pendragon

XXXVI No 1

King of the Castle

Opera • Film • News

Editorial

Themes

This issue we focus on the line in the playground chant proclaiming the **King of the Castle**, binding together a range of contributions dealing with Kings (Henry VIII, Mark and of course Arthur himself) and Castles (Maiden Castles and Tintagel Castle). All the other usual features appear, including a lively letters page, with authorial responses to critical book reviews, making the critic, one supposes, the "dirty rascal" of the rhyme! Thanks are due to all the journal team for their often unsung work, and especially to Ian Brown for another of his fascinating cover illustrations, as always a feast for the eye!

Next issue the theme will be the Tolkien-sounding **Fellowship of the King**. This can be approached in two ways: one, a chance to celebrate all those lords and knights, ladies and damsels, who somehow don't often get a look-in in these pages; and, second, an opportunity to look back on fifty years of Pendragonry – the Society was founded back in 1959, since when a lot of water has flowed under the bridge!

People

We are sorry to have to announce the death of **Kate Pollard** in January 2009. She was made a Life Member in 1994 for her sterling work for the Society, and an appreciation appears this issue.

Chris Gidlow, best known as the author of the popular *The Reign of Arthur*, was a leading light in the Oxford University Arthurian Society, his first term as President (styled "Regent") being from 1986 to 1987. During the Regency of Sir Gawain (his *nom-de-guerre*) Geoffrey Ashe came to respond to the criticisms of his Tor Maze theory, with other speakers including academics Caroline Brett and Elspeth Kennedy, novelist Kathleen Herbert, the 'Gwent Arthur' theorists, Baram Blackett and Alan Wilson, and Nikolai Tolstoy. At present he is Live Interpretation Manager at Historic Royal Palaces (which include the Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace); his article is based on a lecture he gave at the Tower of London in November 2007.

Dave Burnham, who writes regularly and informatively for *Pendragon*, is Head of Information Services and a lead officer in the Adult and Community Services directorate at Lancashire County Council. Back in 1991 he appeared on TV in *Mastermind* with "The Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration 1827-1922" as his specialist subject. Though losing to the eventual champion he did reach the semi-final as one of the four best runners-up.

Nathan Ashton's many roles include that of audio post-production engineer, world traveller and storyteller; he holds two degrees and an audio industry certificate, and has worked with clients in the US and abroad.

Steve Sneyd's childhood was spent in both England and the United States, the frequent moves providing him with an outsider's perspective of two cultures more often separated than united by a common language. In addition to his own work, he has supported genre poetry in general, and his Hilltop Press publishes both science fiction and fantasy poetry. ☙

LATE NEWS

"Bomb disposal teams were called in and buildings evacuated after workmen mistook a Monty Python film prop for a hand grenade," reported the *Daily Telegraph* recently.

Engineers from a water company spotted it after lifting up a fire hydrant cover during work in Shoreditch, east London. The road was cordoned off and nearby pub *The Windmill* was evacuated, but bomb disposal experts soon realised that the cause of the scare was a copy of the **Holy Hand Grenade of Antioch** from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, used by Eric Idle to defeat the killer rabbit in the 1975 film: "the fictional weapon looks more like a golden ornament than a hand grenade; it was based on the Sovereign's Orb used at royal coronations." The owner of *The Windmill* complained that he had lost a good hour's worth of business, but he may in fact gain from the worldwide publicity generated.[1]

[1] Matthew Moore "Pub evacuated after Monty Python prop mistaken for grenade" *Telegraph* March 19 2009

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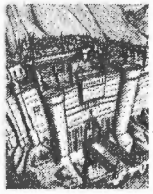

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Pen Dragon

Letters to the Editor

Rossetti *Jane Burden*

GUIN – NEVER? EE!

The arrival of *Pendragon XXXV* No 4 reminded me that I'd failed to develop a thought I'd had for the Guinevere-themed issue, mainly due to a combination of unfortunate circumstances in the second half of 2008.

Guinevere stands outside the threefold female archetypal Maid-Mother-Crone cycle which so often features in discussions of women characters in myths and legends, since while starting off in the first class, she then moved into a class of her own, the Barren Woman, so never reached either of the second two. Arthur and Lancelot both fathered children by other women, but Guinevere remained childless (or, as Sonja Strode noted, *eg* page 11, supposedly childless).

It seems curious to me this point remained undeveloped, indeed seemingly was ignored, in the main medieval Arthurian texts. In Christian belief, as with other religions stemming from similar Near-Eastern origins, barrenness in a woman was typically regarded as somewhere between an embarrassment and a divine punishment (*eg* Genesis 16), so this might have been something to draw attention to. Then again, Arthur's lack of a legitimate heir helped increase the doom-laden atmosphere of his later reign, and stressed the uniqueness of his time, even if the point was commonly understated. Could this also have contributed to Guinevere's eventual retreat from the world into a convent, as some authors suggested?

Alastair McBeath, Morpeth, Northumberland

Thanks very much for sending [the latest issue of *Pendragon*]. In fact, I have been feeling guilty about receiving *Pendragon* "in exchange for" *The Round Table*—since we haven't produced a *Round Table* or a collection of verse or fiction under the Round Table imprint for a few years. I do enjoy reading *Pendragon* and I commend you and the others who have produced and continue to produce a journal with so much information, not to mention the poetry and artwork.

Alan Lupack, University of Rochester NY

• *Professor Lupack, as well as being a distinguished Arthurian scholar (he was President of the International Arthurian Society, North American Branch from 1999 to 2001), is Adjunct Professor of English and* Director *of the Rossell Hope Robbins Library at the University of Rochester, NY. Editor of* The Round Table: a Journal of Poetry and Fiction *since 1984, he is also an accomplished poet and writer of fiction. His authoritative* Oxford Guide to Arthurian Legend and Literature *was reviewed last issue.*

Thanks ever so much for the latest fine and fascinating edition of *Pendragon*, as always chock-full of excellent research and erudition, especially with regards to literature and attitudes towards Guinevere across the generations; and [the] discussion in "Life Imitating Art?" is both most interesting and quite poignant.

It was good to enjoy the continuation of the late (and much missed) Professor Russell's feature review. The detailed research and clarity of his writing has always helped to bring *Pendragon* to life, and things just won't be the same without him. Thanks, by the way, for including my little poem, "Call to

Avalon" – it was just another of those scribblings that popped into my mind in the wee small hours of the morning, and I had to jot it down; so I'm chuffed to see it amidst the fine pages of *Pendragon*.

And, speaking of fine things, Simon's illustrations continue to be a real delight. I'll always admire his incredibly intricate Celtic designs, but, at the same time, his more spontaneous naturalistic style is so vivid and vital; and his Guinevere is certainly most striking! Anyway, I just wanted to say a quick thanks for yet another delightful edition of the journal that brings a highlight to each season.

Ian Brown, Ormesby, Middlesbrough

Thank you for *Pendragon XXXV* No 4 – excellent as always!

Laurence Main, Dinas Mawddwy, Wales

As always ["Guineveres" was] a very interesting issue, and Geoff Roberts' Rhiannon poem was particularly lovely, a pre-Raphaelite painting in words. A tiny footnote to the mention of the Italian obsession with Merlin [in Bill Russell's feature review] – I recently read a review of a publication by Harvard University Press of the first translation into English of dubious 16th-century Italian monk Teofilo Folengo's mock epic poem *Baldo* which mentioned that Folengo used as his pen name Merlinus Coccaius (the latter word presumably rude!).

Steve Sneyd, Almondbury, Huddersfield

• *The* Baldo *epic was apparently one of Rabelais' models, and a fictitious work by Merlin Coccaius,* De patria diabolorum *("The land of devils"), was one of the invented or imaginary books mentioned or discussed by characters in* Gargantua and Pantagruel. *The first English translation was published in 2007 by Ann E Mullaney as part of Harvard UP's* I Tatti Renaissance Library.

PENDRAGON THE DVD

Pendragon, Sword of His Father is now available on DVD ($18 I believe). It is also available for download ($10). The Signature Symphony here in Tulsa, OK, will perform the music that I wrote for the original *Pendragon* trailer two years ago. It is very exciting! They will perform it during their film music concert Feb 13th and 14th.

The Burns Family Studios has been contacted by a company interested in helping with distribution but nothing is decided yet. I hope that happens. They truly did a wonderful job with the film. They had over 350 volunteers and it was amazing to see all of those names scroll by. They also had some really nice special effects. And the sound – the sound was just fantastic! To tell the truth I am very proud of [husband] Nathan. The sound was recreated from bottom up as they did not keep ANY of the original sound. Not even any of the dialogue.

Some fun news is that I ended up working on the score after all. They contacted me late summer and told me that while they wanted to score it themselves they realized they would not have the time to finish it within the timeframe they wanted to so they were looking for orchestrators. I was one of four orchestrators working on the film. Aaron and Marilyn Burns wrote the themes and would send us the melody and a basic idea of chording and instrumentation. Then we would write it for orchestra and make a realistic MIDI playback that worked with the picture. I orchestrated about half of the music for the film. It was a lot of work but very rewarding.

Lydia Ashton, Tulsa, Oklahoma

• *Nathan Ashton's fascinating article on creating the soundscape for the movie is elsewhere in this issue.*

STORYBOOK CORNUCOPIA

To list everything of merit in "Storybook" [*XXXV* No 3] would take too long, as everything was of the best quality, from the latest news to the freshest fiction, taking us into the Otherworld via "Coventina's Well", to such a delightful twist in "What You Seek" (I've noticed a talent for spinning a very believable yarn in the past: [the] encounter with Arthur on the slopes of Etna and the subsequent butterfly on your hand, for example, if memory serves me correctly), and, well, Steve Sneyd has excelled with his gripping and chilling "Perhaps the Answer is also the Question". In the tradition of the best Victorian gothic horrors, he created a sense of doom and trepidation right from the beginning: that mixture of irresistibly morbid curiosity and a sense of willing the hero

of the tale to turn back at every step. And what a splendidly dark version of Merlin in his stone prison! Such a tale could easily stand up alongside Stoker, Shelley or Poe. Then we have the gentle humanitarian message of Pamela Constantine's "What Dragons Do" followed by her captivating and stirring poem "Conjuration" and, well, the list goes on.

Again, to note every treasure in this edition would simply take too long: omitting anyone here is only for the sake of time and space, and one can only hope that everyone who contributed will happily do the same, again and again, because "Storybook" in its facts and fiction, from the letters onwards (and even before) is a real gem of a treasure trove. Well, I enjoyed it, anyway. Thanks for a cornucopia of ripping yarns!

Ian Brown, Ormesby, Middlesbrough

• *It's good to know when an issue is appreciated! Especially in view of Ian's fine cover illustration for the "Storybook" issue. D J Tyrer in reviewzine* **The Supplement 43** *(November 2008) comments on "Storybook" that "as ever there are lively letters of comment and a pack of fascinating reviews"; he adds that "in some ways [this is] a somewhat 'lightweight' issue of the 'zine, as it has little actual research, but, as a change of pace, and as a look at an important subsection of Arthuriana, it is a worthwhile one," continuing that he would highly recommend the journal to anyone with an interest in the myth of King Arthur and the history of 'Dark Ages' Britain. See Reviews for an overview of* **Grail 2.**

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Sincere thanks for sending me the copy of the Journal, Summer 2008. Your review of my *King Arthur & Britannia AD 495* on page 46 has been studied with interest. The date of AD 495 is as firm as can be expected, plus or minus a year. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* offer corroboration.

You have engaged a number of multi-syllabic words to examine my article. I should point out my work is only part of a PhD thesis, my title earned and granted by my (local) Monash University. You should know the bubonic plague pandemic of AD 535 is well documented; it undoubtedly had a serious effect on the native population of Britain, halving the closely settled urban style population on Romano-Celtic establishments. The Saxons on the other hand led a dispersed life style on farms and were far less likely to suffer a contact contagion.

For that reason alone, King Alfred (of the cakes) was able to call on the written records of Anglo-Saxon life between AD 550 and 800 to form the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, whereas learned Britons had died of the disease during the AD 540's. After Gildas AD 545, records are extremely sparse until Nennius assembled the known records in a heap in the last decade of the eighth century. Thus the historic Dark Ages of British life only began after Gildas, long after King Arthur and the Battle of Badon. May I recommend you re-think your critique linkages in my piece.

Overall, in each of the five reviews, pages 45-47, I detect a common theme. Degrees of severity in pouring cold water on the author's efforts are seen. May I suggest a somewhat lighter treatment of your contributors, otherwise those sources will dry up and your readership reduces their input.

Neil L Thomas, Mount Waverley, Australia

I thank the *Pendragon* journal for providing a review for my book *Shadows in the Mist: the Life and Death of King Arthur*. As there were, however, significant inaccuracies in the statements made in the review, I regret that I must very briefly attempt to set the record straight.

Firstly, I did not establish my case against a West Country Arthur based solely on Geoffrey of Monmouth. I based it on a lack of viable sites in the West Country, and a lack of other supporting evidence. I also most certainly did not propose Arthur of Dalriada as the chief candidate for the Arthur of Nennius's battle list, etc. As made perfectly clear on pp 38-46, I present "my Arthur" as a man from the Carvetii region, with his center at Stanwix and/or Carlisle, and a pedigree that links him to Cynfarch son of Merchiawn.

The battles as I've situated them are located all the way from Buxton in the south to near the Firth of Forth in the north; I do not, as the reviewer contends, place most of the battles in north-west

England (in fact, except for Camlann, NONE were fought in north-west England). I include totally new identifications for the Dubglas, Bassas, Tribruit and Badon battles in my book, and in an online article have confirmed the identification of Agned not with Bremenium, but with Catterick.

Lastly, my "inclusion of anachronistic High Medieval material – Excalibur, the Sword in the Stone, Camelot – and mythological motifs and characters – Avalon, Morgan le Fay and Uther" was not included to make my argument for a historical Arthur more "persuasive". To anyone who reads my treatments of these places, personages or items, it should be obvious that I attempt to explain their origins based on earlier prototypes or motifs, themselves often non-factual or folkloristic in nature and first found in sources predating the romances.

Of the lack of index I must also proclaim innocence, as that and the poor print quality were decisions of the publisher. I'm not sure what book the reviewer read, but it would not seem to be mine!

August Hunt via email

• *The American writer H L Mencken is quoted as having said that "criticism is prejudice made plausible," and as the reviewer of the Arthurian titles by Neil Thomas and August Hunt I admit to displaying some prejudices, though clearly for the authors these were no way made plausible! However, I stand by my assessments, though with a couple of reservations, which I refer to below.*

Despite promptings, I have not been able to establish from Neil Thomas what his PhD was in, though I suspect it was not for history, archaeology or medieval literature. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle *doesn't offer any corroboration for the date of Badon, other than possibly suggesting there might have been a hiatus in Saxon immigration at around the time Badon is traditionally set. There is no clear evidence of "a closely settled urban style population" in mid-6h century Britain, and any such population would have been small compared with a rural population. His bibliography does not cite up to the date academic research, and he is clearly unhappy with any sort of peer-review.*

August Hunt is only partly correct: I said that "Hunt sets up the case against a West Country Arthur, based on Geoffrey of Monmouth," which is not the same as saying "solely based on Geoffrey," though I can see that this might be ambiguous. I accept however that I was wrong to suggest that Hunt "proposes ... an Arthur of Dalriada" which he certainly didn't do; this was due to rushed editing of my own notes. What Hunt actually suggests is (page 57) that Arthur's line of descent can be "traced to royal Northern ancestors who had ties with both Strathclyde and Irish-founded Dalriada".

The same applies to my assertion that Hunt places "Arthur's centre of operations in Cumbria, in north-west England, where he then locates most of Arthur's traditional battles". This too is ambiguously phrased: what I should have said is the range of Arthur's battles (as Hunt's map on page 60 makes clear) spread north to the Firth of Forth and south to the Peak District, almost equidistant from a centre of operations in modern-day Cumbria.

Finally, Hunt's attempt to explain what I call anachronistic and mythological material later attaching to the Arthurian legends is, I believe, irrelevant to the assumed reality of an Arthur figure. It doesn't matter that Excalibur, the Sword in the Stone, Camelot, Avalon and Morgan le Fay may have ancient Celtic roots in considering the evidence for an historical King Arthur; the fact is that the connections were made several centuries after. This material really deserves a place in a book of its own, not in an historical study.

In a later response August writes, "I regret if my criticisms of your review came across as being overly harsh, but felt I need to say something." Quite right, too, especially if you were being misquoted!

The alternate propositions are that Arthur was either euhemerised (a flesh-and-blood hero made into a god) or that a Celtic god was "historicised" (rather as Woden was in Anglo-Saxon genealogies):

It's only because Roman historians gave in Latin form [Arminius] the name of the German leader who defeated the Roman army at the Teutoburger Wald (and caused Augustus to supposedly cry out "Give me back my legions") that the Saxon divine figure Irmin, who gave Ermine Street its name, can be identified as originally a real person before being apotheosised and worshipped at the Irminsul shrine that Charlemagne destroyed... ***Continued page 24***

King Arthur and King Henry

Chris Gidlow

King Arthur, Maximilian's tomb, Innsbruck; designed by Dürer, cast by Peter Vischer 1513

Arguably, the two most famous kings of England are King Henry VIII and King Arthur. Ironically, it was in the reign of the former that the balance of scholarly opinion tilted decisively against the idea that King Arthur had been real at all.

At the end of July 1483, in response to public demand from 'many noble and divers gentlemen of this royame of England', Caxton published the *Morte Darthur*, using translations and adaptations of the Arthurian legends made 12 years earlier by Sir Thomas Malory.

It told the story of Arthur, according to it a fifth century King of Britain, his conquests, the exploits of his knights and hs death.

By happy coincidence the work became exceedingly topical when, less than a month later, as prophesied by Merlin, Henry Tudor arrived at Milford Haven bearing the banner of Cadwallader and claiming descent from the ancient British Kings. A year later there was a new Arthur, Prince of Wales, a potential king Arthur II. The book stayed in print, being reissued in a deluxe illustrated edition by Caxton's successor, Wynken de Worde.

But was it true? Caxton professed scepticism himself 'divers men hold opinion that there was no such Arthur and that all such books as been made of him be but fained and fables, because that some chronicles make of him no mention ne remember him nothing'. English humanist writers had begun voicing doubts as early as 1435, based on growing respect for continental late classical sources which did not seem to confirm the legendary accounts.

Caxton's 'gentlemen' including 'one in special', usually assumed to be Arthurian enthusiast Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers, argued that Arthur's existence was supported by ancient chronicles. Moreover there was much physical evidence to confirm his existence: 'frst ye may see his sepulture in the monastery of Glastonbury ... in the abbey of westminster, at st Edward's shrine, remaineth the print of his seal in red wax, closed in beryl ... in the castle of Dover ye may see Gawain's skul and Cradok's mantle, at Winchester, the Round Table, in other places Lancelot's sword and many other things ... in Wales, in the town of Camelot, the great stones and marvellous works of iron lying under ground, and royal vaults whch divers now living hath seen'.

In the book itself, Thomas Malory had also taken pains to stress that the action took place in the real England, not in a mythical neverland as might be concluded from the French sources. He offered modern equivalents of the

Romance Place names, Camelot was Winchester, Lancelot's Castle Joyous Garde was Alnwick or Bamborough, Astolat was Guildford.

Henry Tudor, now King Henry VII, threw himself eagerly into the Arthurian milieu. His son Arthur was born and christened in Winchester/Camelot. Of his christening Tudor chronicler Edward Hall wrote 'Englishmen no more rejoiced than outwards nations and foreign princes trembled and quaked, so much was that name of all nations terrible and formidable.'

'Arthur II' never made the throne, dying before his father. The Arthurian cult, however, remained alive and continued to be patronised by his brother, King Henry VIII.

It was probably in Henry's reign that the Round Table in Winchester was painted in Tudor livery. It is just conceivable that it had already been painted in this way, for Arthur's christening. It might have been painted for Henry's visit to the city in 1516, but most likely it was done on the occasion of the joint visit with Emperor Charles V in 1522. Charles was given a grand tour, including Hampton Court Palace, but culminating in Winchester Great Hall, beneath the Round Table itself. Charles' family were Arthurian enthusiasts too. His grandfather and predecessor, Maximillian, had a statute of Arthur on his tomb.

Henry had used Arthur as a figure painting in the pageantry of the Field of Cloth of Gold two years earlier. An attendee took the inference correctly, describing Henry as 'the noblest and most famous prince since Arthur'.

Later that same year, when Henry met Charles at Calais, the entrance was adorned with a life-size sculpture of King Arthur holding a sceptre and Round Table, with the caption 'I, King Arthur, head of the table round; principal leader of all valorous hearts...'

Not all Arthurian enthusiasm was royal sponsored. In 1543 a society of Archers was founded, a sort of Tudor re-enactment group with Arthurian names and coast of arms, which met annually to 'celebrate the renowned memory of the magnificent King Arthur'.

All that was needed was a proper modern historian to prove once and for all that King Arthur had lived and reigned in ancient England.

Polydore Vergil

Vergil and Leland

Polydore Vergil was born in Urbino, in Italy around the year 1472. He arrived in England in 1502, as a collector of the papal tax called Peter's Pence. He had written a book 'on the Inventors of Things' in the new, humanist style, including criticism of sources and avoidance of legendary material. Henry VII appointed him to write the *Anglica Historia*. He became archdeacon of Wells, was naturalised as English, and was imprisoned briefly for offending Cardinal Wolsey.

This first step was to track down an authentic manuscript from Arthur's time, *On the destruction of Britain* by Gildas. Vergil and Robert Ridley, chaplain to the Bishop of London, produced in 1525 an edition from two manuscripts. They proved that Gildas had not written other legendary material attributed to him, notably the *Historia Brittonum*. They showed that Gildas confirmed the basic framework of the legendary history, with the Saxon invasion and the Battle of Mount Badon, but that he had said nothing about Arthur.

This was to be the tenor of Polydore Vergil's approach. His *Anglica Historia* came out eventually in 1534 and

basically demonstrated that there was no evidence of a historical King Arthur at all, still less one who had conquered extensive continental realms and bested the Roman Emperor. He castigated Geoffrey of Monmouth as 'feigning of the Britons things to be laughed at ... with most impudent lying, taking unto him both the colour of Latin speech and the honest pretext of history'. His was not a lone voice: Robert Fabian in 1516 had doubted Arthur's campaigns in France, and John Rastell in 1529 had examined Arthur's seal at Westminster and found it wanting. But for an Italian to write such things was intolerable.

To the rescue came John Leland. In 1536 he published his pamphlet *Codrus*. Meaning a 'conceited or arrogant person', it praised and defended of Geoffrey of Monmouth against Polydore Vergil. Leland described Vergil as 'contrary to truth and filled with Italian bitterness. I know not whether to be smile or to be angry.'

John Leland was a much younger man, lest we see the conflict between humanist young turks and medievalist old fogies. He was born at the time of Vergil's first arrival in the country, in 1503. He was educated at Oxford, Cambridge and Paris and served as a tutor in the household of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk in Lambeth until the duke's death in 1524. After pursuing his studies in Paris he returned, look religious orders and became a royal librarian in 1533. He described himself as an 'Antiquarian'.

Henry VIII established three libraries devoted to the collection of ancient texts, at Westminster, Greenwich and Hampton Court. Leland was part of a small staff which operated across all three sites. He was given a royal commission to search the libraries of the country for lost and forgotten works. He described his work as 'to peruse and diligently to search all the libraries of monasteries and colleges of your noble realm, to the intent that the monuments of ancient writers as well of other nations as of your own province might be brought out of deadly darkness to lovely light.'

Leland's descriptions of his travels, the *Itineraries*, are one of the glories of Tudor writing. He notes everything and is often the first person to leave a written record of a particular site. He is an opinionated, patriotic and pro-Tudor writer. Sometimes he seems too credulous. His self-appointed mission 'to expel the crafty coloured doctrine of a rout of Roman Bishops' led him to 'cut and raze' a line he read in a tablet in York Minster saying that a king 'took this kingdom of the Pope by tribute to hold of the Church of Rome'.

He visited Arthurian sites, including Winchester and Caerleon. He reported for the first time the tradition that South Cadbury hill fort was the real Camelot. He described the seal in Westminster Abbey as cracked with age, protected by a silver mount and crystal cover. 'Such and so great is both the antiquity and also the majesty of the thing, neither surely is there apparent (that I do know of) which more evidently approveth that Arthur was living than the same seal doth.'

At Dover he was shown Arthur's Hall, Guinevere's bedchamber, Gawain's gigantic bones and was told that they had Craddock's mantle. It is worth noting that the site of Gawain's death had changed through the Middle Ages as the prime place for a seaborne invasion altered. It had first been put at Ross in Pembrokeshire, right by Milford Haven where Henry Tudor landed. Geoffrey of Monmouth had chosen the Roman port of Richborough, 14th-century writers had opted for Southampton before Dover was settled on.

Noting the Round Table at Winchester, Leland commented that 'neither the memory nor fellowship of the round troop of knights as yet falls out of noblemen's minds in the latter age of the world.'

He arrived at Glastonbury late in the day and intending to rest, but the aged Abbot, Richard Whiting, showed him to the library. 'It contained, I suppose, the richest collection in Britain of books on our church history, the mere sight of this incredible series of most ancient books inspired me, and for a while I stood lost in wonder on the threshold. I spent days examining the shelves.'

He uncovered a chronicle by John of Glastonbury, giving details of Arthur's burial at Glastonbury, and by Adam of Domerham describing how the bodies of

Arthur and Guinevere had been discovered at Glastonbury in 1190. He held and examined the foot-long leaden cross which had identified the burial and, of course, visited the black marble tomb in which the king and queen had been re-interred by Edward I and Eleanor of Castile. Another 9th-century history pointed to the authenticity of religious relics owned by Arthur in Wedale Abbey. And a charter from St Patrick, giving blessings to pilgrims who helped clear the Tor of trees, confirmed the antiquity of the abbey.

Leland wrote to the Vicar General, Thomas Cromwell, expressing his disquiet that German scholars had been raiding the library for materials relating to their own history. Cromwell had other interests in the Abbey. Although Whiting had never made any waves, had signed up to the royal supremacy and continued to sit in the House of Lords, his days and those of his wealthy abbey were numbered. It was the last one still undissolved in Somerset, one of the last twenty in the country, and its income of £3,301 a year was tempting.

Whiting was tried on charges of hiding treasure for his own purposes and to deceive the commissioners. This might have been true. By 1539 488 undisclosed valuable items had been uncovered including a gold chalice. The trial, however, was commuted to that of treason, with unsubstantiated charges that Whiting had supported the Pilgrimage of Grace. Found guilty, he was hanged on Glastonbury Tor and his Abbey dissolved.

When Leland returned a few years later he never mentioned the Abbey at all. The Library, the tomb and, by the end of the century, the cross were all gone.

The dissolution of the monasteries and the religious turmoil it typified tolled the death knell for many of the Arthurian relics. Sometimes this was done out of macabre humour. A life-size statue of St Derfel Gadarn (narrator of Bernard Cornwell's Arthurian trilogy and one of the few survivors of Arthur's last battle at Camlan) was dragged from its church in Wales as an object of superstitious veneration. An ancient prophecy claimed that one day Derfel would set a forest on fire. As luck would have it, Catherine of Aragon's confessor, the observant Franciscan John Forest was due to be burned at Smithfield so the saint's effigy was added to the pyre.

Armed with all the material he had gathered, Leland composed his *Assertion of the most famous King Arthur of Britain* in 1544. These relics were surely proof enough. Gildas was a calumniator of the Britons, and besides which did not name many people known to have existed.

The argument was rambling and largely incoherent, however, no real match for Polydore Vergil. Relying on the now suspect relics of monasteries would not necessarily win more converts, either.

Leland, in a literary flight of fancy, once literally composed a 'swan's song'. Figuratively, though, the *Assertion* was to be his own. He resumed his travels in 1546, intending to compile his own history of England. In 1550 he was certified insane and committed to the care of his brother. By 1552 he was dead.

Polydore Vergil never believed Leland had all the books he claimed. John Caius of Cambridge, who knew Leland well, confessed that, though learned, he was a boaster and his claims to ancient knowledge should be accepted with caution. Another chronicler wrote, 'I do fear he was vainglorious.'

Vergil was left holding the field. In Mary's reign he returned home to Urbino where he died, aged over 80, in 1555.

Vergil's historical method, coupled with the disappearance of most of the Arthurian relics – the seal was the last to go, still visible in the early 17th century – destroyed the view of Arthur as a historical figure. The tales remained, however, valued as allegories of chivalry and a bygone, glorious past. ☙

Tristan, Isolde, and the importance of having a pet: what Wagner did for the age-old tale of love and death

Dave Burnham

The sad tale of Tristan and Isolde has been a staple of the fireside for 900 years and the pattern of the tale remained more or less the same for most of that time.[1] Although Wagner's music drama, first performed in 1865, follows mediaeval sources closely he offered as well something entirely new; his work being regarded as one of the harbingers of the 'modern' in art. I want to look at the origins of the tale and what Wagner did with it, what influence it had and what I think of it. I'll start with the tale as Wagner wrote it. First of all there is a significant 'back story'.

The Narrative

Tristan, orphaned, has been brought up by King Marke of Cornwall, his uncle. Tristan has proved himself in war with Ireland. This conflict was resolved when an Irish hero, Morold, crossed the sea and Tristan had killed him in single combat. Tristan returned his head to Isolde, the Queen of Ireland's daughter, and Morold's betrothed. But Tristan had been badly injured and fetched up on the Irish coast, being found by Isolde. She tends his wounds, as she, like her mother is a great healer. He, out of caution, tells her his name is 'Tantris'. As she bathes him she sees a nick in his sword identical to the piece of steel embedded in Morold's head. She picks up the sword intent on killing Tristan. But he looks at her, gazes at her and she is transfixed, enchanted by this man and lets the sword fall. The look has transformed Tristan too. Tristan recovers and returns to Cornwall swearing eternal devotion. Yet when he returns to Cornwall conscious of the guilt he feels for killing Morold, he offers to go back to Ireland as Marke's representative to seek Isolde's hand for the king.

Act One opens on the ship in which Tristan is escorting her to Cornwall for the marriage. He refuses to see her. This enrages Isolde especially as Kurvenal, Tristan's man, is roundly disparaging Morold. Isolde tells her secret to her maid Brangaene and decides to offer a death potion they are carrying with them to Tristan and die with him. Brangaene, a canny woman, suggests that Tristan is fed a love potion to bind him to her. But no, death is the only solution for Isolde. Isolde tells Tristan that she will refuse to leave the ship unless he atones for killing Morold, offering him the 'draught of atonement'. He knows it's poison, but his honour demands he drinks it. Once Tristan has drunk, she grabs the cup and drinks too. But Brangaene has switched draughts and it is the love potion they have both taken. It works, but the knowledge that they had both been willing to die for the other is the real binding between them. Their love, they know, is eternal. The ship docks and King Marke is waiting for his bride.

In Act Two while Marke is away at night the lovers swear their love is too great for the cares of the world and will outlast death, which both suggest is what they want. Brangaene meanwhile is trying to warn the oblivious pair that they have been betrayed by Melot, one of Tristan's men. Marke returns and, bewildered, asks Tristan to account for his behaviour. Tristan knows his sin can only merit death and asks Isolde if she will die with him. She agrees. Tristan accuses Melot of treachery, but lets his sword drop for Melot to wound him when they square up to each other.

In the final act Tristan has been brought back to Brittany still wounded. When Tristan is told that Kurvenal has sent for Isolde, he becomes delirious imagining the ship hoving into sight. When the ship does arrive Tristan staggers to his feet and removes his bandage, dying in Isolde's arms once she arrives. Then another ship arrives with Melot, King Marke and Brangaene. Kurvenal thinks Marke has come to visit more infamy on Tristan, attacks and slays Melot and attacks Marke and his men, dying in the process. But Marke reveals that Brangaene told him the secret of the potion, and has decided to free Isolde from the marriage. Brangaene tells Isolde this good news. Isolde is oblivious and can only see Tristan's body. She contemplates his death and considers life, the great universe, the breaking wave of existence. Whatever future she might have had, she chooses 'sweet bliss' and decides *to sink, to drown in the vast wave of the world's breath* and dies. The final stage direction, *King Marke blesses the bodies* confirms that she is dead and not just in a swoon.

The twelfth-century core

Early, written versions of *Tristan and Isolde* appeared in that extraordinary period of creativity the twelfth century, the earliest known being by the Frenchman, Beroul, and then Eilhart von Oberge. A slightly later version by Thomas d'Angleterre is, like the earlier two, incomplete, but seems to have been the basis of a much more comprehensive version, that of Gottfried von Strassburg, which Wagner used as his starting point[2]. Gottfried's tale gives the following 'back' story:

Tristan is conceived on his father's (Rivalin) deathbed and his mother (Blancheflour – Marke's sister) dies in childbirth. Rivalin is King of Lyonesse. The boy is named Tristan for the tragedy of his circumstances. He is fostered, as all heroes are, but is kidnapped by Norwegians. He is a prodigy of chess, linguistic skill, hunting lore and all courtly skills. The Norwegians try and sell him, as he is so valuable, but he is shipwrecked and ends in King Mark's court, where again he impresses with his 'courtwiseness'; so much so he is taken on as Mark's favourite. Neither Marke nor Tristan realise the connection at first. The meeting of Isolde is much the same as in Wagner. Gottfried has Tristan visit Ireland twice, the first time with the wound, the second to woo Isolde on Marke's behalf. On that second occasion Tristan is set the task of killing a dragon which he does, intending to use this useful act as the pitch for Isolde's hand for Mark. However the Irish King's seneschal steals the dragon's head and claims that he killed the dragon. Tristan meanwhile has been overcome by the pestrous fumes of the dragon and is lying in a faint next to the headless body. Isolde, who else, revives him and finds the dragon's tongue about his person. Possession of the dragon's tongue trounces the lying senechal's ploy and seals the deal. But the primary difference between Gottfried and Wagner's narrative is that in Gottfried there is no hint of love between Tristan and Isolde before the drinking of the potion, the drinking of which is pure fluke. The couple are thirsty on board ship and an unknowing maid servant gives them the potion. The power of the potion is undeniable and lasts four years.

We know that Gottfried and his contemporaries had many classical texts to draw from, Biblical tales and access to Islamic and Persian literature via the borderlands between Christian Europe and Islam – Outremer, Sicily, Spain and North Africa. Much of this earlier or 'pagan' literature does not reflect the sexual mores of the mediaeval Christian Church, so Gottfried with his fusion of the classical ideal of the purity of love with contemporary courtly expectations and his implicit criticisms of Christian expectations of chastity, loyalty and obedience was skating on thin ice. Any sympathy for the lovers elicited by the tale could not be crowned with a 'happy' ending. Gottfried's version has 19,000

[1] I have not offered full references for Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, CDs or DVDs. There are many versions and they are easy to find.

[2] Mediaeval background can be found in both Norris J Lacy's *Arthurian Encyclopedia* (Boydell 1986) and Willem Gerritsen and Anthony van Melle's *A Dictionary of Mediaeval Heroes* (Boydell 1998).

lines and is unfinished, but it could not end other than with the couple's death – even though their adultery is due to the potion.

If Gottfried did not finish his tale hundreds of others in succeeding centuries did. Several events appear regularly including:

1. Morold comes to Cornwall after Marke refuses to offer the annual tribute of young people as slaves to the Irish – demanded in a previous peace treaty.
2. Tristan goes back to Ireland to woo Isolde in response to the suggestion of courtiers who wanted to make sure he did not become King. He could not refuse to go lest it be thought he was lining himself up to be next king.
3. On the wedding night Isolde gets Brangaene to pretend to be her in Marke's bed so he will not know Isolde is not a 'maid'.
4. Tristan and Isolde carry on a clandestine affair thereafter and are banished from court and live for a time in a lover's cave.
5. Returning to court, they are eventually discovered in bed together and both doomed to die. Tristan escapes and Isolde's virtue is subsequently 'proved' by…
6. … a fascinating ordeal that Isolde had to undertake after Tristan has been banished. The ordeal was to hold a burning bar of iron – consequent burnt skin 'proving' guilt, unblemished hands, God's verdict of innocence. On her way to the ordeal Tristan, dressed as a beggar, asks for alms. She offers some money and on turning her dresses become entangled in Tristan's legs and they end up on the ground in an ungainly embrace. She carries on and when the question is put, 'who have you lain with?' she answered, 'Mark my husband only', and adds jokingly, 'and that beggar over there'. God allows her to hold the iron bar unscathed. This is from Gottfried and has been interpreted as commenting on how fickle God can be when he chooses.
7. In the end Tristan retreats to Britanny and becomes a favourite of King Hoel. Tristan marries Hoel's daughter, 'Isolde of the White Hands' – although the marriage is not consummated. She is so irritated by this she complains when water splashes on her thighs that it is bolder than her husband.
8. Tristan is wounded yet again and sends for 'Isolde the Fair' one last time, pining and dying from a poisoned wound. The ship he sent for her on its return is to hoist white sails if she is aboard but black ones if not. She comes, with a curative potion, but on the ship's approach the jealous Isolde of the White Hands tells Tristan that the sails are black. He dies. Isolde arrives and she too dies.

The emphasis varies in the many tellings. Beroul and Eilhart concentrate on the tragedy of the couple caught up in a passion which means they breach every rule in the book: religious, chivalric, family and 'national' honour. The love is seen as disruptive, threatening the norms of society. The resolution had to be their death – a reassertion of the proper order of things. Gottfried offers more sympathy to the couple and less to their society. In Gottfried for instance Mark is a weakling surrounded by cowards in his court – a society therefore not worth serving. But in the early fourteenth century Dante deals roughly with the lovers and has them in the fifth circle of his *Inferno* with other illicit lovers: Dido, Cleopatra, Helen, Paris, Achilles.

Malory, writing around 1465, has 300 years' worth of Tristan and Isolde tales to draw from. His 'Tristram' is second only to Lancelot among the Round Table knights. He goes to Ireland to fetch 'La Belle Isoud' for Mark and the potion is drunk so there is no shame in their subsequent, frequent couplings. Except of course, compared with the pain suffered by the couple in Gottfried's version Malory has Tristram play fast and loose with Isoud's affections. He has other women after rescuing them (the usual reward for rescuing damsels) and marries 'Isoud of the White Hands' in Brittanny. Malory also plays some of the tale for laughs. Read about the testing of Isolde's Chastity by use of the 'testing horn'[3]. Tennyson, in *Idylls of the King*, reverts to the name Tristan and again has

[3] Thomas Malory *Le Morte D'Arthur* (Cassell 2000) Book VIII, Chapter XXXIV.

him as second in valour and skill only to Lancelot. Although the beginning of the romance is mentioned, most of what Tennyson dwells on is the continuing affair conducted at Camelot, Brittany, in the woods, all over the place. Mark is presented as a thoroughly bad lot. Tristan, after ending the affair once, changes his mind and returns to Mark's castle, convinced of his love for Isolde the Fair, and finally convinces her of his 'fidelity'. At this point Mark creeps up behind him and cleaves his brain in two. Tennyson was a Victorian after all and could not really allow the adulterous lovers their cake and their ha'penny, no matter how unpleasant Mark was.

The earliest shards

It could be said that although Tristan features in mediaeval Arthuriana, there is no early link between the two heroes; Tristan was merely appropriated from Cornish and Welsh beginnings by the burgeoning mediaeval fame of the Round Table. But like Arthur, Tristan's beginnings are thin and obscure. The 13th-century Book of Landaff mentions a *Talorcan filius 'Drust'* referring back in king lists to people who are supposed to have existed in sixth century Britain. Odd, this, as Drust is taken to be a Pictish name. Then Tristan is mentioned in several Triads. He is the lover of 'Essylt'. In Cornwall there is a stone which mentions 'Drustan' and 'Cunomoros' – Cornish figures from the fifth century.

As well as these hints some early British tales offers clues to the origins of the tragedy of Tristan and Isolde. My favourite tale from the *Mabinogion* speaks of war between Britain and Ireland once the Romans had left, itself confirming archaeological evidence of Irish raiding and settlements in Wales and Cornwall. In *Branwen, Daughter of Llyr* there had been war between Britain, ruled by Bran the Blessed, and Ireland.[4] Thirteen Irish ships appear on the coast off Harlech (where a statue of Bran can be found today) sent by Matholwch, Ireland's king, offering peace in return for the hand of Bran's sister, Branwen. Great rejoicing follows the marriage and

[4] Jeffrey Gantz *The Mabinogion* (Penguin Classics 2003)

Branwen duly sets off for Ireland. But it's a trick – Branwen is set to work in the kitchens and only manages to alert her brother by means of a talking raven, who carries the message of her distress. The story then follows traditional early mediaeval Welsh themes with magic cauldrons, a singing severed head and all manner of enchantments. A ninth century Irish tale, *Dairmid and Grainne*, has strong elements of Tristan and Isolde too. Grainne is Finn's wife, but has conceived a passion for Diarmaid, Finn's nephew. He rejects her but she forces him to become her lover by using a magic potion on him, or in some versions a *geis*. They flee to the forest, pursued by Finn and suffer great hardship. But despite the *geis* Dairmid remains true and does not have sex with Grainne. When at a fountain, water splashes against her thighs, she chides Dairmid that the fountain is bolder than he is. The tenth-century Irish tale *The Wooing of Emer* has the hero rescue the Princess from being a tribute to a foreign oppressor. But a false claim is made by a rival to have been the rescuer. However the princess recognises the hero when he is bathing and he wins his due reward…

Plots and themes

Behind these shards are archetypal themes. Sometimes categorised as a 'love triangle', Tristan and Isolde is nothing of the sort. Isolde never loves Mark, so this tale is no re-run of Arthur, Guinevere and Lancelot. No, the story pattern on which Tristan and Isolde is based is 'the lover's kidnap and the lover's rescue'. Mediaeval writers were not only influenced by what they learned from Islam or Wales, but were heavily influenced by classical tales, which have many examples of kidnap/rescue, three of which everyone would have known about in 1180 and which we are all familiar with now:

1. Perseus has secured the head of the Gorgon, and cruising past on Pegasus, his flying horse, he espies a beautiful, naked women chained to a rock on the coast, her distraught parents looking on, a monster approaching. He kills the monster and marries the woman, Andromeda.
2. The Athenians have to propitiate the king of Crete, at Knossos, every year

by sending seven maids and seven youths to be given to the Minotaur, the hideous son of queen Pasipihae and a great White Bull. Theseus says he'll go and deal with the Minotaur. He does that successfully with the help of Ariadne and her skein of red thread and returns to Athens with the young hostages. The final tragedy, as described by Robert Graves, sounds familiar: *The tradition on this tribute voyage was to use only black sails on the ship taking the young people. Theseus makes an arrangement with Aegeus, his father, that on their return they will use white sails to indicate survival, but he forgets to change the sails* (typical young people this) *and as the ship swings into sight near Pireaus, Aegius thinking the worst 'flung himself' down the cliffs.*

3. Of Paris's kidnap of Helen and her subsequent grand, if laborious, rescue by the Greeks en masse, I need not elaborate. There is a sequel, which has echoes in some versions of Tristan and Isolde. When Agamemnon returns from Troy he takes a bath and his wife, Clytemnestra, takes that opportunity to slay him, just as Isolde intended when, as she bathes Tristan she realises he is Morold's killer[5].

Mediaeval versions include:

1. St George and the Dragon – a Christian retelling of Perseus' rescue of Andromeda.
2. The 11th-century tale of Guinevere being kidnapped by Melwas and kept in a Glass tower. Arthur storms the tower on his own and rescues his bride.
3. The most famous version is Lancelot's introduction to the world in Chrétien de Troyes' *The Knight of the Cart*[6]. In this the greatest knight is asked by the king to look after his wife and they develop an admiration for each other. Guinevere is then kidnapped and Lancelot goes after her and facing bizarre dangers. Once she is recovered their lust is consummated in what must have been a truly shocking (or titillating) manner for listeners in the late twelfth century.

And that's not all, as this kidnap/rescue theme appears throughout history – just think of Hartwright and Miss Halcombe foiling Percival Glyde and Count Corvo in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*; Tracey Lord and Dexter Haven in *The Philadelphia Story*, and its remake *High Society*; Dustin Hoffman rescuing 'Elaine' from her own wedding in *The Graduate*; Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan in *Sleepless in Seattle*; Bonnie Bedelia and Bruce Willis in *Die Hard*.

Wagnerian treatment

Wagner loved Mediaeval romance and based several works on the Arthurian legends and Germanic legends – one of the very few artists to use both sources – so it is not surprising he turned his attention to Tristan. And the vehicle Wagner used for his art, 'music drama', as Wagner referred to his works, is ripe for high emotion[7]. Music is, of all the arts, the one most capable of getting directly to people's emotions. So it is not surprising that opera in the main has been the vehicle for the frothiest comedy, where the audience can just let themselves go and be carried along by the music or the darkest tragedy, allowing the audience not just to watch, but to experience in their own hearts people's lives unravelling. Detective fiction, biography or quiet reflections on life do not lend themselves to opera. Opera librettists have never stinted on the potential to have the audience laughing, or in this case, weeping. Heroines who die at the end of operas include: Butterfly (*Madame Butterfly*, Puccini, by her father's sword), Carmen, (*Carmen*, Bizet, stabbed), Tosca (*Tosca*, Puccini, jumped from the ramparts). But there are even more operas where both lovers die at the end; *Norma* (1831, Vincenzo Bellini), *Lucia de Lammemoor* (1838 Donizetti), *Le Prophete* (1849, Meyerbeer), *Romeo and Juliette* (Gounod, 1867), *Aida* (1871, Verdi), *Otello* (1887, Verdi), *I Pagliacci* (1892, Leoncavallo), *Manon Lescaut* (1893, Puccini), *Pelleas and Melisande* (1902, Debussy), *Mark and Thirza* (The Wreckers, 1906, Ethel Smyth), *The Goose Girl and the King's Son* (Konig's Kinder, 1910, Englebert Humperdinck). Wagner himself had three of his music dramas end with the death of both lovers, *Der Fliegende Hollander* 1843 (the Dutchman and Senta), *Tannhauser* 1845 (Tannhauser and Elizabeth), *Gotterdammerung* 1876 (Brunnhilde and Siegfried).

Also Donizetti had written his version of Tristan in 1845 and Wagner's protégé's Karl Ritter wrote a story based on Tristan and Isolde in the 1850s. But one key influence on Wagner in choosing the tale seems to have been his own life. He had married young, in 1836 to Wilhelmine (Minna), whom he had seduced. She bore a daughter but could have no further children. The rest of Minna's life saw her striving to provide a home base for Wagner, while the artist himself followed the life of a peripatetic conductor/composer. By the early 1850s the pattern of his life was set: making ends meet by conducting all over Europe, composing when he had funds, running up debts because of his extravagant lifestyle, being baled out by admiring patrons, many of them women, with whom he often had more or less serious dalliances.

In the mid 1850s he was being funded by Otto Wesendonck, with whose wife Mathilde Wagner became smitten. She wrote poetry and was as 'sensitive' as Wagner himself. It was on deciding she was his muse that Wagner began writing Tristan. He took some of Mathilde's poetry and included it in the libretto. She was his Isolde. But his relationship with Mathilde demanded more of her time than was acceptable or practical for her and in the late 1850s she made it clear that she was staying with Otto. Minna had discovered the affair and Otto was livid.

Although Wagner turned his attentions to a lawyer's daughter, Mathilde Maier, then a singer, Friedericke Meyer, then Henriette von Bissing in the early 1860s, his future was to be with Liszt's daughter Cosima, whom he had met when she was a child. He met Cosima again in 1857, when she had just married Hans von Bulow, another of his protégés. She (18, while Wagner was in his mid-forties) was tongue-tied in his presence and does not seem to have been taken with her until about 1862. But their paths crossed regularly because von Bulow worked with Wagner frequently. Just as Wagner was working on the third Act in 1858 Cosima, although recently married, attempted to lure another of Wagner's young followers, Karl Ritter, into a watery suicide in a lake. This intention is known only from letters exchanged between the two of them. Cosima seemed intent on her own end, no matter what, but the reason for her intention is unclear. Rowing on the lake together, Ritter, learning of the young woman's intention offered to die with her, but she, having it seems suggested it, demurred and they called the project off – agreeing to write to each other in three weeks time, saying what they intended. The young woman responded to Ritter's subsequent letter with an embarrassed apology.

Cosima would have been all too aware of Isolde as her husband had been involved in its writing. Did she at that time see herself as Isolde to Wagner's Tristan? Possibly she did and within two years she was living with him, her marriage fading into the background. She had three children with Wagner and

[5] There is still no better than Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths* (Penguin 1991) for this material.

[6] *Chrétien de Troyes* (Penguin Classics 2005).

[7] I have drawn here mostly from Ernest Newman's *Wagner Nights* (Putnam 1961) – old but still comprehensive; Geoffrey Skelton *Richard and Cosima Wagner: Biography of a Marriage* (Gollancz 1982) – for Wagner's relationships with women; and Roger Scruton *Death Devoted Heart* (OUP 2004) – detailed, dense and tendentious but full of ideas.

did not for more than a few days leave his side for the last fifteen years of his life. She was the love of his life, his support and aide and the creator and protector of his legacy. They also named one of their children Isolde and one Siegfried.

Choose Death

But this assumed identification with the characters may be so much play acting, and Wagner had bigger ideas than just writing about his complicated relationships. Most of Wagner's changes to Gottfried's narrative are elisions because he is writing music drama in which he has to concentrate the action. The most significant difference between all previous versions and Wagner's is that the love potion is not necessary. In Wagner the couple have already exchanged that look. He uses the potion as a different plot device entirely, having Isolde wanting to end both Tristan's and her life by taking poison. The love potion reawakens their love, strengthens it, banishes thoughts of anything else, but it is their already. Wagner's other even more significant introduction is that from the first Isolde seeks death, then she and her lover both seek death, finally they both achieve it.

Wagner's lovers do not choose death because they are cornered, or in the depths of despair – which is the motivation for most suicides. Neither do they choose to die for altruistic reasons or duty, as in wartime possibly. Double suicides are relatively rare and often noted because of such rarity. Examples include:

1. Rudolf Hapsburg (heir to Austro Hungarian Empire) and the nineteen year old Marie Vetsera at the hunting lodge at Mayerling. This is famous not least because of Rudolf's prominence. Rudolf, 30 at the time and married shot his mistress in the head, then himself. Rudolf was officially declared to have been in a state of "mental unbalance". These two, oppressed by court and social expectations were clearly 'cornered'.
2. Elvira Madigan, a 21-year-old Danish tightrope walker, and Lieutenant Count Bengt Sparre who was 35. They met while she was with her stepfather's circus, but their love was impossible; Sparre was married and had two children. After exchanging love letters for a year, they ran away together in June 1889. When they ran out of money, they packed a picnic basket, went out to the forest where Sparre shot Madigan and himself.
3. Arthur Koestler's and his wife. Koestler may not be remembered today, but was an intellectual power house. A Hungarian socialist he fought for the Spanish Republic in 1937 and was captured by the Fascists, barely escaping execution. With the book *Darkness at Noon* he established an international literary reputation and earned the undying enmity of communists. Then in the 1960s he changed tack and became interested in history, psychology and the paranormal. He was a philanderer, married three times and since his death there have been accusations that he raped women in the 1950s including Jill Craigie. He had terminal cancer and decided to take his life. His wife died with him, although there was nothing wrong with her.
4. Very few people will have heard of Darby Crash and Casey Cola. He was a punk singer and she his girlfriend. He had been talking about killing himself as a way of establishing punk immortality and persuaded Casey to join him. They took huge doses of heroin. He died. She survived. Perhaps no one would have heard of him anyway, but his mistake was to do it the day John Lennon was shot, so he got no publicity at all.[8]

Different situations here, different motivations, but the male partner in all these cases was older and dominant. Wagner's suicidal pair, albeit fictional, are different. Isolde is the active partner, being bent on death from the start. And in the second Act Tristan, expecting death at Mark's hands does not beg him for Isolde's life, but asks her to join him. They are both mad for death. At the end Tristan tears off his bandage just as

[8] I confess I found three of these on the internet, but used Jill Craigie's biography for the Koestler material: *To Be a Woman: the Life of Jill Craigie* (Carl E Rollyson 2005).

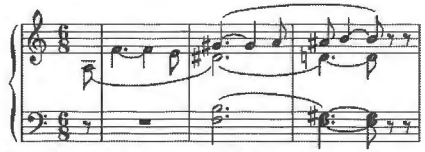
Isolde arrives, killing himself. Isolde then dies through an act of will alone.

The reason for this is Wagner's reading of Arthur Schopenhauer's philosophy[9]. Schopenhauer, like many others, was influenced by Kant's view that human beings should treat others as beings in their own right, as ends and not means. Schopenhauer agreed but argues that we are all caught up in striving to overcome the demands on us as physical creatures. Schopenhauer argued that it was the individual 'will's' attachment to the 'phenomenal' world (this world) which leads us to endlessly strive to affirm our separate existence. Serenity is only achieved by not striving; by ridding oneself of desire. He also followed Buddhist thinking that there was no Heaven for individuals. Individuals after death combine in a Great Soul. Although the 'will' is an immensely powerful force, humans, unlike animals, have a counter force based on an intellectual understanding of the world, *the gift of renunciation*. Schopenhauer believed 'the intellect can overcome the will's resistance to death by showing us we have nothing to lose and everything to gain'. So our entry upon death into the Universal is no loss as it was our individual existence which caused us suffering in the first place. These ideas from the East were new and immensely attractive to Wagner and he discussed the ideas with Mathilde. It is also clear from the way Tristan and Isolde talk to each other in Act Two that they associate their 'Night' as a separate existence from the mundane toils of 'Day'. Night is death, the heavens, the universal, a place apart. Day is responsibility, a loveless marriage, duty, Marke. And in her final solo, the so-called Liebestod ('love death'), Isolde's plan and determination to join Tristan in the 'universal wave' is made explicit.

The Influence

I have not mentioned the music in *Tristan and Isolde* as I have no authority. I'm no musician and therefore have no insights to offer, although I will offer a couple of suggestions. There are at least three features of Wagner's Tristan that prefigure 'modern' art.

1. Wagner's use of 'leitmotifs' is overwhelming. Leitmotifs are musical phrases identified with particular characters or emotions in a story. Leitmotifs were hardly new, but in Tristan and Isolde it has been suggested that there are more than thirty – as if Wagner were trying to write a music drama and tell the tale without words.
2. His use of Schopenhauer's interpretation of the Buddhist notion of Nirvana as a goal, introduces a religious element which is non-Christian – a bold move in1865.
3. Listen to the Prelude and the very first chord you hear is the so called 'Tristan Chord'. The hint at discordance which you hear is at variance with the pleasing plangency which was what nineteenth century audiences expected. The Tristan Chord gets a message across directly, it is slightly jarring and the listener knows that something's not quite right and perhaps it'll all end in tears. This use of music is now a cliché – the listener today is accustomed to music that lets you know very clearly that the shark is coming or someone is about to get knifed in the shower - but was viewed as deeply transgressive 150 years ago.



If the modern in art has been about creating rites in which human truth can be shown rather than told then *Tristan and Isolde* is a worthy precursor to Debussy, then Schoenberg in music and Eliot, Picasso, Braque, Joyce and so on, all of whom offered different ways of showing and celebrating the rituals and patterns of human experience. And while the breakdown in Christian cultural hegemony made way for the sort of pick'n'mix spirituality we have today, or as Roger Scruton would have it, a moral 'free for all' in which people do not engage with anything mystical, live meaningless lives of consumption without emotional commitment and in

[9] Arthur Schopenhauer *Essays and Aphorisms* (Penguin 1970)

which literally nothing is sacred, Scruton sees Wagner's music dramas as attempting to recapture and relive the sacred in a non-Christian form: *Wagner's redemption was not from the Christian Church ... but through an inner redemption achieved by the human subject alone, drawing on that metaphysical isolation that distinguishes him from the natural world.*

A deeper magic

So Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*, leaving aside the proposal that it offers a religious experience, is an invitation to audiences to share the transcendence of a love too grand to be confined to workaday existence. Romantic, perhaps, but it leaves me feeling deeply uneasy, for two reasons. First of all much of the action is predicated on falsehoods. Like those 1950s romantic comedies starring Doris Day, no one is honest about their feelings, their motivations, even who they are. While subterfuge and misunderstanding push the plot along, it's no way to live. More unnerving for me is the question 'What about Isolde's mother?' Did Isolde care about her? And what about Kurwenal, a hearty fellow laying down his life for Tristan? What about Brangaene, switching the love potion to save Isolde's life once and loving her charge dearly? What do the pair of lovers owe these people? Nothing it seems. And this is where the philosophy from Schopenhauer breaks down, because if the lovers have a responsibility in Kantian terms to treat each other as ends and not means, does that not apply to Brangaene and Kurwenal and Isolde's mother? Their love is blind to all other's feelings; selfish. In the drama all the emotion is consumed by the lovers leaving none for anyone else.

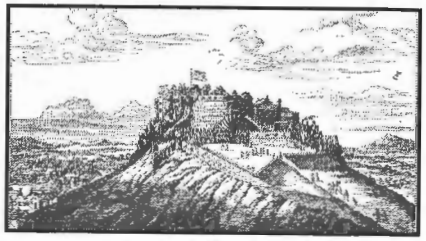
Wouldn't a more honourable renunciation for the lovers be a renunciation of the proposed renunciation? Giving up the madness would be even more difficult for the mad lovers than continuing with their love. But that wouldn't be very romantic you might say, and wouldn't offer satisfying drama. But it can. Think of Noel Coward's *Brief Encounter*. Laura (Celia Johnson) and Alec (Trevor Howard) meet on a station. He removes a mote from her eye, demanding they 'gaze' at each other. They meet more frequently; they fall in love though both are married. They attempt to consummate their love but are thwarted. Alec decides it is doomed and announces he is moving abroad. Their last meeting is spoiled by a chattering acquaintance of Laura's. As Alec leaves Laura decides to throw herself under a train, but ... well she doesn't do it. She renounces her preferred renunciation for a human duty to others, her husband and children. Alec and Laura had other aspects to their lives – families – which made their renunciation of each other possible, even hopeful.

Isolde, on finding Tristan dead, would have been distraught, but she would have not so easily succumbed to her mysterious death had she been thinking 'Who's going to walk the dogs?' So, romantic as this flight into the void is, my pragmatic English soul finds Celia Johnson more alluring as a heroine than Isolde and Alec a more honourable knight than Wagner's Tristan. ☙

Milka Ternina as Isolde, New York Metropolitan Opera, 1901-02

The Mystery of the Maidens' Castle

A tentative investigation Steve Sneyd



There are plenty of maidens, and indeed castles, in the Arthurian chivalrous romances, but just two fortresses bring those elements together by being named as Castles of the Maidens. Yet the puzzle they pose intrigues out of proportion to their scarcity and the brevity of references made to them.

The puzzle falls into two parts.

First, why that name? And, second, can any actual castle or fortress be plausibly tied to the Arthurian romance references?

Why Castle of the Maidens?

As to the name, at first glance it seems completely straightforward – it's a castle associated with maidens. Yet as soon as examined, certainty begins to dissolve. After all, why just these particular fortresses – just about every castle except the most temporary siege structure, or, in theory anyhow, one in the hands of a religious order of knights vowed to chastity, would have had maidens within its walls at some stage, even if their maidenhood was only temporary, if kidnapped to a robber baron's hold.

And does the name imply ownership, or gender exclusivity some sort of Amazon all-female garrison, or control by a female order, perhaps of militant nuns, again bound to chastity, or warrior priestesses? Is the name's implication one of refuge somewhere maidens were sent for safety in times of war? Again, a maiden fortress could mean one that had never been taken by assault, or surrendered to siege, or at the very least a hitherto-untested belief that it would be impossible to storm, that is, proven or would prove to be as impregnable as, in the ideal, maidenly virtue. But then the usage would be *maiden* in the singular, not *maidens* plural – or at least it would be a grammatical stretch to take it as a boast of having withstood more than one siege unscathed.

Where the name, for actual locations, is in the singular form – Maiden Castle –it has been suggested that this is folk translation into a familiar word in English of a Brythonic term, *mai dun* meaning great fort. Again, though, the plural form causes problems unless it's assumed that writers have chosen to convert Maiden Castle into Castle of the Maidens for reasons of euphony or simply because they thought their hearers/readers would be more gripped by imagining a location full of many young women rather than just one! "Great fort" has descriptive plausibility for at least some of the real sites bearing the Maiden Castle name: less compelling is the suggestion, quoted by Lewis Spence in his *Mysteries of Britain* from the Reverend James Rust's *Druidism Revisited*, that Maiden in this context is a garbling into English of a Gaelic term for Great Cauldron!

Other suggestions that have been made are that *Mai* is a garbling of *Maen* "stone", but this would make no sense in the case of earthwork fortresses; or that *Mai dun* means stronghold by the plain; or that *Mai* should be interpreted as May – that is, that the place was one used for May Day gatherings[1] or the earlier Celtic

[1] The second element has also been interpreted as, either *den* as in sense of a place of shelter or hiding, associated with May festivities or ceremonies, or as dean or *dene*, an old Northern word for a small valley, hence a valley used for such rituals, although in the only specific instance I know of, where the name now appears as Maydene Castle, an earthwork above the Cock Beck near Towton battlefield in Yorkshire, *The Place Names of the West Riding* notes it was earlier written as Maiden Castle.

Beltane fires, often lit on high places.[2] As Beltane had associations with the pre-Christian faith, this leads naturally to the suggestion that the Maiden, or Maidens, refer to the Celtic triple goddess in her maiden phase, or to a place associated with her worship, or maidens who gathered to worship her.[3]

One Maiden Castle at least, the best known instance of the name, that huge multivallate Iron Age hillfort south-west of Dorchester in Dorset, was indeed, when excavated, found to have had added, near the east gate, a late Romano-Celtic temple of 350-380 CE. (The fort also overlay a Neolithic burial mound, incidentally).

Intriguingly, archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler, in his book about the site, quoted an associated folktale of why the fort was built, by a giant who wanted a safe place for his sweetheart to milk her cows. That could be a faint echo of ancient religious ceremonial activity, although it could also be taken as a reflection of purpose as perceived by later locals, that is, that such structures were to protect women and cattle generally. That, at any rate, is the view of the name origin Leslie Grinsell took in his *Folklore of Prehistoric Sites in Britain.* (That a giant – Drewyn – built a hillfort so his love would have a safe place for milking is also told of Caer Drewyn above Corwen in the Dee Valley, so the tale is not unique to Dorset's Maiden Castle.) Whether it reflected earlier belief, or simply back-formed folk etymology, grown up to explain an pre-existing name, is impossible to tell, as also whether the story had now-forgotten parallels at other Maiden Castles. A variety of explanatory candidates to consider, then, without any definiteness in the way of answer.

It is also worth noting that the place name exists in other languages, inside and outside the British Isles. In Scots Gaelic, it exists as *Dun nan Nighean* – fort of maidens (at least four examples in the Inner Hebrides) – and *Tor Ban Na Gruagaich*, Fair Castle of the Maidens, in Caithness. It also occurs, as far away as Syria, with its two instances of Qasr al Banat – Castle of Maidens – and Turkey, where the Kizkalesi means Maiden Castle.

Arthurian castles

As to the choice of locations that could fit the Arthurian references in that they have the right name, the possibilities initially seem many. At least fourteen locations in England, two in Wales, and five in Scotland are currently called Maiden Castle, and many more in the past; in addition there are at least four Maiden Bower sites in England, and a Maiden's Arbour[4], a Maiden's Hall, a Maiden Hold and other variants.

In the main, these are ancient earthworks, in many cases Iron Age hillforts, in some Norman castles, usually of the motte and bailey (that is, mound and fortified courtyard) type (although, as none of the latter have to my knowledge been excavated, these motte-and-baileys could in turn have recycled earlier earthwork defences, a frequent Norman habit), with other instances including a probable Roman fortlet in the Pass of Stainmore, an earthwork thought to be "a village settlement", a small circular mound of unidentified purpose, and another speculated to be a beacon mound, as well as a large cairn, and a rock structure of which there is dispute whether it is natural or man-made.

Although some at least are in areas of Britain seen as associated with Arthur – in particular, seven Maiden Castles are

[2] There was a direct "Beltan time" association with one Cumbrian Maiden Castle, since in 1547 the tenants of Eskdale were ordered to bring their cattle then to this "rude enclosure" near Wasdalehead, as cited by Jeremy Harte in his "Maiden Castles - A Northern Enigma", in Northern Earth 29 (Autumn 1985) 7-12

[3] As an aside to this, Jeremy Harte made the colourful suggestion (*op cit*) that the name derives from sightings of supernatural women, fairy entities, or the morriganesque collectors of slain warriors.

[4] Bower and related forms is likely to be a garbling of the Old English *burh*, later *bury*, for a fortified place, to give, inaccurately, the sweet connotation of a sheltered place of pleasure and repose.

in Cumbria, where Carlisle is one candidate for his headquarters – with just one exception none seem to have been specifically suggested as having Arthurian connections. There is one other, though, that has a folklore association irresistible to mention, albeit not an Arthurian one, namely Maiden Bower at Houghton Regis near Dunstable in Bedfordshire. Grinsell notes of this small Iron Age hillfort built over a Neolithic causewayed camp the story that a queen obtained the site by asking of her king as much land as a bull's hide would cover for herself, then cutting the hide into thread-thin strips and joining them together to encircle enough land for the fort. This allegory of superior female cleverness is not unique to that site – it was told, for instance, also of Tong Castle in Staffordshire, now destroyed by a motorway, and. most famously, as the founding myth of the great Mediterranean city of Carthage, that Queen Dido obtained the land for its citadel, the Byrsa, by just that trick.

The one site still known as Maiden Castle which *has* been suggested for an Arthurian role is an Iron Age hillfort north of Malpas in Cheshire, in the 18th century also known as Maiden's Tower, put forward as a possible location for the tenth battle in Nennius' list of Arthur's victories, the battle at "the mountain which is called Agned".

This battle, however, is oftener speculatively located in lowland Scotland, suggestions including early chroniclers' *Bregomion* or *Breguion* (and other similar spellings), perhaps the Roman fort of *Bremenium*, at High Rochester in the Cheviots.

However, Geoffey of Monmouth refers to an Ebraucus, King of Britain (his name presumably a reference to a rule based at Eboracum, that is, York) as having founded the Castle of Mount Agned, and says it became known as the Castle of Maidens. A link can then tentatively be made to the fact that Edinburgh Castle was known from early medieval times by the Latin for Castle of Maidens, that is, *Castro Puellarum* (1093) and *Castellum* or *Castra Puellarum* (1142) – *puella* being the Latin for young girl or maiden. (The 13th-century *Chronicle of Lanercost* explains this by saying the king who first built the castle did so to keep his seven daughters safe, but this has the air of a backformation to explain the name).

That castle rock of Edinburgh, long before it became a medieval fortress, was an Iron Age stronghold. Then, in the Dark Ages, certainly already by the "Arthurian period", it became a base for local kings of Lothian/Manau Goddodin, of the mini-realm that, considerably later launched the disastrous raid on Catraeth and in turn had to face the *Obsessio Etin* or siege of the fortress then called Dineiddyn. A battle fought by Arthur in their support at or near the fortress, if that was Mount Agned, would be strategically plausible, perhaps against Picts attempting to extend their control south of the Forth.

Another nickname for Mount Agned in Arthurian romance was the Dolorous Mountain. Given the name similarity, could this have been the Castle of Mont Dolorous? That appears in the romance of *Fergus of Galloway*, which in effect shifts a historical 12th-century figure into an Arthurian setting full of picaresque and magical encounters. In the case of this particular castle, it is where Fergus, having killed the giantess of another castle, Dunostre, and her pet dragon, to win the Shield Beautiful, now has to kill her revenge-seeking husband, also gigantic, then drown the giant couple's child in the moat. The castle is clearly somewhere in or near the Lothian area, as Fergus is able, from it, to see another castle, Rocebure, where his fiancée is besieged, and that is described as being in "Lodien". Moreover, the giant association also fits with the belief that the Eidyn/Etin element of the name Edinburgh came from an old word for a giant, an *etin*.

Finally, what of the other Arthurian Castle of the Maidens, that met with on the Grail quest? Seat of the knight Morians, setting for a major tournament, it also is given an impressionistic physical description by Malory, as having deep ditches and two gates, while its name is explained in a most curious way, *viz* that the maidens "betokeneth the good souls that were in prison before the incarnation of Jesus Christ". More usefully, geographical clues as to location are given, albeit not fully consistently, in the romances, that

is, that it was at, near or in the vicinity of Gloucester, and also said to be near the river Severn. Although none of the extant Maiden Castles anything like fits those clues, there is a possible candidate, as I suggested in an earlier article in *Pendragon*[5] the late Romano-British fortified temple cum healing centre at Lydney, in the Forest of Dean, could underlie the account. Although now receded a considerable distance, in Dark Age times the Severn would have nearly lapped the base of the hill on which it stands, and, as to the name, the maidens could have been a group of female healers, perhaps clinging on there, maintaining a presence as "wise women", into Arthurian times.

No certainty, sadly, to end with – but perhaps the very mysteriousness of the Castle of Maidens is a key element to its fascination, one that refuses to go away. ☙

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[5] Steve Sneyd "The Dog-God's Temple in the Sky", *Pendragon* XXXI No 4 (Summer 2004)

Dunstanburgh Notes

where no roads reach
only ramblers breach these ramparts
circling gorse and close cropped grass

stumps dent the skyline's greyness
framing gorseland's grazing sward
where sheep might roam to spattered rocks

in sight of Lancelot's lost hideout
opposite Gaunt's crumbling gate
kittiwakes colonize the whinsill crag

David Banks

PEN-DRAGON

Continued from page 7

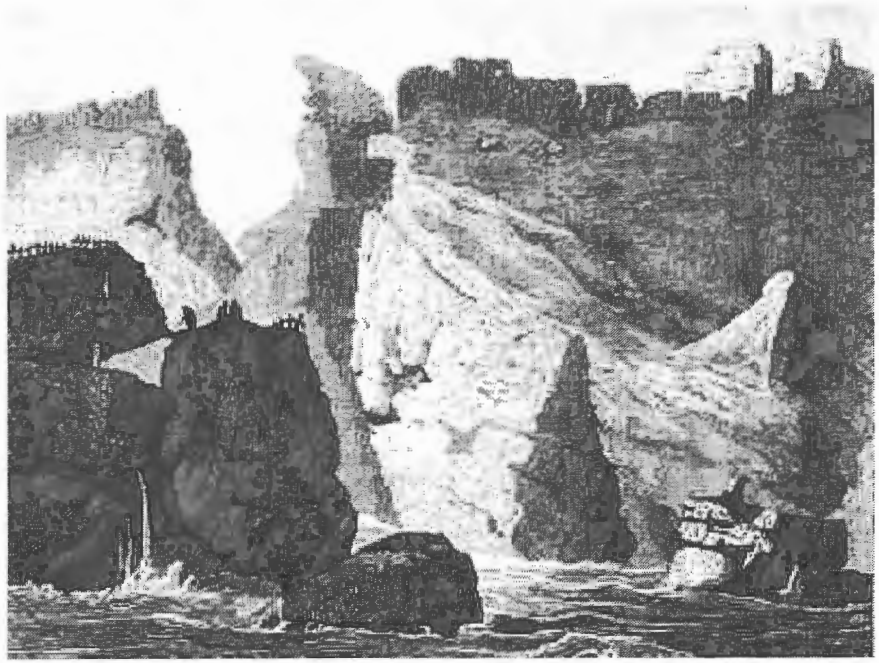
Figures of medieval romance like Dietrich of Berne (a distorted version of the Ostrogothic king of Italy Theodoric of Verona) or Roland (in history a marginal figure listed in passing as Hrodlandus, Warden of the Breton March) underwent almost dreamlike transformations in tale, but that doesn't stop them having roots in real people. I was struck, when Gildas gave the "backstory" of Britain, by his mention of the "treacherous lioness" who "butchered the governors" early in Roman rule – if we didn't have Roman records of the rebellion of Boudicca, this could be seen as purist folktale, perhaps based on giving human form to some martial goddess of the Britons.

But the biggest single problem with completely eliminating "an Arthur figure", to me, one which I can't see a way round for the deniers, also stems from Gildas, namely the battle of Badon. Gildas says this was in his lifetime, only 44 years ago (or 43, dependent on the interpretation of his knotty sentence): so when he wrote many others would also be still alive who recalled the event, even in that time of generally short lifespans. He couldn't, in other words, have invented the battle out of whole cloth [...] *Someone* must have commanded the British side. If not Arthur, or an Arthuralike, then who?

Steve Sneyd, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire

• *Is Arthur mythical or legendary or historical? Which came first, chicken or egg? Whatever else, this debate is going to run and run – much as it has done for some considerable time, ever since Euhemerus!*

Kings at Tintagel Castle ☙ *Chris Lovegrove*



We were almost bent double getting to the front doors; for safety the car had been parked with its wheel right up to the kerb. Having inveigled a stay at the Camelot Castle Hotel at Tintagel (King Arthur's Castle Hotel as was), we had forgotten how unremitting the winter weather was in North Cornwall. From our four-poster bed we might have had views of Tintagel Castle, if the squalls had allowed, but they didn't and so we didn't. It brought home to me the perennial question, why would anyone have wanted to stay at Tintagel Castle in its heyday? Surely Arthur, king or otherwise, if he ever had residence there, must have asked himself the selfsame question?

Legend

Tintagel burst into the written record in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* (1136) as the place where Arthur was conceived, in a manner that, whether based on the story of the conception of Hercules (Russell 2005) or Alexander the Great (Lovegrove 2005) or on native tales (such as Pryderi's story in the *Mabinogion*), suggests legend rather than true history. Geoffrey may well have visited Tintagel as his description shows a familiarity with the constricted access to the so-called Island (now fast becoming a reality), but quite why he picked on this windswept site can only be speculated on (Lovegrove 2005: 10-11),

One way round the indubitably wintry inhospitality of Tintagel is to regard it as principally a summer residence, and this indeed is how it is viewed in Béroul's 12th-century romance, *Tristan*. Post-dating Geoffrey's *Historia*, it is possible that the earlier work influenced Béroul's decision to place King Mark's summer stronghold and some of the story's action here.

In the early 13th century, the wealthy second son of King John, Richard Earl of Cornwall, acquired the site of Tintagel,

plainly with the intention of garnering some Arthurian glory to himself. He built much of the castle still visible today, sometime after he became Earl in 1227. (A decade or so later he was to found Hailes Abbey in Gloucestershire, later famous for its relic of the Holy Blood, and was elected "King of the Romans", that is, King of Germany, in 1257 – clearly somebody concerned to be more than just a bit player in history). The remains of the castle (which was never really of military significance) cemented the later perception of Tintagel as being the site of the legendary King Arthur's castle.

Archaeology

In the early 20th century local historian Henry Jenner opined that Tintagel "has singular little history and not much romance attached to it ... Historically and romantically Tintagel Castle is rather a fraud" (Jenner 1996: 36).

However, he also speculated that Tintagel Island "may have become a religious establishment of Celtic saints or monks at a later period, and the presence of the evidently Celtic chapel of St Ulyet or Julitta and of Christian interments of perhaps the 5th or 6th century, and the fact that it came into the possession of the monks of St Petrock's, Bodmin, seem to indicate something of the sort..." But he then goes on to insist that "all this must needs be pure conjecture. The evidence is very slight" (Jenner 1996: 25).

This "very slight evidence" was taken up enthusiastically by the late Ralegh Radford in the 1930s. He maintatined that in his excavations he had indeed discovered the Dark Age Celtic monastery, evidenced by the widespread disposal of sherds of imported pottery from the Mediterranean all over the site. Many of the structures he uncovered were interpreted as Dark Age monks' cells and associated buildings, and such was his undoubted erudition and authority that few doubted his findings, publicly at least.

In 1973, however, Ian Burrow delivered a lecture in which Radford's 1935 interpretation was challenged by the proposition that the site was actually an early medieval secular site, a military stronghold as legend had insisted all along (Thomas 1994: 74). Even so, Radford maintained his belief in the purely religious associations in his co-authored booklet *Arthurian Sites in the West* published in 1974. But it was to be a fire on the island in the summer of 1983 that really put paid to the monastic theory. Underneath Radford's "Dark Age" monastic cells were revealed the traces of earlier structures, clearly associated with the ubiquitous Dark Age Mediterranean pottery. Many of Radford's structures, which overlay the Dark Age features, were now identified as medieval, probably 11th-century, and not post-Roman.

In 1986 the new official guidebook to the site, by Charles Thomas, officially established Tintagel as a genuine 5th/6th-century high-status stronghold. In 1990 a team led by Christopher Morris, then Professor of Archaeology at the University of Glasgow and now Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at the University, began a new series of investigations on the Island, while a small team under Charles Thomas investigated the churchyard of St Materiana on the "mainland" opposite (*eg* Nowakowski & Thomas 1990). A more accurate modern assessment of Dark Age Tintagel was now underway, revealing the promentary site, protected by a Great Ditch, to be principally occupied not by monks but by the entourage of powerful local leaders with substantial manpower; one of these also had the authority to encourage the import of Mediterranean goods in the form of perhaps the largest assemblage of wine amphorae, tableware and glassware in all of Western Britain.

Interpretation

If Tintagel was indeed occupied in the Dark Ages, even if only seasonally, then who were these powerful leaders? As Neil Faulkner (2009: 29) puts it, "Perhaps the Arthur enthusiasts have captured a kernel of truth about Tintagel: it seems likely that it was a seat of power of the very type of Dark Age warlord from which the whole Arthur legend derives".

First, we may probably discount King Teudar, who features as the adversary of local Celtic saints in medieval sources. His centre of operations, in any case, was further south, in west Cornwall around St Ives and the Hayle estuary.

The *Life of St Samson* mentions the 6th-century saint's encounter with a local leader of a warband called Guedianus, who is referred to as the *comes* or count in Trigg, the district which included the site of Tintagel (Thomas 1994 chapter 14 *passim*). However, the *Life* seems to locate the Guedianus incident across the River Camel, rather to the east of Tintagel.

We now come to the King Mark of the romances, uncle of Tristan and husband of Iseult, Tristan's lover, whose summer residence is named as Tintagel. Now, Gregory of Tours' 6th-century *History of the Franks* notes a Breton king Chonomoris who, as Quonomorus, is identified by the late 9th-century *Life of St Paul Aurelian* as Marcus, king of Dumnonia, whom the saint meets in the Fowey area in south Cornwall. And, lo and behold, in the Fowey area is still located a stone with the names of Conomorus and his son Drustanus or Tristan. This, surely, is some sort of confirmation that Mark Conomorus, king of Dumnonia, ruled in Cornwall and may have lived at nearby Tintagel, surely?

However, Charles Thomas believes that "Mark is part of a three-way tangle between history, hagiography and epigraphy" throttling any attempt to identify him with the Cunomorus of the Tristan stone (Thomas 1994: 213). In any case, "the reference to Tintagel in relation to Mark as the king of Cornwall may have been a re-location" from Fowey to North Cornwall. There is no evidence, other than the romances, that Mark, or Conomorus (if they are really the same, or merely two individuals merged by the author of the *Life of St Paul Aurelian*) inhabited Tintagel, much as some writers would like it so (*eg* Ditmas 1969; Wilson 1999).

The genealogical manuscript known as Jesus 20 lists some kings of Dumnonia who appear to have ruled sequentially (Thomas 1994: 212): these are Gwrmawr ("Great Man"), followed by Tudwawl, Kynmawr ("Great Hound", who might have been the Cunomorus of the Tristan Stone), Custennin (who might have been the Constantine in the *Welsh Annals* who apparently converted to Christianity around 589), Erbin and Gereint. We have no idea where these rulers, if they are all in fact genuine, were located other than somewhere in Dumnonia, that is modern Cornwall, Devon and possibly further east and north.

This leaves us the names found on the so-called Arthur Stone from Tintagel dramatically revealed to the world in a press release in August 1998. A slate drain cover from the east of the island was found to include part of a Late Roman inscription[1] on which was superimposed a series of 6th-century names: Paternus (or Paterninus), Coliavus and Artognou. Coliavus, who appears twice, appears to have made or done something, as the word FICIT (the native version of classical FECIT) is associated with his name. What was made, or done? Does it refer to a contract, or even building work? Why was a Late Roman inscription chosen to attach the names to? These must have been individuals of some standing to have their names thus recorded. The excavation team suggest that "it is difficult to envisage Tintagel as anything other than a site of the Dumnonian rulers ... from which control could be maintained of passing shipping." It is tempting to give these individuals some higher status at Tintagel.

Where did they end up? The answer might be, at Tintagel churchyard. Here, in 1990, the excavators revealed several Dark Age graves of indubitable Christian affiliation: some were cist graves, others unlined, at least two were mounded over, another was rock-cut, several had wooden grave markers and there was clear evidence for the raising of a granite

[1] Now interpreted as HAVG, referring to Honorius *Augustus*, Western Roman Emperor from 395 to 423; that is, the original slate dates to around 400 AD, implying an official presence here in the dying days of direct Roman rule, when Tintagel might have been known as *Durocornovium*.

pillar (Thomas 1993: 102ff). And there are probably other Dark Age graves yet to be identified.

And what of Arthur? Does he lie here? Perhaps the last word ought to rest with J Cuming Walters (1997: 26) who, in a poetic burst, describes a typical August sunset over the Island: "Darkness looms over Tintagel... The black chough wheels about the ruins – the spirit of Arthur, say the people, revisiting the scene of his glory." Now that the chough, after half a century's absence, is re-established on Cornwall's shores, we need look no further for firm evidence of Arthur's presence in the land.

And at least the inclement weather doesn't seem to bother it. ☙

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L Thorpe *transl* (1966) *Geoffrey of Monmouth: the History of the Kings of Britain* (Penguin)

J C Walters (1906) *The Lost Land of King Arthur* (Chapman & Hall) re-published in Kelvin I Jones *ed* (1997) *Arthur's Lost Land* (Oakmagic Publications)

Joy Wilson (1999) *Tristan and Iseult: a Cornish love story* (Bossiney Books)

Guinevere's Tapestry

Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
Tease the yarn and pull the thread.
Gaze through the window,
See the bed…
Cold and bare.
Ah! No King's head!

Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
Tease the yarn and pull the thread.
Gaze through the window,
See that head…
Brave and bold.
Such sweet Knight! To bed!

Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
Tease the yarn and pull the thread.
Rumours rife,
And tongues do wag:
Slay the treacherous, wily, Hag!

Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
Tease the yarn and pull the thread.
Men may run and play the field;
A woman's place
To simply yield?

Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
Tease the yarn and pull the thread.
Off with heads
And minds that will
A Queen like me
To weave silently, still.

Stitch! Stitch! Stitch! Stitch!
Tease the yarn and pull the thread.
The King laments;
The Knight repents;
The tapestry fills,
Shaped by the hand
Of 'the woman who did'.

Sonja Strode

© Dr Sonja Strode

Rebuilding the sounds of *Pendragon, Sword of his Father* ☙ *Nathan Ashton*

Recreating the sound of footsteps in snow using gloves and rock salt

I am a Sound Designer and Audio Postproduction Supervisor. That means it is my job to use sound to enhance the visual imagery of a movie and further its story by adding tension, scope, intimacy, or weight. In many ways, sound is like clothing. Clothing does not alter the form or essence of a person, but it greatly changes perception and treatment by others. In a film, good sound is not optional. It is mandatory. The purpose of this journal article is to share the audio-dressing process used to clothe the *Pendragon* film in proper attire.

First let me explain the three kinds of film being shot in the United States. First is a "studio picture." These films are funded, shot, produced, and released through one filmmaking company. Second, an "independent feature" uses the same process as a studio picture except that funding comes from more than one source. The final kind of film is a "fiercely independent" movie. These films are funded, shot, produced, and released outside normal movie channels. They usually have very little funding but they possess a highly attractive purity of vision. Those that achieve good production (story, visuals, acting, lighting, editing, and sound) have the potential of finding a large audience and launching filmmaking careers. The Burns Family Studio chose this third route for *Pendragon.*

There are many reasons to choose Arthur as the backdrop for a movie; including swords, knights, magic, jousting, damsels in distress, symmetrical seating arrangements, and nasty sharp pointy teeth. Good reasons every one. The Studio chose to cast the familiar Arthur legend from a Christian perspective – God has a purpose for every person and that purpose is part of a greater, generation spanning whole. Arthur never built a kingdom for himself nor was he afraid to lay down his life at Badon. *Pendragon* challenges the audience to revisit these virtues.

The Burns Family Studio contacted me in the spring of 2007 before their second summer of shooting. The director, Chad Burns, wanted to make a visceral film and recognized that good sound and music were at least half of the project. He sent me some footage and asked for my help. I was astounded. The quality of the video was good. Their costuming and weapons looked great. They even built an entire Roman battlement in their dad's back yard... and then burned it to the ground. I could tell that *Pendragon* was a serious endeavor. I wanted in.

We talked frequently over the course of the following year. In the summer of 2007 Chad said, "We can only afford a Cinematographer or an Audio Mixer this summer. Which should we choose?" Remember the phrase "very little money"? I hesitated. When a film is shot, the Audio Mixer is the one in charge of recording sound at the time of shooting. Armed with microphones and a recording device, their primary job is to capture dialog, sound effects, and environmental ambiances. Many independent films forgo a good Mixer and are left with unusable audio. In this case the decision was made eyes-open. My answer considered: most of this film was shot in uncontrolled environments, movie props never sound real, and we would have to create much of the sound anyway. I swallowed hard and advised they hire a Cinematographer.

Preparation for audio post-recording began in August of 2008. I gathered swords, shields, rocks, bits of rope and wood, shoes, leather bags, scrap audiotape, and other noisemaking props into a foley studio at Oral Roberts University. I gathered relevant pre-recorded sound effects from my commercial CD collection and previous project libraries. In early October, I received the first locked footage from *Pendragon, Sword of His Father*. The Cinematographer decision was a good one. The film looked amazing.

After a couple of days of combing through the two hour film and evaluating each snippet of sound required, I called Chad to get direction from him on how he wanted each scene to sound. We discussed minutia like crickets in the night scenes (because there were no crickets in 411 AD Britain) and big things like fireball explosions. Chad was very clear on his wishes: He wanted *Pendragon* to sound big, rich, and detailed. That discussion confirmed that all two hours of audio had to be replaced. Arrangements were made for the dialog to be re-recorded in Detroit. Sound effects were built in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Additional sound elements came from Colorado. Music came from in Michigan and was orchestrated by artists in Oklahoma and Texas. The internet program Skype became the backbone of our communications.

AUDIO POSTPRODUCTION

The first step in rebuilding *Pendragon's* soundscape was to record ambience. This is the broad-stroke sonic backdrops of wind, rain, trees, grasslands, and empty stone rooms. One important element of this film was crowd noises. I was fortunate to know Kevan Forrest and Roger Bush who work in the ORU's Multimedia Institute. They transformed a group of 25 students studying Advanced Audio Recording into the vital Walla Group. The Walla Group recreated the chatter of crowds. It took some coaching, but the students proved quite adept at watching a scene and reacting as if they were actually in the action. I directed the Walla Group to give me several different interpretations for each scene to allow the director to choose what he wanted. For example, in the arena fight, I instructed the ladies to make one recording heckling Artos, then another one cheering him on. The chant "Fight! Fight! Fight!" was recorded separately from cheering and separately from the clapping. That is 5 layers of sound for one scene. In this way Chad Burns, was able to direct me in blending the sounds to create the effect that he wanted.

Next began the process of Foley. Chad and I discussed how each character impacts the audience and I used this knowledge to select sonic profiles for each of them. For example, Caydern, the dark antagonist, is usually seen in leather and chain armor, so I decided to make his armor creak menacingly. The damsel sounds like silk and soft slippers. The main Saxon is surrounded with flies.

I became the "Foley Walker," moving props to recreate sounds while watching each scene. Clothing was the first Foley recorded. Footsteps were the second. To record footsteps, I put on the appropriate shoes and walked, shuffled, turned, ran, and danced in time to on-screen character's movements. Try this the next time you are walking down a non-carpeted hallway: Listen carefully to the sounds your feet are making. Pay attention to the cadence, heel-toe clicks, weight, and slight slip of the toe when you lift your foot. Then stop and try to recreate the same sound walking in place. Next time try to recreate running. Then try it in women's shoes or with a walking stick. I suggest you do this someplace private or risk reinforcing the notion that you are certifiably odd.

The third set of Foley recordings were for "specifics." These are sounds originating on screen or directly implied as occurring off screen. Every movement makes noise. If someone picks up a mug of ale in a quiet kitchen, there are three noises: the clothing rustle of the person reaching for the mug, the soft hand grasping the handle, and the sound of the mug leaving the table. Then there is the sip and swallow. The mug must make a sound as it returns to the table. And don't forget the hand release. If that same drink occurred in a small pub, the clothing and hand noises could be ignored. In a noisy bar the sip and swallow might also be left out. So, "Quiet is Expensive." Our ears are

amazingly sensitive and our subconscious registers more than we think. Lower budget films are rife with scenes that feel barren and plastic. Often this indicates a lack of strategic sound work adding the necessary background sounds.

An Arthurian story allows two possible approaches to building the soundscape. The first is to create a realistic true-to-period piece. The other is to paint a larger-than-life picture. In researching medieval sounds I visited with reenactors and sword fighting clubs. I quickly realized that a realistically represented 411 AD would not sound the way our audience expected. It would be much quieter. Sounds would be more pure and focused without distracting background clutter. Shield hits sound like banging of cheap pots and pans. Sword sounds are sharper but not heavy. In a film, if the event is important then we expect the sound to be big. So, small firearms in films sound like cannons and Roman swords appear to weigh two tons each. This is the essence of hyper-realism. I spoke at length with Chad Burns about real vs. hyper-real sound because *Pendragon* started out as a period piece. As sound work progressed it became obvious that the ping-ping of real swordplay or the silent flight of a real arrow shot would not convince the audience that what they were seeing was real. Thus ping-ping became clank-clank and arrows had to whistle and rip through the air.

THE SUM OF THINGS

Working on *Pendragon* was an honor and a joy. Chad Burns was demanding but realistic. The music crew was consistent and dependable. Everyone on the team knew their responsibilities and kept their sense of humor. This kind of professionalism makes spending nine 80 hour weeks rattling chains and dancing barefoot in a dark studio 16 feet underground mostly bearable... That and copious amounts of stout English tea.

There is much more to tell. My wife, Lydia Ashton, was part of the orchestration team and can talk at length about making music capture emotion without overcrowding a scene. I can tell you about are the perils of mixing audio without sufficient rest. Then there is an incident involving a brick, chainmail, leather straps, and ... the night watchman.

The phrase that went through my head over and over during the *Pendragon* project was, "If it were easy, then everyone would be doing it." Rebuilding the Pendragon's world was not easy - but it was worth doing. In the midst of making this independent film I was challenged to create something that could stand the test of time. I was challenged to reach out to Christ for strength when mine failed. I hope those who watch the movie feel inspired to do the same. ☙

Read more about *Pendragon, Sword of his Father* at PendragonMovie.com. Be sure to check out the production blogs and watch the "making of" featurette. Nathan invites you to contact him through www.NathanAshton.TV regarding film, sound design, music, and life in the motion picture industry.

• *There are a couple of explanations for the term Foley. Even in the business it's sometimes thought that it derives from "foliage" as this is one of the artificial sound effects added afterwards.*
Despite this folk etymology it almost cetainly is named after Jack Foley (d 1967) who was a sound editor at Universal Studios, working on Show Boat, Spartacus *and other films, though he apparently was never credited as such for his innovation.*

old news

Compiled by Chris Lovegrove

Somerset County Council

FINDS AND FAKES

In 1988 a lead coffin was discovered at a site next to the Fosse Way on the site of a proposed warehouse development by Showerings, the makers of Babycham, at **Shepton Mallet** in Somerset. Subsequent excavations revealed roadside houses and workshops, streets, industrial areas and cemeteries, indicating occupation from around 100 AD to the late 4th or early 5th century. Small finds included jewellery, tools and coins, plus, in 1990, a unique Chi-Rho "amulet".

According to Somerset County Museum Service's press release on 18 September 2008, the **pendant** (rather than amulet) comprised "a central disc with a cross shape made from double silver beads. The front of the 45mm disc is marked with the 'Chi-Rho'; an early Christian symbol incorporating the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek, which are similar to our modern-day letters 'X' and 'P'. It was these markings that initially led archaeologists to believe that they had stumbled across an extremely rare Christian artefact, generating great excitement on a local and international scale."

A member of Birmingham University's Field Archeology Unit, Quentin Hutchinson, said he found the pendant when excavating a 4th-century grave in a small, late Roman cemetery consisting of 16 burial plots; that weekend, with two volunteers the only other people working the site, he discovered the object beneath undisturbed soil, slightly under the upper right leg bone of a male aged between thirty and fifty.

He declared that it would have been impossible for anyone to have planted the item: the grave had already been partly excavated by another archaeologist and needed to be totally exposed so it could be recorded in detail. "I began lowering the grave fill. You can always tell, from subtle differences in colour and texture, if there has been a disturbance. In this case, the soil was very clean, very compact. It did not look to have been disturbed in any way. The site director had already looked at it with me. There was absolutely nothing to suggest that it had been tampered with." Noticing a "fleck of black and a bead", he carefully removed a large clod of earth surrounding the object and lifted it out. He said he then took the small silver cross, 45mm long, and 39mm wide, to Peter Leach. As the site director wiped the remaining soil from the small disc at its centre, revealing the Chi-Rho marking, Hutchinson thought, Oh my God, what have I found? "It was a once-in-a-lifetime moment. Peter Leach said that nothing like it had ever been found in Britain. It was incredibly exciting."[1] As Somerset County Council later reported, "it was these markings that initially led archaeologists to believe that they had stumbled across an extremely rare Christian artefact, generating great excitement on a local and international scale". The Bishop of Bath & Wells, George Carey, even wore a copy at his enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury.

[1] Andrew Norfolk "Christian amulet that ruined my life is not a hoax" Times September 22, 2008 http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/science/article4799762.ece

However, two months later, it all went pear-shaped. "My director called me into his office and told me that he had been asked by the British Museum to question my professional conduct because they were convinced that the amulet was a modern hoax." Hutchinson naturally denied planting it; speculation was soon rife suggesting that a hoaxer had planted the object to delay the proposed warehouse development.

Dr Martin Henig, as reported in *The Times* in 1997, was asked to examine it, and later reported that he "was deeply suspicious" because "the thing screamed that it was modern. It looked to me as though somebody had looked at a picture of a brooch found in Sussex and made an amateur copy of it."

Henig later declared, "I don't think we will ever know who planted the object in the grave and caused so much distress to the excavator or the site director. I assume he or she did so in order to 'prove' that the deceased was a Christian, but we knew that anyway. People who indulge in such behaviour, whether or not in defence of some religious position, should surely reflect that such actions can cause distress to the living, and that deception, whatever the motive, is an immoral and unchristian act."[2] Nevertheless, Peter Leach, who directed those Fosse Way excavations in 1990, commented that there was "no reason to doubt the authenticity or provenance of the amulet at the time of its discovery". Fellow director Ian Ferris said, "It was found by a professional archaeologist. It is difficult to see how somebody could have placed it without breaking into the site."

Somerset County Council reported that the British Museum carried out a series of tests on the pendant's metal composition in the 1990s; "attempts to date the object proved inconclusive, which led to doubts being raised over its authenticity." However, after the Council recently gave authorisation for further tests to be conducted, Dr Matthew Ponting of the University of Liverpool re-examined the piece, using *inductively coupled plasma atomic emission spectrometry* (ICP-AES). Two samples of the pendant's metal "were found to be inconsistent with Roman silver, but are consistent with silver produced in the nineteenth century or later. This information strongly suggests that the piece does not date from Roman times. It has also been revealed that the silver disk and adjoining rivet have been constructed using silver from different sources."[3]

Stephen Minnitt, Somerset County Council's Acting Head of Museums, said that they can confirm that "the artefact is almost certainly not the rare Christian artefact it was first believed to be. Experts are now '99 per cent certain' that the amulet is not genuine, and it is possible that we may never be able to say with certainty how it came to be buried in Shepton Mallet." The pendant remains at the county museum in Taunton, though this is closed for refurbishment, only re-opening in 2010.

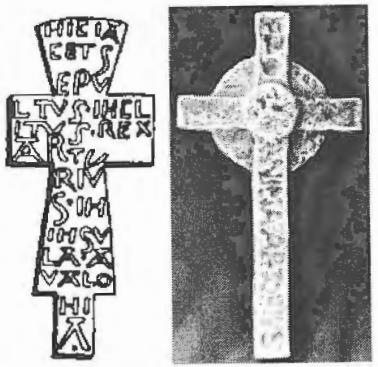
Deeply dispirited by the cloud under which he found himself, Quentin Hutchinson resigned from the field unit in 1991, leaving the profession in 2000. "I'm not an expert on Roman silver, so in that sense I can't say whether the amulet is genuine, but what I do know is that it came out of an untouched grave. My suspicion is that the real problem is that the amulet is unique. Because it doesn't fit their understanding of the period, [the authorities] are determined to believe that it cannot be genuine. The truth is I wish I'd never found it, because it ruined my life."

We've been here before, haven't we? The famous **Glastonbury Cross**, marked in Latin with the words "Here the famous king Arthur lies buried in the Isle of Avalon", was also claimed to have been buried in or above a grave, the discoverers later branded hoaxers and the object subsequently declared a rampant fake. Of course, now we will never know, because the cross disappeared in the 18th century.

[2] Dr Martin Henig "Chi-rho cross from Shepton Mallet" *Church Times* (October 3 2008) http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/content.asp?id=64218

[3] "New evidence solves ancient riddle" Somerset County Council news release (September 2008) http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/latestnews/pressreleases/details.cfm?releaseID=1575

And, more recently, self-styled "Arthurian historian" Alan Wilson found a stone at St Peter-super-Montem at Mynydd y Gaer in South Wales inscribed REX ARTORIVS FILI MAVRICIVS which – contrary to his belief – reads not "King Arthur, son of Mauricius" but the more illiterate phrase "King Artorius Mauricius of the son". Furthermore, in 1990 he also amazingly found a silver cross inscribed PRO ANIMA ARTORIVS which again doesn't read "For the soul of Arthur" as he believes but "Arthur for the soul". Sadly, because of inherent inconsistencies, not to mention a distinct lack of provenance, none of these objects provides evidence of Arthur. And one of them, the silver cross, by an extraordinary coincidence was discovered in the same year as that other silver cross in Shepton Mallet. ☙



OUT OF DARKNESS

From being a Cinderella period in British archaeology, the so-called **Dark Ages** seems to be having a resurgence in the pages of respected specialist journals like *British Archaeology* and *Current Archaeology*, and in the publications of regional archaeological trusts, not to mention on popular archaeology TV programmes.

Gwithian, on the north Cornwall coast, and within sight of Godrevy lighthouse, was a multi-period site dug by a young Charles Thomas in the 1950s. Unlike many other Dark Age sites producing imported pottery of the 5th and 6th centuries, Gwithian wasn't of regal status but a sort of industrial estate, producing its own local hand-made pottery, metalworking in iron and bronze, and working bone and leather. Full analysis of the Bronze Age, post-Roman and medieval landscape was only recently tackled, including a series of radiocarbon dates that give the first phase of the Dark Age site a range from the 5th to the 7th centuries. In total the 3000 potsherds excavated in the 1950s make it the largest **assemblage of Dark Age pottery**, and reveal the coastal site to of critical significance in linking North Cornwall to the Eastern Mediterranean.[4]

In the decade that the Portable Antiquities Scheme has been in operation metal-detecting has added over 68,000 Roman coins to the database, making it possible to look at the 4th to 6th centuries in a new light. Britain has more **late Roman silver hoards** than any other province in the Empire, with many of the coins being "clipped". The clipping of silver *siliquae* to make copies implies that the locals were "trying to maintain a silver currency at a time when the stock of metal was declining", and current thinking is that clipping occurred in the early 5th century, in the reign of Constantine III (407-411) and just after. Because at least one late hoard includes bronze coins, it could provide evidence of "a gold, silver and bronze currency functioning for a significant time after AD 410", when the Romans officially abandoned Britain, perhaps until around 430. In addition, a number of later 6th-century Byzantine bronze coins have been found, mostly in south-western Britain, underscoring the links with the eastern Mediterranean that imported pottery has implied, though probably not suggesting that they were used as currency.[5]

Vindolanda, one of the forts on Hadrian's Wall, has produced archaeological evidence that two massive granaries, with some of the walls surviving to a height of around five feet, were being used as accommodation from the 5th to the 8th centuries, "proving that Vindolanda continued to be occupied long after the end of Roman rule in Britain".[6]

Just to the south of **St Davids** in west

[4] *CA 220* (July 2008) 12-21
[5] *CA 220* (July 2008) 38-43
[6] *CA 221* (August 2008) 5

Wales is the well of St Non, the legendary mother of the patron saint of Wales (her name simply means "nun"). Surrounding the site is the possible remains of a stone circle, while a cross-marked stone dates from the 7th or 8th century, but no evidence of the woman herself. In the medieval *Life of St David* St Non was reported to have left a mark "impressed as on wax" on a stone with her hand as she gave birth, a stone reputedly built into the chapel marking where he was born. A stone with a prehistoric **cup mark** has now been discovered in the chapel ruined walls, possibly confirming the source of the legend though not, of course, literal historic evidence.[7]

Pembrokeshire continues to yield more details of ordinary life in the Dark Ages. A chapel building at **Porth Clew**, Freshwater East, which dates back to the 13th century, "sits in an enclosure formed of several substantial ditches", notes the Dyfed Archaeological Trust,[8] following investigations in the summer of 2008, though these are awaiting scientific dating. The chapel is associated with a substantial **cemetery**, with perhaps different phases of use. "The burials are typical of those which we would expect to see in the Early Medieval period (5th-10th centuries AD) [...] The extent of the cemetery, and the density of burials within it, suggests a substantial population in the area." The associated domestic settlement has yet to be located, however.

Porth Clew is one of Pembrokeshire's early Christian **coastal chapels**, "important for pilgrimage, for the development of the Christian church, and for worship", say the excavators. "They were probably also markers in the landscape, used for navigation by the small vessels which would have been travelling up and down the coast."[9]

[7] *CA 223* (October 2008) 5
[8] Dyfed Archaeological Trust proclaims itself as "Wales' leading and most respected fieldwork ... at the forefront in conducting topographic surveys". http://dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/
[9] Richard Jones "An early medieval cemetery at Porth Clew, Freshwater East, Pembrokeshire" *Dyfed Archaeological Trust Newsletter 9* (Autumn 2008)

Debbie Bardo, whose post-grad MA thesis is on Early Medieval Churches and Norman Land Acquisition in the Vale of Glamorgan, researched five different churches in a small geographical area. Two, **Llanilltud Fawr** (Llantwit Major) and **Llancarfan** are well integrated into the landscape, continuity being one of the major reasons, although she believes that it was not just from the Roman period. "Continuity seems to stretch through the prehistoric period, as there is evidence at both these sites for Iron Age settlements," she writes in a letter to *British Archaeology*.

"At another early site at **Llanmaes** (also dedicated to St Cadog) we have Bronze Age as well as Iron Age evidence. One of my theories is that there is also some purpose or ritual (close to water / rivers / springs and erected in natural groves or hollows), perhaps an acknowledgement to their historic past, and that is why certain areas in the landscape were chosen."[10]

The Roman **amphitheatre** in **Chester**, which was excavated in the 1960s, has recently been re-assessed. After two phases of use in the Roman period, a period of uncertain function follows between the 3rd century and the 11th or 12th century when there is little or no dateable evidence. A timber "platform" noted in the 60s and a small timber building were among the final of several phases of activity "probably representing fairly intensive occupation over an extended period". Archaeologists from English Heritage suggest that "the fact that [entrances were] blocked ... perhaps indicates remodelling of the amphitheatre as a Dark Age fortress – the seat of a local warlord or petty king". This scenario fits in well with the fact that in the 7th century St John's church was sited immediately outside the east entrance, implying a defended settlement.[11]

Horcott Quarry in Gloucestershire has been revealing a multi-phase settlement area from the Early Iron Age through Romano-British to Early and Middle Saxon periods. The Saxon settlement

[10] Debbie Bardo "Ancient Glamorgan" *British Archaeology 102* (September-October 2008) 11
[11] *CA 224* (November 2008) 18-25

directly overlay the Iron Age settlement, causing great difficulties in identifying both postholes and pottery from the two phases. In the late 3rd century AD a large cemetery was laid out to the east of the Romano-British farm settlement, with adult and infant graves differentiated and a wide range of interments. A century later the cemetery went out of use and an Anglo-Saxon settlement with sunken-featured buildings and hall-like structures was established. The evidence for continuity is extraordinary in a site notable for its scale and complexity.[12]

Jesus Christ was supposedly brought by Joseph of Arimathea to **Looe Island**, also known as St George's Island, off the coast near Looe in south Cornwall; this legend may have been fabricated in the 12th century by Glastonbury monks when the island was being touted as a rival place of pilgrimage to St Michael's Mount, suggested a Channel 4 *Time Team* programme.[13]

The 22-acre island (which was bequeathed to the Cornwall Wildlife Trust in 2004[14]) was occupied from the 12th to the 14th centuries as an "offshoot" of Glastonbury Abbey; two chapels were established, both dedicated to St Michael, one on the island and one on the mainland opposite, to administer to pilgrims: Professor Nicholas Orme has compared Glastonbury's activities to a kind of theme park.[15] Nevertheless, both sites proved to have earlier origins.

Time Team explored both of the chapel sites, finding structures pre-dating the later medieval additions (principally chancels added to naves). A burial from under the chancel wall suggests that the chapel site may have been a pilgrimage centre well before the later medieval refurbishment and extension, with two post holes and a rock cut feature – on a slightly different alignment to the later chapel – interpreted as evidence of an earlier wooden chapel.

On the island, Time Team also found evidence of later refurbishment and modification of the earlier chapel. A ditch around the top of the hill, forming an oval enclosure, produced Roman finds in its top layer, including various coins, perhaps a hoard, suggesting that it could be a prehistoric feature reused not only in the Roman period but also to enclose the chapel in the Christian period. Although no evidence of the Christ child's putative sightseeing trip was revealed, the two sites' significance in the early medieval period and earlier was a bonus, further testament to the extraordinary ability of manufactured legends to hint at a historical reality. ☙

GRAIL QUEST IN ICELAND ...

Back in January 2008, it was reported that a group of scientists believed the **grail** "and other lost objects" guarded by the Knights Templar might be located in southwest Iceland, in the rural district of Hrunamannahreppur.

Architect Thórarinn Thórarinsson wrote to the district council asking permission for both himself and Giancarlo Gianazza, an Italian cryptographer, to search for the treasure there. According to the webiste *visir.is*, Gianazza believes he has found clues as

[12] *CA 224* (November 2008) 34-40
[13] *Time Team* 2009 season programme 9 "Hermit Harbour: Looe Island, Cornwall" first screened 1 March 2009
[14] http://www.channel4.com/history/microsites/T/timeteam/2009/looe/index.html
[15] Ironically, Glastonbury Abbey itself might itself have become an early 20th-century theme park if an American syndicate had managed to buy it at auction in 1907: Tina Rowe "How Glastonbury Abbey nearly became *Arthurland*" *Western Daily Press* December 2 2006

to where the **Holy Grail** is hidden from Dante's poems and artwork by Leonardo and other Renaissance painters.

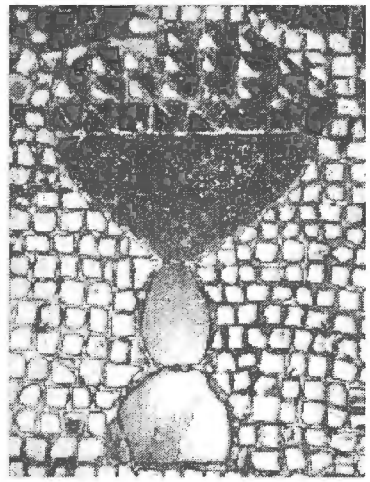
A central plank in their argument is a claimed correlation between Leonardo's painting of the *Last Supper* (the notorious "V" shape between Christ and St John) and an aerial photograph of the area. Not only does Leonardo's *Last Supper* allegedly supply outlines matching the landscape at Kjölur, but Botticelli's *Primavera* also provides a series of numeric symbols forming an apparently significant date, March 14 1319.

Moreover, both Dante's *Divine Comedy* and "an ancient Icelandic script" suggest that Snorri Sturluson (author of the famous *Prose Edda*) was accompanied at the Althingi parliament in 1217 by "eighty armoured Eastmen", who Gianazza thinks might have been Templars; Sturluson could then have assisted them with finding a good hiding place for their treasure, Gianazza concluded. He believed that the treasure was located "in a five-meter-large secret underground dome by Skipholtskrókar near Kjölur mountain pass" created by the Templars.

Architect Thórarinsson's letter told the council that the two had "investigated that place since 2004 with field work both in summer and winter and undertaken extensive geological measurements." Thórarinnsson was subsequently given permission by the Hrunamannahreppur local authority to dig a two-metre-deep and five-metre-wide ditch near Skipholtskrókar. "Although we have our doubts, we think this project is exciting," the head of the local authority Ísólfur Gylfi Pálmason said. "It is at least a different kind of project than what we have to deal with on a daily basis."

Then in July 2008, it was reported that the team were finally doing a geophysical survey in Skipholtskrókur to search for the mysterious underground dome. Sadly, however, when Gianazza's team searched the area, according to the history magazine *Sagan Öll* "they only found water and no evidence of a secret underground dome" or, presumably, of the grail.

They put a brave face on it all, believing that during their expedition they were able "to gather enough evidence to continue their quest in a larger area in Iceland's highlands" in 2009. Gianazza remained confident that the Grail is in Iceland: undeterred by all the setbacks, he was reported to be planning to return and survey a wider area of Iceland's highlands.[16] [17] ☙



... IN THE CATACOMBS ...

"A cross inlaid in the floor of a library marks the spot where Indiana Jones has to dig to access the ancient catacombs of Venice in the film *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*," a *National Geographic* article reminds us, eventually revealing a secret that eventually leads him to the **grail**. Unfortunately, as the head of the Archaeological Superintendence of Veneto Luigi Fozzati reminds us, "There are no catacombs in Venice, as the town rises on wood piles in the middle of the saltwater Venetian Lagoon. There is no room for underground chambers or passages, and only a few buildings have a basement." Venice's cemetery is found on a small island, while the oldest tombs of VIPs are located in churches.

As we've already reported, amateur

[16] *Sagan Oll / Iceland Review*, quoted in *Withowinde 148*, the Journal of the English Companions, Winter 2008
[17] "Quest for Holy Grail Begins in Iceland This Month" July 18 2008; http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news/?cat_id=16539&ew_0_a_id=311381

archaeologist Alfredo Barbagallo has claimed that the Holy Grail may be hidden in a Roman catacomb underneath the Basilica of **San Lorenzo Fuori le Mura**, near the tomb of St Lawrence who was martyred in 258. Pope Sixtus II is said to have entrusted the Holy Grail to St Lawrence to save it from persecution in the time of the emperor Valerian. Lawrence either put the chalice in a safe place or sent it to Spain before his martyrdom. However, Barbagallo thinks the Grail remained in Rome, and that it was buried in a tunnel under the basilica dedicated to St. Lawrence, where it remains to this day.

However, Vatican authorities have denied permission to open the catacomb and look for the chalice, according to the *National Geographic*. "There isn't any solid evidence behind Barbagallo's claims," states Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai, rector of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology, while other authorities remind us that early Christians were not in the habit of burying objects with the dead, only inscriptions and human remains.[18] ☙

... AND IN PIEDMONT

There is another belief that the **grail** is really hidden under the medieval tower in the small town of **Torre Canavese** in the Piedmont region of Italy. Peter E Presford, editor of the castle magazine *Postern*, has translated and passed on the information about this which he found in *I misteri del Piemonte sotteraneo* ("The Mysteries of Subterranean Piedmont") by Mauro Minola.

The gist of this is that Torre Canavese, just south-west of Ivrea, north of Turin, takes its name from a medieval tower, and that the locals believe there is a room or gallery under the tower, linked to a network of tunnels to the hills, which holds a treasure. The story apparently led to a conference "dedicated to the 'Grail'" held in the town "in recent years".

The theory as to how the Grail could have got there is that in 1147 Corrado and Bonifacio, Counts of the Monferrato area and of Canovese, went on Crusade. Corrado got the title of King of Jerusalem and received the Grail. In 1224 Gugliemo (William) VI (presumably another Count of the Monferrato) took the Grail to Italy, to Ivrea – another theory is he took it to the church of Gran Madre de Dio in Turin – and hid it in the church of Sant'Ulderico there, where a stained-glass window still shows it. The Bishop, Bonifacio del Torre, then hid it beneath the Canavese Tower as a safer hiding place.[19]

There are hints of the presence of the Grail on the tower exterior, and *I Misteri* mentions that a faded fresco on a roadside shrine shows St John holding a chalice with a serpent rising from it; it's believed that the *Sacro Calice* confers immortality, according to the website of Mariano Tomatis.[20]

Perhaps all the places that claim to have the Grail should be twinned with each other, as having something in common; this is more than most of the places in Europe, and beyond, that the Huddersfield area is twinned with seem to have: the sole connection with one in Kazakhstan seems to be that a senior councillor married a woman from there! ☙ *S Sneyd*

[18] Maria Cristina Valsecchi "What's Inside Rome's Ancient Catacombs?" http://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/ancient/catacombs.html

[19] The date of 1147 doesn't tie up. According to Runciman's *A History of the Crusades* William and his son Conrad – Corrado – set off for the east in 1185, but Conrad lingered in Constantinople, and didn't reach Tyre till 1188, held it against Saladin, became King of Jerusalem in 1192, and was murdered by the Assassins before his coronation. Boniface – Bonifacio – became King of Thessalonia in early 1205. An earlier William did go on Crusade in 1176, but died soon after.

[20] http://www.marianotomatis.it/graal/graal.php?id=3

Reviews

Norris J Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert
A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes
D S Brewer 2008 £19.99 / $37.95
978 1 84384 161 6 PB 242pp

We have a lot to be thankful to Chrétien de Troyes for: without him there would be no Lancelot, no Camelot, no Holy Grail; he virtually kickstarted the romance tradition through his use of a vernacular language, French; and of the six surviving texts ascribed to him five have, to a greater or lesser extent, an Arthurian background. So, one of the great literary what-ifs must hinge on whether Arthurian literature, both medieval and modern, would have have been what it is if not for Chrétien.

This *Companion*, one of D S Brewer's invaluable Arthurian Studies series, was first published in 2005 in hardback, joining similar studies of the Lancelot-Grail cycle, the *Gawain*-poet and Malory. Seventeen especially-commissioned and authoritative essays examine the historical and literary and contexts to Chrétien's works, the six key texts (including *Philomena*, ascribed to Chrétien) and then the far-reaching responses to his innovation in creating what is termed here "the Breton romance".

Philomena, a dark tale based on a story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, introduced a leitmotif that runs through all his known romances, that of love and desire. In a later romance, *Cligés*, Chrétien lists his previous works in French: *Erec et Enide*, *The Commandments of Ovid*, Ovid's *The Art of Love* and *The Shoulder Bite*, *King Marc and Ysalt the Blonde*, and *The Metamorphosis of the Hoopoe, the Swallow and the Nightingale* (the latter almost certainly the original of the extant *Philomena*, attributed to a Cretiens li Gois). These split into two groups, those based on Ovid and those deriving from Breton tales, and it is the latter group that largely survives to this day, though sadly without the Mark and Iseult narrative.

The essays discuss the poet's significance as an innovator, from *Erec et Enide* "the first Arthurian romance" which introduces Arthur's court as a frame for the narrative and demonstrates sophistication in its portrayal of individual psychology, through *Cligés*, the introduction of Lancelot in *Le Chevalier de la Charette*, Yvain's exploits in *Le Chevalier au Lion* and Perceval and Gawain's quests in Chrétien's unfinished *Le Conte du Graal*. As enlightening as the academic studies of individual texts are – with their examinations of subject matter, meaning, interlace and language, with translations – the assessments of Chrétien's legacy in succeeding centuries are equally insightful, though it would be invidious to single out particular essays for praise: all provide informed interpretations plus delightful background gems (such as Lady Guest providing the first modern transcription of *Yvain*, in her 1838 *Mabinogion* translation). For specialists and non-specialists alike this must be the ultimate Chrétien *vademecum*.

Chris Lovegrove

D J Tyrer *ed* **Grail 2** Atlantean Publishing 2006
£3.99 payable to DJ Tyrer from 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea Essex, SS1 2UY (overseas orders £4.99 sterling payable to DJ Tyrer or US$10 in dollar bills)

After waiting an extended period of time, the second volume of *Grail* is finally in my hands. As soon as I began reading the poetry and short stories, I quickly realized that the wait had been worthwhile. There is more poetry and more literature, most of which has been enhanced by additional artwork.

Steve Sneyd's poetry offers five cryptic interpretations of the grail's power and existence that continue to maintain the high standard set by his previous publications. Aeronwy Dafies' contributions include three poems, two about the arduous task of achieving the quest for the grail, and the excellent opening short story, *La Damosel de la Graal* that features a female version of the Fisher King and the manner in which she chooses her successor.

If you are inclined to enter an order of Druids, Cardinal Cox presents the short play that you may be required to perform in order to become an initiate. He also has the honor of having his poem on the first page. In a very short piece, D S Davidson explains why the difficult choice to not reveal the grail to the world had to be made

and he delivers a powerful closing punch to this magazine with his mini-epic, grail quest short story, *The Light Darkness*.

Joe Miller's *Keep the Faith* correlates Percival's quest for the grail with a modern man's (Dave) longing to live a life with purpose and meaning. For both protagonists hope of achieving their goal seems to be a fleeting chimera.

The Passenger by J C Hartley is an offbeat, though provoking short story about the keepers of the grail and the changing of the guardian. Could one of the main characters be King Arthur incognito?

Publisher/author D J Tyrer's entries are a humorous tale about two bumbling young detectives that come up against a pair of incompetent immortal villains that are trying to get their hands on a secret codex that dates back several thousand years and an excellent but rather pessimistic poem about the final judgment when evil in the world takes on the guardians of the grail.

The Prize, written by AR Leonard, tells in verse the story of a Teutonic war lord that must recover the grail for a German king in order to secure the love of a maiden.

In a very unorthodox farce, *Rainbow Revels*, Neil K Henderson unfolds the history of Fish worshipping, I think.

Last but certainly not least, Pamela Harvey enthralls the reader with a tale from the beginnings of life during the ice ages incorporating dragons and gods with predictions for the future, including the coming of King Arthur.

There can be no doubt that Mr Tyrer used the time between the publication of *Grail 1* and *Grail 2* wisely. His choice of material is excellent and the presentation of the mix of poetry and story telling keeps the reader turning pages. If you have not yet purchased a copy, I suggest you do so immediately. This small press publication is a gem. I look forward eagerly to the appearance of *Grail 3*, which is scheduled for release sometime in early 2009.

Larry Mendelsberg

Merlin

Shine Television for BBC Wales
Thirteen-part series commencing September 20 2008 on BBC1
Executive producers Julie Gardner (BBC Wales) *and* Bethan Jones *Story editor* Polly Buckle *Starring* John Hurt, Richard Wilson, Anthony Head *and* Colin Morgan

I began watching Merlin on Saturday evenings simply because it was set in an Arthurian world. If I were being honest I did not expect much from the series, particularly as I remembered sitting through some episodes of the BBC's terrible version of Robin Hood, which aired in the same time slot as Merlin. After the first episode I was disappointed as it seemed to be pushed very much towards children, was full of plot holes and the visual look was rather silly.

The element of the series that annoyed me most was the changes made to the traditional Arthurian legend. In the BBC series, Merlin is the same age as Arthur while the Guinevere character is far removed from anything I had previously seen. I don't want to go on too much about 'colour blind casting' as my annoyance with actress Angel Coulby, who played Gwen, had nothing to do with the colour of her skin and more with the dullness of her character. However, many posters on the IMDB website seemed to feel that the issue of her race and the other historical authenticity problems managed to undermine the rest of the program.

Things began to change for me after about the fourth episode of the series when I had lowered my expectations and started to accept the series for what is was, an entertaining family adventure loosely based on Arthurian legend and set in a mythical land rather than a historical setting. When I just tried to enjoy Merlin I found myself being pulled in by it, particularly as actors such as Richard Wilson, Bradley James and Katie McGrath were all quite watchable in their roles. Even Colin Morgan in the central role was not too bad, although I suspect he's no Hollywood great in the making.

After watching all 13 episodes I would have to suggest that Merlin has been a success. The series had respectable viewing figures, will be shown on NBC in America and has already been renewed by the Beeb for a second season. Overall, the

writing is not brilliant and I doubt it will gain the wide appeal of a show like *Doctor Who* but what pleased me most about Merlin was that my 12-year-old niece seemed enthralled by it, and I soon realised that the series was getting a whole new generation interested in Arthuriana and that certainly can't be a bad thing!

Alan Campbell[1]

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Translated by Simon Armitage Ian McKellen *narrator* Sam West as Gawain
BBC Radio 4 February 20 2009

Radio 4 did another Christmas-set item as its Afternoon Play, the latest of several repeats. Obviously some had to be cut to fit the ¾-hour time slot, but nothing vital. This seemed a lively version, and the alliteration was effectively kept without, except on a handful of occasions, being hammer hammer hammer or over the top.

The register vocabulary-wise had its inconsistencies, some oddly bureaucatic lingo word choices (*eg* "premises" for the hall at Camelot!) and in other cases anachronistic terms ("adolescent", "megablow") and phrases ("hadn't a clue", "such goings on", "just the job", and one which really did jar, "keeping his cool") but they certainly weren't enough to spoil the experience, and hopefully for those new to the story will have hooked them and maybe start the process of recruiting future Arthurians!

Steve Sneyd

bookworm The **Shadow Lands trilogy** by Simon Lister is "an entirely original re-working of the Arthurian Tale – the continuation of the legend of the Celtic Warlord who fought the Saxons", according to the author's website. "This is the tale of Arthur's return at the hour of Britain's greatest need and it is set in a future, thousands of years after a catastrophic event, where the world no longer revolves on its axis and where summer is six months of daylight, and winter six months of darkness." The catastrophe released a captive Merdynn (sic), who then "gathered the few survivors together and started to reform the world as he had previously known it". The sparse population lives a Dark Age existence in the ruins of ancient cities.

The first book, ***Shadow Lands***, begins in a village across "the Causeway" (a passage over the English Channel from France) as the villagers prepare for the annual migration to escape from the coming of winter. "No one is yet aware that a deeper darkness is encroaching from the East." Book Two is entitled ***Causeway***, and the third is ***Haven*** (located in Pembrokeshire where Milford Haven is now). The trilogy was first published in 2007 in Canada by Spire Books (originally PABD: Publish and Be Damned!), and the author sells the trilogy at historical re-enactments around Britain. Or you can buy the books for £20.00 (plus postage) from the website if you'd rather not attend the Battle of Camlann at Tintagel![2]

Barry Dunford is the author of ***Vision of Albion: the Key to the Holy Grail*** (Sacred Connections PB £15.00 464pp illus); as this is further subtitled "Jesus, Mary Magdalene and the Christ Family in the Holy Land of Britain" that may tell you all you need to know about the book, which concludes that "there has been a monumental historical cover-up surrounding the real Jesus story and the true purpose behind His planetary mission". Specifically, this holiest earth was in Scotland, the Albion of the title, at sites such as Iona, Fortingall, Edinburgh and – unsurprisingly – Rosslyn Chapel. Cheques (£15.00 plus £3.50 UK post and packing, airmail Europe £5.00, airmail rest of the world £10.00) are payable in sterling to 'Sacred Connections', Milton of Camserney by Aberfeldy, Perthshire PH15 2JF, or via Paypal from their website www.sacredconnections.co.uk

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[1] On December 13 2008 it was announced that the BBC had re-commissioned *Merlin* for a second series, which begins filming in 2009. This review first appeared on thependragon.co.uk on January 9 2009, re-published with the kind permission of the author: http://www.thependragon.co.uk/alan_campbell.htm?blogentryid=4435378

[2] http://simonlister.co.uk/default.aspx

Kate Pollard 1941-2009

It would be fair to say that if it wasn't for Kate Pollard the Pendragon Society may not be still in existence now to see in its 50th year. Kate, who died aged 67 in hospital in Sydney on January 2nd 2009 after a long fight with breast cancer, was the daughter of Jess Foster, founder and first honorary secretary of the Society. After Jess' death in January 1979 Kate took more and more of a leading role in the Society, not only editing the journal for a period in the late eighties but also propelling forward the excavation and report on the Society's dig at Llanelen in the Gower peninsula for the best part of two decades.[1] It was her energy, enthusiasm and organisation that largely kept the Society viable at a critical time, both in front of and behind the scenes, and it would be hard to overestimate her crucial importance in keeping the Society going. She was made a Life Member at the Cardiff AGM in 1994 in recognition of that essential contribution.

In the nineties she moved to the neighbourhood of Totterdown in Bristol, an area blighted by a highway that was never built, and took on a role of local activist that helped to rekindle the spirit of the community. In 2006 her book *Totterdown Rising: The Story of a Community Enduring and Surviving a Planning Disaster* (Tangent Books, Totterdown Press ISBN 0955352037) was published, documenting local government's misguided and at times illegal attempts to place the motor car above the needs of ordinary Bristolians in the 60s and 70s.

But this was only one facet of her effect on Totterdown; as appreciations make clear, this "whirlwind" will be best remembered for her "kindness, common sense, empathy and organisational skills allied to an extraordinary ability to persuade and cajole the people around her to stop watching the telly and actually do something" and as someone who "understood and could communicate the real value of our communities here in Bristol." She not only had "tremendous enthusiasm for projects she threw herself into, she really was a person who got things done," and she would be forever known for "her warmth and her very sharp sense of humour." One of the founder members of Totterdown Residents Environmental and Social Action, she edited the local newsletter *The Talk Of Totterdown* and helped deliver 2,000 copies of it in the area. For this she won a *Bristol Evening Post* award in 2007 as "best volunteer" at a ceremony celebrating Bristol's best newsletters.

Kate, who was born in Woking, qualified as an art teacher at Winchester Art College; her artistic expertise not only graced many early editions of *Pendragon* but were also valued by community centres in Shirehampton and Southville and by the Bristol-based Puppet People. She is survived by her children Zoë (who now lives in Australia) and Rob who, with her two grandchildren, lives in New Zealand.[2] ☙

[1] Kate Pollard "The Twentieth Year of Llanelen" *Pendragon XXIII* No 4 (Autumn 1993) 10-11

[2] http://thebristolblogger.wordpress.com/2009/01/08/kate-pollard/#comments and http://www.thisisbristol.co.uk/totterdown/Totterdown-pays-tribute-community-worker-Kate-Pollard/article-620809-detail/article.html

the board

Arthuriana in Popular Culture

SCREEN NEWS

In a recent *National Trust Magazine* their media-liaison officer declared, "The most common accusation to throw at TV drama or film is lack of historical accuracy. Few, if any, films make claims to be completely accurate. Of course this does not matter when the figure is King Arthur because, to some extent, you can make it up."[1]

The makers of the TV series ***Merlin***, while not actually filming in a National Trust property (location work was at the castle of Pierrefonds in France and in Wales), obviously took this as an *imprimatur* to do what they liked with the Arthurian legend, leading to howls of protest from some quarters and amusement from others. Sub-editors had fun – "Saturday knight magic" and "hotter than Potter?" went the *Radio Times*, for instance – but some readers ranted over its "Disney fairy-tale feel" and "anachronistic language", describing it as "a nondescript sword-and-sorcery yarn"; others thought it "totally fabulous escapism" and the saga as "fair game for any reinterpretation of the characters".

The critics were gleeful as they sharpened their quills; the *Times* reviewer thought Camelot had become "a stage for scenes culled from every teen romance show that clogs up children's TV", but also remarked that his nine-year-old daughter thought it "a scary comedy".[2] See this issue's Reviews.

US cable TV network Chiller offered three airings on February 23 2009 of an adaptation of Roger Zelazny's short story ***The Last Defender of Camelot*** for *The Twilight Zone* in 1986. The episode is apparently also available on DVD as part of *The Twilight Zone* Season 1 (1985-1986), according to Michael A Torregrossa (of The Society for the Study of Popular Culture and the Middle Ages) on Arthurnet. Winner of the 1980 Balrog Award for short fiction, *The Last Defender of Camelot* was also the title of a collection of classic Zelazny short stories including the title story, a sort of robot tale explaining how Sir **Launcelot** survived the thousand years after Camelot's fall to confront a half-mad **Merlin** still trying to meddle in world affairs.

French TV series ***Kaamelott*** has been broadcast since 2005 on channel M6 in primetime, building its audience base up to 5 million, and also airing in Switzerland, Belgium and Canada. Melding fantasy and comedy, it uses similar techniques to BBC's *Robin Hood* and *Merlin* series by employing modern language and situations while ostensibly being set in the 5th century. From the fifth season the mood becomes considerably darker as the inevitable crisis looms.

Alexandre Astier plays King Arthur; in his spare time he is also writer, director and composer for the project, and hopes to follow on with a trilogy of films about Arthur (a tall order as episodes are only three-and-a-half minutes long!

Renaissance is a 2006 black-and-white film directed by Christian Volckman, using "motion capture" and computer graphics to create the film's look. Set in Paris in the year 2054, every person's actions are checked and filmed in Big Brother fashion by the city's largest company **Avalon**, which exports eternal youth and beauty. A young female scientist is kidnapped and Avalon pressurises a tough policeman to find their missing employee as quickly as possible. However, he's not the only one on a quest for her, and the viewer discovers that she is involved in a conspiracy in which she holds the key to a secret that puts a question mark over humanity's future, the Renaissance Protocol.

The film, funded by Disney with $3m from Miramax, reputedly cost €14m over six years, but made little over £1m

[1] Harvey Edgington "Film" *The National Trust Magazine* (Summer 2008) 15

[2] Mick Hume "Wiz kid fails to cast spell" *Times* September 22 2008

worldwide at the box office. The BBC website dismisses it as *"Blade Runner* with a baguette under its arm"; other than purloining the name Avalon and its association with the Otherworld there seems to be little that's Arthurian here.

THE BOARDS

A production of Wagner's ***Parsifal*** at the Bayreuth Festival gained a five-star accolade from the *Guardian*'s seasoned critic Martin Kettle.[3] Opening the 2008 festival, this grail-themed opera, staged by Stefan Herheim, "continually poses the direct question of whether Wagner's own Bayreuth legacy ... can ever be morally cleansed" of its nasty political overtones and associations through its "theatrical deconstructions of Parsifal, of German history, of Wagner and, above all, of the way they are woven together in Bayreuth itself."

Opening with black-winged angels surrounding Wagner's deathbed, a boy in a sailor suit rushes out onto a "fascinating path through a forest of symbols and allusions ... that takes us ... through the first world war and the Third Reich and on to postwar Germany and the present day". The first-night audience included several Wagner generations, Chancellor Angela Merkel, politicians and industrialists, all of whom were obliged to confront the production's moral challenges.

Cardigan Theatre presented eight performances of their annual Christmas show in late December 2008 at Theatr Mwldan in Cardigan. Anthony Stevens' pantomime was entitled ***Merlin and the Dragon's Egg***, with this synopsis: "Alun, assisted by his brother Jack, sets off on a quest to find a magic egg in order to win the hand of the fair Princess Rebecca. The Egg is guarded by dragons and the wicked Zanderblitz with his bungling assistants Law, Norder and Bill are also hot on the trail. Queen Teabag and Jack's mother, Mam, also add to the mayhem." Where Merlin fitted in isn't clear, but what *is* clear is that the Arthurian legend is alive and well and still being randomly plundered for motifs!

There was a musical on tour in the United States in early 2009 based on a popular American children's book series called ***Magic Tree House*** and set in Camelot. Siblings Jack and Annie time-travel in a magic tree house controlled by a benevolent Morgan Le Fey. The play's characters include Arthur, Guinevere, Merlin, Bedivere, Lancelot, Percival, Galahad and Bors as well as Morgan, plus a cast of magical characters. The children's book series includes at least forty titles and apparently began in 1992, although not all of the books are Arthurian. A subset of the series includes twelve titles referred to as "The Merlin Missions" and began in 2001 with *Christmas in Camelot*.[4]

This next could be regarded as either a threat or a tentative promise! Rick Wakeman, on his Planet Rock show (*Rick's Place*) said on February 14 that, if his forthcoming multimedia show *The Six Wives of Henry VIII at Hampton Court* in May goes well, he hopes to revive, ideally on ice again, the staging of ***The Myths and Legends of the Court of King Arthur***. He added that last time it was an accident that, in the scene where the knights all kill each other, one was left over and had to kill himself, but this time it will be deliberately built in. (On October 18, 2008, he admitted that in a pop quiz for some TV show – *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* perhaps? – he failed to identify one of his own songs, "Merlin the Magician"!)

BROADCAST

BBC Radio 7 recently did an adaptation of John Masefield's 1935 children's novel ***The Box of Delights*** in instalments. If they mentioned the date it was made, it didn't sound somehow like a 1948 production, which was when the famous radio version was apparently made.[5] The

[3] *Guardian* August 2 2008

[4] Mary Pope Osbourne's *Christmas in Camelot* describes how "Jack and Annie go on a quest to save Camelot, a quest that will prove to a beleaguered King Arthur that children and imagination really can make a difference." http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/magictreehouse/missions.html

[5] According to *Wikipedia*, there was an earlier adaptation for BBC radio, "staple Christmas fare" for Children's Hour in the late 1940s. "A later radio version featured Donald Sinden as Abner Brown and Spike Milligan as Arnold of Todi", presumably the version broadcast by BBC Radio 7.

1984 TV version, now out on DVD, starred early Doctor Who incarnation the late Patrick Troughton as the mysterious Punch & Judy man, Cole Hawkins, who gives the box to the boy hero Kay Harker to look after and keep safe from evil priest Abner Brown (Robert Stephens).

In the book there is a scene where, on the run at midnight, the boy finds a magic pony which enables him to evade Brown's team of "wolves of the Gulf" (that is, pirates) by taking him into the past, to King Arthur's camp; here he encounters Sir Lancelot, who addresses him as Master Kay and helps him on his way to get back to the present and a dawn rendezvous with someone who could help his continued escape.[6]

Simon Armitage's ***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*** continues to be regular re-broadcast: see Reviews for an assessment.

EVENTS

Pendragon member Dave Burnham spoke to the Wagner Society Manchester about the origins of the **Parsifal** legend back in November 2006, reminding them how much the mid-19th century was steeped in a medieval revival, taking them back both to the 7th-century origins of the story of Peredur and the 12th-century Renaissance, and, forming the core of his presentation, noting what Wagner did with the story. On October 13th 2008 his subject was **Tristan**, and the Society was exhorted not to miss a "fascinating exploration of Wagner's most beloved opera" in Dave's talk, entitled *Tristan – the Real Story* (this talk forms the basis of Dave's article this issue).[7]

The 2009 **Popular Culture and the Middle Ages** congress at Kalamazoo, Michigan, includes sessions with Arthurian themes, such as "Contextualizing *King Arthur Was a Gentleman* (1942): the Matter of Britain as World War II Propaganda" given by Michael A Torregrossa of the Society for the Study of Popular Culture and the Middle Ages; "A New Chivalry for a More Civilized Age: T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*" by Caroline Womack, Washtenaw Community College; and, as part of a Pedagogy and Medievalism round table session, "Teaching the Medieval Monstrous: Cinematic Grendel and the Green Knight" by Lorraine Kochanske Stock of the University of Houston (all May 8 2009).

Underlining transatlantic fascination with European traditions was a recent call for papers (250-word proposals invited by June 15) for the **Mid Atlantic Popular / American Cultural Association** (MAPACA) Conference (November 5-7 2009) in Boston, Massachusetts, in particular those "dealing with any aspect of Medieval or Renaissance representation in popular culture". Medieval and Renaissance literature "continues to attract modern audiences with new works in fiction, film, and other areas, whether through adaptation or incorporation of themes and characters", and so MACAPA encourages discussion of, say, modern portrayals of any aspect of **Arthurian legends** or Shakespeare, modern versions or adaptations of any other Medieval or Renaissance writer, modern investigations of historical figures such as Eleanor of Aquitaine and the Tudors, Medieval or Renaissance links to fantasy fiction, gaming, comics, video games and the Internet, plus applications in education and drama. Further details from Diana Vecchio, Senior Lecturer of College Writing at Widener University, One University Place, Chester, Pennsylvania 19013 or via dmvecchio@widener.edu

From October 20 2009 to January 2010 France's national library la Bibliothèque Nationale will be mounting an exhibition titled ***La Légende du roi Arthur*** looking at all aspects of, naturally, the Arthurian legend. Their website is hosting a taster, with interactive features allowing you to browse illuminated manuscripts. The site

[6] As I recall, this brief Arthurian encounter didn't seem to serve much plot purpose except to put across the idea that, if the Box got into Abner's hands, it would threaten past and future as well as present, that is, in this case it would be a threat to Arthur and his court. *S Sneyd*

[7] Wagner Society Manchester Newsletter 14 (September 2008) www.wagnersocietymanchester.co.uk

is only in French, and a little confusing to navigate around, but well worth the effort! We have already mentioned ***Le roi Arthur, une légende en devenir***, the exhibition mounted at the Champs Libres in Rennes from July 15 2008 to January 4 2009; les Champs Libres at Rennes, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, the médiathèque de Troyes and the château at Chantilly together offer a "voyage around their Arthurian collections" through the medium of this shared site, with "rubrics" developed during the course of 2008 and 2009.[8]

An Arthurian link turned up in a long article, credited to "Max", about **live action role playing**: "Me and my Imaginary Friends, or What Larp [*sic*] Does for Me". This is about the enactment, rather than re-enactment, of actual battles in the countryside of events in a fantasy world "which is an egg with a dragon within... The world is Endreja ... our base is Albion ... our history and world setting is loosely based on Arthurian legend ... wielded Excalibur, for example". The article, in *Banana Wings 36*, gives two websites, one run by **Merlinroute Limited**, trading as the Lorien Trust, the other includes role-playing events such as the setting up of an **Order of the Pendragon**.[9]

NAME GAMES

Merlin-UK, which "specialises in health, saving lives in times of crisis and helping to rebuild shattered health services", has been nominated by Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson for the 2009 Conrad N Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

This annual prize, worth $1.5m, is the world's largest humanitarian award and was established by the Conrad N Hilton Foundation in the US in 1996 to honour a charity or NGO that has made extraordinary contributions to alleviating human suffering anywhere in the world. Merlin has apparently been working in Liberia since 1997 and, extraordinary to report, now helps to deliver a third of the country's health care. "No humanitarian organisation has been more instrumental in rebuilding Liberia's health care system from emergency to recovery than Merlin," the President said. The recipient of the prize will be announced in autumn 2009. Merlin was set up in early 1993 by three young friends – a doctor, a manager and a logistician – to create a specialist British charity to send medical teams into disaster zones.[10]

An amusing item off the radio shows Arthur references turn up in unlikeliest contexts, to put it mildly. On BBC Radio 2's Ken Bruce show on January 30 2009 there was mention of the Florida woman who'd spent $150,000 having South Korean scientists clone her dead Labrador: the dead dog was called **Lancelot**, and the cloned puppy has been named **Lancelot Encore!**

PERIODICALS

In a certain editor's mis-spent youth JLA stood for the Justice League of America, who featured in the DC comic of the same name. But no, we find it now stands for ***The Journal of Late Antiquity***, launched as "the first international English-language journal dedicated to the study of Late Antiquity".

JLA's remit is to provide for the multi-disciplinary coverage of all the methodological, geographical, and chronological facets of Late Antiquity, from the late and post-classical world up to the Carolingian period, and including the late Roman, western European, Byzantine, Sassanid, and Islamic worlds, that is from around 250 to 800. In particular, it aims to "bridge the gap between literary and material culture scholarship", with one of its primary goals "to highlight the status of Late Antiquity as a discrete historical period in its own right".

JLA is published in two approximately 200-page issues per year and is priced at a "miniscule" $30 per year for personal subscriptions, and only $25 per year for students. Further details can be had from the John Hopkins University Press website.[11]

The Heroic Age (ISSN 1526-1867) is the Journal of Early Medieval Northwestern

[8] http://expositions.bnf.fr/arthur/
[9] http://www.lorientrust.co.uk and http://hartsofalbion.co.uk/albion

[10] http://www.alertnet.org/thepeople/members/218926.htm
[11] The John Hopkins University Press http://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_late_antiquity/

Europe. Founded in 1998, its mission statement declares that "*The Heroic Age* is dedicated to the exploration all aspects of early medieval North-western Europe, from a variety of vantage points and disciplines from the beginning of the fourth century through the beginning of the thirteenth." So far this makes it a perfect counterpart to the *JLA*. "By bringing various points of view to the table, we hope to open new vistas of investigation and strengthen ties among early medieval studies and its popular bases." This allows it, for example, to review and take seriously Arthurian material as varied as Chris Gidlow's *The Reign of Arthur*, Nick Higham's *King Arthur* and Mike Ashley's *Mammoth Book of King Arthur*.

"The title 'Heroic Age' is applicable to literary, historical, folkloric studies and the material culture that lies behind the people who lived, wrote, and championed their beliefs and created cultures in the period. We will strive to understand and promote understanding of this dynamic early medieval period." The good news is that the journal is available free to access on the web, at http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/index.php

The ***BBC History Magazine*** for December 2008 (Volume 9 No 12) featured "King Arthur: what do we really know about the legendary hero?" The text was by Simon Young, author of the imaginative *500 AD*, and the magazine's cover asked the pertinent question *Is there a man behind the legend?*

The Supplement is one of a number of periodicals and occasional titles produced by D J Tyrer's Atlantean Publishing venture. Issue 43 (November 2008) is another feast of articles, reviews and news for lovers of eclectic fiction, with items on Georges Simenon and Jeremy Paxman, a Texan singer-songwriter and a crime writer, plus, of course, original fiction and poetry. This has material enough to help you take a sideways glance at how Arthuriana overlaps with fantasy, SF and all that other niche literature. Copies are available for 80p (UK) and $2/€2 (overseas) from 38 Pierrot Steps, 71 Kursaal Way, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2UY.

Chris Lovegrove and Steve Sneyd

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