pendragon

Journal of
The Pendragon Society

Historians

XXXIII No 3

editorial

XXXIII No 3 *Late Spring* 2006

Historians

Welcome to this palindromic issue 33 / 3. This issue introduces two historians, the medieval Gerald of Wales and the 20th-century R G Collingwood, takes a look at the attractions of archaeology for those who take part in it and explores creative and re-creative history, represented for example by Arthurian board games.

There is also much (too much, perhaps?) on the new views of history as put about by revisionist historians and popularising novelists. There is nothing wrong in revising our views of history – in fact good historians do it all the time – but quite a lot amiss with creative speculation masquerading as the truth in default of critical thinking. Whatever your mode of transport to past times, whether hobbyhorse or bandwagon, do let us know if you agree or disagree with anything you read here or elsewhere on the matter.

The striking cover illustration is by Ian Brown, whose take on the theme is best represented in his own words.

Taken from the idea of Arthur and his knights sleeping in a cave until Britain needs them, and of Merlin watching over them until their time has com, I've imagined that, for Arthur and his knights to be effective in helping Britain in its hour of need, it would probably be a good idea for Merlin to occasionally rouse them from their slumber and bring them up-to-date with such matters as history, current affairs and technology, otherwise they would be hopelessly bewildered, emerging into the modern world. Considering that Merlin is often depicted as Arthur's mentor, some of these discussions might lead to long nights of discourse over many subjects, such as history, battle strategy and philosophy. In this illustration therefore, after the rest of the knights have returned to their slumber, Arthur and Merlin continue to peruse Merlin's library and enjoy lengthy discussion deep into the night.

Future issues

We have in hand a couple of items on Arthurian comics and humour, along with other submissions including Gerald of Wales Part 2 and Sir Gawain and some fiction. I can't spot a linking theme there, but at least there should be something to appeal to most readers!

There is also promised a new translation of Sion Dafydd Rees's *Catalogue of Welsh Giants*, with several Arthurian references, from the 16th or 17th century, and a guide to interpreting Welsh place-names so that Anglophones will be able to make some sense of the stumbling-block of mutations, plus of course more of Alistair McBeath's fascinating series on Arthurian gaming.

Thanks

Here we document some more appreciative comments from members. Eileen Buchanan from Renfrewshire expresses her "thanks for another great *Pendragon*" while Dr Karen Ralls, writing from Oxford, declares that *Pendragon* is "very inspiring and a tribute to all [the] hard work" of those involved, adding "Well done, all!"

Meanwhile, Paul Parry from Prestatyn "thoroughly enjoyed" and Geoff Sawers in Abercenet [Reading in Berkshire, as if you didn't know] was "delighted" with the *Treasures of Britain* issue. We hope the current issue lives up to all your expectations.

Thanks too for several recent donations, all of which help us to keep the journal at a set price with a regular number of pages, despite rises in the cost of paper and postage. And thank you to all the contributors and to the journal team for sustaining the magazine. Unlike peer-reviewed academic journals we aim to make *Pendragon* the Society's collective voice and so are reliant on the membership to let us know their thoughts and views.

pendragon

The Journal of The Pendragon Society

Established 1959 ISSN 0143 8379

Contents

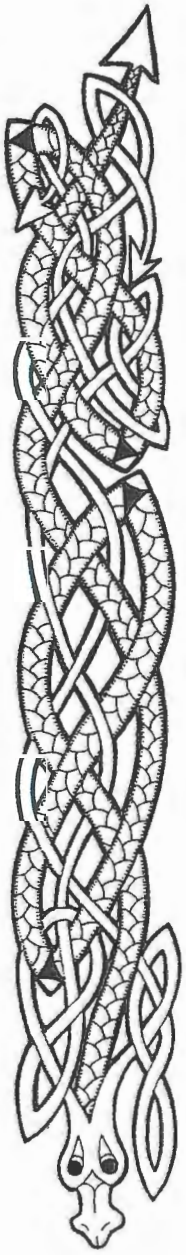
Pendragon pursues Arthurian Studies: history & archaeology; legend, myth & folklore; literature, the arts & popular culture
Vol XXXIII *No 3* Spring 2006 *Issue theme* **Historians**

CONTENTS

Illustrations / picture research Ian Brown, Chris Lovegrove, Simon Rouse

President Professor W M S Russell
Enquiries and subscriptions Simon and Anne Rouse, 7 Verlon Close, Montgomery, Powys SY15 6SH, Wales **e-mail** simon_rouse@talk21.com
Four issues £10.00 UK, £13.00 Europe, £16.50 ($26.00) USA / RoW
Sample £2.00 **Cheques** *The Pendragon Society*
Members' contact details, where known, are stored in a retrieval system for Society purposes only; if you object we will remove your entry
All letters answered if accompanied by SAE or IRC
Editor Chris Lovegrove, Bryn Llechog, Rhosfach, Maenclochog, Pembrokeshire SA66 7JS, Wales
Chair Fred Stedman-Jones, Smithy House, Kingsley Road, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 6SX
Advertisement rates £20.00 per page and *pro rata*, minimum quarter-page
Special rates for back cover and inserts – enquire for details
These rates are for camera-ready copy at A4 scale for reduction to A5

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



Letters

PEN-DRAGON

PARHELIA AND PRECESSION

Congratulations to the Editor and all the contributors on the Treasures of Britain issue [*XXXIII* No 2], a treasure-house indeed of poetry, prose and pictures. And very many thanks to Alastair McBeath for giving us the accurate and fascinating information about parhelia, and for providing such a thorough answer to my question about Kidinnu. This answer certainly confirms what a great scientist was Hipparchus.

W M S Russell, Reading, Berks

CARDINAL DIRECTIONS, LIFE AND DEATH ...

I found myself in complete agreement with the various comments in *Pendragon XXXIII* No 2, praising the journal and its contents generally, and how welcome it always is. As ever, there was much to enjoy and inform in this issue, including the Loch Lomond Tourist Board's advertisement — sorry, Hugh McArthur's fine piece on "The Arthurian Lake"!

Charles Evans-Gunther's "Avalon of the Mind" (pp18-23) raised a few thoughts especially, as its title might infer. Though unintentionally, the "pre-Galfidian Avalon" typo (p18, column 1, paragraph 2) caused mild amusement: "pre-Galfidious Avalon" to contrast with the Napoleonic "Perfidious Albion", perhaps? I digress. While interesting and entertaining enough, I struggled to agree with Charles' seeming suggestion that some unstated inter-societal transmission of mysticism over the ages was responsible for the association of the direction of West with Death, or the Land of the Dead. Surely the link would be more likely so global because of individual societies independently connecting the sunset direction with the time to rest or cease activity? Death is simply a very final cessation of activity at a practical level, after all.

Similarly, the four- and five-fold divisions of the world or the universe stem naturally from the four clear cardinal directions. East and West are shown respectively by the rising and setting of the Sun or other celestial bodies, while the Sun's highest diurnal point defines the other two, South for the solar direction in the northern hemisphere, and North for the antisolar direction. Any society with observers who watched the night sky with diligence would know it appears to revolve around an invisible point, the pole. (It is only relatively recently this has been marked by a close, bright star in the north. Western records indicate our Polaris was not near enough to the pole to be considered a good marker for it before Renaissance times, when the star was first so-named, for instance.) Either this polar axis, or the observer's own, apparently central, location (or a combination of both) would naturally create the fifth world-division. Again, there seems little need to imagine an unknown trans-society mechanism for passing on such information.

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

... AND BURIAL

Geoff Sawers' *Lancelot 2* and *3* [poems] were wonderfully timely as the last couple of days have looked spring like, but in fact freezing. In fact, the *Treasures of Britain* issue was full as always of items of interest or enjoyment.

On the trope of historic figures without known burial places [letters last issue and *Igraine* issue] Attila the Hun is a classic since the story is that his Huns diverted a river, built his tomb in its bed, then allowed the flow back into its old course so no one could ever disturb the grave. Given the practicalities involved, this has an air of myth about it, which fits in well with the others cited – though one way round the problem of river damming would be to put the tomb on a crannog and then perhaps sink it.

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, W Yorkshire

• *I'm sure Steve knows that* ***Alaric the Goth*** *was the actual recipient of this ritual, in 412 CE in southern Italy. In the words of Edward Gibbon, "By the labour of a captive multitude they forcibly diverted the course of the Busentinus, a small river that washes the walls of Consentia. The royal sepulchre, adorned with the splendid spoils and trophies of Rome, was constructed in the vacant bed; the waters were then restored to their natural channel; and the secret spot where the remains of Alaric had been deposited was for ever concealed by the inhuman massacre of the prisoners who had been employed to execute the work" (*Decline and Fall *xxxi).*

Attila*'s death (on his wedding night, no less, in 453) and burial near the Danube was no less notable: "The remains of Attila were enclosed within three coffins of gold, of silver, and of iron, and privately buried in the night: the spoils of nations were thrown into his grave; the captives who had opened the ground were inhumanly massacred; and the same Huns ... feasted ... about the recent sepulchre of their king" (*Decline and Fall *xxxv). The death of Attila is famously celebrated in the medieval German poem* The Nibelungenlied *and in the Icelandic* Saga of the Volsungs, *both in Penguin Classics. Another mysterious sepulchre is the theme of the next letter.*

Intriguing news from Govan Old Parish Church – the Govan sarcophagus is now officially believed to be 6th century – at last ["Early British Christians" *XXXII* No 4, 32-3]. My friend tells me that it was examined using new technology last year whilst restoration took place, so we're back with the possibility that it could have been to house St Constantine's bones (the hollow hewn in the centre is rather narrow and short for a body). Of course the A on the horse's rear flank will now provoke even more debate...

Ian Brown

Cath Palug ["Palug's Cat identified?" *XXXIII* No 1, 9], as far as I am concerned, means "battle cat": *cath* means "battle" and *palug* an indigenous form of Lynx. Battle Cat most likely refers to a Pictish warrior from the Pictish *Cat* province Caithness, still sometimes referred to as *Catness*. These lands of the north-west of Scotland are the clan homeland of *Clan Chattan*, the Clan of the Cat which still thrives today as a confederation of smaller clans. Their motto is "Touch Not the Cat (Without a Glove)".

The Highland wild cat is still extant in this area, and interestingly enough is the only known feline which does not descend from the African feline: its origins are quite unknown. I imagine that Battle Cat would have been a major Pictish warrior hero or leader whose homelands abutted Dalriada to its northern frontier.

Eileen Buchanan, Houston, Renfrewshire

• *Thanks to Eileen for her intriguing news. A 12th-century Life of St Kentigern makes St Constantine a son of Rydderch and, like his father, a 6th-century king of the Strathclyde Britons. The authors of* A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain *(Seaby1991) believe however that "the careers of at least three Constantines have been confused in the medieval records" and this makes any statement about the Govan sarcophagus being a reliquary for his bones hard to substantiate. Eileen reports that there is as yet no formal academic paper on the examination of the sarcophagus, but the arguments in favour of a 6th-century date are eagerly awaited.*[1]

*A Yorkshire Parks Authority press release (October 6 2005) gave lynx bones from a cave near Settle a date range of 80-320 CE and those from Kinsey Cave a range of 425-600, confirming that the lynx survived into the early medieval period and giving a context to early Arthurian tales of battles with "lions" [*XXXII *No 3, 9]. I've never before heard* palug *given as meaning a lynx – Modern Welsh* palf *"paw",* palfalu *"grope" and* palfod *"buffet" seem to suggest an origin more in keeping with a fierce creature. The Scottish wild cat on the other hand may, if reports of its interbreeding with feral pet cats are true, be heading for extinction.*

BY MERLIN'S BEARD!

Thank you for *XXXIII* No 2 and for having included my "Dear Bedivere" in it. Please consider my "A Goatly Prophecy" for publication in *Pendragon*. Neither I nor my poem are anti-semitic, quite the opposite. The prediction of the end of the Jews in the poem came to me, like the rest of the poem, out of the air or the *zeitgeist* or wherever such things originate.

Bill West, Chicago, Ill, USA

---

[1] Gerry Braiden "Govan's place on Scots tourist trail set in stone" *Evening Times* March 4 2004 <www.eveningtimes.co.uk>

Gerald the Welshman, Arthur and Merlin (1)

W M S Russell

Restored view of Gerald's tomb effigy, St David's Cathedral

Few people in any age have combined so active a life with so prolific an output of writings as Gerald the Welshman (Giraldus Cambrensis).[1] He was born in 1147 at Manorbier on the coast of Pembrokeshire, a beauty spot he loved all his life. His father was William de Barri, one of the Norman lords who had already established themselves in South Wales. Through his mother Angharad (William's second wife) he had as grandmother one of the most famous characters of the whole Middle Ages, the Princess Nesta, daughter of Rhys ap Tudor, last of the Welsh kings (after his death in 1093 there were only princes in Wales). Nesta married Gerald de Windsor, another Norman lord in Pembrokeshire, who thus allied himself to her brother Griffith, who succeeded Rhys (but not as king). Known as the Helen of Wales, she was renowned for her phenomenal beauty, her sensational abduction by Owen ap Cadwgan, and the distinguished noble families she bore to her husband and lovers (including Henry I of England), the FitzGeralds, the FitzStephens, the de Cogans, the FitzHenries, and probably Robert of Gloucester, the champion of his half-sister Matilda and the patron of Geoffrey of Monmouth.

Gerald was thus strictly ¼ Welsh and ¾ Norman, but on the Welsh side he was of royal descent. He generally regarded himself as ½ Welsh and ½ Norman. Since the Russells may have been Norman peasants who came over under the Angevins, and my mother was a Moy Evans of Swansea, I feel a certain affinity with Gerald! But one needs no such affinity to find this lively personality extremely likeable. Gerald was so impartial, because of his mixed ancestry, that in his *Description of Wales* he has a chapter of advice to the Normans how to conquer Wales, and another chapter of advice to the Welsh how to prevent this![2] But in the long run, as we shall see, he earned the name by which he is known by his magnificent devotion to a thoroughly Welsh cause.

As befitted the grandson of Nesta, Gerald was extremely good-looking. His vocation appeared early. 'When his three elder brothers used to build castles on the sands at Manorbier, he would always build a church.'[3] He was educated by his uncle, David FitzGerald, Bishop of St David's, at an abbey in Gloucester, and at Paris, but he must have educated himself considerably, for he became one of the best educated men in Europe, at a time when education in Wales was said to be at a low ebb.

In 1172 he returned from Paris and was ordained, and with his uncle's backing he soon became a Canon of St David's and Archdeacon of Brecon. He proceeded to carry out financial and administrative reforms in the see of his rather lazy uncle. A new

[1] Owen, H (1889) *Gerald the Welshman* (London; Whiting & Co) *passim*, the source of the information about Gerald and his writings in this part of the paper

[2] Giraldus Cambrensis (1908) *The Itinerary through Wales and Description of Wales* (transl Colt Hoare, Sir Richard, London: Dent) 198-205

[3] Owen (ref 1) 103-104

church was built at Kerry, on the border between the territories of St David's and St Asaph. Gerald heard that the Bishop of St Asaph was coming to dedicate (and thus claim) this church. He at once got horse and arms from his kinsfolk, rushed to Kerry, and celebrated mass in the church before the Bishop arrived. After mutual threats of excommunication, Gerald won the day, but he then sent the enemy Bishop a present of good food and wine, and 'they kiss and make friends'.[4] Clearly Gerald was equally excellent as a tactician, a lawyer and a diplomat.

The fight for St David's

From 1176 to 1203, Gerald fought, with enormous courage, devotion and pertinacity, to restore the independence of St David's and the Welsh Church from Canterbury. He had no difficulty in finding documents to prove that the Welsh Church had originally been independent (it was long independent even of Rome). The original metropolitan was Caerleon, but in the sixth century Dubritius resigned the Primacy to St David, and he moved the metropolitan function to Menevia, afterwards called St David's. Canterbury only began to take over in late Saxon times, and established its domination after the death of Rhys ap Tudor and the control over the Welsh princes achieved by Henry I.

This sequence of events shows all too clearly why Gerald's heroic campaign was bound to fail, though he never seems to have drawn this inference from these facts well known to him. As generally in the Middle Ages, politics and religion were inextricably intertwined. The independence of the Welsh Church was the way to a politically independent Wales. Conversely, the primacy of Canterbury (Gerald did realise independence from Rome would be a pipe dream) was vital for the control of Wales by the English crown. Hence the Angevin kings were just as implacably opposed to Gerald's scheme as the Canterbury Archbishops.

In pursuit of his lost cause, Gerald sacrificed his own more personal dream, of becoming Bishop – or, as of course he hoped, Archbishop – of his uncle's see, the most sacred in Wales. Of course the Angevin kings, who wanted a docile puppet in that see, would never tolerate its occupation by an obstinate trouble-maker of royal Welsh descent. Both Gerald, and unfortunately the kings, realised that this personal position would help his patriotic campaign (so Gerald's ambition was not selfishly personal, but of course that told against him). All three kings were falsely affable to him (John even promised him the see of St David's) but all made other appointments and let him down. (Richard I died just before making an appointment, but we can be sure he would have acted like his father and brother.) They offered him other sees to keep him out of mischief – Bangor, Llandaff and some Irish ones – but Gerald always refused them.

The chapter of St David's nominated him for Bishop in 1176 – Henry II over-ruled them – and in 1198 – John, despite having falsely accepted this, finally over-ruled them. By 1201, the chapter and all Welsh clerics abandoned him, and he appealed to the princes. They understood the religious-political connection as well as anyone, and enthusiastically supported him. As a result, John temporarily outlawed him, and the cause was as hopeless as ever.

In pursuit of his aims, Gerald made three journeys to Rome, to appeal to the Pope on behalf of both himself and St David's. Innocent III enjoyed conversing with him, and accepted as valid his evidence for the metropolitan status of St David's. As falsely affable as the Angevin kings, he addressed Gerald as the elect of St David's, and even as Archbishop – but then smoothly explained he was not speaking *ex cathedra*. In fact, the resources of the English Church were much greater than those of the Welsh Church, so when the two parties offered bribes in the form of contributions to Rome, Gerald's enemies easily won. Innocent therefore appointed commissions to rule on both the election and the status of St David's; they ruled against Gerald, and nearly ruined him with their order to pay costs. These vain journeys to Rome were hazardous enterprises in the 12th century. On one of them Gerald was robbed, on another he was captured by the French, only getting away when he proved he was too poor to pay a ransom.

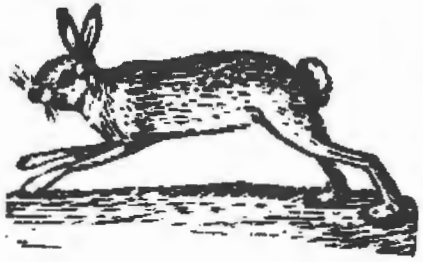
In 1203, Gerald finally gave up, realising the cause was hopelessly lost. He accepted the appointment of Geoffrey de Henelawe, and, after one more journey to Rome to resign all his Church offices (Innocent restored

[4] *Ibid* 9

them to him), he finally retired from his active life, and devoted himself to writing his last books. He died in 1223, and, very fittingly, was buried at St David's.

Gerald died unhonoured, unsung and forgotten by the ungrateful churchmen of Wales. But he was not forgotten by the princes. '"Many and great wars", said the Prince of Powys, "have we Welshmen waged with England, but none so great and fierce as his who fought the king and the archbishop, and withstood the might of the whole clergy and people of England, for the honour of Wales".'[5] And the last word was uttered by Llewelyn the Great:[6]

So long as Wales shall stand, by the writings of the chroniclers and by the songs of the bards, shall his noble deed by praised throughout all time.



The Writings

All Gerald's books were written in Latin, and exceptionally good Latin by the standards of his century. The range of his subject-matter is amazing. In the words of one of his modern editors, 'Geography, natural history, ethics, divinity, canon law, biography, natural history, epistolary correspondence, and poetry employed his pen by turns, and in all these departments of literature he has left memorials of his ability'.[7] There were plenty of scholars in his day proficient in one or two of these fields, but perhaps none others in all of them, and in one he was very unusual: he was probably the best naturalist between Pliny and the Emperor Friedrich II. In his *Itinerary through Wales* he gives an excellent account of the building activities of the beavers of the river Teivy, long since extinct, and in his *Topography of Ireland* 'his accuracy of observation is shown by his distinguishing the species of the Irish from the English hare, a fact unknown to scientific naturalists until some fifty years ago' (Owen, writing in 1889).[8]

Most of Gerald's books survived the Middle Ages, printed editions began to appear in the 16th century, and the collected surviving works were printed in seven volumes in the 1860s. Gerald's two books about Wales will be considered in the second part of this paper. At this point, I will briefly mention some of his other works.

Gerald made three visits to Ireland, in 1183, 1185-6 and 1198. During the second and longest visit, he collected material for his two books on Ireland, the *Topography* and the *Conquest*. The first book is a masterly account of the physical and human geography of the country: Gerald 'remains the sole authority for the state of Ireland during the whole of the Middle Ages'.[9] The *Conquest* is an excellent historical work. Gerald's interest in this is understandable: representatives of *all* the noble families descending from Nesta, and therefore relatives of his, took part in the Norman conquest of Ireland.

The *Conquest* originally had three volumes, and all Arthurians must bitterly regret the loss of the third volume, which was apparently a Latin translation of an old Welsh book of the prophecies of Merlin Sylvester, which he had discovered in Wales, as we shall see in the second part of this paper. Some of these prophecies concerning Ireland are quoted in the surviving first two volumes, but I have not read them, and must leave to someone else the task of listing and commenting on these prophecies.

The Mirror of the Church, written late in life, is mainly a vigorous and entertaining attack on the monks. No 16th-century reformer hated the regular clergy (monks and later friars) half as much as did the medieval secular clergy. Gerald added to the Litany the item: 'From the villainy of the monks, good Lord deliver us'![10] But this heterogeneous work also contains a useful guide-book to the churches of medieval Rome.

The Jewel of the Church deals with church ritual and sacraments, and also with

[5] *Ibid* 22
[6] *Ibid* 182
[7] *Ibid* 27
[8] *Ibid* 33
[9] *Ibid* 32
[10] *Ibid* 160

ethics and canon law. The most interesting point is his opposition to clerical celibacy, which had been introduced a few decades earlier by Gregory VII (1073-1080), in order to keep property in the hands of the Church.

The fight for St David's is very thoroughly covered in three books, an autobiography, a polemic against his enemies in the campaign, and an account of the legal evidence and his discussions with the Pope.

A rather miscellaneous collection of extracts includes extracts from his other books, but also some of his correspondence and his Latin verses, including love poems. Gerald also wrote a number of biographies of saints, a fairly irresistible subject for a medieval cleric. Finally, there is his book on the *Instruction of Princes*. Besides an account of the qualities and duties of an ideal prince, this includes a history of the reign of Henry II, with a violent attack on him and the other Angevins, whom he certainly did not regard as ideal princes.

In the *Instruction*, Gerald describes his visit to Glastonbury, where he saw the famous bones and the inscribed leaden plate identifying them with Arthur. But, apart from the lost volume of Merlin's prophecies in his *Conquest of Ireland*, most of Gerald's Arthurian allusions are to be found in his two books on Wales, to which I turn in the second part of this paper.

Acknowledgement
I am most grateful to Brian Stableford, who procured for me a copy of Owen's book.

C Bristow

The Ninth Legion

Five thousand men
unaccounted for
Eagle standard trails
in a northern breeze

No monuments
for the lost Legion

No graves, no bones
no antiquity

Fighting for a failing cause
scattered on the dust of obscurity

fading like the Roman sun

One journey ended
and one begun ...

But sometimes when the
wind blows free

I wonder if they've really
gone

Or maybe they still stand their watch
upon the battlements

of Avalon?

Steve Gunning

my argument needing some mention of Badon

killed my brother then
if memory serve robbed church
worse still brute savage
at some feast laughed through my grace
not spite unchristian leaves
out victor's name no
faith sets me over such
littleness only justice

Steve Sneyd

Two Historians and a Cavalryman

Dave Burnham

One of the most powerful of twentieth century images of Arthur is that of the roving Dark Age cavalry general, who always defeated his Saxon enemies because of the superiority of the cavalry arm. This Arthur moreover was a real figure, a historical certainty.

This image was, until the 1970s, so strong that for many it was taken for granted. But it was the creation of two historians: two men who could not have been more different personally, but who together concocted this powerful set of ideas. They were Sir Charles Oman and Robin Collingwood.

Charles Oman

Oman went up to New College in the 1880s, and became a fellow at All Souls where he remained for the rest of his life. Oman had a passion for coin collecting, war gaming and history, all of it: classical, mediaeval and modern.[1] His first contribution to the debate about Arthur was in the then mainstream of English historical tradition. At this time, the general view of Arthur was that he was mythic, the legend deriving from memories of a Celtic god. In his *History of England* (1895) Oman accepts this view, describing the obstinate defence by the tribes of Devon and Cornwall of the South West of Britain at the end of the 5th century against the Saxons, concluding:

So gallant was it that the Celts of a later generation believed that the legendary hero of their race, the great King Arthur, had headed the host of Damnonia in person and placed his city of Camelot and his grave at Avalon within the compass of the western realm.[2]

This affectionate condescension sums up the general view of the English mainstream – which was dominated at the time by the Teutonic view of history. Led by Bishop Stubbs, many English historians of the time claimed that all that was good in English government had derived from the Anglo Saxons; nothing from the successor Normans or predecessor Celts having survived.

But between 1895 and 1910 something happened to Oman's view. In 1910, established as Chichele Professor of Modern History, Oman surveyed the evidence for Arthur once more in his *History of England before the Norman Conquest*.[3] He commented that he did not accept entirely that Arthur was a mythical figure and suggested that the possibility of his existence should be taken seriously. Oman didn't point to any fresh evidence for Arthur's existence and made no startling new analysis of what evidence there was. He merely suggested that with so many literary

[1] Charles Oman (1941) *Memories of Victorian Oxford* (Methuen)
[2] Charles Oman (1895) *History of England* (Methuen)
[3] Charles Oman (1910) *History of England before the Norman Conquest* (Methuen)

references in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries and remnants of a thriving oral tradition in Wales, Cornwall and Brittany, the weight of assumption must fall on the side of the existence of a real character.

So Oman had developed his position on Arthur compared to his comments 15 years earlier. He had not only seen fit to examine the evidence in some detail, but the tone of his comments was altogether more positive. A slight change perhaps, but why bother to make so much comment about what to English historians previously had been such an insignificant figure? He was not the sort of historian given to idle speculation – his long term reputation being as a historian of warfare, particularly the voluminous, precise and rather dour *History of the Peninsula War*. He was a conservative and stood against, amongst many other things, the establishment of an Honour School for modern languages (which he thought was fit only for 'undergraduettes' rather than men), and the downgrading of Latin and Greek as the basis of undergraduate scholarship. He criticised the 'Progressists' (as he called them) before the Great War, afterwards when he was elected as one of the Oxford University MPs he was referred to as 'Stone Age Man'.[4]

But Oman seems always to have been his own man – and despite his later reputation as a die hard he was not wedded to the Teutonic school of history. For one thing his historical interests had always been so much broader than English mediaeval history. He revered Bishop Stubbs, but more for his personal kindness, than his views. So Oman was in no way politically attached to the Teutonist position and a certain weariness with it comes across in his inaugural lecture as Chichele professor of Modern History in February 1906. In this wide ranging lecture he expressed irritation at Oxford's obsession with mediaeval history and by implication with the Teutonic interpretation.

He was not alone. In the same year T F Tout of Manchester University commented publicly that 'much evil has ... accrued ... from the excessive cult' of Stubbs's *Charters of English Constitutional History*. Meanwhile J B Bury was reforming the Cambridge approach to history, introducing in 1909 a more exacting examination structure which treated early English mediaeval history as part of the overall pattern of study rather than the pinnacle of historical enquiry.[5]

An understandable reaction of younger men against established wisdom may partly explain Oman's half turn about Arthur, but perhaps events in the wider world influenced him as well. While Oman was writing his *History of England* the challenge was hardening to Britain's grand view of itself from modern Teutons across the North Sea. Who can say why Oman changed his tone about Arthur, but the war clouds drifting across the North Sea were bringing into question the pro-Teutonic complacency associated with much of British cultural life.

Robin Collingwood

Oman did not see fit to change what he wrote about Arthur in the several subsequent editions of *A History of England before the Norman Conquest,* the last of which appeared in 1936. In the same year a more concrete Arthur was taking shape. This was Arthur the cavalryman, the last Roman Duke, and he came riding into history spurred on by the eminent philosopher historian R G Collingwood. Although Collingwood was Waynflete Professor of Moral Philosophy at Oxford, he had been approached in 1934 to produce what was to become the first volume of the prestigious Oxford History of England series.[6] Collingwood was an obvious choice as he was an experienced archaeologist and the pre-eminent post war historian of Roman Britain. *Roman Britain and the English Settlements* was a serious and comprehensive review of the latest thinking about the Roman period, bringing into play all the post war archaeological findings and Collingwood's own imaginative thinking.

[4] See http://fm.greenhillbooks.com/greenhill/gbn/92/sir_charles_oman.htm

[5] J Kenyon (1983) The History Men: The Historical Profession in England since the Renaissance

[6] *Roman Britain and the English Settlements,* by R G Collingwood and J N L Myres, was not a collaborative work. Collingwood wrote the Roman section and Myres separately wrote a subsequent section on the early Anglo-Saxons. The decision to tack on Myres' short work to Collingwood's was made by the publisher.

3rd century clibanarius
after Colledge (1968) *The Parthians*

No further claims had been made for a historical Arthur since Oman's in 1910. The Shakespearian critic E K Chambers had written a review of all things Arthurian in 1926 and found no evidence of a real Arthur.[7] Gilbert Sheldon, an amateur historian, had offered a set of tentative 'what if' suggestions in 1932,[8] but he was a lone voice. Collingwood in *Roman Britain* dedicated a full five pages of this work to Arthur – the final five – using him as a valediction for the Roman way of life. He pulled no punches in his attitude to Arthur. *There should be no hesitancy in doubting his existence,* says Collingwood, as if there were no debate needed about this. This was notable as the view that the idea Arthur was derived from a pagan god was still the orthodox position. A G von Hamel, in the John Rhys Memorial lecture of 1934 restated it and Lord Raglan in March 1936 proclaimed in his *Illustrated London News* piece about his new book *Heroes* that it was certain '[Arthur] was not a real man'.[9]

Collingwood asserted that Arthur was the leader, possibly in a formal Roman sense a *Comes* or *Dux,* of a 'mobile field army'. He represented the rump of Romanised Britons, or at least Britons who wanted to continue as much as possible a way of life that still had an urban component. Arthur was Christian and wanted to retain government by principles other than the tyranny of a single powerful family group. Collingwood paints a picture of a desperate war leader trusted by civil authorities and called to crisis points as the need arose. He led wherever he fought, rather than incorporating his forces into local militia. His force played the same role as the U S Cavalry in the twentieth century Western, riding in to save the day at the last moment. Collingwood claimed that Arthur's twelve traditional battles were obviously genuine stating:

that the sites of his twelve battles must not be sought in any one part of Britain.

This interpretation conveniently explains the existence of Arthur legends from Cornwall to north of the Forth. Furthermore as the Angles and Saxons appeared not to use mounted forces in any numbers, the sudden appearance of armed horsemen might spread panic and would explain Arthur's traditional series of uninterrupted military successes.

Collingwood then explained that cavalry in the classical world had traditionally been used in a limited way. Keeping and feeding horses was expensive and without stirrups, which only came into general use later in the middle ages, cavalry troops in the Classical world had not been the shock weapon they were to become. But in 378 at the battle of Adrianople Roman forces had been routed by mounted barbarians and from then the use of cavalry became more widespread. As Collingwood has it,

The late Empire was ... the age which established the ascendancy of heavy cavalry, clothed in chain mail, over infantry.

This view is lifted directly from one of Charles Oman's classic works, *the History of the Art of war in the Middle Ages* (1893, with many later editions). Although no longer fashionable, Oman's idea that the supremacy of Roman style packed infantry had been destroyed by fluid barbarian horsemanship at Adrianople held sway until after the Second World War. Moreover in his comments about the battle of Adrianople in the *History of the Art of War* Oman allowed a little romance to creep into the text. He

[7] E. K. Chambers (1927) *Arthur of Britain* (Sidgwick and Jackson)
[8] Gilbert Sheldon
[9] Quoted in Parry, John, J "The Historical Arthur" *Journal of English and German Philology* Vol 58 (1959) 365–379. Raglan's ideas were subsequently published in *The Hero* (1936), published by Pitman.

surmised that the mounted, armoured knight of mediaeval chivalry was the direct descendant of these mobile, mailed, barbarian riders. Did Collingwood lift the vision of his Arthurian cavalry from these lines? For he too uses a romantic tone in places in *Roman Britain*:

Arthur left behind him an imperishable name, and the people he saved could not believe that he had died ... For Arthur, as I have suggested was the last of the Romans ...

The book as a whole attracted what can only be described as rave reviews. In the ten I have read the word 'brilliant' is ubiquitous and there was general agreement that Collingwood had produced a work of some significance. Several reviewers mentioned the Arthurian thesis, some with approval, but more with cautious indulgence.[10]

Collingwood did not acknowledge the need to demonstrate Arthur's existence. He had no new evidence, and made no new connections with what evidence there was. So these grand claims on the face of it are extremely odd, especially as Collingwood was a philosopher, a man bent on using accurate scholarship to provide solutions to problems. The reasons for his drastic leap of faith I think are quite subtle.

There are a number of clues to the reasoning behind Collingwood's firm championship of Arthur in his autobiography, written a year or two after *Roman Britain*.[11] First of all, and of immense significance, was the very deliberate thinking process Collingwood developed for all his academic work. Robin Collinwood grew up during the period when archaeological excavations were proceeding apace, but with no agreed principles of enquiry. Under the careful tutelage of his father, a noted archaeologist himself, Robin developed a fierce view that no one should begin to dig without first knowing what problem it was that was being investigated. He castigated the sort of methods archaeologists of the previous generation used, indicating that Pitt Rivers at Silchester excavated more or less to see what he could find, digging up pots and shards galore and obliterating the site, but learning little about the functions of the settlement and the way people lived. In response to such loose thinking Robin Collingwood developed a simple device for both archaeological and historical enquiry. He said all scholars and excavators should both ask 'what am I doing this for?' but also 'what problems am I looking to solve?' Furthermore he says of any finds or any evidence the question should be asked 'what was this for?' or 'what does this mean?'

Although this sounds very simple Collingwood makes great play of the radicalism of asking what something is for and gives examples (about the uses of Hadrian's Wall and his estimate of the population of Roman Britain) of how he has used the technique to take a historical debate forward. He also gives examples of how he has changed his mind, when new information has come to light or mistakes in his arguments have been pointed out by others. Here we have a historian who didn't set out to have the last word, as he knew full well that in any academic discourse there was no last word to have; his job was to wrestle knowledge forward and look with interest to see what happened next.

So this is part of our answer. Collingwood pushed the evidence about Arthur to the farthest possible limit to test out a hypothesis. On previous form he would not have been put out by a crushing rejoinder or amendment to his ideas. Rather, he expected it and courted it. This interplay of ideas gave him the freedom to offer hypotheses beyond what the evidence would sustain to see what the response was.

But there is also a more personal reason for Collingwood's Arthurian thesis. As we have seen, in his scholarly endeavours he always set himself questions. His question was, unusually for him, not explicitly put about Arthur in *Roman Britain*, but it went something like 'how did Arthur fight battles all across the country in days when Roman roads had fallen into disrepair?' So why did this attract his attention? The answer is surprisingly close to home.

A few years before Collingwood wrote *Roman Britain* a debate about Arthur's battles had begun. More precisely there had been a debate about *where* they had been.

[10] David Burnham "The Willing Suspension of Disbelief: R. G. Collingwood and the Historical King Arthur" *The Historian* No 83 (Autumn 2004) 36–42
[11] R G Collingwood (1939) *An Autobiography* (OUP)

The first intimation of this debate came in an article by W G Collingwood, Robin's father, in an obscure journal in 1926.[12] In his *Arthur and Athelstan* Collingwood senior compares the military campaigns of Arthur as reported by Geoffrey of Monmouth in the twelfth century with known campaigns of tenth century English kings fighting the Danes. The implication here is that Geoffrey had merely grafted Arthur's name onto extant English legends. However at the end of the article Collingwood senior hinted at something else. He wrote:

Perhaps after an age of credulity, another of scepticism, and a third of pseudo-science which has failed to explain him as a sun-myth or a culture hero archaeology and philology may give us back a real Arthur.

He went on to mention the work of philologists in tracking down the meaning of British place names, a great deal of which came to fruition in the twenties, and his hope that the places where Arthur's battles were fought might become clearer as a result. Finally he described a blank space north and west of Sussex, suggesting Arthur had fought there. He followed this up in 1929 with an article making specific geographical claims about all 12 battles. In *Arthur's Battles,* in *Antiquity* (1929 vol II), Collingwood senior claimed that the battles must have been fought against Kentish Saxons, as the *Historia Brittonum* says Arthur fought against the Saxons of Kent. He goes on to identify, in detail, all the battle sites on or near the Sussex coast. We know that Robin had been involved to some extent in the production of this article as the editor of *Antiquity* had asked him to supply and comment on the text of the *Historia Brittonum* used by his father. However at this time and until around 1932, in his own writings, Robin's view of the politics of post Roman Britain was that the Britons were more likely to have welcomed the Saxons[13] as potential protectors, rather than fought them. And there are no indications that he was interested in the idea of Arthur.

But whether or not Robin was greatly interested in King Arthur in the twenties he was certainly interested in his father. In 1927 W G Collingwood had a stroke. He partially recovered from that but succumbed to more and for the last couple of years of his life was very unwell. Robin took some of the responsibility for his care until W G's death in October 1932. It was only after his father's death that Collingwood espoused the idea of a real Arthur, and he did so with relish. His paper to the Roman Society in February 1936[14] and a paper delivered to Martletts[15] the following June include acceptance of the twelve battles as historical, identifies Aelle of Kent as Arthur's main enemy and mentions Cissbury (In Sussex) as the site of Badon. All this is suspiciously close to his father's analysis – when only a few years earlier Robin had argued against any such possibility. And the expression of these new ideas, as in *Roman Britain* was enthusiastic and lacked academic caution. Higham[16] noted an emotional tone in Robin's Arthurian section in *Roman Britain* and it has occurred to me that Collingwood had more than an academic interest in the question. Could the thesis about Arthur the cavalry general be a valediction for his father, a grand solution to one of the last academic interests his father had? Such a tribute to his father would have been fitting for both of them. This might explain Collingwood junior's less than rigorous attitude to the evidence for Arthur's existence. It was perhaps more important to him to round off a piece of his father's work in the final five pages of *Roman Britain* than to stick to his academic last. So did Collingwood's thesis owe more to his love for his father than anything else?

The result, whatever the motivation, was that the proposal that Arthur was a historical figure rested in a renowned work used as a set text by undergraduates and other

[12] W G Collingwood "Arthur and Athelstan" *Saga Book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* X (1), 1926

[13] R G Collingwood, Notes for "The State of Britain at the time of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements", paper to the Archaeological Institute, Feb 1933, *Collingwood Papers* (23/9), Bodleian Library

[14] R G Collingwood *Journal of the Roman Society* Vol 26 (1936) 302–305

[15] R G Collingwood, Notes for "Who was King Arthur?", paper to Martletts, University College, June 1936, *Collingwood Papers* (23/15) Bodleian Library

[16] Nick Higham (2002) *King Arthur: Myth Making and History* (Routledge)

students for the next thirty years. It also stimulated post war comment about the battles. Subsequent scholarly interest remained focussed on the detail of the battles and Arthur's historicity was from then on, in some quarters, assumed to have been demonstrated. Some historians acquiesced in this, more as time went on. But more important than historians, were the creative writers – and for the first time in any numbers novelists – who used Collingwood's thesis for their work in the post war period. Thus the public accepted Arthur's historicity. Arthur the dashing cavalry general had arrived and became, in the public mind at least, a fixture in the historical landscape for nearly half a century.

So the conservative and the philosopher worked separately and together to create one of the most powerful cultural images of the twentieth century.

In a scriptorium corner stiller than old bones

Heaped documents how herb garden cuttings pile
Into interlocking tangle fingering dust each dusk
Seems carnally to lust for: how disobedient mind strays –

Time and past to seek again a start-point; clumsy pull
Of course from heap-bottom as always makes all fall:

Red-tired strain at light fade, yawn-gate won't close:
In runs sleep: failing faint lost names, eyes close.

Along clay-coated palisades of dream
Noiseless faces mock-mouth, making
Song of long-lost: "Know, won't tell"

Steve Sneyd

Doctor Dee confounds the skeptic

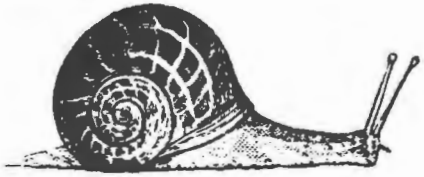
My Queen seeks more proof?
Angels write my histories,
is Heaven's message
not evidence enough how
Arthur sailed farthest Thule's
ice-mountain-ghosted
seas? Quickly, send sailors there,
I swear facts scrimshank
bones carried in ship-shaped berg
will prove his, deed all North hers

Steve Sneyd

No name no packdrill

brindle cat's claw makes
of insect pinprick full hole:
warlord's love gone west

Steve Sneyd



When Snails Talk

Anita Loughrey

People are naturally curious about their origins. There is an innate desire to discover our roots. We go to enormous lengths to find out about our grandparents, or who were our real parents or search for lost siblings. History satisfies this curiosity. Stories about our own localities and the people who live, and use to live in the area, reveal patterns and help to outline beliefs about our culture.

Archaeology is one historical means to studying our past. The purpose of historical enquiry is not simply to present the facts but to search for an interpretation of the past and their ramifications. By studying what went before, we learn to shape our future and hopefully how to avoid the mistakes of our predecessors. Information is collected and collated not only to give the meaning of a particular place and explain how we should care for that area but also to provide a global impression.

In fact, all over the world, the history of individual countries is studied in immense detail and every country has believed, at one time or another, their own culture and history is the most significant. But, can every country and nation be the most important? It becomes clear that humans are essentially the same and we are all equally vital. Everybody's past is intertwined and influences the future.

Historians and archaeologists attempt to find patterns and establish meaning through the study of evidence. An example of this hunt for meaning can be seen with the excavations for the Northmoor Trust, at Little Wittenham, on the Berkshire and Oxfordshire border. These excavations were directed by Tim Allen and supervised by Hugo Lamdin-Whymark from Oxford Archaeology.

In spring 2004, volunteers worked with pottery and bone specialists on the previous summer's excavations. All their findings were collated on a database. One of their most significant discoveries was part of an Iron Age pottery lid. It has a highly polished black surface with a design of white chalk dots inlaid into it. They also found a late Bronze Age pot in the ditch around the hilltop.

Pollen and snail evidence show that woodland areas were cleared as settlements spread and provide a picture of a very densely occupied prehistoric and Roman village. Worked stones from Devon and Cornwall suggest there was Bronze Age Trading coming down the Thames. This information can be compared to what was happening at the time in other areas. Their discoveries take an essential step toward explaining what life was like and how life was led.

In August 2004, Oxford Archaeology with the help of several volunteers set out to investigate this large settlement below the hillfort. They looked at four main areas and found each had their own function.

They identified areas for feasting, rubbish, storage and living. They also unearthed a grave containing a man and newborn baby. This evidence suggests the hillfort was not lived in but was used for retreating to in times of trouble and as an important meeting place for burials, ceremonies and festivities.

The whole community have been involved in the project. Oxford Archaeology ran two family fun days, where children took part in a spoil heap challenge and were shown how to clean their finds.

The Northmoor Trust aim to use the information in a new Landscape Evolution Centre inside the converted farm building at Hill Farm, Little Wittenham. The Heritage Lottery Fund contributed £1.7m toward the project.

Visitors will be able to explore the evolution of England's Landscape over the last 10,000 years and see the effects people have had on the environment. They can also investigate how predicted climatic and economic factors could change an area's landscape over the next century.

Tim Allen said, "People don't realise the effect they have on the landscape. Our decisions can dramatically influence the future."

Bill Horsfield from the Northmoor Trust explained, "There are a variety of scenarios for the way the landscape may evolve in the future. There is no single model as it depends on the choices we make, both at an individual level and regional policy level."

During January 2005, Oxford Archaeology and volunteers interpreted the findings and updating the database. Hugo said, "There is a whole mass of correlating information to fit together into the correct context."

They undertook an extensive geophysical programme over winter weekends, which involved field walking and a magnetometer survey over 30 hectares with volunteers at Northfield Farm, on the edge of the flood plain, in hope of finding better-preserved evidence of flooding in the Thames Valley.

Hugo Lamdin-Whymark said, "This project is about involving local people in learning about the past."

They are keen for volunteer involvement. No previous experience is necessary. They are looking for a forensic specialist who may be able to match fingerprints found in the pattering of pottery fragments and volunteers to transcribe surveys, maps and 16th and 17th century documents, such as wills of the people who lived in and around Little Wittenham.[1]

It is clear that excavations, such as those carried out on the Oxford / Berkshire border at Wittenham Clumps, are searching for the wider picture. These projects involve the whole community collaborating to establish an impression of the bigger image. In this way, archaeology and the historic environment, help us all to appreciate the global value of our common cultural inheritance.[2]

[1] If you are interested in taking part or would like further information contact Hugo Lamdin-Whymark on 01865 263800 or write to Oxford Archaeology, Janis House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

[2] The Landscape Evolution Centre is open to the public Autumn 2006. For more information, contact Katherine Barton from the Northmoor Trust on 01865 407792

A Goatly Prophecy

With damp pink nose,
Merlin's whiskered goat
Plucked a hair from Merlin's head
And so began to recite
In diptychs crude and sometimes trite:
"An age of great inventions,
Our century's coming to a close,
And of great wars and persecutions
Which prejudices have set loose,
Whether it be the Afghan rebels
Or the destruction of the Jews.

"Trouble now in Bosnia,
Where the world grows smaller,
While the Moslems come together
To let yet another war
Bring the century to a close.
Where will it all end,
As the new century begins?"

"In war and crippling planet throes.
What else can be the news?
The final ending of the Jews?
A war in Israel before
With oil surging to the shore,
As the Arabs come to the fore,
Before the sun is harvested
To bring new energy
And the world is left without a sound
But green chirps all around,
As the earth becomes a garden,
Where whirring wings abound.

"And what will happen to Mohamet?
He has run his final gamut.
As the Buddhists rise
To their full mountain's height,
Half the world will follow Buddha's way:
The other half the Christians have.

"Christ and Buddha, thus, will split,
Until the two religions merge
In the spirit's final surge,
Before the world settles into pantheism
With fertile thoughts in the final garden.
The green will flow from shore-to-shore.
There shall be deserts never more."

But the thought of deserts
Made the hooved one think of dessert,
And so he stole a hair

From nodding Merlin's nose
And joined him in a snore.

Bill West

Digging in the dark

Archaeology and the Pendragon Society *Chris Lovegrove*

The Pendragon Society has rarely dabbled exclusively in armchair archaeology, and since its inception in 1959 its members have not been frightened to get their hands dirty. However, in the half-century of its existence the Society's experience of excavation has evolved with the changing nature of the discipline, with the result that it is unlikely that what it managed to achieve in the past will ever be repeated in the future. So here, for what it is worth, is a *very* brief history of Pendragon archaeology to date.

Otterbourne

The founder of the Society and its long-time Honorary Secretary, the late Jess Foster, recounted the outcome of an unpromising search for the graves of Ambrosius, the last of the Romans, of Cerdic, the first of the Saxons, and of Arthur. This was undertaken in the early sixties by her and a group of youngsters, and consisted of rambles in and around Winchester and the surrounding Downs.

It was in the course of one of our rambles along the river bank that we came on the little abandoned church of Otterbourne. This had nothing to do with Arthur, but if you had happened to be King Pellinore, riding in the woods and following the trail of the Questing Beast: and if you, at the end of the day, happened to come upon a mysterious chapel in a wood, complete with Hermit and a whiff of the Grail, this would have been it.[1]

What the fledgling Pendragons eventually did was to clear away the rubbish and undergrowth from the ruined building and compile a list of names and dates carved upon the tombstones, none of which were in the Winchester archives. However, there was local politics to deal with, antagonism to young people in general and opposition from the parish bigwigs. "The Parish Council finally threw us out and the real vandals moved in: in a short while the church and its surroundings were reduced to a shambles."[2] And so ended the Society's first foray into hands-on history.[3]

South Cadbury

When Jess Foster moved to Bristol, the Society soon became involved with real archaeology. South Cadbury hillfort in Somerset had Arthurian folklore going back to at least the 16th-century, but there was nothing to substantiate a Dark Age date until a Mary Harfield began to pick up East Mediterranean pottery sherds while walking her dog on the hill. In time Mrs Harfield joined the Pendragon Society, the Society became a founder member of the Camelot Research Committee and things were kicked off when Jess Foster persuaded the local press in Bristol to donate funds at around the same time as Geoffrey Ashe got the BBC to do the same.

In the first year or so a few Pendragons were involved in the digging alongside Cardiff University academics, students and serious volunteers. In 1966 the famous letter *A* ("for Arthur!") was uncovered by Jess – more plausibly a votive letter from a Roman temple – but in time the "Romantics" (who introduced the innovation of a marquee for the myriads of visitors) chose to officially sell postcards and refreshments while maintaining a presence *incognito* amongst the diggers. There was even occasionally time for a spot of surreptitious experimental archaeology, hurling Iron Age slingshots with homemade slings (mine was made from an old school satchel) over the ramparts. This was abandoned when non-combatants were put at risk from friendly fire, despite being several feet in the rear!

[1] Jess Foster (1972) *Till Hope Creates: an informal history of the Pendragon Society* (Zodiac House) 13

[2] Jess Foster (1978) *A for Arthur: the story of a society* (Pendragon Society) 6

[3] Don and Carol Bryan survive from Winchester days as the Society's longest-serving members. Don teaches archaeology and history at local colleges in Hampshire and has been a Blue Badge Tourist Guide for many years. <http://www.heritagetours.co.uk/don.htm

When the dig officially ended in 1970, and evidence of an Arthurian-period timber hall and gateway partly justified the Camelot Research Committee's portentous epithet, several Pendragons had managed to graduate in essential archaeological skills (myself included) to feel competent enough to tackle an independent Pendragon dig.

Cattle Hill, Bratton Seymour

In 1968, at a time when it was clear that the presence of Pendragons on a no-nonsense professional dig was an embarrassment, the Society was invited by the Hobhouses of Hadspen House in Somerset to investigate a Roman site which had been revealed by ploughing in 1966. After four years of digging, the site at Cattle Hill, in the parish of Bratton Seymour, turned out to be one of the more extensive Roman countryside sites in the county.[4]

Two adjacent buildings were found, both around a hundred feet across. The first contained in one of its rooms an intricate mosaic, the central part of which was nearly nine by eleven feet and which featured in a central panel the head and shoulders of an enigmatic figure. This has been described elsewhere as

a crudely executed bust, either with long straggling hair or wearing a hat or helmet and a garment adorned with a band of red triangles. A small animal or a bird appears to be sitting on the left shoulder.[5]

The reconstruction drawing of the mosaic remains shows the bust within a medallion surrounded by interlocked squares with a guilloche cable and Z patterns. The spandrels beyond a further Z-pattern circle possibly all contained an ivy-leaf-and-tendrils design, as the drawing suggests.

The second building was similar to the traditional winged corridor Roman villa found in Britain, but without the corridor! The full extent of both buildings was not fully investigated, but the coin range and pottery types, together with comparisons with similar sites, all suggest that the site was mainly occupied from the mid-third to late fourth century, despite a bronze, one-piece bow brooch of a type that went out of fashion around 60 AD, and the odd medieval pottery shard.[6] The site was adjacent to an ancient route called *The Hardway* which led in a south-westerly direction towards South Cadbury only a handful of miles away. This led to some speculation about possible links between the two sites in the post-Roman period, speculation of course almost impossible to prove either way.

The dig, directed by Terry Staples (and, to start with, a doyenne of Middle Eastern archaeology Crystal Bennett), was a microcosm of approaches to excavation in the late sixties. The dig began as in-depth investigations within a grid, supplemented by trial trenches around the periphery of the area to decide its extent. A resistivity survey helped decide further excavation, and the shallower foundations of the winged building meant that the new machine-stripped areas were no longer limited by grid squares. A site visit by the South Cadbury archaeological team provided the suggestion that we look for post-Roman features, but all that was found of that date below the thin topsoil was a pit and a possible sleeper timber beam trench. Still, little beats the excitement of

[4] T M Staples (1969) *Excavations at Cattle Hill, Somerset during 1968 & 1969: first interim report* (Pendragon Society); T M Staples (1970) *Excavations at Cattle Hill, Somerset during 1970: addendum to first interim report* (Group Archaeology)

[5] Anne Rainey (1973) *Mosaics in Roman Britain: a gazetter* (David & Charles) 30: "Bratton Seymour, Somerset"

[6] T M Staples *Group Archaeology Newsletter No 1* March 1972

discovering tesserae, coins, boot studs, roof tiles and other objects that hadn't seen the light of day for over a millennium and a half.

By 1970 the embarrassment of the Pendragon Society label led to a new label, Group Archaeology, being adopted by the digging team. Nationally, threats to archaeological sites from new building, vandalism and neglect led to the founding of Rescue (whose logo was Stonehenge in the bucket of a JCB), and that, combined with voluntary divorce from the Pendragon Society, meant that Group Archaeology – with declining numbers and unable to demonstrate urgency for the site's continued excavation – ceased to actively dig Cattle Hill and gently disappeared.[7]

Interlude

The Society became disillusioned with archaeology after this experience, and its energies went elsewhere. This was an intoxicating period, with New Age mysticism, fledgling Glastonbury Festivals, expeditions to discover terrestrial zodiacs in darkest West Wales,[8] labyrinth-building and researching secret histories to get involved in. But archaeology didn't go away entirely. There was a brief exploration of enigmatic walls near Rode in Somerset (an early modern garden feature, it was decided), and then an invitation to investigate what local legend, of unknown antiquity, claimed was a Dark Age chapel site linked to the mother of the Emperor Constantine and Joseph of Arimathea! Pendragons couldn't resist a reccy.

Llanelen

Members from the Society first examined the site of Llanelen on a brief expedition to the Gower peninsula in South Wales in 1972. When a dramatic thunderstorm interrupted proceedings it must have confirmed local suspicions that the old folktale motif of a storm warning those who disturbed ancient sites was true. Nevertheless, digging got underway in 1973 and, despite further storms over the years and directorial complaints that it was all an excuse for family holidays, the main excavation didn't cease until 1985, with further exploration, specialist studies and endless drafts of the final reports continuing for several more years. With the demise of Group Archaeology as a warning, the more official-sounding Llanelen Research Committee was set up under the auspices of the Society, which meant that academic respectability and, just as important, monetary grants were both obtainable while still enabling those all-important family holidays to continue.

So, what was all the fuss about? Well, here was, behind all the local lore (sometimes of doubtful antiquity), what turned out to be a genuine Dark Age site. Rather more complex than the simple wedding cake analogy sometimes suggests, Llanelen proved to be a dig with around a thousand years of unbroken history.

Ignoring the odd stray prehistoric flake, development began with post-Roman secular occupation, indicated by beam slots for wooden buildings, domestic refuse and a quernstone fragment. This was followed not long after by the Christian burial of an unknown but somehow significant individual, whose grave formed the nucleus of a small cemetery of around eight graves. Nearby, a small timber structure – probably a chapel – was built, with a possible baptistery adjacent, and the whole, the *llan* or sacred enclosure of an early Christian site, was surrounded with an incomplete oval embankment. The dating of this early phase was confirmed by fragments of imported glass vessels (which show that Llanelen was an important site in the 6th to 7th centuries), a glass bead (produced around the 6th to 8th centuries), three quernstone fragments, and fragments of knives and buckles.

Early medieval copper alloy object, Llanelen

[7] When Andrew Smith and I visited in 1999 the site had been ploughed and was under crop

[8] The Morien Institute details some of the background to this period: details are on its website

A copper alloy ornamental fitting in the shape of a horse's head, found at the interface of this early phase and the next, is stylistically enigmatic: it could be from the 8th century, or a stray Viking piece from the 10th, or even a local Welsh copy from the 11th century. The jury is still out. Following a geophysical survey, later investigations beyond the immediate area of the stone building showed evidence for a further two timber structures along with smelting slag of probably a post-Roman or early medieval date, but no more closely dated than that.

Sometime before the early 13th century, a stone church – with a nave, and later a chancel – was built on top of a new platform, replacing the timber chapel and associated occupation, with at least twenty-four graves added. A third phase saw the church fall out of ecclesiastical use, becoming a farmhouse in the mid-13th century (as indicated by diagnostic pottery) until, probably, the Black Death caught up with its inhabitants in the mid-14th century.[9]

Future past

For this writer at least, despite the fact the Llanelen took up our energies for the best part of 30 years, the fact that in amongst all the later medieval and industrial archaeology we found evidence of genuine Dark Age activity was very exciting, and continues to be very satisfying. And those three decades of research – which I've summed up rather inadequately in three paragraphs – point up some strengths and weaknesses of archaeology as an historical discipline.

Certainly, it is physically exhausting for sometimes little result. As with the skeletal fragments we dug up, you might get a wealth of scientific data but you don't get to know the individual involved – identity, personality, life history and so on. As humans we crave patterns that resonate with our own experiences, and one piece of bone can only give at most a glimpse of a real past life.

Next, that exhaustion would be unachievable in present-day circumstances. The Society stumbled into a project that with hindsight we probably wouldn't have even considered. Unlike cataloguing gravestones, the responsibility of excavating what eventually became a listed archaeological site is not one to be lightly undertaken now. Business plans, grant applications, funding bodies, academic qualifications, specialist reports, technology and red tape are not for faint-hearted types of a romantic disposition.

That responsibility can be awesome. Imagine finding a rare manuscript, and then being told you have to copy it exactly by hand, immediately destroying the original page by page as you do it. Non-invasive archaeology is the preferred mode now, using equipment that doesn't lose the evidence below ground or behind walls or in front of your eyes. Amateur archaeology, as practised by the Society over thirty years, is *so* 20th-century, and there is little room for that approach now.

Nevertheless, amateur archaeology continues to thrive. Metal detectorists increasingly are involved in *bona fide* archaeology, and hopefully report private discoveries through the Portable Antiquities scheme. *Time Team* annually gets the public involved in its Big Dig, and *Current Archaeology*'s annual handbook provides details of local societies, college courses and vacation digs run by professionals with the amateur digger in mind.

Speaking personally, those years of Pendragon archaeology I experienced are irreplaceable. The sheer fun, friendships made and expertise gained – I wouldn't have missed any of it, though to catalogue even a sample of all that would require another article at least, or even a series, and I wouldn't want to inflict that on readers. But if you're hoping *Pendragon* will sponsor the next significant early medieval dig, you might just be whistling in the dark.

[9] A Schlesinger and Colin Walls, with Jonathan Kissock, Chris Lovegrove, Kate Pollard and Nik Wright "Excavations at Llanelen, Llanrhidian: an early church and medieval farmstead site" *Journal of the Gower Society XLVI* (1995) 58-79; — "An early church and medieval farmstead site: excavations at Llanelen, Gower" *Archaeological Journal 153* (1996) 104-7; Jonathan Kissock and Nik Wright, with Chris Lovegrove, Kate Pollard and Alex Schlesinger "The Excavation of a Charcoal-burning Platform at Llanelen, Gower" *Studia Celtica XXXV* (2001) 143-159; — "Further excavations at Llanelen, Llanrhidian" *Gower LIII* (2002) 39-47. All these names represent the Llanelen Research Committee (later, Group); after training at Llanelen Jon Kissock in time gained a PhD in archaeology

Arthurian Gaming

Part I - Upon the Board

Alastair McBeath

Introduction

Creating, or trying to recreate, the world of Arthur's time – whenever that was or will be – is what we all do to a greater or lesser extent. We do it because we enjoy it. Which is why it struck me as somewhat odd that so little attention has been paid in these pages to combining the two, in playing games. Think you're too old or too "grown-up" to play games? Then go back to the start and wait till you throw a "6"! Alternatively, go back and re-read this paragraph; then reconsider your answer.

This short series will not be a comprehensive catalogue of Games Arthurian, nor will it cover re-enactments, "live" roleplaying, or computer games. Instead, I want to look at a slightly eclectic mixture of games and gaming types that I am familiar with, with a view to suggesting a new creative outlet for some of you might be to design and play your own games of Arthur's world, beginning here with a selection of board games.

Race Games

These are probably the simplest form of board games most people will have played from being children, the "snakes and ladders" kind, where a thrown die dictates the moves of your token, marker or counter along a track to the end, hopefully avoiding pitfalls and taking advantage of whatever bonuses present as you go. The linear quest structure of many Arthurian tales suits itself admirably to creating this style of board game. A list of events from the tale will provide ideas for pitfalls and bonuses, with the start as Camelot, the end as the quest object. Traps or solutions can be drafted in from other stories to increase or better equalize the numbers of positive and negative events, if necessary, while between 150-200 spaces to the track should give a game of around half to one hour for three to six players.

This straightforward idea can be made more interesting by adding short-cut tracks in places, or side-track mazes to slow the players down, or multiple pathways to choose from, in each case usually requiring landing on the key entry space. The more of these there are, the more thought is needed about their placement, and similarly with where events and activities are to be set along the route(s). Penalties should be things like missing turns, needing to throw one or more specific numbers on the die or being sent back so-many spaces. Bonuses should allow things like moving on past the next trap safely, permitting another turn immediately, or allowing the next short-cut to be taken without landing on the entry space. Most should be modest, with severe or very good events rare. Side-mazes should have possible early escape spaces, if landed on, which might even turn them into short-cuts. Imagination is the key to this, triggered by how you perceive the events from the tale(s).

Creating the board could be by-hand, if you have skill and confidence enough, but a word-processing or graphics presentation program on a computer will make things easier for non-calligraphers. Illustrations always help too, though these may be more of a challenge.

For further inspiration on the layout, a late Victorian board game *The Prince's Quest* (reproduced in Bristol, 1995) is worth seeking out. Though somewhat naively illustrated in parts, this is a well-designed multi-path race game, loosely based on "Sleeping Beauty", but with elements added from a good few other late Victorian reworked fairy stories. It nicely captures the episodic nature of all such quest tales, hence it would be a suitable template for translation to Arthuriana.

Monopoly

Anyone hunting through the toyshops or toy catalogues in recent times can hardly have missed the proliferation of variants on the classic *Monopoly* property trading game, including one version which allows you to create your own board, properties and cards, via a computer. This makes it easy to create your own Arthurian version.

Properties would become important towns, or even regions, from Arthurian Britain, with the four stations as four main transport routes (for the 5th-6th centuries, choose from the main Roman, or pre-Roman, roads), and the two utilities as major religious centres, either Pagan or Christian, as best suits your view of whatever period you have selected. The "Chance" and "Community Chest" cards would need some rewording to suit this more "sub-kingdom" view, where expenditure would represent maintaining, protecting and improving life for the populace more generally, not merely a single individual, while some of the financial dealings could be taken as the costs of maintaining heroes/knights, armies and garrisons to take and hold places and territories. You might also like to use more "Arthurian" charm pieces as the players' tokens – the original *Monopoly* tokens were charm-bracelet models, after all. Overall, not so much *Monopoly* as *Monarchy*, perhaps.

This style, or your own preferred variant, would be easier to produce than the race game example, as the board layout is already done for you. You would simply have to decide what you wanted to print on for the properties and cards, though that in itself would need some thought to order satisfactorily.

Risk

Rather like *Monopoly*, *Risk* variants have sprung up in recent times too. At least one of these, *Risk Godstorm* (produced by the appropriately-named Avalon Hill in 2004, a subsidiary of the Hasbro group which also makes *Risk* and *Monopoly* under the Parker banner), has a few loose elements of Arthuriana already, including an "Excalibur" card, while the Underworld for the Celtic forces in the game is called "Avalon". However, this is based on muddled elements of several near-Classical (-ish) mythologies. Norse, Celtic, Greek, Babylonian and Egyptian armies and gods are involved, all armies including war elephants (relax, it's only a game!), covering the conquest of Europe, its near-surroundings, its Underworlds, and Atlantis. And yes, Atlantis CAN sink beneath the waves! Intriguing though it is, this is not what most of us would allow as sufficiently Arthurian, I fancy.

The concept of the Underworld as a separate board, where activities can influence, and be influenced by, events on the main board, and the introduction of magical powers via cards, plus the addition of powerful deities, all have interesting possibilities for an Arthurian variant, together with the idea of a fairly fixed timespan to work within (say, Arthur's lifetime). The separate map board could be used for the simplified stages of heroic quests perhaps, while instead of deities intervening directly, they could be substituted by significant heroes, giants or monsters, for instance.

The two-part *Lord of the Rings Risk* variant (again Parker/Hasbro, produced in 2002 and 2003 respectively) added other potentially useful aspects, including leaders for armies, the idea of some fixed starting areas for specific forces, event cards, and rivers as additional types of blocking terrain, but with some bridges over these. It abstracted the quest concept to friendly control by a led force of a specific region, giving some army-level benefit or other, based on the event cards drawn. There were additional facets too, including in the second game, the *Gondor & Mordor Expansion Set*, an extra map and cards to allow the recreation of the siege of Minas Tirith. This worked less well than the main military *Risk* game, however. The abstracted movement of the Company of the Ring gave the useful frisson of a strong, if variable, time element to the main, first, *Lord of the Rings Risk* game, but the successful destruction of the ring of power in the *Expansion Set* made much of the preceding military action irrelevant, a problem numerous other *Lord of the Rings* games have struggled with over the years.

As with *Risk Godstorm*, some parts of this would work to advantage for the Matter of Britain, such as the abstracted quests, the leaders concept, and the time element. A suitable board would have to be devised, using the general "Risk" concepts of

geographic areas, and blocking mountains, sea inlets and perhaps also bridged rivers, with *Lord of the Rings*-style special place symbols or movable markers for the quest targets, and the normal naval links for seaborne attacks. The area involved could just be mainland Britain, with the players as all British sub-kings, or the whole British Isles, with forces representing the Britons, Saxons, Irish and Picts/Caledonians, for a 5th-6th century example. However, it might be interesting to include some Scandinavian and other near-Continental areas to allow for things like Saxon invasions – perhaps even expanding the map south through Gaul to Italy, so Arthur could become Emperor! The idea of fixed homelands would work nicely too, to give an element of "historical reality" to the game. My own tentative steps in such a design so far have preferred the "four armies" idea, with a map representative of all the modern British Isles, plus the coastal near-Continent from Brittany round to Denmark, north-west Germany and south Norway-Sweden, but you will doubtless have your own views.

The usual set of dice to regulate battles, general rules and army pieces from the standard *Risk* game work fine, though you would need to make a suitable pack of territory cards at least, depending on what other complexities you may favour. It would be possible to substitute suitable plastic or even metal miniature figures from those period types available if desired, as better showing the armies. There is much more scope with *Risk* than the earlier games discussed here to come closer to simulating the Arthurian world, at least on a broad strategic scale.

Merlin

This is the one decent boardgame I have come across which deals centrally with elements of our interests, at least in theory, as its subtitle, "Magic & Power in Arthurian Britain", demonstrates. Even so, it is not quite so "Arthurian" as this might suggest. The game was first published by its designer Julian Musgrave in 1992, under the Wotan Games label in the UK, but it seems to have been the better-revised and extensively reworked version of another Wotan Games product also by Julian Musgrave, variously titled *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* (1988) or *Excalibur* (1989), neither of which I have seen, and which seemed to get rather mixed reviews during the limited period they were available. Unfortunately, *Merlin* too has long been out of print, but you may still be able to find a copy, possibly second-hand, either through a specialist games shop, or via the Internet. It can be played by one to four people (it does work very well solo), and classes itself as having a "Complexity Rating" of 4. (Though not stated, this value was probably estimated using the semi-standard, if overly subjective, 1-6 scale, where 1 is the equivalent of *Monopoly* and 6 is real life. The *Risk* variants discussed above would probably be about 2 or 3 on this scale.)

Merlin is best described in Julian Musgrave's own words (*Rule Book* p 3: "Game Objective"):

The game action takes place during the thirty years of the reign of Arthur Pendragon, High King of All Britain. The players are Britain's most senior druid priests, each aspiring to become the next Merlin - high-priest advisor to King Arthur. The game lasts for ten turns so each turn represents three years of Arthur's reign [...] The board is split into the ten kingdoms of Arthurian Britain; each with a capital city and up to four towns. At the start of the game each kingdom has its own king, recognising Arthur as their overlord. During the game these kings make their own decisions for their kingdoms, appoint heirs, make marriages, rebel, invade their neighbours etc. The job of the players is to use their powers and influence to bend these decisions to their benefit. Then there are Saxon invaders to defeat and religious affairs to be decided.

The game mechanics are quite straightforward, and there is a set of standard sequences for the game's various events and activities, so things do not easily bog down, but there is a good deal of skill (and not a little luck) involved, to try to sway the sub-kings to your side. There are three "flavours" of kings, Warrior, Peaceful and Statesman, each with a different ability level, who come from a total of twelve noble houses, two more than there are sub-kingdoms, so some may not appear unless an existing dynasty is ousted. Four families always start on the board, led by: King Lot in "Orkney" (everything north of Hadrian's Wall

in modern Britain in this game), King Lancelot in "Kent" (all south England east of Poole Harbour), Sir Constans in "Sorestan" (Lincolnshire and all points south to St Albans, west of the Wash, and east of Leicester), and Sir Lambor in "Gore" (South Wales). Oddly, there is no Mark in "Cornwall" (south-west England west of Bath and Poole Harbour) or anywhere else, but as you may have realised already, this is very much an imaginary, stylised, and anachronistic, version of Arthurian Britain, while retaining enough flavour of Arthuriana to make things interesting.

To fill in the remaining map blanks, there is "Cameliard" (north-west England, bounded by the coast, the Wall, the Pennines and the Mersey), "Northumberland" (north-east England from the Humber to the Wall, east of the Pennines), "Northgales" (North Wales), "Arroy" (the bit in the middle not already covered – roughly the modern English Midlands south to Stonehenge), and "Eastlands" (East Anglia). The map board is full colour, printed on glossy paper, but is hand-drawn, sometimes rather crudely, as are the thick card counters and markers. This gives a vaguely medieval feel, but one that also borders on "badly drawn" at times, as if the game were a pre-production copy.

There are named towns available for development (or destruction), areas of mineral wealth to be exploited (in Cameliard, Gore and Cornwall), and stone circle religious sites where the Druid Council can meet (in Orkney, Northgales, Arroy and Eastlands). Economics and statesmanship are essential elements, together with making marriage alliances and ensuring heirs are nominated, but warfare is inevitable too. Lot, a very active Warrior ruler starting in the poorest kingdom, nearly always raids south as soon as he can, unless persuaded otherwise (assassination is a possibility). Even if no players want to make war, the sub-kings can make their own decisions at times, and there are "Filthy Saxon" raiders to contend with, who can strike any coastal kingdom at almost any time (Kent is very susceptible, and it is the richest kingdom, jointly with landlocked Arroy – safe from Saxon sea raids, but no one else). And of course, there is always the threat of famine and pestilence. If the Saxons get out of hand, the four druid-players (Aneurin, Morgana, Taliesin and Vivienne), if the players agree, can mount a Holy War against them, which can make a mess of everyone's plans!

Overall, I like *Merlin* very much. The components are a little rough and ready, and there are times when you have to interpret or invent material to cover gaps in the rules, but it is an entertaining, challenging game, which has a sufficiently Arthurian gloss to be satisfying. The 'warring sub-kingdoms' notion is plausibly historical for the 5th and 6th centuries, certainly, and it would be possible to redesign aspects to better suit your own preferred vision of Arthurian Britain, though I've been happy to leave well alone, and just enjoy the game as it is.

Imperium Romanum II

My final choice for discussion here is a full-blown, strategic board wargame, this improved second edition produced by West End Games back in 1985 – and again sadly long out of print. The original *Imperium Romanum* was published in 1978, designed by Albert A Nofi. As its name implies, it covers all the key military campaigns during the life of the Roman Empire from 88 BC to 540 AD, on colour-printed paper map boards that span from Ireland and Spain east to the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea, using monthly game turns. Although classed as a Complexity 4 game, like *Merlin*, this has far more detailed, if better-written, rules. Many of these cover special cases which apply only to some forces or at some times however, and the game overall works very well to simulate the strategic economic and military problems and solutions faced by the Roman Empire in various places and times throughout its history. So well in fact that it has been used as a university teaching aid in the USA.

As the maps (which are designed using a hexagonal grid to regulate movement and distance calculations) include the British Isles bar Shetland and the extreme western fringes of Ireland, and the counters for armies and leaders are sufficiently generic, it would be perfectly possible to devise Arthurian scenarios to play out in that corner of the world only – or to march an army south to Rome for an "Arthur as Emperor" variant. The very last published scenario, a hypothetical one set in 540 AD, where

Belisarius took the Purple instead of refusing it, contains details for Saxon land forces, which could be used as a basis for similar ones for the Britons, Irish and Picts/Caledonians, for instance. Other special rules cover the size and activities of Saxon and Frisian naval raiders, so there is plenty of scope for ideas as to how the naval component might be tackled – especially for the Britons (if they wish to cross to the Continent or Ireland), Irish and Picts. There are also tables governing the size of forces available in all the areas of Britain and Ireland, providing further guidance. Anyone seriously contemplating an "Arthur as Emperor" variant should see scenarios 26 and 27, which cover events from late 401 to 420 AD, especially the forces and expectations of the "Constantius III" faction, as Constantine / Constantius starts in Britain, but marches steadily south, on his ultimately unsuccessful attempt to become Emperor himself. Although earlier than what we would consider the "usual historical" Arthurian period, these scenarios are good for ideas as to how Arthur might be given a reasonable chance of seizing Rome in this game, after constructing your own variant scenario, of course.

Imperium Romanum II is a splendid game, one of my favourite board wargames, albeit not one for the faint-hearted. It certainly gives a real feel for events in Roman Empire times, as far as this is possible now, and consequently gives a better understanding of what went on where, when and why.

Conclusion

My aim here has been to give some ideas for how you could recreate Arthurian times and tales in board games of varying degrees of seriousness and complexity. Working out the details and playing the games will give you new insight into parts of matters Arthurian, in a different way to simply reading or writing about those events and times, historical or imaginary. Much of this, especially for anyone who has not tried before, will not be easy, but when was an Arthurian quest ever simple?

• *Next time, miniature figure gaming*

Reference Bristol, O (1995) *Six Victorian & Edwardian Board Games* (Michael O'Mara Books, London)

Simon Rouse

Galahad's last request

Lord-knights, so soon I will depart,
But this I first must do:
The maid Magranne of gentle heart
I now commend to you.
She is not wise, but culpable
In the downright view of man,
And yet she loves with heart and soul.
To her I give the plan.

You also have not long to stay
And on your way may stumble,
For soon the light we shine will fail
And Camelot's walls will crumble.
Yet will the words I brought remain
Writ on a magic scroll.
For Love ahs surely placed them
In that maiden's soul.

Then while you live respect her
Whatever may prevail,
For she is on the Inner Quest
And this she must not fail.
What though the castle tumbles
And Camelot disappears?
The scroll of Love will do its work
Through all the coming years;

And there will come a day, my lords.
Then her descendants wake.
Themselves to take the Inner Quest
Even for Love's sake.
Our purpose will be carried
Down through the waves of time
And Camelot will re-arise,
Immortal and sublime.

Pamela Constantine

Alice Buckton and St Bride's bell

Keeper of the Grail
The Evolution of the Chalice Well

Simon Rouse

Legends

The Chalice Well at Glastonbury is a pilgrimage centre that holds a special place in many people's hearts the world over. It has been regarded as an area of particularly sacred space since pre-Christian times, spanning at least three ages: Aries, Pisces and Aquarius. The importance of water as the source of life is fundamental knowledge for all living things and as a natural spring it would have been held in high regard by the original indigenous population, by the succeeding Celtic tribes and the Druid community on the Isle of Avalon.

One of the local foundation legends surrounding Glastonbury concerns Joseph of Arimathea's numerous visits to the West Country in the pursuance of his business interests in the tin trade. The legend attests to him bringing with him his nephew, Jesus, on one or more of these journeys, to be schooled by the Druids at Avalon. As a regular visitor to these shores Joseph would have been aware of the sanctity of the Isle of Avalon and the repository of knowledge that was held there. How much Druidic knowledge was imparted to Jesus is a matter of conjecture, but it is possible, maybe even probable, that Jesus himself was shown the spring and learnt of its special qualities. Regardless of whether we follow the Christian faith or not, it is certainly a humbling thought that when we visit Chalice Well today, we may literally be standing where Jesus, too, during His 'hidden years' before He took up His ministry, may have paused to look around, reflect and gain a clearer vision of his future path.

Of course, the vale of Avalon would have looked markedly different to the expanding mass of urbanisation that is Glastonbury today. In the Chalice Well Garden there are yew trees, remnants or descendants of an avenue of trees that once flanked the little stream flowing down between the Tor and Chalice Hill. The excavated stumps of other yews that grew here have been dated to *c* 500 BC, suggesting that the Celtic peoples of the area did indeed regard the waters as sacred, landscaping a yew grove to honour the healing spring and the Mother Goddess.

The most famous legend, though, is the return to Glastonbury of Joseph, with twelve disciples of his own, in custody of the Holy Grail, the cup used at the Last Supper. After founding the first Christian church in Britain, Joseph is reputed to have buried the Grail at Chalice Well, although no physical vessel has been discovered there as yet. A bowl of some antiquity was discovered locally in the years between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but, alas, it was not the Grail. Some believe that the Grail was secretly guarded until the Dissolution of the monasteries, when it was safely removed and quietly relocated to a number of 'safe-houses', among them the Cistercian abbey of Strata Florida, until it reached its final resting place deep inside Wales. The search for the Grail goes on and although the Chalice Well is no longer the keeper of the physical Grail, it remains the spiritual home of the metaphysical Grail.

Two cruets were also brought by Joseph, separately filled with the blood and sweat of Christ, taken from His wounds whilst on the Cross. These, too, were buried at Glastonbury. Legend asserts that they were buried with Joseph within the Old Church he founded, but could they have been buried in

a separate location, one at Chalice Well and the other nearby at another spring? The names of both springs give an indication as to which may have been buried where, Chalice Well being known as the blood spring while the other, across what is now Chilkwell Street, is known as the white spring. Now covered by the reservoir building, the white spring was once a little coomb and, although not as famous as its neighbouring sister waters, may too have been held in high regard as a natural source of water. Why the white spring was overshadowed by its neighbour is an intriguing question. Does the hiding of the Grail indeed have a basis in truth?

The descriptive names of blood spring and white spring may go back to antiquity, but the properties of the waters at each also explain how they attracted their epithets. The waters at Chalice Well are rich in iron and, over time, leave a red deposit on everything they touch. If you have ever filled a bottle with Chalice Well water and left it for a month or two, the bottom third of the bottle will become stained an orangey-red colour. The source of this water is undetermined - it may originate from the Mendips, or even Wales, a lengthy underground journey. The other spring's waters, with its possible source deep under the Tor, leave limestone deposits, hence its white spring name. On a symbolic note, the blood red waters of Chalice Well may also represent the feminine principle in a Goddess-centred religion or matriarchal society such as the' Celts are believed to have had. The analogy of menstrual blood flowing from the womb-like Chali'ce Hill in a feminine aspected landscape would not be lost on the awareness of our more naturally attuned ancestors.

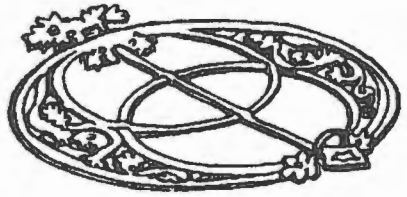
In the middle of the 2nd century AD, King Lucius sent to Rome for missionaries to come to Britain to convert the populace to Christianity. Geoffrey of Monmouth names the missionaries as Faganus and Duvianus and tells of their success, baptising Lucius and his followers, by a Somerset tradition in the waters of Chalice Well. When Faganus and Duvianus arrived at Glastonbury, they found the huts of the original twelve anchorites of Joseph of Arimathea situated around Chalice Well, at the foot of the Tor. The accepted site of Joseph's ancient wattle building, extinguished in the Abbey fire of 1184, was by tradition on the same site as St Mary's church in the Abbey grounds. Did Joseph build his first church at the waters that held the Grail and later removed to a second location, building a second church, within the precincts of what became the Abbey? Was he trying to safeguard the resting place of the Holy Chalice by diverting attention away from the site of its burial?

We can see that Chalice Well has been a place of pilgrimage and devotion since time immemorial. Excavations in 1960 indicated prehistoric and Roman occupation. People have been coming to its healing waters seeking cures for all kinds of ailments for hundreds of years. It was in the custody of Glastonbury Abbey for much of this time and was certainly looked after in its own way. Offerings from pilgrims to the well would have brought some income to the Abbey, but the monks had bigger and better relics to care for which generated a larger income. Possibly not as much attention would have been placed on the well as by the pre-Christian inhabitants of Avalon.

After the Dissolution, the Abbey was robbed of much of its stone, to be used locally for new buildings, and the well was unregarded, although not forgotten, for a period of time. There was on old inn at the foot of the Tor called 'The Anchor'. It may have been named after the anchorites at the little monastery on the site there or an allusion to the time when the Somerset levels were a network of waterways and lagoons broken up by islands of higher ground, and Glastonbury had harbours. The history of the well goes quiet until in the middle of the 19th century, a gentleman by the name of Matthew Chancellor had a dream about the Chalice Well's healing properties, so he took himself off to the well to drink. Sure enough, he was cured of his ailment, the inn was purchased along with the strip of land that enclosed the well-head, this by persons unknown, and, with a subsequent 'cure-all' plan in place, a bath house was erected. For a while, Glastonbury became a spa town. Unfortunately this wasn't sustained, partly due to the coldness of the waters for bathers and, with the subsequent death of a hopeful pilgrim who drank too much of them, the spa boom faded.

Modern Glastonbury

The Abbey had passed through many hands during the centuries following the Dissolution until, early in the twentieth century, its remains, grounds and the Chalice Well came up for auction. In 1913 the well was successfully bought by Miss Alice Buckton, author of *Eagerheart*. The small monastic remains on the site became a guest house for new pilgrims and a thriving artistic community was born. Music, plays, readings and lectures were held there, followed by the arrival of various craft workers. The beautiful lid that covers the well, based on the *vesica piscis* design bisected by a symbolic spear, originated from this period arid was designed by Frederick Bligh Bond, himself no stranger to Glastonbury, in 1919.



Miss Buckton continued to keep the spirit of Chalice Well alive during the ensuing years, until her death in 1944. It is said that the well has never dried up and during the droughts of 1921 and 1922 the town was saved through her good offices, allowing the townsfolk all the water they required. Her hopes and wishes to keep the well available for all to use as a place of healing led to the foundation of The Chalice Well Trust, which continued the guardianship until, in 1949, it was unfortunately forced to sell the well. In 1959, after re-purchasing the well and gardens, The Trust was reinstated by Wellesley Tudor Pole. The house was renovated, the garden developed and lectures were again held there. The Chalice Well Trust remains the custodian of the well today and, over the succeeding years, the gardens have been lovingly cared for and expanded even more. The continuing inspired hard work transforming it to become a place of particular peace and tranquillity, ideal for moments of quiet contemplation and meditation in the calming and uplifting surroundings of a very beautiful piece of Avalon. It continues to be an oasis of calm in the bustle and sensory overload of modern Glastonbury.

We have been visiting Chalice Well since the mid-1980's and we return at least once each year, often more when circumstances allow. We have seen the garden grow and change over the years and on our last visit, at the time of writing, 2002, the garden had never looked better. It is now commonly known that all living things vibrate at their own varying frequencies and, on that visit, the garden seemed very alive. Its presence and natural energy levels were at a noticeably high level. I feel sure that this is the combined result of years of spiritual energy brought by visitors to Chalice Well and the inherent energy within the garden itself. Dorothy MacLean's pioneering work with plant devas at Findhorn in the early 1960's has surely provided the blueprint for the jubilant expression of co-operation between our two kingdoms that has manifested itself so abundantly at Chalice Well.

On our early visits, the sight that first greeted us was the *vesica piscis* shaped pool, fed from a spout in a wall at its far end, with stone steps to one side leading up into the garden. You may know that the *vesica piscis* is the middle section of two interlocking circles. Extend one end of the *vesica* and you get a fish design- a sacred geometrical figure and the symbol in Roman times that you were Christian. A few years ago, the water spout and steps were replaced by sympathetic new planting and a Sevenfold Metamorphic Cascade – a series of stone bowls, the result of research and development by John Wilkes of Flow Design Research Group at Emerson College. The water flows round the cavities of the seven flow forms in a figure of eight, altemately to left and right, before being funnelled through a narrow escape channel, thereby inducing "rhythms into the flow to enhance the 'subtle energy' content of the water". Theodor Schwenk, also, believes that "a body of unadulterated water has infinitely subtle veil-like forms if the water is in harmonic movement". I like that phrase very much. 'Harmonic movement' so eloquently expresses the dance of water here and is reassuringly compelling to watch.

The planting has developed through the years also, each season seeming to attain a more harmonious balance of colours and

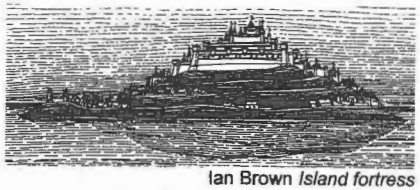
shapes. The Well area itself has more of a woodland feel to it now, a more natural setting perhaps for such a pure source of water. The spring is capped to ensure its purity, as the water rises through blue leas gravel up a stone shaft thought to be over 800 years old. The waters are cold, an even 52 degrees Fahrenheit with a steady flow of around 25000 gallons per day. Originally the well shaft was above ground, but years of subsidence and landslides have covered this to its present 'ground level'. A single block of stone forms three sides of the well mouth, which Glastonbury resident and mystic Dion Fortune believed had megalithic origins, and was a probable recess for a sacrificial victim in the well's pagan past. A sluice allows the water out to run down to the lower parts of the garden, presumably after the victim had drowned and fulfilled their role as living sacrifice to the Gods; also supplying Joseph with an ideal place to hide the Grail. If Ms Fortune's perception was correct then it is a comforting thought that this place of Druid sacrifice has now become a sanctuary which, in turn, has brought a measure of healing to the land. It is as though the correct question has been asked of the Grail's guardian and the land has become whole once more.

The meadow area of the garden has been cleared and cultivated over the past few seasons, revealing more open spaces and views to the Tor. A balance to the smaller, more densely planted parts of the original garden is now wonderfully in evidence. New seating areas have been erected providing quiet places for reflection and an opportunity to pause for a while and absorb some of the *holyest erthe in Englande* in a peaceful setting.

Rather than being required to ask, 'Whom does the Grail serve?' we should really now be asking, 'How may we serve the Grail?' The question posed before us is, should we continue to search for the Grail within the ever enlarging urbanization of the developed world, or should we now understand that the Grail, or the essence of the Grail, resides within such places as Chalice Well. The Grail Quest for each of us in our own times must surely be the re-greening of our home, the planet, halting the destruction of the natural world and working in co-operation with the natural kingdoms. As the Grail itself provided each person at the Round Table, and in the hall of the Fisher King at Carbonek, with the food and drink they most desired, so, as we achieve the Quest, each person in the world may no longer go hungry or thirsty. Everyone will have their needs met and want for nothing. We have the power to turn aside from our perilous journey towards the Waste land and return our home to its Edenic state, making it literally a Heaven upon Earth, a global Sarras. The guardians and custodians of these natural sanctuaries are truly today's Grail Knights.

Sources

Geoffrey Ashe (1982) *Avalonian Quest* (Methuen)
Geoffrey Ashe *ed* (1971) *The Quest For Arthur's Britain* (Paladin)
Patrick Benham (1993) *The Avalonians* (Gothic Image)
Dion Fortune (1986) *Glastonbury* (Aquarian; first published as Avalon Of The Heart 1934)
Lionel Smithett Lewis (1985) *Glastonbury – Her Saints* (RIIKO; first published 1925)
Lionel Smithett Lewis (1988) *St Joseph of Arimathea at Glastonbury* (James Clarke; first published 1922)
Nick Mann (1985) *The Cauldron And The Grail* (Annenterprise)
R F Treharne (1971) *The Glastonbury Legends* (Sphere)
<www.chalicewell.org>



Ian Brown *Island fortress*

Twilight

When the world revolves to Camelot
Beneath a peaceful sky,
When Arthur and his golden court
Return to rule, then I
Might find my lonely spirit
From which all hope has gone
Floating through this misty clime,
Perchance to Avalon.

Pamela Constantine

old news

DARK AGE TRAPRAIN LAW

The great hillfort of **Traprain Law** in the Lothian plain east of Edinburgh continues to reveal secrets from the Dark Age and other periods. Famous since 1919 for its hoard of late Roman silverware cut up and placed in a pit in the early 5th century, this treasure features bowls, spoons and flagons with Christian motifs. More recently, teams from Belfast and Edinburgh have been conducting rescue excavations since 1999, revealing human artefacts from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods as well as the expected pre-Roman and Roman Iron Age periods when the Votadini (Dark Age Gododdin) tribe had this as its capital.

Traprain maintained links with the Roman world through the 3rd and 4th centuries, even after the Roman withdrawal from Scotland. On the summit the burial of a child in a long cist, probably dating to the Early Christian period, may be "the first tangible evidence" for traditional links with the early 6th-century **St Modwenna**, who reputedly founded a chapel on the site.

There are more Dark Age links, though of a rather tenuous nature. Thenew (Teneu, Thaney) was supposedly the daughter of the mythical king Loth (hence the Lothian area) and the mother of Glasgow's future patron saint, **St Kentigern** (or Mungo). King Loth ordered his daughter to be thrown from Traprain's cliffs when he discovered she was pregnant by a local shepherd, but mother and unborn child survived. Though then cast adrift, Thenew survived again, to give birth ashore. With the popularity of the cult of St Kentigern in the 13th and 14th centuries, it may be that the summit's medieval enclosure, which included a possible chapel and the long cist, represent "a centre of pilgrimage for followers of St Kentigern".[1] *CL*

[1] Ian Armit, Andrew Dunwell, Fraser Hunter, Mags McCartney and Eiméar Nelis "Traprain Law" *Current Archaeology 203* (May/June 2006) 602-607; Ann Williams *et al* (1991) *A Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain* (Seaby) "Teneu", "Kentigern"

PRECIOUS, MY PRECIOUS

Once again on view at **The Vyne**, the Tudor stately house at Sherborne St John, Basingstoke in Hampshire, is an object not only with an intriguing history, both ancient and modern, but even a tantalising mystery.

Originally discovered in the late 18th century at nearby **Silchester**, the object is a late Roman solid gold ring. Its hoop-shape has an inscription on nine of its ten facets which includes the name Senicianus; on the tenth is mounted a bezel engraved with the head of a goddess labelled VENVS.

Within decades of the ring being discovered, across the Bristol Channel at the site of the late Roman pagan temple at **Lydney** a small lead tablet was found, with a curse scratched onto it. This reads, in translation,

To the god Nodens: Silvianus has lost his ring and granted half [its value] to Nodens. Among those who are called Senicianus do not allow health until he brings it to the temple of Nodens.

There is the suggestion of a late 4th- or early 5th-century crime story here, if the two males named Senicianus are indeed one and the same. Silvianus, the pagan, has had his Venus ring stolen, and Senicianus has somehow acquired it. Despite its pagan image, Senicianus has the ring customised with a Christian message: SENICIANE VIVAS IN DE[O] ("Senicianus, mayst thou live in God!"). Silvianus then curses the Christian with ill-health till reparation is made to the Lydney temple. The ring of course never reaches the temple but gets lost in Silchester. Regrettably, we hear nothing of the health of Senicianus.

Now here's where the plot thickens. When Mortimer Wheeler was digging at Lydney in the late 1920s he heard the tale linking the two finds. His adviser on the 20th-century finds was no other than the linguistics academic **J R R Tolkien**, who was yet to make his mark as a fantasy author. It is so tempting to speculate that this late Roman or early Dark Age mystery of a lost ring and a curse may have been the initial inspiration of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.[2] *CL*

[2] Sue Herdman "Divine inspiration" *The National Trust Magazine* (Summer 2006) 36; R G Collingwood and Ian Richmond (1969) *The Archaeology of Roman Britain* (Methuen) 206-

HOLY GRAIL LOCATED ... AGAIN

Cryptologists are at it again, reading a secret message they believe is encoded in stone. This time it's the turn of Canadian **Louis Buff Parry** – after two years work he has reportedly deciphered the inscription on the Shepherd's Monument at **Shugborough Hall** in Staffordshire to reveal that the Holy Grail is buried nearby. Or has he?

At the heart of the mystery is the radical polymath Thomas Wright of Durham (1711-68), who not only speculated about galaxies (in his *Original Theory or New Hypothesis of the Universe*, 1750) but also (like his friend William Stukeley) drew 'druidic' remains in the British Isles. In addition he also designed architectural curiosities at Badminton House (a 'Talismanic Grove' of trees laid out in 'a magic square') and – probably – the Shepherd's Monument at Shugborough.

The monument, originally placed in 1748 in an alcove against a since demolished kitchen garden wall, features a version of a Nicholas Poussin painting now much admired by Priory of Sion adherents. Below are inscribed the letters

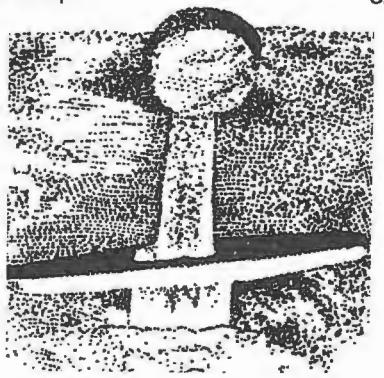
O.U.O.S.V.A.V.V

D. M.

Buff Parry believes this inscription proves that "a **Holy Grail stone** was captured in France and brought back to Shugborough in 1746 by Admiral George Anson". The Anson family then commissioned the monument from Thomas Wright to encode the Holy Grail stone's location.

The code should be read backwards, according to Buff Parry (presumably as Hebrew is). MD is 1500 in Roman numerals and refers to verse 1500 in *Genesis*, and VVA VSOUO is supposedly the phrase "the bloom or offshoot of Joseph" (*Genesis* verse 1494) meaning "the [grail] stone the builders forgot". (Are you still following this?) Buff Parry believes that it is "very likely that at least one of the stones will be eventually found" at Shugborough. What, there's more than one?

The general manager of the estate, Richard Kemp, has over the years eagerly endorsed each new interpretation of the inscription, and doesn't let us down this time either. He thought that Buff Parry had managed to narrow down the worldwide search for the grail right down to the estate, and having "read every theory that has ever been written" (a wonderful achievement in its own right) finds that he "cannot find a question that [Buff Parry] cannot answer". Oh, I'm not sure you're trying hard enough, Mr Kemp.[3] *CL*



GAWAIN'S SWORD ... AGAIN

Everyone knows the story of how Arthur achieved recognition as king by drawing the sword from the stone. Much less well known is that Italy has a quite independent sword-in-the-stone story, with the striking feature that both can still be seen at a hilltop site in Tuscany, southwest of Siena in Italy. San Galgano – Saint Gawain – is the 12th-century person held responsible for the sword in the stone being there.

Dr Luigi Garlaschelli finally reports on tests done at **San Galgano Abbey**, including ground-penetrating radar, metal analysis of the sword, thermo-luminescence tests *etc.* Most intriguing of all is that the core of the building, the round chapel, is 985AD ± 50 years – that is, it well predates the supposed reason for it.[4] *Steve Sneyd*

7; Anthony Birley (1988) *The people of Roman Britain* (Batsford) 121, 154

[3] "Holy Grail 'lies at stately home'" <news.bbc.co.uk> March 17 2006; Ivo Dawnay "The eccentric Mr Universe" *The National Trust Magazine* (Spring 2006) 77; "The Grail Code" *Pendragon XXXI* No 4 (2004) 7-8; "Staffordshire's Grail Monument" *Pendragon XXXII* No 2 (2004-5) 10

[4] Luigi Garlaschelli in *The Skeptical Inquirer 30* No 3 (May-June 2006); Steve Sneyd "Another sword in another stone" *Pendragon XXVII* No 4 (Spring 1999) 20; "The Real Sword in the Stone" *XXX* No 4 (Spring-Summer 2003) 19

Reviews

T H Robinson

Brian Stableford
The Stones of Camelot
Black Coat Press 2006 £14.99
1 932983 69 4 pb 327pp

Brian Stableford is, with Arthur C Clarke, one of the two best living science fiction writers, with Diana Wynne Jones and Michael Moorcock one of the three best living fantasy writers, the best populariser of science since Isaac Asimov, the best historian of literature since C S Lewis, and a peerless translator of 19th-century French novels. So when he produces an Arthurian novel I expect a masterpiece, and a masterpiece this is.

The Arthurian setting of this novel is neither the historic 5th-6th centuries AD of our world, nor the imaginary medieval kingdom of Chrétien and Company. It is in what is called in science fiction and fantasy an *alternate* world, that is, one where natural laws, probabilities and history took a different course from their course in our world. This Arthurian kingdom (with a rough medieval décor) occupies central Britain, sandwiched between a Wales run by druids (who in this world had not been suppressed by the Romans), and an Eastern England settled by Saxons, part Christian part pagan.

The kingdom had been a violent anarchy of conflict between families and factions, until Merlin stepped in. With a little magical help from Morgana le Fay, he played the trick of the sword in the stone, and raised to the throne his young apprentice Arthur, of unknown origin and therefore impartial between the warring families and factions. To achieve and maintain a peaceful and well-governed kingdom, and to bring about his long-term aim of preserving the remnants of Roman civilisation and averting a Dark Age, Merlin engages in all kinds of chicanery and an orgy of spying. When planning the castle of Camelot, he had installed spy-holes in every chamber, linked by a network of secret passages connecting with his own residential tower as Court Magician. These are known only to him, except a few later shown to Arthur to enable them to meet privately. When he is too old and infirm to negotiate the secret passages, he delegates the task to a new young apprentice, who has to report to him all he sees and hears at the spy-holes. This apprentice is Amory, the hero and narrator of the novel.

No man is a hero to his valet, and naturally, subjected to this fly-on-the-wall treatment, the knights and ladies of Camelot do not appear very heroic to Amory and Merlin. The only two who remain wholly sympathetic are Arthur himself and Gawain. They both genuinely want to preserve a well-governed kingdom from faction and civil conflict. Merlin, Arthur and Gawain, vaguely pagan *politiques*, want as part of this ideal to maintain tolerance between more than one religion. But they are under pressure from opposite directions to favour one religion, from the Welsh druids led by the bard Taliesin, and from the Christians led by an intriguing Abbot of Glastonbury. Their problem is complicated by a need for allies, in case the Saxons, at present at peace with them, decide to expand their territory.

This setting would amply suffice for most novelists, but Stableford produces three other worlds! Amory is to experience all of them. The amoral and virtually immortal elves live in Cokaygne, where the sun always shines. Food does not actually fall from

the trees, but a permanently fertile soil yields a reliable abundance for a reasonable amount of work. This agreeable world can be reached from Arthur's world through a Gate of Avalon and probably other portals. These are kept hidden by the elves, and as a further discouragement humans passing these gates suffer for a time from physical and mental disturbance, caused presumably by dimensional change. Some humans, nevertheless, do get through and live in Cokaygne, but if they return to their own world they are liable to find that centuries have passed, for time is different in Cokaygne.

The elves, who are not bothered by the dimensional change, sometimes come through the gate to hunt or trade with humans. When Morgana le Fay visits Camelot with elf traders, she pretends to be a Queen of the Elves. But back in Cokaygne she is just an ordinary elf. The elf polity is a completely peaceful, completely efficient anarchy, such as Marx dreamed of when the State had withered away. Stableford's account of life in this world is a *tour de force* of psychology and sociology. However, it is as Morgana's servant that Amory gets to and lives in Cokaygne. He had actually been there briefly in infancy as a changeling, before being returned to Arthur's world, brought up by ignorant and superstitious nuns, and taken on by Merlin in his teens.

Gates like the Gate of Avalon, and equally difficult to find, lead from Cokaygne to a third world, the Dark Land. In Cokaygne the sun always shines, in the Dark Land never, it really is dark. It is peopled, not by sinister demons, but just by another branch of amoral elves. The elf folk divided early between those who wanted eternal day and those who wanted eternal night.

As a companion for Amory when he visits the Dark Land, Stableford imaginatively brings into his novel a non-Arthurian but certainly glamorous figure. Thomas Rymour de Erceldoune was a real person in our world, attested by legal documents in 13th-century Scotland. But as Thomas the Rhymer he was later made the hero of a romance and a ballad, in which he figured as the *protégé* of a Queen of Elfland.[1] He fits well into Stableford's story, and as musician and poet he goes down well with both kinds of elves.

But Amory is insatiable in his thirst for experience, and he and Thomas finally find their way to *our* world, in modern times, where Amory writes down his many experiences and the true story of Camelot.

With such a rich and imaginative setting, there is naturally a correspondingly rich and imaginative plot. For fear of spoiling surprises, I shall not say a word about this, except to note that I have only mentioned a few figures in a large cast, and that the story includes a fine murder mystery. As with all Stableford's books, I was hooked on the first page and stayed hooked until the last. I wish all Arthurians and all who love a good fantasy the pleasure of reading this very enjoyable book.

W M S Russell

Lev Grossman
Codex
Arrow Books 2005 £6.99
0 09 949122 2 pb 376pp

In that this is a tale of a modern quest for a medieval book that purports to be about the Quest for the Holy Grail, *Codex* is undoubtedly an Arthurian novel. We are treated to circumstantial details about *A Viage to the Contree of the Cimmerians* by Gervase of Langford – the codex of the book's title – and much about encoded messages, bookbinding and medieval manuscripts. This reveals the author's intention to impress us with the depth of his research, as details of a virtual reality game later impress us with the breadth of his experiences.

Sadly, in common with many such thrillers (the paperback cover is a homage to the original *The Da Vinci Code* paperback), there is little about the characters to empathise with or care about. The final nail in the coffin, for me, is the totally surreal view of modern England that is conjured up in the closing pages as the US hero, the archetypal innocent abroad, chases after his chimaera.

Still, as a thriller it does its job, pulling the reader along at breakneck speed with reflective episodes interspersed, and is intriguing enough to keep you reading.

Chris Lovegrove

[1] Briggs, K (1977) *A Dictionary of Fairies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books) 394-5, 415-417

Kate Mosse
Labyrinth
Orion Books 2006 £7.99
0 7528 7732 1 pb 702pp

I read this before it was acclaimed the viewer's choice in C4's Richard & Judy's Book Club shortlist at the 2006 British Book Awards but, frankly, remained unimpressed. I had high expectations for an out-of-the-ordinary modern take on the grail written by a successful reviewer and sponsor of new writing, but was deeply disappointed at the result.

Kate Mosse (no, not the model) has mixed up a cocktail of familiar elements – Cathars, reincarnation, grail, medieval archaeology – and somehow ultimately turned them into a romance-cum-fantasy-cum-thriller of the cheapest kind. I admire her research into life in the Middle Ages, her knowledge of the Midi (she lives in Carcassonne), her attempt to make her grail a little different from the familiar bloodline thesis. However, her use of Hollywood magic and crude Disneyesque villains and villainesses, combined with a holier-than-thou heroine, ultimately left this reader cold. Still, I can't argue with 70,000 readers (at the last count).

Chris Lovegrove

John Matthews
The Book of Arthur:
lost tales from the Round Table
Vega 2002 £16.99
I-84333-6l2-X hb 416pp

The term "Lost" in the title is perhaps a little misleading, but "Tales that are often mentioned but very hard to get hold of" doesn't have quite the same marketing ring to it!

I certainly found it excellent for that purpose, with the added benefits that the retellings are in a straightforwardly readable style – Matthews doesn't attempt to intrude his own personality, simply to give the essence in each case (and makes clear what portions he has omitted, and why). The end notes are very thorough, detailing sources and translations used, and giving useful background. That includes the first convincing explanation I've come across for the curious term *esplumoir*, for Merlin's place of wizardly withdrawal. Matthews suggests the word as related to the enclosure used for a moulting falcon .In other words, it is a place of retreat wherein Merlin could shed outgrown aspects of his more mundane self.

The book contains twenty-eight stories, grouped into those of Celtic, including Irish, origin, those which belong to the "epic of Gawain", and a third "medieval legacy" group. In the Introduction and elsewhere, Matthews comments interestingly on social attitudes reflected in the stories, including the notable misogyny of the earthy version of the unfaithfulness-detecting mantle story, of an automaton designed to detect non-virgins, and of an adulterous woman being daily served with her lover's embalmed head at meal-times. He also notes where he detects elements of pastiche, parody and humour, indicating that, from an early stage in development of Arthurian story, at least some tellers kept tongue in cheek – a gentle warning, perhaps, to beware over-seriousness in our modern responses.

This book is both a pleasure to dip into, or read / reread at a sitting, and ideal in terms of sating curiosity as to those stories so often referenced but hitherto not readily findable, like the bleakly strange werewolf story of Gorlagon, and the very different account of the catalyst-of-downfall knight given by Ulrich Von Zatzhikoven's *Lanzelet*, with the piquant irony that the Swiss writer's source was Hugh de Morville, later one of the knights who murdered St Thomas à Becket – a striking instance indeed of "one man in his life plays many parts"!

Stories here intriguingly re-context such familiar Arthurian tropes as the self-playing chessmen, for example, or the "beheading game", three different variants showing its importance well beyond the familiar instance of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. We discover, too, the Siege Perilous recast as once Judas' seat at the Last Supper, and the glass castle become home to the Lady of the Lake.

Finally, two irresistible favourites – neither of which I'd even heard of previously. "The Knight of the Parrot" has Arthur unable to escape a running commentary on his every deed from the know-all parrot of the tale's title (aged leftover of lost villa culture, perhaps?); the extraordinary story of Melora and Orlando not only features a rare instance of Merlin deploying to evil purpose his skill of shape-changing (into what sounds like the title of a 1950s novelty rock song, a one-legged one-eyed one-handed harp player), but also the most empowered of heroines, outwarrioring every male from Britain to Babylon.

Steve Sneyd

Nigel Bryant
The Legend of the Grail
Boydell & Brewer 2006 £9.99
1 84384 083 9 pb 272pp

When it first came out in hardback in 2004 Nigel Bryant's synoptic version of the grail legends was reviewed favourably in *Pendragon* as "true to its sources but eminently accessible to a modern audience" – a quote which I see has made its way onto the cover of this welcome paperback edition.

To really test its accessibility I asked an intelligent lay-person, with no knowledge of Arthurian literature, what she thought of it. I'm glad to report that she read it cover to cover with great enjoyment, noting that what started apparently as a fairy-tale became increasingly more serious, with the occasional need to refer back for clarification. It certainly helped elucidate the confused view of the grail engendered by *The Da Vinci Code* furore which, lo and behold, coincided with the release of this handy new edition!

Chris Lovegrove

Brendan McMahon
The Princess Who Ate People:
the psychology of Celtic myths
Heart of Albion Press 2006 £9.95
1 872883 88 5 pb 102pp

First, I have to say this is a wonderful title for a book, to go with a striking cover by Ian Brown. The author used to be a Pendragon member, so his familiarity and fascination with Celtic myths comes as no surprise. Here he looks primarily at Irish and Welsh narratives with his psychotherapist's eye, seeking for ways in which these old tales can help modern patients make sense of their own dilemmas.

Though Irish tales dominate his study, British stories put in an appearance, including some Welsh Arthurian narratives. The text is critical of aspects of classic Freudian analysis, and here I wish McMahon's concluding chapter, which encapsulates his approach, had begun the book. Some stimulating ideas are here, even for those unsympathetic with Freudian theory, so I will only mention a couple of niggles. First up are the typos – I can't believe that there wasn't time to proofread the text before publishing – and secondly I was disappointed that the magnificent cover was not really as representative of Mis, the princess of the title, as I expected.

The final word must go to the author: "The fact is that the psychological complexity of the tales, with their rich interplay between the internal, interpersonal and social worlds, debars any simple reductionist interpretation, Freudian or otherwise." Amen to that, I say.

Chris Lovegrove

Laurence Main
King Arthur's Camlan:
a quest for the truth
Meirion Publications 2006 £4.95
1 871974 11 9 pb 84pp illus
Available from the author (include £1.00 for p+p), 9 Mawddwy Cottages, Minllyn, Dinas Mawddwy, Machynlleth SY20 9LW

This is Pendragon member Laurence's personal psychic quest for the background circumstances of King Arthur's last battle. Using dreams, creative reconstructions, synchronicities, coincidences and intuition, he builds up what he believes is the definitive account of Camlan, told from his point of view as a reincarnation of Derfel, a survivor of that battle. Half the book is taken up with Laurence's own ballad "The Dream of Derfel", but there are also other poems, maps, original illustrations and a generous mention of the Pendragon Society.

Laurence's mix of written word information and facts gleaned from inherited memories has been successful over the years (this is his fiftieth book) but will not appeal to cynics, pedants and scholars. This may or may not be a recommendation to buy it yourself.

Chris Lovegrove

bookworm

FICTION AND FACTUAL

Simon Young's ***AD 500: a Journey through the Dark Isles of Britain and Ireland*** is now available in paperback (Phoenix £7.99). This "witty and delightfully prejudiced guide book" (David Self in the *Times Educational Supplement* for March 3rd) purports to be a travelogue written by a Byzantine Greek in the aftermath of the Roman withdrawal from Britain.

Next issue will include a review of an unusual novel: ***Dewi the Dragon*** (Y Lolfa paperback £4.95 93pp 0 86243 770 9), by emeritus professor Christie Davies, features another emeritus professor, W M S Russell, world authority on dragons and a consultant in imaginary biology. This fantastic conceit, which works surprisingly well, was published earlier this year.

Paul Broadhurst's ***The Green Man and the Dragon*** was published on St George's Day in a limited edition of 1000 copies. The Levantine saint is said to be "far older than we might imagine", having links with the Green Man, the all-knowing Knights Templar and megalithic cultures. If you want to have the key to discovering the principles that guided ancient religions and civilisations across the world, send a cheque for £22.00 (payable to *MYTHOS*) to Box 888, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 7YH (this price includes postage and packing within the UK). Also published on St George's Day was ***Explore Dragons*** (Heart of Albion Press paperback £12.95 187pp 1 872883 931) by crypto-zoologist Richard Freeman, a review of which is also planned for next issue.

BOOK NEWS

The ***Da Vinci Code*** saga may have run its course; we can only hope. One commentator rooted for Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh because she didn't like Dan Brown's face: "it's miserable and he isn't ... entitled to be". Others declared both Brown's book and ***The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*** execrable, one going as far as to say that "If there has been a worse book [than *DVC*] published in the past 25 years, then *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* could well be it."

Behind it all an important principle is at stake. "Restricting free use of ideas is the spirit of the age. Firms have claimed copyright on plants and parts of the human genome because ideas are worth more than all other assets ... If [Dan Brown] doesn't win, free thought may be stifled in the name of protecting ideas." Incredibly, Mr Justice Peter Smith lampooned the whole idea by including a code of his own in his 71-page written ruling. In the meantime, the increased sales of Baigent and Leigh's book from all the publicity will only go to paying off their massive costs. Oh, and the film is doing reasonably well despite the critics' scorn.[2]

The first published volume of the late Rosamund Stanhope was ***So I looked down to Camelot***, which took its name from the title of a poem. Contrary to an obituary in *The Guardian*, this was not a homage to Tennyson: according to her daughter Louise Larchbourne, "It is an instance of a dialectic expressed in much of her work, fiercely repudiating the glorification of an ideal world in which everything is OK, frozen in beauty and uneventfulness," instead it is "engaging in and affirming life".[3]

"Eccentric book dealer" **Charles Garvin**, who died in January 2005 at the age of 59, ran **Pendragon Press** with Jeff Levin.[4] They published, *inter alia*, science fiction authors R A Lafferty and Ursula Le Guin, including *From Elfland to Poughkeepsie* (1973), the latter's genre literary criticism.

Former Children's Laureate and much-published author (including titles with Arthurian themes) **Michael Morpurgo** declares "I love revisiting old stories, reading them again and writing them too. I've reworked some of the ancient myths and legends upon which so much of our literary tradition is founded: Beowulf, Arthur, Robin Hood ... As a child I loved listening to them, waited impatiently for the printed page to turn and reveal another colour plate, Gawain and the Green Knight perhaps, hiding behind a veil of magical tissue paper. Many other writers have found inspiration in these ancient tales, Andrew Lang, Rosemary Sutcliffe [*sic*], Seamus

---

[2] C"Judge's own Da Vinci code cracked" *BBC News* April 28 2006lare Dyer "Millions at stake in Da Vinci Code court case" *Guardian* February 27 2006; Richard Alleyne "Did Brown steal Da Vinci Code? The plot thickens" *Telegraph* February 28 2006; Joanna Walters "How Dan Brown's wife unlocked the code to bestseller success" *Observer* March 12 2006; Barbara Toner "Bright ideas to have and to hold, for richer..." *Guardian* March 4 2006; Nick "Dan Brown has been called many things, but never 'my hero'. Until now..." *Observer* March 12 2006; Hugh Davies "The authors who wrote themselves a £2m bill" *Telegraph* April 8 2006

[3] *Guardian* February 2006

[4] *Ansible 224* (March 2006)

Heaney, Ted Hughes, and in retelling them they have given the stories new energy for each new generation..."[5]

A N Wilson also aired his love for the Arthurian legends in his regular *Daily Telegraph* column. He saw obvious connections between Harry Potter and the young Wart of T H White's *The Once and Future King*, not to mention between Dumbledore and Merlyn, noting also that an "essential source" for *The Sword in the Stone* is John Masefield's *The Midnight Folk* (1927). Actually, I think a closer parallel is *The Midnight Folk*'s sequel, *The Box of Delights* (1935), which also features the young Kay Harker, this time with a more obvious Merlin figure, Cole Hawlings. Wilson suggests that the true-life original for White's Merlyn is his headmaster at Stowe School, J F Roxburgh (who also mentored Evelyn Waugh and Peregrine Worsthorne). In a follow-up article Wilson contrasts White's Arthur with the King Arthur of John Cowper Powys' roughly contemporaneous novel *Porius*.[6]

AND FINALLY

Two reviews still outstanding are scheduled for next issue: Graham K Griffiths' ***Behold Jerusalem!*** (Longinus paperback 2003 £17.99 305pp 0 9543519 0 8), which was recommended by Laurence Main, and ***Cunval's Mission*** (Y Lolfa paperback 2004 £5.95 0 86243 709 1) by Pendragon member David Hancocks. Apologies for keeping you waiting for these.

June Watts' ***Circle Dancing*** (Green Magic 2006 £9.99 0 9547 2308 2) comes with a recommendation by Dame Judi Dench, though it is really outside *Pendragon*'s remit. It proclaims itself the first book to explore the link between the modern sacred dance movement and its historic heritage.

If you have come across an Arthurian title that we have missed, do let us know. Better still, write a review of it yourself – even a thumbnail sketch will be welcome!

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

[5] Michael Morpurgo "Aunt Bessie's stocking forest" *Guardian Family Supplement* January 14 2006

[6] A N Wilson "Harry Potter's literary ancestors" *Telegraph* February 27; "The knights with right on their side" March 6

the board

NAME GAMES

Red is the new libertine. Platinum is the new Marie Antoinette. "With this **Da Vinci Code**-style riddle passing as an explanatory note, the Christian Dior show ... opened the Paris haute couture season..." This must be an early sighting of a *Da Vinci Code* metaphor which we must surely now expect to regularly blacken our literary skies.

In the same *Guardian* article as the DVC metaphor we read about a "never ending stream of famous models" being "a troop of gothic **Guineveres** with bleached-out eyelashes and long, white-blonde – indeed, platinum – hair extensions". **Guinevere** as much-abducted female found her way back into captivity recently, in the guise of a four-year-old North American black vulture. After five days freedom she was coaxed down with dead rabbits from her tree in an Essex garden, and returned to the Tropical Wings World of Wildlife six miles away in South Woodham Ferrers. A spokesperson for TWWW told the BBC that her vulture mate **Lancelot** had been "missing her terribly". Well, he would, wouldn't he – nobody to chew the fat with.

A partially-deaf man was saved from a recent blaze at his home in Batley, West Yorkshire by **Merlin**. Peter Taylor was awoken at night by his pet African Grey parrot, who "jumped out of his open cage and ran up and down" his owner's legs to wake him after a smoke detector's battery failed. Though Merlin has now learned to imitate a smoke alarm's sound, he has now been superseded at Mr Taylor's new home by a fire system specially designed for the hard-of-hearing.

Many people in Tenby in Pembrokeshire had "become attached" to ***Sir Galahad***, it was reported, but that didn't stop a replacement by *Haydn Miller*. The 20-year-old Tyne class lifeboat made way for the first in a new generation of "bigger, quicker and safer" computerised vessels in the Tamar class, each costing £2m. Tenby is the first RNLI station in the UK to take delivery of a Tamar vessel but *Sir Galahad* it seems will still be missed, by the Tenby crew as much as by townspeople. Coincidentally, Royal Fleet

Auxiliary ***Sir Galahad*** – which was a contemporary of the RNLI *Sir Galahad* – visited Pembroke Dock in the same county in May during the 24th anniversary of the San Carlos landings in the Falklands. Like the lifeboat the ship is due to be retired later in the year. Still on a nautical theme, a narrowboat called ***Pendragon*** was sighted recently at Apsley canal basin in Huddersfield. Other narrowboats with Arthurian names are to be found on the Kennett and Avon canal system.

Tree-house environmentalists in Shepton Mallet protesting against a new Tesco store site lost their court battle against eviction. Their leader Oliver Carter – not your conventional distressed damsel – was bitter. "Of course they won in court. They had four legal experts and a highly trained barrister. All my legal advice came from **King Arthur Pendragon**, a druid priest." Whoops.

Typical of responses to news of the "Welsh" names **Arthur Elwen** given to the son of Conservative leader David Cameron (see last issue) is that of a *Guardian* letter-writer from Gwynedd. He complains that there is "nothing Celtic" about the name Elwen, which is attributed to Old English Aethelwine, "*aethel* meaning noble and *wine* meaning friend".

A 165-mile walk dubbed **Arthur's Way** was completed way back in March 2004, linking Cadbury Castle to Tintagel. Three walkers used the Leland Trail to kick-start their trek through Somerset, Devon and Cornwall to raise money for cancer charities.

National Lottery operator **Camelot** has developed courses equivalent to GCSE and A-level in lottery retail skills. The courses, which each cost £43 and attract government funding, will enable corner-shop staff to gain "enhanced product understanding" of draw tickets and scratch card games and to practise "enhanced selling techniques" to persuade us to gamble even more. Has the chivalric dream shrunk to this?[7]

[7] Jess Cartner-Morley "Method in the haute couture madness" *Guardian* January 24 2006; "Vulture 'on the run' coaxed back" <news.bbc.co.uk> March 16 2006; Andrew Hirst "Smoke alarm ruffles Merlin's feathers" *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* March 25 2006; "Lifeboat first for Tenby station" <news.bbc.co.uk> March 2 2006; "Sir Galahad heads into town again" *Western Telegraph*

BIG SCREEN

In 2004 we reported on production of the Ridley Scott-produced ***Tristan + Isolde*** (12A), which began shooting in September 2003. The film, starring Rufus Sewell as "Lord Marke" and Sophia Myles and James Franco as the fated lovers, finally opened in the UK in April 2006. Sewell's former college drama teacher described him as even then being charismatic, determined, talented, charming, popular, creative and playful, while Ms Myles – claimed as the new 'it' girl of British cinema – declares, "I've always done exactly what I want to do, and Isolde is similarly headstrong."

But despite quality actors, the film opened to mixed reviews in the US earlier this year. UK critics were similarly lukewarm, generally giving it two stars out of five. Its "lumbering storyline and clunky script" (*Guardian*) and "soft-lit Mills & Boon" love scenes (*Huddersfield Examiner*) clearly failed to impress hardened hacks. It doesn't help that the film is variously described as being set "during the aftermath of the fall of Rome" and "in the depths of the King Lear-ish Dark Ages" – it even gets dubbed "Kevin Reynolds' 13th-century romance" by free newspaper *Metro*.

The opening of the film of ***The Da Vinci Code*** in May was no longer jeopardised by the High Court action between the author Dan Brown and the writers of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*. In April Mr Justice Peter Smith ruled that Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh's copyright was not breached by Brown's novel. *The Da Vinci Code*'s "special attractiveness is the way in which Mr Brown has put together [*The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*'s] generalised facts and ideas into a well received thriller... As a device to writing fiction he is perfectly entitled to dress up factual scenarios to give an illusion that supports his fiction." The claimants now face costs of several hundred thousand pounds. More on this appears in BookWorm.

In the thick of the media feeding frenzy, *Amélie* star Audrey Tautou seemed determined to be relatively unaffected by her im-

May 10 2006; Paul Lewis "Tesco allowed to evict protester" *Guardian* February 23 2006; Geoff Dawber *Guardian* letters, March 6 2006; <http://www.seekon.net/arthursway/; Joseph Lee "A-level in scratch cards" *TES FE Focus* March 3 2006

minent superstardom. She plays French cryptologist Sophie Neveu in the film version of "the novel of the millennium" (!) alongside Tom Hanks as symbologist Robert Langdon and Paul Bettany as Silas the mad monk. She is unfazed by the supposed blasphemy of the story. "Nothing was toned down. The filmmakers took the novel as pure fiction, which it is, and treated it as such."

The world première at the Cannes Film Festival left critics seriously underwhelmed, but the financial success of the film will depend ultimately on the paying public: diehard believers, cynical sceptics and the simply curious. If you have views on all this do let us know.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Opus Dei movement is revelling in its new-found notoriety, and anticipates a continuing surge in membership. The sect (which numbers 500 members in England and Scotland and 700 in Ireland) reportedly has no members in Wales. Their UK spokesman Jack Valero said "We would like to start a group in Wales ... it will be like starting in a new country for us." Duh! Wales ***is*** a separate country! That's bound to endear the ultra-conservative group to potential members there. According to Fr Joseph Evans the sect's self-harming rituals are "just normal practice" and self-flagellation is used "in accordance with the standard traditions of the Catholic church". The priest has no intention of wasting money going to the film and has not read the book. Presumably this would be taking self-mortification too far.[8]

BROADCAST

Merlin's Apprentice – broadcast at Easter on TV channel Five – is supposedly a 2006 sequel to the TV mini-series *Merlin* produced in 1998. Miranda Richardson and Sam Neill reprised their roles as the Lady of the Lake and Merlin but, as the internet encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* points out, this is "more properly an alternate universe tale". In *Merlin's Apprentice* the Grail is found during Arthur's reign, not after his death, though during Merlin's fifty-year sleep is gets lost again.

Canada's Hot Docs festival, which opened late April 2006 in Toronto, included Jonathan Stack's ***Secrets of the Code*** documentary, with the director answering questions after its screening on May 1st. Described as "a spiritual road trip along the paths explored by Brown's best-selling book", the film has interviews with rabbis, monks, priests and others spiritually affected by the novel, and is another title to add to the many programmes daily appearing purporting to explore the novel's by-ways.

On the same day a Time Shift TV documentary on BBC4, ***The Da Vinci Code: the Greatest Story Ever Sold***, took a critical look at how Brown's thriller was attacked not only by the Church but also by the art world and by academics, and included clips from three 70s BBC documentaries on the Grail.

Terrestrial channel Five even ran a DVC night, with no less than three programmes dedicated to the phenomenon. ***The Man Behind the Da Vinci Code: Revealed*** focused on Henry Lincoln, co-author of *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, who first brought the Saunière mystery to British TV audiences in the 1970s with his programmes for the BBC's *Chronicle* TV series. ***Angels and Demons: the True Story*** was an extended advert for Dan Brown's second novel, while ***The Da Vinci Code Myth: Revealed*** was an examination of the non-existent Leonardo connection with a sacred bloodline. Now all we need is a revealing programme entitled *The Great TV Mystery Revealed: Why DVC Programmes Need Subtitles.*

About the only thing that seemed to add anything new on radio was the ***Book of the Week*** discussion on BBC R4 (April 6) chaired by Roger Bolton, with Henry Lincoln (the only *HBHG* author not to take part in the court case) and church historian Peter Stanford. The latter basically said there was no real evidence for any of the book's claims, while Lincoln seemed to be mainly distancing himself from any claim for the truth of the book. He merely said that it reflected long-circulating ideas such as the story of the

[8] The Board *Pendragon XXXII* No 1 (2004) 42; Tina Hurley on Rufus Sewell *Guardian Education* February 21 2006; Eddie Harrison "Living life on a role" *Metro* April 25 2006; "Da Vinci Code idea was not stolen" and Stephen Bates "A smile played around the author's lips..." *Guardian* April 8 2006; Jon Harry "Louvre at first sight" *Wales on Sunday Life magazine* May 14 2006; Jonathan Gibbs "Has *The Da Vinci Code* had *any* good reviews?" *Guardian G2* May 19 2006; Marc Baker "Seize the Dei" *Wales on Sunday* May 14 2006

Magdalene coming to the south of France, and, mentioning the just-published translation of the Gnostic *Gospel of Judas*, that Gnostic gospels gave a very different picture from the "official" one.

Moreover, the idea that Christ survived or avoided crucifixion occurred elsewhere, for example in Islam, Pierre Plantard's 20th-century publicising of the supposed Priory of Sion didn't prove it didn't exist before him, and, no, *HBHG* hadn't claimed a Vatican cover-up or conspiracy. Bolton summed up noncommittally, though a visit to a bookshop revealed twenty-two different books about the Grail on sale.

Richard Hammond and the Holy Grail – now you don't get many titles like that! The *Indiana Jones* film theme played over the opening credits as the *Top Gear* petrolhead traipsed around Europe, from Istanbul to Paris, Glastonbury to Rosslyn, London to Rome. His aim – to make the theme accessible – was admirably achieved, even if this modern-day Everyman found neither bloodline nor ancient artefact (BBC1 May 29 2006, producer James Hayes).

A recent issue of US SF magazine *Pablo Lennis* mentioned that in a new series of *Stargate* on TV an episode called **"Arthur's Mantle"** took the characters into an alternative reality, drawn there by a device operated by Merlin. They attempt to deal with Merlin in this Camelot world, but it is not clear if they try to get the Black Knight to murder Merlin or if Merlin tries to get the Black Knight to murder *them* – the description in *Pablo Lennis* was a bit vague!

Apparently the Channel 4 documentary profiling the project pioneered by Oxford University and the Wellcome Foundation to map the DNA, and thus the ethnic make-up, of the UK is to be called ***The Face of Britain***, and is due to be broadcast later this year, in November 2006. The programme production company, Wag TV, is reportedly seeking families who "know a lot about their family history but would like to delve deeper and have their DNA tested to reveal ancient roots".[9]

ROLE-PLAYING

Last issue we noted that ***Spamalot*** is due to open in London in October 2006, and now we hear that it is hoped that the sell-out New York production will transfer lock, stock and actors to the West End. David Hyde Pierce and Hank Azaria will presumably be joined by Tim Curry's replacement in the role of King Arthur, British classical actor Simon Russell Beale, for the show's two hours of "life-affirming silliness".

Colwyn Bay Light Opera Society presented the world première of ***Arthur King*** at Theatre Colwyn at the end of April 2006. Based on a book by Lyn Selby, with music and lyrics by Ian Mason, the synopsis begins "Merlin returns to save Britain from the EC". Before you imagine this is an anti-EU tirade, it turns out that Merlin falls for a sexy French caterer called Brigitte Baguette and has to revise his ideas about Europe. Out-of-work teenager Arthur King is the reincarnation of you-know-who, Mordred is a local drug-dealer and Merlin discovers lager, so this musical, spotted by Paul Parry, was clearly a summer pantomime under another name.

Maggie Fox and Sue Ryding this year celebrate 21 years as comedy duo LipService with *Horror for Wimps*, currently on tour. One of their more celebrated productions was the classic ***King Arthur and the Knights of the Occasional Round Table***, which we must hope they will revive before too long.[10]

Reading University's School of Continuing Education ran a course entitled ***The women of Arthur's court: female characters in the Arthurian legend*** on May 6 this year – details were included in last issue's mailing. Dr Juliette Wood, currently Secretary of the Folklore Society, considered the changing roles of female characters like Guinevere, Morgan le Fay, Isolde, Ygraine, Morgause and the Lady of the Lake in modern Arthurian tradition. She also discussed what historical and archaeological sources tell us about 5th-century women and examined how the role of the characters developed and changed from medieval romance onwards.

[9] <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merlin%27s_Apprentice>; Chris Knight "Countdown to the Code: It's all Da Vinci, all the time" *National Post* (Canada) April 25 2006; <www.hot-docs.ca>; "Pioneering project pays visit to county" *Western Telegraph* May 24 2006

[10] Veronica Lee "A Brit brightens Broadway" *Telegraph* January 14 2006; "Girls will be ghouls ..." *Huddersfield Examiner* February 10

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

An editorial error resulted in the headers for some pages of last issue reading *Heroes and Villains* instead of *Treasures of Britain* – apologies for any confusion. In part 2 of Prof Russell's extended review last issue, a serious error was the omission of Mortimer after Ralph on page 39, though the reviewer charitably suggests that this "won't worry people with good memories".

To the editor's chagrin the exchanges listing has been giving the wrong payee details for *Meyn Mamvro* for some time now. Sorry, Cheryl! This has now been corrected, along with details of the journal's new rates.

MORE UNHOLY GRAILS

And still they come. "The rhythmic foundation of most sample-based music, from hip hop to drum'n'bass, is a **truly groovy drum break** that's never been used before – a holy grail that sends producers rooting through piles of old records in search of the elusive prize". On Mark Riley's programme on borrowing in popular music we were specifically told that one song in James Brown's huge back catalogue, ***Funky Music***, was "the holy grail of sampling".

As far as managers of music acts are concerned "**the US** is the holy grail for British artists", while **The Beatles** represent the unobtainable "holy grail for online music suppliers" because they won't release their copyright. And wannabe guitarist Will Hodgkinson "travelled far to find his grail, from Manchester ... to the **crossroads** in the Deep South where [blues guitarist] Robert Johnson allegedly sold his soul to the devil. The spot, a brightly lit intersection with a stream of noisy traffic, was less than inspiring".

Forecasting glittering prizes for sporting unknowns and *ingénues* is "the Grail" for sportswriters, according to Frank Keating, while for Fiona McIntosh, ex-editor of *Elle* and now editor-in-chief of *Grazia*, many women's "holy grail of work/life balance" is the **freelance career**. In the financial world, "**cornering the trading market** [is] the holy grail" for Thomson Financial and its peers, only exceeded, according to *The Guardian*'s business editor, by "the holy grail that will take **trading off the telephone**".

Science and technology as usual attempt to have the last word. "If there is a Holy Grail of space exploration, then **achieving interstellar travel** would be it," reports *Metro*'s science columnist, while elsewhere in that free paper a journo claims that an **anti-cholesterol drug** which "could soon be given to millions of patients to stop them having heart attacks" is "a pill dubbed the 'holy grail' of medicine" – though this quote, judging by the few expert statements used in the new item, seems to be a product of his own imagination.

Meanwhile, a book reviewer in *Seven* claims that the **skull of Thomas Paine**, the 18th-century radical, became, when "floating free of the rest of his skeleton", what he terms is "a phrenological Holy Grail". For one travel writer, **untracked powder snow** is the holy grail for skiers, despite all the risks. Elsewhere, a commentator writing from Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia at first glance thought that he had "found the holy grail of the post-9/11 world, proof positive that Islam in power can allow and even encourage a peaceful, tolerant, multicultural society ... **an exemplar of interfaith coexistence**". But all is not as it seems, apparently.

Amazing Coincidence No 4. The head of philosophy at University College London declares that "the holy grail [of animal experimentation] would be the ability to achieve all of our scientific purposes **without using any animals** at all". He goes on to mention a national centre set up in 2004 to pursue the so-called **3Rs**: "refinement (less suffering), reduction (fewer animals) and, most difficult of all, replacement (no use of living animals)". Now, the "3Rs" is in fact the principle established, in collaboration with a colleague, by our own President, Professor Russell, after whom the American Humane Society named their prestigious Russell and Burch Award. To have an Arthurian society's president's principle declared a holy grail is indeed poetically apt.[11]

[11] Club reviews *Metro* March 6 2006; "UK bands get boost from government" *Guardian G2* March 14 2006; Caroline Sullivan "Lennon online" *Guardian* November 15 2005; Mark Riley's "It's the Same Old Song" BBC R2 March 28 2006;Gary Lachman "Twangs for the memory" *Guardian Review* April 15 2006; Frank Keating "A sporting life: The sportswriter's Holy Grail" *Guardian Sport* March 7 2006; Dan Milmo "Data firms chase a fast moving market" *Guardian* February 23 2006; *Metro* science column grail: February 16 2006; Finian Davern "The pill to stop heart attacks" *Metro* March 14 2006; Thomas Paine's skull: *Seven* January 22 2006; Alf Alderson "Steep, deep – and safe" *Guardian Travel* March 25 2006; Timothy Garton Ash "Comment" *Guardian* February 16 2006; Jonathan Wolff on bioethics in *Guardian Education* March 28 2006; the full report of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics is *The Ethics of Research involving Animals* (May 2005) and is available from www.nuffieldbioethics.org

JOURNALS AND SOCIETIES

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

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

Caerdroia *Annual journal of mazes and labyrinths* UK £7.00 Europe €10.00 USA $15.00 "Labyrinthos", Jeff and Kimberly Lowelle Saward, 53 Thundersley Grove, Thundersley, Essex SS7 3EB *www.labyrinthos.net*

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* £2.50 / £7.50 "Meyn Mamvro", Cheryl Straffon, 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 "Ða Engliscan Gesiðas (The English Companions)", BM Box 4336, London WC1 3XX *www.tha-engliscan-gesithas.org.uk*

PERIODICALS

The featured "day walk" in the spring / summer 2006 issue of the Youth Hostels Association magazine ***Triangle*** takes in Lud's Church in Cheshire. As all readers know, this geological formation, as well as serving as a meeting place for Dissenters in the past, is thought to be the original Green Chapel in the 14th-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. "After passing through the ravine (wonderful with icicles in winter), look back to see the profile of the Green Knight high up in the rock face," writes Naomi Higson. Her 5-mile itinerary goes from YHA Gradbach, past Lud's Church and the Hangingstone to Danebridge, returning along the Dane Valley.

Caerdroia, taken from Welsh words for "castle" and "revolving", is the title of the illustrated journal of mazes and labyrinths, now published annually. The 35th edition, which celebrates *Caerdroia*'s 25th anniversary in 2005, epitomises the quality A5 annual we have come to expect over the years and reinforces the view that the spiral castle is not only still alive but here to stay. This issue takes in labyrinths in Europe and India, portrays modern maze-makers and gives societies and books detailed attention. Maths, computing programs, art, history – it's all here, and more besides.

The Cauldron 120 (May 2006) includes two articles with Arthurian links. "The Alchemy of Avalon" by Nicholas R Mann and Phillipa Glasson is a revised extract from the same authors' *Avalon's Red and White Springs* (Green Magic) which was first published in *Avalon 30* (Summer 2005), while Shani Oates' "The Green Knight" will be reappearing in an upcoming issue of *Pendragon*.

Meyn Mamvro 60 (Summer 2006) is a *sacred caves* issue, and Peter Rose's "Cornish caves: folklore and cult" looks at tales linked with the Dark Age St Sampson and the apocryphal St Agnes' encounter with the giant Bolster at Chapel Porth.

Widowinde 139 (Summer 2005) among other good things outlines news of a new GCSE History pilot. Beginning in September 2006 in 70 schools, Medieval History 400–1500AD will be compulsory as a core unit. This period of course doesn't just include the early Anglo-Saxon period but also post-Roman Britain. Students will not only be expected to investigate local and international history for these centuries but to also choose from a number of other options such as archaeology, heritage management and marketing, multimedia and varied presentations of history in the media. This all is a welcome change from the concentration on Tudors, Stuarts and the World Wars that seem to have dominated exam syllabuses in recent years.

Number 105 of exchange journal ***Northern Earth*** is a singular issue in that several of its articles attempt to debunk long-held and cherished myths. Eddie Cass echoes modern scholarship which, with good reason, doubts the antique and ritual origins that have been ascribed to Pace-Egg Plays and similar folk dramas in the mumming tradition, David Staveley outlines recent scientific research which suggests the Long Man of Wilmington hill-figure is no earlier than the mid-16th century and Chris Lovegrove reasserts Castlesteads on Hadrian's Wall as a prime candidate for Arthur's last battle. *NE* not only continues to challenge preconceptions but also to look better with each number.

BBC History magazine allowed grailologist Richard Barber to re-visit the Grail theme that he previously expounded on in 2004 for the same periodical ("The Grail" Vol 7 No 2: 30-33, February 2006). This, fortuitously, closely coincided with the lead-up to the film of the Dan Brown novel and with Richard Hammond's Holy Grail TV documentary (Barber was programme adviser). Barber's next book incidentally is on Edward III and the first Knights of the Garter, the organisation which supplanted Edward's original plan for an Arthurian chivalric order.

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

The Dark Tower revisited

Steve Sneyd

Childe Rowland and his brothers twain
Were playing at the ball,
And there was their sister Burd Ellen
In the midst, among them all.

Childe Rowland kicked it with his foot
And caught it with his knee;
At last as he plunged among them all
O'er the church he made it flee.

Burd Ellen round about the aisle
To seek the ball is gone,
But long they waited, and longer still,
And she came not back again.

They sought her east, they sought her west,
They sought her up and down,
And woe were the hearts of those brethren,
For she was not to be found.

Katharine Briggs, that most authoritative figure in the field of British folktale, did accept that, despite the oddity of its provenance – Robert Jamieson in adulthood recalling a story he had been told aged seven at his childhood home in Morayshire [*c* 1770], by a travelling tailor; and the clear literary-ising (if such a word exist) of the description, particularly of the barrow interior's lavish décor, in his text – the bones of the story could be regarded as authentic, and assignable to a recognised tale type.[12]

There's an intriguing variation, incidentally, between Jamieson's version and Joseph Jacobs.[13] The latter adds the detail that Ellen's spiriting away is due to her having circled the church widdershins while seeking the ball, that is, that in effect she is the architect of her own misfortune.

[12] Steve Sneyd *ed* (2004) *Opening the Ellen Files* (Hilltop Press); reviewed *XXXIII* No 1, 46
[13] Joseph Jacobs (1890) *English Fairy Tales* (Nutt; Schoken 1967) 257-266

This raises the question whether he had an additional source other than Jamieson, or whether this was just a classic case of him succumbing to "always blame the woman" syndrome?

Although Alan Garner for *Elidor* clearly drew on either Jamieson or Jacobs (my guess would be Jamieson, because of the latter's Cheshire connection), particularly for the football in the churchyard scene and the barrow visit, he doesn't (at least in the paperback edition I have) acknowledge either, merely quoting the line from *King Lear*.[14]

Childe Rowland to the Dark Tower came ...
His word was still, Fie, foh and fum
I smell the blood of a British man.

Rowland rescues Ellen from the King of Elfland John D Batten

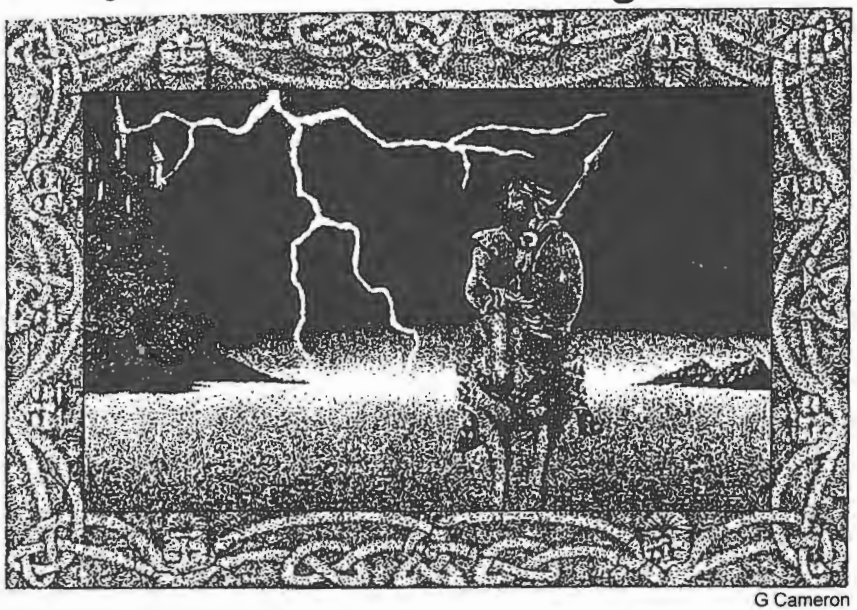
The latter reference [wrote Joseph Jacobs] is to the cry of the King of Elfland. That some such story was current in England in Shakespeare's time is proved by that curious *mélange* of nursery tales, Peele's *The Old Wives' Tale*. The main plot of this is the search of two brothers, Calypha and Thelea, for a lost sister, Delia, who had been bespelled by a sorcerer, Sacrapant (the names are taken from the *Orlando Furioso*). They are instructed by an old man (like Merlin in "Childe Rowland") how to rescue their sister, and ultimately succeed. The play has besides this the themes of the Thankful Dead, the Three Heads of the Well [...], the Life Index, and a transformation, so that it is not to be wondered at if some of the traits of "Childe Rowland" are observed in it, especially as the title explains that it was made up of folk-tales.

But a still closer parallel is afforded by Milton's *Comus*. Here again we have two brothers in search of a sister, who has got into the power of an enchanter. But besides this, there is the refusal of the heroine to touch the enchanted food, just as Childe Rowland finally refuses. And ultimately the bespelled heroine is liberated by a liquid, which is applied to *lips and finger-tips*, just as Childe Rowland's brothers are unspelled by applying a liquid to their ears, eyelids, nostrils, lips and finger-tips. There may be here a trace of the supreme unction of the Catholic Church. Such a minute resemblance as this cannot be accidental, and it is therefore probable that Milton used the original form of "Childe Rowland", or some variant of it, as heard in his youth, and adapted it to the purposes of the masque at Ludlow Castle, and of his allegory. Certainly no other folk-tale in the world can claim so distinguished an offspring [Jacobs 1890].

Fee, fi, fo, fum,
I smell the blood of a Christian man,
Be he dead, be he living, with my brand,
I'll dash his brains from his brain-pan.

[14] Garner, although, censors the killing of all whom Roland met on the way to recover his siblings, understandably I suppose as not wishing to cast his hero in a bad light (nice schoolboy and serial killer would have made an uneasy amalgam indeed!) and introduces matter, like the unicorn, from chivalrous rather than folk tale: *Elidor* (Collins 1965).

Arthur and the Snowgoose



G Cameron

Pamela Constantine

Arthur pushed on through the rugged northernmost countryside of the dark isles. It was stark and craggy here, but not nearly as daunting as the lone route of his spirit. For Arthur, charged with so high a mission as the full raising of these lands to a realm of true blessedness, knew in the honesty of his heart that he could not achieve this by remaining solitary in his private life.

He had the power of integrity, though he would be the first to admit it was not yet full-hewn, and other resources Merlin had made plain to him. H had also attracted some good friends – stalwart men and true. But instinct told him he would have need of a power greater than all others: the love of his match-partner. Arthur, himself a man of loyal heart, knew by this joint power alone could be fully achieve his destined purpose.

Here in the extreme north wild boar roamed in large numbers through the vastly forested terrain; and there was the rumoured danger of wolf-packs and the occasional bear. But the danger most real to Arthur was that he might be recognised in this barbaric region. For he was aware that word had already spread like wildfire through the land of the ease with which he had drawn Excalibur from the stone, and of his avowed intent to unite the warring realms in peace. Despite Merlin's warning, he had been foolhardy enough to declare this intention to others. Now, a few months hence, he was learning wisdom and discretion, and had journeyed north clad as a local peasant, equipped with only a sword and a spear.

In Caerleon they were preparing to crown him king with all pomp and ceremony, but there was something he urgently needed to know before he came to the throne.

As he fought his way through thicket and snagging briar, sometimes climbing in order to descend into the next patch of lowland, he thought again of his recurrent dream, of the maid, dazzling fair of face and graceful as a lily, to whom his heart was given – though he had seen her not in all his life on earth. Yet she and no other would be marry.

The matter had been causing him deep concern for some time now, and Merlin seemed unwilling to be drawn on the topic. Did the maid only exist in dreams or was she here on earth? And if she were here, was she unmarried? Would she be willing to wed him, to become Queen of Camelot? All he knew for certain was that he could not fulfil his role of destiny without here.

And since Merlin was silent on the matter, here he had come, secretly seeking the only other being he could ask. In the south, the old ways were already changing: it was not only the human kingdoms that were divided. Other races, once intertwined, had drawn apart as human beings sought to impose greater orderliness on a wild planet. It was said there had once been a time when fairies had existed in human form, that some had possessed the ability to transform themselves into other shapes, and a power to prophesy beyond that of any mortal.

Now, they had withdrawn to the outer edges of the dark isles, guarding their ambiguity, their more fluid nature, from the ever-increasing rationality of humankind. There was Morgana, of course, who put in an appearance now and again, but he did not trust her.

A few such fairies, it was believed, still remained in the remote places, and the wisest of these was reputed to be Dionaid, who dwelt in an impenetrable cave near the loch of Kail on the northernmost edge of the land. It was said that every year when the wheel of nature turned with the falling of the leaves, a male snowgoose would come to drink at the loch; that then Dionaid would emerge from her cave into the daylight, transform herself into a snowgoose, and fly off with her mate for the winter.

Today was such a time. Arthur hoped fervently he would not be too late, that he might be there when Dionaid emerged.

But even as he descended into the glen of Kail in a last shaft of autumn sunlight, he heard the whirring of wings as the male snowgoose flew past over his head and on down towards the loch. Striding full-pace through the tufted heather, Arthur reached the glen and ran towards the entrance of the cave, which was lit by the very same beam which had guided him thus far... And even as the snowgoose landed, Arthur arrived at the illumined mouth of the cave.

There was a tense moment of complete silence while the majestic bird sipped from the loch, then, drawing closer to the cave, raised his head to call forth his mate. The call when it came was uncanny, almost human, and seemed to echo into the far distances. Arthur held still, feeling the poised power of the moment on which his destiny hung.

Again, silence. Then with feet of silk and form enveiled as in a snowy mist, Dionaid appeared, her brilliant eyes fixed upon the great white bird. Arthur could feel the magnetism between the two. And he, in that moment, seemed to remember such a time in his own life, here or elsewhere, when he too had felt that same magnetism towards another. He remembered his own, and, soundlessly, his heart cried out.

As if she had heard, the fairy woman stepped back to look for the first time on Arthur and he felt the penetrating force of her gaze.

"You too yearn for the coming of your mate," she said.

"I cannot fulfil my destiny without her," Arthur replied.

"Look into the loch," said Dionaid. "The face you see there will be that of your Queen-to-be."

Arthur hastened to the lochside, hardly daring to look, then gazed down into the clear, still water. It did not reflect his own face but, to his great joy, that of the fair woman of his dreams. For a magical second she smiled back at him. Then, on the instant, she had gone.

"You who were one before the twinning of the stars will come together again," said Dionaid; and even as he reluctantly withdrew his gaze from the blank water to look at her, two snowgeese rose on the cooling air and circled, higher and higher, above the mountain peak.

High in the sky, Dionaid looked down on him with pity which was yet tempered by peace: for although she knew that the future king would both have and lose his queen, she also knew that since the two were inextricably one in essence, in some other realm they would be happy together forever.