Exploring new interpretations of past and place in archaeology, folklore and mythology

- The Three Destinies of Lleu Llaw Gyffes
- Latvians - their origins and place in old Europe
- Discoveries at Krivkalns
- Recovering the Lost Religious Place-names of England
- Paganism in British Folk Customs
- Herne the Hunter - a case of mistaken identity?
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Anthony Rees

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The Three Destinies of Lleu Llaw Gyffes

ALBY STONE is a prolific writer of articles as previous issues of At the Edge confirm. He has also written a number of booklets: Wyrd - Fate and Destiny in North European Tradition; A Splendid Pillar; The Bleeding Lance and The Questing Beast. His book on northern creation mythologies, Ymir's Flesh, is scheduled to be published later this year.

In the different branches of Indo-European tradition, social structure is ritually legitimized in myth and religious observance, which reflect the Proto-Indo-European social organisation into three distinct strata, or as Georges Dumézil terms them, functions. The first function is usually termed 'sovereignty'; it relates to rule and the ritual maintenance of order. It can be sub-divided into the magico-religious and the temporal-juridical, represented socially by priests and kings respectively. The second function is concerned with defence and the imposition of order through physical force and is concerned with war-like activities, represented by fighters and military institutions. The third is concerned with fertility and prosperity, represented by cultivators and other producers of food and material goods, but also relating to sexuality, peace and beauty. The first function has an essential duality, and is thus often allocated in myth to two gods, usually brothers, and often twins: although sometimes one brother is displaced and supplanted by an older male relative. These three functions are inherent in Indo-European tradition, and appear to have been inherited from the Proto-Indo-European culture that spawned the rest.

This trifunctional structure can be found in many aspects of Indo-European culture. While it frankly reflects the social stratifications that occur in virtually every culture, among the Indo-Europeans it is formally codified in ritual and iconography and is pervasive to such an extent that it was described by Dumézil as an ideology, one that has shaped all subsequent Indo-European societies in its image [1]. Since Dumézil defined this structure, a number of studies - including significant contributions by Bruce Lincoln [2] and Emily Lyle [3] - have shown how it relates directly to the Indo-European image of the human body and the identification of human physique with the cosmos and its creation, and to the magical and religious traditions devoted to it.

The story of Lleu Llaw Gyffes - preserved in Math Vab Mathonwy, the fourth 'branch' of the collection of medieval Welsh tales known as the Mabinogion - is directly related to this system. The life and adventures of Lleu revolve around the three 'destinies' sworn upon him by his mother Arianhrod, and these encapsulate the trifunctional organisation of Indo-European culture. Not only are these three functions evident in this and other key episodes and motifs, but the structure of the narrative is itself determined by the trifunctional schema.

Lleu's story begins about halfway through Math Vab Mathonwy. It follows on from the rape of Goewin by Gilfaethwy, aided by his brother Gwydion. Math, who had employed Goewin as footholder, now requires a new servant to perform the task, as his footholder must be a virgin. Gwydion proposes that his sister Arianhrod for the vacancy. Although she claims to be chaste, she is tested by being made to step over a magic wand; as she does so, she drops a child, a boy who is baptised Dylan Eli Ton, 'Sea, son of Wave', who makes for the sea and swims away as soon as he is baptized. Arianhrod leaves the scene, but Gwydion sees that she has dropped something else, which he takes and secretes in a chest. Some time later, he hears a cry from within the chest. Opening it, he discovers a baby boy, who grows at a prodigious rate. When the boy has grown to the size of a man, Gwydion takes him to Caer Arianhrod, and presents him to his mother to be named. But Arianhrod is displeased, and swears that the boy is fated to remain nameless until she herself gives him a name.

Thanks to Gwydion's magic, Arianhrod is tricked into naming the boy Lleu Llaw Gyffes ('the fair one with a steady hand'), whereupon she places another destiny on him - that he will never hear arms until she herself equips him. Gwydion again fools her into giving the boy his first arms, and this time she swears that he is destined not to have a wife of any race on earth. Gwydion and Math make Lleu a wife from the blooms of oak, broom and meadow-sweet; she is given the name Blodeuwedd ('flower-eyed').

Gwydion urges Math to give Lleu the rule of Cantref Dinodig, and for a while Lleu and his bride live happily. Then...
one day, while Lieu is away visiting Math, Blodeuedd sees Gronwy Pwyll out hunting, and quickly becomes his lover; the pair spend three nights together until Lieu returns. The lovers conspire to get rid of Lieu, and Blodeuedd discovers from him how he may be killed: neither in a house nor outside; neither on horseback nor on foot; and with a spear, worked on only during Mass on Sundays, that takes a year to manufacture. Blodeuedd has a bath set up on the bank of a river, with a thatched roof above it and a he-goat at its side. Meanwhile, Gronwy makes a spear according to the formula. Lieu then demonstrates his own death to oblige his wife. He is standing with one foot on the bath and one on the goat's back, with only the lower part of his body clothed, when Gronwy spears him. With a terrible cry, Lieu flies off in the shape of an eagle. Gwydion eventually tracks him to where he perches, in a sorry condition, at the top of an oak; the magician sings three englynion, and Lieu flies down to him in three stages, then returns to human form. Gwydion punishes Blodeuedd by turning her into an owl, and Gronwy flees. Lieu eventually takes his revenge by insisting that Gronwy should suffer no more nor less than what he was prepared to do to Lieu. Despite an attempt to find a substitute victim, and then being allowed to put a stone between himself and Lieu's spear, Gronwy is slain. Lieu then resumes his life, eventually becoming the ruler of Gwyedd.

A number of triadic groupings are immediately discernible in the story: the three destinies; the three types of flower used to create Blodeuedd; the three englynion sung by Gwydion, and the three stages by which Lieu descends from his oak. There are also the three nights Blodeuedd and Gronwy spend together when they first meet. Less obvious at first are two more - the magical conditions for Lieu's death, and the treacheries of Gronwy. As Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan has shown [5], the Mabinogion contains a number of triadic structures determining plot and relationships within the various narratives; and Welsh tradition in general is preoccupied with triadic themes and groupings - for example, the well-known Triads [6]. Math Vab Mathonwy itself is divided into three clearly defined segments: the stealing of Pryderi's pigs; the transformations of Gwydion and Gilfaethwy; and the story of Lieu. The last section is further subdivided into three parts: Lieu's enigmatic birth; the imposition and solution of the three destinies; and his troubles with Blodeuedd and Gronwy. The romantic aspect of the story is the triangular relationship between Lieu, Blodeuedd and Gronwy. Clearly, Lieu - as we may term the third part of Math Vab Mathonwy - should be viewed in the context of traditional Welsh triadic structures; but in its constant reiteration of the idea of triplicity we may see a subtle reinforcement of underlying trifulctional themes.

The trifulctional structure is evident from the very beginning of Lieu's life. He is one of two brothers, the elder of whom takes to the sea as soon as he is baptised, and plays no further part in the story. This idea of two brothers, one of whom disappears from the scene leaving the other in the ascendant, is a common feature of the first function [7]; the reasons for this change from duality to singularity (and sometimes back again) is complex, but may relate to the changing social roles of priest and king in diversifying Indo-European societies. In this case, Dylan is replaced in the pair by Gwydion the magician (ostensibly Lieu's uncle, but possibly also his father; the story is not clear on this point), who balances Lieu the secular ruler of Cantref Dinoding - he later becomes king over Dyfed - by giving him magical assistance.

Lieu is clearly marked as a first function figure, by rôle and by iconography (spear and eagle frequently denote kingship, especially among the Celts and Germans). As such he should be expected to relate in some way to all three functions. A king and his society should be seen as reflections of one another; a king is not simply one who rules or acts on behalf of his people, but 'the very embodiment of the social totality' [8]. In Irish tradition, for example, Lugaid of the Red Stripes is the son of three brothers who slept with their sister Clothru on a single night. Lugaid is born with red stripes around his neck and waist, which mark out his physical inheritance from the three fathers - his head resembles that of Nár ('noble'); his chest and arms are like those of Bres ('combat'); while from the waist down he resembles Lóthar ('washtub'). As their names indicate, each of his fathers represents one of the three functions, and from each he inherits the part of the body to which they are allocated [9]. Lieu's trifulctional nature is not illustrated quite so graphically. Instead of inheriting aspects of the three functions as a matter
of course, he has to acquire them, by overcoming - with the help of Gwydion - the three destinies imposed by Arianrhod. The destinies are that he will not have a name; that he will not have weapons; and that he will not have a wife. Here are the three functions, presented in their typical hierarchical order. The second and third are self-explanatory (war and sexuality), while the first is explicable, as Lloyd-Morgan has pointed out, in terms of knowledge (his name), so completing the set [10].

Arianrhod’s motive is ostensibly sheer spite at being reminded of her embarrassment; but she actually seems to be playing a rôle similar to that of the character of the goddess Sovereignty in Irish tales. Although it is she who places upon Lleu the destinies that would prevent his assumption of kingship, it is still she who confers upon him the very qualities that he requires for that position. It is significant that it is only after the resolution of the third destiny that Lleu is given the rule of Cantref Dinoding. Blodeuedd, as bride of the king-to-be, can also be seen as a version of Sovereignty, the trifunctional goddess who represents the social totality, to whom the king is symbolically married. She is created from three different kinds of flower, which hint perhaps at some kind of hierarchy imposed upon the vegetable kingdom: tree (oak), shrub (broom), and meadow-plant (meadow-sweet). It is possible that the colours of the three flowers may have been envisaged as the three colours associated with the three functions in Indo-European tradition - white for the first, red for the second, and blue, green or black for the third [11]. This would perhaps depend on our correctly identifying the species and gender of the plants in question, and knowing which parts of Blodeuedd’s body were made of which flower; but Math Vab Mathonwy tells us nothing that would be of use in this respect.

Celtic tradition does have a three-coloured ideal of physical beauty, a combination of red, white, and black - in Peredur and the story of Deirdre, for instance [12]. Although the references are to physical beauty, it may be the case that the three colours do relate to the three functions by symbolising a balance or harmony of their respective characteristics - intelligence, strength, and sexual attractiveness. Blodeuedd is said to be ‘the very fairest and best endowed maiden that mortal ever saw’. On the other hand, Irish tradition refers to Sovereignty in terms of three colours that appear to relate to the land and its vegetation, and that correspond broadly with the colours assigned to the three functions [13].

If Lleu becomes a ruler by overcoming the restrictions of his three destinies - that is, by acquiring the attributes and becoming an embodiment of all three functions - then he is done away with by having them undone. While Arianrhod represents the Sovereignty presiding over their acquisition, Blodeuedd presides over their dissolution. Lleu tells Blodeuedd that he can only be killed under certain conditions: neither in nor out of a house, neither on horseback nor on foot; and with a spear made during Sunday Mass over a period of one year. But there is more to it: ‘he arose out of the bath and put on his breeks, and he placed one foot on the edge of the tub and the other on the he-goat’s back. Then Grown [sic] rose up…and smote him in the side’ [14]. As Lleu has specified, the bath is under a thatched cover. It is also worth noting that this episode takes place on a riverbank.

In a sense, Lleu’s death is made possible by ‘unmaking’ each of the three functions contained in his person. The first function may here be represented by the house, symbolic of the ordered cosmos, and personal identity; the second is represented by the horse, or rather its absence; while the third is represented by the bathtub. Second and third functions are duplicated in the state of Lleu’s dress - his chest and arms are bared, and thus vulnerable, whereas his lower body is covered, so reducing his sexuality. The spear is both a first function symbol and a second function object manufactured under magical conditions; as a symbol it also has well-known phallic (second function) connotations. It is in a sense the key that completes the undoing of the functions personified by Lleu.

It is true that this functional analysis of Lleu’s temporary murder rests overmuch on conjecture on supposition; but it is clear that, as the circumstances of his ‘death’ show, Lleu is placed in a dangerously ambiguous position, his status indefinable. He is neither indoors nor out; neither on horseback nor on foot; neither clothed nor naked. What is more, he balances on the edge of the bath, and the murder attempt takes place on a river-bank, at the boundary between water and land. Even the weapon used is made only when everyday activity is suspended and a magical transformation - the Mass - is occurring. As Mary Douglas remarks, danger ‘lies in transitional states, simply because transition is neither one state nor the next, it is undefinable. The person who must pass from one state to another is himself in danger and emanates danger to others’ [15]. Lleu is in a thoroughly liminal state, and the things that
hold his kingship together fly apart when the spear is cast, leaving only the eagle, a symbol of what he once was.

Gronwy’s actions correspond to another Indo-European motif identified by Dumézil as the ‘three sins of the warrior’ [16]. These sins, successive transgressions against representations of each of the three functions, are also found in the careers of Indra, Heracles, and Starkaðr. Indra’s three sins are: involvement in the killing of a Brahmin (first function); using his physical force in a cowardly way (second function); and an adulterous rape (third function). In the case of Heracles, the equivalent sins are the murder of his children in a fit of rage after the Delphic oracle repeated the command of Zeus concerning the twelve labours; the cowardly murder of the son of Eurytos; and the desertion of his wife, followed by rape. As for Starkaðr, the sin against the first function is regicide; he then displays cowardice, resulting in the loss of a war; and finally he commits regicide again, for money, an aspect of the third function [17]. In each case, the sins result in a loss of some kind. Indra loses first his tejah, spiritual force, then his physical force, then his beauty, each loss relating to the function he has sinned against. Heracles slides further down the social ladder with each crime – he is reduced to a labourer, then a slave, and finally he is killed. Starkaðr loses one of his three lives after each evil deed. The ‘three sins of the warrior’ are clearly observable in Gronwy. Firstly, his adulterous liaison with Blodeueudd is easily linked to the second function. Second, the cowardly manner in which he despatches Lieu is matched by his attempt to find a substitute to die in his place; and even when he does finally submit to Lieu’s demand he insists upon having a barrier placed between himself and Lieu. Thus he sins against the second function. Finally, Gronwy’s sin against the first function is twofold -

regicide and usurpation. Again, there is the element of loss: first Blodeueudd is taken from him, then he loses his life [18].

The three functions are all invoked to begin Lieu’s rule, and perhaps again to terminate it, albeit on a temporary basis. The character responsible for the nearly-fatal blow is also connected with all three functions, and there are grounds for believing that his ally is also so connected. It is also tempting to see the same pattern in the three englynion with which Gwydion brings Lieu back to the human realm, though that may be stretching the point too far. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how the Indo-European triliteral tradition has influenced the structure of the story, perhaps even being the prime determinant. It is difficult to decide whether this is the result of deliberation on the part of the redactor, utilising recurrent traditional motifs to structure the narrative in a form recognisable to the likely audience; or whether, as Dumézil might have suggested, the common Indo-European linguistic and ideological heritage found a natural expression here, as it appears to have done in other Indo-European epics and myths. Certainly, the triliteral pattern has been discerned in Celtic material by Dumézil and others, so its presence in the story of Lieu is by no means an isolated instance [19].

References

1: The triliteral pattern is by no means universally accepted, but it now forms the basis for much of the more influential work being done in the field of comparative mythology. For a useful introduction, see: C. Scott Littleton, The New Comparative Mythology, University of California Press, 1982.


4: Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (trans.), The Mabinogion, Everyman 1949, p63-75.


8: Lincoln, op. cit. p163.

9: Ibid. p159-61.

10: In her essay Lloyd-Morgan notes in passing the correspondence of the three destinies with the Indo-European social tripartition, but does not pursue the matter.


14: The Mabinogion, op. cit. p71.


17: Interestingly, Starkaðr murders Olo while the latter is bathing. A more striking parallel to Lieu’s death can be found in the murder of Agamemnon, as told by Aeschylus in the Oresteia: not only is Agamemnon slain by his wife’s lover while half-in and half-out of a bath, but he is covered with a garment of netting by his wife Clytemnaestra - in other words, he is neither clothed nor unclothed.

18: Lieu’s Irish counterpart Lug is involved in a similar love-triangle, ended when he kills his wife’s lover.

19: See, for example, Rees and Rees (op. cit.): Marie-Louise Sjoestedt, Gods and Heroes of the Celts, (1949; reprinted Turtle Island 1982). Other scholars who have applied the Dumézilian formula to Celtic tradition include Joseph Nagy, Jan De Vries, and Patrick K. Ford.

At the Edge 4 No.3 September 1996
In the first part of my article I should like to introduce readers briefly to the Baits, especially Latvians, and their origins, culture and place in old Europe. Baits, Latvians, Lithuanians - these are words which mean nothing for most people today. If they know that they all live near the Baltic Sea then that is already very much! The reasons for this ignorance are various - 700 years of subordination under Germans, Poles, Swedes and Russians who all have tried to inculcate the opinion that the Baltic folk are rough barbarians without any culture worth considering. Of course, the 50 year occupation of the Baltic states by Soviets has separated them from the other Europe and its cultural life. It is important for all of us to become acquainted with each other again, as we were thousands of years ago. Celts, Germans, Baits and others are members of one family that is termed 'Indo-European'.

Today, all over Europe people have to try to maintain the living fragments of their traditional cultures or renew the lost parts. Today, some people have understood that what some call 'progress' is disposability. We must make the best use of that cultural and spiritual wealth that members of the Indo-European family share. The Baltic cultural heritage is especially important as much can be attributed directly to Proto-Indo-European origins.

Before readers say I am too self-opinionated, similar words have been said already. S.K. Chatterji, National Professor of India in Humanities, wrote: 'An ancient pre-christian, or in other words, purely Indo-European tradition undoubtedly has come to us intact in the language and literature of the Baits.' [1] A French professor of philology, A. Meillet, notes: 'Before being flanked by the German peoples from one side and the Slav peoples on the other, the Baltic language carriers have performed their historic role. The Baltic people - Lithuanians and Latvians - possess the oldest civilisation in Europe that is more ancient than the Greek and Roman civilisation.' [2] It could be added that the Baits have not yet completed their entire historic role. Who knows, maybe at present their role is even more decisive than in the ancient times?

What has survived of this ancient civilisation? One aspect is the Latvian folklore - a collection of about 3,300,000 items in total. It is divided into the following categories:

1: Dainas (Latvian songs of endearment or Latvian holy songs) - about 1,250,000
2: Riddles - about 530,000
3: Beliefs - about 400,000
4: Proverbs and sayings - about 300,000
5: Legends - about 60,000
6: Magic words or spells - about 55,000
7: Fairy tales - about 40,000
8: Folk melodies - more than 30,000
9: Folk dances - about 25,000

This vast Latvian spiritual heritage, where Christian overlays form a very small part, is rather like a well of wisdom to drink from. It is not forbidden to anybody, but it is not easy to do because of the 'remote' location and gossip about the quality of the water!

The same words can be said about the material witnesses of the Baits' ancient culture - the holy places. One of these is described below. But, before reaching for the origins of the Baits, Table 1 shows a few words from Latvian and English which have common roots in very remote times.

Valtars Grivins lives in Valmieras, a town in north-east Latvia. He has been researching the traditional beliefs and archaeological sites of his country for about four years. He has become concerned about the way megalithic sites and ancient rock engravings are being damaged or destroyed so is attempting to draw attention to this problem in his own country and, as with the example of this article, by trying to enhance awareness in western Europe of this little-known but rich inheritance.
Table 1

Words with similar meanings in Latvian and English.

For Latvian words which have only a distant relationship with the English counterpart, the modern Latvian is given in [ ]. Some of the English words are themselves more-or-less archaic and confirms the deep 'roots'. There are many more related words but these fifty are enough to provide an insight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latvian</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jnasts</td>
<td>word</td>
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<td>lupata</td>
<td>beard</td>
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<td>krams</td>
<td>other</td>
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<td>pile</td>
<td>pelt</td>
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<td>pils [castle]</td>
<td>pile</td>
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<td>s1ners; s1nere</td>
<td>pelt</td>
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<td>skrapis</td>
<td>pot</td>
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<td>s1nere</td>
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<td>skandet</td>
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<td>sedli</td>
<td>can</td>
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<td>brinkis [archaism for bank or edge]</td>
<td>brink</td>
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<td>vedibas [archaism]</td>
<td>wile</td>
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<td>apergs; gerbs</td>
<td>garb</td>
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<td>dveivams; d evajs</td>
<td>divine</td>
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<td>partika [provisions, food]</td>
<td>partake</td>
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<td>velks [archaism for wound]</td>
<td>wheik</td>
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<td>[archaic dialect usage derived from Old English hwylca 'pustule']</td>
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<td>riba</td>
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<td>gaita</td>
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<td>rite; norite</td>
<td>grave</td>
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<td>gravis [ditch]</td>
<td>miss</td>
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<td>miseksis</td>
<td>mind</td>
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<td>mina; atmina [understanding; memory]</td>
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<td>strenge</td>
<td>string</td>
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<td>skandet [scan poetry or songs]</td>
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<td>skraps</td>
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<td>smers; smere</td>
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<td>balkis [bean]</td>
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<td>bullis</td>
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<td>krass [sudden; sharp]</td>
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<td>mastis</td>
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To look for the origins of the Balts we must go back to the end of the last Ice Age when about 10,000 or 11,000 years ago the first newcomers from north-west and middle Europe arrived at the Baltic coasts. These were people of Swidry [3] and Baltic Magdalenian cultures. Archaeologically, we can trace an uninterrupted continuity of those peoples through to the late Neolithic when, about 2,400 BC, Corded Ware and Battle-Axe culture appears at the Baltic Sea. Most academics consider that the people who brought Corded Ware culture to the Baltic were newcomers. This means that the Balts arrived in the Baltic in the third millennium BC.

However, some prominent Latvian archaeologists have propounded an alternative theory. Their research suggests that Corded Ware does not represent an influx of new people but, rather, the change in culture from hunter-gathering to agriculture and stock rearing that might have itself resulted from changes in climate during the third millennium. This gives added credence to the ideas of Maillet given above, who was writing in the 1930s, before archaeology and philology were so mutually supportive.

It must be understood that present-day Lithuania and Latvia are only a small part of the territory which was originally occupied by the Balts. Baltic words are used for the names of rivers and lakes over a wide area - from the Finnish gulf in the north to modern-day Kiev in the south, and from Moscow in the east to Berlin in the west. A good example is the River Volga. Thought by most people to be originally Russian, some linguists (including Russians) think that the name 'Volga' is derived from the Baltic name 'Jilga' which means 'long river' [4]. Later it was transformed by East Slavics into Julga and by the seventh or eighth century AD into 'Volga'.
steadily reduced. The map shows the territory inhabited by the ancient Balts around 500 BC. The mutual exchange of culture with Celts, Slavs, Germans, Thracians, Scythians and Finno-Ugrian peoples is a theme for at least one book. Of note, however, is the contribution of the Balts to the Finno-Ugrians, especially in the fields of religion and agriculture. Comparative linguistics has revealed that many Finno-Ugrian words connected with religion and agriculture are loaned from the Baltic languages (see Table 2). This proves that agriculture, cattle-breeding and the building of overground dwellings were all adopted by Finno-Ugrians from Baltic precedents. Close relations were maintained with the Indo-European peoples. Trade in amber and articles made from amber was undoubtedly one of the main ‘engines’ of cultural exchange at this time.

The geographical borders of the Balts shown in the map did not change until the sixth century AD when, after the fall of the Gothic empire (located in the modern Ukraine) at the hands of the Huns, the East Slavs became free instead of being enslaved by the Goths. The East Slavs started to migrate to safer and more peaceful places. At the same time the Western Slavs also started to move out of their territories (present-day Poland). Unfortunately for the Balts, their lands were subject to Slav invasions: between the sixth and twelfth centuries the East Balts were subdued by the Slavs.

Some of the Balts were assimilated and stayed to live together with the Slavs. Some struggled against them until the twelfth century but then retreated to the old Baltic lands nearer the coast. Thus by the thirteenth century the heartland of the Balts, a stronghold of old European culture, had been reduced to approximately the extent of modern-day Latvia, Lithuania and East Prussia (now the Kaliningrad region of Russia).

Nevertheless Lithuania became one of the greatest European states in the fourteenth century. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania spread out from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. I shall not analyse the reasons why Balts lost their independence in the later middle ages and became a ‘ghost kingdom’. Not without reason the Balts were the last ‘pagans’ in Europe; invasions by various Christian states led to a loss of political independence. But, despite this, the Balts did not lose their national culture and religion.

References:
1: S.K. Chatterji, Balts and Aryans in their Indo-European Background, Simla, 1968.
3: Swidry culture’s people were counterparts of their Baltic Magdalenian people.
4: Latvian ilgs is a synonym for gars but gars means ‘long’.

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## TABLE 2
Some Baltic loan words in Finno-Ugrian languages

<table>
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<td></td>
<td>becomes</td>
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<td>dragon</td>
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<tr>
<td>kokle</td>
<td></td>
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<td>musical instrument</td>
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Left: Petroglyphs found in 1986 on the bank of the River Brasla (with cup mark, bottom centre)
After these introductory remarks I would like to describe one of the many Latvian holy places. I have selected the most remarkable of the sites - the Krivkalns - a stone arrangement located at the end of a small hill which is bordered by a stream called Liekupite.

The site is in the northern part of Latvia, about 10km from Valmiera. Krivkalns translates as 'The Hill of Priests' (Krivkalns = Krivs the Latvian and Lithuanian word for 'pagan priest' + kalns, 'hill'). This place-name was that used by the last owner of the farm on which it stands when he met the researcher Ojars Ozolins. Today the hill is overgrown with bushes and trees and merges with the surrounding forest.

However, until the late 1960s it was encircled with the fields and meadows of an abandoned farm (the last owners being among the many Latvians deported to Siberia.)

In 1986 a skull of a he-goat and other items were found buried at a significant stone in the Krivkalns arrangement - clearly a sacrifice. A topographical survey in autumn 1986 revealed that five stones form a 'cross' and another group of stones resemble the Ursa Minor (Little Bear) constellation (which includes the modern pole star, Polaris); see fig. 1.

Ojars Ozolins suggested that the stone arrangements at Krivkalns are an ancient holy place connected with the stars and other celestial bodies.

Stellar symbols have not been recognised yet in Latvian rock art (engraved stones) but have been observed in similar Lithuanian rock art. The four-sided stone from the Utena region of Lithuania (fig. 2) also shows the stars nearest the celestial pole. This stone now

**Figure 1:** The stones at Krivkalns.
(1) The main stone ('Pole Star').
(2) Zone strewn with small stones ('Milky Way').
(3) Border (non-setting constellations at Spring Equinox).
(4) Constellations below skyline at Spring Equinox.
lies horizontally but once stood vertically. In the upright position, an observer walking around the stone would see various combinations of stars. The top of the stone depicts the summit of the heavens around which all the stars are rotating. Such a significant depiction of the Axis Mundi were sacred for all people living in the ancient world.

Was Krivkalns a similar ‘stellar map’ but on a larger scale? Ozolins’s attention was drawn to a large stone in the northern part of the stone arrangement. This is where the evidence of sacrifice was found. It is surrounded by smaller stones (characteristic for the main stone of many other holy places in Latvia). The Krivkalns main stone could be intended to depict the Celestial Pole.

As we can see from fig. 4, it fits in with one of the stars of the constellation Draco. Astronomical calculations show that the Celestial Pole was located in Draco about 3,500 years ago. Thus the age of Krivkalns is similar to many megalithic monuments in Western Europe.

The Celestial Pole is located above the head only for observers standing at the Earth's north pole. From other places the Celestial Pole is seen from various angles, depending on latitude. In Krivkalns the pole and the surrounding constellations marked by the stones resemble the appearance at the Spring Equinox about 3,500 years ago.

Why is the Celestial Pole not located at the centre of the ‘cross’ of five stones? Such objections merely reflect modern thinking. The Krivkalns arrangements are not a direct reproduction of the night sky. Rather, the stones embody ancient holy laws evoked for sacred and magical purposes to bind ‘our’ world with the Universe. In the ancient symbolism the cross is the sign for space and matter, as well as the sign of creation and/or the creator. The Krivkalns cross is connected with the sun, regarded as creator and maintainer of the world, in the Balts’ culture.

If we stand at the main stone (Pole Star) then the middle stone of the cross is located on the line of sight to the winter solstice sunrise. In Latvian tradition the winter solstice is connected with the rebirth of the world and the sun.

Of course, if Krivkalns was the only arrangement in Latvia suggesting astronomical knowledge among ancient people then we should have doubts. But many other monuments and holy hills can be found in Latvia with traces of similar interest in the heavens (I hope to return to these in a future article for At the Edge). Research shows that many Latvian megaliths are situated in ways that point to significant stellar events, the sun’s return...
Midsummer sunset

West

East

Midwinter sunrise

Figure 4
The arrangement of the central stones at Krivkalns.
(1) The main stone ('Pole Star'). (2) Sacrificial deposits.

The World Hill and the World Tree are basic principles of expression for Baltic peoples and are expressed in place-names, rock art ideograms and the layout of holy places. I hope readers have enjoyed the ideas described in this article and have some new ideas about Baltic archaeology and traditions.

End Note
A professionally-produced video, *The Way of the Sun*, showing Ojars Ozolins several stone arrangements and holy hills where he describes the stones and their astronomical significance is available from Valtars Grivins. It is on VHS (in UK PAL format) and overdubbed in English. Also available is *The Land of Eight Seasons*. This is a less-professionally produced video (with English subtitles) showing a variety of interesting Latvian holy places, including some of the rock art sites.

Valtars Grivins will supply both films on one VHS tape for £30 or $45. The problem is sending money to Latvia. Valtars says it is too risky sending cash by post; maintaining a long-established tradition of xenophobia, the British Post Office and banks no longer supply International Money Orders and charge exorbitant fees (minimum £8) for transferring funds overseas. If any *At the Edge* readers are interested in buying copies of the video please contact Bob Trubshaw at the *At the Edge* editorial address (see inside front cover) before the middle of October as it may make sense to combine orders to keep costs down. If you know an easy way to transfer funds to Latvia (or are reading this after mid-October!) then write to Valtars Grivins direct at:
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LV-4220, Latvia.
Why, apparently, are religious beliefs so little reflected in the earliest English place-names? Openly religious Old English (OE) place-names - St Albans, Whitchurch, Axminster - are rare. Yet Wales at this period is full of llan names commemorating the activities of peripatetic ecclesiastics. Was England by comparison really so secular? Or is it that the religious content of early place-names has simply been disguised and forgotten?

Seventh-century place-names

It would be difficult to overstate the role played by religion in the England of the Dark Ages. At least two kings, Sigeberht of East Anglia (circa 630-7) and Caedwalla of Wessex (680s), abdicated to become penitents. And in this same period, the seventh century - because of the emergence of a common language, English, but also, I would argue, because of the increasing administrative centralism of the Church - the basis of English place-naming was laid down. Thus the charters and boundary lists of two religious establishments in Surrey, Chertsey Abbey and the minster at Farnham, believed to be genuine seventh century documents, contain at this early date a whole set of typical OE place-name elements including -ingas, -ham, -hyth, -brycg, burh, -eg, -ford, -leah, -feld (today's -ing, -ham, -hythe, -bridge, bury, -ey, ford, -ley, -field) [1].

Most of our knowledge of the earliest OE place-names comes from ecclesiastical charters, so we might expect to find some religious content. Is it there? And if we find it, what is its significance? Two outcomes might be hoped for. First, do we find that a good proportion of the names of religious or cultural centres might be reinterpreted to reveal a religious meaning? The answer, I suggest, is yes. Gloucester, Canterbury, Chertsey, Wells, Lincoln, Lichfield, Sherborne, Bristol, Windsor, all will be claimed as examples. Second, is there a chance that place-names might reveal lost archaeological sites? This is something of a holy grail for place-name students, who (rightly) have received a hard time for their troubles from sceptical archaeologists. Care is advised. A place-name fixes neither a geographical site nor a date of first occupation. But there is the prospect, to take one example, that place-names may provide the 'other trace' that identifies Stenton's 'ancient parish churches, actually early monasteries which have disappeared without other trace' [2].

There is also the prospect that pagan religious activity underlying Christian sites may be identified, so helping us to understand the mechanics behind the Pope's recommendation to Mellitus, first bishop at St Paul's in London in 604, that existing pagan sites be co-opted [3]. The Pope anyway was following standard Roman Empire practice (under the Empire the god worshipped at Bath was 'Sulis Minerva').

So, let us look at religious activity in the seventh century, and see whether any OE...
place-name elements might be linked to parts of it. Monasteries and minsters are a good place to start, because they are relatively well documented. Morris, an ecclesiastical historian, lists the seventh century names of all churches documented from that period [4]. Cox, a linguist, gives us the relative frequency of occurrence of OE place-name elements in all place-names documented up to the 730s [5]. Other linguists (e.g. Gelling [6]) have looked at the possible meaning of OE elements. A geographer (like myself) would look at spatial patterns. All these approaches will be used below: they are brought into focus in a confined study area, Surrey.

**burh - 'fort' or 'monastic enclosure'**

Most promising is OE element *burh*, found in the names of monasteries including Glastonbury, Bury St Edmunds, Peterborough, Canterbury, Malmesbury, and significantly in *Paulus byrig aet Lundaenae* for St Paul's in London. Three of these names clearly mean 'the burh dedicated to saint Edmund/Peter/Paul'.

It does look likely that to the accepted meanings of *burh* as 'Iron Age hill-fort, Roman town, fort, manor, borough' we must add 'monastic enclosure'. Canterbury could thus either be 'the cathedral' or 'the fort' of the people of Kent. Such would be consistent with Caradoc's use of *urbs* (town) for Glastonbury, and Bede's statement that the great Welsh monastery of Bangor Iscoced (some of these religious establishments held thousands of people) 'is called by the English Bancornuborg'. Ekwall interprets the first part of Malmesbury Abbey's name to be an amalgamation of the names of two of its famous abbots, Maelduiulf its Irish founder, and the later English Aldhelm. Equally interesting is Barker's thesis of a series of lost Celtic monasteries (Ian) in southern England, several of whose putative sites have burh names (Ramsbury, Amesbury, Westbury, Charlbury) [7].

In Surrey, Newark Priory was called Aldebury (1204) and then *Novo loco de Andeburg* (1210), i.e. 'new place (Newark means 'new building') for the old burh', suggesting to me the priory may be successor to the lost seventh century minster of Woking nearby. Blair reached the same conclusion, although for different reasons [8].

**eg - 'island'**

Increasingly, a Celtic earlier phase of several English monasteries is not in dispute. The rights of existing Celtic establishments at Glastonbury and Abingdon were restated by their Anglo-Saxon conquerors [9]. And here the OE element eg ('island') seems relevant. It occurs, like *burh*, in many monastic names including Chertsey, Ramsey, Romsey, Selsey, Bardney, Athelney, Thorney (Cambs, but also the site of Westminster Abbey). Eg is found also in archaic forms of some monastic names: *Glastingei* (Glastonbury), *Laestingaeu* (Lastingham), *Heruteu* (Hartlepool). Parallels to English *eg* would seem to be Welsh *ynys* ('island'), as in *Ynys Pyr* (Caldey Island, 'the *ynys* of St Piro') [10] and Scandinavian *holm* ('small, island'), as in the monastic names Durham (*dun holm*), Holme Cultram (*Cumb*), and Hulme St Benet's (*Norfolk*). Could *eg*, *ynys* and *holm*, under the influence of the early Irish missionaries, each have undergone during the Dark Ages a temporary 'semantic shift' and come to mean (monastic) island (retreat)? Cox notes that *eg* seems to refer to major estates, but that this sense dies out by the eighth century. The name sequence *Glastingei* (704), *Gleestingburg* (732-55) is perhaps telling.

That Celtic monks sought remote islands, headlands and marshland retreats is history. Mayr Harting, quoting Bowen, has described the remote locations of early Welsh monasteries as 'ynys' [11]. That the monks were the conscious inheritors of a pagan tradition in not well advertised. Ellis Davidson says 'some names (those ending in -ey for instance) indicate cult centres on islands, like that of the old Nether in Tacitus' account' [12]. In Ireland, St Colm when he settled an island in Lough Derg is said to have found there Maccriche, a pagan man [13]. While from Gwent, to quote a church leaflet guide (with my emphases)

'Llantilio Crossenny means the Church of St Teilo at Iddon's Cross. Iddon was the local ruler in the sixth century who had been leading the struggle against Saxon invaders. Hearing that Teilo was at LLanarth nearby, he asked the holy man to aid him with prayers for victory. Teilo raised his cross here, on an ancient pre-Christian mound and after Iddon had defeated his enemies, *this land was granted to St Teilo for the building of a church*.'

Looking at *eg* then, churches where we might seek Stenton's lost monasteries perhaps also include Rye (Sussex), Olney (Bucks), Gedney (Cambs), Witney (Oxon), Eyam (Derbs), Kersey and Eye (Suffolk). In Surrey we find Chertsey and Bermondsey (recorded seventh century monasteries), Molesey and Battersea (recorded in seventh century charters as monastic possessions), Titsey (site of a Romano-British temple), and in the Wealden forest the insignificant Puckney ('Puck's island'). (In the more minor Surrey names, however, *eg* seem to preserve the original meaning simply of 'island', as in the dialect Thames 'eyot').

After the Council of Hertford in 672, new Roman ecclesiastical organisation took over from Irish monastic influence. Minsters and their defined territories replaced the more independent Celtic monasteries [14]: is the replacement of *eg* by *burh* a reflection of this? Celtic-style monasteries either dissolved, or
mutated into the new minsters, sometimes but not always retaining their old name. A Latin term, *minster*, came in. Thus Westminster perhaps changed its name from Thorney, as beftitted a newly important state church. While in the far south-west, areas relatively lately taken into Anglo-Saxon lordships, the English names of local centres (Axminster, Exminster, Charminster, Ilminster) seem likely to have been *minster* from the start, their prior names being Celtic.

*ingas* - 'people'

There must be a suspicion that *-ingas* fits into this sequence. In *gas* ('people') is much beloved by place-name students. It is interpreted as recording the folk groupings of Germanic ('Anglo-Saxon') invaders. A different (or perhaps supplementary) interpretation is possible. Could *-ingas* place-names recall the 'followers' of early missionaries, or the 'religious communities' at monastic sites? These senses are admitted by Dodgson [15] in the case of *Guthlingas*, the followers of Guthlac founder of Crowland Abbey in Lincolnshire at the beginning of the eighth century, and by Ekwall with *Bercingas*, 'the monks of Berkeley' in Gloucestershire. There are equivalents in *Maldwibnaec exclesia*, 'the church of the people of Maedulf' for Malmesbury, and *Cuthbertfolk*, 'the people of St Cuthbert' for the soke of the Bishops of Durham [16], (Cuthbert's shrine being in the cathedral).

The Venerable Bede, writing in the 730s, is a good source of *-ingas* place-names. These need to be distinguished from his use of *ingas* for royal lineages like Oiscingas 'the kings after Oisc' (i.e. of Kent). Bede's place-names, perhaps not surprisingly, occur in a religious context, like the monastery of Barking (Essex), but also as 'districts', as in *Innegetlingum* (perhaps Gilling near Richmond, Yorks). This set of lineage, religious and geographical meanings may be resolvable, in that monasteries often were the possessions of local aristocratic households [17]. That is, the household of a local *thegn* converted en bloc and in situ to the new Christianity. So, aristocratic households absorbed simultaneously the status of lineage ("-ingas"), monastery and tribal territory (and were the instrument for the spread both of Christianity and of 'Englishness').

The territory in essence is likely to have been the catchment area of the local pre-Germanic sacred centre (the original Hundred?). This explanation is not inconsistent with, but broadens into a wider historical context, the "-ingas" 'mini-states' postulated by Bussett and Blair [18].

Check this against the eight known *-ingas* sites of Surrey. Significantly, all occur in early charters, and in each of seven Hundreds. They are Woking (seventh century monastery; Woking Hundred), *Bintungom* (Farnham charter and Hundred; Binton Farm is by Seale, 'half'; close to later Waverley Abbey), *Eashing* (short-lived royal Saxon fort whose remote location is a puzzle but lies next to Peper Harow, possibly 'the pipers' temple', Godalming Hundred), Godalming (minister, perhaps supercedes Eashing; Godalming Hundred). Dorking (Roman station on Stane Street, and likely minister site: Wotton Hundred). Tooting (station on Stane Street; close to later Merton Abbey; Brixton Hundred). Tying (beside the hilltop church of St Martha's; Blackheath Hundred) and Getinges (Eaton Farm at Cobham, the A3 crosses the Mole here so conceivably the lost Elmbridge, 'Mole bridge' which names this Hundred). Poulton notes that in Surrey, minister territories and Hundreds appear to be co-terminous [19].

Were the Surrey *-ingas* places all seventh century monasteries? If so, might they be connected with Birinus, the fresh emissary from the Pope who became first bishop of Wessex (circa 635), of whom Bede recalls that he 'built and dedicated churches and brought many to the Lord', and who is said to have converted Surrey? His churches remain unidentified. One of his sponsors was king Oswald of Northumbria, who had overrun all England except Kent. Under these circumstances, and at this date (before the Council of Hertford), churches founded by the state probably would be hybrids between Roman minister territories and Celtic monastic organisation (complete with pagan undertones), and quite likely could have had a Northumbrian Anglian type of name. Thus it is interesting that *-ingas* place-names are found in Northumbria (Bede's own land), East Anglia, Middle Anglia, Essex and eastern Wessex - sub-kingdoms all newly fixed up with Celtic-trained (bar Birinus) bishops - but are absent from east Kent. (Sussex remained pagan late, but has a rash of *-ingas* places that might be associated with the activities of the Northumbrian Wilfrid, first bishop at Selsey, in 681).

If, after the Council of Hertford, Celtic-style monasteries were amalgamated into administrative minster areas, the focus is now on proto-urban, rather than archaic holy sites. In the Farnham charter (signed at some place called *Beasingahwark*, 'pagan temple') we may be witnessing this process, since the dependent 'estates' (perhaps actually dependent sacred centres) apportioned to the new minister are *Cusan weoh* ('Cusa's temple'), *Bintungom* (see above) and Churt ('heath', but which conceivably is 'shrine in the heath'), as Chard in Somerset is 'house in the heath'). The charter's sponsor was Caedwalla of Wessex, a lively character who appears in both Bede and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A 'pagan' and 'usurper' with a Celtic name, in the 680s he emerged from the forest of the Weald, devastated Wessex, the Isle of Wight, Sussex and part of Kent, before being converted by
St Wilfrid and retiring to Rome. Was his base the wild
Hants/Surrey border around
Farnham (Liss in Hants is Celtic
Ilva, ‘court / hall’)? By contrast,
the Chertsey documents from
the settled Thames valley focus
on an established monastery,
with dependent -ham (Germanic
‘home’) estates which today are
villages and parish churches and
are perhaps the successors of
Romano-British agricultural
estates [20]. The Chertsey
charter cites Sonning (Berks) as
the neighbouring ‘province’
[21], perhaps, that is, the next
minster territory. Blything
Hundred in Suffolk is perhaps a
minster territory centred on
Sigeberht’s monastery at
Bythburgh (burh); Happening
Hundred in Norfolk may
similarly relate to Happisburgh.
Modern names in -ing’ or
‘–ham are not all -ingan, but if
the hypothesis presented here
has merit then some or all
place-names containing the
dative form -inga-ought also
have religious meaning. This is
conceivable for an -inga-ham
name like Lastingham. It is
more than probable for names in
-inga-hearg, -inga-eg,
-inga-burh, -inga-hoh, like
Guneningaherg (Harlow on the
Hill, Middlesex), Glastingei,
Glestoneburgh and Ivinghoe (see
hoh, below). And could
-inga-ham names on the
Continent originate with the
missionaries who went to
Europe from East Anglia? [22].

ge - ‘territory’

The picture for east Kent,
missing under -ingas, might be
completed by ge (‘territory’), as
in modern German gau. Nearly
all place-names in ge lie here, at
or close to minster sites, and fit
well a concept of minster
territories based on
geographical zones: Eastry
(‘east’), Denge (‘marsh’), Sturry
(‘on the river Stour’), Lyminge
(‘of the Roman town Lemans’).
Kentish minster territories on
the Roman model could date
from Kent’s mid-seventh century
isolation, or even from
St Augustine’s archbishopric at
Canterbury from 597. The only
known exceptions seem to
support this. Ely’s monastery
although in the fens tradionally
was founded by St Augustine.
Vange lies on the Essex bank of
the Thames estuary opposite
Kent. ‘Surrey’ (‘southern ge’)
perhaps in reality is Southwark,
a minster territory founded at
the south gate of London by the
kings of Kent?

slow - ‘religious
meeting place’

A late major religious
place-name element, accepted as
such, is stow, ‘(religious)
meeting place’ [23]. Examples
are Stow on the Wold (Gloucecs),
Stow (Liness), Stowmarket
(ecclesia de Stou, formerly
Thorney, Suffolk), Peterstow
(earlier Lann petery, Herefordshire), stane Albane
stow (St Albans), but perhaps
also Bristol (‘stow at the
bridge’).
Surrey has two cases of burh
stow, at Bristow Farm in Frimley
by Bagshot Heath, and Burstow
church a mile from Thunderfield
Castle (‘Thunor’s field’, see later)
in the remote clayey Weald and
inexplicably the site of a court of
king Alfred. Do both hint
backwards to lost pagan centres?

Women

A specific suggestion
regarding monasteries. When a
place-name has a woman’s name
in it, could it just be that the
person referred is a member of
the aristocracy who became an
abbess? The most famous was
Hilda of Whitby. Others might
be the Bebb who seems to
appear in the name of Bambourgh
(Northumberland), Tetta (abbess
of Wimbourne) at Tetrbury
(Wilts), Wulfstan at
Wolverhampton, and Beage at
Bibley (Glos) and Byland Abbey
(Yorks) (or is this heang, ‘circle’,
suggested by Barker for
Beamister in Dorset)? The
essentially pagan tradition of
female seers gradually dies out in
English Christianity.
Pagan sites

Christian minsters were well established in England by the mid-eighth century, often at future town sites whose large parish churches survive to this day. But was this the end of pagan sites? Writing of Surrey, the medieval historian John Blair notes of Bisley church that it is ‘conceivable that some cult survived... around the nearby holy well of St John the Baptist where parishioners were still being baptised within recorded memory’ [24]. It is reasonable to suppose such sites to be relic pagan ones. As with the sanctification of Bisley’s well through the good offices of St John, do place-names give clues to the surviving cultural significance of pagan holy springs, trees, barrows and sacred hill-tops and enclosures?

Water

The cathedrals of Wells, Southwell and Bath relate to the springs (OE wielle, ‘that which wells up’) still found there. A Roman mausoleum has been found by the pools at Wells [25], while the miraculous hot springs at Bath were dedicated to the Celtic god Sulis. The pools at which Lichfield cathedral was found by the pools at Wells [25], at Bath were dedicated to the (presumably Roman) mau soleum has been found there. A while the miraculous hot springs of Southwell and Bath relate to the Water sacred hill-tops and enclosures?

Consider also the rare Latin survival fonta (‘fountain, spring’), Welsh ffynnon, and OE burna (‘spring, stream’). One set of names, Bidwell ( Beds), and the adjacent Bedfont and Stanwell (Middlesex), containing byden ( ‘trough’) [28] and stan ( ‘stone’), seem likely to relate to the stone basins commonly found at holy wells. Burna in Surrey and elsewhere came to mean ‘bourne, stream’, but when used as a place–rather than a river-name the sense ‘spring’ seems evident. The minster name Sherborne (Dorset, ‘bright spring’) has its Surrey counterpart in Shireburn Spring, the former name of the Silent Pool near Guildford. This deep, clear-legend-girt pool at the foot of the Downs closely resembles that at Wanborough (also near Guildford) where a Romano-British temple has been found; the name Shireburn appears to have transferred to the sub-minster at the village of Shere a mile from the Silent Pool.

Trees, stones, crosses

Sacred trees do not seem so well evidenced in place-names. Perhaps their significance faded earlier. Notable, however, are the overt religious connotations of a small minority of names with the OE element leah, a term whose origins are obscure but which seems normally to mean something like ‘wood’. Just a few catch the eye. Willey / Weoley, (Surrey, Worcs) means ‘leah with a heathen temple’. A sense ‘holy grove’ for such cases seems likely, especially when one adds the other Surrey names Thursley and Telves apparently referring to the worship of Thunor and Tiw. Another example is Thunder(s)ley in Essex [29].

Of similar type may be names in graf (‘grove’), as in Gravesend (Kent, Northants), and county names, in ‘several Hundred-names’. That ‘tree’ may be sometimes a term for a (wooden) religious upright or cross, is indicated by Croesoswald the Welsh name for Oswestry. That Hundreds often did centre on natural trees, is shown by a name like Copthorne Hundred in Surrey, ‘at the pollarded hawthorn’. Some meeting places may have been marked by a (standing) stone or stone cross rather than a tree, as perhaps at Boston (‘Botolph’s stone’, Lines), Holystone Abbey (Yorks), and the Surrey Hundred-name Brixton (‘Beohtsige’s stone’).

Barrows

The term beog, ‘barrow’, is normally considered descriptive of a mere landscape feature. Continuing cultural significance is obvious where the name retains that of the individual whose burial mound it is. This happens with the term hlaw, ‘barrow’, as in Wilmslow (‘Wilhelm’s hlaw’) and Taplow (Taeppa’s, Bucks—see Eric Fitch
in At the Edge No.1. Hlaw seems used of new feudal
Germanic burial mounds like Taepa’s of circa 620 (where
the rediscovered adjacent
church of 700 could be the burh
of Berry Hill). That prehistoric
mounds retained a role in
the community is suggested by the
survival of the Celtic-derived
element cruc (Welsh crug), as
in Crich (Derbs), Crick
(Northants), Cricklade (Wilts),
Crewkerne (Somerset;
interestingly, ‘cruc house’, i.e.
messuary?) and the Somerset
and Surrey names
creechbarrow / Crooksbury
(cruc beorg). (That (hoh in
Wales meant barrow seems
proven by the coincidence of
hoh names with tumuli evident
for example on O.S. map 145
of the Preseli mountains of
north Pembrokeshire).

In Surrey, cruc crops up at
the aforementioned Crooksbury
Hill (beside the church place
Bintunghon), Creek Copse (by
Hascombe hillfort), and
Chechelfelle Hundred (likely
centred at one time on
Thunderfield Castle, see
below).

Sacred hill-tops

Beowulf’s burial mound was
sited on a hill-top. In such cases
the OE element hoh seems to
present itself. It is said to mean
a ‘projecting ridge of land’,
 derives from the word ‘heal’.
Yet clearly some hoh sites are
of special significance. Synods
were held in 645 at Icanho and
in 747 at Clofesho. These
locations are not known, but it
has been suggested that
Clofesho may be the eighth
century minster at Brixworth in
Northants [30]; this church
stands beside a mound. Icanho
might be Iken, a flattish hill
beside the Aisle estuary in
Suffolk, where recently the
remains of a Saxon cross have
been found at the church [31].
No less suggestive are hill-top
names like Ivinghoe Beacon on
the Chilterns, Trentishoe
(‘circle hoh’) on the Devon
cliffs, the seventh century
monastery of Hoo on a hill
above the Medway estuary, and
the famous ship burial tumuli at
Sutton Hoo above the Deben
estuary in Suffolk. Is hoh a
religious term, or are
hoh-named sites simply good
places to investigate? What, for
example, is at Plymouth Hoe?

Houghton and Hutton (hoh
tun) appear in several counties,
perhaps not always at religious
sites. In Surrey, hoh (as Hoe,
etc.) seems partially to correlate
with parishes containing ingas
names. Were our postulated
seventh century minsters cited
adjacent to pre-existing religious
centres, the focus Surrey’s
original Hundreds?

Sacred enclosures

Old English names for stone
circles and the like seem rarely
to have survived. Exceptions
may be Stonehenge (‘hanging
stones’), Ringstead (‘place of the
ring’, Norfolk, Northants),
Trentishoe (trendels hoh, see
above) and Bewholme (beagum,
at the rings’, Yorks).

But look at OE ora, said to
mean ‘border, margin, bank’.
Again this clearly is a culturally
significant term. The Anglo-
Saxon Chronicle claims
Gymenesora and Cerdicsora
respectively to be the landing
places of the Germanic
conquerors of Sussex and
Wessex. Since the latter name
seems to contain a Celtic
personal name [32], are we
dealing rather with British
coastal religious centres at
which the invaders first seized
ratification?

Does ora in fact describe the
embankments at significant sites
- for example those surrounding
Bronze Age sacred hill-top sites?
At Oare (Wilts) is a huge such
enclosure, and the same name
in Berks and Kent (as in Wilts),
figure in charters. As to the
continuing importance of Bronze
Age hill-top enclosures, Cunliffe
notes of Sussex that all three
known rural Romano-British
temples occur inside such [33].

In Surrey, ora is recorded in
eight places, usually hill-tops and
including Nore below Creek
Copse (see above), a lost ‘wolf
ora’ beside Thursley (see
above), and Nore Hill in
Chelsam where a prehistoric
embankment has recently
been discovered [35]. Surrey’s
most obvious sacred hills are
not named with ora; instead,
the Hills of St Martha, St
Catherine (formerly Drakehull,
‘dragon hill’) and St Ann are
topped by chapels which
overshadow any former
embankments.

Rituals

Just occasionally, a
place-name may give a clue to
the activities at religious sites.
What, for example, were
‘pipers’ up to at Peper Harow
temple in Surrey?

We note from Ekwall
Mottisfont (‘pleader’s junta’,
Hants), Botwell (healing
spring’, Middlesex). Fritwell
(‘well for auguries’, Oxon),
Elwell (‘wishing well’, Dorset).
Such essentially religious
rituals have their counterpart
in the civil activities Ekwall
suggests at for example
Thingoe Hundred (‘assembly
mound’, Suffolk), and Playstow
names (marking places for
sporting games, or maybe for
religious plays).

Wanborough in Wilts,
Ekwall notes:... looks like...
‘wagon’, but it is not easy to
see what a compound
waagenberg could mean. Cf.,
however, Wagenberg... in
Germany’. Do we here have a
reference to pagan ceremony
involving the progression to
the barrow of a holy wagon
(see Alby Stone’s article in
At the Edge No.2)?

Beside Nore Hill in Surrey
is Worms Heath, ‘snake’s
head’ - one of a type with
Heronshad (‘eagle’s head’) and
Evershead (‘boar’s head’) also in the county. In
discussing such names, and
others including Gateshead
(‘goat’s’, Durham) and
Manshead Hundred (‘man’s’,
Bedfordshire). Dickson [34]
cites the pagan Germanic habit
of religious decapitation, but
Green [35] notes equivalent
rituals among the Celts.

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A place-name theory

We need to put religious place-names in context. Early estates, according to Ford [36], centred on a particular focus and a particular name; most other names were generated as geographical and economic dependents. Perhaps we can now say that the core 'estate' name often was religious. The 'estate' anyway being a series of Chinese boxes: sometimes a hall, sometimes the Hundred, sometimes the pagan centre, monastery or minster, later the manor or parish. Thus the fact that Chertsey Abbey's charter lists a set of -ham estates says nothing about their date or origins, but more about the power of the Church to codify a system. As Sawyer says [37], Old English place-names probably were subject to periodic complete substitution, with stability achieved only through the influence of legal or tax documents, or by the construction of a church.

We have noted a progression in monastic names, from -eg through -burh to -mynster, and suggested this reflects religious power politics. A general view of the way place-names change is needed. Sometimes core names are replaced, but perhaps as often they simply are modified or translated, as in the series Glastingei, Glestingaborg perhaps from Celtic glasto-, 'woad', where the earlier Celtic name Ineswytrin (Latin/Welsh Ynys Vitrium) may likewise have meant 'island of woad'. Sometimes an earlier name survives attached to a marginally different geographical site, as in Surrey probably at Peper Harow / Eashing, and at Cherchefelle / Thunderfield / Burstow. The 'different sites' may well be a church, and the pagan spring, barrow or enclosure it replaced.

Religion provided cultural continuity. It was doubtless their religious content that allowed the Romano-British terms cruc and funta to survive. John [38] has suggested Celtic place-names survive where a local Romano-British aristocracy survived late. Perhaps this 'aristocracy' sometimes was monastic or priestly. The cathedral name Lichfield retained the bones of the name of the Roman town of Leta cetum (Wall, Staffs) [40] when the local administrative focus shifted (reverted?) to priests at a sacred pool two miles away.

So, place-names relate to religious sites in different ways. An archaic name may not be inherently religious but, as in the case of Lichfield, may survive through ecclesiastical agency. Or, a place-name element may have gathered a (temporary?) religious meaning over time: examples being Welsh llan (originally 'enclosure', later 'religious enclosure'), and perhaps the OE eg, ge, -ingas, burh (interpretations easy to miss if you have no adequate religious paradigm to call on).

Few place-name elements define objects that are specifically religious: weoh, heargh (both 'pagan temple'), mynster, cirice (both 'church'), but probably also cruc, beorg, hlaw. Some objects may appear secular or topographical but perhaps most commonly can more accurately be seen as religious: those indicated by funta, wielle, hoh, ora.

So it seems our place-names are permeated by religious references of one sort or another. For the reason, one could look to Higham. He sees post-Roman England as a largely constant population with a smattering of intrusive energetic 'Anglo-Saxons' and a gradually acculturating British nobility becoming 'English'. Newly enthused and peripatetic Christian missionaries doubtless were a civilising influence by personal example, but in the end, 'local group loyalties may have been more to cult centres than to specific dynasties.' [39]

References

4: The Church in British Archaeology, R. Morris, Council for British Archaeology research report 47 1983.
12: Gods and Myths of the Northern Europeans, H.R. Ellis Davidson, Pelican 1964.
14: Fisher op. cit.
16: Ekwall op. cit. pxiv.
Axminster (Devon) and Sturry valleys (see discussion of in A verling (Gloucs), parallelling 'A von' valley might be reflected (Kent) in the Axe and Stour discussion of dealing in geomancy (see sites, and we are perhaps between the rivers'. Place is former name of Christchurch Priory in Hants, '(monastery) reminiscent of Twynham, point eg. 'monastery or people on the 'up' of Upping-, / Epping), in the 'up' of Upping / Eppin-), English place-names the explanation could equally reflect some religious practice, or be in antique line ages of Scandinavia, and in English place-names the bill ('sword, point of land ') of Goring and the bill ('horn, point of land ') of Horning-. In antique lineages, totemic words seem to contain totemic words (my thanks to Alby Stone for this suggestion): the helm ('helmet') and scyld ('shield') of the Helmingas and Scyldingas lineages of Scandinavia, and in English place-names the bill ('sword, point of land') of Billing-, the gara ('spear, strip of land') of Goring and the horn ('horn, point of land') of Horning-. In antique lineages, totemic or warrior nicknames might be expected. In place-names, the explanation could equally reflect some religious practice, or be topographical (as also perhaps in the 'up' of Upping , / Epping), eg. 'monastery or people on the point / strip of land' - reminiscent of Twynham, former name of Christchurch Priory in Hants, '(monastery) between the rivers'. Place is important in ancient religious sites, and we are perhaps dealing in geomancy (see discussion of hoh, later).

A British tribal area in the 'Avon' valley might be reflected in Avening (Gloucs), parallelling Axminster (Devon) and Sturry (Kent) in the Axe and Stour valleys (see discussion of ge). Cf. Bede's Meanwara, 'people of the Meon valley', and the minster at Meon (Hants).

21: Blair op. cit.
24: Blair op. cit.
25: W. Rodwell in The Early Church in Western Britain and Ireland, S. Pearce, BAR 102, Oxford UP 1982.
29: Higham suggests these Germanic gods would have been attractive to local British groups, as being close to Celtic paganism and less oppressive than Roman hierarchies. Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons, N. Higham, Seaby 1992. (The next incumbent of the holy places was Roman Christianity - but Christianity liberated by the Irish paganism of its messengers).
32: J. Morris op. cit.
34: Appendix 1 in Mawer op. cit.
37: P.H. Sawyer in Sawyer op. cit.
38: Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies, E. John, Leicester UP 1966.
39: Higham op. cit.

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Given the extent to which modern-day pagans take as a truism that many of our folk customs have, unconsciously, retained relics of their heathen origins is traceable to the success of one man's major opus - Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, a multi-volume work published in the 1890s.

'It is difficult to overrate the influence of *The Golden Bough*. It offered a pattern which was immediately and attractively available; and it proceeded to dominate attitudes and thinking to a remarkable extent. The vegetation drama, ritual death and resurrection, the sacred tree, became accepted elements...' So observed Roy Judge in his study of the Jack-in-the-Green [1], also noting that the Frazerian influence was complex.

While modern day researchers find little of Frazer's work holds up to scrutiny, his opinions were accepted almost without question for about 60 years. In the introduction to the abridged one volume edition of *The Golden Bough*, prepared some thirty years after the original research [2], Frazer wrote: 'I have neither added new material nor altered the views expressed in the last edition; for the evidence which has come to my knowledge in the meantime has on the whole served either to confirm my former conclusions or to furnish fresh illustrations of old principles.'

Frazer's objectives were straightforward: to demonstrate that Christianity derived from the same principles as so-called 'primitive' religions. Within the constraints of the then-active blasphemy laws Frazer strove to treat the Bible as another rich mythology - to be studied objectively, and with the same contempt for the beliefs as academics showed for non-Christian faiths.

'A group of men with bells on their legs, dancing frenetically'

Frazer's views were based on the work of Sir Lawrence Gomme, Sir Edward Tylor and Wilhelm Mannhardt although Frazer proved to be the better known of these researchers. Frazer in his turn influenced Sir Edmund Chambers and Cecil Sharp. Sharp, almost single-handedly, inspired the English folk dance revival and, in the process, drew attention to the then-dying remnants of other folk customs. Sharp's Frazerian-influenced opinions were contested at the time but between 1914 and the early 1970s his views were unopposed - folklorists 'were not concerned with evidence (or the lack of it) of historical continuity, and... relied entirely upon similarities and parallels in form to construct grand hypotheses.' [3]

Part of these 'grand hypotheses' was that morris dancing was an ancient rite which had remained unaltered for centuries. When an historian, Barbara Lowe, published her studies of the earliest origins of morris dancing in 1957 [4] she was totally ignored. This is not in the least surprising, as what she discovered runs entirely counter to Sharp's fantasy. Lowe found that morris dances first appeared about 1450 as a new craze in the courts of the nobility and royalty throughout western Europe. These courts were notoriously fashion-conscious and briefly-favoured novelty was as prevalent then as in our own times.

Courtly morris of the fifteenth century was a Christmas-tide entertainment involving a group of men with bells on their legs, dancing frenetically in an attempt to woo a lady. After this display of male vitality she, in fine fickle, gave her heart to a fool. Not only did this little scenario find favour in the palaces of England, soon it was spreading among the common people. First along the Thames to nearby towns and then, by the sixteenth century, throughout England. Along the way it became less a feature of Christmas than of the Maytime or summer games.

'Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* 1922

'Is some riddle solved by my surviving forever? Is not eternal life itself as much of a riddle as our present life?'
A medieval mummer's play with the characters dressed in animal masks.

A few 'traditions' really are traditional

The history of morris dancing is similar to many other popular traditions. A number of historians have intensively studied specific aspects of 'traditional' customs and repeatedly revealed that these traditions peter out before the eighteenth century. A few 'traditions' really are traditional - but there are few of them. When we decorate our homes with greenery and give each other presents at Christmas, we are following a custom which goes back 'time out of mind'. Few of us light bonfires for Mayday or Midsummer but, up until the late nineteenth century, this was a commonplace custom which, also, can be traced back beyond written records. Probably the erection of Maypoles is equally archaic. But written records ominously peter out for all other 'traditional' customs.

Historians know well that events are best shown up in written sources when they contravene custom or legislation. The names of common people most frequently enter the annals of written history when they appear in court records for greater or lesser crimes; not infrequently, drunkenness on feast days. The once-heated debates of churchwardens and clergy are veiled beneath the dry records of parish registers. These same registers reveal year after year the amounts spent preparing for such festivities as 'church ales' - until, abruptly, these expenses are no longer part of the meticulous lists. No one at the time explicitly stated that church ales had been superseded by other (less bawdy) forms of fund-raising, but the evidence is clear enough. So the genealogy of popular customs can be pieced together.

'How traditional was “traditional”?'

There is clear evidence that in the late medieval era 'new devotional fads were enthusiastically explored by a laity eager for religious variety' [5] The greatest of the feasts of the late medieval liturgy, Corpus Christi, apparently well-established since time immemorial, was comparatively new, dating only from the thirteenth century.

Such were the religious practices of the populace. This was 'traditional religion' in Britain - although this simply begs the question, 'How traditional was “traditional”?' Running in parallel were the ascending aristocratic interests in astrology and the attempts to subdue 'witchcraft' and the various activities of 'cunning' men and women. The boundaries between religion and magic were less well-drawn than they are with the hindsight of modern mentalities [6].

Behind these terse paragraphs are entire academic careers picking over the ways in which social history is a patchwork of ever-evolving changes. We think of our own times as being subject to unique processes of change. Yet history records an ever-changing flow. The difference of the modern day is mostly that the processes of communication are more immediate and more detailed, giving a greater awareness of change. An additional and pertinent difference is that, until recently, the 'meanings' of popular customs were not fixed by written accounts. Why things were done was the least rooted aspect of these activities.

'Customs quite out of fashion'

Peeling the layers of the onion away, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the pro-Reformation and counter-Reformation sway back and forth with greater or lesser enthusiasm and enforcement. The reign of Elizabeth I provided an era of comparative tolerance, where the country was officially Protestant but the zeal of the senior clergy could be, and was, vetoed by the monarch.

During the Civil War and Restoration there is widespread written evidence of the way new religious and social ideals were being promulgated. The sometimes brutally aggressive Puritans stripped the churches of their images, rood lofts and altars - while a smaller, less-aggressive number, from time to time attempted to restore some of the 'popish' traditions [7].
Just how thoroughly the Reformation and Civil War swept away traditional customs is revealed by writers of the time. John Aubrey is a name well-known for his early antiquarian interests. He was a child before the Civil War and could see first-hand how many local customs, such as midsummer bonfires, had vanished during the Interregnum, 'the civil wars coming on have put all these rites or customs quite out of fashion.' [8] Aubrey also tells how the once-annual custom of decorating the salt-well at Droitwich on the patron saint's festival was prohibited; the well promptly dried up. The ceremony was restored the following year, whereupon the water once again flowed.

Much has been made of the Restoration of Charles II and the establishment of Royal Oak or Oak Apple Day (29th May) as a 'surrogate' for the Mayday festivities prohibited by the Puritans. Yet closer inspection reveals that over thirty years of Puritan campaigning had wrought a severe dislocation and the popular pastimes which were 'restored' were different in nature and character. In essence, the post-Restoration festivities were not so much spontaneous customs of the common people as events which were organised by the 'gentry'. It was the subtle transition from 'participating' to 'attending'. [9]

**Gentrification**

The modern era is much better documented regarding folk customs. Superficially, this might be thought that our society became more self-conscious of the need to preserve itself in writing. But this is somewhat inaccurate. Plenty of records exist in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but the popular customs were so commonplace that they were rarely considered worthy of mention, except when unusual rowdiness or other irregularities entered the annals. Only in the late eighteenth century did educated observers become sufficiently separated from the common people that they began to record popular customs, rather in the manner that early explorers were systematically documenting foreign cultures [10].

By the late nineteenth century the fairly copious written records reveal that popular customs were again undergoing widespread changes. Victorian moral standards disfavoured drunkenness, brawling and any suggestions of lewdness. And, as court records reveal, the former two were inextricably linked to village festivities, and the latter is frequently alleged by detractors (although parish records of births do not provide evidence for a surfeit of milk-maids defloriated at Maytide). There is more than a little to suggest that such holidays were traditionally a time for local lads to visit a neighbouring village, not just for a few beers, but an inevitable punch-up with the 'home team' [11].

One might be forgiven for thinking that the South Lindsey district of Lincolnshire is as traditional and slow-to-change as any part of England. But, as Obelkevich found [12], this area was always in contact with the groundswell of change. His meticulous study of rural society there in the mid-nineteenth century reveals the same processes of gentrification which other researchers, such as Bushaway [13], reveal for elsewhere in the country.

Bushaway draws upon many first-hand accounts. One of these, written in the 1880s, describes the Mayday activities in a Hampshire village. Bushaway discerns 'the ceremonies of Mayday were deliberately transformed to accord more with prevailing Victorian taste and ideas of social behaviour. The Ruskinesque image of little schoolchildren or young girls carrying delicate May garlands under the kindly supervision of an adult was a popular one, well known in Victorian art. The image bore little relationship to the earlier more robust customs which had been consistently suppressed and discour-aged...'

Bushaway discusses in detail the demise of bull baiting, street football, cheese rolling, 'Whipping Toms', and a number of other 'boisterous' popular pastimes. All these were more-or-less totally eradicated throughout the country by the combined efforts of the local justices, clergy and other gentry.

Despite the best efforts of the Victorian patriarchs a handful of these customs did survive. But they did not escape unchanged. Some, like the Abbots Bromley Horn Dancers, benefited from natty costumes (previously the performers wore their everyday clothes). Ironically, at the very end of the Victorian era it was the ideas of Frazer which were imposed on the traditions. The process of 'paganisation' had begun.

The same imposition of Victorian and Edwardian values can be recognised in the way folk music was being recorded. Cecil Sharp and other pioneers must have spent untold hours 'in the field' transcribing songs by ear. They cannot but have known that traditional folk singers vary their melodies slightly from verse to verse and use subtle rhythmic and pitch embellishments. Yet their transcriptions show an 'idealised' version, tidied up to fit into the twelve-note scale and simple rhythmic schemes. Great play was made of the 'modality of the melodies, as if this in some way made them exotic. When 'serious' composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams or Percy Grainger got hold of these tunes the process was intensified, with four-square harmonies being imposed in place of the entirely different idiom of monophonic music. It is hard to imagine the original singers' voices while listening to Vaughan Williams' symphonic settings of folk songs, so we should be equally suspicious of how much the written record of folk customs has been equally bowdlerised.
The earliest-known illustration of dancing around a maypole in England, from 1680s.

"Christianity was often paganised"

This is not to suggest that Frazer was to blame. Paganism was an integral part of nineteenth century European culture. Not, I stress, in a sense that in any way suggested worship or even belief in pre-Christian deities. The Renaissance had re-awakened awareness of Classical paganism, and the Classics remained the bedrock of educated European culture - the foundations from which all other civilisations had evolved. In the less-educated popular minds some of this spilled over but a complex syncretism of magic and respect for the Christian concept of the Devil provided a system of superstitions which, for want of a better term, is usually described as 'pagan'.

However, as Obelkevich emphasises, 'To use the term "paganism" for the non-Christian elements in popular religion [of the mid-nineteenth century] is convenient but misleading, since like popular religion as a whole, it was not a distinct and conscious movement or organisation but a loose agglomeration of religious phenomena. It was not a counter-religion to Christianity; rather, the two coexisted and complemented each other.' [14]

Nevertheless, at the end of his study, Obelkevich writes, 'It is hard to avoid the conclusion that paganism was dominant and Christianity recessive in popular religion. Paganism was rarely christianized, but Christianity was often paganized.' Those who want to understand the context of these conclusions should read his book - hiding behind the scope of a regional study are many ideas of wider importance.

The paganised survivors

The imaginations of the late Victorian folklorists were fuelled by this on-going popular 'paganism' within Christianity and the notions of a unified pre-Christian pagan past seemingly supported by Frazer's melting-down of ethnology.

These imaginations asserted that hobby horses - such as that at Padstow - must be survivors of the masked dancers which early Christians, such as Theodore in his oft-quoted homily, attempted to suppress [15]. Likewise, foliate heads - so frequently found carved in the stonework of churches - were, to the eyes of Lady Raglan (who coined the term 'Green Man' to describe them), evidence of a subversive veneration of vegetation gods [16].

Yet, despite bending over backwards to incorporate all evidence for an early origin for ritual animal disguises, E.C. Cawte is forced to conclude that, while there are records of hobby-horses throughout most of the sixteenth century, these were intended to represent a horse and rider in a pageant. 'It is only toward the end of that period that there are records of a single hobby-horse with a morris team.' [17]

Hooded animals (of the Padstow type) enter written records about 1800: 'There is evidence neither for a hooded animal much before that date, nor for an association between hooded animal and the morris dance, nor that this type of construction was ever called a hobby-horse before [the twentieth] century' concludes Cawte. He acknowledges that 'there are records of animal disguise in every century since the thirteenth, in either Great Britain or France. The recent customs might therefore be expected to have lengthy pedigrees, but they seem to be distinct from the events recorded earlier that the situation is much as before; it can only be guessed that there may be some connection between recent customs and the older ones.' Despite such bending-over-double to admit the possibility of guesswork, the conclusion is clear - there is no evidence.

Jack-in-the-Green figures - ones covered from top to toe in greenery - have some slight affinity to Padstow-type horses. Their history has been covered equally thoroughly by Roy Judge [18]. His detailed study reveals that their origins are in the Mayday revelries of sweeps - which were mostly concerned
Modern pagan beliefs

During the 1970s and 80s the whole edifice built on Frazer's foundations was steadily dismantled by academics. Nothing of consequence was left. Folklore studies adopted a more functionalist approach (some would argue an excessively functionalist approach!) and turned their backs on pan-cultural synthesis.

At the same time modern-day witchcraft was gathering momentum. Much of this energy was provided initially by Gerald Gardner, whose eclecticism makes the term syncretism an understatement. Drawing on the ideas of, among others, Margaret Murray (The Witch-cult in Western Europe) and Robert Graves (The White Goddess), with more than a little input from the ceremonial magic of the Golden Dawn and its descendents, he invented pagan 'wiccan' rituals. To give credence to these he overlaid his contact with some traditional 'cunning' men and women in Hampshire, suggesting that they were part of some organised tradition dating back to the mists of time [21].

Just when academia was shaking off the dodgy meta-theories of Frazer, and consigning The Witch-cult in Western Europe to the pile of books based on deliberately-distorted evidence (The White Goddess had never been taken seriously by anyone else; even the author regretted publishing it!), these very ideas were being taken up by the exponents of popular paganism and thereby gained an even wider influence which continues little-abated to this day.

Part of the reason is that, all too often, academic specialists live in a different belief system to the outside world (even other academics in different disciplines). Everybody except paleolithic experts thinks cave paintings were about hunting magic. Everybody except neolithic experts think the New Stone Age peoples venerated a Great Mother Goddess. Everybody except specialists in the period think the victims of the witch-hunts were practitioners of a pre-christian pagan religion. Almost everybody thinks sheela-na-gigs were pagan deities. Fortunately someone was thoughtful enough to provide non-specialists with an update on what could be known with some certainty, ruthlessly exposing anything that was only supposition. That person was Ronald Hutton, who, came to academic and popular attention with his book The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles [22]. Since then other authors have attempted to unravel facts from popular pagan fictions; for instance Miranda Green [23] discusses Celtic triple deities, keeping a great distance from Graves' fabrication of a three-fold goddess.

Predictably, those who espouse modern pagan beliefs have attacked Hutton, leading to some vituperative correspondence [24]. But as he was mostly the bearer of the news that many different researchers had independently concluded there is no factual basis to their faith (but since when has that ever been a problem to religions?) this might be regarded as misdirected - all the more so because Hutton is actively involved in modern paganism.

Regrettably these debates between modern pagans and those they perceive as 'Huttonites', entertaining and revealing as they may be, have served as something as a smoke screen which has distracted attention away from the key issues. My hope is that this article will not regenerate the smoke, but will encourage readers to explore for themselves the research which Hutton summarised. The overall impact of that research puts folklore and related affairs into a different perspective from the popularly-held viewpoint. No one is disputing that Morris dancing, Green Men and the like have, over the last few decades, become paganised. Rather, this is just one more veneer on the ever-changing nature of these 'traditions'. But these modern pagan ideas are quite distinct from historical understanding.

The key word here is 'historical'. The work summarised by Hutton is that of historians, where absence of written evidence is taken as prima facie evidence of absence. Folklore and folk custom, by their nature, are manifestations of primarily oral cultures. Such oral traditions all-too-quickly fade into silence. Frazer gave voice to that silence in a manner...
which retained few, if any, echoes of the original. The chorus of Frazerians reverberates on, at least outside academia. Recent academic studies have, so far, been by historians rather than anthropologists who might be more sensitive to picking up 'inaudible' oral traditions. The work summarised in this article is, perhaps, only a starting point.

Postscript

At the time of researching and writing this article I was not aware of exactly what David Clarke and Andy Roberts were quietly cooking up. The publication of their Twilight of the Celtic Gods (see reviews section of this issue) proves that they have got well past the starting point in picking up hitherto-unheard oral traditions. I have chosen not to modify the text of this article in the light of reading their book, although clearly a number of issues are illuminated in new ways by their 'informants' from the traditional village families of the Peak District and south Yorkshire.

Ronald Hutton's latest book, The Stations of the Sun, also arrived after this article was written (again see reviews section). His book deals, in greater depth, with most of the topics outlined here. I have not modified my text (although the two illustrations used here are taken from The Stations of the Sun) but simply recommend this work as essential reading for anyone who wants to find out more about British folk customs.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Professor Ronald Hutton for drawing my attention to key sources and providing background information to his published works. He kindly read an earlier draft and amended comments relating to Frazer. However, the views expressed here do not necessarily reflect his opinions.

Two books which lurk in the background of this research, but which do not receive overt citation, are Aron Gurevich's Medieval Popular Culture - problems of belief and perception (trans. J.M. Bak, Cambridge UP, 1988) and Charles Phythian-Adams' brief but inspirational (and unjustly overlooked) Local History and Folklore - a new framework (Bedford Square Press, 1975).

References

8: John Aubrey, Remaines, cited in Underdown, op. cit.
11: This ritualised male aggression, clearly visible in traditional Shrove Tuesday street football and the Easter Monday Hallaton Bottle Kicking, also survived until recently on the terraces of football stadia (and is one of the UKs few exports to Europe). It is not simply a 'territorial instinct', as ritual fistfights were a feature of Irish funeral customs until very recently (see Gearoid O Cruailaoich, 'Contest in the cosmos and the ritual of the Irish "Merry Wake"', Cosmos No.6, 1990 p145-160). While it may date me, I think also of the Bank Holiday activities at certain seaside resorts during the 1960s, when gangs of scooter-riding 'Mods' arrived. In its various manifestations, this ritual aggression is an aspect of 'liminality' in its own right, and deserves more detailed discussion.
13: Bushaway, op. cit.
14: Obelkevich, op. cit.
16: Lady Raglan, 'The Green Man in church architecture', Folklore Vol.50 1939. (This
article is the original source of the term 'Green Man' for foliate heads.)
17: Cawte, op. cit.
18: Judge, op. cit.
19: Punch, 1844, IV, p196 cited in Judge op. cit.
21: While individual, often idiosyncratic, folk charms and remedies of the cunning ones may have been passed down by word of mouth for many generations, there is no suggestion of any organisation or common approach. Academic literature sometimes makes poor distinctions between superstition, magic 'charms' and so-called 'witchcraft'; notable exceptions are Thomas (op. cit) and Obelkevich (op. cit.). Thomas and Obelkevich both identify widespread witchcraft (Obelkevich specifically stating that it was flourishing in South Lindsey in the nineteenth century) but what they describe is clearly not an organised religion (still less with any affinities to Gardnerian-influenced paganism) but rather the rag-tag remnants of folk magic that were to further degrade into the private superstitions of today (such as touching wood for 'luck').
One of the leading figures in the modern pagan movement, Michael Howard, has published a number of articles in his magazine, The Cauldron, which deal with the roots of wicca around the middle of this century. His research has been thorough and involved interviewing many of the key people (several of whom are now dead). Despite this thoroughness he has found no indications of connections with a 'living tradition' of organised witchcraft predating Gardner.
I interpret this as fairly conclusive evidence that there was no such 'living tradition' (outside the mind of Gardner and his followers) although acknowledging that Howard would disagree with my opinions.
The information revealed by David Clarke and Andy Roberts in Twilight of the Celtic Gods (Blandford 1996; review in this issue) provides considerable support for the first two paragraphs of this footnote (which, as with the remainder of this article, were written before publication of their book).
24: See, for instance, the letters section of The Ley Hunter No.124, 1996, p29-33.

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But why not just take out a subscription?
I have it on the impeccable authority of two retired schoolmasters that our Anglo-Saxon ancestors used to worship strange gods called Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. See *1066 And All That* if inclined to disbelieve. Messrs. Seller & Yeatman didn't have much to say about the ancient Celts, but that gap in their original publication has since been supplied by many other works of almost equal merit. Take Herne the Hunter, for instance, who is a version of the pagan Celtic god Cernunnos. To doubt about it. I saw a picture of him - rather a good one - in that standard work, the *I-Spy Book of Ghosts and Hauntings*.

Yielding to a certain low-minded scepticism, we may feel the need for some original texts rather than Big Chief I-Spy's version of them. In the case of Herne, this leads us into the plot of one of Shakespeare's minor comedies, the scene in Act IV of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* where Mistress Page tells her friends:

> 'There is an old tale goes, that Herne the Hunter<br>Some time a keeper here in Windsor forest,<br>Doth all the winter-time, at still midnight<br>Walk round about an oak, with great ragged horns.<br>This sounds scary and, yes, he is a malevolent spectre who<br>'blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,<br>And makes the milk-kine yield blood, and shakes a chain<br>In a most hideous and dreadful manner' (1).

However, there is no need to worry, because Herne doesn't exist. Mistress Page puts down all the tales about him to the inventiveness of 'the superstitious idle-headed eld'.

*Above:* Herne fleeing past the oak with Mabel Lyndwood. By Cruickshank.

The plot of the *Merry Wives* moves on to its climax, in which Falstaff dresses himself up as the ghost in order to make love to the mocking wives. Neither he nor they show any apprehension about creeping through Windsor Park at night, so there cannot have been much expectation that a real Herne the Hunter would turn up and spoil the fun.

Shakespeare's original audience were not the sort to be troubled with such fears, either. For one thing, the first performance of the *Merry Wives* took place well away from the haunted park, being put on at Whitehall in 1597. The audience consisted of courtiers, proud of their intellectual sophistication - short scenes were based on rather arcane parodies of a Latin primer and the latest in-joke...
about a German nobleman (2). Local allusions to Frogmore fields, Datchet Mead and mine host of the Garter - lovingly explicated by local antiquaries - were meant to appeal, not to residents of the town, but to those who had taken lodgings there while the queen was in residence (3). The simplicity of country people is a recurring theme, and when Mistress Page assures us 'Yet there want not many that do fear/ In deep of night to walk by this Herne's Oak', the audience were meant to smile. Windsor people! Dear old superstitious bumpkins.

The allusion would lose all its effect if there had not been a real Herne's Oak, and a real ghost story to go with it. But the final scene of the Merry Wives is too carefully crafted in its dramatic effects to be a mere report of local folklore. There is a tree - the stagehands can rig one up, pasteboard with canvas leaves - around which all the characters can do their business; and somewhere in the props room is a pair of antlers - didn't we use them for that scene in Doctor Faustus where the man comes to the window wearing them on his head? Always good for a laugh, the old antlers/cuckold gag (4). So Falstaff can use them for a disguise, which will leave his face fully recognisable by the audience while making him look silly. If some fairies are introduced to circle round the tree, tormenting Falstaff, that will keep the boy actors out of mischief in the Green Room and bring the play to an end with song and dance, plus working out the subplot in which pretty Nan Page elopes with her lover. Something of this sort ran through Shakespeare's mind when he thought out the play. Literal transcriptions of folk belief were not his line.

But was Shakespeare the only Elizabethan dramatist to take note of Herne? There is another text which according to some researchers embodies a second report of the legend. The version of the Merry Wives printed as a quarto volume in 1602 varies in many particulars from the familiar text which was published in folio in 1623. Of particular interest is the quite different wording of Mistress Page's speech, which begins:

'Oft have you heard since Horne the hunter died/ That women to affright their little children/ Says that he walks in shape of a great stag...'

Independent evidence? Not so. The Quarto text was put together after the original performance as a pirate version, prepared by someone in touch with the actor who played or understudied Falstaff. Scenes in which the fat knight played a part are more or less faithfully transcribed from memory, but the words of the scene where the wives plan to meet him at Herne's Oak - a scene in which the actor, qua actor, had no particular interest - are just hammered up to help the plot along (5). It seems that as far as the Quarto and Folio are concerned, two texts are not better than one.

The plays of Shakespeare had a mixed reception until the 18th century. The Merry Wives was neglected until the 1720s, but the time of its revival also happened to be the growth period of English tourism, and the inhabitants of royal Windsor were not slow off the mark in the production of guidebooks and visitor trails (6). A map of 1742 indicates 'Sir John Falstaffs Oak' - not, be it noted, Herne's Oak - next to a dell in the Little Park; this aged pollard tree was commemorated by a wood engraving in 1785 (another nearby oak, equally aged but 'maiden' or unpollarded, also had its adherents). In an aquatint Falstaff and the wives appear under the pollard tree, which has however been shifted about half a mile off site in order to make a pleasing composition with the Castle (7). Visitors could turn to the pages of Samuel Ireland, an author who visited Windsor in 1790 and whose admiration of Shakespeare was later to lead him to forge at least three new...
plays as the work of the master. He wrote of Berne: 'Having committed some great offence, for which he feared to lose his situation and fall into disgrace, he was induced to hang himself on this tree. The credulity of the times easily worked on the minds of the ignorant to suppose that his ghost should haunt the spot' (8).

That is something new. There is nothing in the *Merry Wives* to suggest that Berne is a suicide, although the motif is common in ghost stories elsewhere, and Ireland's story may repeat one of the traditions which Shakespeare ignored while arranging his plot. The story of Berne's suicide is repeated by James Hakewill in his *History of Windsor* but it is doubtful whether this or later texts offer any kind of independent testimony; the Herne tradition is a set of whispering galleries in which every new author repeats and distorts those who went before (9). Eric Fitch, the most recent of the Herneologists, repeats a number of unprovenanced variations on the tale, including the belief that the Hunter hanged himself after the king had raped his daughter; that he went mad after being wounded by a stag, tore off the antlers, and bound them on his head; or that the ghost was not a stag-horned man at all but a white fire-breathing stag (10). These versions are mere embellishments of earlier sources, but they do suggest that traditions independent of Shakespeare could have some currency in the town.

Herne's Oak did not last long as a tourist attraction. In 1796, George III - during one of the more lucid phases of his porphyria, when he was prepared to talk about trees rather than to them - ordered the felling of dead oaks in the Park, and down it came, much regretted by local poetasters. Like Voltaire's God, however, as soon as the tree did not exist it was necessary to invent it, and the Shakespearian tradition was transferred to the nearby maiden oak. The debate raging as to which of the two had been the original was not helped by a storm which blew down the maiden oak in 1863: it was replanted *in situ* (11). The ease with which Herne's Oaks were being replaced suggests a degree of scepticism as to whether the tree identified in 1742 was really the one that Shakespeare had in mind.

Somewhere near the Castle, at any rate, an old oak tree stood in 1597; and Windsor people thought that it was haunted by a dead forester, who appeared in a form half-man, half-stag. That seems a very slender foundation on which to raise the edifice of speculation which now celebrates Herne the Hunter. There are other facets of his character, to be sure, but they emerged - or, to be less evasive, were made up - after 1790. The claim that the original, pre-Shakespearian Herne was a pagan god seems to rest on those stage props, the stag's antlers.

Support for this theory comes from an unexpected quarter. Fat Sir John, lurking under Herne's Oak for his midnight assignation with Mistress Ford, compares his disguise with that affected by the classical deities: 'Remember, Jove, thou wast a bull for thy Europa; love set on thy horns...' After paganism comes bestiality; Mistress Ford is to be 'my doe with the black scut'. All very reminiscent of the sex scene in Ted Hughes' *Gaudete* except, of course, that it's meant to be funny. The lustful Falstaff never gets to piss his tallow after all, and his venture into animality ends with the rueful conclusion 'I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass' (12).

The best laughs in the *Merry Wives* come from the indignity and humiliation of Falstaff, who in pursuit of his lecherous delusions finds himself treated as a basket of dirty washing, an old woman, and finally an animal. He makes the best of every situation, even those ludicrous horns, but the inference is plain: for the original audience, Herne the Hunter was not the epitome of forest majesty, but an example of how low you could stoop. We forget that times have changed: animality, which was once a foul reproach, is now rather popular.
Heme appearing to Hemy on the battlements. Cruikshank's illustration for Ainsworth's story.

But for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, anything that blurred the line between man and beast was disturbing and degrading (13). If you didn't laugh at it, you might shudder. It is also easy to forget what 'a keeper here in Windsor Forest' actually meant to sixteenth-century ears. It was an age when forest law was maintained to uphold an elite of administrators, and not vice versa; officials were covertly seizing a range of perks which included rights to lift turf, cut underwood, and cull the deer, some of which seem to have survived the proliferation of their official guardians. The inhabitants of Windsor town, as well as the denizens of the Forest, knew enough about this shady work to make them bitter. Their fields or gardens lay open to the deer, against which they were not suffered to raise a hand, while the keepers - exploiting both deer and forest, to no-one's advantage but their own - might visit indignities upon the people among whom they were billeted (14).

The original Herne the Hunter can best be understood as an epitome of hatred, ridicule and contempt. He blasts the trees and makes the cows yield blood, like a devil or witch - or like one of the real-life keepers who had the power to fell timber and evict cattle from their pastures in the interests of free range for the deer. Herne wears the horns which were a standard vehicle of insult; and like a monster he crosses the boundary between man and beast. Ghosts of wicked men in the form of animals, common in mediaeval tradition, were believed in up to the 19th century in remote communities (15). There was, one suspects, little respect in Windsor for forest law. Fearing and despising Herne the ghostly stag/man, people were able to vent some of the passion which might otherwise have led them to string up a few keepers on their own account.

But Windsor Forest was enclosed for agriculture in 1813, a hundred years after the last Swanminote Court had been held, and the long affair between keepers and citizens found an end. The town had new priorities: at the Castle, Jeffrey Wyatt was busy demolishing the snug but undignified lodgings of George III for something more chillingly grand and Gothic. The past had been discovered, and it was picturesque. In 1843 a romantic novelist, Harrison Ainsworth, appeared on the battlements in search of copy.

Ainsworth was a pro. Having discovered his abilities in the line of melodramatic narrative, he had brought out five novels in the previous three years, drawing between them on the history of three centuries (16). As this might suggest, he did not allocate more time than was strictly necessary to pursue research or soak up atmosphere. An Ainsworth romance came out week by week, in the manner of a soap opera, published as episodes in his own magazine. Every new chapter introduces some fresh character to be woven in the plot, or invents some new twist for an existing one. Right at the
beginning of *Windsor Castle*, Herne the Hunter manifests in a spectral light to the Earl of Surrey, and from then onwards he comes to dominate the action until by the last page he has outclassed every character but bluff King Hal himself. The attentive reader will catch Ainsworth doing his research as he goes along - suddenly his pages are crammed full of details about costume or venery which were not suspected before - and Herne is no exception. One of the few folklore studies then available, Grimm's *Deutsche Mythologie*, offered a hint: Grimm knew nothing about Herne except that he was a hunter, but on this basis he was briefly mentioned in the chapter on the Wild Hunt (17). Ainsworth read this eerie feast of Germanic lore with close attention. The romantic terror of the supernatural hunt was transferred bodily from the Black Forest to Berkshire; even the white owl which appears initially as Herne's companion was taken from Grimm's account of Tooting Ursula, who precedes Hackelberg of Saxony. The Hunt rampages through Windsor Park during the earlier part of the romance, at first as a ghostly chase, afterwards (when it is time to be written out of the serial) as a real band of outlaws who can be rounded up and hanged.

When the Earl of Surrey discusses Herne's origins, one companion tells him that the Hunter was a suicidal keeper - an authentic story, insofar as Ainsworth derived it from the existing guidebooks. But another member of the party suggests that Herne is a wood-demon who seeks to purchase souls. It is in this guise, as a fiend not a ghost, that he stalks through the book, surfacing even within the Castle impiously disguised as a friar, and bargaining for the soul of more or less everyone from Wolsey to Anne Boleyn. He doesn't offer these terms to Henry, apparently assuming that his soul is pretty much in the bag already, but he does appear to him on the terrace in a terrific thunderstorm to prophecy a forthcoming reign of blood.

Ainsworth's piecemeal method of composition had its disadvantages. Halfway through the book, the narrative breaks down altogether and there are five chapters giving tourist information on the Castle. When the romance resumes, with Herne and his followers more prominent than ever, Ainsworth felt the need to provide his anti-hero with a better pedigree and tells a new tale of how he came to haunt the Forest (18). Herne was an honest and skilful huntsman who saved the life of his king from the attack of a stag, but himself received a fatal wound. On the advice of 'a tall dark man...mounted on a black, wild-looking steed', Herne's life is saved by binding the stag's antlers on his head; and the same mysterious figure bargains with Herne's rivals to make him lose all his hunting skills - at an unspecified price. The dark stranger introduces himself as Philip Urswick, but any Victorian reader of supernatural melodrama would have recognised him as the Fiend, and I must confess I find it a little chilling to see our modern neo-pagans incapable of drawing the same conclusion (19). After Herne - who has lost all his powers of woodcraft - has committed suicide, the other foresters return to the diabolical Urswick, and he instructs them to follow their dead master in the hunt every night; at last justice catches up with them, and they too are hanged from the branches of Herne's Oak.

Stirring stuff, but the credit for it must go to Ainsworth and not to local tradition. The story is put together using themes such as the infernal bargain, the hazards of the chase, the hanging of Herne's band and the interview between him and the king - all of which have already appeared separately in the earlier pages of the romance. Like Herne's association with the Wild Hunt itself, the story is the work of a melodramatic novelist committed to penning a chapter every week (20). That makes it all the more curious when we find that Herne has really been seen around the Park in just the manner invented by his biographer.

For fifty years after the publication of *Windsor Castle*, it is true, Herne lay low. Absence of evidence here carries more weight than usual, for Victorian ghost-hunters were crashing snobs and any hint of a Shakespearian spook riding in full view of the Queen's residence would have been seized on with glee. After Ainsworth, Herne's fate was to be entwined with royalty, and when he next appeared on stage in 1902 - for Basil Hood's operetta *Merrie England* - we are told 'there is nothing to fear from Herne. He only appears, they say, when the Sovereign contemplates crime' (21).

Fearlessly, Edward VII had a new Herne's Oak planted on the original site in 1906. It was under this modest sapling that the Hunter was seen standing on moonlit nights by a retired colonel, looking out of the window of his lodgings in the Castle, in 1915 or so (22). At about the same time an Eton schoolboy was making friends with a retired keeper, who told his credulous young acquaintance that he had often seen Herne and his wild following (23). If so, the old man was doubly privileged, for Herne normally reserved his appearances for the upper crust - the sort of people, it seems, who might do a bit about hunting themselves.

In 1910 Evan Baille, son of a Castle official, heard the sound of a horn and hounds following the chase. When Lord Burton was at Eton during World War I, he heard the baying of hounds and the winding of a horn in the Great Park (24). Other Eton scholars followed suit: one lad heard the sounds while riding in the Park in about 1916, while in the 1930s two boys rushed back to College with the news that an invisible hunt had rushed past.
them, brushing them with cold air (25).

The baying of Herne’s hounds, and the pounding of his horse’s feet, were heard in 1926 by the wife of Walter Legge, herself a JP and well connected (26). She was standing outside her house in Old Windsor and heard the sounds at midnight: a fortnight later the experience was repeated for her and her daughter. The noise suggested a hunt coming towards Old Windsor from Smiths Lawn, or towards Bears Rails from the Copper Horse. Research by Colin Wilson, published in 1978 and again (with the references to ley lines altered) in 1993, drew attention to the Long Walk which runs southwards from the Castle, and from which Herne’s ride seems to have begun (27). The Walk is certainly a straight track, as Watkins had already noted, but it is not a particularly old one. Charles II bought the land needed to set out this tree-lined avenue in 1680, and it is clear from a map of 1607 that there was no previous alignment on the site (28).

With time it became a settled belief that the blowing of a horn might be mysteriously heard in the Park or Forest. In 1964 Ruth Tongue passed on an uncanny tale of two Windsor youths and a London teddy-boy who are out in the forest for a little light vandalism when they come across an old horn. The teddy-boy blows it, and stirs up an invisible host which pursues him as far as the church and shoots him down. As with many of Tongue’s stories, this bears the unmistakable stamp of her own invention, despite being attributed to a Berkshire morrisman (29). In these stories Herne is heard but not seen. The young guardswoman who panicked in 1976 and shot at a statue, because he saw it growing horns, cannot really be brought as evidence to the contrary. His adjutant said kindly: ‘He had obviously heard stories from older soldiers. When you are on a lonely guard in the middle of the night, imagination can do funny things’ (30). Less easily explained was a sighting of a man wearing antlers who walked out of some undergrowth and vanished behind some trees in the 1920s; this however was at Cookham Dene, in the purleus of the Forest but well away from Windsor (31).

It seems that the growing interest of the modern world in Herne has not been reciprocated, since his hunt has not been seen or heard in Windsor Park since the 1930s. There was a time when the wounding of the horn and the baying hounds were held to prognosticate calamities; rumours of them were abroad before the Depression in 1931, the Abduction in 1936, the war in 1939, and the King’s death in 1952 (32). There the record ends. I suspect that if the Wild Hunt were to be heard now in full chase before every crisis in the royal family, nobody in Windsor would get much sleep.

It would be indignified for Herne to appear as a mere ghost now that he has been elevated to the rank of a god. Credit for this apotheosis, for so much else, seems to go to Margaret Murray. Drawing on memories of Ainsworth’s book (then a schoolroom classic) she notes in The God of the Witches that ‘Herne the Hunter, with horns on his head, was seen in Windsor Forest by the Earl of Surrey’ and adds that ‘Cernunnos…in English parlance was Herne’ (33). In vain does the reader object that Cernunnos, as a general name for Romano-Celtic deities wearing horns, is a scholarly convention; the term is extended for the sake of convenience from a single Gaulish altar now in the Musee Cluny. Etymology has its own fascinations: nine other versions of the name Herne have been proposed by recent authors, many prepared to advance multiple interpretations without pausing to reflect that if any one of these is right the others are likely to be wrong. Among profuse references to Cornwall, Cerne Abbas, herons and hoarstones it is possible, eventually, to discover that Herne is a common mediaeval surname.

The same combination of abundance and irrelevance characterises much modern literature on Herne. Tuning the diligently compiled pages of recent works is like straying into a magnificently eclectic anthropological junkshop, stored with the plunder of every age and nation except for the one which matters - Tudor Berkshire. Herne has to be understood in context. His antlers meant something to the original 16th-century audience: what they meant, I have tried to suggest, though I may be wrong; but comparison with the antlers of Star Carr, Neolithic Bulgaria and the Tungus tribesmen will not shed any further light on the matter.

The difference in research which I have indicated is not one of facts, but of method. There is a temptation - and some interpretations of paganism have tended that way - to imagine a lost religion from which existing faiths and folklore have descended, a kind of ideal or primeval belief which can be arrived at by comparing cults and stories from all over the world. There ain’t no such animal. Antlers can symbolise whatever people want them to symbolise: meaning doesn’t reside in them as bits of horn, but as elements in a performance put on for the benefit of an audience. First and foremost, from Falstaff’s disguise to Robin of Sherwood, Herne is a character. He has meant many different things in different performances, from a comic epitome of lust to an eerie merchant of souls. I can find no evidence of a pre-1597 performance in which he played the part of a god. Herne, I suspect, is real as well as imaginary. Behind the performance which Mrs. Walter Legge put on for the newshounds when she told her ghost story in 1926 lies another, lonely performance in which the Hunter himself created sounding horns.
and baying dogs for her benefit. But that midnight enactment was itself derived from the writings of a Victorian hack: performances, even when they are not mounted by human beings, are still textual. And it is the triumph of the latest literary invention, the pagan Herne, which has enabled him to retire from his crude apparitions. Why go crashing through the undergrowth to impress a few schoolboys when you could be appearing nightly in a TV serial?

References

2: See the Arden edition p.lvi for date of performance and pp.xxix, xlvi for aristocratic allusions.
4: See Faustus IV ii 70–120. That the play was familiar to the audience of the Merry Wives is shown by the allusions made in i i 120 and IV v 65.
5: The status of the Quarto is discussed in the Arden edition pp.xxxiii–xxxvii. The theory of independent origin has been abandoned since 1920 but still surfaces in, for instance, John Matthews, Robin Hood, Gothic Image. 1993 p47.
6: The Arden edition p.xii notes 18th-century revivals of the play. The flow of Windsor tourist literature began in 1742 and continues unabated; Sue Reynier, The Development of Tourism In Windsor, typescript in Windsor Library 24.
7: Tighe and Davis, op. cit. p685ff, summarise the claims of the two rival oaks. The aquatint is reproduced by Jennifer Westwood, Albyn, Paladin, 1987 p88.
12: The Merry Wives of Windsor V v 4, 18. 120.
14: I rely largely on E.P. Thompson, Whigs and Hunters, Peregrine, 1977 notably pp41, 60, 63, 99. His narrative relates to the 1720s, but the grievances involved were endemic in any system of forest law.
16: See the entry on Ainsworth in the Dictionary of National Biography. There are 52 chapters in Windsor Castle, which suggests a production target of one chapter a week for a year.
17: Jacob Grimm, translated by James Stallybrass, Teutonic Mythology, George Bell, 1883 Vol.3 p942, Herne, p922, Tutosel. This Ursula had been a nun, a feature afterwards incorporated by Ainsworth in the sub-plot of Mabel Lyndwood.
18: Windsor Castle chapter 31.
19: Urswick’s name exemplifies Ainsworth’s slapdash method of composition. Because an earlier chapter had been set in the Urswick chapel, a real corner of St. George’s, commemorating a former dean, the name came incongruously to his mind for a devil five chapters later.
20: Even Petrie, after chronicling Wild Hunt traditions for the best part of his book, has to admit that ‘in the case of Herne himself . . . there is no direct evidence of the stories that must have surrounded him in the middle ages’, op. cit. p94. An apparent German reference to Herne exists only in Petrie’s translation, p46; the hunter Horns from Jutland looks promising, but turns out to be a scribal error for Huens or Hwons, p54, quere if not Huon of Bordeaux.
28: Alfred Watkins, The Old Straight Track, Methuen, 1925 p224; Olwen Hedley, Round About Windsor and District, Windsor, 1948 p58. Norden’s 1607 map of the Little Park is reproduced by Petrie, op. cit. p6. Herne’s 1926 ride did not proceed along the Long Walk towards Windsor, as claimed by Wilson, but away from it towards Old Windsor.
32: Underwood, op. cit.

At the Edge

No.3 September 1996
At about the time the last issue of *At the Edge* was being printed and distributed I made better-than-expected progress setting up World Wide Web pages for *At the Edge* and Heart of Albion Press. This means that this is the first chance I have to inform readers of this most exciting project - even though the site has been live since 23rd May.

Those who have not yet had the opportunity to 'surf the Net' may well want to accuse me of being fashionable and trendy. Those who have put their toe into the oceans of cyberspace will know that the search engines already offer a profoundly disconcerting means of accessing all the information that has been uploaded. These search engines take less than a minute to trawl through all 12 billion words of text currently on the World Wide Web (WWW) and all the text currently on InterNet use groups, coming back with links to every reference to the most obscure key words.

Not all these references are intrinsically valuable - there are many lists-of-lists and passing references. For instance, a search for 'King Arthur' brought forth an American High School student's homework project. The reference to Arthur was a passing comment in the midst of the author's candid self-assessment of how her life was being shaped by denial! Searches of 'altered states of consciousness' however, brought forth much useful material which may or may not find its place in academic research. 'Prehistoric rock art' is another fruitful search, this time yielding sites with galleries of pictures. By contrast, 'werewolves' was a disaster - hundreds of links, but every one to character definitions for various role-playing games!

The disadvantage of the WWW and InterNet is that most of the users are American - rock art, for instance, gets good coverage for the southern USA but fares more badly for Europe. This will change, perhaps more rapidly than anyone in Britain anticipates.

The WWW already offers staggering possibilities for exchanging information. But, in perhaps as little as five years' time, it will have evolved into something far more powerful, in ways which cannot be predicted in detail [1]. Perhaps it would be wrong to predict that the printed page will be dead within ten years but what is about to happen in information technology could be equally, if differently, profound.

What is already quite clear is that the WWW enables alternative viewpoints to be aired. Indeed, one is more likely to find the weird and wonderful than the orthodox! The down side is that this, inevitably, means that there is much that should best be treated as a possible 'spoof'. The 'upside' is the ability to disseminate information readily. While 'small presses', such as my own Heart of Albion Press, have produced a variety of printed books and booklets that would not necessarily interest major publishers, the underlying problem is to make people aware of their existence (even within the UK). The WWW cuts through that problem effortlessly. It is world wide, easily searched with keywords, and above all (almost) free.

The same advantages should apply equally to more orthodox research too. While the InterNet is perhaps better used than WWW by academics, some progress with informative university-based WWW sites is being made - although too many are still promotional facades with little depth. Academic archaeology is relatively well-supported. Several on-line journals exist, or are about to be launched. These are 'moderated' and subjected to the usual academic peer-review processes. While this may filter out some of the ideas of interest to *At the Edge* readers, they will have an increasingly important role to play in the dissemination of academic research.

If we stick with the good ol' fashioned 'earth mysteries', then this too fares quite badly (so far). An Associate Professor of Art History at Sweet Briar College, Virginia, seems to have been the pioneer, with some WWW pages specifically on earth mysteries that may evolve into something more substantial. *At the Edge* is pleased to be one of the first to use the WWW to exchange information on archaeology, folklore and mythology. Because sites are most likely to be encountered via search engines, there is a strong incentive to put up as much, and as varied, text as realistically possible. A substantial proportion of the major articles from Mercian Mysteries have been uploaded to inaugurate the site (no less than about 1.5 megabytes of
text and pictures). Articles from At the Edge will normally be uploaded six months after publication on paper, steadily building up a full archive of fact-filled WWW pages.

Despite the trend for WWW sites to be based on stunning graphics, with minimal text, I am taking the counter view that those visiting At the Edge pages will consider that it is the text that matters most. Illustrations are added where necessary for an understanding of the article. Given that some (but by no means all) of the text files exceed 20 kbytes, few users will appreciate having to wait for several large picture files to be downloaded as well. Pictures are all reduced to a compact file size, even though this means that quality is not necessarily stunning. One of my plans is to provide small 'thumbnails' which link to larger colour pictures - so the WWW version will provide more than the paper version can offer!

One of the tactical weaknesses of WWW is the impossibility of enforcing copyright and the tendency of many users to ignore copyright claims and regard everything as 'public domain'. This is a particular problem with pictures and is the main reason why I am holding back from providing links to large colour pictures. In the final analysis, At the Edge's WWW site is there to draw attention to the 'physical' magazine - which only exists because of paid subscribers. Maybe the At the Edge WWW site will evolve to enable subscribers to have privileged access to password-protected areas, but this is an option for the future, as it is counter-productive to increasing awareness in these early days.

At the Edge's WWW site also includes lists to many useful (or merely entertaining) WWW sites elsewhere. Visitors to the site will also see up-to-date indications of the contents of the forthcoming issue - including the titles of new books sent for review. Above all, there is a facility for visitors to the WWW site to e-mail the editor with feedback, comments, suggestions, updates or whatever. To me, the prospect of such feedback is in itself full justification for the site's existence.

My 'associated' Heart of Albion publishing activities also have a WWW site at http://www.gmt.net.co.uk/indigo/albion/hoaphome.htm One of the titles, Gargoyles and Grotesque Carvings of Leicestershire and Rutland, has already been uploaded in full. Given enough spare time, Heart of Albion will be expanding into more and more electronic publishing (not necessarily all uploaded to WWW pages) - Little-known Leicestershire and Rutland - the hypertext being the first of these to be made available.

This article can be found on WWW at http://www.gmt.net.co.uk/indigo/albion/ateonwww.htm

Notes

1: Your aging editor is probably one of the first to have been taught BASIC programming while in sixth form (in 1970), and can not only remember the advent of the pocket calculator but had hands-on involvement with early desk-top computers, such as Commodore 64s and Acorn BBCs. Despite pushing the Acorn to its limits for scientific data acquisition and processing, there is no way I could have imagined that less than ten years later affordable personal computers would have the power to handle the desktop publishing and image-processing used for Heart of Albion, Mercian Mysteries and, now, for At the Edge. Such meteoric but unpredictable developments are inevitable when users take powerful technology and find more and more things to usefully do with it. The WWW has every potential for equally dramatic evolution.
I hope that most At the Edge readers will be familiar with the bronze age discoveries at Flag Fen, to the east of Peterborough. A massive wooden structure comprising of lines of posts and a huge timber platform is being interpreted as having 'significant religious aspects'. The artifacts associated with this mass of waterlogged timber include hundreds of metal objects (many of which have been deliberately broken), human and animal bones, plus pottery and other items.

So far only three per cent of the known extent of the site has been investigated. Lowering of the water levels in the fens means that timber and other archaeological evidence is disappearing before excavations can reveal the remains.

Those who have been to Flag Fen will confirm that the visitors centre brings to life these vestiges of Bronze Age life in an exemplary manner, exciting the lay person as well as informing those with good background knowledge of archaeology.

The excavations at Flag Fen are financed through the Fenland Archaeological Trust (FAT). For reasons totally outside its control FAT has lost the majority of its income. The result is quite simple - without new sources of income they cannot continue. Key staff have been made redundant and the site is kept open mostly by part-time employees and volunteers.

Ironically, the funding disappeared just when recent aerial photographs had revealed a previously unknown prehistoric landscape in adjoining fields - including what may be a burial site and temple.

Unless £92,000 has been raised by the beginning of July then the site will be closed down indefinitely and the team of experienced Bronze age and wetland archaeology specialists will be dispersed. This issue of At the Edge will go to press towards the end of June so I am unable to provide an final update. However, I spoke to Dr Francis Pryor, the Director of Archaeology for FAT, in the middle of June. He reported that £45,000 had already been raised but there were no clear indications whether the remaining £47,000 would materilise in time.

Donations to Fenland Archaeological Trust can be sent to:

FAT, Flag Fen Excavations, Fourth Drove, Fengate, Peterborough, PE1 5UR

If you work for a company which would consider sponsoring displays and/or equipment for future excavations then this could be an excellent way to help the Flag Fen activities and provide your company with some positive publicity. Dr Pryor had details of their requirements with suggested sponsorship contributions and he would welcome the opportunity to discuss how best to give publicity to sponsors. Phone 01733 313414 for relevant information.

STOP PRESS

At the time this issue is being typeset I am in contact with the organisers at FAT regarding including an insert with the mailing of this issue of At the Edge. If this comes off then this will provide an update on these remarks. If there is no loose insert with this issue then please phone the above number for more information!

Bob Trubshaw

At the Edge No.3 September 1996
From Jeremy Harte

Calendrical architecture and Tara

Bob Trubshaw’s ‘The fifth direction’ article in At the Edge No.2 brings a few thoughts to mind. Bricriu’s Hall at Tara, with its calendrical architecture, reminds me of the rhyme about Salisbury Cathedral: ‘As many days as in one year there be, As many windows here around you see.’ (dating back at least as far as Aubrey’s Natural History of Wiltshire) that was being printed on souvenir postcards well into this century, and is representative of a widespread genre for which I have a few more examples (don’t mention this to Michael Behrend or the next post will be full of thousands, many of them in languages that I cannot even pronounce).

There seems to be a profound attraction in the idea of buildings keyed into time. Astrological ceiling paintings depicting the moment of foundation were an accepted trick well after the Renaissance (there is an example near where I live in the ceiling of Gatton Town Hall, which is a folly not a town hall, built in 1765).

Back to Tara. I thought the names of the earthworks, though not original, were better than ‘high Victorian myth-making’. Don’t they represent something out of the Dindshenchas, or is that a false identification of medieval tradition with the landscape? I pick this up from Barry Raftery’s Pagan Celtic Ireland: the Enigma of the Irish Iron Age (Thames and Hudson 1994), from which I also pick up one passing comment which made me reflect on my Dorset days. He notes how barrows survive in some of the hill forts or royal centres, as apparent funerary focuses for the feasting, games or whatever. Now several Dorset iron age hill forts - notably Abbotsbury, Chalbury and Maiden Castle - have a bronze age round barrow within the rings. These must have been retained deliberately. You would not keep something like that without giving it symbolic meaning. However, I do not know of any hill forts where the excavations have included the vicinity of the round barrow. Mortimer Wheeler did trench the Long Mound at Maiden Castle but I do not think he asked what the mound meant to the Iron Age occupants - they didn’t in them days.

Competition Results

Congratulations to the five winners of the competition in At the Edge No.2. The following people should have received their copies of the paperback edition of Paul Devereux’s Secrets of Ancient and Sacred Places:

L. Elves
C. Fisher
M.E. Jones
A. Norfolk
C. Upton

And the correct answer? The major neolithic monument which aligns with the eastern end of the Stonehenge cursus as Woodhenge.

The Ley Hunter Core Moot 1996

Heading the list of speakers at The Ley Hunter’s Core Moot this year will be Thomas Dowson who will speak on the work he and David Lewis-Williams and other members of the Witwatersrand Rock Art Unit have been doing over the last decade or more on the southern African bushman rock art. They have established that such rock art images are associated with trance states of consciousness.

Recent work by Jeremy Dronfield at Cambridge University has confirmed that similar evidence of altered states of consciousness can be confirmed for neolithic rock art in Irish chamber tombs. At the time of going to press The Ley Hunter were still waiting confirmation that Dr Dronfield could also speak at the Core Moot.

Other short papers will also deal with the topic of ‘Ancient Signatures of Trance’ and other subjects.

The Core Moot will be held Saturday 9th November 1996 at the University of London Student’s Union Halls, Malet Street, London WC1. Tickets cost £10. Cheques payable to ‘The Ley Hunter’. Send to: The Ley Hunter, PO Box 258, Cheltenham, GL53 0HR

Places are limited and early application is strongly recommended.

Phone or fax 01242 261680 for further information.
Liberated prophetesses

The Pythia, the prophetic priestess at Delphi, has long been considered as mouthing inarticulate ramblings in a drugged trance with a college of priests tiding them up for public release. Now a new study has called into question this male-dominated scenario. It seems the Pythia gave clear prophecies on their own initiative.


Place-specific fertility rituals

The Lupercalia, a feast in which half-naked young men leapt around the streets whipping women as part of a fertility ritual, was one of the most archaic rites in Imperial Rome. It seems that the original god venerated, both as Faunus and Mars, combined fertility and warrior attributes. The ritual is closely related to the geography of primitive Rome.


Geomantic burials

Among some African tribes the role of the undertaker is concerned as much with geomantic divination of the grave site as with the disposal of the body. As in feng shui and the Malagasy sikidy tradition, the choice of ancestral graves is linked to the prosperity of the living.


Bride revisited

Recent research has identified places named ‘Bride’ as referring to St Brigit, a pagan goddess of the same name, or fertility rituals conducted before magic. Speculation on these names should be tempered, however, by a study which attributes at least some of them to Old English bryd, ‘a plank’.


Minerva not unique?

The cult of Sulis Minerva at
Bath has been seen as an isolated instance of the interpretatio Romana by which native Celtic deities were regarded as aspects of a Graeco-Roman deity. Comparisons from Europe suggest that the equivalence may have been more widespread, and that Bath was not the only cult centre to venerate Minerva as a goddess of holy wells.


Grid irons or odd balls?

An idiosyncratic study of the roads of Buckinghamshire identifies some of them as vestiges of an early landscape survey laid out in a regular grid pattern. Most of the county is scanned for right-angled roads which in the absence of historical reference to such a survey are dated to the Neolithic. It all sounds very Watkinsian, but appeared in a straight archaeological journal.


Anti-Imperial pilgrimages

Pilgrimage is normally seen as a medieval response to the sacred landscape, or if it occurs in a later context is put down to survivals among a conservative population. In the Islamic world, however, pilgrimage enjoyed a nineteenth-century revival as a means of asserting non-Western identity before decolonisation.


Time Team given hard time

The deliberate exclusion of ‘alternative’ ideas (although leaving plenty of air time for debunking downs) and ‘ripping off’ ideas and drawings are among the accusations made by those who helped Channel Four’s Time Team with the work at Boleigh Fogue (broadcast March 1995).

Ian Cooke ‘Total eclipse of the sun’, Meyn Mamvro No.30 Spring/Summer 1996 p6-7

Earthlights at Kobe


Spiral speculations

What did spirals mean to prehistoric people? Some imaginative ideas from Dr Terence Meaden.

‘Spirals and what they meant in megalithic times’, 3rd Stone No.23, Spring 1996 p6-9

Neolithic monuments in the Golden Valley

An attempt to approach the landscape symbolism of neolithic tomb locations in the Golden Valley, Herefordshire.

‘Monumentality and the neolithic’, 3rd Stone No.23, Spring 1996 p14-17

Long barrows and houses

Long barrows have for a few years been thought to be funerary ‘houses’, similar in size and shape to contemporary houses. Perhaps abandoned houses alongside occupied dwellings suggested the burial tradition. The clustering of houses in threes - and the clustering of long barrows in threes - on the Danube suggests a deeper symbolic context.

Magdalena S. Midgley ‘The Earthen Long Barrows of Northern Europe’ Cosmos Vol.11 No.2 Dec 1995 p117-123

Celtic hill figures

Archaeological excavation has suggested a late bronze age date for the Uffington White Horse.

Could the Long Man of Wilmington and the Cerne Abbas Giant be almost as old? A respected academic adds suggestions to a topic usually consigned to the fringe.


Cosmic writing

Some religious scriptures - including certain Taoist texts and the Biblical Ten Commandments - were first written by God or the gods in ‘cosmic script’. Such divine works were attributed with awesome powers. Their subsequent dissemination and copying reveals much about the beliefs of the cultures.

Stephan P. Bumbacker ‘Cosmic Scripts and Heavenly Scriptures’ Cosmos Vol.11 No.2 Dec 1995 p139-153

Elf-infested spaces

Kevin L. Callahan at the University of Minnesota claims Ojibwa Indians in north Minnesota, and elsewhere in the American Midwest, see ‘little people’ for about thirty minutes during atropine-induced (e.g. Deadly Nightshade) hallucinations. Callahan suggests these may be linked also to flying and werewolf experiences. Those in the second stage of alcohol withdrawal (i.e. two to three days after stopping drinking) report similar encounters with ‘little people’. [Although not noted by Callahan, this puts me in mind of the expression ‘elf-infested spaces’, coined by Terence McKenna to describe his experiences with MDMA (‘Ecstasy’)].

Callahan also notes that loud sounds can trigger synesthesias and create disturbances of perception e.g. blending of foreground and background (an effect deliberately used by filmmakers).

[Found during an Internet surfing session but URL lost; several searches have failed to relocate the site. If any cybertechnauts succeed in finding...]

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this gem of a site, please e-mail the editor!]

Polish Midsummer customs

Detailed information on the springtime and midsummer festivals - including rites at rivers and ritual fires.

K. Przybylska ‘Sobotka - Polish summer solstice’,  The Cauldron  No.80 May 1996 p18-19 [reprinted from Sacred Serpent No.5 Spring 1995]

More pagan Gothic ritual

Nineteenth century Valentine’s Day customs in France are akin to the pagan Gothic ‘goddess in cart’ rituals described by Albry Stone in At the Edge No.2. In France, a woman with bared breasts stood in a cart, followed by a procession of young people. The procession led to the church where a Mass was held which was followed by all-night dancing and drinking. Childless couples offered the bare-breasted woman offerings of flowers in exchange for a fertility blessing. Back in twelfth century Germany a ‘ship-like’ cart containing a ‘goddess’ and a half-naked woman was pulled by women who also danced and sang bawdy songs.


Thor v. Serpent not a score draw!

Snorri suggests Thor’s battle with the Midgard Serpent ended in a draw. But other sources suggest that in the earlier versions Thor did defeat the demon of the deep.

Thorskeggur Thorin ‘The one that got away?’,  Talking Stick No.21 Spring 1991 p20-2

Shamans were not only Siberian

Innovative research on the origins of the word ‘shaman’ reveal good evidence for it being deeply-rooted in Indo-European cultures. The enigma is why this word ended up being used by Tungus Siberians (from whence Mercia Eliade reintroduced the word ‘shaman’ into western culture). This insight into a more widespread early use of the word ‘shaman’ has the potential for much further research and reassessment.


North Europeans in China 2000 BC

Straight-nosed, blond haired people, naturally mummified by salt-laden sands, wearing garments woven in a similar manner to British and Celtic mummies predating 300BC have been found in the Tarim Basin in western China. This is now a desert but probably better suited to settlement in the past. These ‘Caucasian’ people seem to have existed (and been buried) alongside local people before 2000 BC but died out in the second century AD - but not before leaving a few documents in an extinct language akin to Celtic and German. The implications require some major revisions to the understanding of early Chinese civilisation.

Quentin Letts ‘Mummies in China unravel historical certainties’,  The Times 10th May 1996 [cutting kindly submitted by R.W. Morrell]

Current archaeology in the Western Isles

In an issue all-but devoted to the Hebrides, a variety of exciting prehistoric sites are described - including the newly-discovered stone-circle and kerb cairn near Callanish.

Current Archaeology No.147 May 1996

Bigger than Avebury

A huge Neolithic enclosure about twice the size of Avebury has been recently discovered at Hindwell near Knighton (Radnorshire). Little work has been done on the interior but Alasdair Whittle of Cardiff University is reported as saying that enclosures such as these were built for sacred reasons, rather than for occupation or defence. ‘They fit into that tradition of the bounding of open space, as part of a symbolically important landscape.’ “Largest Neolithic site” found in central Wales’,  British Archaeology No.14 May 1996 p4

No they didn’t! Yes they did!

The Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dum debate on whether or not the Romans invaded Ireland (see Abstracts At the Edge No.2) has brought to the surface good links between the Irish myth of Tuatha, the Roman historian Tacitus and archaeological evidence. The title of the article reveals the conclusion.

Richard Warner ‘Yes, the Romans did invade Ireland’  British Archaeology No.14 May 1996 p6

Rock art of the Spanish landscape

Richard Bradley’s investigation of prehistoric rock art in the context of the surrounding landscape has been extended into northern Spain. Tentatively, the rock art could suggest territorial markers for dividing hunting rights.


Neolithic regions in Britain

Up until recently, Neolithic studies have tended to under-play the way monuments vary throughout Britain. This paper argues for four or five distinct regions, which are sustained over extended periods of time.


Woodhenge ceremonies

A densely-presented study of ‘formal deposition’ at Woodhenge gives clues to the way the spaces within the monument were used for ritual.

Joshua Pollard  ‘Inscribing
space: formal deposition at the Later Neolithic monument of Woodhenge, Wiltshire’

Barrows not all for burial

Not all bronze age barrows contain burials - but do reveal evidence of repeated feasting and ceremonial activities. A paper also interesting for the fact that it describes evaluation of soil samples stored for 25 years after the barrow was destroyed.

M.J. Allen et al. ‘Food for the living: a reassessment of a Bronze Age barrow at Buckskin, Basingstoke, Hampshire’

Prehistoric Society publishes paper on leys

The same issue of Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society contains what should be headline news for all ‘earth mysteries’ journals - a map of prehistoric sites linked together in alignments. That most of these ‘leys’ comprise of only three sites (and therefore might be considered to have good chances of occurring by chance) is excusable given the strong astronomical significance of many of the alignments.

In all fairness, this is only part of a wide-ranging assessment of a group of Irish monuments which has a number of other interesting suggestions to make, such as the extent to which individual monuments are visible from the surrounding landscape and a thorough assessment of the archaeoastronomy.

Michael J. Moore ‘A Bronze Age settlement and ritual centre in the Monavullagh Mountains, Co. Waterford, Ireland’

Are we still hunter-gatherers?

Is football a substitute for hunting? Is shopping sublimated gathering? Are soap operas surrogates for small extended family units? And why are barbeques and real fires so emotionally satisfying? Indeed, are our emotional demands still those of the paleolithic? Perhaps we would have less anxiety if we established a ‘Palaeolithically Correct’ future?

Gustav Milne ‘Why is there nothing like a real fire?’ British Archaeology No.13 April 1996 p14.

My thanks to a number of At the Edge readers who have submitted cuttings. Unfortunately there seems to have been a proliferation of relevant articles in recent months and, despite this exceptionally lengthy Abstracts section, I have been forced to ‘prune’. However, please keep contributions coming in - they are always appreciated even when not published.

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See ‘Prehistoric Society publishes paper on leys’

At the Edge 41
No.3 September 1996
Ronald Hutton

**THE STATIONS OF THE SUN**

*A History of the Ritual Year in Britain*

Oxford University Press 1996
242 x 163 mm, 542 pages, illustrated, hardback £19.99

Britain has a wide variety of folk customs associated with annually-recurring festivals. The history of these activities is complex - probably more complex than most people imagine. To cover this scope in a single book usually results in popularisation and superficiality. However, Professor Hutton has managed to provide an overview which is most certainly not superficial and, in some ways, most contentious.

The scope of *The Stations of the Sun* is a festival-by-festival survey drawing on all available historical records. These reveal the extent to which folk customs have changed over the centuries. Indeed, some 'traditions' - such as those associated which Christmas - are shown to be little over a hundred years old. Few folk customs date back before the Restoration and all have evolved and changed significantly.

Hutton does not restrict himself to customs which are strictly calendrical but also discusses morris dancing, mummers' plays, Lords of Misrule and the like. Clearly, with such a broad scope, he is drawing upon the work of a number of folklorists who have explored the history of specific aspects of British folklore. This makes the book different from his *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400-1700* (Oxford UP 1994; now available in paperback), which is based on the author's vast primary research in a narrower time span, and more akin to the work which brought him to prominence, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (Blackwell 1991), in that cogent summaries illuminate debates previously little-known except to specialists.

*The Stations of the Sun* is a remarkable work of synthesis which brings together ideas which previously lurked only in scholarly articles and monographs. It is also remarkable in the way this wealth of information is presented in a readable and accessible manner. These alone makes the work indispensable. But the greatest strength of this book is the way in which many popular assumptions about the 'timeless' nature of folk customs are stripped away. Above all, the popular belief that such ways are the 'fossilised' remnants of prechristian religions is shown to be little more than wishful thinking on the part of eminent figures in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras.

Folklore studies have been rather on the fringe of academia for most of this century. Over-enthusiastic support for what can now be recognised as unsupported 'meta-theories' held sway for far too many decades (and still predominate among popular authors). Modern academics have tended to deal with the nitty-gritty of folkloric matters, at the expense of broader interpretations. The overall result has been an all-but unbridgeable gulf between popular and professional students of folklore.

*The Stations of the Sun* provides an opportunity for general readers to bring themselves up to date. Indeed, this book provides nothing less than a datum point for all future studies of folk customs in the British Isles. Topics are dealt with thoroughly and, as would be expected, full references are given for those who are interested in specific themes. Although without question a major contribution to British folklore studies, it is not definitive. Hutton himself provides pointers to where further historical research is needed. The key constraint is that Hutton operates as an historian. Absence of documentary evidence is taken as good evidence of absence (although once or twice he acknowledges that rituals may indeed date back to 'time out of mind'). Quite how appropriate this historical emphasis is for a field of social history which survives, perhaps even thrives, as local oral tradition remains an open question.

However, even when written down, folklore records leave open the significance of the customs for the people taking part. Hutton partly illuminates the manner in which different social classes perceived given events; he also demonstrates that customs change in importance over relatively short periods of time. What he does not discuss is the ways in which folk customs are a way of simultaneously expressing and conferring meaning on the social and physical world - and the...
scope for considerable evolution in such concepts. The densely-woven and deeply-rooted cosmological symbolism inherent in folklore is, understandably, beyond the scope of Hutton's opus.

Broadly speaking, at the level of interpretation folklore studies seem to remain several decades behind other areas of anthropology - and even the best part of a decade behind the comparatively slow-moving revisionism in archaeology - in that (so far as I am aware) there have been few attempts to question the distinctly 'modernist' underlying stance or to open up a pluralism of interpretation. Hutton's approach is such that he has little need to touch upon such meta-issues but his achievement makes such debate and development much easier.

The Stations of the Sun is more than essential reading - it creates the potential for especially interesting times ahead for British folklore studies.

Bob Trubshaw

David Clarke with Andy Roberts

TWILIGHT OF THE CELTIC GODS
An Exploration of Britain’s Hidden Pagan Traditions

Blandford 1996
246 x 189 mm, 176 pages, 46 illustrations, hardback £16.99

In the previous review I suggested that the limitations of Hutton's approach to folklore is that he operates as an historian - in that absence of written evidence is taken as strong evidence of absence. Yet folklore does not require to be written down to exist; indeed, aspects of folklore thrive best as oral traditions. However, for the last hundred years or more, oral traditions have been vanishing - more specifically, the individuals who picked up the tales, songs and sayings first-hand from older members of their families have themselves passed away. After the great campaigns of early folklorists in the early decades of this century, there seemed to be little possibility of primary fieldwork picking up on otherwise-lost traditions.

Well, the resolute efforts of David Clarke and Andy Roberts prove that such assumptions are untrue. The early chapters of Twilight of the Celtic Gods are based on first-hand accounts given by five 'informants' (very much alive) from the Peak District of Derbyshire and neighbouring south Yorkshire. They reveal that a traditional knowledge of the landscape, its plants and animals was passed to them. One of the sources describes how he was taken on long 'nature walks' through Wharfedale by his grandmother. 'She would tell me stories about [landscape features] and the powers that inhabited and protected them. Giants, fairy-folk, spirits and more subtle forces and powers were everywhere, and what to me had once been, say, a hill was now a place full of possibilities, a hive of life and death both physically and non-physically, all of which was necessary for its continued existence and significance within our learning.'

Clarke and Roberts are at pains to reinforce their sources' assertions that this was not a 'cult', 'religion' or 'belief system' separate from Christianity (which all of these people and their families profess to follow) but, in the words of one, 'an attitude, a way of perceiving things'. A different person says 'some of the "old ways" did not die out after all, but instead simply merged into everyday consciousness'. A third says: 'Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question. Clarke and Roberts do little to resolve this, apart from noting that the information they have published all suggests that we are seeing regional variations of this local "wisdom" passed down within individual families. Quite how old these traditions are is, of course, the big question.

These accounts form less than half the book. The remainder is concerned with rituals associated with Tigh nam Cailliche, the diminutive ' Hag’s House' in Glen Lyon, Scotland (first ‘discovered’ by Anne Ross and reported by Clarke in The Ley Hunter No.120 [1993]) plus an overview of two of his other areas of research - so-called ‘Celtic’ heads and various ‘screaming skulls’ and the like, where bad luck comes to anyone who removes them from the building they ‘protect’.

Whether any of these are really evidence of ‘Celtic’ (i.e. iron age) beliefs or customs is
kept wide open by the authors. If I may be forgiven one cynical thought, it is that these days their publisher seems never to produce a book without the word ‘Celtic’ or ‘Arthurian’ in the title and *Twilight of the Celtic Gods* may not have been the first choice of the authors. But do not be put off by the handle - this book is a long way from New Age rehashes of Celtic ‘truisms’. The authors’ ethnographic research in their own ‘backyard’ is commendable and deserves to be looked at in greater depth than this rather preliminary account.

Bob Trubshaw

**Michael Dames**

**THE AVEBURY CYCLE**

Thames and Hudson 2nd edition 1996

240 x 160 mm, 240 pages, fully illustrated, £10.95 paperback

It is a truism that reviews tell you more about the reviewer than the subject of the review. With this in mind, please forgive an autobiographical preamble. Had Dames not written the first edition of *The Avebury Cycle* back in 1977, there may well not be *At the Edge*. His ability to ‘re-mythologise’ a prehistoric landscape was way ahead of any other ‘fringe’ research back in the late 70s and, in my opinion, remains unmatched to this day. I visited Avebury many times during the early 80s ‘under the influence’ of this book, while also becoming increasingly aware of other ‘earth mysteries’ authors. By 1986 I was beginning to take an active interest in the landscapes of Leicestershire and Rutland which, in turn, led to *Mercian Mysteries* and hence *At the Edge*.

Dames has successfully created a modern-day myth which not only ‘explains’ but literally re-animates the neolithic remains of the Avebury area by drawing upon archaeology, landscape features, mythology and folklore. This unique achievement is perhaps a result of a singular career - originally studying as a geographer and archaeologist, the author became a senior lecturer in art history, while also being commissioned to produce a number of sculptures for public spaces. An artistic approach, combined with a solid understanding of prehistory, is the unique foundation for *The Avebury Cycle*.

The strength of this book is that, even if every concept could be proven to be an archaeological fallacy (a most unlikely scenario), the overall attempt to ‘weave a story’ is effective. Which ideas work well and which are ‘dubious’ depends mostly on the preconceptions of the reader. I would certainly not want to spoil the enjoyment of others by projecting my own biases onto this ‘Rorschach blot’ of analogy and suggestion.

Many books written in the mid-70s would need considerable revision before being re-issued in the more critical-minded mid-90s. Instead, Dames has understandably chosen to let the original text remain, with only the slightest of additional information. Indeed, so far as I can tell, the changes are simply to add a one-page preface (which seems intentionally tangential in its remarks): to replace an appendix on Stonehenge with some concise remarks about recent discoveries of ‘palisade enclosures’ - noting that they align with his Lammas moon rise ‘birth line’ (although the publishers do not consider these new remarks require indexing!); an extra 30-or-so words added to a picture caption; and a slightly extended bibliography.

Those who own the original edition will not, I suspect, consider that they need to buy this revised edition. However, the continued availability of this pioneering and inspirational book is most welcome. At a time when academic archaeologists are just beginning to accept the validity of analogy and the need to ‘re-invent’ the past, Dames provides a role model which generally looks as good now as nearly twenty years ago.

Bob Trubshaw

**John Michell**

**WHO WROTE SHAKESPEARE?**

Thames and Hudson 1996

240 x 175 mm, 272 pages, 116 illustrations, £16.95 hardback

John Michell probably needs no introduction to *At the Edge* readers. His fondness for mystery and eccentric notions is reflected in the subject matter of various books. In this latest work he revels in the enigma behind the finest English literature - and, in the process, finds some of the crankiest minds of our age and culture.

Visitors to Stratford upon Avon are led to believe that a local lad with little schooling and of rather dubious character was the author of the Bard’s works. But the evidence to support this notion is all-but-non-existent. What evidence there is fits badly indeed. Despite strong and emotive defence by the ‘Stratfordians’, various scholars have proposed good arguments for Francis Bacon; 17th Earl of Oxford; 5th Earl of Derby; 5th Earl of Rutland; and even Christopher Marlowe (even though he was seemingly murdered before most of the plays were written!). And this is just the short-list of realistic contenders!

Argument and counter-argument weave thickly. The author of *The View Over Atlantis* unveils himself in the section which deals with acrostics, anagrams and other ‘encrypted’ code words. It is to Michell’s great credit that he summarises all these scenarios concisely, without taking sides. Indeed, apart from strongly
dismissing any credence in the belief that the Stratford lad was the author of the plays, we are left with good reasons to suppose that any of the 'short-listed' candidates could have written some, if not all, of the Bard's opus. Without being explicitly stated, we are left wondering if the plays and sonnets we attribute to Shakespeare are most probably a deliberate use of the same pseudonym by a group of authors.

Above all, Michell writes in a thoroughly readable way which entertains as well as informs. I can only concur with the author's overview: 'It is a harmless, stimulating and instructive subject to dwell upon, which is more than can be said for many other types of obsession.'

Bob Trubshaw

David R. Harris (ed)

THE ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF AGRICULTURE AND PASTORALISM IN EURASIA

UCL Press 1996
Paperback £19.95

This is a truly ground-breaking collection of essays, based largely on papers presented at a conference held at the Institute of Archaeology in London in 1993. David Harris has assembled an impressive array of scholars in a variety of disciplines to examine the beginnings of farming and herding and the impact they had on the early populations of Europe and Asia.

In the first section, the emphasis is firmly on theory. For example, Andrew Sherratt examines the happy accident of plate tectonics that allowed the right conditions for agriculture to arise in crucial regions; L. Luca Cavalli-Sforza and Colin Renfrew relate agriculture to the human genetic map and language dispersal; and Tim Ingold casts an anthropologist's eye on the domestication of plants and animals. Others examine the domestication and spread of crops in the light of molecular biology, ecological and evolutionary theory, and epidemiology.

This is up-to-the-minute, state-of-the-art stuff that does much more than merely set the scene for the twenty case-studies that follow. The case-studies are divided geographically to cover southwest Asia, Europe, and from Central Asia to the Pacific coast. These combine to give a near-comprehensive picture of the evolution of farming in Eurasian prehistory, and show how the development of human culture and societies went hand in hand with the growth of agriculture and herding, and how each has helped shape the other. They include a number of offerings that would be diverting in any context, such as Hans-Peter Leopold's discussion of the origins of animal domestication, Ilse Kähler-Rollefson's look at the dromedary, and Tim Bayliss-Smith's consideration of people-plant relations in New Guinea.

From sheep, goats, cattle and camels to corn, rice, fruit and nuts - this collection goes a good way toward showing how and why prehistoric populations cultivated and ate what they did, where they did. But while the individual contributions are interesting and absorbing in themselves, it is as a cross-disciplinary whole that this book really succeeds. Each essay illuminates aspects of the others that might otherwise have been under-stressed, and this adds both insight and dynamic to the matter at hand.

For the most part, the materials are presented in as straightforward a way as their technical natures permit, and are commendably readable. The collection is handsomely illustrated - there are all manner of charts, graphs, maps, photographs, tables and line drawings to clarify the text - and satisfyingly large, weighing in at nearly six hundred dense, stimulating and informative pages.

This is an excellent book that fully deserves to become a classic of its kind, and the editor, whose own concise texts sandwich the others, deserves much credit.

Ally Stone

Mike Dixon-Kennedy

CELTIC MYTH AND LEGENDS

An A-Z of People and Places
Blandford 1996

£23.4 x 156 mm, 304 pages, hardback £16.99

This is an encyclopedia-style work, very much a companion volume to the same author's recent Arthurian Myth and Legend (Blandford 1995). The scope covers British - especially Irish - Celts. Inevitably much is left unsaid on specific topics but the approach is nothing if not comprehensive. A useful first point of reference for checking up on the multifarious heroes and protagonists of the myths and legends.

Bob Trubshaw

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No.3 September 1996
Courtney Davis and David James

THE CELTIC IMAGE
Blandford 1996
£7.6 x 219 mm, 128 pages, 78 illustrations (including colour), hardback £16.99

These two latest books are the latest in a line of general interest books on Celtic art and culture from Blandford. Celtic Ornament - Art of the Scribe deals with 'Celtic' manuscript art from the Dark Ages. The background of the monasteries and scriptoria that produced these works of art are discussed with details of the pigments, pens, scripts and symbols used. Most of the art is copied from the Book of Kells and Lindisfarne Gospels and all the art forms and symbols are dealt with.

The Celtic Image also uses Courtney Davis art but this time some of his modern pieces are given in full colour. The book is a whirlwind tour through the entirety of Celtic culture, from the Iron Age to the present day. The usual subjects are discussed, including Celtic Christianity and crosses, sacred places, the seasonal cycles and Celtic warriors. The book is a good introduction to the world of the Celts but goes little beyond a coffee table book in its content. A whole chapter is also given to stone circles and megaliths, including two picture of Callanish, which is rather odd.

Courtney Davis's artwork is mainly of artefacts and buildings of the period but some of them mark a good progression to a less Celtic and more spiritual art form. Both of the books are informative and well-presented but I would recommend them for the general reader only.

Anthony Rees

Jill Bourne (ed.)

ANGLO-SAXON LANDSCAPES IN THE EAST MIDLANDS
Leicestershire Museums 1996
A4, 190 pages, illustrated, paperback £19.95

The eight chapters which make up this volume are revised from papers presented at a conference held in 1991. The approaches are varied and extend from archaeology into place-name studies, topographical information and what may be termed 'historical geography'. The emphasis is strongly on Leicestershire although parts of neighbouring counties are drawn in to the discussions where necessary; one paper specifically discusses the ambiguity of boundaries between Leicestershire and south Derbyshire in this period.

For those with a specific interest in either the Anglo-Saxon period or in Leicestershire this volume is most welcome and provides a wealth of detailed ideas. While the east midlands has long been associated with pioneering approaches to landscape history - all-but-synonymous with the work of W.G. Hoskins - this publication shows that there is much to be gained by looking in detail at the landscape, even where (as is the case for Anglo-Saxon Leicestershire) historical documents are scarce and archaeological data is tantalisingly patchy.

Bob Trubshaw

Jack Roberts

THE SACRED MYTHOLOGICAL CENTRES OF IRELAND
Bandia 1996
A5, 48 pages, 70 illustrations, card covers £4.50

Those who found interest in the article in At the Edge No.2 which looked briefly at the sacred centres of Ireland will find much of interest in this booklet. In a mere 48 pages there is excellent information on a large number of sites, with the archaeological information bang up to date. Those who have seen the same author's The Sheela-na-gigs of Britain and Ireland will know that he is capable of filling every page with facts and attractive drawings.

The author shares an all-too-frequent preference for seeing prechristian Celtic religion as being dominated by goddesses. No doubt this helps sell books and booklets but such one-sidedness is hardly supported by the early medieval Irish literature (no matter how much one asserts that this was tainted by Christian scribes) or by any archaeological evidence.

From The Celtic Image
However this over-enthusiastic following of fashion does little to distract from the usefulness of this booklet.

For those who want to explore the sites and the sources of information further there are two problems. Firstly, there are no grid references for the sites (although many are large and/or well-known locally). Secondly, the bibliography gives incomplete information which might make it difficult for librarians to track down the more obscure items.

Bob Trubshaw

Jack Roberts
THE STONE CIRCLES OF CORK AND KERRY
An Astronomical Guide
Bandia 1996
A5, 32 pages, fully illustrated, card covers £3.50

There are over 100 stone circles in the west Cork and south Kerry area which makes it perhaps the greatest concentration of such circles in Europe. Most seem to have been constructed so that specific solar and lunar events are marked by the layout of the stones - sunsets predominate.

This guide book provides concise information on the visible remains and the astronomical orientation. There is a sketch map showing locations and written directions to help locate the site. However, even if Irish maps for this area are not as reliable or up to date as those for the British mainland, I cannot understand why grid references were not provided to help further - stone circles can be tricky to find at the best of times. Given that only one circle is in state protection there is a serious risk that some of these circles will no longer be in place in a few year's time.

The author has published a number of other booklets and fold-out maps about the prehistoric antiquities of Cork and the Beara Peninsula. These booklets are available direct from the publisher at:
Bandia, Commonagh, Leap, Co. Cork, Ireland; cheques payable to 'Bandia' (add 30p p&p per item).

Bob Trubshaw

Moyra Caldecott
MYTHICAL JOURNEYS, LEGENDARY QUESTS
The Spiritual Search - Traditional Stories from World Mythology
246 x 189mm, 176 pages, 16 colour and 20 b&w illustrations, hardback £18.99

Storytelling is regaining ground although there are all too few anthologies which bring together useful collections of material from different traditions. Caldecott has adopted the theme of tales which feature journeys and quests, with examples from ancient Sumeria, Classical Greek, pharaonic Egypt, Arabia, Australia, Africa, Scandinavia, Russia, India, Surinam, Vietnam, Wales, Ireland and North America. Each story is prefaced with a short account of its origins and followed by a commentary, sometimes considerably longer than the tale itself.

All the tales are retold in a manner which would be accessible to children but nevertheless would be enjoyed by adults.

A useful source book for all those who tell tales, informally or otherwise.

Bob Trubshaw

Nevill Drury
SHAMANISM
Element 1996
270 x 195 mm, 96 pages, fully illustrated in colour, paperback £9.99

The latest in Element Books series which take the texts from the 'Elements of... ' series and revamp them with full-colour illustrations. While clearly

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addressed to the 'New Age' end of the spectrum of interest in shamanism Drury manages to keep in reasonable contact with ethnographical accounts of shamanism. The scope of the book means that the treatment generally lacks depth or discussion. Nevertheless an attractive and essentially sound introduction to the subject.

Bob Trubshaw

WALKING THE TALK No. 1
£3 from: Save Our Sacred Sites, 9 Edward Kennedy House, Worlington Road, London, W10 5FP

Subtitled as 'The Journal of Save Our Sacred Sites', this 25 page A5 offering includes pithy articles from the National Trust property manager responsible for the Avebury area; Professor Ronald Hutton; Clare Prout of the Pagan Hospice and Funeral Trust; a 'group statement' from the Dongas; and several modern-day pagans.

Save Our Sacred Sites was set up in response to the damage inflicted on the stones of West Kennet long barrow by a group of pagans in May 1995 and the consequent response by the National Trust (custodians of this monument) which included considering the use of security guards to prevent access after dusk.

Walking the Talk No. 1 probably succeeds in its objective of trying to bring together the varying interests of archaeologists, tourists, pagans and heritage management groups. It has taken a small step in the direction of informing the pagan community of the damage they unwittingly may cause to archaeological sites by lighting fires and leaving rubbish or 'offerings' - although clearly there is long way to go before this message has been fully conveyed.

The introduction to this inaugural issue is written in the first person although there is no indication as who is behind Save Our Sacred Sites. Walking the Talk is scheduled to appear quarterly and the subscription details seek standing orders, so the organiser(s) clearly want to give the impression that this is not a 'flash in the pan'.

I have no problems with the overt aims of this project but I find it intriguing that there is no attempt to define 'sacred sites'. One suspects that any 'ancient' site which is claimed as sacred by modern-day pagans will de facto meet the criteria. It remains to be seen whether ploughed-out henges (including, for instance, the massive neolithic enclosure recently discovered near Knighhton - see Abstracts this issue) with nothing to be seen on the ground will envoke as much enthusiasm as Avebury and other places which have been the subject of copious mumbo-jumbo in New Age and modern pagan books and magazines.

For all the attention devoted to damage at well-known sites, Walking the Talk makes no mention of the need for minor archaeological sites - such as numberless standing stones and all-but ploughed-out prehistoric earthworks - to be given the protection they deserve as scheduled monuments, rather than risk being destroyed at any time without notice. No is there any attempt to question the motives of English Heritage - surely a quango in need of close scrutiny - given the recent leadership by a series of buffoons more interested in advancing their political careers than taking any interest in the sites and the resolving the conflicts inherent in their management.

Above all, will Walking the Talk have the strength to 'name names'? The pagan community is small enough to know who are the main culprits of intentional damage (to my knowledge one of the contributors to this issue knows the identity of the group who, in the words of one of those responsible, 'trashed' the young trees around Nine Ladies stone circle in Derbyshire last year).

A worthy enterprise which, if it has the momentum to sustain the campaign, could produce some useful dialogues over the next few years.

Bob Trubshaw

Books received:

The Modern Numerology John King, Blandford 1996 ppk £8.99
Contacting the spirit world Linda Williamson, Piatkus Books, 1996 £8.99

Next Issue

Tree veneration lore and Green Men take over!

Jeremy Harte
How old is that old yew?
Peter Hill
Green Men in Northamptonshire
Philip Quinn
Veneration of trees in Avon
Paul Wain
Derbyshire tree lore
Ruth Wylie
Photographs of little-known Green Men

plus the usual letters, abstracts, reviews and much else.

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No.3 September 1996
New Subscription Rates

Observant subscribers will have noted that the price on front cover has been increased from £2.00 to £2.50 and the subscription rates shown on the inside front cover have been increased accordingly.

I am never in a hurry to increase cover prices but paper prices have not reduced sufficiently to offset the massive increases last year and an increase in postage rates is imminent.

Above all, although the number of new subscribers is satisfactory, a much large number are needed to significantly reduce the cost-per-copy of printing.

All existing subscriptions will, of course, be honoured in full but all subscriptions paid after 1st September will be due at the new rate.

UK subscribers still save £1.00 on the cover price of four issues and ensure that they receive their copies of AT THE EDGE promptly on publication.

Notes for Contributors

Articles and letters are welcome for publication on the understanding that they have not been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. A preliminary letter summarising proposed ideas is most welcome. Length should not normally exceed 3000 words although, exceptionally, up to 5000 word articles will be considered. Contributors are asked to write for general readers and avoid jargon.

While the editor will offer advice and assistance on matters relating to copyright, articles are accepted for publication solely on the understanding that the contributor is responsible for obtaining copyright clearance for any text (including substantial quotations), illustrations or photographs.

Sources and references must be clearly indicated. Please ensure references include the correct and full title, author (with initials or first name), publisher and year of publication. N.B. In future issues the format for references will change to Harvard numbering system e.g. (Trubshaw 1996). End notes (i.e. comments other than bibliographical information) should be shown by superscript numbers.

Contributions should be sent, when possible, by e-mail or on IBM PC disc in ASCII or Word for Windows compatible formats; or on Amstrad PCW 3" or 3.5" discs in Locuscript format. Otherwise send on good old fashioned paper - clear, unmarked typescript suitable for scanning.

Note that published contributions become the joint copyright of the author(s) or artist and the editor of AT THE EDGE. If you would like to discuss any of these notes, please contact Bob Trubshaw.

What you receive in return

For published articles contributors are credited with a year’s subscription. Contributors of short articles, reprints of 'syndicated' contributions and letters published will be credited with a free issue.

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A good number of people have written to say how much they like the approach of AT THE EDGE. Such praise is always appreciated but does not really help where it matters most.

AT THE EDGE is not an academic journal - the subscription rates are a small fraction of those for heavy weight periodicals yet there is no sponsorship and all-but-no advertising. On such shoe-string budgets every subscription really does help.

If you like what you have read in this issue but are not a paid-up subscriber then please reach out for your cheque book now - if you are reading this before the 1st September then the old subscription rates still apply (deduct £2.00 from those shown on the inside front cover).

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for At the Edge readers only

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Subscribers to *At the Edge* should find a copy of the Clearance Sale catalogue enclosed. Otherwise send an A5 s.a.e. for your own copy.

Heart of Albion Press is now on World Wide Web at http://www.gmtnet.co.uk/indigo/edge/hoaphome.htm

Full catalogue on-line together with complete text and images for Gargoyles and Grotesque Carvings of Leicestershire and Rutland to download free of charge.

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