

[8] R R Davies (1997) *The Revolt of Owain Glyn Dwr* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 285, 307-9
[9] H J Rose (1966) *A Handbook of Latin Literature* (London: Methuen) 427, 467
[10] Lindsay (ref 6) 2, 16, 386
[11] N Pennick (2002) *The Power Within* (Chieveley, Berks: Capall Bann Publishing) 8-9
[12] N G L Hammond and H H Scullard *ed* (1970) *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press) 510, *sv* Herophilus
[13] A C Crombie (1969) *Augustine to Galileo* (2 vols, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) Vol 1, 171
[14] Pennick (ref 11) 9
[15] E J Holmyard (1957) *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) 69
[16] C Russell and W M S Russell (1977) "Space, Time and Totemism" *Biology and Human Affairs* 42, 57-80, especially 72
[17] Crombie (ref 13) 170
[18] Russell and Russell (ref 16) 59
[19] C Russell and W M S Russell (1976) "The Social Biology of Totemism" *Biology and Human Affairs 41*, 53-79, especially 53-5

societies, with its elements, qualities, humours and temperaments, sees the universe and the human body in terms derived from social relations. These four foursomes are derived from the four sections into which many tribes are divided, *for intermating purposes*. 'There is a widespread belief among tribal peoples in four elements, or elementary substances, that are basic components of the physical universe. The connection with the four mating sections may be more or less explicit... Among the Zuni, four groups of totemic clans are associated explicitly with the four compass-points, the four seasons, four colours, four activities and four elements... In the development of European scientific thought, the totemic origin of these concepts was lost sight of. But the underlying ideas about mating and kinship were never far from the surface, and reveal their presence by frequent clues in metaphor and imagery.'[20] This is spectacularly obvious in alchemical works, which regularly express chemical combinations as *matings* (90), with pictures of actual mating of man and woman.[21] *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosencreutz* (1616), the central text of the Rosicrucians, 'was mixed up with the real marriage of Frederick V, Elector Palatine, with Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I of England'.[22]

However derived and however irrational, the humours were regarded as basic by both alchemists and physicians. Sharing such basic theory, the two activities must always have been close, but Hughes shows that in 15th-century England the two *professions* merged. He lists a number of physicians who were alchemists or alchemists who were physicians (49-55). He shows also that alchemical medicine or medical alchemy became linked with a third activity – politics (19). The key to this final combination was the Waste Land complex, the belief that a sick king produced a sick nation, not only in social and economic affairs (where it is true enough) but in causing natural disasters such as crop failures and epidemics. As I have observed,[23] 'there is no doubt that this belief was widespread in ancient and medieval times. It is attested in the early Irish legends, in Homer, and by a Delphic oracle given to the Spartans... In AD 1258, when Hulagu stormed Baghdad, he was told that if the caliph is killed ... the sun hides its face, rain ceases and plants grow no more: unfortunately, the terrible Mongol was not impressed, and killed the caliph and most of the city's population'.

The England that was losing or had lost France, and was experiencing financial chaos, lawlessness and utterly corrupt government, was evidently a sick society in real terms. And if ever there was a sick king, it was Henry VI. He was physically a frail weakling, a feeble-minded religious maniac, and had episodes of what may have been catatonia. Throughout his reign and throughout the Wars of the Roses, the Lancastrian party was led by his formidable wife, Margaret of Anjou. She ruled through utterly corrupt favourites, who were probably her lovers, the Duke of Suffolk, and after his murder the Duke of Somerset. When in 1453 she gave birth to a son, confusingly called Edward, people were uncertain whether the father was Somerset, the Earl of Wiltshire, or, as Warwick supposed, a nameless commoner. When the idiot king was shown the baby, he exclaimed, apparently quite seriously, 'that it must be the child of the Holy Ghost'.[24]

The alchemist-physicians diagnosed the king as utterly phlegmatic (48). They were now so respectable that they were encouraged to try to cure the king. In and after 1455, royal alchemy commissions were set up to investigate possibilities of making gold to rescue the bankrupt government and of curing the king by alchemical medicine.[25] The alchemist-physicians set about reducing the king's phlegm by means of 'laxatives, medicines – clysters, suppositories, medicines for clearing the head, gargles, baths, complete or partial poultices, fomentations, embrocations, shaving of the head, ointments, plasters, waxes, cupping, with or without cutting the skin, and inducements to bleeding' (48).

Henry VI would be a difficult patient for

[20] Russell and Russell (ref 16) 71-2
[21] Marshall (ref 5) Plate 27
[22] Russell and Russell (ref 16) 72
[23] W M S Russell (2000-1) "T S Eliot and the Grail" *Pendragon 29* No 1, 26-30, especially 27
[24] M Clive (1975) *This Sun of York* (London: Sphere Books) 7,9,14
[25] Holmyard (ref 15) 78-9, 95-8

modern medicine. For 15th-century medical alchemy he was, of course, an impossible patient. When they finally realised this, the alchemists gave up the man they called, explicitly, the Fisher King (72); it was time to replace him and to call for an Arthur. They turned to the young Edward, Earl of March.

Alchemy and Edward IV

Edward IV, roses, suns: Canterbury Cathedral

Probably the two most famous English alchemists were Thomas Norton and Sir George Ripley. Hughes devotes much of his book to these important figures. Both were closely connected with Edward, but also patronised by George Neville, Warwick's brother, who became Archbishop of York. During the periods when that tricky politician was either in open revolt or plotting against the King, they seem to have been loyal to Edward, and they were his advisers and publicists as long as he lived.

Norton produced only one major work, the *Ordinal of Alchemy*, which he dedicated to Edward in 1477 (212). Ripley, much more prolific, produced several books, including the *Compound of Alchemy*, which he dedicated to Edward in 1471 (212), the *Marrow of Alchemy*, written for George Neville in 1476 (286), and the twenty very useful Ripley Scrolls, 'the earliest dated in *c* 1450-60' (57), a series of pictures representing symbolically alchemical processes. Hughes has performed an immense service in making a thorough investigation of Ripley's works, and showing how they were used to publicise Edward. Many of Hughes's illustrations are from the Ripley Scrolls. Here I can only pick a few of the many symbols and images concerned, beginning with the most important of all, the Sun, which, providentially for Edward, dominated his horoscope (11).

From the beginnings of alchemy, the Sun, which represented gold, was, so to speak, the star of the show. The *Emerald Table* is an account of the alchemical Work, which may have been written in Greek by, or at the time of, Apollonius of Tyana (*c*1–*c*96 AD)[26]. It was long available only in a medieval Latin translation, but in 1923 E J Holmyard found an Arabic version, probably originally translated from Syriac. 'There is no doubt that the Emerald Table is one of the oldest and most long-lived of all alchemical documents.'[27] It was supposed to have been found on a plaque of emerald, in the hands of the imaginary founder of alchemy, Hermes Trismegistos, vaguely related to the Egyptian god Thoth. (But Lindsay notes that for the Egyptians, Greeks and medievals 'emerald' meant anything from green granite to green glass.[28] 'The text had a great effect on Western medieval alchemy; its words were often endowed with talismanic force and engraved on laboratory walls'.[29]

The author, whoever he was, concludes his account of the basic principles of alchemy with the words: 'What I had to say about the operation of Sol is completed'.[30] Here the Sun is virtually identified with alchemy. The great Syrian alchemist Zosimus (flourished about AD 300)[31] wrote: 'The great Sun produced the Work, for it is by the Sun that all is accomplished'.[32] The word *alchemy* is derived from the Arabic *al kimiya*, where the second word is translated *black land* (either Egypt or the primal substance, of which more later), but one of the supposed founders was called Chemes –

[26] Hammond and Scullard (ref 12) 86, *sv* Apollonius of Tyana; 730, *sv* Nerva
[27] Holmyard (ref 15) 96
[28] Lindsay (ref 6) 185
[29] *Ibid*
[30] *Ibid* 186
[31] *Ibid* 323-5
[32] J Sadoul (1973) *Le Grand Art de l'Alchimie* (Paris: Albin Michel) 27 (my translation from his French)

which happens to mean the Sun in Hebrew. Jacques Sadoul concludes: 'Alchemy would thus be the science of the mysteries of the Sun'.[33] From all of this, it will be clear how advantaged Edward was in being born under the strong spring Sun, on 28 April (11).

The Sun (gold) and the Moon (silver) were often associated, with the Sun as much superior to the Moon as gold is to silver. It was supposed that the combination of the two was necessary for the achievement of the Philosopher's Stone. This was always represented as a marriage – thus, as we have seen, revealing its origins in tribal mating relations – and sometimes in pictures even by a man and woman copulating.[34] Nothing is ever simple in alchemy, and in the 8th century AD Jabir ibn Hayyan decided that metals were formed from sulphur and mercury, which he identified with the Sun and the Moon. 'He knew quite well that when ordinary sulphur and mercury are heated together the product obtained is a non-metallic stony substance... The sulphur and mercury composing metals were, then, hypothetical substances to which ordinary sulphur and mercury formed the closest available approximations.'[35] This is typical of tortuous alchemical thinking. So after Jabir when the Sun and Moon are seen together, they are either making metals or the Philosopher's Stone. Either way their mating is clearly very important. Sun and Moon with human faces are found in many alchemical pictures – for instance in Hughes (59, 61, 94), Holmyard[36] (Plates 9 and 19), Marshall[37] (Plates 26 and 27), and Sadoul[38] (153, 316). Some alchemists supposed that gold and silver would first have to separate, before their final recombination marriage. Hughes prints a picture of Ripley's tomb, covered with reliefs which are alchemical pictures. In a panel on the right a man holds the Sun and Moon (with human faces) apart; on the left-hand panel two birds, whose heads are the Sun and Moon (with human faces) have their necks intertwined, which Claire Russell has shown symbolises mating.[39] [40]

His horoscope was not Edward's only connection with this powerful symbol. On 3 February (xi) or 2 February 1461[41] (the exact date seems to be in dispute), Edward and his army were taking up their positions for the battle of Mortimer's Cross. He had just heard that his brother Edmund and his father had been killed in the battle of Wakefield,[42] so he was now the legitimate king. At about 10 am they saw three suns in the sky. This illusion is caused by ice crystals reflecting an image of the sun on either side of the real one (xi), so it is most common in polar regions (113, *n* 28). But it occurs in Europe from time to time. It was known to the Greeks. Aristotle (384-322 BC) has a masculine noun *parhelios*, Aratus (*c* 315-240) has a neuter noun *parhelion*. Both words mean '(a sun) beside the sun'.[43] In English the term of Aratus has been adopted,[44] and since there are *two* illusory objects beside the real sun, the phenomenon is named by the plural word *parhelia*. Parhelia are reported in the *Croyland Abbey Chronicle* a few years after Edward's, in 1467.[45] Hughes mentions them occurring before the fall of Constantinople in 1453 (81), and parhelia in England in the cold winters of 1940 and 1947 (113, *n* 28). His Frontispiece is a photograph of the parhelia in Minnesota. In the summer of 1847 parhelia were observed by the three Brontë sisters and their friend Ellen Nussey, who exclaimed 'You are the three suns!'[46]

This phenomenon just before a battle could have had a disastrous effect on morale, for 'the addiction of the English to omens and prophecies was a by-word on the

[33] *Ibid* 26-7
[34] Marshall (ref 5) Plate 27
[35] Holmyard (ref 15) 69, 71, 73 (quotation)
[36] Holmyard (ref 15)
[37] Marshall (ref 5)
[38] J Sadoul (1970) *Le Trésor des Alcimistes* (Paris: Albin Michel)
[39] C Russell (1981) "Kinship Symbols and their Evolution" *Social Biology and Human Affairs 45*, 119-144, especially 134-5
[40] W M S Russell (2004) "Sea Birds and Beasts" *Pendragon 32* no 1, 7-8
[41] Clive (ref 24) 48
[42] *Ibid* 43
[43] H G Liddell and R Scott (1897) *A Greek-English Lexicon* (8th edn, Oxford: Clarendon Press) 1154
[44] W W Skeat (1993) *The Concise Dictionary of English Etymology* (Ware, Herts: Wordsworth Editions) 331, *sv* parhelion
[45] Clive (ref 24) 192
[46] *Ibid* 62 *n* 24

Continent'.[47] But Edward, with great presence of mind, announced that the three suns betokened the Trinity, expressing their support. The army was cheered, and Edward won a brilliant victory. (In a novel or epic one would be tempted to see the true sun and the two false ones as Edward and his two surviving brothers, but of course nobody then knew that both would be false to him.) After the battle Edward announced he was adopting the sun in brightness as a badge, to commemorate the three suns that had 'foretold his triumph' (81). The alchemist-publicists must have been overjoyed.

The subject of badges is well discussed in the handsomely illustrated book *Heraldry*, by Ottfried Neubecker and others.[48] Whereas the rules for coats of arms (the science of armoury) were very strict, with badges anything went. 'Badges have the advantage that they can be used in unlimited numbers, somewhat like a fabric pattern.' Napoleon had a bee badge, and his coronation robes were covered with bees. 'For his coronation in 1483, Richard III of England is said to have ordered 13,000 white boars. These were to be distributed at the ceremony over the clothes of the doorkeepers and the King's retinue, who were dressed in "Livery colours" decorated with badges.' An individual or a family could have a number of *different* badges; the Staffords had eighteen. You could acquire a badge by inheritance, by marriage or by your own choice. Edward inherited from his father and transmitted to his elder son the badge of a falcon in a fetter-lock (a sort of foot-cuff used for hobbling a horse). 'It was supposedly shown open because the "falcon" who hoped for the throne was not to be locked up.' The white rose of York was 'said to have come to the York family by marriage with a Clifford heiress'.[49] Edward himself chose the beautiful *rose en soleil* (rose in sun), a white rose with the sun's rays blazing all round it. There are a lot of *rose en soleil* badges beside the portrait of Edward in a stained glass window in Canterbury Cathedral. This is shown in a figure of Hughes (93), and in bright colours on the cover of Mary Clive's book *This Sun of York*, by far the best straight biography of Edward IV.[50]

Though the sun was naturally their trump card, the alchemists related other alchemical symbols and images to Edward. All these have been investigated and clearly laid out by Hughes. I will give one example. As the first stage of the alchemical Work, 'Ripley recommended the reduction of the pure substances gold and silver to base primitive matter, the primal essence or *nigredo*' (it was supposed to be black), not to be confused with Aristotle's primal matter, source of the four elements. Other alchemists produced *nigredo* by melting down iron filings, faeces and urine (57). But this primordial chaos, represented by a dragon, was to be destroyed in order to produce the pure substance needed for the next stage of the Work (87). Hence there was a positive alchemical symbolism associated with dragon-slayers. For many people, the supreme dragon-slayer has been Sigurd

[47] *Ibid* 191
[48] O Neubecker, J P Brooke-Little and R Tobler (1977) *Heraldry* (London: Macdonald and Jane's) 138, 206-7 (quotations); 208-13
[49] Clive (ref 24) 50
[50] *Ibid* front cover

Fafnirsbana. But for the 15th-century English, as Christians it was St Michael the Archangel, and as English it was St George, their patron saint since 1351. Hughes shows that Edward associated himself closely with both saints (108-9). In Edward's new coinage, the angel has on its obverse the ship of state. 'Either side of the mast, formed by the cross of St George, there is a rose and the sun in splendour.' On the reverse, St Michael slays the dragon. At a ceremony in Bristol on 4 September 1461, Edward was shown 'St George on horseback "upon a tent fighting with a dragon"'. This is seen by Hughes, surely rightly, as 'a pageant of thanksgiving for the new king for delivering the kingdom from the chaos of civil war", in alchemical terms destroying the chaotic *nigredo*. Finally, 'the focus for the cult of St George was the chapel of St George at Windsor, ... rebuilt by Edward IV as the symbolic heart of his new dynasty' and of course the new home of the Order of the Garter, to which he gave special attention. 'This was Edward's supreme achievement as a patron of architecture'.

In a letter to Edward, Ripley promised to tell him about the secret of the red and white elixirs, 'not by writing but by word of mouth' (89). There was very good reason for this indiscretion. The red elixir was for making gold, the white elixir for making silver, and the combination of the two was an important contribution to the making of the philosopher's stone.[51] Now already in the 14th century these two elixirs were symbolised by *flowers*, of the corresponding colours.[52] In the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, there is an alchemical manuscript called *Trésor des Trésors*. This contains a picture of the two elixirs, represented as two glass vessels, one containing a red fluid and a red-dressed man standing in it, the other a white fluid and a white-dressed woman standing in it. Out of the first vessel spouts a red rose, out of the second vessel a white one. The two elixirs are labelled in large letters *Rosa Rubea* (red rose) and *Rosa Alba* (white rose).[53] Since the red elixir is for gold and the white one for silver, a *very* embarrassing symbolism for the Yorkists. However, Ripley survived to work for the Tudors. The union of red and white elixir as vital for making the philosopher's stone was the *perfect* symbol for the marriage of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York (daughter of Edward IV) on 18 January 1486 (304). And so in one manuscript of the Ripley Scroll there is a beautiful picture of a red and white rose.[54] The image was eagerly adopted by Henry VII, and today we know it as the Tudor Rose.

So much here for alchemy as a glorification of Edward IV, and we now turn to his other glory as an avatar of Arthur. Among the writings commissioned or encouraged by Edward IV for publicity, very important were genealogies and prophecy collections.

Genealogies of Edward IV

Faking genealogies has always been a favourite pursuit of the European upper classes. Edward's genealogists were in the happy position of stating the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. For Edward really did have a better claim to the English throne than Henry VI.

Edward III had five sons. The first, the Black Prince, had one son, Richard II, who died without issue. The second, Lionel Duke of Clarence, had no sons. The third, John of Gaunt, was the ancestor of the three Lancastrian kings by Blanche of Lancaster, and of the Beauforts by his mistress Catherine Roët; he married her and legitimised the Beauforts, who included the Dukes of Somerset and above all Margaret Beaufort, wife of Edmund Tudor and mother of Henry VII. The fourth, Edmund Duke of York, founded the House of York: his second son, Richard of Cambridge, was Edward IV's paternal grandfather. The fifth, Thomas of Woodstock, had no sons and was in any case obviously far down the list. So *in the male line* Lancaster, from the third son, took precedence over York, from the fourth.

However, Lionel, the second son, had a daughter, Philippa, who married Edmund Mortimer, of the great Marcher family (from whom Edward IV had his title of Earl of March and his possessions there). Their granddaughter Anne Mortimer married Richard Earl of Cambridge, and so was

[51] Holmyard (ref 15) 147-8, 239
[52] *Ibid* 236
[53] *Ibid* Plate 21
[54] *Ibid* Plate 14

Edward IV's grandmother. So *In the female line*, Edward, descending from the second son, had the best claim to the throne.[55] [56] Now England had never had a Salic Law. Henry II had become king as the son of Matilda, daughter of Henry I. Edward III had claimed the throne of France from his mother Isabelle, daughter of Philippe IV le Bel. And of course Henry VII was to be king in right of his mother Margaret Beaufort. To emphasise this, the Yorkist writers quoted *The Revelations of St Bridget* (of Sweden), which insisted on the equality of the male and female lines of succession (123, 230).

Hughes has shown that the writers glorified Anne Mortimer, as the link between the House of York and Philippa and Lionel, hence the key to Edward IV's claim to the English throne. They associated Edward's grandmother with her namesake St Anne, grandmother of Jesus (122-3). Apparently nobody thought this blasphemous. Edward made much of the cult of St Anne, and on one occasion this was particularly useful to him. In his epic march from Coventry to London, before the battle of Barnet, he and his army stopped at Daventry. Edward and many of his men crowded into the Abbey church, where an image of St Anne was hidden in a tabernacle. Suddenly the doors sprang open, revealing the saint. This needn't have been rigged; Hughes suggests the vibrations of so many tramping feet could have done it, if the doors were not too tightly shut (223). Edward, with his usual presence of mind, made much of the saint revealing herself, and the army marched on with greatly heightened morale.

For the English line of inheritance of Edward IV was matched in the genealogies, perfectly accurately, by an equally impressive Welsh line. Edmund Mortimer was descended from Ralph Mortimer and his wife the Princess Gwladys, daughter of Llywelyn the Great. Edward's Welsh ancestry was actually superior to that of Henry Tudor. They both descended from the mighty Gruffydd ap Cynan, great patron of the bards, hailed by Rhys ap Tewdwr as king of the kings of Wales. But Edward descended, through Llywelyn, from Gruffudd's eldest child, his son Owain, whereas Henry descended from Gruffudd's youngest child, his daughter Gwenllian, who married Gruffudd son of Rhys ap Tewdwr. Hence in 1584 the Welsh historian David Powel claimed that Henry VIII had inherited England from his father Henry VII, and Wales from his mother Elizabeth of York.[57]

Now Hughes has shown that in several of the genealogies the Welsh line is given preference by being picked in bright colours and decorated with crowns (131-140). Why was this? From the historical Welsh princes the line is traced back to the more or less legendary kings of Britain, and so to the imaginary Trojan exile Brut, founder of New Troy (London), and through him to his ancestor Japheth son of Noah! But there is nothing special about this. The peoples and dynasties of Western Europe favoured Trojan ancestors (to be in line with the Romans) or Biblical patriarch ancestors; the British just had the best of both worlds.[58] Now, as Hughes makes abundantly clear, the importance of the Welsh line was that it made Edward the descendant, and therefore a potential avatar, of the subject of most of the old and new prophecies – the Once and Future King, Arthur Pendragon.

To be concluded

[55] Clive (ref 24) xii-xiii, genealogy
[56] C Ross (1983) *Edward IV* (London: Methuen) 4, genealogy
[57] J Davies (1994) *A History of Wales* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) 140, genealogy; 116-17, 141, 254
[58] W MS Russell and C Russell (1991) "English Turf Mazes, Troy and the Labyrinth" *Folklore 102*, 77-88, especially 80-81

Dianne Wynne Jones
Hexwood
Puffin Books 1996 $4.99
0 14 037034 7 pb 300pp

My apologies for this very belated review of this American edition – the book was first published in Britain in 1993. I read every book by this author I can lay my hands on – 31 so far. A Waterstone shelf label assures me that I am between 9 and 12 years of age, but, even by the standards of higher mathematics, this is a magic series, since it undoubtedly includes the number 80.

This novel is as good as usual. The galaxy is ruled by five Reigners. The present five, who got there by trickery, are as evil as evil can be, and much of the book concerns

their come-uppance; worst of all are Reigner 1 and his former girl-friend Reigner 3.

In a quiet corner of Earth, a magical machine called the Bannus was installed long ago, initially to test and choose new Reigners, but it has become somewhat independent. Anyone entering the region it controls is transformed into a character in a highly modified version of the Arthurian and Grail legends. Thus the feeble Reigner 2 becomes Anfortas (here called Ambitas), and the horrible Reigner 3 becomes Morgan La Trey. Reigner 1's Bannus identity is peculiarly appropriate.

In a hugely complicated plot, with a DeMillean cast, even King Arthur turns up near the end, after masquerading in the Bannus field as a character from Spenser. To say more would be as bad as giving away the plot of a detective story, and I will only remark that this book, like all by Jones, is extremely ingenious, extremely inventive, and *extremely* enjoyable.

W M S Russell

Karla Andersdatter
Of Love and Promises
In Between Books 2005 $25.00
Available from PO 790, Sausalito, CA 94966, USA

Just coming of age, raised as a Celtic princess, the daughter of two kings and a healing woman, Iseult is called upon to heal the wounded warrior whose ship has foundered on the shores of her step-father's land in Ireland. A pledge to her Goddess, the Forest Mother, binds her life to the attractive stranger and sets in motion the well told tale of Tristan and Iseult.

Iseult is the personification of a Goddess and follows the path of truth even though it is often difficult and painful. Ms Andersdatter portrays Iseult as a strong willed, sensitive woman that learns about the world the hard way without wavering in her beliefs. Iseult, after centuries of listening to the distorted versions of her love story told by the bards, wishes the truth be told so the untarnished reputations of those involved can be restored.

Throughout the first half of the novel, the reader follows Iseult's account of her meeting with Tristan and their subsequent betrothal. Much of this account follows the traditional story line; however, Iseult is no pawn of the fates. Her moral character is unquestionable and she acts in accordance with her own will, even if her decisions are emotionally distressing.

Many of the well known scenes are presented in this tale, even those that are a bit fanciful, but here all circumstances become a matter of choice by the participants. The principal players are not victims of capricious fate. They understand the consequences of their actions and accept their responsibilities. The conflicting ideals of paganism as represented by the Forest Mother and the ideals of Christianity provide a background for the action and the decisions of the characters.

King Marc is a warm, generous king, who is influenced by villainous counsellors with nefarious intentions. Tristan is our upright hero, although misguided at times. Brangaine is forthright and loyal throughout the tale and all the secondary characters play their parts in accordance with the story set forth long ago. It is approximately half way through the novel when Ms Andersdatter departs from the traditional narrative. The reader gets caught up in a fresh reworking of the love affair, which ends in an unfamiliar but completely acceptable way.

If this book seems to be a bit romantic in its presentation of this classic tale, we can perhaps forgive the author. She is a well known poet, anti-nuclear activist and advocate for peace and harmony on this planet. More importantly, her book is highly readable, entertaining and leaves the reader with a warm glow and contented feeling that does not often accompany a reading of the story of Tristan and Iseult. Highly recommended for those that love a good story and believe in the ultimate victory of truth and loyalty.

Larry Mendelsberg

In Search of Myths and Heroes
Dir: Jeremy Jeffs; Prod: Rebecca Dobbs
4/4: February 25 2005, BBC Two
Series available also as a BBC DVD; a BBC book accompanies the series

Michael Wood presented this pleasant four-part series on BBC2, "In Search of Myths and Heroes." He went to Tibet to find the original inspiration for Shangri-La and to Ethiopia and Arabia to find the Queen of

Sheba; he then followed the voyages of Jason and the Argonauts and, in the final instalment, he investigated the legends of King Arthur. I didn't expect there to be any profound revelations in the last programme, but thought it might be worth watching out of passing interest.

It was, however, terribly disjointed and rather arbitrary in its selection of reference sources and conclusions. For anyone not entirely familiar with the legends, I feel it would have been too confusing to follow completely; and for anyone familiar with them, well, it not only told us nothing new, but also left out such a huge welter of information that it was hardly a documentary at all; and making such bold claims as the finding of Arthur's grave in Glastonbury being a proven forgery: that's really going too far. All right, so, as far as I know, there's been no proof revealed either way – it might or might not have been a genuine find – but such sweeping and biased statements as that don't really do research a lot of good, or tell the public anything helpful.

It was clumsy and awkward, and Michael Wood does seem to have lost his touch with this particular programme; but apart from that, it was all right, I suppose!

Ian Brown

The Real Da Vinci Code
Dir: Kashaf Chaudhry; Prod: Simon Raikes
February 3 2005, Channel 4

Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* continues to top bestseller lists but, unusually for a piece of imaginative writing, its author and supporters claim there is more truth than fiction in its pages. This Channel 4 documentary, fronted by *Time Team*'s Tony Robinson, examined Brown's espousal of the theory that the Holy Grail is not an object but the bloodline of Jesus' descendants, a hypothesis first expounded in *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* in the 1980s.

The two-hour-long programme covered the subject in broad sweeps, including the grail-as-object (both the Valencia chalice and Graham Phillips' alabaster cup got a look-in on this and on Michael Woods' recent TV documentary), the Cathars, the Knights Templar, Mary Magdalene, the Priory of Sion and, of course, Leonardo da Vinci. As Tony Robinson said in a *Radio Times* interview ("The gospel truth?"), "it's entirely plausible that Jesus could have had a relationship with Mary Magdalene" but the edifice of bloodline secrets and secret societies is "totally spurious".

The link with Arthurian legends hinges on the supposed derivation of *san greal* ("Holy Grail") from *sang real* ("royal blood"). As no end of scholars have pointed out (most recently Barber 2005: 227), and as the programme makes clear, it was only as late as the 15th century that John Hardyng's *Chronicle* and other writings contemporary with *Morte Darthur* used a mistaken etymology to link *sangreal* with *sanke roiall*. This supposed derivation was speculative and not revelatory of a lost cipher, and so upon this foundation of shifting sands the whole grail-as-bloodline edifice collapses.

Robinson declares that "We live in an age where we enjoy challenging the old certainties, and one of the oldest certainties in our culture is the Gospel narrative ... so to uncover a secret that turns it upside down is liberating and sexy." What's more important than Grail as cup or bloodline "is our yearning to find something unobtainable". In the meantime, try Michael and Veronica Haag's *The Rough Guide to* The Da Vinci Code (2004) for a critical overview of Brown's *oeuvre*, and Richard Barber's *The Holy Grail: the history of a legend* (Penguin 2005) for an authoritative study of the "real" thing.

Chris Lovegrove

Pendragon Round Table
Hay-on-Wye 2005

This event has now securely replaced our old-fashioned AGMs on the Pendragon calendar. Instead of a long day's journey in Autumn to some location to discuss Society business and share a meal it has now become a carefully planned weekend in June in locations chosen for their historical interest where we can enjoy beautiful scenery and spend time getting to know each other and truly become a group of friends.

Baskerville Hall was everything we had hoped it would be and more. A great rambling country house, set in acres of grounds, with outdoor picnic tables sheltered by massive mature trees. The accommodation was comfortable, the food good, the bars and pool obligingly available and the staff welcoming and determined to make sure our event would be a success. On top of this the sun shone down the whole weekend, as glorious as it had been at Caerleon in 2003 – weather which we had not dared to expect again. Far too hot for armour, most of us were dressed for the Costa Brava.

The first surprise was when we saw where our event was scheduled to be held: a spacious room on the ground floor overlooking the front lawns - with a splendid Round Table, about twelve feet in diameter, surrounded by a circle of comfortable chairs. With our ceremonial Sword and Grail placed in the centre:

'The Sword to protect us.
The Grail to Sustain us'

we were off to a flying start at 2 p.m. sharp.

The major decision that we made at the Annual General Meeting was that we should proceed with all speed to set up a new Website, to tell the world about ourselves, our impressive journal – take a bow, Chris - and encourage a greatly expanded membership to join us in our research and activities. A small group of volunteers met after the meeting to discuss a paper prepared to initiate this and met again al fresco after breakfast on Sunday under a great tree that looked down on us venerably and sheltered our deliberations - the Meeting will be remembered as the Cedar Tree Council henceforth in our annals.

Chris Barber's slide presentation on *Owain Glyndŵr* was a huge success, the beautifully composed pre-recorded commentary was matched by the breathtaking quality of the images, all taken by Chris himself. We thank you Chris, for joining us on a very busy day for yourself to share this splendid experience with us.

Laurence Main's wonderfully charismatic and interesting talk on *Derfel Gadarn and Camlan* was also well received by a very good humoured audience. It was fascinating to learn that farmers in the remote valleys of west-central Wales regularly dig up bones, weapons and other evidences of long – forgotten battles but find it easier not to bring in the prospectors and experts to walk all over their lands and disturb their way of life. The Arthur glimpsed in the old Welsh tales became quite vivid and credible as Laurence wove his mantic spells over us. Thank you Laurence, it was good to have you with us again.

Then came refreshments, a prize draw took place and Dave Burnham accurately estimated how many plastic knights belonging to Ben Rouse were occupying a large sweet jar - a curious but impressive talent.

Dave then proceeded to organise us through an absolutely unique activity in which we individually received and rejected cards with names of famous personages on them until, on a signal, we roamed around the room seeking those who we felt had

chosen compatible personalities. An Arthurian quiz then ensued in which the teams sometimes bid or exhorted for alternative answers to be considered. The winning team not surprisingly contained Chris, of course, and were duly rewarded with plastic medals. A really good time was had by all thanks to Dave's splendidly crazy but challenging approach to what was far more than a party game.

There was ample opportunity over the weekend for members to make little expeditions into Hay-on-Wye, which was only a mile or so over the river, and it was fun to spot members of our group with their noses buried in books as we walked past bookshops - Vince Byrne had made himself very comfortable on a chair in Richard Booth's shop, I noticed.

On returning to Baskerville the roamers flopped out on the lawn, joining those who had preferred a less active time and were talking and enjoying cold drinks. Some might have been recovering from talking in the bar half the night, of course.

On Sunday afternoon members largely organised their own time and there were leaflets prepared to guide those who wished to explore further afield. Arthur's Stone was on the way to Kilpeck, a venue that drew several of the party to see the Norman church with its wonderful carvings that conjure up a world of Christian/Pagan ideas in juxtaposition in the minds of our ancestors. My own group spent a couple of hours in the garden of the Kilvert Hotel at Hay, eating and talking before setting out for home.

There is no doubt that the Round Table was a great success and it will be difficult to match, but we said that after Caerleon.

If this description sounds to you like an in-crowd enjoying themselves and you feel you might not be welcome at our next event, or be seen as an outsider, please DON'T. There is no hierarchy, or 'higher-archy' as Kate Pollard, our past secretary, used to say, only a 'lower-archy' who do the jobs and keep things going. All are welcome to our Round Tables, husbands and wives come and friends who are interested in our activities. We are not an elitist group - that would hardly be the style for an Arthurian Society, would it? Do come next time!

F.C..S-J

Back: Pat Wright, Marilyn Stedman-Jones, Derek Richards, Eira Richards, Richard Stedman-Jones, Steve Sneyd, Richard Carder, Simon Rouse, Alex Gibbon, Laurence Main, Mischa Carder, Tom Byrne, Vincent Byrne, Paul Parry, Heather Parry, Anita Loughrey, Jim Loughrey,
Front: Fred Stedman-Jones, Ben Rouse, Anne Rouse, Dave Burnham, Reg Baggs.

Talking Head ≈ Fred Stedman-Jones

HOUND OF HELL

The Hound of the Baskervilles by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, originally serialised in the *Strand* Magazine (1901-1902), is set largely on Dartmoor. The story is inspired by regional mythology of the British Isles concerning hellhounds. The phantom black dog is a powerful archetype, a complex mix of folklore and local superstition which has roots reaching far into the past. Witnesses often describe the creature as a gigantic black hound with glowing red eyes that resemble burning coals.

The most common belief that surrounds the black dog is its ability to predict doom and that a strange death should be anticipated soon after a sighting. Black dogs often seem to haunt lonely tracks across dangerous moors, ancient footpaths, historic ruins and isolated crossroads, places associated with local superstitions where it is very easy to see the misty form of the terrifying beast in the shadows or hear it howling in the darkness. As long as there is fear of the unknown the black dog will stalk us.

The inspiration for Conan Doyle's story is usually claimed to be a tale of a phantom black dog on Dartmoor which came from the people, places and folklore of that area. Guidebooks to Devon point authoritatively to the ghostly hound connected with the death of Sir Richard Cabell, allegedly the most hated man on Dartmoor and an obvious model for the devilish Hugo Baskerville However, speculation that some of the story originated in Herefordshire began 50 years ago when, fifty years after the book appeared, Maurice Campbell, a chairman of the Sherlock Holmes Society, published a pamphlet, *The Hound of the Baskervilles: Dartmoor or Herefordshire?* which caused much controversy at the time and the argument has been revived again in recent times in several books and newspaper articles, the issue remains unresolved.

In 1901 Conan Doyle wrote to Greenough Smith, editor of the *Strand* magazine, *'I have the idea of a real creeper for The Strand,'* adding, *'There is one stipulation. I must do it with my friend Fletcher Robinson'.* Robinson, a 28 year-old journalist, had been on a golfing holiday with Conan Doyle in Norfolk when he interested the author with his retelling of the tale of a ghostly hound. Robinson was a Devon man and it was to Dartmoor that he and Doyle went to research the book, ferried around by a coachman by the name of Harry Baskerville.

When the story was published in book form in 1902, Conan Doyle included an acknowledgement to Fletcher Robinson for telling him of the hound legend but it went no further than that. The debate over the book grew in 1951, when the one time carriage driver for the Fletcher Robinson family, Harry Baskerville, claimed that Robinson had played a much bigger role in its authorship than had been acknowledged. In his Conan Doyle biography, *Teller of Tales* (1999), Daniel Stashower points out that Greenough Smith later recalled that Robinson had admitted finding the hound legend in 'a Welsh guidebook' and that the proposed title *The Hound of the Baskervilles* had been divulged to Conan Doyle's mother before he and Robinson had even been to Dartmoor or met Harry Baskerville.

The medieval Baskervilles had a castle at Eardisley in Herefordshire and their descendants, the Baskerville Mynors, owned the mansion Clyro Court, now the Baskerville Hall Hotel. The character who first enlists the aid of Sherlock Holmes in the affair of the hound is Dr Mortimer and the Mortimers were the great medieval barons of the area, Mortimer's Cross is a local place name. Then there is Stapleton, the naturalist in the novel, and *hey presto*, a few miles from Kington, complete with a ruined castle on a hill, is the hamlet of Stapleton.

A leaflet I picked up at Baskerville Hall recently claims that, *"Arthur Conan Doyle was a family friend who often came to stay here. During his many visits he learnt of the local legend of the hounds of the Baskervilles. It is reputed that on nearby Hergest Ridge he translated this into probably the most famous case for his celebrated detective Sherlock Holmes. However, at the request of his friends he set the book in Devon 'to ward off tourists'".*

Residents of Kington maintain that Conan Doyle may have drawn his inspiration for his wicked character of Hugo Baskerville and his terrifying dog from the legend of Black Vaughan who lived at Hergest Court when it was far grander and more fortified than the present bleak stone and timbered farmhouse. The story persists that both Doyle and the Vaughans were connected by marriage to the Baskerville family.

Black Vaughan's headless body (he was beheaded after the Battle of Banbury in the Wars of the Roses) lies in a spectacular double tomb in the rather eerie Vaughan Chapel in Kington Church with his widow Ellen Gethyn (the Terrible) by his side. A frequent visitor at the Court was Lewys Glyn Cothi, one of the greatest Welsh poets of the time. When Thomas died fighting in the Yorkist cause in 1469 Lewys wrote a funeral elegy or *marwnad* which evoked his patron's *'fighting white-cuirassed like King Arthur at Camlan'.*

It was after his death that he began to measure up to Hugo Baskerville's infamy. According to the local legend, his furious phantom would rampage through Kington and its environs, overturning farmers' carts, terrifying their wives and disrupting services at the church by manifesting as a raging bull. A spectral hound was also seen. It was decided that Vaughan should be exorcised, so Black Vaughan was given the bell, book and candle treatment by 12 priests. His spirit shrank down into a buzzing fly and was confined to a snuff box and buried under a stone at the bottom of the pool close to Hergest Court. And that should have been that, except for the fact that Black Vaughan's dog allegedly continued to haunt the territory its master had once operated in as a harbinger of death to the Vaughan family. Many local people still refuse to walk near his home of Hergest Court at night for fear of seeing his ghost and that of his black dog.

As recently as 1987 a Solihull woman, coincidentally called Miss Jenny Vaughan, saw the ghostly figure of a bull in the church, outlined against a blue curtain covering the north door. *'What struck me most',* she said, *'was the incongruity of seeing a bull in a church'.*

The Court still stands, and the pool to which Black Vaughan's spirit was committed remains. It is recorded that the wife of the present owner told that he conceived a plan to fill in the pool. On the appointed day when JCBs arrived to do the work the water began to bubble ominously. The farmer changed his mind and dismissed the contractors!

An account from *The Independent* newspaper of 25th August 1989 records, *'A mysterious animal is running amok near the village from which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle got his inspiration for his story* The Hound of the Baskervilles. *Dozens of sheep have had their throats ripped out on farmland a few miles from Powys village Clyro. Armed farmers are making nightly searches alongside thick forest and across remote moorland around Hay on Wye in Herefordshire and Welsh border villages to track down the killer, which strikes at night'.*

Pamela Harnsworth, Landlady of the Baskerville Arms Inn, Clyro said, *'At least two people have seen it. It's bigger than a fox and dark in colour. Many think it's a large dog. One farmer has so far, lost sheep worth £300'.* A Dyfed-Powys Police spokesman said, *'As unlikely as it seems something appears to be going on out there'.*

In 1938 the following dramatic event took place involving three ladies of the Baskerville family. Florence, Clara and Eleanor Baskerville were walking on the Malvern hills when the fog came down and they claim they were followed by a large black animal for most of the way to their house 'Homefells', which was very high up the Malvern bills at Malvern Wyche. The family was worried for sometime afterwards as they thought it might signify a coming death in the family. I am pleased to say this did not happen!