

pendragon

Journal of
The Pendragon Society



Treasures of Britain

XXXIII No 2

editorial

XXXIII No 2 Winter 2005-6



Treasures of Britain

This issue is a little like a reliquary or jewellery box, stuffed full of little trinkets. There are some magical objects, the odd grail and perhaps a philosopher's stone. There are maps of what might be Treasure Islands, landlocked maybe or located in a lake. Then there are finely-wrought poems – epigrams, epitaphs and even fanfares – with facets gleaming, all vying for your attention. What will you look at first, I wonder?

The cover is based on a Pictish sculptured stone from Invergowrie, Angus, showing a horseman raising a drinking horn to his lips. This may bring to mind the figure of **Gwlgod**, "probably Mynyddog's *maer* or steward". Responsible for "arranging the feast at the royal hall" in the early medieval poem *The Gododdin*, Gwlgod fell at the battle of Catraeth around 600.¹ He reappears in the medieval tale of *Culhwch ac*

Olwen as **Gwlgawd Gododdin**,² the owner of a horn that, with Arthur's help, Culhwch has to procure, against Gwlgawd's will, for Culhwch and Olwen's own wedding feast. It reminds us how even everyday objects could, over the centuries, metamorphose from items of special regard into things with extraordinary powers – in this case, perhaps even being a model for the grail.

Historians

Next issue, with its projected studies of historians and archaeologists, looks like turning from the originally-planned dry-as-dust examination of *primary sources* to the more attractive field of human interest by looking at the personalities involved in Arthurian research. With this in mind, the theme will, predictably, be **Historians** – we hope this leaves potential contributors free rein to interpret as they will. The summer issue has yet to have a theme, so suggestions and submissions are very much welcomed.

Apologies and thanks

Regrettably, your Editor has been off-line for a significant period, as a result of which edpendragon@yahoo.co.uk is now defunct. I apologise profusely to those who have not had a reply to their e-mails and hasten to add that it was not personal! I hope to be back online with a new address in the near future, so until then Royal Mail (or any other postal franchises) will be your best bet for correspondence.

Mercifully we seem to be getting it right in other areas for a number of you. For Mark Valentine the journal "really is a great read" and he always looks forward to it, and Pamela Constantine thinks recent issues are "full of interest, as always", while new member Henk van Leeuwen has already taken out a two-year subscription on the basis of his sample issues, taking the opportunity to compliment the editorial team on the quality of the journal. Thank you for these appreciative remarks (more appear in the letters pages) and do please continue to let us know what you enjoy and what you think we can improve. Thanks too to all this issue's contributors and to the usual editorial team.

CL

¹ A O H Jarman (1990) *Aneirin: Y Gododdin, Britain's oldest heroic poem* (Gomer Press) 101-2

² Gwlgawd "from Gododdin", the area around Edinburgh

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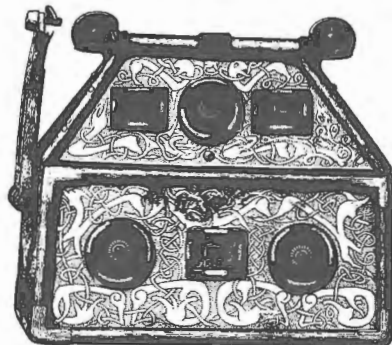
Charles Evans-Günther

Letters

COURTLY LOVE

My apologies for the apparent geographical confusion within my article "The Wisdom of Courtly Love" [XXXII No 4, 14-19]. It was never my intention to mislead readers into assuming these three distinct areas of he Aquitaine, Languedoc and Provence were one. I had simply wished to identify a commonality of pertinent cultural values, distinct from those of Northern France. My generalisation serves to assert the teleological principles of historiography only. My sincere thanks to Steve Sneyd for his erudite clarification [XXXIII No 1, 5].

Shani Oates, by e-mail



Monymusk reliquary

KING ARTHUR'S GLASGOW

Although I disagree with the dating comparisons for the Constantine sarcophagus ["A Portrait of Arthur?" XXXII No 1, 10-11], there is nothing to say that the tomb might not have been cut at a later date to house his holy relics. This practice is replicated in the Monymusk Reliquary, made to carry Saint Columba's bones many years after his death. Legend says it was Constantine of Cornwall who abdicated his throne, went to Ireland and took holy orders from Saint Columba. Iona was founded consequently in 563 and Constantine followed at Govan in 565.

These dates are contemporary with the quasi-historic Urien, Owain and Gwallawg and therefore the persona of Taliesin. We should also include Loth, Gwalmachie, Myrddin and the poet Aneurin of *Gododdin* fame, who are all north British characters, or *Gwyr y Gogledd*. Obviously none of these figures are contemporary with the traditional dates of King Arthur, but they did live alongside Aeden MacGabhran and his son Artur and they are all traditionally associated with the Arthurian myths.

The author J S Glennie proposed that for the Arthurian Legends to have been imported into present-day Scotland there would have to be a historic influx of Brythonic / Cymric people who brought the stories with them. This never happened; however there was an export of Welsh-speaking peoples from Strathclyde and Lothian, the homelands of the heroes listed above.

It is my belief that oral stories of Arthur and the men of the north have been corrupted by later Christian scribings, probably deliberately. Also, that the stories are primarily founded in the now Scottish landscape and involve north British characters from Artur MacAeden's lifetime. Finally, the influence and the people have been carried by ship to all parts of the Celtic world. Remember there is the Auld Alliance between Scotland and France through the west coast sea route via Wales, Ireland and Cornwall to Brittany and beyond...

Hugh D P McArthur, *Publicity Liaison Officer,*

The MacArthur Society in Britain

• *The Monymusk reliquary, a house-shaped wooden shrine encased in bronze and faced with silver, dates from the early 8th century. Only ten centimetres in length, it is believed to be of Pictish manufacture. Hugh suggests that the so-called Constantine sarcophagus in Govan Old parish church, Glasgow, was indeed a stone reliquary for the saint's remains, though he believes it to date earlier than the 10th-11th century usually ascribed to it. See also Eileen Buchanan's letter last issue, and Hugh's article this issue.*

HIGHLIGHT

The quality of the journal, in content, style and presentation, is constantly excellent, and it's always a highlight to the season whenever *Pendragon* arrives.

Ian Brown, *Middlesbrough, Cleveland*

• *Three cheers for our resident artists, Simon Rouse and Ian Brown himself, for their distinctive contributions to the journal.*

BIRTH AND DEATH MYTHS

The Igraine issue (XXXII No 4) contained several articles with items on the myths associated with the births and deaths of various Arthurian and non-Arthurian characters. I'd like to throw a couple of fresh Near Eastern characters into the mix, and point out one other aspect, though I'm sure I won't have been the only "Pendragoneer" to think of it.

The biblical Moses: Born in secret and concealed after his birth; "given away" via the reed basket on the river into effective fosterage to escape a childhood threat; a definite death following an extended lifetime, but his burial place was never subsequently known. The historical Mesopotamian ruler Sargon the Great (c 2334–c 2279 BC – dates may vary in different texts): Many subsequent myths became attached to him, including that he was born in secret, with an unknown father; "given away" via a reed basket on a river (doesn't that sound familiar? Sargon's myth likely predates that of Moses', however) to be effectively fostered, until later divine intervention brought him to the kingship and founding of the Akkadian dynasty; a definite death, but the location of his new capital city Akkad or Agade has never been found. For references, see Georges Roux's *Ancient Iraq* (3rd edition), 1992, 151-152 and notes on 452. Lastly, as Chris Lovegrove mentioned in passing, the biblical Jesus too fits this general pattern. In respect of the Matter of Britain in this regard, I recalled the effective "fosterage" of Jesus suggested by the tales that he accompanied Joseph of Arimathea to Britain, which in view of the other "fostering" episodes, remains an interesting concept, no matter when it was added into the tale.

Professor Russell helpfully commented on why all these different traditions might have reached such comparable ends on page 8 of the same issue of *Pendragon*, of course.

Alastair McBeath, *Morpeth, Northumberland*
• *Brendan MacMahon's new book deals at length with the psychological aspects of the life of heroes – see BookWorm for details of this and other recent Arthurian offerings which will be reviewed as and when.*

GREEK & MESOPOTAMIAN ASTRONOMY

This may be carrying us too far from the Matter of Britain, but as Professor Russell did ask in these pages (XXXII No 3, 6) about the possible discovery of precession of the equinoxes by the ancient Mesopotamian Kidinnu, before the ancient Greek Hipparchus was attributed as doing so c146 BC, a reply here may be appropriate. I would also like to thank Prof Russell for his very kind comments in the same letter about my timeline in the immediately prior issue.

Several Classical authors referred to an earlier Mesopotamian astronomer, known to the Greeks as Kidenas. The name Kidinnu is known from a number of Babylonian cuneiform clay tablets, probably dating to the mid early 4th century BC, a name which would most likely become Kidenas in Greek. These tablets are concerned with the so-called System B of the Mesopotamian lunar theory, a more refined mathematical model than System A for determining the position of the Moon in the sky. This theory would have been essential for calculating the time of eclipses reasonably accurately. Otto Neugebauer¹ discussed both Systems in detail.

It is unknown whether Kidinnu / Kidenas was the inventor of System B, whether he was an astronomer recording it, or whether he was simply the scribe who copied the tablets, although it is clear the subsequent Classical authors considered him to have been an astronomer of some note. Pliny (*Natural History* II.VI.39), for instance, mentions him in relation to the motion of the planet Mercury, which suggests he was involved in writing tablets about more than one sort of astronomical event at least.

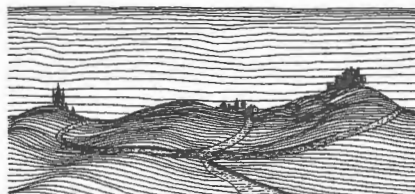
As the Moon's apparent monthly path through the sky shows its own kind of precession, taking 18.6 years to complete a

¹ Otto Neugebauer "The Exact Sciences in Antiquity" (1957 second edition, with further corrections), Dover, 1969; pages 114-118, text sections 49 and 50

full cycle, knowledge of this could have been used to anticipate precession of the Earth's equinoxes, though this cycle is far longer, around 25,800 years. Whether Kidinnu understood lunar precession well enough to make such an extrapolation is not clear. In the 1920s, it was proposed that he had discovered equinoctial precession during the 4th century BC, but the arguments supporting this were conclusively disproven by Neugebauer in 1950.²

Overall, the longevity of ancient Mesopotamian astronomical records meant that the constellations the Sun passed through near the solstices and equinoxes had been observed to change over time. As a result, the Mesopotamian astronomers may have had an inkling that precession occurred, without necessarily having a name for it, or perhaps even a conscious understanding of it, before Hipparchus quantified its effects. The surviving records that have been examined do not suggest they understood it as Hipparchus did, or as we do now, however.

Alastair McBeath



Ian Brown

WHERE DID SCOTLAND START?

I was delighted to see the responses by Steve Sneyd and Charles Evans-Günther (XXXII No 3, 6-7) to my slightly tongue-in-cheek starter on this topic in the preceding issue, because both went to the nub of the matter, as I'd hoped someone might. The key issue to understanding the history of what is now mainland Scotland and northern England (and places linked, but beyond, such as the Isles and Northern Ireland) is to

² For details and full references, see the synopsis on pp 200-201, or the longer discussion of this matter, and the lunar system clay tablets, on pp 214-219, of H Hunger and D Pingree's "Astral Sciences in Mesopotamia", published by Brill in 1999.

appreciate who was where and when, and where they or others considered their lands to extend to. I'd prefer to avoid using so negative an analogy as Steve's "can of worms" to discuss the resulting complexities, but I can appreciate the sentiment!

Charles' initiating article (XXXII No 1, 26-33) I did indeed find a little too fluid in its time-sense, which is largely what prompted me to write, a fluidity matched by his comment that Scotland could be reached by moving "beyond Hadrian's Wall". While moving "beyond" the Wall to its north will certainly bring you to the modern Anglo-Scottish border eventually, the journey in a straight line might be anything up to 90 km, as nowhere do the two coincide today. However, if I moved "beyond" Hadrian's Wall from my corner of England, I'd still be in England of course, but heading south, away from Scotland!

Alastair McBeath

♦ Sharp-eyed readers will notice that this issue has a Scottish strand – of sorts!

OF TIMELINES AND GEOFFREY'S ASTRONOMICAL INFLUENCE(S)

Charles Evans-Günther (XXXII No 3, 7) raised a couple of points about my astronomical and meteorological timeline in XXXII No 2, 17-20. Firstly, I should say it was inspired by, and was intended to complement, Anita Laughrey's splendid "Arthurian timeline" in *Pendragon* XXXI No 3, 26-30, rather than be viewed as a stand-alone item. This is partly why I only included the lone comment on Uter in 467 AD from *The Annals of Ulster*. That was also the sole Arthurian note in any of my sources.

As Charles rightly stated, this mention of Uter Pendragon is indeed very late, potentially as late as the late 15th to early 16th centuries, when the extant *Ulster* manuscripts were written. The item only occurs as an addition to the less complete of the two surviving copies (Rawlinson B489 at the Bodleian, according to Mac Niocaill's introduction to the text and translation I used).³ I'd hoped that the reference's title, plus my comments concerning the eclipses

³ S Mac Airt & G Mac Niocaill *transl* (1983) *The Annals of Ulster (to AD 1131), Part I: Text and Translation* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies.)

of 497 and 512 as recorded in the *Ulster Annals*, might have demonstrated in passing something of the problems with this source, as likely to be based on borrowed or non-contemporary material for this period, but perhaps I should have been more explicit.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's use of some astronomical imagery in relation to his Arthuriana was irrelevant to what I dealt with, which latter were historically-recorded events, or actual ones which passed unrecorded in a few cases (eclipses), between 460 and 545 AD. As I discussed some years ago ("Comet Myths Ancient & Modern", 3rd Stone 31, 1998, 13-16), Geoffrey lived towards the end of one of the greatest periods for bright comets, brilliant meteor sightings, and numbers of strong meteor showers, which lasted from c 975 to c 1115 AD. This astronomical activity peaked towards the end of the 11th century, around the time of the famous 1066 return of what we know now as Halley's Comet. During or near Geoffrey's likely childhood and formative years, there was a tremendous meteor storm seen all over Europe, including Britain, in early April, 1095, followed by four especially bright comets between 1097 and 1114. After all that, and given the post-Norman-conquest era he inhabited, it would have been more remarkable had Geoffrey not used some astronomical portents in his writings, regardless of whether he had access to information or tales from the 5th-6th centuries.

What I found intriguing, though the nature of the "Timeline" precluded detailed comment, was that the year selected for Uter's death, 467, was also one with a great comet visible during it, even though the comet was not recorded in the *Ulster Annals*. The implication may be that Uter's death was added to this entry because of Geoffrey's imaginative association of "his" Uther's accession with a comet (*History of the Kings of Britain*, viii 14-15), though whether this may have been done for symmetry, through a misreading of Geoffrey, or simply by chance with no knowledge of the bright comet in 467, is probably not determinable. It is a curiosity that no other Arthurian reference occurs in *Ulster* apart from this during the mid 5th to mid 6th centuries, whatever the case.

Alastair McBeath

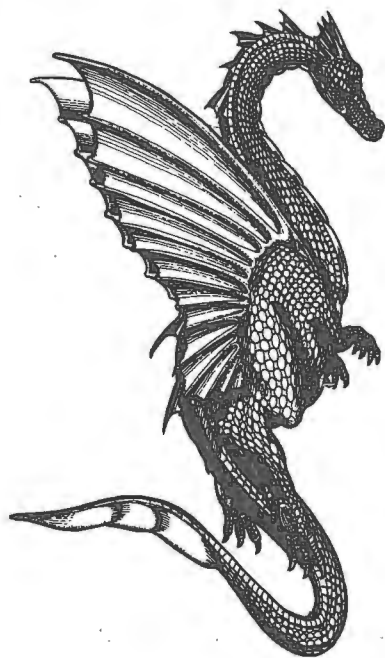
PARHELIA, SUN DOGS OR MOCK SUNS

Part one of Professor Russell's fascinating, extended review-commentary on Jonathan Hughes' book *Arthurian Myths and Alchemy* (XXXII No 3, 34-41) included some details on the parhelia, chiefly as described, in a slightly confused manner, by Hughes. Parhelia are two rounded, bright areas in, usually, cirriform clouds, which are caused by refraction of sunlight (not, as Hughes suggested, reflection) through the tiny ice crystals which make up such high-altitude clouds. They can be rainbow-coloured, and may occasionally seem almost as bright as the Sun. They are normally somewhat larger in size than the Sun's disc, and, when both occur together, they lie in a horizontal line at about the same elevation in the sky as the Sun, one on either side, and each about 22 degrees from it.⁴ They are sometimes called "mock suns", for obvious reasons, or equally obviously, "sun dogs", and are one of a large variety of atmospheric halo effects which can be seen due to light refracted or reflected by ice crystals in clouds, usually from the Sun, but also the Moon at times, or even some of the brighter planets, and very rarely, the brightest stars.

I cannot comment on how often such atmospheric halo effects take place for the polar regions, having seen no recent statistics from such locations, but halo effects of all kinds are very common from European latitudes. From 32,875 halo observations collected between 1986 and 1995 by the German *Arbeitskreis Meteore* (AKM) observers, the parhelia were second only to the very frequent refraction ring (more often, partial ring) halo, seen with a radius of 22 degrees centred on the Sun or Moon. About 40% of all halo reports were of the 22-degree ring, 31% of one or both of the 22-degree parhelia, with haloes of some kind visible to the German observers on about five out of every seven days. There are no

⁴ This is approximately the distance between the tips of the outer edges of the thumb and little finger of an outstretched hand held at arm's length from the eye – but please NEVER try to measure this directly near the Sun, unless the Sun is securely shielded behind a solid object like a rooftop, as eye damage, and probable permanent blindness, is liable to result if you view the Sun directly.

comparable observing groups or statistics for the UK, but estimates from my own and a few others' efforts here in recent years suggest halo phenomena can be seen about every three to four days from Britain, providing one knows what to look for. They do not require cold weather at the surface to happen, however. The atmosphere where cirriform clouds appear is nearly always cold enough to produce ice crystals. When it isn't, or when there isn't enough moisture to produce ice, there are no cirriform clouds!

Ian Brown *Lighter than air*

There is a popular impression that haloes are commoner in winter, simply because most of the brighter, more frequent, relatively small-scale, halo effects occur around twenty to thirty degrees from the Sun. When the Sun is lower in the sky, as it is throughout the day in winter, it is easier for people to notice such haloes without effort. Most people rarely look at the sky away from the near-horizon.

One thing I would suggest is that if you do see one or both mock suns when the Sun is

fairly low in the sky (between about 15-25 degrees elevation), look up, facing towards the Sun. If the cirriform clouds extend far enough over the sky, you may be lucky in spotting one of the brightest halo forms, the "circumzenithal arc". This looks like a very small, 'upside-down' rainbow in its most complete form, that is, with the convex top of the coloured bow towards the Sun, but with both Sun and arc on the same side of the zenith. Its closest point to the Sun is usually about 46 degrees away (so about two full hand-spans at arm's length directly above the Sun), and can be startlingly brilliant at times. Like the sun dogs, it is a refraction halo, and can occur with them because both are due to minute hexagonal, plate-like ice crystals all having the same orientations relative to the surface (in both cases, with their larger flat sides almost parallel to the ground). In the AKM statistics, the circumzenithal arc was present in about 5% of all halo displays.

These three bright areas, the two parhelia plus the circumzenithal arc, form the extensions of a partial cruciform shape with the Sun in the middle, in a "join the dots" fashion. This has raised speculation in some quarters that manuscript references to a cross being seen over the Sun may relate to this kind of halo display. Other types of multiple, near-solar halo display could have produced a similar impression however, although any such could be considered rare enough to seem "miraculous" for inexperienced observers.

For more information, see the wonderfully-illustrated *Rainbows, Halos, and Glories* by Robert Greenler (Cambridge University Press, 1980), or my own much more modest "Halo Observation" (Liverpool Astronomical Society, 1997), from where the halo statistics used here came. The German halo observing group can be contacted via the AKM website, www.meteoros.de, part of which site is in English.

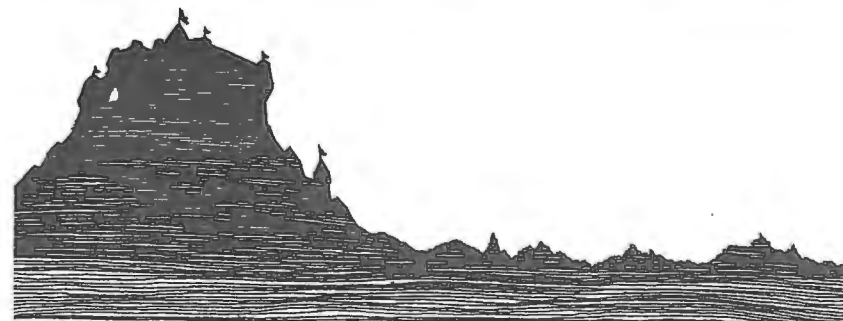
Alastair McBeath

FINAL WORD

Thank you for the *Pendragons*, which have been a source of unfailing pleasure through the year.

Jeremy Harte, Ewell, Surrey

♦ Thank you! Letters – especially complimentary ones! – are always very welcome.

Ian Brown *Open Door*

The Quintessential Grail

This was the treasure no one knew
Save he who placed it underground
Not in the earth but in Man's heart,
Safe, till the day it could be found.

Where is there now so great a knight
That he might lift that holy thing
Into the light of consciousness?
What revelations might it bring?

So deep it lies that even yet
Seekers of true sincerity
Sense it by their sense of loss,
Nor guess the place where it might be.

The Arimathean understood
Who buried but symbol in the earth,
Knowing someday Man would evolve
And bring a greater age to birth.

For we are all but symbols too
Nor shall gain knighthood, till we can
Raise up the Grail of Love within,
It is the task of Everyman.

Pamela Constantine

Thesaurus

My word-hoard
I keep locked up
In my brain-box
Treasure beyond measure
I share it
With whoever asks
Pretty sparkling things

Chris Lovegrove

Winds of Change

The breeze that whispers through the
grasses
Of the islands of the West
Speaks of lands now long forgotten –
Tells of Lyonesse.

Tells of how its Mother Islands
Fell to mighty turbulence;
How for loss of great Atlantis
There's no recompense.

They ignored all Nature's warnings,
They whose pride had made them blind,
Till the end of golden mornings
Left nothing behind.

So now just the tops of mountains,
Northernmost of islands' chain,
Mark the place where legend murmurs
Lyonesse may still remain.

To the rhythm of the ages
Earth still churns and boils with heat.
Winds and waves join – say the Sages –
When the Cycle is complete.

Where now swim the isles of Scilly
Legend tells of Arthur's Court –
Tells of how its bells would ring out
In a time of dire import.

Earth is deep and sky is feeling
Changes that we cannot guess –
Will the world then heed the pealing
Of the bells of Lyonesse?

Pamela Harvey

After a night to remember

Steve Sneyd

Midmorning now, and time to gather in the garden shade:
Their men nicely out of the way, on their horseback commute
to whatever usual skirmish the king had scheduled,
their servants assigned tasks for the day, their babies
fondled, patted, kissed, left to the nursemaids, the older
children off to tutor tasks.

Now it was gossip time, excellent distraction from any
bruises night had left, aftermath of last evening's
foolishness – how could a wise-called ruler be so naive,
so stupid, they agreed, as to allow that idiotic chastity
test with the tricky magic girdle, and anyway why not
make their men take it too, now that'd've been a laugh.
Still, good thing so many failed, from big head queen herself
too up herself to come and join them here today and talk
it out, that'd calmed most of the men, all in same boat,
and even those who had, in private quarters after the hall
dispersed been unable to resist questioning and hitting
out to get nearer to answers, soon calmed down before
they went too far. And now for the best laugh of all:

All turned and stared where alone as dunce in schoolroom
corner, pretending to examine how the roses bloomed
and deadhead ones passed their best stood, face
averted, the one wife of all of them who passed that test had
proved faithful and pure. Then solid as armed phalanx
all closed in on her jeering as crows how that result
just proved no one but her wall-eye bumpkin husband best
she could ever get 'd ever want her anyhow and then very
soon as she stayed silent unresponding catcalls turned
to pushing jostling of her tearing clothes pulling hair

Peering unnoticed over the high surrounding wall, clung
to the top with grip on spallied arms of pear, Niamh
still young but near-grown, watched their victim go down
under blows, rolled in a desperate crying ball, and swore
again to herself soon, soon she'd learn somehow how
that magic worked made you who set such games afoot
and never ever one who'd end grassstained sobbing goat.

Ian Brown *The scent of a rose*

flags & leaves
&bodies&hands
entrained, enshrined and shining
& this wood is full of gods
brimful, bursting oozing sap
out of each poor paw pore pore
and the palms of (my) leaves are eyes
alight, alight whickering
snortscallion Jones
browdown in nutgreen earth
prowdown lowerdown
tonguetittytied claustrophobe.
Life is short : blood is long
but I am lost here

Lancelot 1

Geoff Sawers

*Sir Bedivere*

Good fortune for Sir Bedivere to bear
And for poor Arthur to be borne,
Worn and wasted, wet with blood,
Dying, to his bier of chastened gold
And whitened wattled wood.
Good that it was dear Bedivere,
As gentle and bold a knight as stood
And carried out the right and good.
And, down the winding path, he bore
King Arthur to the weedy shore.

Three ladies came when he was born;
Three queens now lifted up his bier
And placed it on the barge
Beneath the dark three-sided sails
Between the deep-carved stern and prow.
Proud Bedivere stood sternly in the purpling
air
And sadly watched the dark barge sail

Over the turquoised waves lifting their wind-
tossed rims,
While the three fair queens stood there,
Staring over the darkening lake and bier,
Sir Bedivere left bereft, bereaved,
Pondering all that passed with him,
With undone Arthur, who had begun
auspiciously
By drawing a sword out of a tree.

Who then could say, who could have
seen
The dark-browed boat or straightened knight
Standing on the shadowy sand, watching
under the burning stars
The burdened barge set sail for the western
sea?

Bill West

Rise, Arthur, Rise

Rise, Arthur! Rise from out the quiet cave
where you have long reposed in holy sleep.
Rise up, the time has come for you to save
your espoused, England, from her troubles deep.
Arise, and with your Sword of Justice smite
the savage who would your Realm defeat:
With dreadful wrath, and in the name of Right, Bring
enemies to bow before your feet.
Rise, Arthur! Rise from under mossy hill,
where long your knights have waited, you to serve,
The memory of you, forever green,
In service to the Country that we love:
Where once you ruled with chivalry and grace:
Bring all your might, and pray to Heaven above
For strength to save this, most beloved, place –
This Holy Isle, the green and pleasant land,
that you so served and governed long ago
Come with your knights – your noble band –
To right all wrongs, make Peace, and end all woe.
Rise Arthur! Rise from your too quiet grave,
Too long you tarry in your dreamless sleep!
Rise from your bed within the mountain's cave,
To raise your Standard, and your watches keep!

Sylvia Charlewood

*Lancelot 2*

lime-leaves stitch a blanket
across the sun
there is no warmth within

Lancelot 3

the cold eats into his wrists
the blackbird that nested
for a spell in his open palms
brought some flicker of warmth
its children fledged and flew

Geoff Sawers

Thirteen Treasures

Chris Lovegrove

Rheged	Dalriada	Strathclyde	Gododdin
	<i>Fergus Mór d 501</i>	<i>Dumnagual Hen</i>	
	<i>Domangard d 507</i> (son of Fergus)	Guithno Clinoch (sons of Dumnagual)	
Ceidio	<i>Gabhrán d 558</i> (son of Domangard)	<i>Tutagual Tudclyd</i> (son of Clinoch)	Clydno
Guenddolau <i>d c 580</i> (son of Ceidio)	<i>Áedan r 574-608</i> (son of Gabhrán)	<i>Rhydderch Hael c 580-612</i> (son of Tutagual)	<i>Cynon d c 600</i> (son of Clydno)
	Artúr d c 590, <i>Eochaid Buide d 629</i> Bran d 598, and Conaing (sons of Áedan)	St Constantine (son of Rhydderch and Languoreth)	<i>Mynyddog</i> Mwynfawr

Figure 1: Dark Age Men of the North (rulers in italics, named treasure owners in bold)

Mention cloaks that can make you invisible, dishes that fill themselves with any food you could wish for, magic cauldrons or chess pieces that move by themselves, and most 21st century listeners would think of the Harry Potter books and films. If, however, you spoke of these objects in medieval Wales, listeners would instead think of *Tri Thlws ar Ddeg Ynys Brydain*, literally the Three Treasures and Ten of the Island of Britain. And instead of Harry Potter you might recall the names of Rhydderch Hael, Gwyddno Garanhir and ... Arthur.

What were these magical treasures, who owned them and what stories did they conjure up?

Possessors

First, let us look at a basic list of treasures as first supplied as late as the 15th century (Coe and Young 1995: 88-9, quoting Bromwich).

1. The sword of Rhydderch Hael ("the Generous").
2. The hamper of Gwyddno Garanhir ("Longshank").
3. The drinking horn of Bran Galed ("the Niggard").
4. The chariot of Morgan Mwynfawr ("the Wealthy").
5. The horse halter of Clydno Eiddyn ("of

Edinburgh").

6. The knife of Llawfrodedd Farchog ("the Knight").
7. The cauldron of Dymwylch Gawr ("the Giant").
8. The whetstone of Tudwal Tudclyd ("Of the people of the Clyde").
9. The coat of Padarn Peisrudd ("Redcoat").
10. The pot of Rhygennydd Ysgolhaig ("the Scholar").
11. The dish of Rhygennydd Ysgolhaig.
12. The chessboard of Gwenddolau ap Ceidio ("son of Ceidio").
13. The cloak of Arthur *yn Nghernyw* ("in Kernow" or Cornwall).

This particular list of Treasures (Welsh *thlws* "jewel, a pretty thing") is not definitive, there being some forty manuscripts dating from the mid-15th to the 16th century which introduce variant items in their Thirteen Treasures (Roberts 1991: 86). These are

14. The mantle of Tegau Eurfron ("Goldenbreast").
15. The coulter of Rhun Gawr ("the Giant"), owned alternatively by Tringer son of Nuddnod.
16. The stone and ring of Luned, described in the Mabinogion tale *Owain, or The Lady of the Fountain*.

In the absence of modern surnames, medieval personages had epithets – what the Romans called cognomens – to distinguish one from another with the same name. In addition to the patronymic or filiation ("son of") nicknames could be descriptive (long-legged or bearded), indicative of region (eg Edinburgh or Strathclyde) or reflecting a personal quality (generosity or stinginess).

What is noticeable is how many of these characters are known to us from historical sources to be from Northern Britain (the Treasures are often glossed as *yn Y Gogledd*, "in the North") and from the 6th century. In particular, we find that many of these personages hail from four kingdoms: Dalriada, Strathclyde, Gododdin and Rheged, centred respectively on modern Dunadd, Dumbarton, Edinburgh and Carlisle (fig 2). Simplified genealogical tables will help to fix these figures in time and space (fig 1).

We see then that possessions of Strathclyde nobles dominate the list, with the hamper of Gwyddno (Guithno), the whetstone of Tudwal and the sword of Rhydderch (sharpened no doubt by the whetstone) owned by individuals from three successive generations.

The early Welsh poem *Y Gododdin* furnishes us with only allusive references, but Cynon son of Clydno is said to have been killed at the battle of Catraeth around 600, and we may assume that this Clydno is the same as Clydno Eiddyn (Clydno of Din Eiddyn, modern Edinburgh), making Clydno a contemporary of Tudwal of Strathclyde. Cynon fab Clydno appears later in the medieval romance *Owain*, where he fails to defeat the Knight of the Fountain.

The ruler of Manaw Gododdin was Mynyddog Mwynfawr ("the Wealthy"), a contemporary of Cynon according to *Y Gododdin* but otherwise unknown. Another northern contemporary is the historically attested Morgant Mwynfawr who fought against the Northumbrian Angles – a Morgant Hael ("the Generous") even appears in Arthur's retinue in the 11th-century *Culhwch and Olwen* – and it is possible to argue that Morgant Mwynfawr is a conflation of these two figures.

In Rheged, we have references to Gwenddolau in the early Merlin legend,

where Gwenddolau's death around 580 at the battle of Arfderydd north of Carlisle drives his vassal Myrddin mad from grief and assumed guilt. Nearby Carwinley, plausibly deriving from *Caer Wenddolau* ("Gwenddolau's Fort"), argues strongly for Gwenddolau being an historical ruler of Rheged in the later 6th century.

Finally, we come to Dalriada, settled by Scots from Ireland from the late 5th century. Bran, one of the many sons of Áedan mac Gabhrán, was assassinated in 598. Could he be the skinflint Bran from the North who owned the magical horn? Another son, or possibly a grandson, of Áedan was Artúr who, with his Irish name, was mooted as the original Arthur in the 1970s by Richard Barber. The 15th-century manuscript listing the Thirteen Treasures specifically states, however, that the cloak was owned by an Arthur "in Kernow" or Cornwall. Does this reflect an interpolation in a late medieval MS, bearing in mind that most of the other historically-known figures mentioned come from Northern Britain? Or is this evidence of a genuine Arthur figure based in south-west Britain (if Kernow here is indeed Cornwall rather than in Powys, the former territory of the Iron Age Cornovii tribe)?

Of the remaining figures, only Padarn Peisrudd may be tentatively identified, possibly as St Padarn or perhaps again as a man of the North, for we know of a precursor of the 5th-century Cunedda from Manaw Gododdin called Paternus, surnamed "of the Red Robe", who probably flourished in the late 4th century. Llawfrodedd Farfog ("the Bearded") is in Arthur's retinue in *Culhwch and Olwen*, but is not historically attested, nor are Rhygennydd Ysgolhaig and Tegau Eurfron, though the last is listed in a medieval Welsh Triad as one of *Tair Rhian Ardderchog Llys Arthur*, Three Excellent Maidens at the Court of Arthur, even if this is no guarantee that she was contemporary with Arthur, let alone historical.

Possessions

It is time now to look at the Treasures and the attributes that make them so special. We shall examine them according to type, as Brinley Roberts has done, under the headings of Vessels of Abundance, Objects of Advantage, Testing Talismans and so on (Roberts 1991: 85-88).

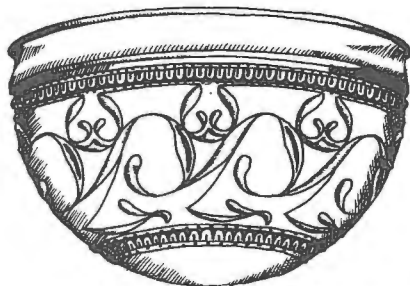
Vessels of Abundance

Five vessels have the kind of qualities that were famously to be assumed by the Holy Grail. Food placed in *Gwyddno's Hamper* used to increase a hundredfold when opened again, *Bran's Horn* supplied whatever drink was desired, and both *Rhygenydd's Pot and Dish* provided whatever food was required. Finally *Llawfrodedd's Knife* served, in the days before the fork was invented, twenty-four men at a meal.

Testing Talismans

These objects distinguished between the worthy and the unworthy. First, *Tudwal's Whetstone* tested a man's bravery, for only an opponent wounded by a brave man's sword which had been sharpened by the whetstone would automatically die from his hurt. *Tegau's Mantle* would only fit a faithful wife, a theme repeated in the tale of Caradoc (from the First Continuation of Chrétien's *Perceval*): not only did a horn call "Blessed" change water into wine, it too was a vessel of abundance; and "no knight whose wife has deceived him or who has deceived his wife will be able to drink from this horn without spilling the wine on himself" (Arthur 1996: 80).

Padarn's Coat would only fit a nobleman, though when the object was associated with his namesake St Padarn, the precious woven garment would only fit an ecclesiastic, while Arthur, who tried to steal the coat, was swallowed up to his chin in the ground (Coe and Young 1995: 17).



Christine Bristow

The last of these testing talismans, *Dyrnwch's Cauldron*, like the whetstone also sensed cowardice as it would only boil the meat of a brave man, and quickly too. This

cauldron reappears in *Culhwch and Olwen* as the Cauldron of the steward Diwrnach, and in the 10th-century Welsh poem *Preiddeu Annwn* ("The Spoils of Annwn") where the cauldron of the Chief of the Otherworld would not boil the food of a coward, exactly like *Dyrnwch's Cauldron* (Sims-Williams 1991: 54-7; Coe and Young 1995: 135-9).

Objects of advantage

Rather less pedestrian than seven-league boots, *Morgan's Chariot* transported its passenger wherever he wished in the twinkling of an eye (well, quite quickly anyway: in this it resembled the flying ship *Skidbladnir* of Norse myth, celebrated in Hilda Lewis' 1939 children's classic *The Ship that Flew*). *Clydno's Halter*, fixed to a nail at the end of a bed, conjured up whatever horse was wished for, while sometimes included in such lists was *Giant Rhun's Coulter*, an object which, when placed in front of a ploughshare, turned the earth as long as was needed.

Of no particular function, but magical in themselves, were *Dyrnwyn, Rhudderch's Sword*, which gave the owner his epithet of Generous because he donated it to whoever asked for it, but had no takers because the blade burst into flames whenever a nobleman drew it; and *Gwenddolau's Chessboard*, made of gold, with silver pieces that played by themselves, familiar from the Harry Potter books and *Through the Looking Glass* but of course known from *Peredur*,

where the hero encounters one in the Castle of Wonders.

Another object that is sometimes listed amongst the Treasures is *Luned's Stone and Ring*. Luned saved the life of Owain when he was trapped in the castle of the Knight of the Fountain by giving him a talisman:

"Take this ring and put it on thy finger, with the stone inside thy hand; and close thy hand upon the stone. And as long as thou concealest it, it will conceal thee."

There are affinities with Sauron's Ring in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* of course, but this object somewhat duplicates the function of *Arthur's Cloak*. Like Harry Potter's Cloak of Invisibility, it allows its wearer to see while remaining unseen. Along with a number of named possessions (his sword, spear, shield, dagger and wife) it and his unnamed ship are mentioned in *Culhwch and Olwen* as the only things *Culhwch* may not ask for as a boon. It also appears, named as *Gwen*, in the medieval Welsh tale *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, and though described as "a carpet of diapered satin" in Lady Guest's Victorian translation, 20th-century translations make it clear that it is "a mantle of ribbed brocaded silk", and that one of its properties

"was that the man around whom it might be wrapped, no one would see him, whereas he would see every one" (Jones and Jones 1949: 145).

It is on this cloth that Arthur and Owain play a game of *gwyddbwyll*, a game of strategy popular before chess, while around them the action parallels the moves on the board.

Treasures

Many of these objects have their counterparts in surviving European fairy tales, such as inexhaustible purses and caps of invisibility (the latter owned by both Tom Thumb and Jack the Giant-Killer). Despite their appearance in late medieval manuscripts, some of the Treasures were familiar, as we have seen from at least the 11th century, to judge by *Culhwch and Olwen*. In this we find that *Culhwch's* tasks – in which he is aided by Arthur and his men – include quests to retrieve the self-same Treasures, or objects very like. *Culhwch* has to fetch:

the hamper of *Gwyddneu Garanhir* which provided for thrice nine at a time as much

food as all wanted; the cauldron of *Diwrnach Wydel* ("the Irishman"), though no magical properties are specified for it; the cup of *Llwy* which held the best liquors; the horn of *Gwlgawd* of *Gododdin*; the harp of *Teirtu* which played of itself when asked; the containers of *Gwyddolwyn* the Dwarf to keep liquids warm forever; the vessels of *Rhimon* Rough-beard which kept milk from ever going sour; and so on.

The originally mundane objects listed among the Treasures were very familiar throughout the medieval period amongst all the nobility. We can still see in archaeological collections how much similar objects were prized by the aristocracy – the whetstone, bowl, sword and horn mountings from the Saxon burial at Sutton Hoo spring to mind – for their use in military display, feasting, personal adornment and leisure. *Culhwch and Olwen* also emphasises the essential items needed for pursuits such as hunting, and for ritualised social intercourse such as grooming, with hairdressing aided by such items as the combs, razors or shears sported by the boars *Ysgithrwn* and *Twrch Trwyth*, though of course these do not feature in the list of Treasures.

Why *Thirteen Treasures*? We know that lists of threes ("triads") were compiled from at least the medieval period, probably as mnemonics for storytelling. Typically a formulaic opening began *Tri Hael Enys Prydein* (Three Generous Men of the Island of Britain) or *Tri Gogyfurd Llys Arthur* (Three Peers at the Court of Arthur). As the number of possible candidates for Treasures increased, the opportunity was surely taken to enlarge the list by using a feature of Welsh counting – *tri ar ddeg* literally translates as three-and-ten – to incorporate thirteen Treasures within the Triad lists.

When did the Treasures – with their archetypal magical properties – first become attached to their historical owners? This surely happened sometime between the late 6th century, when most of the personages were living, and the 11th, when already a magical hamper was associated with *Gwyddno* and possibly a wonder cloak with *Arthur* in *Culhwch*. We know that folklore was already attributing marvels to *Arthur* in Wales in the 10th century, as recorded in the

Historia Brittonum – that is, within four centuries of his supposed death. By analogy with known folklore processes, we might guess, at a conservative estimate, that Gwyddno and his later contemporaries were being credited with owning magical objects within two or three generations of their deaths, and that some of the Treasures of Britain, situated in the North – whether or not they numbered thirteen – were being celebrated as early as the late 7th century. And the fact that an Arthur – though maybe not the Arthur – was included amongst the owners could be testament to the significance of his name and his fame at an early date.

What happened to these Treasures? A 16th-century MS (Roberts 1991: 87) suggests that Myrddin managed to obtain the horn of Bran Galed and the remaining thirteen 'royal' treasures of the Island of Britain, taking them to the House of Glass (*Tŷ Gwydr*). And there, we must assume, they still remain.

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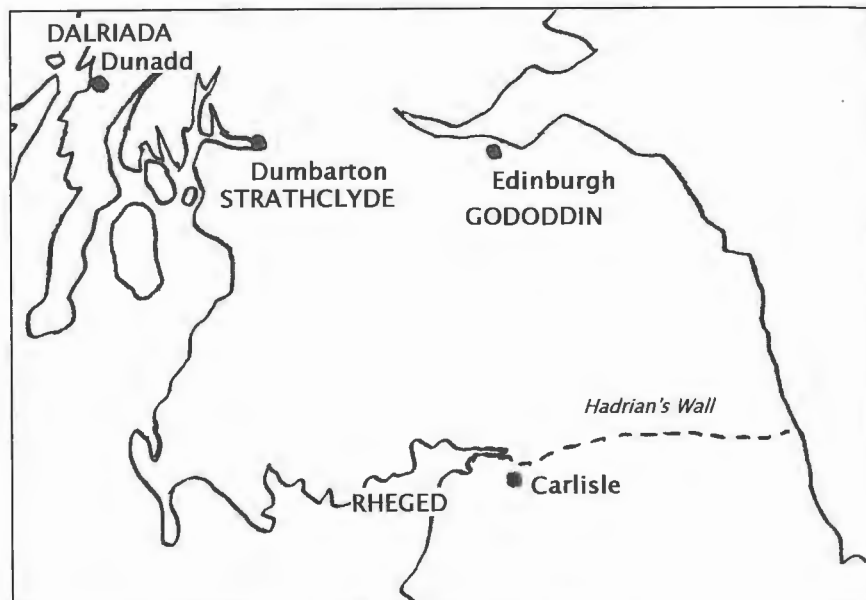


Figure 2: Kingdoms in 6th-century Northern Britain. Dunadd in Argyllshire was a centre for the Irish Scots on the west coast. Dumbarton (*Alclut*) was the capital of what became Strathclyde. Edinburgh (*Din Eidyn*) was a centre for Gododdin, which stretched north across the Firth of Forth. Carlisle, famous in medieval Arthurian tales, was capital of a Rheged which stretched from Cumbria in England to Wigtonshire in south-west Scotland.

Avalon-on-Thames

Michael Bayley



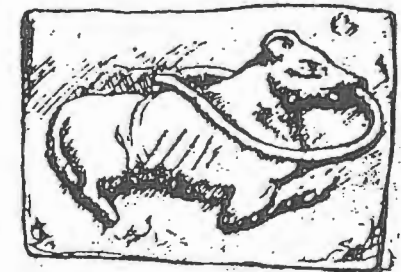
The Shiela-na-gig from St Michael's, Bray

illustrations Michael Bayley

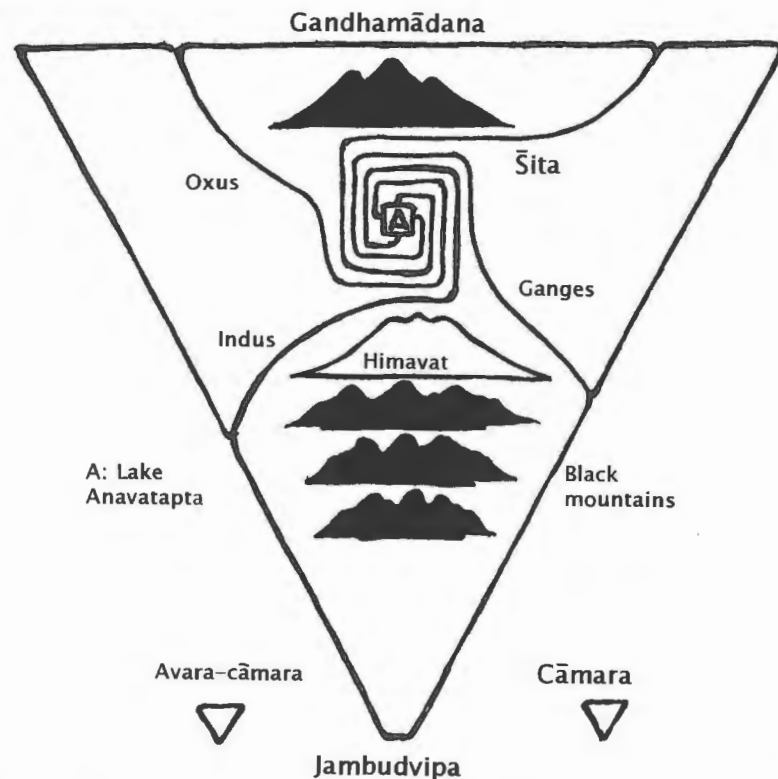
Avalon is the realm of some of the great Ladies or Queens in Arthurian legend. It is both an island of healing and a sepulchral island and is certainly a realm of Magic. Its location varies with the legend and the storyteller, so it may refer to a use of land rather than a specific place, but it is Celtic. Sometimes it is a western isle like Scilly and the Channel Islands and sometimes a marshland island in a river valley like Glastonbury, or Bray in the Thames Valley.

It is spelt Avalon or Avallion or Avallach. It would appear to derive from *afal-ion*, the island of the "Lord of the Apple", the sacred king who was given an applewell, to explain to him how his soul could be reborn to live again in the body of his son after coupling with the priestess queen as demonstrated by the applewell.

Bray on Thames has the best claim to be King Arthur's Avalon, as gravel extraction in the middle of the 20th century around the site of the medieval lake called the *Stagno de Akele* has revealed a cast Roman and pre-Roman cemetery, containing skeletons of those who had suffered severe wounds, and many who had recovered from those wounds. There were also many Bronze Age swords, spear heads and axe heads, some virtually broken, some in good condition. A Bronze Age priestess on the site could have well dived into that lake and returned a bronze sword and spear with which to arm some up-and-coming young hero, as Arthur was armed by the Lady of the Lake. There was a very ancient pre-Norman Conquest church by this lake, demolished in about the 14th century. Two carved stones survive from this, built into Bray Church and its mortuary chapel. The former has a crude and defaced Shiela-na-gig re-used as an arch bracket to the nave. This is a non-Christian fertility figure, doubtless incorporated in the new medieval church by the wish of the local people, before they would consent to finance building the church. Similarly a sculpture of a hound dog was built in the mortuary chapel. This too has no Christian basis for inclusion. However if the old pre-Norman Conquest church were a Roman temple re-dedicated to Christian use, its presence can be explained. The Romans built temples to Hecate adjacent to their burial grounds, and Hecate's dog was her messenger to this world, used to fetch the souls of those to die into her keeping. Hence the various ghostly black hounds that haunt the British countryside to this day.



Hecate's dog from the old church at Builderswell



Avalon of the mind

Charles Evans-Günther

Fig 1 (above) after Sadakata Akira (1997)

I do not believe in the Isle of Avalon. There you go, you may as well stop reading now if you profoundly believe Arthur was taken to Avalon after the battle of Camlann. If you will let me qualify this statement, however, you might find this article interesting.

I do not believe in Avalon because there is no evidence of a pre-Galfridian Avalon outside of the odd similar town names in Roman Gaul and one, *Abalava*, on Hadrian's Wall, not too far from Carlisle. None of these, however, were islands; though the Welsh word *ynys* has several meanings, Geoffrey's Latin *insula* does not. Normally, *ynys* means an island and it can also represent a

meadow but I am uncertain of the idea of it being a realm, which has been suggested. When it comes to Glastonbury I am pretty well sure that this is part of the corpus of pro-Glastonbury literature or being used for some propaganda reasons. It should be remembered that Geoffrey of Monmouth, Gerald of Wales and William of Malmesbury (if he actually wrote about Avalon) were all Normans or Norman sympathisers. There is no pre-Galfridian Avalon in Wales and no reference to it in bardic poetry, under any name until much later. The Welsh *Ynys Afallach* may be an attempt to understand the Isle of Avalon and Afallach, a name of a character found in certain genealogies, is confusing: Later traditions link Maelgwn and Urien Rheged (more or less contemporaries) with the daughters of an Afallach, Gwalltwn and Modron respectively.

Even if we accept that Afallach is before

Geoffrey there is no reason to connect him to the death of Arthur. The *Welsh Annals* stated, and are supported by Welsh bardic poetry, that Arthur fell at the battle of Camlann. Bardic poetry says Arthur is dead like other famous men. Cynddelw, writing in the second half of the twelfth century, stated that like Caesar, Bran ap Llyr, Hercules, and Alexander Arthur had died and, around the same time, Llywarch ap Llywelyn wrote that his patron Maredudd ap Cynan "is dead, as is sovereign Arthur". This, of course, could well be the official face of things and there may have been a substratum of popular tales. However, it seems rather strange there is no reference at all to Avalon, *Ynys Afallach* or Arthur going to that place in bardic poetry!

The Cynfeirdd (Early bards) and Gogynfeirdd (poets from 12th-14th centuries) make mention of Arthur and other characters connected with Arthur, but none seem to reflect either Geoffrey of Monmouth or any of the later material on Arthur. The Welsh tales called collectively the *Mabinogion* also do not mention anything about Avalon or any Welsh version of it. Camlann is mentioned in *Culhwch and Olwen* and *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, while Badon and Medrawt appear in the latter. However, *The Dream of Rhonabwy* is pretty strange and deserves an article to itself.¹ There is a rather unusual statement in *Culhwch and Olwen*. While listing numerous members of Arthur's court it includes a Gwynn Hyfar, called steward of Devon and Cornwall (in translation) and one of the nine who planned Camlann. The name is amazingly similar to Gwenhwyfar, and I wonder if the later Triads, blaming the battle on Gwenhwyfar, aren't mistaking one name for the other. But no Avalon!

Irish links

There is little doubt that the name has a Celtic background, with the *Aval* easily recognisable as *afal*, "apple". The Welsh version of the Isle of Avalon, *Ynys Afallach* is worth some discussion because it is certainly the name of someone. The word *ynys*, as is also true of *caer*, is a feminine noun and usually feminine nouns cause mutations. An

example of this is Holy Isle in Anglesey – it is called *Ynys Gybi*, which means Cybi's Isle after St Cybi. Vowels don't mutate, therefore *Ynys Afallach* is Afallach's Isle. So when it has been suggested that *Caerfallwch*, in Flintshire, means Afallach's fort, this cannot be so. *Caerfallwch* is found in an Anglicised form in 1303 as *Caruathlok*. Both John Rhys and Ellis Davies were taken in by the possibility that Fallwch was Afallach, and so when I wrote an article entitled "Clwyd Connections", many years ago, I was influenced by them. In retrospect I now can not accept this interpretation. *Caerfallwch* must be either Mallwch's Fort or Ffallwch's fort, both of which are different from Afallach.

This name is found in early genealogies as *Aballac*, which together with its more modern rendering has an interesting final element: *-ac*, *-ach*. This ending is rare in Wales and a quick look through the *Mabinogion* shows only Brysethach, Brythach, Deorthach, Diwrnach, Nerthach, Salach and Wmach out of hundreds of names. All are obscure, Diwrnach being called "the Irishman" and Brys son of Brysethach from Scotland. The others include a giant and three place names. However, look through personal names in Irish tales and you will find many with the *ach* ending. There is virtually a name ending *-ach* for every letter of the alphabet, from Abartach to Tigernach. It would be very difficult to list them all but their abundance would indicate to me that both Aballac and Afallach have Irish origins.

So where did Geoffrey get Avalon? It cannot be proven but he may have found a reference in Wales. I would suggest however that it was not from Welsh tradition rather from Ireland. There can be little doubt that Wales during the 11th and 12th centuries had considerable contact with Ireland. Trade and influences in the literary world are known – certain scholars actually travelled from Wales to Ireland to complete their education. Welsh leaders also took refuge there during the wars with the Normans and at times of internal disputes. Gruffydd ap Rhys and Gruffydd ap Cynan spent long periods in Ireland. The latter's mother was actually Irish-Norse, his father having fled to Ireland when there was dynastic problems in Gwynedd. It has been suggested that Irish bardism played a big part in the

¹ The story seems to be in reverse, with Camlan having already been fought and Badon yet to come.

reorganisation of Welsh bardism during this period.

Ynys Afallach and the Isle of Avalon must come from *Emain Ablach*, the Otherworldly home of Manannan Mac Lir of Irish Celtic tradition. It was supposed to be an island to the west of Alba according to the tales. This fits in well with Geoffrey's own references in *Vita Merlini* and may answer why Arthur was taken to Venedotia in the *Vera Historia Morie Arthuri*. Venedotia was Gwynedd (not modern Gwynedd, of course) and it consisted of quite a long coastline with most of its main settlements in the west. It is interesting that Gwynedd was, after the Roman period, occupied for a time by Irish warriors and settlers. This is also true for Dyfed which had a ruling Irish dynasty, one of whom was called Arthur, son of Pedr. Alba is normally considered to be Scotland but it may have earlier meant Britain.

Otherworld

Emain Ablach, which is linked with apples like Avalon, is a worldly connection with the Otherworld. It cannot be put on the map as it is part of something that doesn't quite belong here. Islands, lakes and caves are all ways of entering the Otherworld. Avalon is the Otherworld! And in Welsh the Otherworld may have been Annwn or Annwnn, which later became connected with the Judeo-Christian Hell. However, Annwn, and the Otherworld, eventually became the Fairyland of tales to be found throughout the world. One aspect of the Otherworld and Fairyland relates to time distortion with a day or night in the Otherworld may be hundred years in our own. Stories like those of Ossian, Rip Van Winkle and Urashima Taro² are found all over the planet.

It must be pointed out that both the Otherworld and Fairyland have been linked with the land of the dead. So since Arthur was killed at Camlann, then being taken to

² I am sure most readers know the tale of Rip Van Winkle and many will know about Ossian but probably few will know about Urashima Taro. This Japanese story can be traced back to the 8th century, in the *Nihongi*, and is dated to 478. It tells of a fisherman who visits the realm of the Dragon King and returns to find hundreds of years have gone by.

Avalon could mean that like all dead Celts he had joined his ancestors and the ancient gods in the Otherworld. So to qualify my statement above: I do not believe Arthur was taken to the Isle of Avalon to be cured of his wounds but that he went to Avalon as do all those who die, at least in ancient Celtic beliefs. Geoffrey, to be fair, may have caught on to this concept. There is no evidence in Welsh tradition of going to the Isle of Avalon or Ynys Afallach, but the dead may have gone to Annwn. If Avalon, Ynys Afallach and Annwn are one and the same then Arthur did go there. Maybe we all go there.

The concepts of the Arthur going to the Isle of Avalon or sleeping in a cave waiting to return to save his people belong to the primordial hero. We know that Geoffrey used Classical Roman and Greek material and the primordial hero was strong in these Mediterranean cultures. However, it is the name Avalon that is interesting and for whatever reasons Geoffrey used it, there is little doubt in my mind that the name itself is of Irish origins.

Origins

That Avalon is in the West seems to me to coincide with many other such places throughout world folklore and religion. Heavenly places are usually in the West. From Egyptian times we are told that both the gods and the dead lived in the West – *Amnt* – on the shore of a great river, "the land of those who are good". The Greeks had an earthly paradise called the Garden of the Hesperides, "far away in the West, where the sun sets". In the East, the ancient Chinese gods lived in a mountain paradise somewhere in Western China, sometimes said to be Kun Lun, and even in Japan there was a belief in a place called *Tokoyo no kuni* the West.³

The West is the direction of the gods and of the dead, and it is possible that this concept is something rather old. There are too many correlations for this to be pure coincidence; it must have something in common to all humans. In Buddhism there is a concept called *Sukhavati* or the Western Pure Land and scholars have spent a lot of

³ The latter is interesting but seemingly the Chinese also had a strange island called Peng Lai Shan off the East coast.

time and energy trying to find its origins. Sadakata Akira, in his *Buddhist Cosmology*, has suggested that it comes from Egypt. It certainly doesn't take much to compare many different paradises throughout the world and come up with similarities. Concepts used by Japanese Buddhists came from India via China and Korea, but they could have come to India from the Middle East. This concept of a Western paradise may also have been taken up by the Celtic peoples who, like the Hindus, are Indo-Europeans. So the mysterious islands and lands to the West of the Celtic world may be very old ideas passed on over a long period and may well go back to a time even before the great civilisations of the Egyptians, Sumerians and Chinese.



Fig 2 Buddhist Cosmos, from Chih-P'an (1271) Fu Tsu Tung Chi (note northern islands cannot be seen, but are square)

There is a considerable similarity between the Hindu-Buddhist cosmology and that of the Bible. Take, for instance, the four rivers of Eden – Pison, Gihon, Tigris (Hiddekal) and Euphrates (Phrat). In Buddhism the cosmos revolved around a gigantic central mountain called *Meru*, and there were four landmasses in the four directions – each a different shape (fig 2). In the North was

Uttaraku (a square), in the East was *Puruvideiha* (a crescent), in the West *Aparagodaniya* (an oval), and in the South was *Jambudvīpa* (a triangle and our world). At the centre of our world is Lake Anavatapta (fig 3) from which come four rivers. These were said to be the Ganges, Indus, Oxus and Sita. Early maps show the rivers pouring out of four animal-shaped spouts. An example of this can be found on the base of the giant statue of Amida Buddha in Nara, Japan, dating from 794 CE.

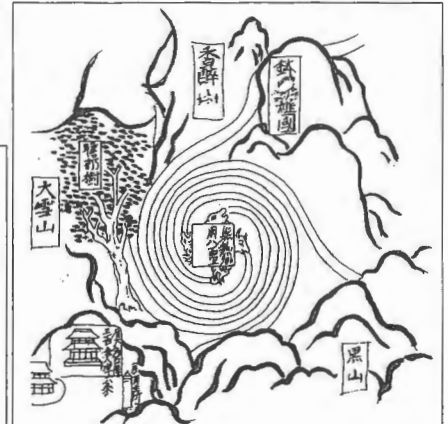


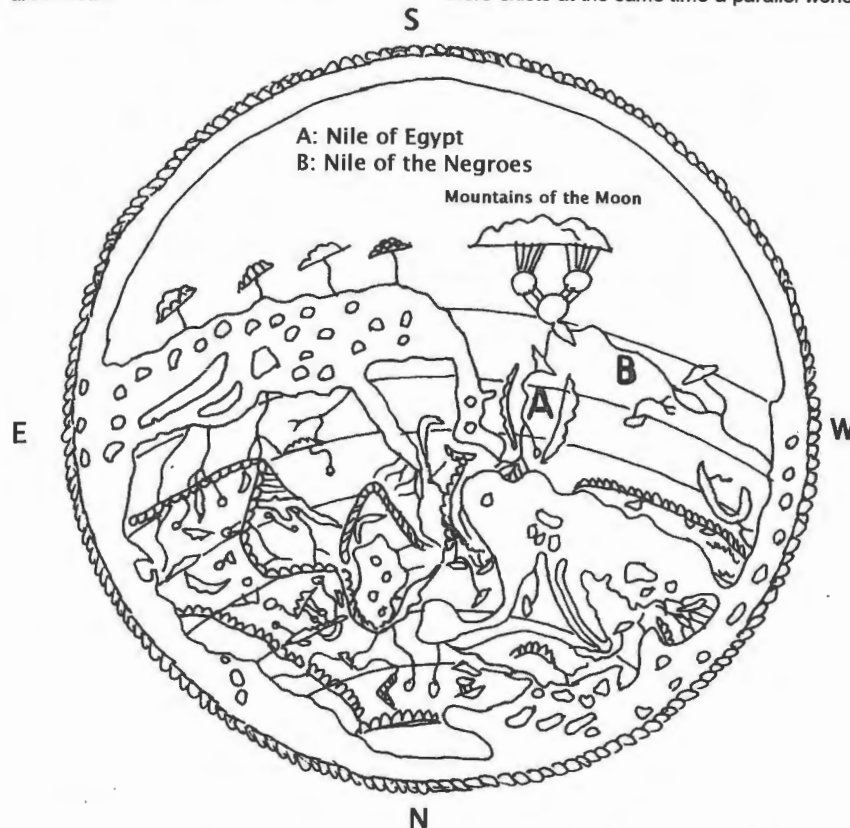
Fig 3 Simplified version of Lake Anavatapta, from Jakai (1364) Gotenjikū Zu, in Hōryū-ji

Arabic historians and geographers stated that one of the four rivers of Eden, the Gihon, was the Nile. The Bible says that the Gihon flowed through the Land of Cush, and there was a Kingdom of Kush to the south of Egypt. The Arab writers were specific about Eden being the source of the Nile and that the river flowed from the *Jebel Kamar*, the Mountains of the Moon. This garden paradise is still talked about by the Pygmies of the Ituri Forest in Central Africa. They locate it in their sacred Biba Tiba, Mountains of the Moon, known today as the Ruwenzori Range (figs 4 and 5). The Pygmies have recounted this and other legends for countless generations and they bear remarkable similarities to stories throughout the world. It is probably in this area that the earliest human beings existed and possibly these tales left Africa with them.

I don't think it is a coincidence that the

cosmology of Middle East and Asia are similar but that both have the same origins. I would suggest that the source is Africa from some incredibly ancient time and that the basics for Eden and other garden paradises spread throughout our planet from Central Africa. It is from here also emanated the primordial hero – the template for all heroes to come. So in a sense Avalon and Arthur are African.

superimposing it on a historical warrior of the Dark Ages. So when scholars try to use this concept as part of 'real' history, I become worried. In Welsh tradition Arthur was killed along with Medraut at the Battle of Camlann and there is no talk of him being taken anywhere. His grave is a bit of a mystery but it is a grave nevertheless! Of course, if you are an Otherworld believer – that is that there exists at the same time a parallel world



I am pretty sure that the idea of the Isle of Avalon was based on Emain Ablach, is the Otherworld and this concept is probably as old as man. Geoffrey did not create it but adapted it to suit his story of the king defeated and taken to a mysterious island to be cured of his mortal wounds. This is Geoffrey using the Classical concept of the primordial hero who never really dies, and

where the gods and the dead can be found – then Arthur did go to Avalon! And if you believe in reincarnation then Arthur can return as theorised.

As for me, I have been doing considerable studies on the relationship between humans and supernatural beings since I came to Japan. The world has been viewed as being divided into four or five directions – North, East, West and South,

with the viewer at the centre. This is found in most societies around the world and is sometimes described as colours or symbols. For example, the system known as Onmyodo in Japan uses a series of mythical animals – a black turtle in the North, a blue or green dragon in the East, a white tiger in the West, a red phoenix in the South and a golden dragon at the Centre. However, while there was (is) a horizontal layout there was (is) a vertical concept as well. I see the world being based on the ancient shamanistic concept of a triple existence – the Sky, the Earth and the Underworld. The ancient Japanese also had a three world system, though the *Tokoyo no kuni* mentioned above may have been a later addition: *Takama no hara* (the High Plain of Heaven), *Ashihara no naka tsu kuni* (the Reed Plain Central Country) and *Yomi no kuni* (the Yellow Spring Country). These correspond to Heaven (land of the gods), the Earth (shared by gods, humans and animals), and Hell (the land of the dead). These can be found in many places and I am sure are based on genuine experiences. However, I do not believe they are purely physical.

Conclusion

I am a student of *Qigong* (*Chi kung*) – a Chinese form of health exercises – and part of this system includes the three *dantien* – cinnabar fields. This concept is difficult to explain but there is one in the brain, one below the heart and one just below and behind the navel. The lowest stores an energy known as *qi* – pronounced 'chi' (ki in Japanese) – which circulates through the body. A balanced circulation creates a healthy body. The system is used in acupuncture, with marvellous results.

Equally, in *feng sui* (*fusui* in Japanese) *qi* circulates throughout the Earth. Many shrines in Japan can be found on an energy point where good *qi* emanates. Other places can produce bad *qi*. The interaction between humans and the energy from such sites can produce strange experiences that seem incredibly real.

I live in a land where the gods are still alive and well. In a sense Avalon is nearer here than in those countries that have become dominated by Christianity. The above is barely scraping the surface. This energy is not just in the East but in Britain,

too. In ancient times, and even in the Middle Ages, people were nearer to this psycho-physical world. Even in Christianity there is a saying put into Christ's mouth – "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you!" Well, so too is Hell! The Otherworld is part of humans.

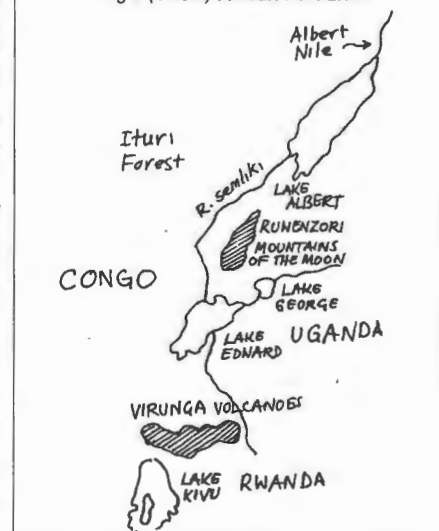
These concepts can also be found in various places. For example, a Japanese friend introduced me to the artwork and writings of an Italian painter, Enzo Cucchi, and I found that he uses a triple world theory as part of his artistic philosophy. It is likely that Avalon is more inside than outside – an Avalon of the mind. But, it is also possible that certain aspects of the earthly paradise are based on an ancient site where our ancestors once lived. I would suggest that this site can be found in what is now Central Africa.

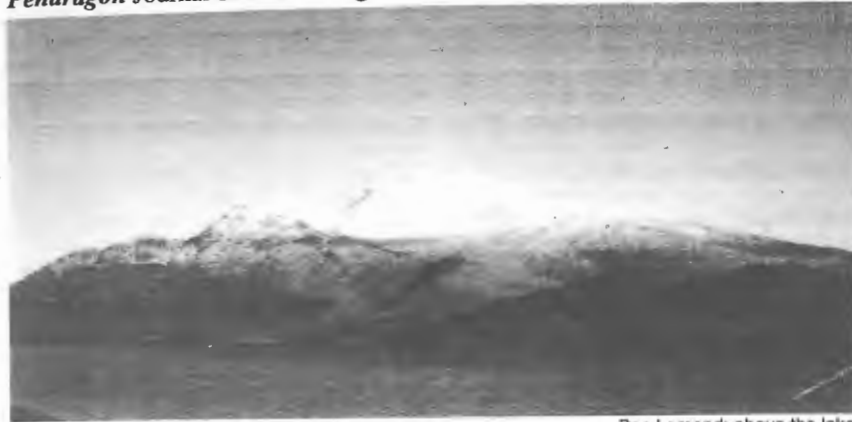
Some sources

It would be difficult to list all of my sources but here are a few that played a big part in this article.

Hallet, Jean-Pierre, and Pelle, Alex (1974) *Pygmy Kitabu* (Souvenir Press)
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Fig 4 (opposite) Edrisi's World, 1154 CE
Fig 5 (below) African Paradise





Ben Lomond: above the lake

The Arthurian Lake

Hugh D P McArthur

illustrated by the author

The Lake

Kinfolk, countrymen, people of the world, I lay before you a proposal that *The Arthurian Lake*, shielded by mystery and magic for so long, can now be revealed from behind the cloak of Britain's most famous stretch of water. The 9th century Welsh chronicler Nennius recorded in his *Historia Brittonum* that the Wonders of Britain were as follows: *The first wonder of the island of Britain is Loch Lomond. In it there are sixty islands, and men live there. Around and in it are sixty rocks, with an eagle's nest on each rock. Sixty streams flow into it, and one out of it to the sea, that is the Leven. . . .*

This statement is widely believed to refer to Loch Lomond and the River Leven in the ancient Brythonic Kingdom of Strathclyde, Scotland. The description is fairly accurate. It is also understood that the sixty eagles equate to sixty chieftains. Scottish clan chiefs and chieftains wore, and still wear, eagle's feathers in their caps. An eagle's nest on a rock could easily mean a clan chief's seat.

Loch Lomond is the largest expanse of freshwater in the whole of the mainland - it is *The Lake* of Britain. It is the bonniest, most romanced, most sung about piece of scenery on *The Island of the Mighty*. Historically it

was known as *The Lake* and today the Dumbarton locals still know it by this name.

Lying in the northern reaches of the ancient Cymric peoples' land, an early form of Welsh was the language of the local native Britons until around 1,000 years ago. A true geological boundary, the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland divide along the Highland Fault which courses from east to west through this majestic inland fjord. To the south *The Lake* is wide and generous overlying sandstone bedrock which affords lush farmlands. To the north the landscape narrows and steepens dramatically as the volcanic bedrocks jostle to form Alps beneath the ancient Caledonian forest.

The greatest Alp surrounding *The Lake* is Ben Lomond. Dominating the eastern bonnie bank just to the north of the islands, *The Ben* rises to 974m from sea level. Lomond appears to mean "Beacon" and the mountain summit was probably an ancient Beltain fire site. The ancient volcano is certainly a beacon in the landscape, with an unmistakable form recognisable from anywhere in the Clyde Valley and far beyond. Loch Lomond remains the magical island-studded *Lake* beneath *The Ben*.

North

To the north of *The Lake*, high up on the west flank of Glen Falloch (sitting at around 230m above sea level) is a huge raised boulder called *Clach na Briton* (The Rock of the Britons). This site is thought to be possibly where the ancient boundaries of

Britain (Strathclyde), Dalriada (Argyll) and Alba (Pictland) converged. Not far to the east and west lie the other great Scottish inland waterways of Loch Tay and Loch Awe where the MacArthurs once held land. It is also said that the MacArthurs once held lands in Glen Falloch, perhaps close to this site.

Clach na Briton is composed of a mounded natural rock outcrop crowned with a rough, loose monolith, obviously placed by human hands. The site is enclosed by the remains of embankments projecting from the hillside to form a central gateway on the approach from the east. The ascent to the boulder spirals as you climb the mound and we can be certain that we are looking at an ancient sacred site, which was used for ritual.

a megalithic Dolmen on the south west spur, proving that this mountain has held sacred regard from the earliest times. There is also a small loch near the summit called *Lochan a Chlaidheimh*, which means the *Wee Lake of the Sword*. That might just be relevant!



Ben Arthur: Arthur's Mountain and Seat

To the west of Ben Arthur on the west flank of Glen Kinglass is a massive rock outcrop known as *Agaith Artair* (The Face of Arthur). As you crest the *Rest and Be Thankful* on the A83 and round the corner into the descent, straight ahead in the distance, the entire left flank of the glen portrays the profile of the legendary man. The face lies at an angle of about 30° projecting from the hillside. At the top, a furrowed brow and long shaggy hair streams back into the hillside, with an arched eyelid clearly defined immediately below. The nose is long and shallow, almost absent, underlined with a craggy moustache and a full craggy beard that tumbles towards the valley floor. Frozen in time, Arthur stares back at his mountain *The Lake* and his lands beyond.

At the foot of Ben Arthur and the head of Loch Long (*The Loch of Ships*) is the village of Arrochar, separated from Tarbet on Loch Lomond by only a short stretch of land. It is this isthmus that Tarbet lends its name to. In 870 AD the Vikings were besieging the British capital at Dumbarton Rock. They split their fleet and whilst one division attempted the frontal assault via the River Clyde, the second group sailed north up Loch Long. They landed at Arrochar, slaughtered the local clan, dragged their boats over the land to Tarbet and set sail down Loch Lomond to attack Dumbarton from the rear. Unfortunately the siege was eventually successful and the fall of Dumbarton marked the end of British rule in the north and the beginning of the slow absorption of Cymric culture into the



Clach na Briton, Glen Falloch

West

Turning to the west we find Ben Arthur (Arthur's Mountain) which is now more commonly known as *The Cobbler*. Soaring from sea level to a height of nearly 884m and collared with majestic horseshoe shaped crags, Ben Arthur personifies the mantle of Arthur's power on the very boundary of the Britons and the Scots of Dalriada. The southwest crag is called Arthur's Seat and local lore recalls the site as one of warrior and Druidic initiation. Further below, there is



Dumbarton Rock, Ben Lomond in the distance

Later in history, the Earl of Lennox appointed the MacFarlanes as protectors of the pass at Tarbet to stop his cattle slipping north with the perpetual clan raids. There was no road on the bonnie banks until 150 years ago and the land route known as the *String Road* wended its way through the hills from Arrochar to Luss. A few miles to the south the route crosses Glen Douglas the scene of many a clan conflict and many resulting atrocities. According to *Nennius*, King Arthur fought his 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th battles at a river called the *Dubglas* in the region of *Linnus*. W F Skene, the 19th century Royal Historiographer for Scotland, identified this river as Glen Douglas in the region of the Lennox. The glen still has a strong military presence.

Travelling south on Loch Lomond we reach the islands, in particular Inchgalbraith, a small island castle not far from Luss. The name Galbraith means British Stranger and the clan held their seat of power on Inchgalbraith. It is ironic that twists of fate and time should remember the Galbraiths as strangers in their own homeland.

East

Turning east to the rising sun we face the most important island in *The Lake*. Inch Cailleach (The Island of the Veiled One) lies close to the eastern shore at Balmaha. The Irish Saint Kentigerna (mother of Saint Fillan) reputedly founded a nunnery on the isle early in the 8th century, but it is doubtless that a sacred island of women existed in the location long before this event. The motif is repeated time and again in Scotland with similar ancient religious female island establishments being found on Inishail on Loch Awe, Priory Island in Loch Tay and the Isle of May (Maidens) in the Firth of Forth.

To find the elusive *Lady of the Lake* we need quest no further. Inchcailleach with its

tor at the eastern end and its *Ridge of the Maidens* (Tom na Nigheanan) fits perfectly with the romantic descriptions of *Avalon*. The Highland Fault runs the length of the island and this magnetic anomaly lends further power to the sacred isle.

An ex-officer of the British army and a very good friend of mine, Alex Macadam, was a firm advocate of Arthur's Scottish origin. Alex explored the legends and scant history from his extensive military experience, analysing Scottish fortresses, tactics and strategy. He concluded that there had once been a tower where the River Endrick empties into a bay in *The Lake* adjacent to Inchcailleach. This, Alex said, was *Joyous Garde*, the home of *Lancelot du Lac* from the French romances.

This site is also the end of the ancient land route that reaches east, along the Endrick Valley to Fintry (The Land of the White One) at the gateway to the old Arthurian Kingdom of *Bannog*. Bounded by the formidable ramparts of The Campsie Fells and the Gargunnock Heights, *Bannog* forms a ring mountain fortress. Standing between the old impassable swamps of the Forth to the north, the Roman Dyke to the south and the ancient fortresses of Stirling and Dumbarton to the east and west, *Bannog* is also the source of the Bannock Burn.

South

Face the south and the Vale of Leven (The Valley of the Elms) opens before you and the one stream from *Loch Lumonoy*, the River Leven (which is one of Britain's fastest rivers) empties into the sea via the Firth of Clyde. Journeying through the Vale, we come under the shadow of *Carman* (The Fort of the Welsh Sea God *Manannan*?) sitting at 244m above sea level high on the western slope. To the southeast the massive Bronze-Age ring fort of Dumbuck rises to over a 150m above the surrounding landscape dominating the eastern approach along the Clyde to the Vale. Dumbuck is extensively quarried now, and one of the many sacred sites that has met its ruin in this way.

Look dead ahead and at last we face the irrefutable witness – at the point where the Leven meets the Clyde, Dumbarton Rock stands sentinel at the mouth of The Vale.

Also known as *Alt Clud* (The Rock on the Clyde) this long extinct volcanic plug has been a fortress since prehistoric times remaining active till World War 2. Dark and foreboding, the uneven breast shapes formed by the cleft rock give a constant reminder of the Goddess in the landscape and add a sacred dimension to the site. Dumbarton literally means *The Fortress of the Britons*; Arthur was styled *King of the Britons* – surely he spent time here!

Five written medieval sources state that Clan Arthur and Clan Campbell are descended from *Smervie* or *Mervin* the son of King Arthur, who was born in the *Red Hall* at Dumbarton on the River Clyde. It is further reported from ancient manuscripts that *Mervin* never came to the throne, as he was "a wild man of the woods". This could mean that he was still a pagan and no longer acceptable to lead the newly Christianised society.

The MacArthurs of Darleith held lands latterly just to the west of Dumbarton and this appears to have been a late acquisition. It was not uncommon however, for clans to regain ancient family estates and these lands may well have been held earlier by a descendant of *Mervin*.

About 2km to the west of Dumbarton Rock, just south of *Carman* is Castle Hill and a site known as Arthur's Castle. About 200m to the west again is another rock outcrop known as *King Arthur's Seat* – the second Arthur's Seat in this story, but there are many more in Scotland.

Oh ye'll tak' the high road An' I'll tak' the low road

And I'll be in Scotland afore ye
For me and my true love will never meet again
On the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond

A Jacobite rebel soldier awaiting punishment by death in Carlisle jail for his part in Culloden penned the world famous lyrics to this Scottish anthem in 1746. The high road was the high sea of transportation to the colonies, which was the route his friend in the neighbouring cell was taking. The low road was a coffin. Death at least could take you home it was a long way back from transportation, if you survived!

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♦ To find out more about King Arthur's Scottish origins visit www.clanarthur.co.uk
This article first appeared in *The Wee Round Table*, the quarterly newsletter of Clan Arthur UK, No 9 (Autumn 2005) 7-14



TALKING FRANKING SENSE

The philatelic journal *Stamp Magazine* for February 2006 included a feature by Bill Goldsmith on stamps with an Arthurian theme – "The Once & Future King", pp 54-7. As well as the Great Britain stamps issued in 1985 to celebrate the quincentenary of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, the article covered other examples such as Austria's 1974 Europa issue depicting an armoured statue of King Arthur from a church in Innsbruck; Jersey's 1974 commemorative stamp for Canon Wace; Germany's 1933 Wagnerian stamps illustrating Tristan & Isolde and Parsifal; and, regrettably, garish stamps from The Gambia, with scenes from Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* cartoon film.

A separate article by Guy Thomas previewed the issue of six stamps by the Channel Island of Alderney on February 16, celebrating T H White's *The Once and Future King*. White lived on the island from 1945-64. The stamps, by artist Nick Watton, depict Arthur, Guenevere, Mordred, Merlin, Lancelot, and Morgause. Unfortunately the artwork is also quite Disney-like!

Mark Valentine

The Cup



and everything that followed
A true Avalon saga (3)
Steve Sneyd

In *The Avalonians*¹ Patrick Benham teased out an intricate sequence of intriguing people and events across a century of connections with Glastonbury. Part Two of "The Cup..." traced the connections Benham established between Frederick Bligh Bond, Alice Buckton and Rutland Boughton in the early 20th century.²

Bligh Bond's daughter Mary, conceived "under the shadow of the Tor", reflected her inheritance of her father's psychic interest -- and also the uncertainties born of a dislocated childhood -- in her 1924 novel *Avernus* (Blackwell), the story of two girls dominated by spirits of doom, resurrection, and gender mutability. Later a church sculptress and acclaimed puppet-maker, she, with her second husband, joined The Mystic Order of the Cross, a cult aiming to reverse Earth's fall from grace by re-establishing contact with male / female divinity. These ideas, applied by fellow cult member John Forbes to researching

magnetic potency in ancient rocks and stone circles, made him one of the first to link UFO sightings with prehistoric sites, findings he published in his small circulation journal, appropriately called *Avalon*, until his 1958 death.

Dion Fortune, coiner of the term "the Avalonians", was born Violet Firth in 1890, the child of Christian Scientist parents, who retired to Letchworth, where the mother told Kitty Pole she believed the child to be a changeling. After World War I Violet first practiced psychology, then moved on to occultism, changing her name to reflect her motto as a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, *Deo Non Fortuna*. Having in 1922 met her thenceforth financial sponsor Charles Loveday on a "moonlight tour" of Glastonbury, she didn't let a twelve-year marriage to a doctor curtail her endless to-and fro journeyings, mostly as pillion on Loveday's motorbike, between London and Glastonbury, from 1924 her base there being an ex-army hut on the Tor's slopes.³ these trips were necessary because, "Inner Adepts" had told her, "Glastonbury supplies the force for the forms that are built in London". In her book *Avalon of the Heart: Dion Fortune's Glastonbury* (Antiquarian Press 1971), along with accounts of Bond, Boughton, and Alice Buckton, she tells of encountering a salamandrine fire spirit, more evidence of how, because the "veil was thin", more had been revealed to her within the "bounds of Avalon" than anywhere else, while "the two forces in equilibrium: the Pagan Tor and Well; the Christian Abbey and its environs" fuelled the creative tension between pagan and Christian of her mystic novels. During World War II she called on her followers to invoke 'The Watchers of Avalon', as secret guardians of the nation, to fight dark occult forces unleashed by the Nazis. Buried at Glastonbury in 1946, having proclaimed herself the "last of the Avalonians", she proved, instead, a further link in an "enduring community of Avalon".

Earlier, another more single-mindedly pagan believer, John Cowper Powys, having known the area since childhood, used it as setting for his now almost forgotten 1933 epic of the Grai's influence on modern lives, *A Glastonbury Romance*.

Little noticed until well after her death in 1964, the startling suggestion propounded by another neo-pagan, Katherine Maltwood,

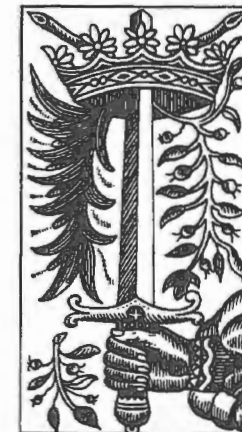
³ Later, the site of Geoffrey Ashe's home. Ed

in her book *A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars* (James Clarke 1929), was in time to have much more impact on "New Age" thinking, being described by John Michell in his *New Light On The Ancient Mystery of Glastonbury* (Gothic Image 1990) as "waking twentieth-century perception of the large-scale, geomantic works of the ancients". One of a wealthy couple living from 1917 to 1938 in a mock-Gothic tower at Poldens in sight of Glastonbury, she was illustrating a translation of *Perlesvaus* when the words "taken in the Isle of Avalon, in a holy house of religion that standeth at the head of the Moors Adventurous" triggered a vision of a giant Zodiac embodied in the physical features of the local landscape; the ever-sought Grail was to her this vast land-embedded pattern, created, she thought, by the Sumerians 5000 years ago.

Meanwhile, in the later 60s, ideas, spread in alternative publications like *International Times* and *Gandalf's Garden*, of Glastonbury as a "power-point" (John Michell in particular having developed the views of Bond and others as to its significance to propose a ley-line intersection there, focusing the "dragon paths" along which he believed UFOs travelled) lured "New Age" hippies -- in 1967 the *Bristol Evening Post* reporting the first of many to arrive as living in a gypsy caravan near the Tor. Michell's thinking -- which has a curious memorial in the pyramidal stage of the later Glastonbury rock festivals, taking its shape from his extrapolation of Bond's postulated gematriac grid for Glastonbury Abbey to link it, in *The View over Atlantis*, with cognates underlying the Great Pyramid as well as Stonehenge -- was speculative. Geoffrey Ashe's, on the other hand, in Benham's words combined "historical scholarship with an understanding of the relevance of the past to our life today and the future", culminating in his involvement, as founding member and Secretary of the Camelot Research Committee, with the South Cadbury excavations of 1965-70,⁵ followed by continuing active involvement in the life of Glastonbury, setting for his novel *The Finger and The Moon*.

In the meantime, *Torc* magazine's fifteen issues between 1971 and 75, edited by

Patrick Benham, provided Glastonbury with a community "message board" and focus (along with such other centres as the Abbey Cafe, and later the Assembly Rooms, Library of Avalon, and University of Avalon) and an outlet for ideas and debate about aspects of the Avalon tradition as diverse as gematria and the Grail quest, Neolithic science and the secret traditions of the masons who built the Abbey⁶; two of the three "cup maidens", Kitty Pole and Christine Sandeman née Allen, lived to become regular readers of *Torc*; another indication of the persistence of the ongoing 'Avalonian' thread so patiently and compellingly traced by Benham's book.



As once proclaimed of Rhydderch Hael
ritual rigid

old and gods / God say / says works
to high place stand stone
draw sword raise blade now NOW fire
should must leap cross-hilt to point
only now only
faintest spark only wishful
longing sees now
heavens open downpour sea
from sky drives scurry down step
mutter among drenched
wrong king this chosen but too
late choosing again
ships ratblack already beach
at rockfoot's siege

Steve Sneyd

⁴ John Michell "Lung Mei: a British dragon line at Glastonbury" *Pendragon Glastonbury Fair edition* (1971). Ed

⁵ The Pendragon Society was also represented on the Camelot Research Committee. Ed

⁶ A small personal link arises here, incidentally, since *Torc* published some of my own Arthurian poems.

old news



BYE BYE, HISTORY

Worryingly, the status of **History** as an **academic subject** continues to plummet, seemingly in inverse proportion to the rise of dubious popular histories and the continuing growth of the heritage industry.

Along with the reported denigration of medieval history research by a former Education Secretary, and the last ever cohort of GCSE Archaeology students (a dwindling if not exactly decimated group) sitting their exams in June 2006, comes further news that history is becoming an endangered species.

The number of training places for new history teachers has been cut by nearly 30%, from 848 in 2005-6 to just 601 in 2007-8. This is not simply the highest cut for any subject in postgraduate courses for secondary education (compared with an overall cut of 10%) – only Citizenship will recruit fewer PGCE students. This is said to reflect decreasing pupil numbers and the relatively stable take-up of history places.

Higher Education too is feeling the chill wind of change. Archaeology staff and students at University of Wales, Newport have lost their building, a lecturer and nearly 50% of lecture time, and have now discovered that the whole course will go by 2007, for "financial reasons", after a chance remark overheard by the department's head.

CL

♦ Claire Phipps "Is archaeology getting buried?" *BBC History Magazine* Vol V No 12 (December 2004) 86; William Stewart "Cuts sink history courses into dark ages" *Times Educational Supplement* January 27 2006; Neil Faulkner "University department axed" *Current Archaeology* 201 (January-February 2006) 452

THE BATTLE OF CHESTER

Known as *Civitas Legionis* in Latin, *Caerlegion* by the Britons and *Legacaestir* by the Anglian English, Chester was cited by Bede as the site of a battle between the Northumbrian king **Aethelfrith** and the Britons of North Wales under **Selyf** king of Powys. It was Aethelfrith who probably defeated the Britons of Gododdin at *Catreath* (Catterick in Yorkshire) around 600, while in 603 he defeated the Dalriada Scots under Aedan mac Grabhrain at the battle of *Degastan*. He was only defeated himself in 617 by Raedwald of East Anglia (whom most now think was interred at Sutton Hoo).

It is suggested that the site of the battle of Chester in 616 is at the Roman settlement at **Heronbridge**, situated on Watling Street just south of the modern town of Chester. Excavations in 1929 revealed a mass grave consisting of males between 20 and 40, many of whom had died from sword wounds to the head. Though the twenty bodies recovered have since disappeared, more recent excavations (in 2004) have located more bodies, and it is surmised at least 120 bodies would have been interred there.

Two bodies were exhumed and analysed. Both had suffered savage multiple injuries, inflicted probably by infantry, and none of the warriors appear to have been protected by helmets or body-armour. Radiocarbon dates confirmed that these men may have indeed been killed around the time of the battle of Chester, making Heronbridge "the earliest positively identified battlefield site".

Whose were these graves? They were clearly not those of the defenceless British monks of Bangor-on-Dee, who were killed for praying to God that the Northumbrians be defeated. Only radio-isotope analysis can confirm whether the warriors were Britons or Anglians, but it is most likely that, given that Aethelfrith was victorious, the careful burials were of Northumbrians.

The loss of so many of his warriors at Chester may have contributed to Aethelfrith's defeat and death the following year. The encounter of course may have been "borrowed" by Nennius, in chapter 56 of his *British History*, for **Arthur's ninth battle, in urbe legionis** – "in the city of the legion" – and turned into a British victory.

CL

♦ David Mason "The Battle of Chester" *Current Archaeology* 202 (March / April 2006) 516-524

ANCESTRAL SECRETS

The research into the **genetic history** of Britain, announced in 2004 by the Wellcome Trust and Oxford University, is proceeding apace with the news that Channel 4 will be broadcasting the results in a TV series called **DNA UK** sometime in 2006.

The project, called **People of the British Isles**, will be looking at the DNA revealed by blood samples to chart the various genetic influences on the populations of the UK over time. In Pembrokeshire, for example, the project has enlisted Cardiff University's Professor Julian Sampson to take blood samples from around 150 men and women over 18. These volunteers must show that they and their parents and grandparents were born and raised in the region to qualify for the project, as we have previously reported in *Old News*.

Professor Sampson, who is also consultant clinical geneticist in Pembrokeshire, acknowledges that the county has "an extraordinarily rich heritage," for not only are there Celts, Romans, Vikings and Normans in its genetic make-up but also Irish, English, Flemings and others known from the documentary record.

Meanwhile, archaeological data obtained using **radiocarbon dating** may have to be radically revised, according to Professor Paul Mellars in a recent report in the scientific journal *Nature*. The calibration curves for dates several millennia ago – certainly between 27,000 and 50,000 years before present (BP), when modern humans are first found in Europe – seem to be out by a significant factor. The recalibrations were arrived at by correlating radiocarbon and uranium-thorium dates from deep-sea cores, stalagmite formations and coral growth with oxygen-isotope levels in Greenland ice-cores. As a result, a radiocarbon date of 40,000 years ago is really 43,000 BP, and even 35,000 years ago becomes 40,500 BP. This may have implications for more recent periods such as the post-Roman period, especially when improved purification of bone collagen for radiocarbon dating has been shown to result in earlier estimates.

After a long period of uncertainty, guidelines were agreed back in 2004 by a committee of archaeologists and church leaders regarding what to do with any human remains following **excavation of Christian**

graves. These guidelines may be crucial for research into genetic make-up, as the post-Roman period in Britain, or Age of Migrations, saw a gradual transition from paganism to Christianity. For example, after a campaign by the local parish council remains from an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Melbourn, Cambridgeshire, were buried in consecrated ground before any extensive research could take place. This happened even though there was no evidence that the individuals (dating from the late 6th to 7th century) were actually Christian.

The guidelines preceded consultation by the Church of England and English Heritage and only related to Christian burials between the 7th and the 19th centuries. Well-publicised controversies regarding the remains of indigenous peoples from North America and Australia held by museums prompted the review. One suggestion was that any disputes over the religious affiliation of excavated individuals could be resolved by storing remains on consecrated grounds where they could be made available for research, though who would be responsible for costs is not clear.

Now a panel has been set up to give advice on such excavations for free. The Advisory Panel on the Archaeology of Christian Burials in England, made up of churchmen, archaeologists and museum staff, is supported by the Church of England, English Heritage and the Department of Constitutional Affairs. Not only will it give advice but it will develop policies reflecting relevant religious, ethical, archaeological and scientific issues.

CL

♦ "Unlock DNA secrets" *Western Telegraph* November 23 2005; "Who are the British?" *Pendragon XXXII* No 1 (2004) 10; Robin McKie "Scientists go in search of the true Brit" *Observer* August 15 2004; Norman Hammond "We just got older" *Times* February 23 2006; James Randerson "Guidelines for reburial of old Christian bones" *New Scientist* May 15 2004; "Disturbing the dead?" *Current Archaeology* 201 (January-February 2006) 455; *Guidance for Best Practice for Treatment of Human Remains Excavated from Christian Burial Grounds in England* (2005) can be downloaded from www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/16602_HumanRemains1.pdf APACBE information at www.britarch.ac.uk/churches/humanremains/

The board

UNHOLY GRAILS

As promised, here are a few more sightings of *girly halos* – there must be scope for a sociological study as to just why "Holy Grail" is the term journals (especially from *The Guardian*) reach for automatically every time they need to characterise anything most eagerly sought. If only there was a Social Sciences Research Council grant going!

First, some tenuously connected references begin with former Python and historian Terry Jones, who reckoned in *The Story of 1* that **zero** was "the holy grail of numbers". The Liberal Democrat holy grail, which will determine their willingness to enter a coalition government, is "a **commitment to proportional representation voting at Westminster**". On a more serious note, if in developing countries aid dependency is banished and local structures and skills are established, then what may be achieved is "a kind of holy grail, **sustainability**". More flippantly, "a **good buddy movie** is Hollywood's holy grail" – supposedly *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang* is it – while Johnny Depp has apparently successfully seized, in *Finding Neverland*, "the elusive holy grail of British accents: the **Scots burr**". The head of film at Bradford's NMPFT, Bill Lawrence, was told that "the holy grail at the moment is to **develop animated characters** in video games where the eyes actually follow the player..."

Then Fred Stedman-Jones reports that style gurus Trinny and Susannah, of BBC One's *What Not to Wear* programme, referred to somebody's **choice of clothes** as "the Holy Grail of bad taste"! They must imagine that the grail can represent a *nadir*. Fred also heard Libby Purves opine, over on BBC Radio 4, that for polar explorers the "holy grail of tracking" was the **snow leopard**. Stuart McConie, speaking on BBC R2 (July 21 2005), suggested that **the pass** is "the holy grail of a rock journalist trying to get into a gig". Miserable pop singer Morrissey had his group The Smiths photographed outside **Salford Lads Club**, which thus is "the holy grail now for

occasional tourists who bemusedly trawl" a Salford city centre devoid of human beings. Over at the London Coliseum, English National Opera's new production of *Madam Butterfly*, directed by Anthony Minghella, hopes to "get close to the holy grail of all opera companies these days" by finding a **younger and wider audience**. Meanwhile, a report on creative individuals and sex in *The Proceedings of the Royal Society* supposedly showed that "**explaining the behaviour of notorious womanisers** such as Picasso, Lord Byron and Dylan Thomas has been a holy grail for psychiatrists".

Next, some literary metaphors: Sue Lawley, on *Desert Island Discs* (June 24), talking to Alexander McCall Smith about the success of his Ladies' Detective Agency books set in Botswana, mentioned **Middle American word of mouth** as being "the holy grail of publishing". Another turned up in a massive reprinting of the early 19th century US fantasy poet Clark Ashton Smith – in his poem "The Saturnienne" he wrote "the unquested grails of hell, of death and deathful dream".

And now we have some mystic metaphors from technological fields. Sony has released the PSP, a portable version of its PlayStation which plays minute game-disks and DVDs. When holding these in the palm of their hands "those from eucharistic religions may think of hosts," observes critic Mark Lawson. "But this holy grail for technology may come to be seen as satanic by the traditional cinema because the PSP ... represents the arrival of the first genuinely portable DVD-player." The convergence of TV, telephony and broadband internet access has so far been achieved only by cable companies NTL and Telewest, who thus offer consumers the holy grail of **triple play**, according to business reports. Meanwhile, the recent machinations of search-engine giant Google run the risk of alienating its supporters, but "to **conquer the world and retain the faith of its groupies** may be a Holy Grail that not even Google thinks it is worth searching for."

Conversely, Meriwether Lewis' **iron-framed boat** of 1805 has reportedly been dubbed by some Americans as "the holy grail of exploration," and finding the boat "would solve a brainteaser for archaeologists and historians." Another teaser came from

space scientists who have in recent years "detected the simplest amino acid **glycine** ($\text{NH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{COOH}$) in three star-forming regions using the ARO 12m radio telescope. This molecule, which is described as the 'holy grail' of interstellar chemistry, has evaded detection for over 20 years." Evading detection is of course a suitably grail-like characteristic!

This last leads us neatly to a news story that broke at the end of 2004. The World Technology Network and X-Prize Foundation were asking the public to help them decide on bids for monetary awards for **scientific or technological breakthroughs** tackling "the most important challenges" facing humanity. It was anticipated that *submissions were likely to centre around some major "holy grails" in health, information and communications technologies, alternative energies and the environment, and material sciences, including nanotechnology*, reported BBC News Online.

• Terry Jones wrote and presented TV's *The Story of 1* on BBC One (dir: Nick Murphy, prod: Jasper James) September 28 2005; Lib Dem grail: Michael White *Guardian* January 28 2006; sustainability: *Guardian* November 8 2005; Jonathan Bernstein "Mates rate" *Guardian Guide* November 5-11 2005; John Patterson film preview *Guardian Guide* November 12-18 2005; Steve Pill "It's all in the game" *Metro* November 15, 2005; "Splicing cable" *Guardian* October 18 2005; Salford Lads Club: *Guardian Weekend* October 8 2005; Sarah Hills "Why artists have sex on the brain" *Metro* November 30 2005; Mark Lawson "Movie revolution" *Guardian* September 3 2005; *Guardian* August 25 2005; *Headquarters Heliogram* #286, Council on America's Military Past (November 2001–January 2002); Steven Chamley, Pascale Ehrenfreund and Yi-Jehng Kuan "Molecules in Space" *Physics World* (October 2003) 37; Jo Twist "X-Prize for world's 'holy grails'" *BBC News Online* accessed January 6 2005 <news.bbc.co.uk>

KNIGHTLIFE

A so-called **Knight School** has been set up by Lincolnshire police in Spilsby to try to curb village anti-social behaviour. Over a hundred children, between the ages of six and eight, have been taught to improve manners, smarten appearance and contribute to community projects, and youth crime has reportedly been halved.



Police sergeant Gary Brown, "a specialist in medieval history", takes a dozen children at a time and instils the "old-fashioned" values of chivalric codes to increase self-discipline and consideration for others and to decrease foul language. Those who complete the eight-week course are "knighted" by the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire at Tattershall Castle, each receiving armour, a wooden shield and, of course, a sword.

Celebrities occasionally cross over into an Arthurian fantasy world. For example, in a letter to the late John Peel, Marc Bolan signed off with "**King Arthur** would have loved you as I do," a touching insight into the T Rex singer's affection for the influential DJ, while Manchester United footballer Rio Ferdinand's childhood in Peckham included a spell at **Camelot Junior School**.

A letter regarding the demolition of Victorian terraces in the Welsh Streets area of Liverpool was signed by the chair and secretary of the **Windermere, Dovetail and Camelot Tenants' and Residents' Association**, arguing that demolition of the damp and decaying properties was desirable both for the community and for urban renewal.

A curiosity on the Web which readers might not have come across is *Camelot: the*

Very Secret Diaries. This was found by accident: the intention was to read a fictional biography at <http://catherinemintz.com> but our Almondbury columnist was distracted by the Camelot mention. There are loads of Arthurian characters and even creatures, objects and places (eg Elaine of Astolat, Questing Beast and the Grail) each with an ongoing diary. There are still a lot of characters not claimed, and the site (whether hosted from the above URL or through a link) invites others to sign up, adopt a character or write an individual diary.

Journalists got excited about the Conservative leader David Cameron and his son, born to Samantha Cameron on St Valentine's Day. Rejoicing in the name of **Arthur Elwen Cameron**, the wee laddie's second name is "either Old English or Welsh" opined *The Guardian*, and means "elf's friend" (perhaps reflecting Cameron's penchant for Tolkienesque political nicknames, such as his own "Frodo Baggins"). Arthur has "enjoyed varying popularity in British history", chosen by Henry VII for his eldest son "as a symbol of reviving national power" and sported by Tory prime minister Balfour a century ago. The *Daily Express* noted that "the new arrival has blue blood in his veins – both his parents are descended from royal mistresses", but many commentators (including the *Express* journo) had trouble deciding what the name *Arthur* actually meant and what the choice signified.

We reported last issue that **Pendragon** should only be bought "below 285p", but now comes news that it was valued at 536p in early 2006. This is of course the continuing saga of the Pendragon car dealership, which wanted to merge with two other dealerships, Reg Vardy and Lookers, to create a monster company worth 6% of the new car market.

Amazing Coincidences No 3. Pendragon member Michael French has noticed a strange play on names after watching two Arthurian films on DVD. In *Excalibur*, directed by John Boorman, Merlin is played by **Nicol Williamson**, while in the Arthurian film *First Knight*, directed by Jerry Zucker, the screenplay is by **William Nicholson**. ♦ Riazat Butt "Knight School cuts youth crime" *Guardian* November 9 2005; Simon Burton "Big day for Rio Ferdinand" *Guardian Sport* November 5 2005; Ryan Gilbey "My Peel sessions" *Guardian* October 13 2005; Irene

Milson and Mary Huxham "Response" *Guardian* November 24 2005; Michael White "Nice one Arthur, my son" *Guardian* February 18 2006; Macer Hall "So have you got his name down for Eton yet, Dave?" *Daily Express* February 18 2006; Fiona Walsh "Pendragon urges rivals to join in £900m car dealership" *Guardian* January 28 2006

BIG SCREEN, SMALL SCREEN

The 2006 release of the £53m film of Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code* starring Tom Hanks could be jeopardised by an action in the courts. Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh, who co-authored *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* with Henry Lincoln in 1982, have filed a writ against Random House, publishers of the novel, alleging plagiarism. "Can a novel plagiarise a history book?" asks *The Guardian*. "Copyright law protects the expression of ideas rather than the ideas themselves," though judges should take into account the originality of research. (But what, I wonder, if the so-called factual work is actually based on a fiction?) "Judges have previously been reluctant to favour claimants if storylines have been copied," so the film may well proceed without a hitch.

Meanwhile, TV programme producers have jumped eagerly on to the bandwagon, for as well as *The Grail Trail* (see this issue's reviews) 2005 saw at least two other Code-related documentaries on terrestrial channels. *The Da Vinci Code Myth: Revealed* on Five (November 29) was an attempt to separate fact from fiction, including interviews with art historian and TV presenter Brian Sewell, alternative historian Lynn Pickett and architect Maxwell Hutchinson. The now notorious neo-conservative organisation Opus Dei was pursued in *Opus Dei and The Da Vinci Code* (Channel 4, December 12) by former friar Mark Dowd. Ironically, supporters are now using the novel to boost membership amongst traditionalist Catholics.

A repeated episode of *Charmed* on Five (February 18) had the magical sisters being called on to help the Lady of the Lake to protect Excalibur, "the legendary sword in the stone" as the *Guardian Guide* erroneously put it. On the same night, on Channel 4, anthropologist Richard Rudgley's *The Celts* aimed to question the linguistic, racial and historic myths that have arisen

over the last couple of centuries. Some good points, but two hours could easily have been compressed into one without loss of argument by shedding stereotypical images. ♦ *Da Vinci* story in *Guardian Review*, October 29 2005; *The Da Vinci Code Myth: Revealed* (director Tom Gorham, executive producer Anna Beattie); *Opus Dei and The Da Vinci Code* (CTVC); *The Celts* (director / producer Chris Malone, Granada)



CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The Arthurian Beasts issue (XXXII No 3) included several typos that Alastair McBeath particularly liked.

- Page 16 (left column, para 4): 'the altar of change', where "alter" occurred twice in a short space for "altar". The "stone alter" seemed a superb contradiction, comments Alastair!
- page 20 (right column, para 3): where T H White's vivid inner life was "demonstrated by his dairies", highly appropriate for the Beasts issue;
- page 28 (left column, para 1): "\$500" – a truly amazing amount for 1451. Columbus? Who he? (1492 and all that). "You get a better class of typo in *Pendragon*, I feel," our post hoc proofreader adds.

THE BOARDS

The May 2005 production, directed by Peter Sellars, of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* at the Bastille in Paris was described as "provocative" due to a collaboration with American video artist Bill Viola. With Ben Heppner as Tristan and Waltraud Meier as Isolde, a recording of the production was broadcast on BBC R3 in late October.

Kneehigh Theatre's production of *Tristan & Yseult* – recent performances took place at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds in November – was poles apart from Wagner's music drama ("I can't bear Wagner," declared their director Emma Rice). "Ancient stories are usually good stories: there's a reason they've lasted so long," Rice suggests. "But what's brilliant about *Tristan & Yseult* is that there's no moral voice ... and

I think that's why people love it."

An onstage band playing contemporary music, modern dress and innovative staging have ensured popularity with audiences. Its two-month run at the National Theatre earlier in 2005 was sold out, testimony to its extraordinary quality, but Kneehigh are equally at ease on tour in clifftop barns and the like. ☺ www.kneehigh.co.uk

The Monty Python musical *Spamalot*, "lovingly ripped off" the 1975 Holy Grail film, is due to open on October 6, 2006 at the Palace theatre in London's West End, with a cast yet to be announced. The New York production notched up record advance ticket sales and Tony awards for best musical and best director, as well as reportedly attracting a "younger, more male demographic" to Broadway.

♦ Clare Ogden "Fable is a real find" *Metro* (NE edition) November 1 2005; Xan Brooks "Spamalot for London after US triumph" *Guardian* January 21 2006;

EVENTS

Professor Russell was in Winchester on 12 July 2005 at the 250th anniversary of his wartime regiment, the King's Royal Rifle Corps (also called the 60th Rifles), founded in 1755 as the Royal American Regiment, recruited mainly from German and Swiss colonists to fight the French in the New World. "After a splendid service in the Cathedral, we veterans marched past our Colonel-in-Chief, Her Majesty the Queen."

He hadn't thought of this occasion as particularly Arthurian, "but it is true that Winchester was long believed to be Camelot, and the splendid museum of the Rifle Regiments – including the 60th – (and also the museum of the Gurkhas) is in the precinct containing the surviving Great Hall of Winchester Castle, which houses the Round Table – made under Edward I, painted under Henry VIII."

The first **Caedmon Literary Festival** is due to be held in **Whitby** during April 23-28 2006. Festival organiser Alan Whitworth says that Whitby has had "a long association with literature beginning with Caedmon, the 'father of sacred song', and it is fitting that this once illiterate cowman should be honoured in the festival title... [N]ot only did he start life from humble origins unable to read or write, but in time he was to master

Pendragon Journal of the Pendragon Society

both skills to become the first to set down ... the traditions of English literature."

There are also literary connections with the geographer Ptolemy, with Bede and with the famous Synod that took place here in 664, so expect readings, lectures, exhibitions, book fairs and so on celebrating Whitby's literary heritage.

☐ A Whitworth, Linden, 10 The Carrs, Sleights, Whitby, N Yorks YO21 1RR

The magical boardgame from *The Mabinogion* is celebrated at the **Gwyddbwyll – Magical Chess Weekend**. Mike Harris and Naomi Ozaniec provide practical exploration and instruction at Trigonos in Snowdonia, North Wales over the weekend of May 19th–21st. For bookings and further details

☐ www.companyofavalon.net
☎ avaloniaco@aol.com ☎ 01341 250 145

PERIODICALS

The quarterly newsletter of Clan Arthur UK, entitled *The Wee Round Table* has recently reached issue number 10. Edited by Hugh McArthur, the newsletter focuses on news of clan members and their activities around the English-speaking world as well as including Arthurian items, mainly by the editor. No 9 includes "The Arthurian Lake" (republished here in *Pendragon*) while No 10 features Arthur's battle sites, located exclusively in Scotland, and news of US Clan member Colonel Bill McArthur of Expedition 12 on the international space station. Back issues are available for £2.00 each (including post and packing) either by cheque payment to "www.clannarthur.com" at PO Box 1427, Glasgow G12 0UY, or via the website:

☎ www.clannarthur.com

Issue 119 of exchange journal *The Cauldron* (February 2006) commemorates 30 years of publication. While primarily committed to witchcraft, paganism and folklore, *TC* occasionally includes Arthurian-related items, all bound together under a critical yet humorous editorial approach. Congratulations to Michael Howard (not that Michael Howard!) on achieving this milestone. An example of Arthurian-related items comes in issue 118 (November 2005) with Mike Harris' "The Cadair Idris Star Map" where the author relates the landscape around Cadair Idris in Gwynedd with Ursa Major, Polaris, Uther Pendragon and Arthur.

Treasures of Britain

Mike Harris is 'Magus' of the Company of Avalon, based in Gwynedd.

A recent issue of *Poetry Cornwall* (Vol 4 No 2, or issue 11) had two Arthurian items, a poem voicing "Brangwain" by Zeet Ansari and a new six-page translation by Jane Tozer of one of the *lais* of Marie de France, the "Chevrefoil" (related to the tale of Tristan and Isolde). Copies are available at £3.50 from Palores Publications, 1 Station Hill, Redruth, Cornwall / Kernow TR15 2PP (cheques payable to "Les Merton").

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

JOURNALS AND SOCIETIES

Sample price / annual subs (overseas subs)
"Cheques payable to" – e-mail & website

Arthurian Association of Australia 19 Caroola Road, Cromer, NSW 2099, Australia www.arthurian.asn.au

The Cauldron Paganism, folklore, earth mysteries £3.50 / £14.00 "M A Howard", BM Cauldron, London WC1N 3XX
www.the-cauldron.fsnet.co.uk

Celtic Connections Journal of Celtic and related subjects £1.25 / £10.00 (£18.00)

"Celtic Connections Magazine", David Barton, 97 Rosehill Drive, Bransgore, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 8NX www.celtic-connections-magazine.co.uk

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

Meyn Mamvro Cornish ancient stones and sacred sites £2.20 / £6.50 "Cheryl Traffon" 51 Carn Bosavern, St Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR19 7QX www.meynmamvro.co.uk

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 "Da Engliscan Gesithas (The English Companions)", BM Box 4336, London WC1 3XX www.tha-engliscan-gesithas.org.uk

Pendragon Journal of the Pendragon Society



Oakmagic Publications continue to publish both original works and re-prints of classic studies relating to Arthuriana. Typical of the former is Kelvin Jones' *Cornish Faery Folk* (£3.50), and the latter is well represented by *Exmoor witchcraft and superstitions* (£4.50, by F J Snell, the author of the topographical *King Arthur's Country*, 1926). Of particular interest will be *Glastonbury, Arthur and the Isle of the Dead* by John Rhys (£3.50 42pp), an extract from Rhys' *Studies in Arthurian Legend* (1891), and the same author's *Complete Welsh Fairy Book* (£6.50). ☐ PO Box 74, Church Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6WY

Subtitled "A guide to the healing waters of Glastonbury", Nick Mann and Philippa Gleson's *Avalon's Red and White Springs* (£4.99 48pp) makes claims for the Somerset market town being Britain's chief spiritual centre.

☐ Green Magic Publications, The Long Barn, Sutton Mallet, Somerset TA7 9AR

Heart of Albion Press calls itself the UK's leading publisher of folklore, mythology and cultural studies, with titles of Arthurian interest on its booklist. Michael Dames' *Talesin's Travels: a demi-god at large* (£16.95 pb 1 872883 89 3) is billed as a "deep and imaginative account of the tales and poetry" associated with the Dark Age bard.

☐ Heart of Albion Press, 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough LE12 6UJ
☎ albion@indigogroup.co.uk
☎ 01509 880725

Outland, the Science Fiction and Fantasy Newsletter, recently featured a comic book series entitled *Preacher*, by Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon (Titan Books). Seventy-odd issues are now available as nine graphic novels, and star the offspring of angel and a demon reborn in the body of Reverend Jesse Custer, the preacher of the title. Volume 3, *Proud Americans*, introduces an organisation known as The Grail. Led by "a fat and bloated 'Pope' known as the All Father" it has been trying to "keep the original bloodline of Christ alive". Using "the ultimate in eugenics programmes" it produces a descendant who, in the words of Dave Chapman (on the staff of Ottokar's bookshop in

Heroes and Villains

Norwich), is "an inbred idiot who isn't even housetrained". The Grail of course is intent on destroying the reverend. An intriguing twist on familiar themes, *Preacher* is only for those who can stand its bad language, violence and sexual content.



In Our Time: Merlin

Presented by Melvin Bragg, with Juliette Wood, Stephen Knight and Peter Foreshaw
BBC Radio 4 June 30 2005

The discussion began with the Merlin present at the battle of Arfderydd between his patron Gwendolieu (entertainingly, pronounced differently by each panel member) and Rhydderch Hael, as aftermath of which Merlin exemplified the trope of becoming a wild / mad man as a result of the battle. The interesting point was made that such figures go into the woods (in this case Cellidon Forest) involuntarily, unlike hermits who went by deliberate choice. Merlin thus became an unconscious liminal figure, mediator between inner and outer life, whereas hermits were conscious pivots between the worlds of kings and contemplation.

They discussed the poems ascribed to Myrddin in the *Black Book of Carmarthen*, with the suggestion that originally, as with much Irish material, they would have been embedded in a now-lost prose narrative, this contextlessness making them baffling; also, briefly, the transfer of the Merlin story from Cumbria to South Wales, before moving on to Geoffrey of Monmouth, in particular the prophecies he ascribed to Merlin, of their difference from Welsh Merlin prophecies in various ways, and of their usefulness in legitimising the rule of Geoffrey's patrons. They also talked of the contradiction that in Geoffrey's 1150 *Vita Merlini* Arthur does not appear, and Merlin has been promoted to kingship and given a prophetic sister. This led them to discuss the motif of the three-fold death, first in terms of the sister's attempt to fool him by presenting a child in three disguises, to get her revenge on him for his accusation of adultery, which led to his correct prophecy of the child's fate in that way, then of stories of Merlin's cognate Lailoken, meaning "little friend" or "darling", also dying by three simultaneous methods.

They moved on to Christian symbolism

and parallels, noting resemblances to the child Jesus' encounter with the money-changers in the fatherless Merlin Ambrosius' encounter with Vortigern's wizards, and to Robert de Boron's noting of how Merlin's conception involves a Satanic parody of Merlin's *esplumoir* (wittily described as his "research centre"!) from falconry terminology, a pun on merlin as a type of hawk [*falco columbarius*].

Gerald of Wales' view that there were two Merlins was noted, also the way Malory, like other later writers such as Tennyson, used Merlin as a setter-up of events who then disappeared, since this made it easier to present Arthur's court as becoming / being fully Christian, Vivien / Nimue having been used to conveniently remove an ambiguous Trickster figure, balancing between good and evil, even to, in disguise, teasing / humiliating Arthur.

In Tudor times, Queen Elizabeth's "wizard", John Dee, like the Tudors of Welsh descent, saw himself as a new Merlin, interpreting the prophecies to boost the Queen's prestige: two of her major poets, Spenser and Drayton, also drew on them. In striking contrast, her father, Henry VIII, hearing from his spies in Wales that people hung around churchyards after services to hear tales of Merlin, and fearing lest the prophecies be turned against him, included in 1536 and 1541 statutes provision against this, executing two Catholic priests for violations. Among later poets, Dryden's *King Arthur*, *The British Worthy* made Merlin a patriotic Englishman who chose St George's Day to heal Arthur's Queen, curiously renamed Emmeline!

Fascinating oddities which surfaced included a 17th-century Welsh antiquary who described the seventy-doored, seventy-windowed glass house as a museum, with Merlin as its curator! Also, that Roger Bacon believed Merlin's prophecies, used with Holy Writ and astronomical data, could predict the Antichrist's coming, and that, in the 13th century, Alanus de Insulis believed Merlin had discovered the mysterious elixir of Christ, while later alchemists found analogies in the prophecies, interpreting, for example, the winged and wingless dragons as volatile and fixed substances. Finally, Jungians see Merlin as Parzival's "dark brother".

Steve Sneyd

The Grail Trail: in pursuit of

The Da Vinci Code

Director / Producer Matt Cain / Granada
ITV1 September 28 2005

Lest you forget there was a time before *The Da Vinci Code* phenomenon (and consistently persistent mentions of it in *Pendragon*) along comes another TV exposé. However, unlike other programmes simply cashing in on the popularity of Dan Brown's thriller (which continues to top best-seller lists) *The Grail Trail* took a novel approach to debunking the book's pretence of being solidly factual. It scooped up three avid readers – two Britons and one American – and took them on a tour of key sites while also allowing them to interrogate various experts in aspects touched upon in the book. Would they still maintain their staunch beliefs by the end?

The two English readers – Neil from Northants, Leah from Surrey – were lapsed Catholics, while Philip from the US was a doctoral student of theology at Oxford. All were drawn to the novel because of its questioning of Catholic orthodoxy. Observing the proceedings on video was media psychologist Raj Persaud, who then gave a running commentary on the trio's reactions to each of their encounters.

First 'expert' to be questioned (in the real Château de Villette near Paris, home of the fictional Sir Leigh Teabing) was revisionist historian Lynn Picknett. Co-author of *The Templar Revelation*, she was given a run for her money by theology graduate Philip. During the visit to Saint-Sulpice in Paris they noted discrepancies in Dan Brown's descriptions of the church furniture. If doubts were being entertained over the 'facts' contained in this work of fiction, the trio hid them well, though Dr Persaud noted that the emotional investment they put into believing the book's claims led them to favourably reinterpret the false evidence it presented.

Then, somewhere in England, they witnessed (with a mixture of bemusement and amusement) a neo-pagan ritual involving a priestess, a dagger and a cup, all interpreted by Ron Hutton (well placed to comment on the novel's flights of fancy as he is both a distinguished professor of history and a noted practising pagan).

Next stop in the zigzagging itinerary was Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan and Leo-

nardo's impressive painting of The Last Supper. Here they encountered po-faced Leonardo expert Charles Nicholl, who pooh-poohed the cryptic clues supposedly enshrined in the mural, particularly the feminine appearance of St John and the V-space between Jesus and St John (purportedly symbolising the feminine principle). Dr Persaud noted that the notion of perception in psychology is "very troublesome", but we can be sure that the perceptions of the trio and of Nicholl coincided in very few ways. In Rome next, where they encountered Fr John Wauck from Opus Dei, the lapsed Catholics found it hard not to view the priest's support of the concept of 'heroic holiness' as merely masochism under another name. Doctoral student Philip was however impressed by Fr Wauck's unwavering faith.

Finally, in Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh, they met a brick wall in the shape of medieval texts translator Nigel Bryant, who maintained in the face of their incredulity that the notion that *sangraal* meant 'holy blood' was a 15th-century fancy, and that believing in conspiracy theories such as a holy bloodline was based on modern fantasies alien to medieval comprehensions. While the trio individually reflected on his aggressive defence and the import of their collective experiences, it is hard surely to disagree with Bryant's conclusion that "What binds us together today is popular culture," represented as much by the TV programme and reviews like this as by *The Da Vinci Code*, its sources and its imitators.

Chris Lovegrove

Alchemy, Arthur and this Sun of York (2) W M S Russell

Jonathan Hughes

Arthurian Myths and Alchemy:
the Kingship of Edward IV

Sutton Publishing 2002 £30.00

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Arthur and Edward IV

Prophecies about Arthur had been around for centuries, but 'by the fifteenth century these prophecies were being circulated more widely on cheap, paper manuscripts and

among laymen' (118). Hughes shows that the chief Yorkist collection of prophecies – no less than 56 – was contained in 'two Latin calendars compiled in c 1461 and 1465, probably by a Welsh cleric attached to the House of York'; for convenience, Hughes calls them both *The Prophetic History of Britain* (69–quotation; 121, 142). But prophecies were contained in many other manuscripts, including genealogies. 'Despite their appearance in a wide variety of manuscript sources, these prophecies shared common themes' (145). Arthur was to return and he (or of course his avatar Edward) was to champion the Celtic Britons (*ie* the Welsh) and restore the unity of Britain, shattered by the Anglo-Saxon invasion. In the *Prophetic History* this happy event was actually dated to 1460–61, and the coming of Edward 'commemorated with the reintroduction of the name "Britain" in large red letters' (135). Edward was the 'once and future king' (142).

It is clear from this why Edward's Welsh genealogy was so much emphasised. The happily named victory of Mortimer's Cross seemed to celebrate the mating of Ralph and Gwladys Ddu, which gave Edward his Welsh inheritance. Hughes thinks it 'refers, even for the Welsh, to the mating of Anne Mortimer and Richard of Cambridge, which gave Edward his *English* inheritance' (122, 137), but this seems quite wrong to me. Anyway, the Welsh poets, mobilised by Edward's great Welsh supporter William Herbert, whom they called his Gawain (or rather, presumably, his Gwalchmei), were naturally delighted. Since the failure of Glyn Dwr, nobody expected or even wanted Welsh independence, but they hoped Edward would champion the Welsh cause in the united country (136, 142, 179). They were encouraged by Edward's early upbringing in the Marches, in touch with Welsh Arthurian traditions (166), and with those of his grandmother's family, the Mortimer Marcher Lords. Back in 1328–30, after they had murdered her husband Edward II, England was briefly ruled by Isabella of France and her lover Roger Mortimer, first Earl of March (Edward IV's own title before he was king). Mortimer 'displayed his power in gorgeous extravaganzas, in which he performed as Arthur with the Knights of the Round Table. Isabella, who had collected a number of books on the Arthurian romances, probably played Guinevere to Mortimer's Ar-

thur.⁵⁹ Altogether, Edward IV grew up well primed to take up his Arthurian inheritance.



To us, there appears one insuperable difficulty. All the prophecies had Edward Arthur-redevivus driving out the Anglo-Saxons. Was he to drive out most of his subjects? But nothing is insuperable to the human capacity for rationalisation. The problem was solved by the, to us, utterly absurd identification of the Anglo-Saxon invaders with – the Lancastrians! This was put forward by the *Prophetic History* (142) and by the chronicler John Hardyng (131), and generally accepted. There was a similar ethnic identification of parties in seventeenth century England, but in that case the Anglo-Saxons were the democratic heroes oppressed by the king and his friends and (for the Diggers and Levellers) the landlords who were the wicked Normans. But the 'Norman Yoke' theory was slightly less absurd, in that many of the upper classes still had Norman names.⁶⁰

In view of this Yorkist anti-Germanism, it is rather amusing that they adopted as a minor hero Honorius's general Stilicho, represented as the champion of the Roman Em-

pire including Britain, and even identified him with Edward's father, the Duke of York (35). Apparently they were quite unaware that Stilicho was a Vandal, and that, in Bury's words, 'he had signally failed in the task of defending the inhabitants and the civilisation of the provinces against the greedy barbarians who infested its frontiers'.⁶¹

Edward did everything to encourage his subjects' belief in him as Arthur, and his court had a thoroughly Arthurian flavour. Hardyng identified Winchester with Camelot (67). (The medieval Round Table is still there, in the same enclave as the museums of the Gurkhas and of the Rifle regiments in which I served in the Second World War.) After the marriage with Elizabeth Woodville, the Court was very rich in Arthurian literature. The Duke of Bedford, brother of Henry V and efficient governor of France, got hold of the library of Charles V, and also commissioned thirteen volumes of Arthurian texts, and most of this passed to Elizabeth's mother, Jacquetta de Luxembourg, the Duke's widow, and, when she married Elizabeth's father, the first Earl Rivers, to their son Anthony, Elizabeth's brother. She herself had at least two parts of the Vulgate romance (14, 32, 67, 110, 173, 266). Edward revived the flagging fortunes of the Garter Order, which he explicitly associated with the Round Table.

Henry IV and Henry V had banned jousting, the latter because it did not kill enough people. When some knights proposed a joust to Henry V to celebrate his marriage to Catherine of France in 1420, he told them instead to go and besiege Sens and kill some Frenchmen (163, 175). The most explicit and deliberate Arthurian feature of Edward's court was the revival of jousting. He 'revived the great Arthurian pageants that had enlivened the courts of Richard II and Edward III' (163). Some of these events at his Court were among the most famous in 15th-century Europe (175-182).

Although in its printed form of 1485 it was to serve the Tudors, Hughes is very likely right when he suggests that it was the Arthurian splendours of Edward's court that stimulated Malory to write his great book in the

⁶¹ J B Bury (1958) *History of the Later Roman Empire* (2 vols, New York: Dover Publications) Vol 1, 172

late 1460s (20, 183-4). When Hughes refers to him as 'the one writer of unquestionable genius in the fifteenth century', he presumably means in Britain (183). For across the Channel, in the intervals of robbery and street-fighting, François Villon was writing some of the greatest poetry in the history of the world.

Writing of Elizabeth (often called Jane) Shore and her lover Edward IV, Sir Thomas More wrote: 'many he had, but her he loved'.⁶² Edward is unlikely to have matched the score of Augustus the Strong in eighteenth-century Saxony and Poland (300), but he surely must have had numerous bastards. It is therefore significant that, apart from two doubtful women of whom we only have the names, the only bastard we really know about, and the only one Edward acknowledged and was kind to, was called Arthur Plantagenet.⁶³ 'In 1477 payment was made by the king to George Lovekyn, tailor and yeoman of the wardrobe, for a coat of black velvet for Arthur, described as "My lord the Bastard"' (171).

Arthur Plantagenet survived to serve the Tudors. He married the daughter of Viscount Lisle in 1511, and in 1523 was given her late father's title (this was sometimes, but not always, granted to husbands of heiresses). He rose to be Deputy of Calais in 1533. But in the end he suffered the fate of virtually all Yorkist relicts under Henry VIII, despite the king's Yorkist mother. Arrested for plotting in 1540, he was found innocent in 1542, "but died in the Tower of London of excitement".⁶⁴ One of his descendants was General Monk, and when the general was rewarded for the Restoration by a Dukedom, he considered himself, because of this descent, entitled to choose the royal title of Duke of Albemarle.⁶⁵

The First Reign 1461-1471

On 28 June 1461, Edward was crowned in Westminster Abbey, riding the crest of an enormous wave of popularity.⁶⁶ After his brilliant victories of Mortimer's Cross and Tow-

ton, it looked as if the Lancastrians were finished for good, and he settled down to clearing up the mess left by Margaret's favourites, and giving the country the best government it had had since Henry II, three centuries earlier. Perhaps his greatest domestic achievement in his two reigns was the restoration of the finances, partly by means of his new coinage.⁶⁷ Much of his administration had to be done through the magnates, who controlled large areas of land, but he distributed functions between them intelligently, and also built up a competent clerical and lay middle class civil service; finally, he established close relations with the London merchants (and sometimes their wives!).⁶⁸ Unlike any previous king, he had the intelligence and initiative to trade himself, in cloth, wool and tin.⁶⁹

The one thing he did *not* do was to rush about conquering. In emergencies, he displayed prodigies of energy, initiative and strategic and tactical generalship, and he was not squeamish about necessary killing. He told Comines that after every victory he rode over the field shouting: "Spare the common soldiers, kill the lords".⁷⁰ Claire Russell pointed out that the English upper classes were then grossly overpopulated: Edward was *culling*.⁷¹

But Edward seems to have differed in an important way from all his European upper class contemporaries. He apparently *did not enjoy killing people*. He much preferred wine, woman and song (he was fond of music as well as the other two), and he would probably have approved the splendid motto of the 1960s, 'make love, not war'. Like many very able people, he both worked hard and played hard. Edward's court was both magnificent and full of fun. A Bohemian gentleman, Gabriel Tetzl, wrote that Edward 'had the most splendid court that could be found in all Christendom'.⁷² Clothing, jewellery and furniture were all sumptuous. There were all kinds of pageantry, lavish feasting, games

⁶⁷ Ross (ref 56) Chapter 16

⁶⁸ *Ibid* Chapters 13-15

⁶⁹ *Ibid* 351-2

⁷⁰ Clive (ref 24) 48

⁷¹ W M S Russell and Claire Russell (1983)

"Evolutionary and Social Aspects of Disease" *Ecology of Disease* 2 95-106, especially 103

⁷² Ross (ref 56) 259

⁵⁹ P Doherty (2003) *Isabella and the Strange Death of Edward II* (London: Constable) 144-145

⁶⁰ C Hill (1986) *Puritanism and Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) Chapter 3

⁶² Clive (ref 24) 221

⁶³ *Ibid* 100

⁶⁴ Sir Sidney Lee ed (1917) *The Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Oxford University Press) 1049, sv Plantagenet, Arthur

⁶⁵ Clive (ref 24) 112 n 2

⁶⁶ *Ibid* 60

and dancing, story-telling, harping and singing, and every kind of enjoyment (175).⁷³

Good government and a lavish court to impress foreigners should have made Edward's great popularity long-enduring among grateful and delighted subjects. But, as Hughes shows, his popularity actually declined during his first reign. His alchemist and Arthurian supporters should have been overjoyed. They had the wise, just and civilised Arthur of most of the Continental romances, the Arthur who is still a worthy ideal for us in the 21st century, and if there was fun and feasting at Edward's court there was plenty of fun and feasting at Camelot.

But that was not the Arthur these ungrateful and jingoistic former supporters wanted. They wanted a 'fierce' Arthur (166), a Grand Master of chivalry. Now Richard Kaeuper has shown that chivalry, far from a restraint on violence, is an ideology of *Prowess* (killing people) and *Largesse* (plundering peasants and townsmen to give gifts to fellow-killers).^{74 75} In short, the jingoists wanted, not the civilised Continental Arthur, but the blood-thirsty conqueror of Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *Historia Regum* was still regarded by most people as authentic history.⁷⁶ Since Edward was not having any of this bloodlust, they felt their hero had turned into a playboy. One London chronicler had the nerve to write that men feared that the king 'had not been chaste of his living' (193),⁷⁷ a piece of hypocrisy worthy of the worst Victorians, or even, far worse, of the modern gutter press – but pots have always called kettles black. The alchemist-physicians were so horrified by Edward's lack of interest in killing that they now resorted to the idea of *curing* the king (as they had tried to do with Henry VI), but this time in the hope of curing Edward of being a decent human being (197).

This discovery of the backfiring of the Ar-

thurian propaganda is one of Hughes's most important and interesting contributions (Chapter 7), for it has obvious implications for the backfiring of propaganda in general.

It happens that Edward did have one disease, though not one the humour-mongers could possibly have understood. He would eat a heavy meal, take an emetic, and eat another one.⁷⁸ This is the disease of *bulimia*, nowadays most common in teenage girls, that is caused by a deficiency of zinc. Julius Caesar and other upper-class Romans suffered from bulimia, and I have diagnosed this as due to lead poisoning, for which there is good evidence in Roman times, for lead poisoning is one cause of zinc deficiency.⁷⁹ It would be interesting to know of possible sources of lead poisoning at Edward's court, such as too much use of wares of lead or pewter (lead-tin alloy). Apart from this one disease, Edward must have been extremely fit in mind and body to execute the brilliant campaigns of 1471.

A second, equally unfair cause of Edward's waning popularity was his romantic marriage to Elizabeth Woodville. He married her secretly on May morning, 1464, and only revealed the marriage, even to his courtiers and Council, in late September.⁸⁰ In the interval Warwick had been intriguing in France to find a docile princess whom he could marry to Edward and control himself. Some historians have thought Edward unwise to have provoked Warwick, who was naturally made to look foolish. But I think this is a mistake. Warwick was bound to rebel some time. In the good old Hollywood expression, England was just not big enough for the Kingmaker and a real King.

Few families in history have been more hated than the innocuous and rather amiable Woodvilles. We have seen that Elizabeth was an enthusiast for Arthurian romances, and she was also a patroness of learning; Queens' College, Cambridge, regarded her as their 'true foundress'.⁸¹ She was loved by her servants and those close to her.⁸² Her

brother, Anthony, second Earl Rivers, was a positive paragon. He was a close friend of Caxton, and probably encouraged him to print in London. Caxton's first printing there was of a translation by Anthony, and he later printed another of Anthony's translation, and an original book by him.^{83 84} Anthony managed to combine his intellectual activities with being the best jousting in Western Europe (178-181). The Italian historian Mancini described Anthony as 'a kind, serious and just man... Whatever his prosperity he had injured nobody, though benefiting many'.⁸⁵ As favourites go, the Woodvilles were not even particularly greedy, certainly far less so than the king's brothers Clarence and Gloucester, who disputed fiercely about the vast possessions of their Neville wives.⁸⁶

Warwick, of course, hated anyone with influence over the king. But the other magnates seem also to have resented any newcomers sharing the Court cake. The most tragic case is that of the loyal and generally decent Lord Hastings, who regarded Anthony as a rival for the position of the king's best friend. After Edward's death, his hostility to the Woodvilles led him to support Richard of Gloucester as Regent, enabling Richard to kidnap the young king and imprison Anthony, who was the young king's 'governor'. When, to his horror, Hastings realised Richard's real aims, he made an approach to the Woodvilles, but it was far too late, and both Hastings and Anthony went to the block.⁸⁷ The day before his murder, Anthony, second Earl Rivers, made his will and composed a moving last ballad.⁸⁸

Warwick spread abroad the assertion that the Woodvilles were low-born, and this lie was widely believed on the Continent. The father of Elizabeth and Anthony was Richard Woodville, first Earl Rivers, their mother Jacquetta de Luxembourg, daughter and sister of Counts of St Pol, and widow of the Duke of Bedford, hence sister-in-law of Henry V.

⁸³ C Knight (1991) *Wm Caxton* (Alton, Hants: Beech Publishing House) 78, 1=1

⁸⁴ Ross (ref 56) 97-8

⁸⁵ *Ibid* 98

⁸⁶ Clive (ref 24) 186-8

⁸⁷ P M Kendall (1955) *Richard the Third* (London: Allen and Unwin) 162, 169-70, 180, 204, 207-13

⁸⁸ *Ibid* 211-12

'Lord Rivers had been a peer since 1448, which was a good deal longer than many of the other members of the House of Lords; he had been a Knight of the Garter since 1450, and he was also a Privy Councillor; as for Duchess Jacquetta, she had once been the highest-ranking lady in England', presumably between the death of Catherine of France and the arrival of Margaret of Anjou.⁸⁹ Jacquetta 'was descended from the kings of Bohemia and the Emperors of Germany' (111). The four Emperors were Heinrich VII, Karel IV, Wenceslas and Sigismund, the last three being also Kings of Bohemia. Hughes notes the interesting fact that from Heinrich VII the Luxembourg family claimed descent from Melusine (110), the lady who became a snake below the waist every Saturday.⁹⁰ This snaky lady was an important image in alchemy, initiating the disintegration of the *nigredo*, as shown in an alchemical picture reproduced by Hughes (111).

Warwick finally rebelled in 1469, and for the next two years Edward's fortunes fluctuated wildly. First, taken somewhat by surprise and with the armies of his supporters Pembroke and Devon destroyed separately by the rebels, he was actually imprisoned by Warwick, who now planned to set up his son-in-law Clarence as puppet king. False, fleeting, perjured Clarence⁹¹ was happy to oblige. Fortunately, despite the Arthurian backfire, Edward was still too popular with both common people and magnates to be killed, and they soon forced Warwick to release him. Warwick and Clarence continued to make trouble, but Edward, free and collecting an army, was able to drive them into exile in France. Warwick now dropped Clarence, deciding to restore Henry VI as a much better puppet. False, fleeting, perjured Clarence, as happy to betray his father-in-law as his brother, soon planned to change sides again, and did eventually support Edward. Margaret, who naturally detested Warwick, was persuaded by Louis XI to agree to a deal with him. Margaret waited to see what would happen, and was later delayed by bad weather, but Warwick invaded at once, with French money and Lancastrian

⁸⁹ Clive (ref 24) 114

⁹⁰ N Philip (2000) *Annotated Myths and Legends* (London: Covent Garden Books) 75

⁹¹ *Richard III* Act I Scene 4, line 55

⁷³ *Ibid* 259-64

⁷⁴ R W Kaeuper (1999) *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) *passim*

⁷⁵ W M S Russell (2001) "Arthurian Literature, Chivalry and Violence" *Pendragon* 29 No 2 34-36

⁷⁶ T D Kendrick (1970) *British Antiquity* (London: Methuen) Chapter 2

⁷⁷ Clive (ref 24) 100

⁷⁸ Ross (ref 56) 415

⁷⁹ W M S Russell (1988) "The Social Biology of Zinc" *Social Biology and Human Affairs* 53 21-38

⁸⁰ Ross (ref 56) 85, 91

⁸¹ *Ibid* 270

⁸² Clive (ref 24) 152

support. He was able to drive Edward in turn into exile in Burgundy (where his sister Margaret was married to Duke Charles the Rash), solely because the Marquess of Montagu, hitherto loyal to Edward despite being Warwick's brother, suddenly changed sides with a large army on which Edward was relying.

With ships supplied by Burgundy and the Hanseatic League, Edward made his final successful return. His return and triumph were related soon afterwards by a supporter, in a *Historie of the Arrivall of Edward IV in England*, part of which 'has been lifted wholesale out of some Arthurian romance'.⁹² Bad weather forced him to land at Ravenspur on the Humber, but fortunately his army could survive there and grow under the protection of Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, to whom he had been kind. Here the alchemists seem to have missed a trick. The Percys had the moon as a badge. Shakespeare and his audience knew this, and they took the allusion when Harry Hotspur cried:⁹³

*By heaven, methinks it were an easy leap,
To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon...*

We have seen that the alliance of sun and moon (gold and silver) was a crucial step in the alchemical work; but Hughes reports no alchemists' comments on this fortunate alliance.

In two great marches and two decisive battles, Edward was able to destroy all his dangerous enemies. Warwick and Montagu were killed in the battle of Barnet, Prince Edward of Lancaster (Margaret's son) in the battle of Tewkesbury, nearly all the Lancastrian leaders were executed after the latter battle, and Margaret was captured and imprisoned. The events of these two critical years can be followed in the excellent complementary accounts and maps of Ross and Clive.^{94 95} After 1471, until Richard III's tyranny opened the way for Henry Tudor, the Lancastrian cause really was finished, and Edward could settle down to his second reign with no serious enemies and his popularity restored even among the jingoists by

his remarkable performance in his final campaign.

The Second Reign 1471-1483



In his second reign, Edward continued in the way I have already described, governing well and enjoying himself, working hard and playing hard. But there were two special events in this second reign. The first was Edward's invasion of France. Mainly, of course, after the events of 1469-71, he

was taking the advice Shakespeare put in the mouth of Henry IV:⁹⁶

*Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels...*

Precisely this point had been made by William of Worcester in the 1450s (36-7), and it was now repeated by John Alcock (coincidentally Bishop of Worcester) in an address given on 30 November 1472 (251). But by going through the motions Edward hoped to give a sop to his jingoist supports. They didn't actually expect him to conquer all Europe like Geoffrey's Arthur, but the genealogists did assert his right to France (137) and even Castile (35, 118), through the wife of Edmund of York, Isabella, daughter of Pedro the Cruel.

Edward spent several years making financial and logistic preparations, and securing a firm promise of support from Charles the Rash of Burgundy. He raised £180,000, only a little less than Henry V's £216,868, and formed an army of 11,451 combatants, even larger than Henry V's roughly 10,000.⁹⁷ A large and well supported fleet landed the army at Calais in June and July 1475: the complete movements of the army are shown in an excellent map in Ross's biography.⁹⁸

Edward wrote to Louis demanding the kingdom of France.⁹⁹ This was, of course, just a diplomatic gambit. Edward was far too intelligent to think he could conquer France.

Henry V and invaded a country torn in two by a vicious civil war, under a king not much better than Henry VI, and a conniving Queen only too ready to collaborate. Edward faced a fairly united country under one of the most intelligent kings it ever had. Anyway, recent history had shown all too plainly that even if the English conquered France by a fluke, they could not possibly hold it. The most Edward could have attempted, with full support from Charles the Rash, was to bluff Louis, preferably without any fighting, into giving back one of the old English possessions, Normandy or Gascony.

But by the time the army got to St Christ-sur-Somme, it was clear that Charles had let Edward down completely, and would not send him a man. Edward now had the problem of withdrawing an invasion army without any fighting. He was able to solve the problem because he and Louis, both good generals and warriors at need, were equally intelligent and equally determined not to throw their two countries into a ruinous war. Since Edward's huge army could do a lot of damage, Louis was quite prepared to buy them off.

The two kings met on a bridge over the Somme at Picquigny. At a meeting on a similar bridge in 1419, the then Dauphin (later Charles VII) had murdered Jean the Fearless of Burgundy. To avoid any such unpleasantness, a fence was built in the middle of the bridge, and Edward and Louis conversed across it.¹⁰⁰ The two kings got on well, and agreement was soon reached. The terms included a seven year truce, in which Edward's friend Duke François of Brittany was included – but Edward said he did not care what happened to Charles the Rash, who had let him down so disgracefully. A trade agreement was very beneficial to English merchants. Louis was to pay 75,000 crowns down, and 50,000 a year indefinitely. (Edward knew of course that Louis would stop paying as soon as he felt there was no danger of a renewed alliance and invasion by England and Burgundy, but the tribute, which did continue for several years, was all clear profit.) Louis also paid 50,000 crowns to ransom Margaret of Anjou. (Having got her, he kept her prisoner until she signed away her rights to Anjou, which became

French.) Edward was to withdraw his troops to Calais at once, and he managed this within a week.¹⁰¹

The Treaty of Picquigny was one of the most glorious and wonderful achievements in world history. I have recently published a paper about three remarkable men who averted serious wars,¹⁰² but Edward's achievement was even greater. To withdraw a huge invasion army without any bloodshed must surely be a unique achievement in world history.

The Londoners, who appreciated trade agreements, gave Edward and his army a very warm welcome.¹⁰³ But Hughes shows that the Arthurian propaganda backfired again, and the jingoists were furious (265-6, 269-70). Edward had saved tens of thousands of English and Welsh soldiers from crippling or death, and tens of thousands of English and Welsh families from bereavement. He had made excellent trade agreements, and acquired so much money in tribute that for several years he could 'live off his own' and spare his subjects the normal parliamentary taxation.¹⁰⁴ But he hadn't done what the jingoists wanted – kill tens of thousands of Frenchmen and leave tens of thousands of French families. So he was not the hero they had hoped for. Hughes shows that Richard of Gloucester sought to cash in on the jingoist complaints, jump on their bandwagon, and dig in the genealogical and prophetic literature for items that could be twisted in his favour (271-3). Clearly he was already thinking of usurpation and murder.

Edward himself knew very well the Treaty was the best thing he had done in his life. He ordered the meeting on the bridge to be carved on the misericord of the royal stall in the Garter chapel. This beautiful misericord is reproduced by Hughes (269) and Clive.¹⁰⁵ The detail is marvellous, and the symmetrical composition wonderfully impressive. The work is worthy of the great deed it commemorates. In Clive's words, 'what Edward is telling posterity is perfectly clear. This, he

¹⁰¹ Ross (ref 56) 232-4, 237-8

¹⁰² W M S Russell (2002) "Three Wars that Never Happened" *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 18 23-33

¹⁰³ Clive (ref 24) 209

¹⁰⁴ Ross (ref 56) 237

¹⁰⁵ Clive (ref 24) Plate 11

⁹² Clive (ref 24) 178 nn 3, 4

⁹³ *Henry IV Part 1 Act I Scene 3*, lines 201-2

⁹⁴ Ross (ref 56) Chapter 7; 139, 162, maps

⁹⁵ Clive (ref 24) Chapters 9-11; 161, 168, 169, maps

⁹⁶ *Henry IV Part 2 Act IV Scene 3*, lines 345-6

⁹⁷ Ross (ref 56) 216, 218, 221

⁹⁸ *Ibid* 223; 227, map

⁹⁹ Clive (ref 24) 202

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* 205-8

says to us, was my finest hour'.¹⁰⁸

The second unusual event in the second reign was the long-delayed come-uppance of false, fleeting, perjured Clarence. Edward, all too indulgent, had forgiven his brother again and again, and loaded him with benefits. Clarence repaid him with utter ingratitude, greed, criminal activities and incorrigible plotting.^{107 108} Just before his arrest in 1477, he had almost certainly poisoned his wife, in the hope of making a foreign marriage as a power base for destroying his brother. He followed this with a particularly nasty crime. He kidnapped a perfectly innocent woman (in itself a quite illegal act), accused her of the poisoning, terrified the jury to get her convicted (they actually begged her forgiveness after the trial for sending the poor woman innocent to her death, and hanged her.¹⁰⁹ Edward, very reluctantly, decided at last to give Clarence his just desserts – and if anyone richly deserved what he got, it was this scoundrel. Parliament fully supported the decision, and indeed pressed Edward when he was for the last time delaying. To avoid scandal and spare Clarence the ignominy of public execution, he was quietly killed in the Tower on 18 February 1478. The silly story of wasting a very expensive malmsey butt to drown him was soon going the rounds, but we do not know the actual method used.¹¹⁰

Hughes shows that Edward's ungrateful critics were positively perverse. Edward saved his countrymen from an enormous waste of blood and treasure, and they complained he was not a hero. Edward, much too late, finally dealt justly with his criminal brother, and they called him a tyrant (292).

Edward was to do his countrymen one last service, by averting a war with France that was being engineered by his intriguing sister, Margaret of Burgundy in 1480.¹¹¹ On 9 April 1483 he died at Westminster, probably from a stroke.¹¹² He was the first English king to die solvent since Henry II's death in 1189.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ Ibid 209

¹⁰⁷ Ibid 107, 215-16

¹⁰⁸ Ross (ref 56) 187-93

¹⁰⁹ Clive (ref 24) 216

¹¹⁰ Ibid 216-19

¹¹¹ Ibid 215

¹¹² Ross (ref 56) 414-15

¹¹³ Clive (ref 24) 252

Edward had given his people peace, by avoiding ruinous wars, prosperity by his trade deals, sound finances and as good government as was possible in the 15th century. He was responsible not only for rebuilding St George's Chapel at Windsor, but for other fine building schemes. His encouragement of English music was so successful that the Duke of Milan tried to recruit English singers and musicians.¹¹⁴ He supported learning, giving large sums to King's College, Cambridge,¹¹⁵ and he encouraged Anthony to give the Prince of Wales a classical education (257). 'Edward was the first English king for whom there is evidence of serious, formal collecting of books; in a sense he was the founding father of the present British Library' (242). Altogether, he was one of the best monarchs in the history of England and Wales.

The alchemist-physicians would have nothing to do with Richard III, but cordially welcomed the Tudors – as we saw in the case of Ripley's red and white rose (300-301). And we all know how the Tudors enthused over Arthurian legend. Even here, Hughes has found a fine example new to me: apparently Elizabeth of York, pregnant with Prince Arthur, was taken to Winchester so that the baby would be born in Camelot (307).

Conclusion

This completes my comments on and summarising of some salient points in Hughes's book. As I said at the outset, this gives little indication of the vast mass of fascinating facts in this remarkable work.

The gremlins who assail all academic books, however carefully proof-read, have produced some odd slips, which I mention so that they can be corrected in future editions.

p66 *Aeles* should be *Aeetes*; p221

Achaeon should be *Achaemenid* (super-

gremlin here!); p239 *Timeum* should be

Timaues; p 257 *legem* should be *legum*

Hughes's wonderful book has made original contributions to Arthurian studies, the history of alchemy and its relation to politics, and the political and cultural history of 13th-century England and Wales. I hope it gets the very wide readership it richly deserves.

¹¹⁴ Ross (ref 56) 274-7

¹¹⁵ Clive (ref 24) 224

Kenneth Hodges "Guinevere's Politics in Malory's *Morte Darthur*"

Journal of English and Germanic Philology
University of Illinois (January 2005) 54-79

My thanks to Larry Hood for a copy of this paper

In this booklet-length article, the author reads Guinevere's actions in a way which he clearly feels is more in line with the way Malory himself intended than as the saga of a love affair's emotional ups and downs most modern readers see.

He makes clear that, given the context of the time at which Malory wrote, that of the Wars of the Roses, when the situation of an English queen was inevitably such that the personal was the political, inescapably, her every action potentially affecting the whole public arena of the court, inevitably the same constraints would apply to the Guinevere of whom he wrote.

Just as an actual royal consort of his time would head an affinity – a group at court owing loyalty to her, and in turn whose interests she would be expected to advance, by influencing in their favour the king's decisions and appointments and choices of advisers, and spending her own independent financial resources when necessary to assist members of this group, separate from the king's affinity, or those of his favourites, a group, moreover, likely to be much wider than her blood kin – so too would Guinevere.

Interestingly, however, because at Arthur's court she had with her neither her own blood kin, nor a following that had accompanied her to Camelot from her father's court, in effect her affinity increasingly became that of Lancelot, portrayed as the strongest of several such groups jockeying for position and status at the court, and thus, inevitably, potentially, then actually, opposed to other affinities, particularly that of Gawain and his kin.

In this situation, any breach between Guinevere and Lancelot, as with his banishment by her after his fathering of a child, Galahad, on Elaine and Corbenic, threatened her political security, but also Lancelot's affinity, weakening her ability to act as "good lady" in promoting their interests. It also weakened Arthur himself, by destabilising court power balances, already strained in the aftermath of the Grail hunt disruption.

The author studies the working out of political necessities, including the legalistic aspects involved in judicial duels, in a series of key episodes in the later stages of the

Guinevere / Lancelot interaction, post-Grail but prior to the final breakdown of Camelot. He shows how the adultery of Lancelot and Guinevere was important, not because it involved a sin, but because it created a public political problem, and the ways in which, as a result, Guinevere's actions and reactions, and those not just of Lancelot but of others in his affinity, their views and needs voiced by their, in effect, shop steward, Bors, were shaped by politics and explained by it as much or perhaps more than by love-affair related emotions such as jealousy.

Again and again, drawing in particular on the episodes of "The Poisoned Apple", "The Fair Maid of Ascolat", and "The Knight of the Cart", Hodges' detailed analysis of Malory's text shows how behaviour hard to explain in terms of modern emotional expectations of how a truly loving woman should respond, is clearly explicable when it is realised that Guinevere is having to filter her emotions through a screen of harsh political necessity. The article offers a thoroughly fascinating insight for the reader, both into the harsh, almost Machiavellian, practicalities of events, and Malory's own sharp awareness as a political observer of the working out of such necessities.

Steve Sneyd



Simon Rouse



www.clannarthur.com

