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Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, Garden Flat,
22 Alma Road, Clifton, BRISTOL BS8 2BY.

TASK FORCE REPORTING

Members in other parts are probably thinking that a great hush has come over Bristol and wondering what, if anything, is going on. Once again this edition of 'Pendragon' will be more of a news letter than a magazine: we will try to show you which paths we have been pursuing. If they interest you, please follow the same lines; if you have found more profitable places to explore we shall be glad to hear of them.

When we left you last we were about to hold our AGM. For this quite a number of members travelled considerable distances to be with us, and we were delighted to see them. A few local members with domestic difficulties had to cut the AGM in order to be able to attend the lecture in the evening. Nevertheless, we numbered about 80 and reports were read, ideas exchanged. Chris Lovegrove reports on the lecture which followed:-

"The lecture was given by Keith Critchlow of RILKO in the University's Department of Chemistry on 'The Symbolism of Chartres Cathedral'. He began by defining opposites: what makes certain spaces sacred, and others profane? Man's desire to measure leads him to erect edifices which in their measurements reflect universal truths and relationships. In Scientific Man's search, however, for smaller and smaller fundamentals he has lost sight of the Whole. One such 'whole' is Chartres, where (despite architectural historians) the 'whole determines the parts': 'every detail on a Gothic cathedral is symbolic ... nothing is whimsical'.

"The opposite of a symbol is a diabol, hence diabolism or dispersal, while symbolism is a putting-together. The classical Christian blessing of index and second fingers is a symbol reflected in the twin spires of Chartres blessing the surrounding countryside with crops. The towers, whose sculpture points to the taller Clocher Neuf being solar and the Clocher Vieux lunar, exhibits curious properties. The Clocher Neuf, if laid down the nave, as it were, reaches 365 feet down into the Sanctuary, the Clocher Vieux 28 feet less; if a foot is equivalent to a day, one is the symbol of a solar, the other of a lunar, year. Extending this idea, a pilgrim pacing these "days" up the nave and choir can be expected to experience a liturgical "calendar"; entering from the West Door, with Ascension Day the logical termination of his journey, he passes through the Transfiguration at the centre of the famous Maze, and through Christmas exactly in the middle of the crossing of the transepts and the body of the Church.

The School at Chartres was the most important of its time in medieval Europe. Jewish knowledge of the Tree of Life was brought there via Spain, and ideas and images about the spiritual centres of the body were demonstrated by Keith (by means of some 200 slides) to be a continuation, in the early 13th century, of

imported Eastern traditions. By superimposing the plans of Stonehenge and Woodhenge on that of Chartres, Keith showed that there was even common ground with prehistoric Europe (as is testified by its legendary Druidical history).

The lecture covered a lot of ground and even over-ran its time; the Maze was the last thing touched on -- it represented the pre-Copernican idea of the Earth as the innermost of a series of concentric spheres and Heaven on the outside. In the Soul's descent from Heaven (Unity) to Earth, it traversed all the belts, thereby gaining the psychological properties of each.

The last slide, aptly, showed Glastonbury Tor: aptly because we hear that, at long last, plans are now going ahead to carry out an archaeological investigation of the "Maze"-terraces. This Society has offered to send some experienced diggers, if such are called for when the time has been arranged. Will any readers who would like to take part in this please get in touch with us.

We are planning an expedition to Wales in the summer and hoping that some of our widely-dispersed members may be able to join us there. We first became interested in this area when two of our Bristol members moved to Carmarthenshire to set up a rural homestead there. Almost immediately they found themselves in an area dotted with megalithic stones, not all of which were marked on the O.S. maps. We decided then to visit our members and investigate these stones. A little later we learned that others were interested in Leys across the same area. Finally, R.I.L.K.O. produced evidence of a well-defined Zodiac, similar to the one at Glastonbury, on the same spot. In their MS there is reference to a site called Tre Beddau, the Place of the Graves, and we were immediately reminded of The Black Book of Carmarthen where one reads The Stanzas of the Graves. Readers will remember that many of the great fallen heroes had found graves but not Arthur because "Anoeth bid bet y arthur" -- a mystery the grave of Arthur. (See pages 104-5-6- in "King Arthur's Avalon".)

No date for this expedition has yet been fixed but it will probably take place about the end of July or a little later: we shall see how many volunteers want to join us, and try to adjust to peoples' holidays. Non-members will be welcome provided they have an ambition to discover things and are not just looking for a cheap holiday.

Our Carmarthen members are kindly helping to organise on the spot. Those who want to camp will be able to do so: we hope to find bed-and-breakfast lodgings with local farmers for those who do not.

Another area for research has arisen from a recent TV programme on BBC2 which some members may have seen if they are regular viewers of Chronicle. Roger Webster reports: -

SOLOMAN'S TREASURE ?

A small village in southern France bears the following sign at its entrance --Fouilles interdit --excavations prohibited. This is not so strange when one considers that the tiny community of Rennes du Chateau conceals a dark and unusual mystery.

Around the turn of the century the village welcomed a new priest, young, no doubt fired with the evangelical zeal of youth, and most importantly poor. For a long while he cast around the

local gentry and merchants for money to carry out urgent and necessary repairs to his rather pitiful little church, almost to no avail.

Then he found, concealed in the ~~lazar~~ of that church, four sheets of parchment covered with seemingly incomprehensible writings. Shortly after this event he made a trip to Paris, there to meet a specialist in cyphers. From there he went to the Louvres and purchased a reproduction of a painting by Poussin. Then he returned to Rennes du Chateau.

Some while after this he commissioned and built himself a new and modestly splendid house, began to entertain quite lavishly, rebuilt the inside of his church and constructed, for his parishioners, a new water tower to serve the village.

From whence came the money? There is no easy answer. For one thing the clues lie so thick upon the ground as to be manifestly confusing: in fact, I cannot hope to remember anything like all of them from watching this programme. Certainly the largest number of arrows towards the truth lie in the church that our priest so lavishly decorated. Many of the paintings have for their backgrounds prominent landmarks of the surrounding countryside, and the familiar figures of Christ, His followers, and executioners are seen contorted into extraordinary positions, until one realises that they point the way to a discovery of the mysterious treasure. They are part of a huge pictorial cypher, which is itself only part of a large cypher that involves itself in complex linguistic inscriptions, geographical landmarks and, of course, the painting by Poussin.

It is this which I will use as an example of the obscurity of this ~~last~~ cypher. The painting depicts Arcadian shepherds gathered round a large sarcophagus in wooded country. An inscription reads, in translation, "Even in Arcady am I" (Death)

In the background is the Chateau de Blanchemort near (inevitably), the village of Rennes, and even the village itself is just visible in the distance. Moreover, when one follows the clues and goes to the place from where one could see that view, one is confronted by the sarcophagus ~~in~~ question (minus its inscription). This is all the more strange when one knows that Poussin is supposed never to have visited that area. Yet another clue mentions the Ark, but what Ark? Then it transpires that the adjoining village is called Arques -- odd indeed. Moreover, if one turns to the tombstone of the Countess of Blanchemort (one-time owner of the Chateau) which is in the graveyard of the church, one finds an inscription (now erased but recorded in the archives) which resembles that on the sarcophagus of the painting. This, in both Latin and Greek, can be read in at least three different ways. From this point there is an explosion of clues and cross-references which are too complicated to memorise from a TV programme.

Suffice to say that the complexity of clues surrounding this mysterious treasure make it obvious that this is no mere chest of gold; there is an aura of some deeper mystery. When, on his death bed, the priest of Rennes made his last Confession his Confessor emerged from the ~~bed~~ chamber visibly shocked and shaken. It was said that he neither smiled nor heard Confession again for a long time afterwards. A tentative theory advanced in the

programme was that the treasure might be at least some part of the treasure taken from Soloman's Temple and hidden for safety by the Knights Templar.

Points which particularly concern us are 1) this mention of the Knights Templar (Guardians of the Grail) and 2) that the village of Rennes lies not far from Carcasonne which is inside the Cathar country and 3) a Grail Legend which maintains that it is hidden in the Pyrenees. (Perhaps this may have a bearing on a book concerning the Cathars by M.B. Lac entitled "The Pyrenean Grail.)

We are trying to get further information about this through the BBC.

Another project we have in hand concerns a visit to Cornwall in the near future when a small party will go there with cine-camera and tape recorder. Michael Pollard writes the following note:

Those who were present at the last meeting in February will know of our interest in the church at Place, Cornwall, and of our proposed visit. For those who missed this meeting the following should be of interest:

The Church of St. Anthony is situated in Place, St. Anthony -in-Roseland --on the opposite peninsular to St. Mawes -- and has many curious features which warrant a full investigation. For example, the Church bell is reputed to be of Phoenician origin, several thousand years old (of Wroth bronze) and still in tune although a virgin bell. Pictographs above the South Door, depicting the visit of Jesus and Joseph to the West Country, are of Egyptian origin, according to an archaeologist who visited Place some years ago. There is also an inscribed panel which is dated not later than the 2nd century A.D.

Because of the situation of Place it is thought to have been a significant port for Phoenician lead and tin traders, and there is, of course, the well-publicised story that Joseph of Arimathea was a trader in these metals.

An interesting idea is advanced in the brochure we have on Place, i.e. that the young Christ was employed as a SHIP'S Carpenter on his uncle Joseph's ships. This could explain the tradition that He travelled widely during those years of which the Bible says nothing. This hypothesis is certainly more plausible to me than the notion of Jesus making a few tables and chairs in a tiny village in Palestine for twenty odd years.

Anyone interested in this Cornish project is invited to write to Mike Pollard at the address on Page 1.

One of our librarian members has unearthed a book called, "King Arthur's Country", written by F.J. Snell, published by J.M. Dent in 1926. Herewith a quote from the Introduction: -

It is evident that some explanation must be found for the widely diffused belief in the actuality of Arthur, who cannot have been simply a hero of Medieval romance; and his form looms hazily on the historical horizon as a divinity of the ancient Celts. A glimpse of him in that character is afforded by

Plutarch, who tells us that a certain Demetrius was sent by the Emperor of Rome on a mission of exploration to the British Isles. This old-world investigator brought back a report of the religious ideas of the inhabitants, among which was the following: "Moreover, they said, there is an island in which Cronus is imprisoned with Briareus keeping guard over him as he sleeps; for, as they put it, sleep is the bond forged for Cronus. They add that around him are many divinities, his henchmen and attendants."

Now this story bears a striking resemblance to the tale of the sleeping Arthur, of which several versions will be given in the sequel. Demetrius writes in the terms of Greek mythology, but in other notices of Celtic religion there is an indication of the name Arthur. Mention is made of a god Artaius, worshipped by the Allobroges of Gaul, and identified with Mercury. "Into the pantheon of deities represented in the four ancient Mabinogian," writes T.W. Rolleston, "there came from some other tribal source another group headed by Arthur, the god Artaius." This Arthur took the place of Gwydion (Science and Light), who slew Pryderi, son of Pwyll, King of Hades, by his magic and charms. His father was Uther Ben (=Bran), and his sister Gwyar (Gore, a war-goddess), who married Lot (=Ludd), and by him had three sons, Gwalchmai (Falcon of May= Llew Llaw Gyffes, sun-god, the Irish Lugh, later Sir Gawaine) Medrawt (=Dylan, sea-god, later Sir Mordred) and Gwalchaved (Falcon of Summer, later Sir Galahad).....

The Round Table, though not named by Nennius or Geoffrey of Monmouth, may be earlier than the days of chivalry. Sir John Rhys, at any rate, assigns to it a mythological import. Arthur, he says, "would probably have to be regarded as a Culture Hero.The Arthurian Legend traces it (the Round Table) to Arthur's father, Uthr Pendragon, in whom we have under one of his many names the King of Hades, the realm from whence all culture was fabled to have derived. In a wider sense, the Round Table possibly signified plenty of abundance, and might be compared with the Table of the Ethiopians at which Zeus and the other gods of Greek mythology used to feast from time to time."

In another passage the same learned professor remarks that "his (Arthur's) name allows us to suppose that he was associated, in some special sense, with agriculture over the entire Celtic world of antiquity." The Latin arare (to plough or till) and the Old English verb "to ear" which has the same meaning, will naturally occur to our minds in this connection; Celtic speech belonged to the same family of languages. Sir John Rhys supposes an early Brythonic form, Arтор (genitive Arторос), which in Welsh would yield the familiar form Arthur.

Our Ecological students should be interested in this extract !

Perhaps we may now be permitted a note of whimsy. Your Gen: Sec: was once again studying Fulcanelli and took special note of one of the illustrations in that book. It depicts a stone carving jutting out from one of the higher parts of the great cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. The text describes it fully:

"If moved by curiosity or simply wishing to give some purpose to a summer stroll, you climb the spiral staircase leading to the high parts of the building....you will see in the middle of the procession of monsters, a large and striking stone relief of an old man. This is he -- the alchemist of Notre Dame. Wearing a Phrygian cap, attribute of the Adept, negligently placed on his long, thickly curling hair, the scholar, dressed in his working cape, is leaning with one hand on the balustrade and stroking his full, silky beard with the other. He is not meditating, he is observing. His eye is fixed; his look is strangely acute. The philosopher's whole attitude suggests extreme emotion....What a splendid figure he is, this old master !"

On this page there is a footnote: "The Phrygian cap, which was worn by the sans-culottes and acted as a sort of protective talisman in the midst of the revolutionary slaughter, was a distinctive sign of the Initiates.....the scholar Pierre Dujol writes that for the grade of Epopt (in the Eleusian Mysteries) the new member was asked whether he felt in himself the strength, the will and the devotion necessary for him to set his hand to the GREAT WORK. Then a red cap was put on his head while a formula was pronounced: 'Cover yourself with this cap, it is worth more than a king's crown.' Few suspected that this hat, called liberia in the Mithraic rituals and which formerly denoted the freed slaves, was a masonic symbol and the supreme mark of Initiation."

Your Gen: Sec:, being ignorant, had previously associated such caps chiefly with the little G'nomey figures that have become so popular in the gardens of our urban society, so she sought a Smaller Classical Dictionary for further light:

"PHRYGIA, a country of Asia Minor, which was of different extent at different periods...The Phrygians are mentioned by Homer as settled on the banks of the Sangarius, where later writers tell us of the powerful kingdom of Gordius and Midas.." (Midas ? Gold ? Alchemists ?)"In connection with the early intellectual culture of Greece, Phrygia is highly important. The earliest Greek music, especially that of the flute, was borrowed in part, through the Asiatic colonies, from Phrygia....After the Persian conquest, however, the Phrygians seem to have lost all intellectual activity, and they became proverbial among the Greeks and Romans for submissiveness and stupidity."

Poor little G'nomeys at the bottom of the garden ! Yet even here the clue is not entirely lost. Your Chairman called at Alma Road at that moment and sought further information from Chambers' Etymological Dictionary:

GNOME: nom n. a kind of sprite, said to preside over the inner parts of the earth and its treasures: a dwarf or goblin.(Fr.- a word traced by Littré to Paracelsus, and perh. formed from Gr. gnome, intelligence, because it was supposed these spirits could reveal the treasures of the earth.

The Gnostic hint is not altogether lost but hidden.

STOP PRESS. News has just come that National Trust has refused permission for dig on Tor. All send condolences to Geoffrey Russell who, nevertheless, says he will try again,

