

JOURNAL OF THE PENDRAGON SOCIETY
— 'HOME OF HEROES' —

PENDRAGON



Knight's move

XIII No 4



XXXIII No 4 Summer 2006



Simon Rouse

W M S Russell

You will be saddened to learn that our President, Professor Bill Russell, died recently after complications following dialysis. In this issue we look back at an eventful life and the unique contribution he made to the Society during his time as president; and in the remaining contributions we have yet to publish we can continue to appreciate his reflections.

This issue's theme

The varied submissions appearing in this issue have thrown up the umbrella theme of *Knight's move* (hence Simon Rouse's 'Home of Heroes' cover). We have the next in Alistair McBeath's series on Arthurian games (not chess, but you can see the rationale behind the choice of title!), plus more fun and games emerging in overviews of Arthurian comics and cartoons, Shani Oates' analysis of Gawain's adversary the Green Knight, Geoff Sawers on Welsh giants and Bill Russell's final overview of Gerald the Welshman. The main strand linking these is of course Arthur, but there are other threads interested readers can tease out themselves.

Future themes

I edited my first *Pendragon* nearly thirty years ago, in September 1977, with the theme of Dragons, and that was followed by Merlin. I propose that we revisit some of those original themes, and as we have already examined dragons in recent issues (including Arthurian Beasts) the autumn issue will feature *Merlin* (including re-evaluations of T H White's *The Book of Merlyn*, first published in 1977) – submissions please by November 15. Sticking with T H White (2006 is the centenary of his birth, after all) the winter edition will be *The Sword in the Stone* (remembering that we've already had an Excalibur issue, edited by Fred Stedman-Jones) – submissions would be appreciated by February 14. After that, Ian Brown has suggested a number of possible themes, including Castles, Quests, The Future King and Metamorphoses, so we aren't lost for ideas!

Last words

There is a copy to give away of Christie Davies' children's novel *Dewi the Dragon*, featuring Professor of Imaginary Biology and world authority on dragons W M S Russell, for the first potential reviewer to write to the Editor summarising their suitable credentials!

Letters to the Editor are always welcome, though do let us know if any part of your correspondence is not for publication.

Thanks are due to the many and various contributors, and in particular to Simon and Anne Rouse for processing the journal, Fred Stedman-Jones for feedback, Steve Sneyd for snippets and other support, and Ian Brown and Simon Rouse for illustrations.

Finally, this issue is dedicated to the memory of Bill Russell. As Fred Stedman-Jones has observed, our late President's "wide range of Arthurian interests and warm sense of humour symbolise the ideal member at whom this magazine is aimed: someone appreciative of other writers' viewpoints and willing to contribute his own expertise to the pool of Arthurian knowledge." A real gentleman.

Chris Lovegrove

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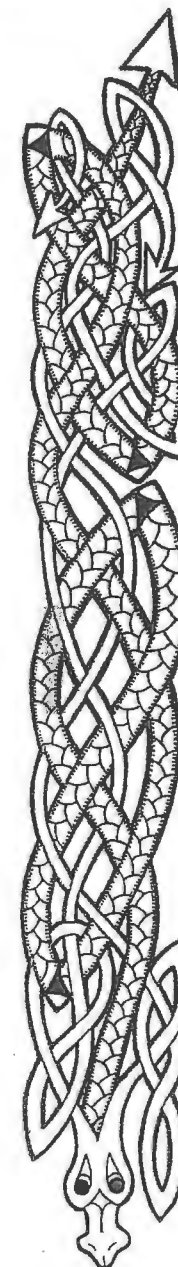
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Bill Russell

President 2001-2006



In 2005 the Universities Federation for Animal Welfare marked the 50th anniversary of the year when 30-year-old UFAW Research Fellow Dr William Russell and his assistant Rex Burch began their study into humane experimental technique. Their project culminated in the publication of *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique* (1959) in which the concept of "Three Rs" (as they were later termed) was fully developed. The 3Rs (as they seem now to be known) are *refinement* (less suffering for laboratory animals), *reduction* (fewer animals experimented on) and *replacement* (no more use of living animals). As Bill has himself noted, little notice was taken of these principles until 1990 when the Humane Society of the United States called a new international prize for contributions to laboratory animal welfare the Russell and Burch Award. Groundswell had been building (represented for example in the UK by the Fund for Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments in 1969), and more recently had resulted in the setting-up of a UK national centre to pursue the Three Rs and strong recommendations by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, not to forget the various World Congresses, launched in 1993, on alternatives to laboratory animal

experimentation.¹

I mention all this for those who are only familiar with Bill Russell's contributions to the study of Arthuriana, to show how fortunate and privileged we were when he kindly agreed to become President of the Society in 2001. By all accounts he was as witty and widely knowledgeable as he was humane; my own regret is that despite correspondence and numerous talks on the phone the opportunity to meet him personally never presented itself.

His several lifelong passions were prefigured in his upbringing. His father, Sir Frederick Stratton Russell, was director of the Plymouth marine biological laboratory, while his interest in classics was fostered by his time at Marlborough College. He won scholarships to study Greek as well as Classics and English Literature at New College, but academic life was interrupted by the war and service in the King's Royal Rifle Corps as a rifleman ("being very leftwing [he] refused a commission").² Typically, he contributed comments on the Corps' Regimental March to the regimental association's journal, displaying yet another deep-seated passion of his, music.³

Surprisingly, his first degree when it was eventually achieved was in zoology, and this was followed by an MA and a DPhil in animal behaviour. His parallel interests in human behaviour led him to psychoanalysis and he embarked on a new career as an analyst. Together with his wife Claire Hillel, also an analyst, he co-authored many papers and books such as *Human Behaviour: a new approach* (Andre Deutsch 1961) and *Violence, Monkeys and Man* (Macmillan 1968).

In the sixties he worked as an agronomist for the Commonwealth Bureau of Pastures and Field Crops before being appointed a

¹ W M S Russell "The Three Rs: past, present and future" *Animal Welfare* 14 No 4 (2005) 279-286; W M S Russell "A Comment from a Humane Experimental Technique Perspective on the Nuffield Council on Bioethics Report on *The Ethics of Research Involving Animals*" *ATLA* 33 (2005) 649-653

² Caroline Richmond "Bill Russell" *The Guardian* August 16 2006

³ W M S Russell "A Note on the Regimental March" *The KRRC Journal* 86 (March 2006) 152

lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Reading University. Here he taught a range of courses including demography, cultural evolution and the sociology of the ancient world, and we are told he often "delivered part of the lectures in rhyming couplets, sung in his fine baritone-bass voice". He was eventually made professor in 1986, retiring in 1990.

While at Reading his first undergraduate studies in Classics and English Literature found further outlets in The Folklore Society. He was, in turn, honorary librarian, president and vice-president of the Society during the seventies and eighties, publishing numerous papers and co-authoring and co-editing books. It was this field of expertise that particularly recommended him as a possible president for the Pendragon Society. Since his first involvement with the Society in 1994, and especially with his acceptance of the presidency, Bill has been more than just an asset, generous in his encouragement, support and praise, committed to raising the profile of the Society through his contacts and invariably positive in all our dealings.

He had experienced much recently that put his upbeat temperament to the test: Claire died unexpectedly in 1999, and he was subsequently diagnosed with kidney failure, necessitating regular dialysis and considerably hampering his ability to travel. Nevertheless, as Caroline Richmond remarked, "his cheerfulness remained undiminished." His sense of humour was typified by two books. As William Moy Russell he wrote a comic SF novel in the mid-fifties, later published as *The Barber of Aldebaran* in 1995 by Janus Publishing, which mixed robotics and music with comedy and fantasy. The individual humour this displays is perfectly echoed by Bill's former Reading colleague Christie Davies in his recent *Dewi the Dragon* (Y Lolfa 2006). "Everyone in sociology used to be creative," Professor Christie said, describing how he was inspired to write this children's book. Unlike most characters in *Dewi the Dragon*, however, William Moy Stratton Russell is the only one to appear as himself, a world authority on dragons and a consultant in imaginary biology. Bill appreciated the joke that the fictional Russell loved chocolate cake (a delicacy he had given up) and was described as a computer buff (the supreme irony for all

editors and correspondents who have struggled manfully with his typescripts). As Professor of Imaginary Biology he may well have enjoyed reviewing the two books on dragons I had lined up for him.⁴

It is hoped that a memorial service will be announced in the not-too-distant future, and there is the possibility of a bursary or prize being offered in his name. In the meantime, his best memorials lie in the recollections of friends, colleagues and readers, in his body of work and in the, one hopes, lasting legacy created by both his humanness and humanity. He will be missed. CL

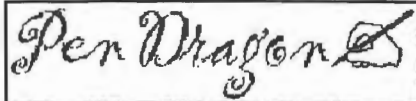


Eric Fitch writes: "I was sorry to hear of the recent death of William Russell, especially as it was me who introduced him to Pendragon. His articles were always scholarly and most informative and he will be a great loss to the society. *The Guardian's* obituary, which is available on the Internet, is most enlightening and he achieved a great deal in differing disciplines. I first came across him via the H G Wells Society, of which we were both members, although I never met him in person. A sad loss."

"May I add how saddened I am to hear of the death of Professor W M S Russell," Kevin Mantle writes. "His erudite articles and letters were always a joy to read." Pamela Harvey adds, "I am very sorry to hear of the death of William Russell. His writings are of a quality difficult to replace, but they will live as long as *Pendragon* is read. I wish him blessings and happiness in the 'Otherworld'."

⁴ Anna Davis "Prof breathes life into Dewi" *Reading Post* February 15 2006

Letters



HISTORIANS

Continuing discussion of diverting rivers for the sake of burials [Letters XXXIII No 3 and No 2 and XXXII No 4], it might be worth mentioning two more instances of rivers having been, according to tradition, diverted in order for burials of different natures.

One can be found in Saint Nechtan's Glen, near Tintagel, Cornwall. A beautiful waterfall tumbles down into a natural granite cauldron and thence through a wide hole in the rock to a tranquil river below. It's an enchanting setting, a ferny grotto, privately owned when I was there a few years ago, but open to the public for a nominal entrance fee.

The story goes that, when Saint Nechtan died, his two sisters, apparently witches, or maybe nuns, diverted the river below the waterfall and buried Nechtan's body, placing a large stone slab on top and then letting the river flow back over it. One can still stand upon the slab in the middle of the river to this day. It's intriguing, too, that Nechtan shares his name with a Celtic water god.

The second instance is referred to in Terry Jones' *Barbarians*. The authors, quoting Dio Cassius, refer to the diversion of the river Sargetia in order to bury and conceal the riches of the Dacian king, Decebalus. The quote from Dio Cassius is as follows:

The treasures of Decebalus were also discovered, though hidden beneath the river Sargetia, which ran past his palace. With the help of some captives Decebalus had diverted the course of the river, made an excavation in its bed, and into the cavity had thrown a large amount of silver and gold and other objects of great value that could stand a certain amount of moisture; then he had heaped stones over them and piled on earth afterwards bringing the river back into its course. He also had caused the same captives to deposit his robes and other articles of a like nature in caves, and after accomplishing this had made away with

them to prevent them from disclosing anything. But Bicilis, a companion of his who knew what had been done, was seized and gave information about these things.¹

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

A few responses to the "palindrome issue"



[XXXIII No 3]... The mosaic from Cattle Hill, Bratton Seymour, was particularly intriguing for the "small animal or bird ... on the left shoulder" ["Digging in the Dark" 19]. It causes me to speculate wildly that some vague folk memory of the image could have been the source of the Arthur's parrot story, given the nearness to South Cadbury.

The healing / iron association of the Chalice Well ["Keeper of the Grail" 28] echoes the same combination at Lydney – it would be interesting to know from someone knowledgeable about healing wells whether other instances of this also have Dark Age / Arthurian associations.

Professor Russell saying, in the review of the new Brian Stableford (which sounds fascinating), that he is "with Arthur C Clarke, one of the two best living science fiction writers" is, it seems to me, an assertion brilliantly designed to stir massive debate among SF readers. Obviously such statusing is very dependent on the subjective question of defining "best", but among Brits alone it'd be impossible to ignore Brian W Aldiss as of at least equal status with the two named, many would proclaim Stephen Baxter an equal, Ian Watson would have his nominators, then there's Ballard, Ian M Banks – I could go on!

Steve Sneyd, Almondbury, W Yorkshire
• One of Steve's areas of expertise is SF poetry, making him well placed to comment on quality SF writers, but may we take it as read that Stableford is up there with the rest?

The early Saxon so-called parrot brooch illustrated is of course a modern label!

Many thanks for the latest issue of *Pendragon*. It is very interesting, and I found "Gerald the Welshman" [W M S Russell] especially fascinating. Also, I like the wry

¹ Dio Cassius *Roman History* quoted in Jones and Ereira (2006) 113. See Reviews next issue

humour of the comments in the Reviews section. I liked, too, Pamela Constantine's story; very poignant and beautiful.

Pamela Harvey, Edmonton, London
• Pamela's own story appears elsewhere in these pages, along with the second part of Bill Russell's paper on Gerald.

NOTHING NEW?

I believe the tales of Arthur are not just ours alone but are in fact millennia old. Within another Indian epic, the *Mahabharata* (circa 900 BCE) can be found river goddesses who arm their semi-divine sons with magical weapons, maimed kings who lose their sovereignty, chivalry, the warrior code, illicit romance, ethics and the principles of Law, Duty and Honour, all played out to their ultimate tragic conclusion.

There can be little doubt these eternal and noble tales have been woven into the cultural tapestry of subsequent genera, moving through geographical time and space to reach our shores. Nothing exists in isolation and true to *Ecclesiastes* 'there is nothing new under the sun'.

Shani Oates, Chesterfield, Derbyshire
• The first part of Shani's detailed study on *The Green Knight* appears this issue, having previously been published in exchange journal *The Cauldron* in two parts.

THE AFRICAN CONNECTION

Charles Evans-Gunther's enthralling essay, "Avalon of the Mind" (XXXII No 2, *Treasures of Britain*) was a feast of food for thought. Although, on first appraisal, I tend to agree with Alastair McBeath's response (XXXIII No 3, *Letters*) that the idea of an Otherworld and land of the dead in the West, where the sun sets, as well as an appreciation of the four cardinal points, can all be explained as natural responses to observing the sun and stars in any culture, as opposed to being an idea that originated in one place and was later disseminated across the world, there is nothing to deny the possibility that many beliefs might indeed have come from one original culture. Ideas, after all, have to start somewhere.

The suggestion of an African cradle of culture is intriguing, and, although the following is a bit far from the *Pendragon* remit, the idea brings to mind a documentary on Channel 5 (January 11 2006, "The Black

Mummy Mystery"), The essential gist of the documentary runs thus:

A mummified child was recently found in Libya, being black-skinned, about two-and-a-half years old when he died, and dated to about 3,500 BC. Although the mummification techniques are similar to those used in Ancient Egypt, this mummy is about 1,000 years older than any mummy yet found there. This find led to further research, and linked with earlier studies, in the area, associated with rock carvings depicting cattle rituals and others showing dog-headed people, possibly describing shamanic practices. Carbon deposits in the petroglyphs give a date of around 3,600 BC. The archaeologist interviewed suggested that the carvings could be as much as 1,000 years older.

Further archaeological research suggested that the culture revealed by these finds spread throughout most of North Africa, from Mali to the western fringes of Egypt. Carved pottery has been found in North Africa (in the Sahara), dating to about 7,000 BC. In about 4,000 BC, this pottery appears in Egypt, showing that the influences, at least, of the culture, had by then spread into Egypt. By that time, the Sahara was becoming increasingly desiccated, turning gradually from fertile savannah to the desert it is today, and it seems likely that the people of North Africa gradually migrated into the Nile Valley during this climatic change.

So, if Charles Evans-Gunther's suggestion is right, then perhaps some traces of mythology can be followed back through Egypt and into North Africa, the original place he suggested. I'm not suggesting here, by the way, that the whole of Ancient Egyptian culture originated in North Africa, but rather that there may be very old traditions that began in that region. To balance the argument for Egyptian origins, for example, David Rohl describes, quite convincingly, Near-Eastern links with early Egyptian culture, in his book *Legend*.

The spiral nature of the rivers emerging from Lake Anavatapta, in figure 3 of "Avalon of the Mind", is reminiscent of carvings of spirals claimed to be Celtic in origin. I'd imagine that's pure coincidence, but, again, these apparent links are probably worth noticing.

Ian Brown, Middlesbrough, Cleveland

Arthurian Gaming

Part II – Round the Table

Alastair McBeath

Introduction

In the first part of this short series, we looked at ways in which mainly strategic, long-term, elements of Arthurian events could be translated into games set on maps and boards. Here, we switch to the shorter, tactical timescale, to examine the use of miniature figure games, often called tabletop gaming, as many of the wargames such figures are used for are best played out over scale terrain set up on a suitably-sized table. This enables us to better understand how individual battles or even smaller-level combats, such as jousts, may have been fought out.

In Britain, there are two widely available monthly figure wargaming magazines, which are useful in finding figures and rules of interest, as well as events or clubs which can be helpful in seeing or taking part in figure gaming first-hand. Similar publications exist in many other countries, but the two British-based monthlies are "Miniature Wargames" (www.miniaturewargames.com), the longer-established of the two, and in general, the one with more local club contact addresses and events' listings, and "Wargames Illustrated" (www.wargamesillustrated.net). Both run historical as well as gaming articles, and Pendragon readers may recall we drew attention to a fine series by Guy Halsall in *Wargames Illustrated* entitled "The Age of Arthur: Post-Roman Britain (400-600) for the Historical Wargamer". This ran to eleven non-consecutive parts in the end (a promised twelfth article seems never to have appeared), from the March 1999 to May 2001 issues. The first seven parts, up to the January 2000 issue, dealt with the sources for the period, textual and archaeological, and their problems, in considerable detail, while the last four examined how this factual material could be used in constructing games. As all the back issues of this magazine to number 200 (May 2004) are now available on CD-ROMs, the articles are readily accessible to anyone with a suitable

computer. You may not agree with all of Guy Halsall's comments, but he knows his subject, and will set you thinking, if nothing else.

There is also a specialist group, The Society of Ancients (www.soa.org.uk), which covers the Arthurian period, and far more, stretching from the (at least semi-) historically-recorded Bronze Age BC to the 15th century AD. It publishes a bimonthly journal *Slingshot* which contains a broad range of historical and gaming articles and reviews, renowned for its publication of high-quality, detailed historical research pieces, as well as much lighter ones (and again, all the back issues from the Society's inception in 1965 to 2000 are available on CD-ROM). As a good many relevant gaming manufacturers offer discounts to Society of Ancients' members, it is well worth considering joining before you start buying!

Figure scales and materials

You may be used to scales such as 1:50 000 (the British OS "Landranger" map scale, for instance), or 1/72 to 1/76, the scale of HO/OO railway models and the "Airfix" style plastic figures and kits. However, the world of figure gaming has long ignored such conventions, so they will rarely help you here. Instead, a millimetre value is normally used, which gives a clue to the height of the figure, as the size stated relates to a six-foot tall human (sorry, but this mixing of SI and non-SI measures was how it originated, crazy as that may seem; 6 feet is 1.83 metres).

In this, the "Airfix" kind of plastic figure is 20 mm scale, because a six-foot human in it stands 2 cm high. At least, that's the theory. However, some manufacturers use the millimetre scale to give the figure's height from the sole of the foot to the top of the head, while others use it to measure from the sole of the foot to the eye. This means there can be a difference in the appearance of figures made by different companies who state the same scale. What started out as the "grand standard" metal figurine scale of 25 mm has become 25 mm / 28 mm now, or even 30 mm.

This is not merely of academic interest, since despite the natural range of human proportions, some ranges of figures simply do not look right when set next to others of

supposedly the same scale. The problem is largely one concerning the physical form of the figures, as some designers sculpt their models as slight caricatures. Oversized heads and hands are amazingly common, yet other designers have obviously studied human anatomy and proportions more closely, and can produce reasonably realistic miniatures, so it is definitely not just a problem with the casting processes. For this reason, despite the fact that most purchases have to be made by mail order, it is always as well to try to see the figures before you buy them. This is much easier now thanks to the Internet, but most manufacturers can still supply printed catalogues as well. Thanks to the broad range of figures in different scales available modernly, you should be able to find some you are happy with, though depending on which Arthurian period you wish to try recreating (the 5th-6th centuries, or the later "High Medieval" style, perhaps), and in what scale, you may find your choice somewhat restricted.

The main scales commonly used for medieval-period figure wargames are 15 mm / 18 mm and 25 mm / 28 mm, although 6 mm is popular with some for recreating large battles on a reasonably-sized tabletop. Conversely, for small skirmishes between handfuls of troops – including knightly heroes against giants and dragons, for example – some people prefer a larger scale figurine, such as 40 mm (for some curious reason, more typically called 1/48 scale by figure-makers, just to be perverse), or 54 mm.

In all of these scales, figures are usually cast in white metal. At one time, this was generally a medium to high lead content lead-tin alloy, which allowed crisp detail to be cast readily, and gave a degree of post-casting malleability (dependent on the lead content), which allowed the fairly easy possibility of personal customization or conversion of figures. Unfortunately, over recent decades, fear of litigation, particularly in the USA, has led to quite a number of manufacturers switching to the low lead alloy pewter instead. This has increased costs and created casting difficulties, as pewter takes fine detail rather less well than the "traditional" higher lead alloys, and the finished casting is rather more brittle. The detail aspect at least has been largely

overcome by improved mould-making and casting techniques.

In other scales, notably 20 mm and 54 mm, some manufacturers specialize in casting miniature figures in the "soft" flexible plastic polythene, or the harder polystyrene plastics, both of which take detail very well. These kinds of figures are often designed much more in true human proportion than the metal types. The polystyrene ones lend themselves to customization and conversion very readily and robustly. Polythene is a more difficult medium to convert figures in successfully, but even it is far easier to work with than the metals. The ranges are more restricted in the plastic figures though, so it is likely you will end up plumping for Arthurian-style metal miniatures in most cases, of whichever historical period.



Ian Brown

Painting

No matter what figures you decide on, the vast majority have one thing in common: they come as bare metal or plastic, and to look less unfinished, they will need painting. This is a real opportunity to be creative, so it is worth experimenting. Even if you decide not to pursue the figure gaming route completely, some of the figures are good enough to be used as ornaments in their own right, or chess-pieces, perhaps. Impressive effects can be achieved using a simple darker acrylic or ink wash over a lighter base coat, for example, as the wash will run into the detail on the casting. While best results with even such a seemingly straightforward technique need a little time, effort and experience, you should not feel you must be precise and "realistic" with your colour schemes. That said, if you wish to produce a more "historically-accurate" painted appearance, say for troops in Britain during the 5th-6th centuries (and beyond), useful information and illustrations can be found in (Nicolle & McBride 1984), although the text is rather too reliant on Myres' *English Settlements* and Morris' *Age of Arthur*, and Heath (1980), also now a little dated in parts. There is a plethora of similar guides now available for other periods too.

Oil-based enamels or water-based acrylics work well on all the figures described here (but polythene figures benefit from a base layer of PVA glue to help key the paint better, once dried). Enamels are opaque and cover easily with a single coat. Acrylics are more transparent and can cover less well, though they behave like watercolours, so more subtle effects are possible with a series of coatings, than with enamels, and it is easier to remove mistakes with a little clean water immediately. Having worked with both sorts on metal and plastic models and miniatures over the past 35+ years, I find I prefer acrylics overall. Once the final painting is completed and thoroughly dried (at least 24 hours for acrylics, frequently longer, maybe 48 to 96 hours, for enamels), if the figures are to be handled much, or for ease of cleaning, it is a good idea to coat them in varnish. A polyurethane gloss varnish should be done first, which will give a high gloss finish, but a matt varnish coat can be applied after that, to make the look less "toy soldier". The gloss varnish gives a better protective

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surface than the matt, which can chip off alarmingly easily sometimes.

Brushes should be sable, especially for any detail work, and of a range of sizes suitable to the figures. I tend to use long-bristled sizes 3, 1 and 000 brushes for 25 mm / 28 mm figures, for instance. Always check the brushes come to a sharp point using a little water before buying them.

In all probability, the figures will need cleaning up a little before you start painting, trimming off waste metal or plastic flashing, and gently washing with warm, soapy water to remove any excess oils or powders left over from the casting processes. A fine-bladed, sharp, modeller's knife and some modeller's small files are useful for this, particularly when working with metal figures. Any faults in the castings can be repaired with a modelling filler, such as the two-part epoxy "Milliput". For stability, it can help to fasten the figures to a base, made of mounting board, or similar thickness stiff card or thin plywood, either permanently using a suitable glue, or temporarily for painting using something like "Blu-Tac". Permanent bases can be covered in flock powder later, or with more elaborate modelling materials to set off the finished figure on a landscaped base, if desired.

Rules

If you decide you would like to try out some Arthurian figure gaming, you will need some kind of rules to govern what happens. At an event or a local club meeting, these will be provided, either a favourite published set, or ones specially designed. It is perfectly feasible to design your own of course, to regulate things like unit sizes and types, movement, combat effectiveness, morale and leaders' command abilities, based on your own researches, or to adapt an existing published set more to your liking. As I have long preferred to design my own rules for such games, I am not familiar enough with most of the published sets to advise on specific ones. It is useful to get an idea of what has been published thus when starting out though, to have a basis to work from. The one rules-set available in print which deals especially with the "historical" Arthurian period, including the 5th-6th centuries, is *Glitter of Ravens – Warfare in the Age of Arthur*, by Dan Mersey (published

by Outpost Wargame Services), which has been favourably commented on. Most of the others sets tend to cover millennial periods across this epoch, so are less tailored to suit just this limited theatre and time.

Most published sets use dice of one sort or another (often not just the familiar six-sided variety either, to help better simulate the perceived probabilities of certain events), and rely on numerical values to help determine the outcome of actions, where that would be uncertain. However, in recent years, an alternative system has appeared, and is still developing, which may be of particular interest to *Pendragon* readers: the Matrix Game. In this, players present verbally-reasoned arguments about whatever actions they wish their armies to take, which an umpire adjudicates. The arguments centre around a table of keywords suitable to the scenario involved, hence the "matrix" element.

As might be anticipated, early attempts to use this system had a tendency to dissolve into anarchy, but in 2005, the Society of Ancients took the bold step of publishing *De Matrica Bellae – Matrix Game Rules for Tabletop Wargames*, by Graham Evans. These are available only to Society of Ancients' members at present. In them, a variably-sized pack of cards with keywords or phrases replaces the table to regulate the arguments available at any stage in the proceedings, and the umpire has to assign a numerical probability to resolve each argument by die throw. Even so, the players must present their arguments sensibly and logically, and back them up with three reasons, or their argument is liable to fail. While not to everyone's taste, this makes for a different kind of game to "normal", and is certainly thought-provoking, with applications beyond tabletop wargaming.

Terrain

Once created, your miniature armies will need a battlefield to manoeuvre and fight over. Simple two-dimensional terrain pieces, such as woods, hills, streams and tracks can be cut from coloured card quite readily, while thick card can give a degree of three-dimensionality, along with some basic card-modelled structures, such as small buildings and bridges. It is easy enough to become more elaborate with these, with a degree of

Knight's move

ability, patience and model-making skill, using materials from a good model shop, and either card, *papier-mâché* or polystyrene foam sheet formers (eg ceiling tiles), all light and easily worked-with. These can then be painted and dusted with scenic scatter materials, small stones, or cork bark pieces. There are plenty of manufacturers who produce ranges of miniature landscape features too – trees, bushes and grass mats (model railway magazines are worth checking for many of these), through to resin, plaster or vacuum-formed plastic buildings, ruins, crags and other items. Some companies even make lightweight terrain boards that can be fitted together to fill a tabletop with the battlefield, complete with all the surface features built on – or set in for ponds, streams and lakes. A good few firms and individuals advertise a painting service, to paint your figures to order too, if you lack the time or confidence to "do it yourself". Details on all can be found via magazine adverts, or using a good Internet search engine.

Figures

Since I started using metal figures in the early 1970s, my preferred scale has always been 25 mm / 28 mm, as a good compromise between being able to see to paint the miniatures, and what can be relatively easily stored. Consequently, I am more familiar with these and what is available in them than other scales. For the "historical" Arthurian / Post-Roman period, there are three main UK 28 mm manufacturers of note. Gripping Beast¹ and Wargames Foundry² have long-established Romano-British ranges designed for this time. Both are similar enough in general sculpting to be mixed in the same army. The third range is from Outpost Wargame Services,³ launched in early 2006, and set to expand further. Outpost have a reputation for producing rather more anatomically accurate miniatures, and they do look a little different to the other two ranges, but all have some good castings, and all can be viewed online.

Period armies to fight against – chiefly Saxons, Irish / Scots and Picts /

¹ www.grippingbeast.com

² www.wargamesfoundry.com

³ www.outpostwargameservices.co.uk

Caledonians, aside from wars between neighbouring Romano-British kingdoms – are available to a greater or lesser extent from these or other manufacturers. Irregular Miniatures⁴ do some fine Scots-Irish and Picts / Caledonians, for instance, though at true 25 mm scale they can seem a little undersized compared to some of the 28 mm figures.

In 15 mm / 18 mm, Outpost Wargames do suitable castings, together with Donnington Miniatures (specialists in this scale, with a large range of castings),⁵ Essex Miniatures⁶ and Miniature Figurines,⁷ all of which I have seen positive comments about.

Though I have tended to stress the early medieval possibilities here, you might wish to use an alternative setting, such as Malory's "High Medieval" time, and if so, most of the manufacturers listed above, along with others, will be able to assist. One other company which produces 28 mm later medieval jousting knights, jousting scenery (barriers, pavilions), and even courtier-spectators, is Steve Barber Models,⁸ which are worth seeing.

Conclusion

It was not my intention to give a comprehensive overview here of tabletop miniature wargaming, but really just to suggest some ideas you might like to try, to further your own Arthurian studies and development. Researching what colours to paint your figures and why can throw up all kinds of new thoughts (how were the dyes made, and what does that do for the range of colours available, say?), aside from anything else. Even just viewing the miniatures online might give you some fresh insight into matters Arthurian. If you were feeling especially adventurous, you might think of combining board and figure gaming in an Arthurian campaign, where strategic manoeuvring on a map board could lead into the background for tabletop figure battles. There are articles and rule sets to help with that too!

• Next time, roleplaying and storytelling games

⁴ www.irregularminiatures.co.uk

⁵ www.donnington-mins.co.uk

⁶ www.essexminiatures.co.uk

⁷ www.miniaturefigurines.co.uk

⁸ www.sbarber-models.clara.net

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Lancelot 4

he opens a beer on his knees
and that small hiss
is a snake in the trees

Lancelot 5

breathing slow on his back
wrapped in rags and binsacs
some moonlight finds his fingertips
an elven hush that arrests, investigates
this bag of bones.
They may yet live – but now they simply breathe.

Lancelot 6

Remember me, my love
while you spin and pray
by rushlight, shuttered from the world.

I stalk your image, love
in the rush and shiver of waves in corn
in a crows aggressive call
in the shoof of waves on a gravel shore
anywhere but in your own hall.

I thought I found the ridge of your back
in the dew on a curled-up fern.
I sat on my haunches and watched all day
as the fern unfurled.

Geoff Sawers



Miracle of tactics

warrior says of
God not man wields cudgel but
for peace will pay king's
fine red and white cattle here
come dawn just rust-dull bracken
heaps laughter in wind
a sidestep out of losing
face to say see joke

Steve Sneyd

Arthurian Comics Cardinal Cox



John Cullen Murphy *Prince Valiant* (2003)
King Features Syndicate

Unsurprisingly, as English is the spoken language over so much of the world, the legends of our Celtic root-land have been constantly drawn upon as an inspirational source. I myself have written poems derived from the Welsh myths of *The Mabinogion* (a couple of which were printed in *Pendragon*). As a result of that, I was invited to read at a Halloween / Samhain ritual in 2004 by one of my local Druid groups.

In comics, Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* was the first to take the Arthurian legends, and from them he created a weekly newspaper strip, stating in 1937. Valiant is the son of the king of Thule, sent to Camelot to learn the ways of a knight. Over the years (Foster only retired from the strip in 1982!) Valiant married Aleta, aged from impetuous youth to noble middle age until his son Am became the central character.

More of an exquisitely illustrated story than a true comic – there were no word balloons, just blocks of text – the art has long been considered amongst the finest produced for the media. It easily equals other stories of the age, such as *Flash Gordon*. Two films have been based on the strip. The first (1953) had Robert Wagner as Valiant, James Mason as the villain and Janet Leigh as Aleta. The second (1997) starred Stephen Moyer as the Prince. Cartoon adventures have also been produced.

At DC Comics in 1941, Sir Justin rode out of Camelot with his magical weapons and flying horse and got frozen. Thawing out 1500 years later and now calling himself Justin Arthur, he became the protector of Winston Churchill as *The Shining Knight*. As well as solo adventures (some drawn by a young Frank Frazetta) he joined the team *Seven Soldiers of Victory* and (during the 80s but set back in the 40s) the *All-Star Squadron*. *Seven Soldiers* has recently been revived, written by Grant Morrison, and a Shining Knight is a member, originating from an Atlantean techno-Camelot.

Back in Merrie Olde England in 1955, Frank Bellamy (later to work on *Dan Dare*) drew a two page strip of "King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table" for *Swift*, the little brother to the more famous *Eagle*.

Meanwhile at Atlas (later Marvel) Stan Lee was writing a story of Sir Percy who has a flying horse and a magical sword. He is, obviously, not at all in any way similar to the Shining Knight as he is known as the *Black Knight*, and therefore in no way like the earlier creation of the rival comic company at all. However, in 1967 Sir Percy's descendant Dane Whitman inherited certain of the equipment and joined *The Avengers* as an occasional member before earning the honour of a mini-series in 1990. Over at Marvel UK, Steve Parkhouse and John Stokes had produced a Black Knight strip from 1979 for *Hulk Weekly*.

Back over at DC in 1972, Jack Kirby told a tale of how Merlin was struggling to save Camelot from Morgaine le Fey, and so summoned up *The Demon Etrigan*. This creation's talk is never terse, as all he says is said in verse, for a writer, what could be worse? (Romantic stories of a nurse?) After the fight Etrigan turns into a man and loses

his memory. Shift to the then present day and demonologist Jason Blood (who lives in Gotham City) is attacked by Morgaine who's out looking for revenge, and Etrigan is released. He is a creature who lives to fight and will do so with all his might. Though he has to talk in rhyme all of the bleeding time. As well as his own series that have appeared each decade (most recently in 2005) he has become an occasional guest in DC's other supernatural titles.

Back to Marvel, then, in 1976, where Brian Braddock was fleeing the Darkmoor Research Centre (which was under attack) and drives off a cliff. Fortunately Merlin arrives to save his life and grant him a few superpowers as a bonus, so that he becomes Captain Britain. Marvel UK published his adventures for a while, first as a back-up strip by Alan Moore and Alan Davis, then in his own title *Captain Britain* from January 1985 by Jamie Delano and Davis. Then in 1988 Captain Britain returned to the central Marvel fold as a founder-member of the team *Excalibur*. Written at first by Chris Claremont and drawn by Alan Davis, other people to work on that title included Warren Ellis. The comic had its own spin-off in 1990 with the eighteen-issue *Knights of Pendragon*.

Returning the ball to DC, 1982 saw the publication of the first issue of *Camelot 3000*, written by Mike Barr and drawn by Brian Bolland (born in Lincolnshire and educated at the Norwich School of Art). Arthur, Merlin and the others are awakened in the future to save the earth from aliens. However, there have been some changes: Sir Tristan has returned as a woman, giving his relationship with Isolde a lesbian frisson; Perceval is a 'Neo-Man' – more monster than nappy-changer; and Morgan Le Fay is leading the aliens.

This was one of the first slick, direct market (aimed at the comic shops rather than the newsstands and so free of the dreaded comics code) editions and printed on 'Baxter' paper rather than the usual newsprint. Deadlines slipped and publication dates were put back until the last issue of the 12-part run finally came out in 1985.¹ Brian has continued to work intermittently for American companies, most notably for the

¹ Republished by Titan Books Ltd in 1988. Ed

Alan Moore-written *Killing Joke*.

In 1984 Matt Wagner had the first issue released of what was to become one of his most popular series, *Mage*. Joined by Sam Keith on inks from issue 4, this series from Comico tells of King Arthur reborn in our times and now named Kevin Matchstick. Excalibur is now a baseball bat. The first series ran until 1986 and then fans had to wait until the present century for the completion at Image.

Hellblazer's first touch with the Arthurian legends occurred in the 1989 annual in a Jamie Delano-scripted / Bryan Talbot-drawn tale of John Constantine's distant ancestor, the sixth-century King Constantine. Geoffrey of Monmouth had made him Arthur's successor in his *History*. Merlin also appears in this comic, but as a decapitated head. One particularly effective piece of art features a waterfall in a cave which creates the image of the Bear-Goddess that the king secretly worships.

Still at DC, Neil Gaiman created the *Books of Magic* in 1990 to provide an overview of magic and the supernatural in that company's universe. Merlin and Jason Blood get walk-on parts in the first mini-series. Tim Hunter, the thirteen-year-old central character, returned for an on-going series in 1994, progressing through a handful of titles. In September 2001 *Hunter: Age of Magic* title started and it was finally revealed that Tim was the re-incarnation of Merlin.

By then, though, the Matter of Britain had filtered through the pages of *Hellblazer* again. Starting in February 1997, writer Paul Jenkins and artist Sean Phillips' five-part adventure 'Last Man Standing' featured an insane Merlin (perhaps still annoyed about his decapitation in the earlier annual) working for the Tory Party. Constantine discovers that his friend, a multi-colour-haired punk called Rich, is last of the line of Arthur, and has to get Rich to recover the head of Bran the Blessed from the borders of Fairie.

Shortly after this, Image started publishing the comic *Lady Pendragon*. This started with Guinevere getting Excalibur after the battle of Camlan. She then defeats King Constantine and has to defend Britain (and herself) from Cheldric, a Saxon. Meanwhile, in our time, historical novelist Jennifer Drake

is forced to take a sword that has been found on Mars. Magic now replaces technology and Jennifer (who is also supposed to be descended from Jesus) summons Merlin into our age. To add to the mix, Iseult (here a warrior-priestess) also appears in our world. Written by Matt Hawkins and drawn by John Stinson, this multi-timeline fantasy / SF crosshatch came in multiple covers and with appendices to explain British geography and mythology to the transatlantics.

On then to January 2005 and the publication by Image of *Beyond Avalon*. This is written by Joe Pruett (one-time editor of the anthology title *Negative Burn*) and art from Goram Sudzuka. In this the Princess Megan (daughter of a king who, we are told, has a name beginning Ar-) is the only child ever born in Avalon. She is taught by a woman called Morgan and a man named Joseph. One day her father leaves the isle, which is not only outside our world but many others as well. This could provide the producers of the comic with limitless possibilities, not just traditional fantasy but also historical and SF adventures. A year after her father's disappearance, Megan retrieves a magic sword from the waters and goes in search of both her father and adventure.

Since then I have seen advertised, but not actual copies of, *Dracula versus King Arthur*. Not the most natural of enemies, I think you'll agree, being separated by around eight hundred years, but also because of the characters surprising similarities. Dracula was partially inspired by Vlad the Impaler, who fought against invaders of his lands. Both have names related to dragons. Both are credited with three wives. King Arthur is expected to return from the dead, Dracula already has.

Doubtless King Arthur and his associated legends will continue to be a source for writers, and amongst them will be some writing for comics.²

² This is a revised version of an article which first appeared in *The Monomyth Supplement* (now *The Supplement*) from Atlantean Press (who also recently published *Grail 2*).

Batman: The Chalice (DC 1999), featuring a modern appearance of the Grail, was written by Chuck Dixon and illustrated by John Van Fleet. Ed

It is living yet

It is living yet, that place apart
Whose shadows touch and move the heart:
The castle on its windy plot
Among the fields of bergamot:
The sorrow and surviving joy
Which still, which still is Camelot.

And when the wind is in the west
Travelling the hill's bare modern crest,
Again I hear the hooves a-thunder
As knights ride out to stop the plunder,
To ease the pain, renew the wonder.

No worthy knight shall remain interred,
And though I only have the word,
Purpose shall be my steed, and I
Will be ready when my lords ride by;
For the soul of Camelot shall remain
Longer than land or sea or sky.

Pamela Constantine

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Jester's Song

Chris Lovegrove



Ian Brown

They say that if you have to explain a joke then it's no longer funny. So, if I tell you that the title of Ian Brown's cartoon is *Jester's Song at Twilight*, did you get it? Or do I need to explain – and perhaps kill the joke dead – that the image is the visual counterpart of a parody of a line in the *Love's old sweet song*¹ which goes "Just a song at twilight"?

The best jokes work at several levels – visual and aural being the most obvious – but context is a crucial component. A lack of familiarity with a line in a once popular song, not being predisposed to humour at a given moment, antipathy towards the joker, all these militate against the effectiveness of a joke. So, not being of a certain age, expecting a serious discussion in a semi-academic journal and a lack of appreciation of the cartoonist's artistic style may well result in a poker-faced response to *Jester's Song*.

And anyway, do Arthuriana and humour mix? To explore the proposition that they do

¹ G Clifton Bingham and James Lynam Molloy

Knight's move

mix, we will look briefly at three areas – Arthurian film, medieval narrative and cartoons. But before even that, we need to confront the serious issue of why we laugh. There are complex physiological, social and psychological aspects to humour, much studied over the years, which the following brief summary can only hint at.

Theory

Studies of primates such as chimps show that when a group is suddenly alarmed they react by showing their teeth – a response to perceived aggression – and screeching. When as humans we are suddenly confronted by the unexpected we exhibit common flight-or-fight signs such as raised heart rate and change of breathing related to a surge of adrenalin. We can see how smiling and laughing are practised responses sharing much with the reactions other primates have to abrupt threats.

Arthur Koestler explained much humour as a "complex pattern of intellectual stimulation" which can result in a physiological reflex such as smiling or laughing (Koestler 1975: 95f). Why such a reflex? He suggests that all varieties of humour are what he terms *bisociative*, that is, "perceiving a situation or event in two incompatible contexts". In the *Jester's Song* cartoon, the two incompatible contexts might be (1) a medieval character (2) an early 20th-century popular song. Like the socialising of the chimpanzees interrupted by the sudden appearance of a possible predator, the shock of having to associate two normally incompatible scenarios hopefully triggers off the expected physiological reactions.

The connection between humour and violence is long-established. Consider *slapstick*, the recognised term for *knockabout* comedy – this originated in a split piece of wood which when hit against someone produced an alarmingly loud smack but little pain. Or the *commedia dell'arte* character Pulcinello, who became the master of the slapstick as glove puppet *Mr Punch*. Or of course the joker's *coup de grâce*, the *punch-line*.

The humorist's technique usually involves three skills: *originality* (expect the unexpected); *emphasis* (using careful selection, gross exaggeration or over-simplification); and a degree of *economy* (to bring out what

Pendragon Journal of the Pendragon Society

is implicit through extrapolation, interpolation or transposing situations or characters). Here's a comy joke:

Q. What was Camelot famous for?

A. Its knight life.²

Not very funny, you will agree, because not very original, but possibly raising a wry grin through *emphasis* (no extraneous matter to muddy the waters) and *economy* (you've had to work a little to make the jump between "knight" and "night"). Above all, you have to appreciate the incongruity of medieval armoured warriors sitting down at evening class. It's time now to study specific contexts in which the humour is very definitely Arthurian.

Film

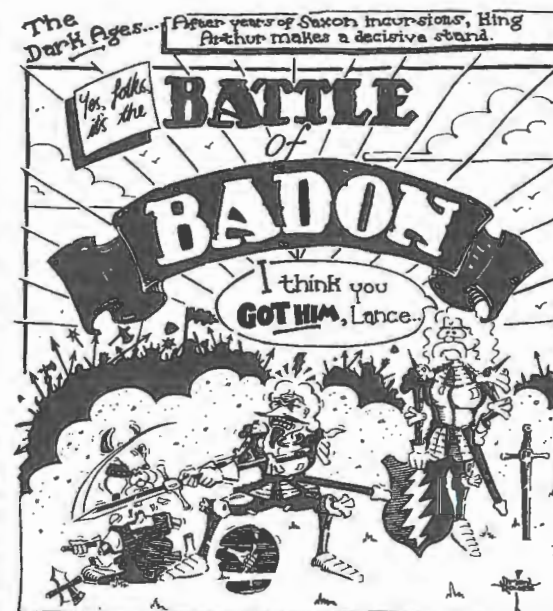
We will leave aside the – one hopes – unintentionally funny moments of films like John Boorman's *Excalibur* (where for example a knight makes love to a near-naked woman still garbed in shining armour) and move straight to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975). As Norris J Lacy remarks (1996: 328), "the filmmakers show an acquaintance with many Arthurian conventions, even though there are few reflections of actual traditional motifs or narrative sequences," not surprising given Terry Jones' background in medieval history. Using a mix of "slapstick, exaggerations, anachronisms, verbal humour and parody", the film achieves much of its effect with shock tactics. The slapstick includes extreme gore (a reference to films such as Sam Peckinpah's *Straw Dogs*) with murderous white rabbits and the notorious Black Knight episode, while exaggeration is exemplified in the giant Knights-who-say-*NI!* Anachronism – another way of setting up Koestler's 'bisociation' – is typified by mixing a Dark Age monarch with a declared 10th-century police arrest. Verbal humour abounds, but I liked the peasant's anachro-

² Diary column, *Huddersfield Examiner* August 10 2005

Knight's move

nistic left-wing diatribe (a technique also appearing in *Life of Brian*) and Merlin incongruously renamed as Tim.

Despite the parody of film conventions



(Lacy instances voice-overs and sound effects) what comes across well is an obvious empathy for some aspects of the romantic legend; this is clear from the portrayal of King Arthur's idealism and from the Pre-Raphaelite tableau of the dragon-prowed boat on the misty lake.

W M S Russell (1991) proposed a Theory of European Comic Technique in a study of Greek and Roman humour. In this theory he postulated two fundamental methods of all comedy, what he called the *Fair-Play Rule* and *Comic Irony*, both of which *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* seems to employ.

In the *Fair-Play Rule* the technique consists of "skilful preparation and build-up to ensure that the punchline, plot-twist or other development, when it comes, is *unconsciously expected but consciously unexpected*."³ As in detective fiction the two

³ Conversely, "if it is consciously expected it is *banal*, and if it is unconsciously unexpected it is merely *bizarre*" Russell (1991: 86).

conditions are "achieved by a combination of preparation [clues] and distraction [red herrings]." In the film, for example, we are given clues that the "932 AD" chronological point is a fantasy – Arthur's knights using coconut shells for hoof noises is a bit of a giveaway – but there are enough red herrings for us to suspend disbelief in a Middle-Age scenario until the final *dénouement* brings us back to the present (the 1970s) with a bump.

Russell's second fundamental comic method he calls Comic Irony, because it was developed in Greece under the influence of *tragic irony* (1991: 89). "The point here is for the audience, readers or listeners to a play or story to know more than any or all of the characters," and this allows for any number of deceptions, intended or unintentional, to come about. "Misinterpretation by some of the characters, or cross-purposes," as Russell says, "is particularly important for such forms of humour," as is particularly evident in the unfortunate wooing of one unsavoury damsel-in-distress.

Medieval narrative

Does the same happen in genuine medieval Arthurian stories? I've seen dramatised versions of *Culhwch and Olwen* – a rather effective puppet one springs to my mind – where the inherent slapstick humour of, say, the raising of the giant Ysbadden's eyes with pitchforks by his servants is given full comic rein, and the unfortunate porter's deputy whose head goes around "like a rolling stone" on the floor has much black comedic potential.

As Ned Sturzer says, "Even a casual reader of *Culhwch and Olwen* cannot fail to note a number of amusing passages of both high and low humour" (2006:145), but he argues that the humorous element is not a by-product but "the very *raison d'être* of this distinguished tale". What Sturzer calls "a celebration of logical ingenuity" is littered with intentional mistakes and logical conundrums, which he believes points to a single authorship (even though the author has borrowed chunks, such as the fantastic court list, from elsewhere). The conundrums, deliberate inconsistencies, wordplays and slapstick (much of the latter based on real violence, much of it murderous) point to an early treatment of the Arthurian legend which didn't treat it as an overweening tragedy.

Anne Lister has already pointed out a later example, *Jaufré* (Lister 1999).



C Lovegrove

Cartoons

I suspect that you must by now be as much of an expert on Arthurian humour as I am and so know all about incongruity, anachronism, comic irony, the fair-play rule, bisociative contexts and the rest, so here are two instances of Arthurian cartoons which won't need any explaining, will they? Most cartoons fall into either the weak pun category (something along the lines of –alot or "knightlife") or are variations on a limited repertoire of Arthurian themes (the Round Table, the Sword in the Stone or Excalibur and the Lady of the Lake). In future articles we will explore these along with the economy of narrative, the limits of taste and the future of Arthurian comedy.

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Ian Brown

Green Knight Dark God of Light Shani Oates

"The perennial agony of man, self-fortuning, deluded, tangled in the nest of his own tenuous delirium, frustrated yet having within himself, undiscovered absolutely un-utilized the secret of his release....."

Joseph Campbell

The Hero with a Thousand Faces

Prose, poetry and Mystery Plays of the Medieval period inherited the narrative traditions of Celtic and Norse paganism. Preserved within these were the collective mythologies and cultic practices of an ancient world, the apparent diversity of which reveal fundamental occult praxis of a common origin. Many classic concepts, adapted from Mithraism, Zurvanism, Shi'ism, Druzism and Gnosticism were skilfully re-woven to suit the Christian sensibilities of the Middle-ages.

During the 1400s an unknown author penned a curious synthesis in the enigmatic *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which common motifs redolent of archaic traditions prevail, leading us in to the otherworldly realms where time and space develop quantum qualities, allowing us a window into another reality. Set within the confines of liminal time, spanning the twelve days of ritual reversal the gateway from the old year into the new, key players direct us to observe the dilemma of fate. Well known themes of slain and resurrected god, challenges / beheading game, new year celebrations, renewal and regeneration, love and betrayal, the wasteland, castle, magickal emblems combine to enact the 'Quest', explored via easily recognised archetypes, beyond whose superficiality may be discerned the deeper mysteries, clues to a higher gnosis.

A brief synopsis discloses an elegant and deceptively complex plot wherein the Green Knight, champion of the Goddess Morgana as Fate challenges the mortal champion of the King – Arthur within his court – to a beheading game. The head of the Green Knight is taken by Gawain's valiant blow, but in return, his own must be offered up, one year and one day hence. During that time he is honoured and feted by the whole of Camelot, receiving a hero's send-off several months later as he seeks his nemesis in the Green Chapel.

Travelling through the wasteland, Gawain encounters a strange ethereal Castle where the Hosts, Lord and Lady Bertilak, are more than they seem. Promising to show Gawain the whereabouts of his assigned rendezvous with the Green Knight at the Green Chapel, Lord Bertilak persuades him to tarry there a while, to partake of their hospitality. They also engage in a strange bargain, agreeing to exchange the prize and fortune won of each of three days. For Lord Bertilak, these are the spoils of the hunt, paralleled in the affections and kisses Gawain receives from the Lady Bertilak. But when the time comes however, for Gawain to ride out, he is remorseful and guilty, for he had not exchanged his gifts truly. He'd withheld the gift of an enchanted girdle, given by the beautiful Lady Bertilak, aspect of the Goddess/Fate to protect him from the death blows of the Green Knight, who was in truth

his host the Lord Bertilak. Three blows are delivered to Gawain, two thunderous, death-blows are swung to miss, the third alights upon his neck inflicting only the lightest of flesh wounds, a reminder of his mortality. This then is the tale of a deceit that cost him the ultimate prize.

Mysteries

Set within analogous landscapes of stark, ethereal beauty where the devotee may encounter the divine, the mysteries have been for millennia, initiatory pathways towards self-knowledge. Enlightenment is achieved through onerous engagement of mystical visionary experience wherein profound transformations of consciousness engender true faith. Various themes pay homage to the Dark Mother (*Nox*) and the Light Son (*Lux*). Furthermore, they reveal the true sacrifice of our creator and our individual part in its anarchic process of redemption.

Simplistically, myth and ritual combine to inculcate this awareness. The Earth is the Mother and the Hero must 'enter' her, both physically and symbolically as son / child and lover... Her compassion alerts him to conscious breakthrough, pushing him into a wider cosmos, to the stars themselves, back to the source; for indeed we are truly all 'stars' and children of the Earth. But our initiator is the son, child of the earth; masked and cloaked in her resplendent greenery, primal colour of regeneration associated with the fecund earth, he is the guardian of her wisdom, the true treasures of the earth. Beyond death there is hope, but only for those who see beyond the mask, who perceive the light concealed within. He is our 'Father', and like all children, our love should be unconditional, total and pure.

Within the mysteries, priests are consigned to awaken the soul to gnosis; however, each person bears the responsibility for their own Karma. Each of us must work to earn our redemption; salvation is not for sale, a gift beyond intellectual appreciation, achieved only through direct experiential transmission – interaction with the divine. These rewards are not easily earned, nor the pathways to them clear, and the aspirant must be forever on their guard not to err – one slip and all is lost. That is why, without exception, it is

stressed that only the 'pure of heart' may attain it.

The highly dramatic poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* invites us to participate in the central conflict, wherein our Hero, Gawain, endures many trials upon his quest for gnosis. Gawain is in effect, the anti-hero, the champion of the common man, whose intentions, though good, are flawed with his own humanity as he confronts the forces of nature within and without himself. He is the vehicle for many tales within the Grail mysteries, the errant soul seeking salvation. But it is within this tale most particularly that the Gnostic, Luciferian principles shine through the brightest, forcing us to face our own eschatological needs. Human endeavour is presented to us as superficial constructs juxtaposed against the primal purity of Nature.

Parallels

And so this tale laced with Gnostic metaphors relating the perils of fate, free will, true will and duty plays out its message through the eyes of Gawain, hunted and challenged by the Green Knight who is cognate with Arawn, psychopomp and dark god of the Celtic underworld. John and Caitlin Matthews, in their book on Irish Mythology (1995: 80) emphasise the associative translation of Gawain's name in Welsh – *Gwalchmai*, as the 'hawk of May' – to the tradition of challenges between the Summer and Winter Kings. They also discuss how similar this tale is to the possible source tale of *Bricriu's Feast* (*ibid* 86-87). Here the hero, CuChulainn (prototype of Gawain) is challenged by the mischief maker Cu Roi ma Daire (also analogous to Hafgan in the similar tale of *Pwyll*), to a beheading game (*ibid* 28, 54). But within this cycle of Celtic tales, CuChulainn later defeats the club-wielding giant. Boars and deer, sacred totemic animals of challenge and transformation are used to great effect to convey the drama to an audience still familiar with such analogous subtleties, especially apparent in the comparison between the 'stinking fox' caught by Lord Bertilak and Gawain's devious concealment of his prize from Lady Bertilak.

Brian Jones (1964: 9) also cites the epic *Fled Bricend* as the source for the beheading

game, emphasising the three component actions shared by both tales. First, after CuChulainn is challenged by Uath mac Imomain [Terror, son of great fear] to strike off his head, three return blows are inflicted without detriment to CuChulainn, declaring the hero as champion. Second is the inclusion of the role of woman temptress. The third and final element explores the archaic tradition of gift-exchange, a formality among the warrior classes and chieftain kings of old, affirming fealty and honour, the courtesy of developing knighthood. Tribal customs in Africa, Madagascar and New Guinea still practise this custom, vital to their social stability. Beyond time, religion or creed, these represent universal truths and are therefore common motifs within storytelling.

The author has also preserved the mystique of the three-day trials between Gawain and Lord Bertilak; a vital element, this strong tradition maintains ancient links broadening the scope of comprehension. Within the *Tale of Lady Ragnall*¹, Gromer Somer Joure [Lord of the Summer Day] – who like the Green Knight is under service to Morgana, Mistress of Fate – also offers a challenge to Arthur (Matthews, 1995: 87). Yet, intriguing though these similarities are, selective details separate their inherent message and purpose, requiring us to look deeper and further afield than this amorphous Celtic twilight.

Veriditas

To Nigel Jackson (1996: 112-115) this fairy-hued woodwose initiatrix and inspirer of apotheosis suggests the fecund sexuality of earth and water. His 'Summer King' guides initiates through the verdant realms of an otherworldly landscape of fey. As Jack-in-the-Green, this ubiquitous woodland sprite evokes Silvan, Bacchus and Pan, embroiled in oak, vine and evergreen leaves of the forest glades. Ancient images of this divine shaman of the woods can be traced as far afield as Hatra in Mesopotamia and pre-Christian Baalbek, carved in stone, a testament to their timelessness (Basford, 1998: 9). Wildman and giant (Grigori?), his death-inducing stasis engenders the gnosis

of the Horned Master. Tendrils whisper prophecy and wisdom, but only if you listen with your heart, secrets that quicken the soul to graceful union within the Ultimate Creatrix – *Unio Mystica*.

Hildegard of Bingen, a medieval nun, Christian mystic and confidante to the Pope, prolifically recorded her numerous experiences within which she offers the word *viriditas* (greenness) to explain 'the word made flesh', the manifestation of spirit into matter.² This single word inculcates for her this state of Kenoma, where the ineffable becomes tangible. It is noteworthy that during her lifetime, carved, foliate heads adorned many churches and cathedrals throughout Europe (*ibid*). According to the online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia*, *viriditas* / *viridius* signifies a deified masculine spirit worshipped in ancient Britain. Of course, in the Middle-East, this role was reflected in the Hindu God, Rama, consort of Sita, Goddess of Nature.³ Both Lord Bertilak, and Rama are hunters, brandishing their great bows and arrows whose wives are also integral to their own roles. Curiously, Rama is the 7th incarnation / avatar of the great creator Vishnu, god of water and earth and as such he acts as lineage bearer for the houses of the Sun and the Moon (Jansen, 2004: 85). Within the Indian epic *Ramayana* (circa 600 CE) tales unfurl of heroism, brotherly love and of devotion, chastity and fidelity within marriage – all 'knightly' virtues (2004: 78). Parallel to the Celtic / Irish myths, Rama, through mistrust and betrayal, lost Sita, goddess of sovereignty, punctuating the dilemmas of free will – enlightenment or material pursuits (*ibid*). Philosophically, these tracts exceed their cultural and moral value.

In *The Masks of God* Campbell (1991: 31) places the source material for the tale *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in these early mythologies circa 375-950 CE, being influenced by the Shakti cults of India as typified in the Festival of Sabarotsava (Jackson 1996: 120) where orgiastic revellers cover themselves in mud, leaves and flowers to celebrate the fecund sexuality of Shiva. But Campbell (1991: 31) also maintains the later mystical poetry of the

¹ www.uidaho.edu/student_orgs/arthurian_legend/hunt/ragnall.html

² www.spiritpassages.com

³ www.spiritpassages.com

Sufis to have greater import to the significance and character of the Green Knight, especially in the figure of Al Khidir. This pre-Islamic prophet, as representative of the divine wisdom of God throughout the Arab world acted as guide to Moses and Alexander.⁴ Reverence for the 'Green Crawler' Nabi Khizir, the living green man of the waters / ponds, is prevalent in shrines near natural springs throughout Kurdistan, and suggests the reverence and role of the Nagas (wisdom serpents) throughout India. Fortuitously, the feast day of Al Khidir falls in the Spring, coinciding with nature's own renewal.⁵

The main goal of a Sufi is one of alchemical transformation, and the intercession of Al Khidir is integral to that process. To the Shi'ite sect in particular, this messianic redeemer is perceived as a 'Time Lord' whose sphere of influence upon this plane determines one's fate, at-one-ed or annihilation at the end of time.⁶ Gnosis is achieved through faith, devotion and wisdom after trials of seemingly senseless riddles, each designed to test perception, breaking down the rational processes of the conscious mind. Only the righteous will prevail, assured of their Gnostic passport into the kingdom of light (Jones 1964: 135). Pertinently, the alchemical *Tabula Smaragdina* – the wisdom imparted by the emerald stone from the Crown of Lucifer, *Lux Mundi* – is also green.

Indigenous Kurds practising Yazdanim, the 'Cult of Angels', also perceive their Lord Creator god – *Haq* (not to be confused with the Arabic word for truth, *haqq*) as a Time lord, whose atavistic presence within *Baba* (Father) as gate / portal reveals his true nature and purpose between the noumenal and phenomenal realms.⁷ He is eternal spirit made flesh; a teacher and guide offering redemption through wisdom. Shams, legendary poet, Sufi mystic and mentor of Rumi, is afforded the gifts of prophecy, wisdom and poetry at the end of a long vigil by the shrine of Baba Kuhl.⁸

Heaven and Earth combine in the colours of yellow and blue to create green, sacred

Knight's move

throughout Asia, India, Middle-East and Europe, expressing life and renewal on a mundane level, whilst supernatural powers of spiritual transformation augment the occult realms. Thus all gods of this hue, Osiris, Rama, Al Khidir and the Woodwose Jack-in-the-Green are all exponents of this duality, being at once psychopomp – leading the souls through the darkness into the light – and symbol of fertility, redolent of renewal. In *The Masks of God* Campbell (1991: 502) even posits green as the colour of the Holy Spirit / Ghost.



Ian Brown

Spring

Furthermore, the commonality of Spring as the ancient New Year is temptingly allusive to *Shavuot*, the Hebraic forerunner of *Pentecost*⁹ when the 'word' (*Law / Torah*) of God was given to Moses in a *Surah* of Fire, and the Holy Spirit descended as tongues of fire upon the disciples of Jesus respectively.¹⁰ Note that Moses, the disciples and Gawain encounter these manifestations

⁹ The 5th feast of the year or 50th day after *Pesach / Passover*

¹⁰ www.biblicalholidays.com

within Nature's own 'Holy' Temples, viz mountains or gorges. Spring as the commemoration of such revelations formulates the inspiration behind the Pentecostal questing for the Grail Legends within the Arthurian Cycles. Numerologically, both 5 and 50 are associated with Mars / Teutates, a Romano-Celtic God of vegetation, agriculture and healing.

Bacchanalian sexual promiscuity and orgiastic revelry were charges levied at the Anatolian celebrations of *Mum Sondii* and the Iranian *Chiragh Kushan*, practised within Yazdanim.¹¹ Resembling the Luciferian and Waldensian and 12th-century Cathar cultic activities, these tantric praxes facilitated both spiritual fertility and mystical union. Renowned 19th century academic Henry Rawlinson believed remnants of these fertility cults exhibiting aspects of Mithraism, celebrating the sacred union of Mitra (Time) and Anahita (Fate / Space / Void) were evident as late as 1818 (*ibid*).

The Green Knight, initiator and holder of the key to the Mysteries serves the Goddess / Fate, testing and leading the Hero on through his many trials, purging him of all material desires, in order to achieve his destiny – "to win a good fate" (Campbell, 1973: 118-121). This would declare him master of his own destiny wherein the Lady (Fate) would announce his victory and freedom from her bonds. Gnosis of inherent divinity cedes the highest order of the Universe, acknowledging Truth and Beauty, the Holy Spirit that moves all. Divested of mundane mortality, the hero becomes 'twice-born', subsumed within the 'Father', at-one-d; thus enlightenment cedes true apotheosis where 'Hunter and Hunted are but One', there is no separation. Universal truth is realised. Victorious, the Hero becomes the guide, the 'sun-door', the initiator – but, Gawain fails and finds only despair, desolation and confusion. Loss of faith induces his long, dark night of the soul (Campbell 1973: 136-7). For the attainer of at-one-ment, the world ceases to be a Hell (place of profound transformation), a vale of tears, but a true paradise of "bliss yielding, perpetual manifestation of the divine presence" (*ibid* 148).

¹¹ www.ancientworlds.com

Ritual

In the spring rites of ancient Babylon, the King was struck upon the face; he had to weep, to shed tears of compassion and understanding, exhibiting an awareness of life and death, and of the hereafter. If his tears were judged to be genuine, by the Goddess (Fate), she would indeed grant him and his people a "sweet fate".

Campbell (1973: 147) believes that only through sufferance and abnegation will the light of gnosis be imparted to those aware of the 'living waters as the tears of God'. Quoting extensively from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he eloquently adds:

"In full, awareness of the life anguish of the creatures of his hand, in full consciousness of the roaring wilderness of pains, the brain-splitting fires of the deluded, self-ravaging, lustful, angry universe of his creation, this divinity acquiesces in the deed of supplying life to life. To withhold the seminal waters would be to annihilate; yet to give them forth is to create this world we know. For the essence of *Time* (my emphasis) is flux, dissolution of the momentarily existent; and the essence of life is *Time*. In his mercy, in his love for the forms of *Time*, this demiurgic man of men yields countenance to the sea of pangs; but in his full awareness of what he is doing, the seminal waters of the life that he gives are the *tears of his eyes*. The paradox of creation, the coming of the forms of *Time out of Eternity* [my emphasis], is the germinal secret of the *Father*. It can never be quite explained. Therefore, in every system of theology there is an umbilical point, an Achilles tendon which the finger of mother life has touched, and where all possibility of perfect knowledge has been impaired. The problem of the Hero is to pierce himself [and therefore his world] precisely through; to shatter and annihilate that key knot of his limited existence. The problem of the '*Hero*' going to meet the '*Father*' [my emphasis] is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the '*Father*', understands – and the two are at-one-d."

⁴ www.spiritmessges.com

⁵ www.ancientworlds.net

⁶ www.absoluteastronomy.com

⁷ www.ancientworlds.net

⁸ www.avatameherbaba.org

Solemnization of the holy ritual year, of life resurrected from the sacrifice of a 'slain redeemer' underpins the spring rites of Attis, Adonis, Osiris, Mithras and Tammuz. No simple act of barbarism, this exemplifies the death of the self of gross matter, thus freeing and elevating the spirit towards Nirvana. Triple death blows are profligate within myths and legends from pre-history, Druidry and Freemasonry. Neo-paganism / Wicca celebrate these concepts in various ways, honouring perhaps unwittingly esoteric practises of these ancient mysteries. Initiatory blows are received upon the cheek and neck at second degree within the Gardnerian Craft. Knighthood confers similar points of contact where blows are struck representing first: the rite of confirmation, second: baptism, and third: the sacrament of the Eucharist – union through which "man, since the beginning of his day on earth, has dispelled the terror of his phenomenality and won through to the all transfiguring vision of immortal being" (Campbell, 1973: 142-143). Thus he dies and is 'resurrected' again in god the redeemer.

Clearly this is not as some would believe a veiled tale of the pagan rites of the battle of the year kings of Holly and Oak, for Gawain fails, he does not defeat the Green Knight, neither is he himself killed. His life remains a token of his loss. However, tree lore and legends pertaining to these two majestic trees form integral clues, almost overlooked, so subtle is their inclusion. Oak is the tree of the waning solar year; a hero's tree, a tree of sacrifice (Hermes and Robin), prophecy and wisdom (ie it manifests the 'word'). Revered as the tree of longevity, it represents the cycles of time and eternity. Sage of all trees, it is the doorway / gate / portal and represents the Ultimate ruling power of Nature conferring abundance upon man and beast. Holly is the wild, erotic force of regeneration, of light and life during the Winter Solstice. Wildman of Saturnian festivals, his power and thunder reflect the forces of Tubal Cain, god of Smith Craft, magick and cunning. Known to the Druids as Tinne, Gaelic for 'fire', he truly represents the God of the Solar Year, bringing heat and light in the depth of winter. Yet the folk name for Holly is 'Holm oak', the evergreen oak, revealing oak and holly to be one and the same, dual aspects of the one Sun / Son,

who is his Father, another paradox of the Mysteries. Furthermore, within the Druid tree calendar, the passage between Oak (Duir) and Holly (Tinne) is perceived as the portal / gateway, emphasising again the suspension and liminality of time, and the freedom to move through the realms via these powers of nature.¹² Despite much speculation and ambiguity surrounding the correlation between Celtic and Roman Gods, Anne Ross (1974: 474) makes it clear that unnamed Horned Gods of the Celts were generally associated with Jupiter, Mars and Mercury, and that these three share mutual qualities of fire and thunder, are related to smith deities and have severed heads dedicated to them.

To be concluded. Full references in Part 2



learning the manual of explication

deaf dumb blind
as foolish as
mistook in dark
all cats grey
blame love potion
witchcrafted shape shift
honour's sword between
cut on where
blood drops sourced
odds high she'll
die love guilt childbirth
only cost long
seasons on some
son arrive you'll
need to aim
at out of
favour fighter he
can get armour
weapons horse off
by killing chip
off old block
then next some
advice over drinks
your king provides
on keeping up
in knightly fashion
noble love's tradition

Steve Sneyd

¹² Shani Oates (2004) *Summer and Winter Solstice Customs*

Gerald the Welshman, Arthur and Merlin (2) W M S Russell

The Itinerary and the Description



The *Itinerary through Wales* is a record of an actual journey. In 1187 the Kurdish Sultan Saladin took Jerusalem. In the following year, Gerald accompanied Baldwin, Archbishop of Canterbury, on a tour of Wales recruiting for the Third Crusade. Luckily, Baldwin was one Archbishop of Canterbury whom Gerald liked and respected; in fact he ended the *Itinerary* with a sincere eulogy of the good old man, who himself attended the Crusade and died in Palestine. Their preaching aroused great enthusiasm, and the tour was an unqualified success. They made about 3000 recruits. Unfortunately, disputes between the monarchs caused such delays that by the time the Crusade took off the enthusiasm of the recruits had waned, and few of them actually went to Palestine. Those that did were celebrated for brave deeds by the chronicler of the Crusade.¹

It is interesting to compare the route of this itinerary with that of George Borrow nearly seven centuries later, recorded in his marvellous book *Wild Wales*,² which I have discussed in this journal.³ Unfortunately Gerald's map of Wales has not survived, but his route can easily be traced from his very circumstantial account. Between them, Gerald and Borrow covered most of the Principality, but their routes only overlapped in a few places: Borrow travelled over the interior of Wales, whereas Gerald and Baldwin toured round the perimeter.

¹ Owen, H (1889) *Gerald the Welshman* (London: Whiting & Co) Chapter 8

² Borrow, G (1977) *Wild Wales: its People, Language and Scenery* (London: Fontana Collins)

³ Russell, W M S (2003-4) "Arthur and Merlin in *Wild Wales*" *Pendragon* XXXI No 2, 27-29

In his book, Gerald describes, in his usual lively manner, every stage of the tour and all their adventures and experiences. But the book is much more than a journal of the tour, for at every place they passed Gerald goes into details about the local geography, economy, folklore and history – political, military, ecclesiastical and, as we saw in the first part of this paper,⁴ natural. The book is immensely readable, and, with Borrow's, one of the two best books ever written about Wales.

The *Description of Wales* can be regarded as a supplement to the *Itinerary*, with a brief account of the general history and geography of the country, and an essay on the customs and the good and bad qualities of the Welsh. As I mentioned in the first part of this paper, the book ends with advice to the Normans how to conquer Wales, and to the Welsh how to prevent this!

In exploring Arthurian allusions, I made use of the translation of both books by Sir Richard Colt Hoare, with notes by him and by a later editor, W Llewelyn Williams.⁵ All quotations in this part of my paper are taken from this book, to which all the page references apply. I found sixteen Arthurian allusions, which I will now present.

Arthur and Merlin in the Itinerary

1. In Brecknock:

... Cadair Arthur, or the chair of Arthur, so called from two peaks rising up in the form of a chair, and which, from its lofty situation, is vulgarly ascribed to Arthur, the most distinguished king of the Britons (pp 33-34).

According to Hoare, 'This mountain is now called, by way of eminence, the Van, or the height, but more commonly, by country people, Bannau Brycheiniog, or the Brecknock heights, alluding to its two peaks'.

2. At Caerleon:

The Roman ambassadors here received their audience at the court of the great king Arthur, and here also, the archbishop Dubricius ceded his honours to David of Menevia, according to the prophecy of Merlin

⁴ Russell, W M S (2006) "Gerald the Welshman, Arthur and Merlin (1)" *Pendragon* XXXIII No 3, 6-9

⁵ Giraldus Cambrensis (1908) *The Itinerary through Wales and Description of Wales* (transl. Colt Hoare, Sir Richard, London: Dent)

Ambrosius; "Menevia pallio urbis Legionum induetur". "Menevia shall be invested with the pall of the city of Legions" (p 51).

The Roman ambassadors, of course, come from Geoffrey of Monmouth.⁶ Menevia became St David's.

3. Concerning a man living near Caerleon called Melerius, who was possessed. He was cured, but continued sometimes to see demons:

If the evil spirits oppressed him too much, the Gospel of St John was placed on his bosom, when, like birds, they immediately vanished; but when that book was removed, and the History of the Britons, by Geoffrey Arthur, was substituted in its place, they instantly reappeared in greater numbers, and remained a longer time than usual on his body and on the book (p 53).

Geoffrey Arthur is Geoffrey of Monmouth, who sometimes signed his name in this way, and may have been the son of a man called Arthur, which would help to explain his fascination with the hero.⁷ This passage shows what Gerald thought of Geoffrey's book!

4. Concerning the small stream of Nant Pencarn near Newport:

The public road led formerly to a ford, called Ryd Pencarn ... of which place Merlin Sylvester had thus prophesied: "Whenever you shall see a mighty prince with a freckled face make an hostile irruption into the southern part of Britain, should he cross the ford of Pencarn, then know ye, that the force of Cambria shall be brought low". Now it came to pass in our times, that king Henry II took up arms against Rhys, the son of Gruffydd, and directed his march through the southern part of Wales towards Caermardyn. On the day he intended to pass over Nant Pencarn, the old Britons of the neighbourhood watched his approach towards the ford with the utmost solicitude; knowing, since he was both mighty and freckled, that if the passage of the destined ford was accomplished, the prophecy concerning him would undoubtedly be fulfilled. When the king had followed the road

⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth (1966) *The History of the Kings of Britain* (transl Thorpe, L, Hammonds: Penguin Books) 230-231
⁷ *Ibid* 13

leading to a more modern ford of the river (the old one spoken of in the prophecy having been for a long time in disuse), and was preparing to pass over, the pipers and trumpeters ... began to sound their instruments on the opposite bank, in honour of the king. The king's horse, starting at the wild, unusual noise, refused to obey the spur and enter the water; upon which, the king, gathering up the reins, hastened, in violent wrath, to the ancient ford, which he rapidly passed; and the Britons returned to their homes, alarmed and dismayed at the destruction which seemed to await them' (pp 56-7).

This episode shows that prophecies can be a real factor for morale. Sir Richard Colt Hoare identified the stream called Nant Pencarn with the modern stream Ebwy.

5. At Caermarthen:

Caermardyn signifies the city of Merlin, because, according to the British History, he was there said to have been begotten of an incubus (p 73).

In the words of Geoffrey Ashe,⁸ 'Caermarthen in Welsh is Caerfyrddin, the Myrddin-town, with the *m* changing to *f* in keeping with Welsh rules. Geoffrey's implication that it was named after the seer' - evidently followed by Gerald - 'is, however, incorrect. The Welsh comes from a British form *Moridunon*, the Sea-Fort, in Latin *Moridunum*.'

6. At St David's:

... St David, who is said to have been uncle to king Arthur (p 95).

Gerald is again following Geoffrey,⁹ but in his *Life* of the saint he makes David's father Sanctus (Sandde) Arthur's uncle, and therefore the saint Arthur's cousin.¹⁰

7. By St David's cathedral:

The river Alun, ... bounding the churchyard on the northern side, flows under a marble stone, called Lechlavar... Henry II, on his return from Ireland, ... met at the white gate a procession of the canons of the church coming forth to receive him with due honour and reverence... A Welsh woman threw

⁸ Ashe, G (2002) *Mythology of the British Isles* (2nd edn, London: Methuen) 186-187

⁹ Geoffrey of Monmouth (ref 6) 230

¹⁰ Owen (ref 1) 148

herself at the king's feet, and made a complaint against the bishop of the place... The woman, immediate attention not being paid to her petition, ... exclaimed repeatedly, "Revenge us this day, Lechlavar! revenge us and the nation in this man!" On being chidden and driven away ... she more vehemently and forcibly vociferated in the like manner, alluding to the vulgar fiction and proverb of Merlin, "That a king of England, and conqueror of Ireland, should be wounded in that country by a man with a red hand, and die upon Lechlavar, on his return through Menevia" ... The king, who had heard the prophecy, approaching the stone, stopped for a short time at the foot of it, and, looking earnestly at it, boldly passed over; then, turning round, and looking towards the stone, thus indignantly inveighed against the prophet: "Who will hereafter give credit to the lying Merlin?" (pp 99-100).

Henry evidently had a fine sense of theatre.

8. At Nevyn, on the coast of the Llyn peninsula, south-west of Caernarvon: *We slept that night at Nevyn, on the eve of Palm Sunday, where the archdeacon, after long enquiry and research, is said to have found Merlin Sylvestris (p 115).*

This is the book in Welsh of Merlin's prophecies which Gerald discovered. As mentioned in the first part of this paper, he gave a Latin translation of the book in the third volume of his *Conquest of Ireland*; that volume is unfortunately lost. For Merlin Sylvestris, or Syvester, see the next item, (below).

9. In Snowdonia:

Not far from the source of the river Conwy, at the head of the Eryri mountain, ... stands Dinas Emrys, that is, the promontory of Ambrosius, where Merlin uttered his prophecies, whilst Vortigern was seated upon the bank. There were two Merlins; the one called Ambrosius, who prophesied in the time of king Vortigern, was begotten by a demon incubus, and found at Caermardin, from which circumstance that city derived its name of Caermardin, or the city of Merlin; the other Merlin, born in Scotland, was named Celidonius, from the Celidonian wood in which he prophesied; and Syvester, because when engaged in martial conflict,

he discovered in the air a terrible monster, and from that time grew mad, and taking shelter in a wood, passed the remainder of his days in a savage state. This Merlin lived in the time of King Arthur, and is said to have prophesied more fully and explicitly than the other (pp 125-6).

Gerald here repeats his mistake about Caermarthen (see item 5 above), but he deserves great credit for clearly distinguishing the two Merlins, whom Geoffrey of Monmouth had totally confused. Merlin Sylvester (from Latin *sylvā*, a wood) seems to have been a real poet of the late sixth century, said to have been driven mad at a battle in Cumberland. Merlin Ambrosius is a more shadowy figure, owing a great deal to Geoffrey's inventiveness; Nennius only calls him Ambrosius. The Welsh name applied to the Northern poet was Myrddin: in a *Life* of St Kentigern he was called Lailoken, and the Welsh name may have been a general word for a prophet. Geoffrey applied it to both the characters, combining them into one, and changed one letter to avoid making his Norman French-speaking readers think of *merde*; by so doing he created a name immortal in world literature.¹¹

It is a pity that Gerald spoiled his careful distinction by associating the wrong Merlin with Arthur; Ambrosius, a boy in Vortigern's day, could easily have advised Arthur, whereas Syvestris flourished long after his death. But no doubt 12th-century authors had no clear idea of Dark Age chronology.

Sir Richard Colt Hoare, in a note on the Nevyn passage listed as my item 8 (p 116) mentions a Welsh triad that lists the two Myrddins and Taliesin as the three principal bards of the Isle of Britain.

Arthur and Merlin in the Description

10. On the banks of the Tywy river: *... by the noble castle of Caermarddin, where Merlin was found, and from whom the city received its name... (p 161)*

Gerald here repeats the mistake noted in items 5 and 9 above.

11. Of Wales in general:

The name of Wales was not derived from Wallo, a general, or Wandolena, the queen,

¹¹ Lacy, N J ed (1996) *The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (New York: Garland Publishing) 319-320

as the fabulous history of Geoffrey Arthurius falsely maintains, because neither of these personages are to be found amongst the Welsh; but it arose from a barbarian appellation. The Saxons, when they seized upon Britain, called this nation, as they did all foreigners, *Wallenses*; and thus the barbarous name remains to the people and their country (p 165).

As in item 3 above, Geoffrey Arthurius is Geoffrey of Monmouth. This is an admirable piece of critical etymology by Gerald, who is absolutely right. The Anglo-Saxon word for foreigners was *Wealhas*, as Colt Hoare mentions in a note on this passage.

12. Of Wales in general:

These prophets are only found among the Britons descended from the Trojans. For Calchas and Cassandra, endowed with the spirit of prophecy, openly foretold, during the siege of Troy, the destruction of that find city ... as in the same manner, during the existence of the kingdom of the Britons, both Merlin Caledonius and Ambrosius are said to have foretold the destruction of their nation, as well as the coming of the Saxons, and afterwards that of the Normans.

Here are the two Merlins again as in item 9 above, the Northern one with more usual spelling of Caledonius, as in Scott's famous lines in the sixth Canto of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*:

*O Caledonia! stem and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!*

'Both the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire claimed to be heirs of the Caesars, and of course Western medieval civilisation was in a real sense the heir of Rome ... So medieval Western Europe was profoundly interested in Troy as the seed of Rome' – which they believed as firmly as the less sophisticated Romans. 'No wonder, then, that after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire itself, the successor peoples wanted to get in on the act and find some Trojan ancestors themselves. By the seventh century AD, the Franks were claiming descent from a group of Trojans led by a King Francio', and 'the Bretons acquired an ancestor called Britto (not actually Trojan, but descended from Japhet, for the Biblical patriarchs provided some competition as equally desirable ancestors). By the time of the chronicle of Nennius in the ninth century,

Britto had been claimed by all the Britons (hence the Welsh and Cornish as well as the Bretons). With the help of some back-dating and some inspired juggling of reputable sources such as Eusebius, he had been metamorphosed into Brutus, a grandson of Aeneas, who had led a party of Trojans to occupy Britain... The Trojan origin of the Britons was generally accepted by the educated public until the fifteenth century ... and diehards were still defending it as late as 1718.¹² So Gerald's association of the Merlins with Calchas and Cassandra would have seemed quite fitting to his medieval readers.



13. In the discussion whether prophecies are from God or 'the acts of a Pythonic or a diabolic spirit':
Some persons object, that, if they were under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they would sometimes premise, "Thus saith the Lord God," or make use of some expression in the prophetic style; and as such a mode of prophesying is not taken notice of by Merlin, and no mention is made of his sanctity, devotion, or faith, many think that he spake by a Pythonic spirit... We read, indeed, the prophecies of Merlin, but hear nothing either of his sanctity or his miracles. Some say, that the prophets, when they prophesied, did not become frantic, as it is affirmed of Merlin Sylvestris, and others possessed (pp 180-183).

Things begin to look rather black for the Merlins, one of whom, after all, was the son of a demon. But then Gerald points out that John the Baptist performed no miracles, and finds examples of possession in some Old

¹² Russell, W M S and Russell, C (1991) "English Turf Mazes, Troy, and the Labyrinth" *Folklore* 102, 77-88, especially 80-81

Testament prophecies. So presumably he gives the Merlins the benefit of the doubt.

'Pythonic' must mean pagan, referring to the Pythia, the priestess who delivered the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, where he had slain the monstrous dragon Python, whence her name.

14. In answer to Gildas's sneer at the cowardice of the Britons:

Were they not brave under their leader Cassivellaunus? ... What were they in the time of Constantine, son of our Helen? ... What were they in the time of our famous prince Arthur? ... When attacked and conquered by the Saxons, ... were they not brave? (pp 190-191)

They were indeed brave in the time of the historical Arthur, and Gerald's reference to Gildas suggests he really was thinking of a Dark Age chieftain, rather than of Geoffrey's inflated superman.

Helen, or Helena, 'was not a Briton, though the family background invented for her son Constantine made her British in legend before Geoffrey ... The original Helena was born at Drepanum in Bithynia, now part of Turkey.'¹³

15. On British history:

With regard to Gildas, who inveighs so bitterly against his own nation, the Britons affirm that, highly irritated at the death of his brother, the prince of Albania, whom king Arthur had slain, he wrote these invectives, and upon the same occasion threw into the sea many excellent books, in which he had described the actions of Arthur, and the celebrated deeds of his countrymen; from which cause it arises, that no authentic account of so great a prince is anywhere to be found (p 191).

If only we knew if there is any truth behind this tradition! It would be a knock-out blow at those sceptics who doubt Arthur's existence. The main point in favour of the story is the circumstantial mention of the Albanian brother. In Gildas's sixth-century Britain, 'Albanian' did not of course mean someone from the Balkans, but an inhabitant of Eastern Scotland.¹⁴ Other sources make this

¹³ Ashe (ref 8) 157

¹⁴ Mowat, F (1999) *The Alban Quest: the Search for a Lost Tribe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) 96-97

brother a brigand called Hueil. Gildas's father is said to have been a chieftain of the British on the Clyde.¹⁵ That the brother was a prince of Eastern Scotland, where the people were not British, is to say the least surprising; their mother must have been something of a Nesta. If the story recorded by Gerald had been made up to explain Gildas's silence about Arthur, why complicate it with a surprising detail difficult to believe? This suggests there may have been some basis for the tradition of Gildas destroying his books.

16. On the loss of Britain to the Saxons:
According to the prophecies of Merlin, the nation, and even the name, of foreigners, shall be extinguished in the island, and the Britons shall exult again in their ancient name and privileges.

This seems to have been the only optimistic prophecy made by Merlin, and the least likely to be realised. As we all used to sing, Welsh and English, during the Second World War, 'There'll always be an England...'

Gerald and Geoffrey

A very interesting feature of these allusions is Gerald's attitude to Geoffrey of Monmouth. Until the fifteenth century, virtually all intellectuals accepted the whole of Geoffrey's *Historia* as Gospel truth. The only exceptions were Gerald and his contemporary William of Newburgh.¹⁶ Gerald was writing in the next generation after Geoffrey: he was eight years old when Geoffrey died. As we have seen, he did accept some of Geoffrey's stories, but he accurately corrected two of Geoffrey's errors (items 9 and 11), and he calls the *Historia* 'fabulous' (item 11). This is greatly to his credit.

There is a school of literary biographers who, when they haven't a clue what their hero was doing, fill in by telling us what he was feeling, and describing his facial expressions. This is ridiculous, of course. But I am sorely tempted to envisage a wicked grin on dear Gerald's face when he was writing item 3 about the evil spirits attracted by Geoffrey's *Historia*. ☺

¹⁵ Lacy (ref 11) 195-196

¹⁶ Kendrick, T D (1970) *British Antiquities* (London: Methuen) 11-13



The Giants of Wales

translated by Geoff Sawers

An extract from Peniarth ms 118, Fos 829-837
Cewri Cymru / The Giants of Wales
by Sion Dafydd Rhys (1600)

This translation is by no means an original piece of work. Rhys' catalogue of Welsh giants' (c AD 1600, although the material within is clearly older), was well edited by Hugh Owen for the Cymmrodorion Society in 1917. I have merely updated Owen's translation from the Old Welsh text, but I think that this is worth doing because the original publication is obscure, to say the least. I have supplied a handful of notes of my own – Owens' are far more extensive, for those who wish to go deeper. The text may seem to repeat phrases like "and the place where he lived..." a lot, but the fine distinctions are interesting. Aros means to stay, but trigo is to dwell; likewise tricbha is a dwelling-place, cartrebh a home and cybhanhedhbha is something even cosier – I

¹ Sion Dafydd Rhys: born in Anglesey in 1534, studied at Oxford and Siena, and practised as a physician. In 1587 he was suspected of printing Catholic books in Welsh – a secret press was found at his house. He published a Welsh Grammar in 1592.

Knight's move

have used abode in English for want of a better word. Rhys is also careful to distinguish between the legends that he believes and those he thinks should not be credited. Proper names I have left in their original spellings – I give readers the fun of trying to work out where is meant. Some are obvious, many not. Cawr/Gawr means giant.

In the land of Meirionydh in the parish of Dol Gelhe in the commote of Tal y Bont there is a mountain or peak or bare hill² called Cadeir Idris [Marginal note: The giant Idris. The commote of Y stummer. And Arthur killed him. And this shows that giants ruled here long after Brutus. Giant Crychan dwelling in Moel Crychan, a neighbour to giant Idris]. And about the foot of this hill are several lochs or lakes of water. The mountain is large and high, as I have said; and although it is high and difficult to cross; yet they say that if a stick or log be thrown into one of these waters, you will get that wood in the other lake on the far side of that mountain. And as you cannot believe it easy that the wood has crossed over a mountain as high as that; it is supposed that some cave or hollow connects the one lake with the other under this mountain, so that a thing that is in one lake can be moved to the other. And on the highest crown of this mountain is a shape like some bed, great in length and breadth, built with slabs or stones all around it. And this is called Idris' Bed, though it may likely have been the grave where Idris was once lain. And it is said that whoever lies and sleeps on that bed, one of these two things will happen to him, that he will be a poet of the greatest sort, or that he will go quite out of his mind. And a great river runs from one of these lakes under the high mountain. But despite this when a dry summer happens the mills built on the bank of that river do not have enough water to grind. For that reason it was often necessary to release water from that lake to save the mills from the shortage of water. And they say this was never done but a torrent of rain followed, with thunder and lightning in that place. And on this high mountain formerly lived an unholy terror of a giant, as large as

² Moel – a bald hilltop. You can use the same word for a bald man's head.

any of the giants above, called the giant Idris. And in the same parish (Dol Gelhe) is a mountain called Moel Yscydion. And on this mountain was a great giant called Yscydion and the hill was named Moel Yscydion after him.

And in the parish of Llan Bhachreth is a hill or mountain called Moel Ophrom; the giant Ophrom formerly lived there and the hill was named after him, and that hill is not far from Moel Yscydion, and it is smaller than Moel Yscydion, and in the same land and the same commote.

Also in the land of Meirionydh in the parish of Lhanylhtyd and the commote of Ardudwy, and a little way from the other hills [moels] and on the other side of the river that divides the commotes, is another hill called Moel Ysbryn because the giant Ysbryn had a dwelling there; and the hill was named after him. All these giants were of great size, and in the giant Idris' time, this Idris was king and chief over them all.

Also in the land of Meirionydh, and close to Penn Aran in Penllyn, under the place called Bwlch y Groes, is a grave equally³ huge where they say the giant Lytta or Ritta or Ricca or Rithonwy or Itto is buried; whose body was moved by some of the tribe of giants to Eryri, somewhere near the mountain Aran Bhawr in Penllyn. This giant Ricca was the one whom Arthur had fought and killed in Eryri. And this giant had made for himself a coat of the beards of the kings that he had killed. He had sent Arthur an order to send him the skin of his face and beard⁴. As Arthur was chief of the kings; he would place his beard at the top of the coat above the other beards as an honour to Arthur. And if he would not do that, he urged Arthur to come to fight him, and the winner would make a coat of the other's beard. And when they fought Arthur had the victory and he took both the giant's beard and his coat, the giant Itto called out ... and said that he had never met a second man as brave as that giant⁵. After Arthur

³ I do not understand what the word *cyhydedh*, 'equal', is doing here, but here it is. As huge as Idris' bed?

⁴ Malory I, 26.

⁵ In something akin to a game of conkers, by beating a giant, Arthur both gets his beards and becomes a giant himself.

had that victory, they came in the second watch of the night... [Marginal note: And others tell the story thus: The giant Itto calling himself king of Gwynedd in Arthur's time sent to Arthur to ask for his beard. And Arthur refused. And thus they met at the top of a hill called Bwlch Y Groes between Mowdhywy and Penllyn in the land of Meirionydh. And in the meeting at Itto's wish they cast off their weapons to prove their strength. And at last through wrestling and struggling they came to the bottom of the hill, to a place called Blaen Cynlwyd, having pulled out each other's beards. To remember this, the hillside is called Rhiw Y Barbheu. And after that, they fought with their swords, in the place where Arthur killed the giant, in the place where Itto's grave is to be seen today at the foot of the slope.

The giant Iwni. The giant Iwni dwelt in the commote of Penllyn in a place still called Cebhn Caer Iwni, where there is still a little of his old castle.]

In the land of Aber Teibhi and in the parish of Lhan Dyssiliaw is a place called Caer Wedros. This caer was and is still called by this name because the giant Gwedros formerly dwelt there.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi and in the parish of Lhan Dyssul dwelt the giant Howel; and the place where he stayed is still called Castelh Howel gawr.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi and in the parish of Lhan Bhair or Lhwyn was the giant Lhyphan; and the place where he dwelt is still called Castelh Lhyphan gawr.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi and in the parish of Bangor was the giant Pyscog; and the place where he dwelt is still called Castelh Pyscog gawr.

Three witches were wives to these last three giants, and these three witches were killed they say by Gwalchmei, Arthur's nephew; by trickery, because they could not be killed except by trickery, because of their great strength and power. The three witches were sisters, and they were killed in their three castles, that is Castelh Howel, Castelh Lhyphan and Castelh Pyscog, as the story is told.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi and in the parish of Lhan Dyssul the giant Hedoc used to live; and the place where he lived is still

called Caer Hedoc gawr.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi and in the parish of Lhan Drenoc the giant Chwil used to live; and the place where he lived is still called Castelh Chwil gawr.

In the land of Aber Teibhi in a valley was the giant Didhannel; and the place where he stayed still has his name, it is still called Castelh Didhannel.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi in the valley above was the giant Moel; and the place where he dwelt is still called Castelh Moel.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi and in Lhan Arth was the giant Moythyn; and the place is still called Castelh Moythyn.

In the land of Aber Teibhi was the giant Mibhod; and the place where he stayed is still called Cwrt Mibhod.

And in the land of Caer Bhyrdhin⁶ in Lhann Sawel there were four giants, and the four were brothers; these were Mabon, and the place where this giant abode is called today Castelh Bhabon; and the second was called Dinas, and the place where he was is still called Castelh Dhinaw gawr. And the third giant is called Chwilcin or Wilcin; and where he stayed is called Caer Wilcin. And the fourth is called Celgan, and the place where he dwelt is still called Caer Celgan.

In the land of Caer Bhyrdhin and in Lhann y Crwys was a giant called Chwermor; and the place where he dwelt is still called Lhwyn Chwermor.

And in the land of Caer Bhyrdhin in the parish of Cynwil was a giant called Ladyr or Radyr; and the place where he stayed is still called Bwlch Rhiw Radyr.

And in the land of Caer Bhyrdhin in Cynwil Gayo was a giant called Cynwil; and that is the reason, perhaps, why the place is still called Cynwil, and he was a holy man.

And in the land of Caer Bhyrdhin in Lhann Llony was a giant called Oerbryd or Eurbryd; and the place where he abode is still called Castelh Ourbryd.

And in the same parish and place was the giant Cymryd, and the place where he dwelt is still called Castelh Cymryd.

In the land of Brycheinawc by the town of Aber Hodni:

The giant Gogbhran dwelt in Aber Ysgyr in

⁶ Carmarthen(shire).

the caer above the river.

Mwghmawr drebhi dwelt in the caers, which land now belongs to Rosser Howel of the caer.

The giant Crystil in the land of the Cruc by bridge Wilim.

The giant Crwcast dwells at the top of Crwcast⁷. Others say Crow Castelh, Castell y brain.

And in the land of Aber Teibhi before Brutus came to this island, was the giant Maylor; and the place where he lived is still called Castelh Maylor that was built on a high hill or ridge called Y Dinas on the one side of the river Ystwyth in the bounds of the town of Aber Ystwyth. And this giant Maylor had three sons, the giants Corippin, Crygyn and Bwba. The giant Corippin abode in a castle that still bears his name, that is, Castelh Corippin facing Castelh Maylor across the river Ystwyth in the parish of Lhan Ychayam in the commote of Mebhonydh. And it happened that the giant Maylor was captured in a place called Cybheiloc, about twelve miles from his own castle; and as he was about to be killed, he begged his enemies to let him blow his horn three times before he was killed, and this he was allowed. And he blew his horn until he blew the hair from his head and his beard. And on the second blow of the horn, so great was the force of the blast that it blew off his fingernails and toenails. And on the third blow of the horn, so strong was the blast that the horn shattered into pieces. And then as his son Corippin was hunting on his great horse, leading his hound by the hand, and heard the voice of his father's horn, he was struck with sadness and he longed⁸ for his father; and that place today is still called Cebhn Hiraethoc. And he set to ride toward his father to help him, and in his haste and hurry he tore the head of his hound from its body, so that just the head and mouth of the dog remained on the leash. And that place is still called today Bwlch Sabhn y ci⁹, and when he saw that, he spurred his horse so that it leapt the river Ystwyth in one bound and it was a wonder to see that leap. And the place where the horse landed from this

⁷ Present tense in the text. The line "others say..." is an addition.

⁸ hiraethodh

⁹ The Pass of the Dog's Muzzle.

leap is called to this hour Ol Cam y March. And so Corippin came to his father, and in the fighting there he was killed too.

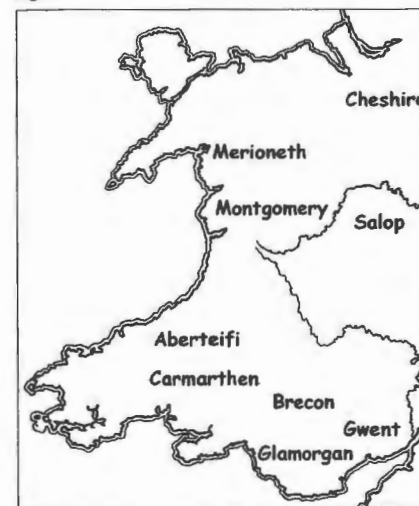
And the giant Crigyn dwelt in Castelh Crygyn in the parish of Lhan Hilar and in the same commote.

The giant Bwba dwelt in the castle that still bears his name, Castelh Bwba, in the parish of Lhan Badam Bhawr in the commote of Perfedd.

These giants lived in Wales before Brutus came to this island, and their custom while they lived was to kill whatever men came to stay within their strongholds until in the end the same man killed them both in one night by trickery.

The giant Odwyn dwelt in his caer which is still called Caer Odwyn or Castelh Edwin in the parish of Lhan Badam Odwyn, which is called Lhan Bam Odyn, losing the letter 'w' from the middle.

Some think Garwed was a giant, but he was not a giant but a hermit who dwelt four miles from Ystrad F'hllur, in a place still called Rhiw Garwed; and there he was killed by Gwaith Bhoed, about five hundred years ago.



In the land of Morgannw was the giant Cribwr in the castle of Cebhn Cribwr by Lann Gedyd. Arthur killed Cribwr's three sisters by trickery. Arthur gave his name as Hot Soup to the first sister, and Hot Porridge to the second sister (so the story goes), and

Breadcrumb to the third. And when the first sister called out for help against Hot Soup Cribwr answered Wench, let him cool, and he answered the second sister the same way, when she asked for help against Hot Porridge. And the third sister cried out that a Breadcrumb was choking her, and he answered this, Wench, take a smaller piece. And when Cribwr chastised Arthur for killing his sisters, Arthur answered thus with an *englyn milwr*:

Take your combs, Cribwr
And cease your foolish anger.
If I get a chance, then surely
What they got, you'll get too.

No one could kill the three sisters together, so great was their strength, but by trickery Arthur killed them one by one.

And the place is still called after his name Cribarth i.e. garth¹⁰ Cribwr gawr. And facing it was a giant called Oyle, and his dwelling place is still called Penn Oyle.

And in a place in the same parish that is still called Ynys Cedwyn was another giant called Cedwyn, and these three lived in Arthur's day. And the first two were killed by Arthur.

And in the parish of Penn Ederyn, the giant Dynas was killed by Arthur. And the place where he dwelt is still called Caer Craic Dynas gawr, alias Craic y thyn.

The giant Bwch lived in a place still called Castelh Bwch between Caer Lhion on the Wysc and Lhan Terman, and he also abode in the other Castelh Bwch between Pentre bach and Henllys in the land of Gwent, and this Bwch had sons, the giant Emalht, whose dwelling was in the place still called Castelh Emalht yn Lhan Gattwc in the Wysc valley. The giant Clidha in the parish of Bettws newydd, whose dwelling was in the place called Clodheu Caer Clidha, and that land today is called Tir Clidha in the parish of Lhan Arth. The giant Buga, who dwelt in the place still called Castelh Brynn Buga, the giant Tragi who used to live in the castle still called Castelh Tragi by Coed Gwent. The giant Cybi, whose home was in the castle still called Castelh Cybi. The giant Crou, and he stayed in the place still called Castelh tir Crou in the parish of Bettws newydd, all of

¹⁰ Garth usually means garden, but can also be a hill.

these were sons of the giant Bwch in the land of Gwent.

And some say that Phili was a giant and a son to this Bwch above, who dwelt in Caer Phili in the land of Morgannwc, and their father, (they say) was killed in the land of Morgannwc above Lhan Trissant in the place still called Pen Bwch.

The giant Erdhan or Gerdhan was dwelling in Castel Erdhan and in a cave that is still called Gogobh Erdhan gawr, and for a while Gogerthan, and on a hill called Brynn Brann Gastelhan in the land of Aber Teibhi.

And in the land of Morgannwc is a place called Celh... walhawn gawr, and it is a big marsh in Coed phranc between Castel Nedh and Abertawi.

And there is a place called Rhyd Penn y Cawr between Lhann Sawel and Cwrt y Betws, in the land of Morgannwc, and there the giant Lhocches had his head cut off.

And in the land of Morgannwc is a place called Bedh Dilic gawr, between Lhan Sawel and Baglann and this grave is over thirty feet in length.

The giant Tamoc in the parish of Merthyr in Hodni valley in the land of Bhrycheinoc.

The giant Medhgyrn in the parish of Aber Y sgyr in the same land of Bhrycheinawc.

The giant Dymhwhch in the land of Euas.

The giant Gwrle, and the place he dwelt was called Caer Gwrle not far from Caer Lheon Gawr and the Dybhrdwy¹¹.

The giant Iestyn and his dwelling in Lhann Iestyn, by Garth Beibio.

The giant Combwch dwelt in the Craic donn, between Trebhyclawdh and Cnwclas.

The grave of the giant Gnerys is in the parish of Lhan ym Mowdhw, close to a place called Bwlch Sabhn ast, in the land of Meirionnydh.

The giant Drewyn made Caer Drewyn in Deymion, across the river from Corwen. And he made that Caer for his sweetheart, to milk her cows in¹². And opposite Caer Dhrewyn is

¹¹ 'The waters of the Dee'. Old Welsh *bh* sounds like a *v* in English – see for example the old town of Dybhr – the waters – modern Dover.

¹² Archaeologists beware: a *caer* may not actually mean a 'fort'. Owen suggests that there are two kinds of *caer* – the 'hill-caer', a

Cebhn Heini, and the lake of the giant Heini. These two places took their names from the giant Heini.

And by the park of Glocaenawc is a place called Sam y Trichawr which was made by three giants in a marsh, to be able to stand firm for two others to fight together in; and when one of them was killed, for the two others to fight, and whichever of the two won, he should receive that thing over which they had quarrelled.

In a place called Glascoed in the land of Trebaldwyn¹³ are the graves of three giants, the giant Meichiad who kept pigs; and Nant and Diphryn Meichiad were called after him, and Cwm glann Meichiad; in the place where his knife and flute were found. And the giant Aedhan, and after him bwlch Aedhan was named. And in the parish of Meibhod are those two places, the Nant and the Bwlch¹⁴.

The giant Ceimiad has his grave under Dyphryn Mochnant in a place called Lhwyn y Meini Hirion by Nant Ceimiad, in the parish of Pennan Mylaghelh, where he was killed (they say) by Arthur, and two long stones mark the length of the grave, one at each end.

There was a place on the border of the land of Amwythyc¹⁵ called Bronn Wrgan, and giants lived there.



And in this place it is told that there were some brothers of Gwenhwybhar daughter of the giant Gogbhran, imprisoned by some of these giants. And she grieved that they were in captivity. But Arthur saved every one of them, killing the giants, and taking the head of the greatest of them, and throwing it into the river to use as a stepping stone, to go to Castel y Cnwclas. And placing his foot on the skull of the giant as he crossed the river, Arthur said, let this skull grow in the river instead of a stone, and from then that river was called Abhon Tybhediad, as the giants' skull grew.

rough stone enclosure, and the 'plain-caer', more likely a fort of Roman origin.

¹³ Montgomery

¹⁴ the stream and the pass

¹⁵ Shropshire

old news

KERNOW, ARTHUR'S KINGDOM?



This year is the 150th anniversary of the composition of that splendid anthem *Land of My Fathers*. In Welsh this begins *Mae Hen Wlad fy Nhadau yn annwyl i mi* ("The old land of my fathers is dear to me"), but the tune and the sentiment has been borrowed by those other Brythonic-speaking nations, Cornwall and Brittany. In Cornish, for example, the first line begins *Bro goth agan Tasow, dha fleghes a'th car*, literally "Old country of our fathers, thy children love thee..."

Of interest to Arthurians is the 2nd verse: *Gwlascor Mygthem Arthur, an Syns ken, Ha'n Gral*

Moy kerys genen nyns yu tyreth aral, Ynnos-sy pup cam, nans, meneth ha chy A gows yn Kemewek dhyn-ny.

("Kingdom of King Arthur, the Saints and the Grail, / More loved by us is no other land. / In thee every cairn, valley, hill and house / Speaks in Cornish to us.") While other Celtic nations, like Brittany and Wales, have their own claims on Arthur, Cornwall's Arthurian links seem only to date from the 12th century, with grail connections only from the 19th. CL

NO STONE UNTURNED

Open University researchers under Dr Phil Potts have deduced that the bluestone monoliths of Stonehenge's early phases were indeed glacial erratics. They believe that "during an ice age, the stones which make up the inner ring of the 4,300-year-old monument were ripped out of the [Preseli] mountains and dragged across the country on a frozen river," to be deposited mere miles from their present site.

Their study, in the *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, suggests that only the distinctive bluestone axe-heads found on Salisbury Plain were transported by humans from Pembrokeshire, and that this indicates, according to the *Daily Mail*, that "our forebears may not have thought the stone had special

powers after all".

The gist of this summary may have got lost in translation from the journalesque, but former Pendragon member Rodney Castleden has already poured cold water on the glacial drift theory. He has argued that during various glaciations several factors scotch the case for the bluestones being transported by natural means in a south-westerly direction to Salisbury Plain.

The most recent large-scale glaciation affecting Britain was around 18,000 years ago. Not only was central and southern England ice-free but also the Preselis, and the South Welsh ice cap ("Welsh Ice") would have been in the way. The Anglian cold stage (around 450,000 years ago) "produced the most extensive ice sheet in Britain" but again, although the Preselis and central England were this time covered, Welsh Ice would have blocked the passage of ice from the Irish Sea area.

There are more subtle arguments from the opponents of human transportation, but Castleden's background in geography, geology and geomorphology challenges them all. Lack of ice action on the Stonehenge bluestones, adverse gradients, lack of solid evidence of other supposed bluestone erratics, and other indications that glacial deposits are unlikely on Salisbury Plain all seem to have sealed the case back in 2001, which makes it all the more intriguing what new evidence the Open University researchers may have provided.

Castleden's detailed arguments for human agency now become more tenable, but we do not have to go all the way with him when he argues that Geoffrey of Monmouth's tale of Merlin's transportation of Stonehenge is "a genuinely old tale, a piece of real proto-history", especially when he brings in Caxton's 15th-century printed version of the *Historia* for corroboration.¹ CL

¹ Fiona MacRae "Did Stonehenge arrive by glacier?" *Daily Mail* June 15 2006; Aubrey Burl "Myth-Conceptions" 3rd Stone 37 (2000) 6-9; Rodney Castleden "The epic of the Stonehenge Bluestones: were they moved by ice, or by people?" 3rd Stone 39 (2000/2001) 12-25; Aubrey Burl "The Third Stone" 3rd Stone 40 (2001) 48-55; David Kaiser "Sacred Preseli" 3rd Stone 46 (2003) 34-37

EARLY MEDIEVAL GOWER

Ongoing research into early landscapes of Gower, carried out by the School of Education at University of Wales, Newport, has given tantalising glimpses of the transformation of a South Walian area from the Roman to the early medieval period.

First, geophysical prospection carried out at Llanddewi in the New Henllys area of West Gower revealed features lying adjacent to prominent earthworks. The mixture of round and straight-sided buildings was strongly reminiscent of sites in the Vale of Glamorgan, where Iron Age round huts were replaced by square and rectangular buildings characteristic of Romano-British sites. Subsequent digging revealed a small structure (8 by 5-plus metres) of probable Roman date, though this has to be confirmed by radiocarbon tests on charcoal. Unfortunately any possible early medieval occupation would have been removed by later ploughing. By using place-names to focus in detail on a limited number of sites, two other possible farmstead sites have also been discovered. The results of this research will be published in the *Annual Report of the Medieval Settlement Research Group* and elsewhere.

Nearby *Stembridge Camp* may have been a *llys*. 'The *llysoedd* were the palaces of the early kings of Wales,' reports Jonathan Kisson. 'Between the fifth and seventh centuries an area such as Gower might have been divided into several small kingdoms each with its own king. Each would also have had a "mother" church or *llan*. Stembridge Camp is one possible *llys* site, perhaps linked to the church at Llangennith; this is almost certainly one of the oldest in Gower.'

Regarding Llangennith he adds, 'Even if the foundation story is wrong – and most of it is lifted straight from the Biblical story of Moses – there is enough reliable evidence to point to Christian activity here in the ninth or tenth century.' This 9th/10th-century date is supported by a decorated slab with vestiges of an interlaced design, discovered during Victorian restorations in the centre of the chancel floor. Known as *Cennys stone*, this may have been the grave slab of the 6th-century saint Cennydd (pronounced 'Kenneth') buried in the hermitage he founded but which was destroyed by Vikings in 986.

Dr Kisson's project aims to chart the evo-

Knight's move

lution of the Gower landscape from around 300 to 750, immediately prior to the villages. Following further field walking and a hedge dating study, it is hoped that successful grant applications will result in the excavation of an early medieval site sometime after 2007.² CL

ANGLO-SAXON APARTHEID

The gist of a curious little item on BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme was a new theory trying to explain why, although Anglo-Saxons were initially only 5-10% of the population, the majority of the English population now has Anglo-Saxon DNA.

The idea was put forward that the Anglo-Saxons practised a kind of apartheid against the serf class of Britons – preventing inter-marriage and so on – and that, in effect, the socially-excluded, depressed, poor, ill-nourished Britons were out-bred numerically by the better-off, better-fed Anglo-Saxons.

It didn't sound wildly plausible, to put it mildly, since in most societies the poor tend to have more children than the better-off, although the survival rate tends to be lower.

Steve Sneyd

WAS LATE ROMAN BRITAIN CHRISTIAN?

When Constantine was acclaimed Emperor 1700 years ago in York his elevation set in train the eventual domination of one religion throughout Europe for centuries to come. This momentous occasion is celebrated in an exhibition, *Constantine the Great: York's Roman Emperor*, at the Yorkshire Museum in York which runs until October 29.

It has also re-ignited debate about the extent of Christianity in Late Roman Britain and on into the 6th-century. "Gildas condemns the British kings for many failings, but paganism is not one of them." However, because most of our evidence is from Western Britain, was this Christianity continuous from Late Roman times or re-introduced from Gaul?³ CL

² Jon Kisson *The transformation of the Gower landscape from Roman to early medieval* (occasional newsletter from School of Education, University of Wales, Newport, Caerleon Campus, PO Box 179, Newport NP18 3YG); Geoffrey R Orrin (1979) *The Gower Churches* (Rural Deanery of West Gower) 40

³ David Petts "How Christian was Late Roman Britain?" *Current Archaeology* 204 (2006) 648-51



NOT FORGOTTEN

Leslie Alcock, the celebrated excavator of South Cadbury hillfort in Somerset, a traditional candidate for the site of Camelot, has died recently, aged 81. After Manchester Grammar School he read History at Brasenose College, becoming president of the Oxford Archaeology Society. After serving as a captain with the Gurkhas in India during the war, he excavated with Mortimer Wheeler at Mohenjo-daro in the Indus valley. He was briefly director of the Archaeological Survey of Pakistan and equally briefly a museum curator in Leeds.

It wasn't until he joined the University College of Wales, Cardiff that he began to make his name in the field of British Dark Age archaeology, first at Dinas Powys hillfort outside Cardiff in the 50s and then spectacularly as excavation director for the Camelot Research Committee at South Cadbury in the sixties. In the seventies he was appointed to the chair of archaeology at Glasgow University, pioneering limited fieldwork explorations at Dark Age sites such as Dumbarton Rock in Strathclyde (occupied from the 6th to the 9th centuries).

His most influential work was *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology AD 367-634* (1971), though he later put less emphasis on the reality of the man. His most recent major publication was *Kings and Warriors, Craftsmen and Priests in Northern Britain AD 550-850* (2002), displaying a synthesis of his northern fieldwork as well as a liking for precise dates in his book titles.

Among his many honours were a fellowship of the Royal Historical Society (1969) and an OBE (1991), but his influence on the general public and on his students may be incalculable. One writer mentioned that he could be "prickly and demanding on occasion" – meaning that he seldom suffered fools (such as naïve Pendragons, myself among them!) gladly – but he was passionate about his chosen period, and conveyed that passion to those he came in contact with, as press obituaries testified.

Knight's Move

Another significant Arthurian scholar, Elspeth Kennedy, has died recently, aged 84. After winning an Oxford scholarship to Somerville College, she specialised as a French medievalist, beginning her life's work in 1948 on the 13th-century romance the *Lancelot en prose*. Her edition of the *Prose Lancelot* didn't appear until 1980, but this was followed in 1986 by *Lancelot and the Grail*. After a spell at Manchester University, she gained a fellowship at St Hilda's College, Oxford, and remained there as lecturer, tutor and college wine steward until 1986. Among many other posts she was an editor of *Medium Aevum* for the Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literature, President of the International Arthurian Society from 1987 to 1989, and recipient of the French Prix Excalibur, but she will also be remembered by former students as a passionate teacher and inspirational scholar.

Also recently deceased is a leading authority on Northern mythology and folklore. Hilda Ellis Davidson – also known as H R Ellis Davidson, where the R stood for Roderick – was born in 1914 and went on to study English and Archaeology at Newnham College, Cambridge, gaining a PhD in 1940 for research into Scandinavian pagan beliefs. As well as a long-standing association with Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge she was President of the Folklore Society from 1973 to 1976 and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries.

Many will remember her *Gods and Myths of Northern Europe* (Penguin 1964) from its many paperback issues, but she was a prolific scholar and author. As well as individual studies (including *Patterns of Folklore*, a collection of her Folklore Society presidential addresses and other essays, published by D S Brewer in 1978, which helped celebrate the Society's centenary with style) she collaborated on many titles such as *The Chariot of the Sun* with Peter Gelling (Dent 1969) and *The Folklore of Ghosts* with our own W M S Russell (1981). Before her death she was actively editing papers for a new study of fairy tales, and her family are reportedly hoping to fund a research grant in her name.¹

¹ "Professor Leslie Alcock" *Telegraph* June 15 2006; Alan Lane "Leslie Alcock" *Guardian* June 24 2006; Jane H M Taylor "Elspeth



KNIGHTS' MOVES

Just before St George's Day this year it was reported that a survey for English Heritage of nearly two thousand people revealed, incredibly, that "half thought St George was one of King Arthur's knights of the Round Table". That the Roman Catholic Church doubted his existence was not mentioned, though it was confidently stated that "only a fifth knew he was a Roman army officer".

Ian Brown reminds us that Tintagel is "crawling with King Arthur's This, King Arthur's That, Merlin's Whatsits and Camelot Thingy". However, it's "always refreshing to find an occasional shop, cafe or cove without any direct Arthurian connection... One of these places [is] a fish-and-chip cafe by the car park. If I remember rightly, it's now owned by a couple from London who don't have much interest in the Arthurian legends" and so are probably also "unaware of the Arthurian link of their cafe's name. It's *The Kingfisher*... It's ironic that the name echoes one of the essential elements of the legends, the Fisher King himself."

Apparently at the Camelot Theme Park near Chorley – "the land of great knights and amazing days" – the longest wait is for the "thrilling" water ride of *Pendragon Plunge*. This is for those who love to be terrified by travelling down a water chute gripping tight to a two-man plastic toboggan. There are fewer white-knuckle rides for *Pendragon*, Britain's biggest car dealer, after its takeover of rival Reg Vardy and failed bid for Lookers, leading to an increase in operating profits.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds notes that many UK Overseas Territories are important seabird islands. "Gough Island, part of Tristan da Cunha, is arguably the most important seabird island in the world, supporting millions of pairs of more than 20 species, including the endangered *Tristan albatross*." Apparently introduced mice are preying on Tristan albatross chicks, but elsewhere the RSPB's Save the Albatross Campaign's Task Force is having some small success re-educating

Kennedy" *Guardian* May 18 2006; M A Howard "H R Ellis Davidson" *The Cauldron* 121 (August 2006) 41

the fishing industry in the southern hemisphere.

Spotted recently by Ian Brown was a *Scarab Merlin* road-sweeping truck. On Wilmslow Road a mile and a half away from Merlin's Well on Alderley Edge, Cheshire is gastro pub *The Merlin*. Built originally in the 1880s, this "drinking and dining emporium" is named after the wizard who watches over a sleeping king and his warriors. A ten-bed hotel in the grounds is said "to beat sleeping in a cave with several hundred knights". The Merlin connection continues: the Football Premier League has threatened legal action against a range of football figurines claimed as suitable for children as young as three. Made by Blighty Collectables, *Little Hooliganz* includes 'firms' such as *Man Utd Merlin Marauders* in aggressive poses. Meanwhile, at the seedier bottom end of Princess Street, Manchester, stands *Avalon College*. It looks a pretty marginal establishment – full details, a sign outside said, at www.avaloncollege.co.uk.²

UNHOLY GRAILS

Ian Brown asks, "Is the Holy Grail the Holy Grail of metaphors?" While you work that one out, he adds that he has it on good authority that the perfect toastie is the Holy Grail of student catering. Academia is where you might expect to find plenty more grail metaphors, and so it is. Many British politicians and professors have "sought to mine the American experience in the hope of discovering the holy grail" of "[eliminating] the disparity in educational achievement and life chances for people from different economic backgrounds". Meanwhile, a profile of philosopher Peter Singer claimed that his academic holy grail was his "steady progress towards ... tenure". For another

² English Heritage survey *Huddersfield Examiner* April 19 2006; Graham Turner "Great days and knights at Camelot" *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* May 13 2006; Michael Harrison "Pendragon chief urges Ford to keep Jaguar" *Independent* August 8 2006; Graham Wynne "The RSPB view" *Birds* 21 No 3 (Autumn 2006) 4; www.savethealbatross.net; pub feature by Elizabeth Mutch in *Manchester Evening News* August 4 2006; "Hooliganz" in spot of boover with footy clubs" *Metro* August 24 2006

journos, the government intends to teach our children the "traditional core values" of the British to "promote the Holy Grail of social cohesion".

Politics is another grail-rich area. "Holding power on both sides of the border" is supposedly the grail of Sinn Féin, while for some Chinese youngsters membership of the Communist Party "remains the holy grail". Boris Johnson, Tory spokesman for higher education, took part in a pro-celebrity football match on TV channel Five. "In television terms it was a fragment of the holy grail" when he "tackled" a former midfielder at groin level with his head, making it the political TV "moment of the week".

Football and entertainment jostle for top honours now: Scottish Third Division club East Stirlingshire's "Holy Grail was the right to be known as the second-worst side in British football". (The worst apparently was Albion Rovers.) DJ Chris Evans on BBC R2, July 27, pontificated that "Bobby Moore's England cap is the holy grail of World Cup memorabilia and it's missing". Wake us up when you find it, Chris. According to European football expert Guillem Balague "Nostradamus predicted Spain will win the World Cup in Germany": *At the end of the sixth month of 2006, the King of Spain will cross the Pyrenees with his army. The legions of Beelzebub await the battle on the central European plains. Destruction and defeat will fall on the evil-doers. The Holy Grail will be returned to Spain.* If you didn't already know, look away now: Italy beat France in the final on penalties, so yah boo to Nostradamus. But according to Chelsea's chief executive, the *Champion's League* is "the Holy Grail of all cup competitions", so yah boo to the World Cup.

For film buffs, *Donnie Darko* ("comedy, 80s teen movie and horror rolled into one") has supposedly "established itself as the holy grail for every misunderstood teen". Speaking of misunderstood, a review of London group Hot Chip declares that they "have achieved the holy grail of electronic music, which is to put a pulse behind the beat and make computer say yes". Does this gobbledegook make any sense at all?

Technology comes next. A letter writer to *Metro* claimed that an alternative fuel was the holy grail that would meet our transport

needs. Neil Banerjee of the Integrated Ocean Drilling Program at Texas A&M University described his excitement at retrieving pebbles called *gabbros* from the Pacific Ocean floor, cooled remnants of red-hot magma boiling 15 million years ago from deep within the Earth. Part of the drilled core contains a boundary where "we went from rocks cooled relatively quickly, days or weeks, to rocks that took months or years. The piece is the holy grail..." In navigation, "the fabled *North West passage* [was] the holy grail of shipping," as heard on the BBC World Service, while "the holy grail of neuro-marketing as far as clients are concerned is to find the 'buy button'" according to a BBC R4 programme.

Copywriters had fun with the old panacea in a print advert for a well-known ale: "You'll never guess what I found in the off-licence." I held up a carrier bag, gleefully. He studied it, morosely. "I dunno, the Holy Grail? The Meaning of Life? Sherger?" Ignoring his sarcasm I reached into the bag and produced two bottles of *Theakston XB*. On a more serious note, a favourable review of Karen Liebreich's *The Letter in the Bottle* (Atlantic) describes her search for the French authoress of a poignant jetsam message (which turns out to be an elegy for a mother's drowned son) as her 'Grail quest'. At least reviewer Lisa Hilton had the grace to put her metaphor in inverted commas, unlike most hacks.³

³ William Atkinson in *Guardian Education* January 17 2006; Singer profile *Guardian Review* July 23 2005; Lucy Mangan "What it really means to be British" *Guardian* May 16 2006; Sinn Féin grail in *Guardian* July 29 2005; Calum Macleod "China's ruling party, 80 today, keeps iron grip" *Independent on Sunday* July 1 2001; Emily Bell "One way to tackle political public relations" *Guardian Media* May 8 2006; Jeff Connor "Game for a laugh" *Guardian* G2 July 29 2005; Guillem Balague "World Cup Diary" *Metro* June 26 2006; "How the soothsayers predicted a winner" *Guardian Sport* June 30 2006; "Champions League is Holy Grail – Kenyon" *Metro* May 24 2006; Clive Lambert "Fuel for thought" *Metro* August 24 2006; "Core blimey" *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* Comment, July 15 2006; BBC World Service *Analysis* May 29 2006; BBC R4 *Broadcasting House* May 21 2006; *Donnie Darko* preview *Guardian Review* August 5

ON THE BOARDS

Presented at the London Coliseum June-July 2006, and proclaimed as "a new production of Purcell and Dryden's great 17th-century collaboration" English National Opera's *King Arthur*, featuring the Mark Morris Dance Group, was exactly that. Director and choreographer Mark Morris declared, "I chose to discard the spoken text (which I don't like) and keep all of the music (which I do)," and this brought down the opprobrium of critics. "The setting is the stage. The time is now. The performers are themselves" particularly tested the patience of Martin Kettle, who questioned the director's artistic judgement in discarding structure, setting and costumes of the "dramatick opera" and re-presenting it as a "sort of vaudeville" (as Mark Morris himself put it).

Heaton Park, Manchester, was the setting for Feelgood Theatre's production of *Arthur: King of the Britons* (July-August 2006). Similarly unorthodox, this was designed to appeal to older children and adults: with drama, sword fights, magic and medieval song, the audience were required to follow the action around three-quarters of a mile with their own seating, torches and sensible footwear.

Another outdoor production took place at the Edinburgh Fringe, this one also angled towards family audiences. *The Quest For Excalibur* was performed in Duddingston Kirk Manse Garden in early August by Scottish storytelling company Theatre Alba, "a promenade production that [gave] those aged four to 10 years a chance to join in the songs and solve the clues".

Spamalot, or to give its full title, *Monty Python's Spamalot*, is due to open at the Palace Theatre, London W1 on 16th October after its successful run on Broadway. Even cynics have been won over by this two-hour long show and its jokes and pastiche songs, but it remains to be seen whether its Jewish in-jokes and energy travel well.⁴

2005; Lisa Hilton "True Mystery" *Seven* April 30 2006

⁴ Martin Kettle "Hostages in the hands of overindulged meddlers" *Guardian* July 1 2006; <www.eno.org>; Tony Naylor review in *Guardian Guide* July 15 2006 <www.feelgoodtheatre.co.uk>; Lyn Gardner

BROADCAST

On BBC Radio 4's *A Good Read* for July 4 2006 Martha Kearney spoke to novelist Justin Cartwright and historian Juliet Barker about their favourite paperbacks, which included T H White's *The Sword in the Stone*. (See also BookWorm.)

The sequel to TV mini-series *Merlin* *Merlin's Apprentice* (Cert PG), in which the wizard wakes after a half-century slumber, is now available as a Channel 4 DVD, RRP £19.99. It sees "Sam Neill don his Elrond wig to reprise his Emmy-nominated role of Merlin the Sorcerer," opines free paper *Metro*, adding that insomniacs will like it: "Odds are Merlin's lengthy slumber was caused by watching the mini-series repeats."

Elsewhere, the first programme of the ninth season of TV SF series *Star Gate* was titled "Avalon" and was another episode featuring the search for Merlin. Clearly the Channel 4 DVD didn't provide enough clues.⁵

In the Radio Detectives series on BBC Radio 7 (August 3 2006) Jeffrey Richards, presenter on *Sexton Blake – the other Baker Street detective*, quoted Dorothy L Sayers as having compared the Sexton Blake stories to the Arthurian ones, as both being loosely connected chronicles of adventures focused round a central group of characters. Richards himself added that, although there hadn't been any new Sexton Blake stories since 1978, if the Arthurian analogy held then, like the Once and Future King he would yet return.

In the Radio 7 "Crime Hour" the Father Brown story (August 7 2006, adapted for radio by John Scotney) was *The Perishing of the Pendragons*. In this melodramatic tale set in a remote house by a Cornish estuary, inhabited by the Pendragon family, the supposed Admiral (actually only a Captain) Pendragon at one point said something to the effect that though everyone in Cornwall claims to be descended from Arthur, his family's claim was better than

"The Quest for Excalibur" *Guardian Guide* July 29–August 4 2006; Ian Jack "Things that have interested me" *Guardian* May 6 2006; Palace Theatre 0870 895 5579

⁵ Merlin DVD "Try before you buy" *Metro* May 2 2006; SF TV review in US magazine *Pablo Lennis* June 2006

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

most. He was then interrupted by another character asking about the family curse and the point was never developed further.

The "Admiral" is eventually exposed by Father Brown as having long ago murdered his brother and now attempting to murder his nephew, so as to get his hands on the family money by wrecking their boats, using a misleading light to lure them onto rocks, said rocks at the river mouth being shaped like Merlin and a dragon. This Father Brown tale was credited to G K Chesterton, so this was not a case of the franchise being posthumously added to.

Over the August Bank Holiday weekend Channel 4 was running its *Time Team: Big Royal Dig* programme, with live coverage on More4. With simultaneous excavations at Buckingham Palace, Holyroodhouse Palace and Windsor Castle, Pendragon interest centred on their search for traces of Edward III's Round Table building at Windsor. We hope to include an update on their findings in the next *Pendragon*, courtesy of Eric Fitch.

A new series of *Adventures in Poetry* began on September 3 on BBC R4 with Tennyson – *The Lady of Shalott*. Peggy Reynolds asked (and hopefully answered) why the poem was still intriguing historians, painters, weavers and indie pop singers. Perhaps this could be a future *Pendragon* theme!



Ian Brown

⁶ Old News *Pendragon* XXXIII No 2 (2005-6) 30; Chris Lovegrove "Digging in the Dark" *Pendragon* XXXIII No 3 (2006) 18-21; "Roman treasure hunt as volunteers dig in" *South Wales Evening Post* April 20 2006; "Big dig reveals Roman ruins" *South Wales Evening Post* June 13 2006

PERIODICALS

Studia Celtica is the short title for the Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales, a well-respected academic journal covering Celtic history, law, archaeology, art, language and literature. Volume XXXIX (2005), published recently, includes several items of direct or indirect relevance to Arthurian studies, especially Ned Sturzer's "The purpose of *Culhwch and Olwen*" and Helen Fulton's "Owain Glyn Dŵr and the Uses of Prophecy". Subscription details are available at the University of Wales Press website www.wales.ac.uk/press

The **Society of Leyhunters Newsletter** has reached issue 19, and acts as a forum for all those interested in "ley lines" and patterns within the landscape. Its intention is to act as a focus for "earth mysteries" in the wake of the now defunct *The Ley Hunter* and, as well as publishing news, reviews, articles and research, it publicises its get-togethers or moots (the next one being on Lundy in the Bristol Channel from April 28 to May 5 2006). A report on the Society's expedition to the Outer Hebrides in March included details of member Laurence Main's talk on "King Arthur's Camlan". UK and EU subscriptions are £10.00 (January to December) from A Hyde, 7 Mildmay Road, Romford, Havering, Essex RM7 7DA or via Leyhunter@ntlworld.com

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

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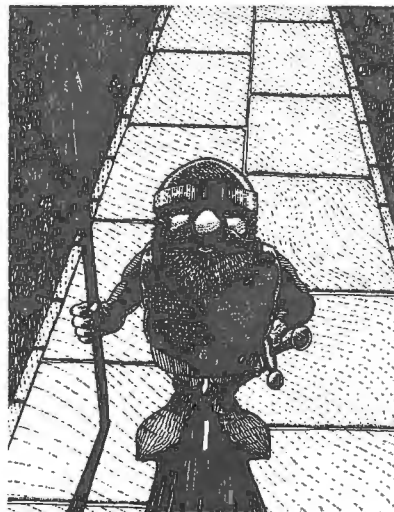
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⁷ Ciar Byrne "Through her Labyrinth, Mosse wins read of the year" *The Independent* March 30 2006;

Knight's Move

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REVIEWS

David Hancocks
Cunval's Mission
Dinas [imprint of Y Lolfa, Ceredigion] 2004
0-86243-709-1 pb 229pp £5.95



Pendragon member David Hancocks studied Architecture and Building, and so it may have been inevitable that his historical interests have manifested themselves in reports and articles in archaeological journals. This, his first novel, is set in the Age of

the Saints, and it may also be no coincidence that he is currently landscaping several acres of woodland by the river Monnow where much of the novel is set.

A young priest called Cunval is sent to begin a mission in the territory of a pagan chief north of Abermenai (a precursor of the later medieval Monmouth). You can trace his journey from post-Roman Caerleon, where he has been trained, along rivers like the Usk, the Trothi and the Wye to the Monnow, where he sets up his *llan* or ecclesiastical enclosure. As you might expect, life is not easy for the new priest, what with bandits, local opposition, taboo violations and Saxon threats, but he persists and wins over the local population. But tragedy is never far away in such volatile times.

Hancocks' novel teems with memorable characters and is set in a community and landscape that we get to know extraordinarily well. His background detail, unusually for many so-called historical novels, is based on a sound archaeological knowledge, though education nearly always takes a back seat to entertainment, as it should in a work of fiction. Through the young Cunval's eyes we revel in the progress of the seasons, the appearance of wild flora and fauna, the technology of building kilns, coracles and cells, and the early medieval agricultural cycle; all in all, an impressive first novel.

Having been involved in the excavation of an early medieval church enclosure, I recognised the steps the young priest takes in setting up his *llan*, though I was expecting a differentiation between his living cell and

Knight's move

the shelter for the altar, and I was surprised at the building of a pottery kiln in a relatively aceramic part of Britain (though so-called Monnow pottery was widespread in South Wales in a much later period). But Hancocks will know his area and its history well, and I wouldn't be too shocked to see an archaeological report on a previously unknown Dark Age site connected with a Cunval, the name (or a variation, Cynfal in modern Welsh) of several historically recorded personages from the 6th century onwards.

Chris Lovegrove

Alex Epstein

The Circle Cast:

the lost years of Morgan le Fay
\$13.00 Available through Lulu.com

Beginning with the tale of Uter and his lust for Igraine, the wife of the Duke of Cornwall, Mr Epstein plunges us into the life of Anna. Anna is the daughter of the Duke and Igraine, an eight-year-old, well-loved, spirited young girl that is about to have her secure life disrupted by Uter's licentious behavior. One is in for few surprises during this retelling of this well-known segment of *Le Morte D'Arthur* although this author's rendering is lively, believable and highly readable. It is at this point that this novel begins to engage the knowledgeable Arthurian reader.

To protect her from Uter's undoubtedly evil intentions, Anna is to be sent away. However, the expected removal to a Christian nunnery is not to be found here. Anna is given a gift by Igraine – a new name, Morgan, "born from the sea" – and placed in a small boat bound for Ireland where she is somehow to find a distant relative to care for her. Accompanying Morgan on this harrowing trip across the sea are Eithne, her Irish nurse, Simon, the son of a soldier of Din Tagell, and her Greek tutor. Somehow the voyage is managed and Morgan is united with her kinswoman, Ciamat.

The story moves smoothly and retains your attention while Morgan is first treated as an outcast by the barbarian people of Ciamat's tribe. Having plenty of time on her hands, Morgan begins to obsess over her mother's plight and focuses her thoughts on returning to Britain to seek revenge against Uter. Her loneliness is soon to end as

Ciarnat's tribe is vanquished in a battle with a neighboring tribe and Morgan is chosen as a slave for the eccentric wise woman of the conquering tribe. Eight years of slavery pass with Morgan laboring for the wise woman, all the while harboring her secret desire for vengeance. A wandering Christian happens into her village and exposes her to the teachings of his God. It is by his martyrdom that Morgan eventually learns of her natural connections to the earth's power and escapes to a small colony of Christians.

During the time spent in the Christian colony Morgan wrestles with her desire to become a good Christian, her desire for retribution and her lust for the young prince who is the son of the tribal king that owns the land the colony is living on. As is true throughout the many episodes of the legend of Arthur, lust wins out. Although Morgan sees her prince become a conquering king she cannot rest until she has returned to Britain and killed Uter.

Together with a band of fifty warriors Morgan returns to Britain and Din Tagell to seek revenge.

Mr Epstein has created an entertaining, highly original story that will undoubtedly give all Arthurian enthusiasts hours of enjoyment. The story is well written in modern prose, the characters are well developed and the story is carried through to a very satisfactory conclusion. This book should be well received by all who wish to read a lively, well-conceived, Arthurian story. All in all, an impressive first novel for Mr Epstein.

Larry Mendelsberg

Graham K Griffiths
Behold Jerusalem!
Longinus Publications 2003 £17.99
0 9543519 0 8 305pp illus

Little Ellie, in Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, says of a version of Raphael's *The Triumph of Galatea* that "It is so beautiful that it must be true". And this surely is the nub of all poets' visions: for Blake, "Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth," and Keats believed that 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, -- that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

For artist Graham Griffiths the revelation that the outline of the whole of the British Isles was made up of giant figures of the

Zodiac was such a *Eureka* moment that *Behold Jerusalem!* is his way of exploring the relationship between beauty and truth. Northern Ireland is Scorpio, Pisces is represented by Cornwall and Devon, West Wales is Leo and so on. For aficionados of terrestrial zodiacs – in Somerset or in West Wales, for example – this vision surpasses anything they can have imagined.

Regional TZs could have been partly sculptured by Man, partly by Nature, so the theory goes, but how to explain the shape of the UK? For Griffiths the "inescapable truth [is] that God, the Cosmic Mind, call it whatever you like, is trying to catch our eye for some almighty reason". What is that reason? He doesn't say because he doesn't know, but he is certain there *is* a reason. His fine interpretive paintings show Griffiths himself is an accomplished artist, but can God's own artistic vision really be limited by a late modern interpretation? What if Griffiths is unconsciously the Creator of this divine message, seeking out an explanation for what he himself has envisioned? The dilemma really is this: if Beauty is in the eye of the beholder (now, who said that first?) can there ever be an Absolute Truth?

This book is attractively illustrated, with wonderful literary allusions, including a final quote from the conclusion of T H White's *The Book of Merlyn*. While I feel some of the punctuation could be tightened up, there is – leavened with self-doubt at times – a rare old enthusiasm throughout which is contagious. One little correction: on page 13 the author states that members of the Pendragon Society "discovered" a landscaped zodiac in the Preselis in 1972; this is not quite true – Society members did explore the area in search of the zodiac, but they were acting on clues provided by author Lewis Edwards.

Chris Lovegrove

• Some reviews held over to next issue



The centenary of T H White's birth, May 26 2006, did not escape media attention. SF newsletter *Ansible* 225 (April 2006) notes that "Professor Charles Xavier ... frequently cited *The Once and Future King* as his favourite book in *The X-Men*." BBC Radio 4's *A Good Read* featured the book in July (see this issue's The Board), and Jane Smiley, author of *13 Ways of Looking at the Novel*

(Faber) continued her *Guardian* analysis of the novel with White's Arthurian cycle.¹ "Steeped in learning and literature, and yet ... not quite respectable", the novel is, like Malory's *Morte*, a "British version of the *Oresteia*" where the violation of taboos leads to the disintegration of the nation. Though it is "full of comic scenes", White "never forgets that underlying the good fellowship and prosperity that Arthur brings ... are violence, rape and incest". Next issue we hope to take a retrospective view of *The Book of Merlyn*, the fifth part of *The Once and Future King* that remained unpublished in White's lifetime, only appearing in 1977, thirteen years after his death.

Atlantean Publications are now open to submissions for a *Grails 3* anthology, following the recent publication of *Grails 2*. Write to D J Tyrer at 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2UY or at atlanteanpublishing@hotmail.com. A *Grails 2* review should appear next issue.

RECENT TITLES

You may have missed Antal Szerb's first novel, the "extraordinary" *The Pendragon Legend* (Pushkin Press paperback). Martin Price from Dinas Powys, Cardiff, in a letter to the *Guardian Saturday Review* (June 24 2006) describes it as "Dorothy Sayers meets Hammer House of Horror and Dan Brown in North Wales, complete with drunken bard". The Pushkin Press edition is not the first English translation however – this was Lili Halápy's for the Corvina Press, Budapest in 1963.

Irene Radford's 2005 novel *Guardian of the Freedom* (DAW hardback 075640178X \$24.95) is the fifth book in her *Merlin's Descendants* series. In this series, you may be surprised to learn, members of the Pendragon Society are not only Merlin's descendants but also the magical guardians of Britain. The current Pendragon is Drake Kirkwood, the Earl of Kirkenwood and magical adviser to the Crown, but in *Guardian of the Freedom* it is the Age of the Enlightenment, and the Hanoverians don't believe in magic. Cue Georgina Kirkwood, the Pendragon's sister, a Mason and a British spy in America, whose role is to sort

¹ "Once and future reckoning" *Guardian Review* June 3 2006

things out.

In 2004 Barbara Tapa Lupack edited *Adapting the Arthurian Legends for Children* (Palgrave Macmillan), a volume with the unnecessary subtitle of *Essays on Arthurian Juvenilia* but which promises some good reading, according to an online review by Lory Hess.² Hess declares, though, that popular culture's development of the Arthurian legends has ranged "from the sublime to the ridiculous – the scale being rather heavily weighted to the latter". The essays on children's comics, poetry, music, plays, film, and so on reveal the depressing fact that the endless variations on the Arthurian theme "are mostly such drivel". In the face of much ephemera she is reassured to read of the achievements of British writers Rosemary Sutcliffe, T H White and Susan Cooper, for example, the last of whom is interviewed at length in this volume.³

A feature review on Arthurian titles in *The Times Literary Supplement* focused on two titles in the D S Brewer Arthurian Studies series and another pricey Arthurian tome. We have reviewed John B Marino's *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature* (2004) but a more recent Brewer title edited by Norris J Lacy is *The Fortunes of King Arthur* (231pp 1 84384 061 8 £45.00), dealing with the relationship between the king and the figure of Fortune in British, Welsh, French and Malorian contexts. Laurie A Finke and Martin B Shichtman, editors of *King Arthur and the Myth of History* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press 262pp 0 8130 2733 0 \$59.95), look at the legend at "key cultural moments" – such as a suggested 15th-century invasion of Scotland, the end of the civil wars of Stephen and Matilda's reigns, the Wars of the Roses and Nazi connections, both real and imagined.⁴

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

² <http://www.acadat.com/projects/ecclesiastical.htm>

³ Interviews by contributor Raymond H Thompson with Susan Cooper, Robert Holdstock, Mary Stewart, Jane Yolen and other Arthurian writers for young(ish) readers are available online in Thompson's "Tales in Successors: Interviews with Authors of Modern Arthurian Literature"

⁴ Carolyn Larrington "Cuckold and king" *TLS* May 26 2006

Pamela Harvey Ridgeway



He man, young to middle-aged, looked once again at the girl and her companion, an older woman he guessed might be her mother. He had wanted to speak to the young woman many times before this moment, as

they had waited for the bus here, but had not found an opportunity that was not too obvious.

Suddenly the mist which was rolling over the countryside seemed to thicken; in almost an instant they could only see a few yards. Elen shivered. Her mother remarked: "I'll write to London Transport – we must get to The Green Dragon before midnight!" The sarcasm in her tone was not echoed by a small, polite voice close to the back of the bus shelter. "The Green Dragon? Oh, I have a building named after me, or rather, after my own kind. How wonderful! Arthur will be so proud."

A thudding sound; a shadow crossed, unfolded out of the mist. Elen's mother shrieked. "Whatever's happening? Oh, they're not doing another remake of *Jurassic Park*? Oh – that must be it. But how lifelike..."

Elen went white, in her anxiety suddenly clinging to the young man next to her. He found this golden opportunity was not one to be missed. He was startled, but not too fazed. He had seen dinosaurs before, when these ancient beasts, descendants of even larger ones of an immemorial past, had visited Arthur's Court. He knew they resided still in Avalon, the Real World. The creature had materialised out of the mists that sometimes came with the opening of the Portal. He, Lancelot, had seen this before many times, but this was the first time since his own arrival in Avalon many years ago that he had been able to navigate the

magnetic currents separating the two areas of life, that mortals called the living and the dead. He would be back for only a short time, and he knew why. The time would soon be when these two dimensions would be quite often united again, or at least accessible to each other, as they were in the time when Arthur had reigned upon Earth.

Elen was slow to be comforted. "It's a real dinosaur," she hissed. Lancelot was soothing. "He won't hurt you – he only eats grass and leaves – he is a vegetarian."

"That's true," affirmed the huge animal.

"It speaks!" Elen's mother was intrigued.

"They do wonderful things these days. You can never believe what you see."

"Indeed," confirmed Lancelot. "And you can believe what you don't see, either!"

"Wh-what is your name?" whispered Elen to Lancelot. His calm demeanour at least was just beginning to comfort her.

"Lancelot du Lac," he said, "but you may call me Lance."

"That's French?" Elen's mother's eyes narrowed. Her expression said enough of her opinion of Frenchmen in particular that needed no phrasebook to interpret.

"Yes. *Oui*!"

"I think we should leave the European Union, or Common Market, as I prefer to call it."

"Mother!" Elen was trying not to be hysterical. "I don't think now is the time to be taking your favourite stance on the importance of all things British!"

"Oh, but I do agree on the importance of all things British," interpolated the dinosaur, in a serious tone. "My folks back in Avalon always say 'When Greeny gets on his soapbox about England's green and pleasant land he goes on for years – as long as the soapbox will stand his weight. But one's country is a weighty matter; but it is also in the context of a much wider world. A world we want to be fair and just, like it was back in the Jurassic Age, when we Dinosaurs, or Dragons, were the highest in Wisdom.'"

"It was a good picture!" reminisced the older woman. "How realistic! That long neck and tail! I just can't get over it. The marvels of modern technology."

Greeny intervened: "My ancestors were even bigger than me. You have nothing like them today, have you? Big and slow and

appearing when least expected?"

The sound of an engine was heard, coming closer but still muffled by the now dispersing mist.

"Yes, we have," Elen said, "The bus!"

Elen sipped her tea, still feeling half in a trance. Two hours had passed since she had left Lancelot, after the snatched kisses outside her front door, and the snatching of her own person from Lancelot's too eager arms by her mother.

"They're all the same, these Continentals!" she had said, pulling Elen through the door. But Lancelot had told her how another, much more important Portal would again open before she was very much older, and the quantum levels of Earth and the Universe would be slowly but surely revealed to everyone here, as they once were on the long ago prehistoric Earth.

"You live in a little box," Lancelot had said, "but all through this period of Earth-change, where you have noticed the symptom of Global Warming due to Man's irritation of Nature's condition, the box has been very slightly opening to this half-world you call Earth. Yes, there is a place here you call Avalon, but there is also the Avalon to which Arthur was taken to be healed of his wounds, and from which he is pledged to return. I am in the vanguard, and also I seek what is mine, from all Eternity."

"What about Guinevere?" Elen whispered.

"She, as you will know, is Arthur's Queen. But I still love her. But – for me perhaps there is another even greater love?"

"Yes," Elen murmured. "Oh, how you touch my heart."

"You touch anything more and I'll call the police," a voice in the hallway was saying angrily. "I'd have you know she is only sixteen!"

"But in the world of Faery where I first met you there is no real age," Lancelot whispered, before devouring Elen's lips in another passionate kiss.

Elen sipped her tea, crumbling a biscuit feverishly in her clenched fingers. She remembered, too, the final words of the Green Dragon before he evaporated into the mist around the Portal: You will inherit the Real World. And understand the Mysteries of Space-Time. This time tomorrow will be another day." *cs*

Recollections of the Old Knight

It is not as the world remembers
The concourse of Camelot,
But a court of light surrounded
By fields of forget-me-not;
And the master of the Hour
From whom the light was had
Shone at peak intensity
From the Grail Knight, Galahad.

In the deep and dismal darkness
Of a young and warring race
Came one who was self-mastered
To the mortal commonplace,
That the clear and holy brightness
Of soul might penetrate,
Revealing all men brothers
Held in high estate.

Briefly, his vital atoms
Pulsed in the lower sphere
To complete the task of Camelot,
Whose music still I hear.
It sings through the mouths of poets,
That Man even yet may rise
From the turmoil of time and battle
To the peace of Paradise.

Pamela Constantine



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