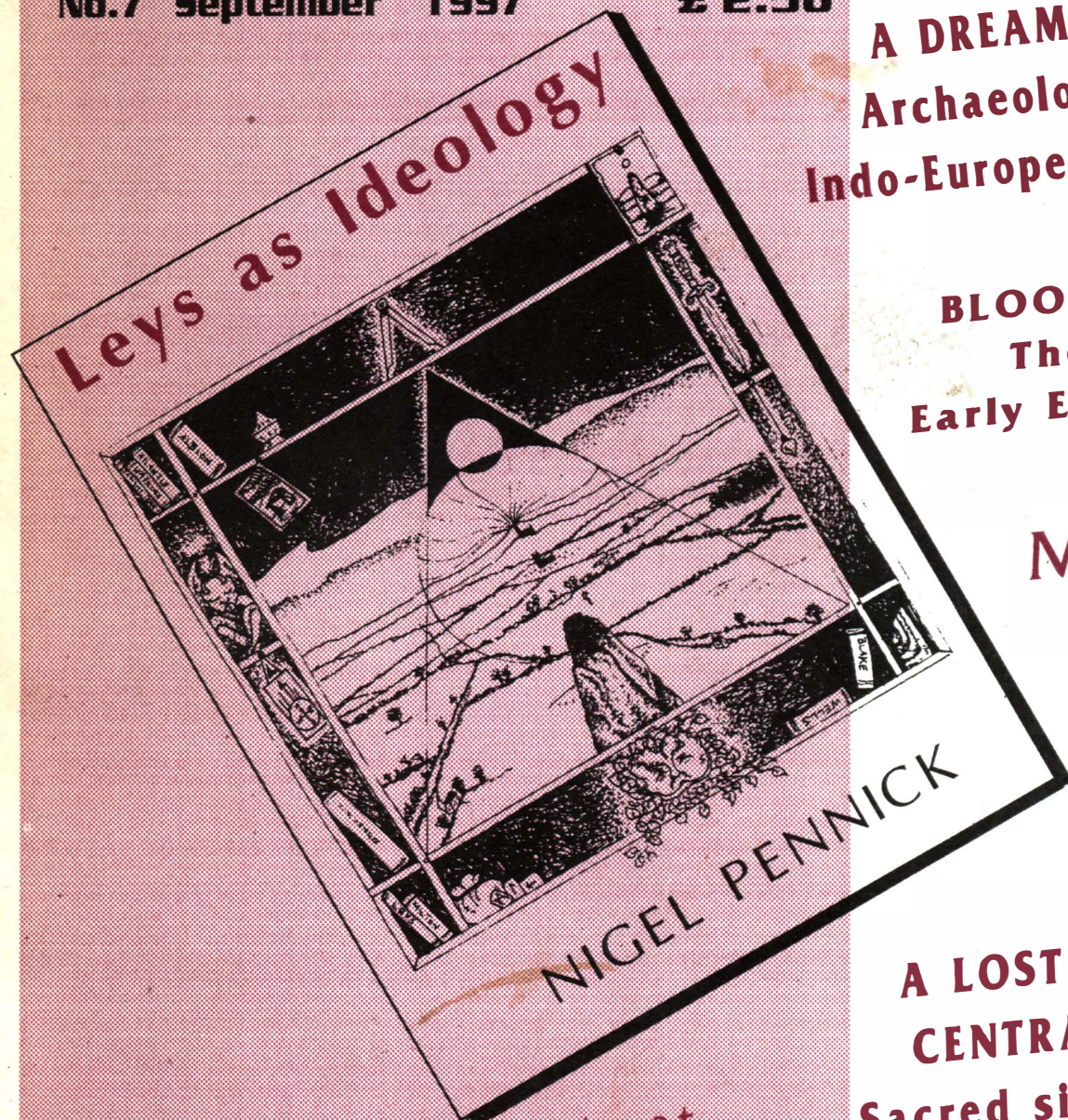# AT THE EDGE

No.7 September 1997

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

A DREAM WORLD ?
Archaeology and the Indo-European world view

BLOOD AND SOIL
The tribe in Early English history

MAKING TIME

A LOST CLASS OF CENTRAL PLACES
Sacred sites in Surrey

Leys as Ideology

NIGEL PENNICK

Solstice alignments at Uffington White Horse

TORII AND TRILITHONS

AT THE EDGE

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Issue No.7 September 1997

Contents:

Cover illustration: David Taylor

Nigel Pennick

Leys as Ideology

NIGEL PENNICK is a full-time researcher and writer whose many books have greatly influenced what has become known as 'Earth Mysteries'. With Paul Devereux he co-wrote Lines on the Landscape *(Hale 1989). His latest book,* The Celtic Cross, *is reviewed on page 44 of this issue.*

The subject of leys or ley lines has a long history, and like any history, it can be interpreted in several ways. Geomantic writers over the years have tended to interpret it in an uncritical way, recounting the historical personages and events without attempting to conduct an overall evaluation of the system. The history of a subject presupposes the existence of that subject as a real and coherent area of study. We may study the history in at least three ways. Firstly, it can be a chronology of who did what and when. Secondly, we can describe the genesis and evolution of ideas within the area we call ley hunting. Both of these approaches can be made uncritically or critically. Thirdly, we can analyse the history of ley hunting in its wider socio-psychological context, seeing it as a belief system which may or may not correspond with objective reality. Contemporary studies in folklore and history undertake far more rigorous critical analyses of folklore and urban folklore than do most earth mysteries studies. Unlike earth mysteries, academic studies do not rely upon secondary sources, but go to the originals to discover the essence of what is meant. When we analyse ley hunting in this way, we can gain new insights into what we have done in the past and what we are doing now.

Looking at it from an external, academic, perspective, it is immediately clear that ley hunting has all of the characteristics of a belief-system. And it can be analysed as such. Like all religions or political movements, ley hunting has its founding father, Alfred Watkins, a revered patriarch. After Watkins, ley hunting has its formative era when it was almost ignored, and when the belief was carried by only a few men, who are seen in retrospect as pioneers and saints of the system. In this period, the water diviners come on the scene, and talk of lines of power. This is then taken up by the heretics of ley hunting, those Nazis who sought to use leys to conquer Europe. After this dark period, ley hunting has a renaissance, when the flying saucer craze in France was linked to Watkins's lines. Then ley hunting is infused with messianic New Age creeds which empower it as a myth for the saving of our planet from the threat of your choice. And this is how the subject stands to-day.

Genesis

Many aspects of ley hunting originate in the earlier part of this century. They are unquestionably part of the thought-processes and opinions of the time in which they originated, and, as such, need to be examined in this context, and not accepted as given truths. For example, my recent studies of English folk traditions have given me an important insight into certain aspects of the origins of ley hunting. In the days before the mechanised plough, English ploughmen took great pride in their trade, especially in making a perfectly straight furrow. From East Anglia comes the saying, 'many a good ploughman turned round in his furrow', meaning that sometimes one has to start again in order to get something right. Ploughmen in the days of horses or oxen, having hit a stone in the ground which pushed the plough from its straight line, making the furrow crooked, would turn the plough and re-do the crooked part straight. In order to plough a straight rig, the English ploughman would cut two willow sticks called 'dods', and tie a piece of wool or fabric to each one. Then, pacing out the field from end to end, he put one in the ground where the ploughing was to end, ten feet from the field boundary, and the other ten feet further on, in the hedge. He then sighted the line of the first furrow on the line made by the two 'dods'. If there was a prominent tree or other feature on the horizon, then he might take that as the 'farthest beacon' beyond the first 'dod'. By steering

Illustration by David Taylor.

a straight course towards these markers, the ploughman guaranteed a straight rig.

This practical means of ploughing a straight rig, known to every ploughman and used until quite recently in middle and eastern England, was the origin of a misunderstanding that Alfred Watkins, the ley hunter, enshrined in his belief-system. As a man from the merchant class, in the class-conscious days in western England at the beginning of this century, it was not for such as him to know the secrets of the ploughman's craft. So it was that Watkins created the myth of the ancient 'dodmen' who had used their sticks to lay out the Old Straight Tracks in the days before the Romans came.

Days of the Empire

In the golden years of the British Empire, amateur anthropology was a popular pastime. The ways of natives were studied and compared,

and many theories passed into common currency. Tales of Atlantis, Zimbabwe, Stonehenge, the Aryan Race, the Lost Tribes of Israel and King Solomon's Mines thrilled the armchair traveller through a succession of popular magazine articles and books. A considerable literature in this vein was published at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Much was motivated politically. A look at the popular literature of this age gives a good insight into the beliefs that underlay the perceptions of Alfred Watkins. To Victorian Britons, the idea that the citizens of the greatest Empire on earth had once been inferior was unacceptable. There were numerous straight lines across the landscape of England and Wales, but these were Roman roads, built in the days when the Britons were a subject race. In the 1870s, William Black claimed that the Romans had made other, invisible, lines on

the landscape as well as the roads. But his ideas were not taken seriously, as it would be better for national pride if the Britons had done it first. Later writers were to suggest that the Romans had built their roads on earlier British trackways.

This was a period when the roads were in decline, for it was the heyday of railways as the main form of transport. Romantics like Hilaire Belloc saw the old roads as a relic of a former, more leisurely, age, and as a means of leaving the hectic modem era. It was the age of the 'back to Nature' movement, starting with the Pagan Naturism of Edward Carpenter and continuing with the Boy Scouts of Baden-Powell and the youth wing of the Social Credit movement, the Woodcraft Folk, who made trails through the woods in emulation of the ancient Britons and Native Americans. The Ramblers' Association and other movements broadly like the German *Wandervoegel*, made walking through Nature along ancient tracks an important escape from the dark satanic mills of the industrial towns. To the pleasure of walking through the countryside, ley hunting added the attraction of discovering old straight tracks, and knowing something secret that others did not.

Watkins' wobbly leys

All of to-day's ley-line ideas originate with Alfred Watkins or his German nationalist counterparts, whom he may have influenced. They claimed that an enormous network of lines of ancient origin exist across their respective countries, and perhaps the entire surface of the Earth. But how accurate were Watkins's perceptions and those of his followers? If we take the, 'dod' example, here was a false assumption made to bolster already-held opinions. How many more of the accepted elements of ley hunting are

based on equally flimsy evidence? How many of them have been examined objectively according to rigorous principles? I would suggest very few. In 1979, for the Institute of Geomantic Research, Michael Behrend and I conducted the, 'Cambridgeshire Ley Project'. It was an intensive study of the 62 leys that Alfred Watkins described in his book *Archaic Tracks Around Cambridge* (Hereford Times 1932). We found that only 9 of these 62 were in alignment, while the others were inaccurate. And since then, the mathematical formula to determine whether alignments are likely to be chance has been improved, shedding doubt upon the few that actually were lines.

From this, and other studies we have undertaken, it is clear that the work of Alfred Watkins is flawed, and similarly, much of the work of his followers. For instance, when we look at the lives of the more important ley hunters of the past, we find some strange things. In the 1940s, Kurt Gerlach asserted that leys in Czechoslovakia proved that it was really German territory all along. Tony Wedd, who championed Watkins's ideas in the 1960s, was a man who believed aliens in flying saucers had given him the design for a cosmic coffee pot that heated coffee without external energy. He spent all of his money on making it, to the detriment of his family. It did not work. Watkins's lines, where they exist, and where they can be verified, appear to be

alignments restricted to specific sets of circumstances. In the sixty years since the death of Watkins, numerous other men have made claims of the literal existence of universal systems of invisible lines linked to everything from water-divining to so-called unidentified flying objects.

Sects and shortcomings

These can be seen as individual sects within the belief-system and, as with Watkins's first ideas, we must apply Ockham's Razor to their claims. When we do this, we find that the ground-base upon which these ideas are based is in the earlier, unverified opinions of the founding fathers of each sect. What value is there in the most complex system if it is based ultimately upon assertions that must be questioned seriously?

The connection between the leys of Alfred Watkins and many historic straight lines may thus be no more than semantic. Concerning real and imagined straight lines, many different and incompatible theories and systems now compete with one another for followers. All that many of them have in common is that they take Watkins as a starting-point and use the word 'ley lines' to describe them. All have their supporters, many of whom have invested large amounts of their life's time and energy in promoting them. Partly because of this personal attachment, there is often a serious lack of objectivity in this

area. The evidence of this is clear: the subject over the last thirty years has been filled with interpersonal conflicts between the protagonists of different ideas. Instead of promoting human harmony and spiritual development, more often than not, each new belief-system has brought further division and conflict, with personal anger directed at those who, in good faith, point out the shortcomings. Sadly, the harmless country walker's pastime of finding ancient trackways has metamorphosed into a welter of strongly held theories. Where there could have been human spiritual progress, there has come instead factionalism and conflict, competition and empire-building.

While it has been a useful exercise in the past to look at straight lines on the landscape, it has led to an over-emphasis on straight lines, which to some seem to have become the most important thing in the world. This appears to have understandable psychological roots in the overall personal disempowerment in the modern world manifested in the patriarchal need to exercise personal power and control. Knowing about and using straight lines gives the ley hunter a symbolic control of the world. It provides us with the comforting illusion of mastery that we as individuals can use straight lines to control the world, thereby harnessing it for our own ends or pleasure, whether the fascist aim of subduing the Slavs or the New Age one of healing the earth. The function of much ley hunting to-day seems to serve the psychological need for participants to feel a sense of importance and control which is absent from the individual in the modern world. Like every other belief-system it gives us the feeling that we are special because we are members of an elite that possesses a secret knowledge hidden from lesser humans.

A Dream World?

Archaeology and the Indo-European world view

Alby Stone

ALBY STONE previously wrote about Dumézil's tripartite Indo-European structures in At the Edge *No.5. This book on north European creation mythology,* Ymir's Flesh, *was published earlier this year by Heart of Albion Press.*

Georges Dumézil's discovery of the tripartite Indo-European (IE) social structure, and kindred phenomena in myth and religion, has provided much fuel for controversy. Even now, nearly seventy years after the first stirrings of the trifunctional theory, historians of IE myth and religion are deeply - sometimes bitterly - divided on the issue [Stone 1997]. This is in spite of Dumézil, and those who have followed and developed his theory, being able to draw on a considerable body of ancient literature as evidence. If the trifunctional theory is accepted for *historical* IE peoples, then its range and sophistication at the time of the earliest IE literature (possibly as early as 1500 BCE, if linguistic evidence for Vedic and Hittite is any guide), then it ought logically to have had its roots in prehistory.

The validity of IE trifunctionalism as a cosmological system unique to Indo-Europeans and common to all branches of the family hinges on the assumption that it existed in the putative Proto-Indo-European (PIE) period - the time ascribed to a supposed undifferentiated IE language and those who spoke it. [1] Trifunctionalism is assumed to have been transmitted 'genetically' from the putative proto-language-speakers to their divergent offspring. The conventional view of IE origins, that the IE languages were carried from a central homeland by successive waves of migrant tribal groups, gives a mechanism for the dispersal of trifunctionalism. Currently the most widely accepted theory is the Kurgan hypothesis proposed by Marija Gimbutas, after an idea earlier proposed by V. Gordon Childe. This identifies PIE-speakers with the makers of *kurgan* tumuli on the Eurasian steppes in the fourth millennium BCE (Mallory 1989: 182-5; Renfrew 1987: 37–41).

Archaeological remains indicate that the Kurgan tradition of this time had all the components that have conventionally been assigned to the Proto-Indo-Europeans - equestrianism, wheeled vehicles, sheep and cattle herding, and so on. Whether these people actually spoke any kind of IE language is unknown. The close correlation between their material culture and expectations raised by reconstructing the supposed PIE language and culture, has led many to suppose that they did.

Lately, this supposition has been questioned. The homeland-migration scenario underlying the Kurgan hypothesis (and rival theories placing the IE homeland in north/central Europe or Caucasia) has been challenged by a number of archaeologists and historical linguists. The trend is now to look for routes by which the IE languages might have spread without needing to resort to migration or invasion as an explanation. Some have suggested that IE spread by being adopted by neighbouring peoples through processes analogous to the evolution of creoles or pidgins in modern times. According to this notion, IE attained its historically familiar forms through processes rooted in economic factors and language status rather than either movement of populations or invasion. Extensive and repeated contacts over millenia ensured that so-called IE languages came to resemble one another very closely, even when separated by many miles (Robb 1993).

Renfrew's wave

More attractive is Colin Renfrew's theory that IE languages were carried from Anatolia with early farming. Renfrew posits a 'wave of advance' in which early IE-speaking farmers expanded gradually, with successive generations moving on to neighbouring land as populations increased and more farmland was needed. Earlier non-IE-speaking populations were absorbed by these farmers, with each group making its own contribution to the language of the region in the

form of detectable lexical, syntactical and phonological substrates. The IE tongues developed in or near the places where they first enter the historical record. The picture is completed by the known migrations of IE-speakers after their languages attained their historical forms (Renfrew 1987).

If Renfrew's vision is correct, the earliest knowable IE or PIE stratum would have been the language(s) of Anatolian agriculturalists of about the seventh millennium BCE. [2] Renfrew believes that this 'wave of advance' process is responsible for a number of important prehistoric European cultural transformations which themselves represent the stages of Indo-Europeanisation of Europe from the end of the mesolithic. Each would possibly represent the beginnings of a particular branch of IE (Renfrew 1987: 159–65).

IE trifunctionalism depends on genetic transmission. If socio-linguistic explanations like Robb's are valid, then genetic relations between different IE languages are only apparent, or very limited. This would immediately undermine the idea of trifunctionalism as a growth from PIE culture. Renfrew's model is a different matter altogether. There is little doubt that farming spread through Europe in the manner he describes; and his model elegantly allows for a genetic link between the known branches of IE, while managing to locate them within distinctive material cultures. It does push the putative PIE period back two or three millennia further than the Kurgan hypothesis, which would bring it into conflict with standard IE glottochronology (the dating of language branches based on the rate of linguistic change); but glottochronology depends on such changes occurring at a constant rate, when it is quite clear that even closely related languages change at differing rates.

Cross-section and plan of an early Bronze Age *kurgan* at Usatove, Ukraine. Burial pits shown as cross-hatching. After J.M. Coles and A.F. Harding, *The Bronze Age in Europe* (Methuen 1979).

More caution

Renfrew has this to say about the implications of his theory for IE tripartition:

'Certainly a number of the arguments offered by Dumézil and his colleagues do appear very difficult to reconcile with the chronology. It is necessary then to suggest . . . that many of the similarities or apparent similarities recognized by Dumézil are not in fact to be explained in terms of a common origin in some proto-Indo-European cultural milieu . . . It seems to me that Dumézil, by avoiding the issue of the concrete historical reality lying behind the various similarities between cultural forms which he seeks to recognize, has allowed himself a much freer hand and perhaps a less disciplined methodology than might have been prudent. As a result, many of his interpret-ations will have to be called into question, and

perhaps some more cautious explanations offered for some of the similarities which are recognized among the myths and the social institutions of different societies where Indo-European languages were spoken' (Renfrew 1987: 261).

Now Renfrew does not deny that his own model would result in shared cultural forms. It is just that his version of the IE 'wave of advance' as a largely peaceful process that occurred much earlier than was previously thought would automatically rule out a tripartition based on a 'common Indo-European background of priests, kings and warriors' (Renfrew 1987: 261).

Or would it? It is clear that the agriculturalisation of Europe did not take place without a degree of conflict between farmers and non-farmers. As Marek Zvelebil points out, the encroachment of farming in areas occupied by foragers would almost inevitably have resulted in competition, social change on both sides, and conflict. For example, there is evidence of 'antagonistic relations' between Mesolithic hunter-gatherers and early Neolithic farmers in Northern Europe (including the Low Countries, Denmark, Germany and Poland), where fortified farming communities are in evidence (Zvelebil 1996: 339); and there are also indications of warfare between Neolithic farming communities in Scandinavia (Price 1996: 349). There is other evidence that points to regular conflict involving Neolithic cultures. This argues for a degree of organisation and leadership of fighters across early Neolithic Europe, and would accommodate a tripartite social division.

Traditional cosmology

Also, Renfrew has not fully understood the trifunctional ideology. As Jens Peter Schjødt has pointed out, in a discussion of Renfrew's view of Dumézil and trifunctionalism, myth 'is

not an expression of some concrete order of society as such which may be investigated and controlled by the archaeological record, but of an ideology produced by and containing the principles of classification in the society' (Schjødt 1996: 188). In recent years it has become increasingly clear that IE tripartition is a ritual system linked to a distinctive cosmology. Social structure and rôles are classified according to the pattern dictated by cosmic structure. IE cosmogony dictates that cosmic structure is homologous with that of the human body.

The human form is the real source of IE social, mythological and cosmic organisation and classification. It is divided into three parts, arranged hierarchically. The first is the head, which governs the rest. The second is the upper torso, including the arms - this part defends, attacks, and is strong. The third part consists of the belly, legs, genitalia and anus. This is the part which reproduces and is the focus of sexual pleasure, and it is the bodily repository for food. In IE myth the cosmos is made from a human body and stratified accordingly. Its divinities are stratified in the same way. The thing that makes IE cultures unique is that they have adopted this pattern and codified it in myth and ritual, and have made it the core of their traditions and beliefs in a way that transcends the merely social (Lincoln 1986).

By looking only at social structure for the foundation of tripartition, Renfrew has missed the point completely. But he levels a more serious charge against the trifunctional school - the apparent dearth of archaeological evidence. The eminent Indo-Europeanist Winfred P. Lehmann is inclined to agree:

'Unfortunately, no archaeological support has been discovered for the tripartite ideology. In the harsh words of the archaeologist Colin Renfrew, without it "the work of the late

Georges Dumézil and his followers (is) a dream world" ' (Lehmann 1993: 276). [3]

But how does one unearth the material remains of an idea? In the text Lehmann quotes, Renfrew is of course referring to social tripartition. Even so, as Schjødt remarks, 'the materialistic reflections of a stratified society can be investigated archaeologically, but is it really possible to show from the artefacts that a society has *not* been stratified?' (Schjødt 1996: 187). Schjødt goes on to suggest that archaeological evidence may even be available, but we simply do not know how to interpret it. Lack of evidence for a thing does not constitute evidence against it, of course. But is this not exactly what Renfrew is suggesting?

A thing as intangible as a thought-process can leave no physical traces unless the thinker sets out deliberately to leave some kind of reminder; or is unconsciously impelled to do so. This is implicitly demanded by the 'cognitive archaeology' championed by Renfrew himself: 'the study of past ways of thought as inferred from material remains' (Renfrew 1994: 3). The problem is that archaeological remains are rarely complete, and for the early Neolithic they are fragmentary. It can only ever be possible to reconstruct a partial picture of the ways of thought of a pre-literate past through archaeology, although obviously some reconstructions will be less incomplete than others. For the putative PIE period, whether it be Gimbutas' Kurgan hypothesis or Renfrew's Neolithic wave of advance, a satisfactory reconstruction is highly unlikely.

However, there are remains that do support IE trifunctionalism. These are texts left by a wide variety of IE-speakers, often about other IE-speakers, from different times and places. Admittedly, these are often widely separated in space and time - but from them it is

possible to discern a definite continuity (or rather, a series of related and explicable continua) of IE tradition. So it is possible to see similarities in the myth and cosmology of Iceland in the tenth century CE and Iran nearly two millenia before; and between Vedic-period India and medieval Ireland. All include versions of a ritual tripartite system and a cosmogenic pattern that gives it mythic legitimacy. Supporting evidence is found in Roman tradition - the Capitoline triad of Jupiter, Mars and Quirinus - and in Greek and Roman accounts of the Gauls, Germans and Scythians.

The textual evidence for historical IE trifunctionalism is overwhelming. There are clear indications of there having been ritual tripartition, as recognised by Dumézil, in all knowable branches of IE tradition. The earliest extensive texts, the older hymns of the *Rig Veda*, show that by the time they were composed (as oral compositions, probably around 1200 BCE) the Indian branch of IE ideology had already been formulated, refined, and long established. Linguistic and thematic parallels from Western Europe, although much later in terms of text age, support the notional PIE antiquity of the source idea. It is improbable that this solidity of concept, and its dual system of cosmogonic and sociogonic metaphors, was spread as an accident or by-product of language acquisition processes of the type suggested by Robb; or that they evolved in parallel solely as a result of similarity of lifestyle. There was something much more dynamic at work.

Can texts be classed as 'material remains'? Can textual evidence, even as vast and varied as that for IE trifunctionalism, be applied retrospectively to trace the source of an idea in space and time? Texts found *in situ* are obviously more valuable than umpteenth-generation copies; and while copied texts can be extremely useful (for linguistic as well as ethnographic content) they cease to be of anything

more than theoretical value as soon as the timeline disappears back across the literacy barrier. But they can be used as cultural 'triangulation points', which is exactly how the archaeology of PIE has used the historical IE languages. And those languages are for the most part preserved in exactly those ancient texts used as sources by comparative mythologists.

Few would doubt that ancient religious texts tell us just what those who wrote them actually believed, even if we sometimes have problems with interpretation. The works of ancient Greek and Roman historians and ethnographers are more problematic. Prone to bias, errors of interpretation, and propagandising, they can rarely be wholly trusted. Yet they can and do contain invaluable information concerning the language, myths and rituals of non-literate Indo-Europeans of their time.

Instead of rejecting the trifunctional ideology out of hand for lack of material support from potentially PIE cultures, it would surely make better sense to provisionally accept the findings of the comparative mythologists in the same way that the suggestions of comparative and historical linguists have been accepted and used as the basis of an entire field of archaeological concern, namely the identification of the PIE-speakers. At least, until its reality is resolved conclusively one way or the other. Instead of declaring the lack of evidence, and dismissing it for that reason, it would be more constructive to speculate on what form archaeological evidence of trifunctionalism might take, then see how the possibilities might be applied to those prehistoric cultures that are thought to be likely candidates for PIE. If the trifunctional system was only partly concerned with social stratification - and perhaps not at all in its earliest manifestations - then evidence of tripartite social stratification

may be the wrong thing to look for.

Tripartite mortuary practices

As Schjødt has pointed out, and as in-depth studies of IE cosmology have demonstrated, trifunctionalism is ultimately a cosmological concept that is not necessarily tied to social structure - except insofar as society may reflect the cosmic image - and which operates through metaphor. The key image is the human body, which gives the cosmos form and structure, and from which the social body also arises; and the human body is itself made of the stuff of the cosmos. Given that death and disposal of the dead are a significant focus of attention in many societies past and present, and given that ritual is essentially a process of symbolic renewal or re-enactment, then mortuary practices may help resolve the impasse.
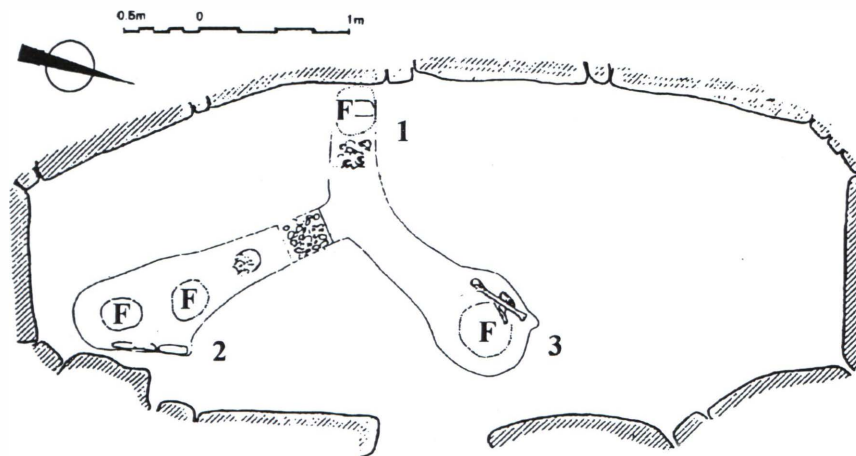
IE sources suggest that the PIE creation myth involved the death and dismemberment of a primordial being. Subsequent sacrificial practices can be related to this notion - Indian tradition explicitly identifies the treatment of the sacrificial horse (a substitute for a mythical human) with the creation of the cosmos, and the distribution of sacrificial meat in ancient Greece was, like that of the portions at ritual feasts in Irish hero-tales, made according to social rank or other indicators of status. Almost all IE sacrifices are focused on the renewal or reiteration of the way things are - cosmic and social order - and are ultimately repetitions of the cosmogonic act (Lincoln 1986).

Archaeologists should perhaps look for evidence of human bodies having been disposed of according to these principles. Two distinct possibilities are suggested: a threefold separation or demarcation of a corpse into head, upper torso and arms, lower torso and legs; and an

apparently more general dismemberment, with the various parts separated according to the taxonomy discernible in IE cosmogonic myth. Whatever the form, it should mark a distinctive shift from previous practices exhibiting few or no signs of ritually systematic dismemberment or tissue dispersal. Other possible indicators of ritual tripartition are: representations of human bodies that are either clearly tripartitioned according to the above schema; or tripartition of ritual or domestic structures, maybe entire settlements. Given that creation myths are central to cosmological systems, practices that suggest cosmogony should perhaps be a main target, along with structures that may reflect cosmological ideas.

As there is no defining 'moment' when a language comes into being, any attempt to pinpoint the beginnings of a collateral PIE culture may be futile. The Kurgan hypothesis does not lend itself to a study of such a locus: supposed vectors for Indo-Europeanisation solely from that source are almost entirely conjectural (Whittle 1996: 138–9). The same is true for the North European and Caucasian hypotheses. Renfrew's model, on the other hand, accords with the neolithisation of Europe, which is largely a known process (Renfrew 1987: ch. 7; Whittle 1996). Yet it brings us no further toward identifying when any particular Asian or European Neolithic population might have 'become' PIE, let alone historically IE. The best we can hope for is the location of evidence for IE trifunctional themes within a context that may or may not have denoted a fully-fledged PIE/IE-speaking community by the time of its occurrence, but which does at least fall in a region that definitely came to be linguistically IE by the earliest historical times.

Several European Neolithic cultures exhibit traces that may

The chambered tomb at Carlshögen (Skåne, Sweden) showing the tripartite pit; F = flint pile.

be construed as evidence of ritual tripartition, or a cosmological corrollary. Early Neolithic burials in Greece, the Balkans, Moldova and the Ukraine (Sesklo, Starcevo, Körös, etc - seventh millennium BCE) seem to have consisted in the main of simple inhumations, with some cremations, but at Prodromos (Thessaly) there are 'some signs of secondary, disarticulated burials' (Whittle 1996: 59). By about 5500 BCE, the Sesklo settlement boasted a large central building roughly 20m by 9m, divided into three rooms: in one there was a hearth, and another contained circular platforms (Whittle 1996: 86). At about the same time, at Dolnoslav (Bulgaria) an apparently religious site - comprising a number of buildings containing hearths, figurines and life-size paintings of humans - was divided into three parts by lines of 'coloured matter' laid out on the ground (Whittle 1996: 86).

The Linear Pottery (LBK) culture of Central Europe, one of Europe's earliest consistently Neolithic culture (about 5500 to 4500 BCE) shows signs of influence from the slightly older Starcevo culture, which would concur with Renfrew's model. LBK graves include traces of partly-dismembered skeletons and separate head burial (Whittle 1996: 167). Tripartitioned buildings, evidently of some importance,

also occur (Whittle 1996: 163). The subsequent Trichterbecherkultur (TRB) offers triadic domestic and mortuary structures: the Lengyel subculture at Brzesc Kujawski (Poland) has houses in clusters of three, while TRB long barrows at nearby Sarnowo also occur in threes (Midgley 1995: 121–2).

Are the disarticulated skeletons of Prodromos, and the dismembered dead and separate head burials of the LBK complex, the remaining vestiges of a cosmogonic tradition ancestral to the IE cosmology underlying Dumézil's three functions? Do the Sesklo building, the Dolnoslav religious precinct and the houses and long barrows of Brzesc Kujawski and Sarnowo have ritual tripartition encoded in their very structure? Of course, the divided and disarticulated dead, which are by no means typical in any context in which they occur, may simply be the result of unknown funerary practices - but what was their purpose? The threefold structures may just reflect a concern with the number three - but why that number?

Twos and threes

In a recent discussion of prehistoric societies in southern Scandinavia, Christopher Tilley has suggested a dualistic or bipolar taxonomic system for

the early and middle Neolithic peoples of that region. Yet it is clear from his data that other ideas were at work. The chambered tomb at Carlshögen (Skane, Sweden - see illustration on previous page) includes a tripartite burial pit beneath the chamber floor: in one part were a jawbone, three vertebrae, a rib, a left arm bone, a left leg bone, and some hand and foot bones, representing a child, a girl, and a young man; in another were a selection of vertebrae from two adults and two children; while the remaining part contained the skull of an adult man. Tilley remarks:

'In view of the distinction being drawn between right and left skeletal parts for selection in the piles in the sections of the tomb chambers, this pit is of great interest because it is precisely those bones of the human skeleton, and only those bones, the skull and vertebrae, that are being separated out in two arms of the pit from other parts of the skeleton in the third arm of the pit' (Tilley 1996: 230).

Tilley also points out the entire Carlshögen grave contains more left upper limbs than right; and more right lower limbs than left, which he interprets according to his bipolar model. But there are also more right feet *and* hands than left ones. In the same region, a similar grave at Ramshög contained more right upper arms than left, more left lower legs than right, more right hands than left, and more left feet than right (Tilley 1996: 233). In both graves the skeletons were invariably disarticulated. Tilley sees the Ramshög deposits as a reversal of the one at Carlshögen, but that is clearly not so. The numbers may be real, but Tilley's pattern of polarity and reversal is not.

The tripartite pit at Carlshögen, on the other hand, shows a decided tendency toward a dispersal of human remains according to a pre-conceived hierarchy or stratification: skull and vertebrae; vertebrae; vertebrae and other bones. Where Tilley (quoted above) seems to be suggesting that the skull and vertebra have been 'separated out' from the rest of the skeleton because they are neither of left nor right, it really seems that a qualitative distinction of some sort has been made, based on the nature and function of the disparate parts, not on bilateral symmetry. Could this represent an early groping toward a trifunctional system?

Applying IE mythology

Ultimately, the truth of the matter is unknowable. The above suggestions may be chimerae; they are based, after all, on a few examples selected more or less at random. But if the nuts-and-bolts archaeology is sound - and there is no reason to suppose otherwise - then it surely makes sense to apply IE mythology in a manner that makes sense *within its own parameters*. The archaeology of myth and ritual requires a comprehensive understanding of relevant belief-systems in order to be effective in its interpretation. Tilley and others of the 'interpretative' school of post-processual archaeology are keen to apply theoretical insights from anthropology to the interpretation of archaeological remains, which is highly laudable - but how relevant are studies of twentieth-century Micronesian or South Amerindian societies to the Europe of four to six thousand years ago? Good archaeology on its own is not enough; nor is good archaeology plus ethnographies that are too far removed in time and space from the culture in question. Logically, the closer one gets, chronologically and geographically, to that culture, the more pertinent an ethnological comparison will be - and if one can convincingly suppose a close ethnic affinity or connection, then it will be more likely to produce results that are

something more illuminating than mere resemblance.

Equally, there is no point in looking for traces of a known (or even hypothetical) mythological or cosmological system if that system is only poorly understood by the seeker. IE trifunctionalism is about much more than social stratification, and to look only for evidence - or the absence of evidence - of social tripartition is to risk losing sight of all the rest. If that happens, then all the interpretative and cognitive techniques in the world will fail to identify IE ritual tripartition in its earliest manifestations. Dumézil and other explorers of IE cosmology - especially Bruce Lincoln, whose brilliant study of IE cosmology (Lincoln 1986) continues to be largely ignored by anthropologists - have provided a clear and comprehensive tool for analysing potential PIE-period cultures. Renfrew, despite his mistrust of PIE tripartion, has given the best candidate so far for a probable PIE-speaking culture or continuum of such cultures. Surely it is about time both were provisionally accepted and a synthesis of the two used to interpret the relevant material remains.

Notes

1: Linguistically, the term PIE is applied to a hypothetical early language reconstructed from the earliest known forms of its branches using the techniques of comparative linguistics. Archaeologically, PIE refers to the period (and possible cultures) correlating to linguistic PIE. Identification of the latter is wholly dependent on accepting one or other of the chronologies that linguistics historians propose for the former. For useful introductions to the dating of IE linguistic change, see Mallory 1989; Renfrew 1987; Lehmann 1987.

2: According to the Nostratic and Eurasiatic hypotheses the pre-agricultural inhabitants of Europe, Asia and Asia Minor could all have spoken similar

dialects of Nostratic/Eurasiatic anyway. Rather than neolithisation bringing about wholesale language change, the switch from mainly nomadic to mainly sedentary lifestyles may have served to reinforce similarities between local dialects. For instance, the river-names of Old Europe - often assumed to be of non-Indo-European origin - have been found to be akin to forms in Indo-Iranian, usually assigned to the nomads of the Russian steppes. The other main families of Nostratic or Eurasiatic (Uralic, Altaic, Afro-Asiatic) are all associated with geographically defined former nomads.
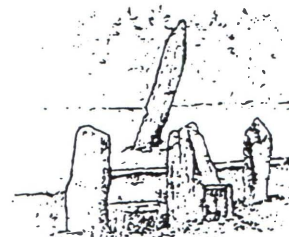
3: Lehmann is quoting from Renfrew's 1990 article 'Archaeology and linguistics: some preliminary issues' in Thomas L. Marky and John A.C. Greppin (eds) *When Worlds Collide: Indo-Europeans and Pre-Indo-Europeans* (Karoma).

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Blood and Soil

The tribe in early English society

Jeremy Harte

JEREMY HARTE maintains his unbroken sequence of thought-provoking articles in At the Edge *with a look at tribalism. The results of Jeremy's extensive trawl through academic and fringe literature,* Research in Geomancy 1990–94, *has just been published by Heart of Albion Press (see back cover of this issue for details).*

From the academic point of view, J.R.R. Tolkien must have been a disappointing investment. After decades supposedly devoted to teaching ancient languages, he turned out to have been far more interested in imaginary ones. The creative energies intended for Middle English had been diverted to Middle Earth, and all were delighted except , perhaps, his employers at Oxford University. As his secret world grew more persuasive, even the sober philological work came to reflect a tinge of elvish glamour - to the detriment of its historical insight. Few other specialists can have felt that the *cnihtas* of *Beowulf* were 'members of societies of noble knights' as Tolkien did in 1940, rejecting less emotive words - 'too many warriors and chiefs beget . . . the far more inept picture of Zulus or Red Indians' (Tolkien 1997: 57).

These thoughts are notionally addressed to the translators of *Beowulf* - a select band - but in defending the heroic idiom Tolkien is really grappling with a more insidious foe. The poisoned voice of Saruman whispers 'Dotard! What is the house of Eorl but a thatched barn where brigands drink in the reek!' (Tolkien 1954: 186). Similar reflections will cross the mind of anyone moving from the high speech of Anglo-Saxon heroic verse to the murky archaeological details of *grubenhauser* and middens. Under these circumstances, the choice of words becomes very important. The Saxons are, after all, the founding fathers of English identity. If we talk about their kings, knights, priests, halls and peoples, they look like respectable ancestors. Think instead of chiefs, warriors, shamans, huts and tribes, and the picture is much less appealing.

There are two traditions in the early history of England. They have been in academic combat, like the lion and the unicorn, for over a century and the issue is still unresolved. On the one side are the Germanists, who see the *adventus Saxonum* through the eyes of the colonists - a race of brave fighters, who ventured west over the seas to carve themselves out a kingdom. Or, if you look at exactly the same process through the eyes of the conquered, as the Celticists have done, the invasions of Britain were the work of a barbarian rabble who burnt and harried a ruined province. The Germanists interpret the fifth and sixth centuries as a new beginning, with the introduction of fresh people, laws, customs, and language. For the Celticists the same era is a calamity in which, against

the odds, traditions of Roman civilisation survive. The long debate is fuelled largely by absence of evidence: it is not until 650 AD or thereabouts that we have any real idea what is going on. And at that date England appears to have consisted of a multitude of small units which (whatever Tolkien would have thought of it) are usually called tribes. But are they really Germanic folk groups, brought over in the great migration? Or are they the surviving remnants of Romano-British organisation? A judgement either way carries implications about how we will relate to those prickly issues, race and nation.

What is certain is that the tribes of early England were new polities, ones which do not appear in any earlier record. They cannot convincingly be linked with any Germanic origin on a lesser scale than Angeln and Saxony themselves, and they do not perpetuate the social groupings (also known as tribes) which persisted from the Iron Age through to sub-Roman Britain. 'Tribe', of course, is a convenient word which has biblical authority, from the Vulgate text onwards, as a description of whatever sort of grouping Judah, Benjamin, and so on were in ancient Israel. Even when able to observe modern pastoral communities who perpetuate the lifestyle of the patriarchs, anthropologists differ as to whether tribes descended from a single lineage truly exist, or whether they are fictions promoted *ad hoc* by

Hengist claims the kingdom of Kent - 1870s style!

enterprising leaders (Ganzer 1994). It is still more sweeping to characterise the settled peoples of the Iron Age as tribes. They appear in the classical record as *gentes*, *ethnoi*; to themselves they were a **tota* (the word is cognate with Irish *tuath*). Calling them 'tribes' is to distance ourselves from them, characterising them as barbarous clans held together only by the natural bond of kinship. Not to be confused with, say, the UK - a rational government based on a common choice of laws, leaders, and rules. This is a good antithesis for defining to ourselves who we are, but does it represent social facts? All cultures contain an ambiguity between choosing identity in a local community, and inheriting it through the accident of birth - between ties of soil, and ties of blood. Being a Cockney is not the same thing as being a Londoner, and (as

Yasser Arafat has been at pains to point out) not everyone who lives within the territory of Israel thinks of themselves as an Israeli, much less as a Jew.

We know little about the peoples of Celtic Britain - so little, in fact, that the discovery of a single inscribed tile was enough to overturn the conventional name of 'Coritani' for the Corieltauvi. But enough is known to show that they behaved like little kingdoms, and not like immutable ethnic groups. Certainly Celtic peoples could divide or combine for political reasons, in the same way as East and West Germany (or, come to that, Sussex). When Caesar ravaged the coasts, there were four kingdoms in Kent: they must have been in a sort of confederacy, since Cantium means something like 'the ring', that is the circle of territory. By the time of the Claudian

conquest they were grouped into one under the new name of the Cantiaci. If peoples were created *ad hoc* by the choice of their members (as happened often enough on the Continent) that would explain names like the Novantae, 'new people', or even Trinovantae, 'very new people'. Unless, of course, **nouio* is to be understood in its other sense of 'fresh'. All the ethnic names from Roman Britain are chosen to flatter their bearers.

We meet with the Calidonii, 'hard men', and the Ancalites, 'very hard men'. The Belgae are 'swollen or proud ones', the Regini are 'proud ones', the Brigantes are 'high ones'. The Parisi are 'able men', the Decantae are 'noble men', the Cassi are 'fine ones', and the Smertae are 'far-sighted ones'. Among all this barbarian braggadocio it comes as a relief to find that the Selgovae are simply 'hunters'. Many of the names refer to war. The Catuvellauni are 'battle men', while the names of the Carnonacae, 'trumpet people', and the Britanni, 'painted ones', refer to preparations for war. The Ordovices, 'hammer fighters', must have hammered their opponents metaphorically rather than literally, and the Gabrantovices, 'goat fighters', charged with heads down. So, probably, did the Cornovii, 'people of the horn'. There were tribes dedicated to the gods - who may have been war-gods - Corionos, Dumnonos and Segontios. The Bibroci, Lugi, Carvetii, Epidii, and Caereni boasted mysterious links with, respectively, beavers, ravens, stags, horses and sheep. That leaves the Atecotti, 'very old ones', the Maeatae, 'people of the larger group', and the Atrebates, who are simply 'inhabitants'. These are all the native British peoples for whose names there is an uncontroversial etymology (Rivet & Smith 1979).

These names are surely unrepresentative of the people to whom they were applied. Not

every inhabitant of Catuvellaunian territory can really have been a battle man, and whole communities of fine, proud, noble, very hard men who fought like hammers (or goats) would have been intolerable. Instead these names are chosen to describe, or at least flatter, the military bands who gathered round a king. They offer us an insight into the language of a society where, as Caesar observed, a few rich warriors dominated the structure - and, it seems,even the name - of society.

But what is curious, in the light of later developments, is the lack of territorial feeling in the tribal names. Though the noblemen and kings held power over an agrarian culture, not one of their names alludes to any feature of the land from which they derived their income, and to which (in the conventional construction of Celtic religion) they were so spiritually attached. It is true that one group of Cornovii lived in Cornwall, and that *corn is therefore open to interpretation in the sense of 'promontory'. But - apart from the fact that the peninsula as far as Land's End was Dumnonian, not Cornovian territory - there were Cornovii elsewhere in Britain. We come across peoples of the same name in Caithness, Shropshire and Wiltshire, where the promontory explanation begins to look a bit stretched. It is hardly likely, either, that early bands of Cornish emigres were settling in these diverse places, and it seems much more probable that this was a flattering name independently chosen by four separate polities. Not all recurrent names can be explained as the result of migrations. Just as modern firms up and down the country have each hit on the dodge of calling themselves A1 Taxis or Apex Computers, so there were warriors in both Devon and Renfrewshire who advertised themselves as Dumnonii. People called themselves Atrebates in

the Pas-de-Calais as well as in Hampshire, and there are Brigantes in Portugal, Austria and Ireland as well as the North of England. Their neighbours the Parisi were certainly an immigrant group, but can they have really been a branch of the Gaulish nation of the same name? Prehistoric Hull must have had its attractions, but they are unlikely to have been enough to inspire mass folk-migration from Paris.
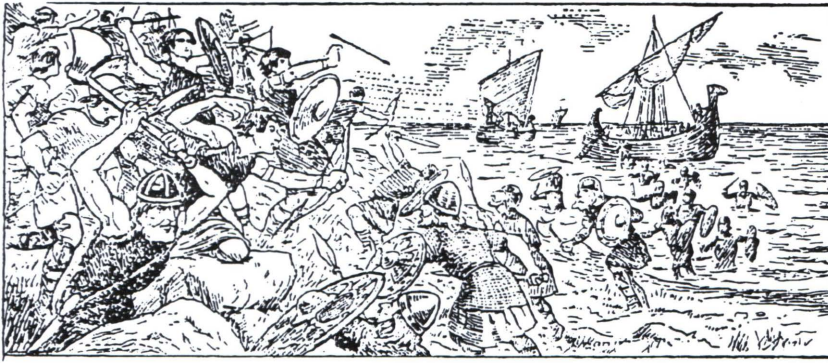
Ethnic names were not derived from places, and until the Roman conquest there was no question of applying them to places either. Far from ruling the waves, 'Britannia' came into being as the designation of a subject island. The word was in use even before the invasion - having been derived from the Gaulish pronunciation of British *Pretani, 'tattooed folk' - but it was Latin-speakers who created a geographical term from the original name of a warrior band. Britannia, as she appears in the poetry of Catullus or on the 50p piece, is an abstraction needed for Roman imperial rhetoric, just as the personifications Caledonia and Hibernia had to be coined to describe those parts of the British Isles not subject to the empire.

The effect of the Conquest was to freeze the pattern of ethnic diversity. Names which had changed flexibly in response to the political uncertainty between Caesar and Claudius stabilised immediately upon their incorporation into the framework of Roman rule. Even so, they remained designations for people, and not areas. Wherever you went in life, you carried with you the ancestral *cognomen*. Vepogenus the Caledonian moved to Silchester, where his grandson set up a votive tablet. Regina the Catuvellaunian married an officer and is buried up at South Shields. The old warrior names were now freely used by all members of the community, wherever they ended up - and Lucco the Dobunnian, serving with the *cohors I Britannica*, got

as far as Pannonia. That was in 105, but the ethnic names continued in use up to and after the departure of the legions. Corbalengus the Ordovician moved to south Wales in the fifth century, and a blacksmith in mid-sixth-century Tavistock was known as the Dobunnian (Rivet & Smith 1979: 305, 339, 434). The old identities could even survive a change of language, witness an ogam grave recording Mac-Iar of the Mac Dobunni (Jackson 1953: 167) But within a hundred years the Dobunni, and all the other groups like them, were to be wiped off the map. The coming of the English changed everything - not only the identities of the peoples in eastern England, as might be expected, but perhaps the existence of discrete 'peoples' at all.

It is true that the document which offers most insight into the territories of seventh-century England is known as the Tribal Hideage, but this name is a modern coinage, distinguishing it from the later Burghal and County Hideages. The text does not specify whether the tribes which it names are kinship groups, or political units, or something else altogether: in any case, surviving versions were copied out of context as fascinating ancestral facts, along with notes on Latin grammar and the libido of the Irish. The Hideage is evidently written either by or for Mercians in the seventh century. It lists all the English peoples south of the Humber, with immense disparities in the allocation of hides to territories - some are recorded as a hundred times larger than others, and the order in which they appear is not systematic. Since it is the same in all three manuscript traditions, however, it must have meant something to the original compiler (Hart 1971).

He starts with the Mercians, and proceeds to list their neighbours. To the west are the *Wrocen saete* (around the

Britons greeting a Saxon 'trade mission' - from a 1930s schoolbook.

Wrekin) and the *Westerne* (also appearing as the *Magon saete,* around Maund in Herefordshire). To the north are the *Pec saete* (Peak District), the *Elmet saete* (Elmet lies in the West Riding), and the *Lindesfarone* with *Haethfelde lande* (Lindsey and Hatfield Chase). This takes us to the North Sea. Then there follow many obscure communities bordering on the Fens and points south - the *Gyrwe* (North and South), the *Wixne* (East and West), the *Spalde*, the *Wigeste,* the *Herstinge*, the *Sweord ora*, the *Gifle* and the *Hicce*. Amongst these we recognise Spalding and Hitchin: the North and South *Gifle* survive, disguised as Northill and Southill, in Bedfordshire. Then far away to the south are the *Wiht wara* (Isle of Wight), followed by the *Noxga ga* and the *Ohtga ga* (everyone gives up on these). We seem to have come back round to the Severn, and the scribe adds up a subtotal.

More communities follow, again running clockwise. The *Hwicce* of Gloucestershire/ Warwickshire are followed by the *Ciltern saete* (Chilterns), the *Hendrica* and *Unecunga ga* (more mysterious names, but for a brave stab at them see Bailey 1994). Then come the *Aro saete* (Arrow is a Warwickshire village). The *Faerpinge, Bilminge* and *Wideringe* lie between Mercia and the Wash, and the *Wille* (East and West) border on East Anglia. Finally the Hideage

takes some notice of the real players on the political stage, - the East Angles, East Saxons, *Cant wara* (Kentish), and the South and West Saxons. Wessex may be a later addition, but it follows the clockwise order.

Each territory is described in hides, reckoned by a rough and ready system. Small units rate duodecimally, from 300 to 1200 hides. Larger ones, covering a similar area to the later counties or shires, are assessed at 7000 hides. The major kingdoms are rated decimally, with Mercia and East Anglia at 30,000 and Wessex at 100,000. The allocation of hides argues against the view that this document is a tribute system. Apart from the difficulty of finding, let alone levying tribute from, the *Wigeste*, there is something too impartial about figures which rank Mercia's old enemies equally with the homeland itself. A genuine tribute list would either have over-rated them as punitive taxation, or under-rated them as client kingdoms. This is to set aside the ingenious supposition that (on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle) since the Hideage doesn't mention Northumbria it must have been written by a Northumbrian: or the still more ingenious theory which would add up all the hides to 144,000 (Campbell 1986: 129). There is no trace of a rational fiscal system in the way in which three incompatible sorts of rough figure are used for small, middle and large units. This is

not a convention of the Hideage, but a standard Anglo-Saxon way of thinking about the size of districts. Bede is just the same, rating Thanet and Ely at the duodecimal 600 hides, and the South Saxons and North Mercians at the conventional 7000. The incommensurability of these figures was no problem, as they were only wild guesses anyway. The Isle of Wight, 600 hides in the Hideage, is 1200 in Bede. Real assessments of agricultural capacity had to wait for the cold scrutiny of the Domesday jurors, who cut them down to size - from 600 hides to 66, in the case of Thanet (Maitland 1960 [1897]: 584). The earlier a source, the more impressive the number of hides it quotes for an area, since the hide is the land of a family and every community needed to boast of its population. Seven thousand hides make a small kingdom in the reckoning of the Hideage, but if we step back into the heroic world of *Beowulf* (line 2194) the same figure represents, not Hrothgar's kingdom, but a single province within it which he gives as reward to the slayer of Grendel.

Deprived of their epic exaggeration, the small units of the Tribal Hideage seem to have been districts of fifty to a hundred square miles. But they are named, not as places, but as peoples. In this, they resemble the ethnic names of the Iron Age. The idea of *area* - of acres and territories, rather than fields and peoples - was an abstraction for which language was not yet ready - 'what sounds like a tribe may have been only an administrative district'(Campbell 1986: 113). Even a writer as learned and fluent as Bede displays what seems to us an odd reluctance to talk about places as if they were things: thus we have periphrases like *in loco villae qui Dalton nuncupatur,* or even *in loco qui dicitur In rhypum.* Nevertheless, the Anglo-Saxon names differ radically from their predecessors in derivation. None of these small peoples felt

the need to designate themselves as proud, noble or bellicose. Instead they adopt the names of landscape features: hills like the Chilterns and the Peak, rivers like the Hiz and Ivel. The topographical names are not even very dignified - the *Gyrwe* are the people of the marsh.

Here is a paradox. The indigenous Celts named themselves after warrior bands: the Anglo-Saxons - immigrants who actually were led by bands of warriors - chose to take their identity from the landscape itself. The Tribal Hideage is not the only source for names of this kind. There is a band of *saete* names within the larger kingdoms, apparently recording westward expansion at the expense of the Welsh in the seventh century. The *Pencer saete* and the *Tom saete* in Mercia have disappeared from the map, but they were sufficiently clearly defined to have a common boundary, and there was a *princeps Tonsetorum* (Hooke 1985: 85). The *Sumor saete* and the *Dorn saete* are with us still - indeed Dorset is the only Iron Age territory to have survived as a unit of government. Along the south coast there were *wara* names, like the *Meon wara*, swallowed up in Wessex, while Surrey, the *Suthre ga*, preserves the archaic term. All these names are topographical, but only those in the Hideage can claim to have enjoyed an existence as autonomous peoples. In 653 they were made a province and diocese, with the name of Middle Angles, under the tutelage of Mercia (Penda's son Peada being the first *princeps*) but this was an arbitrary grouping of peoples who had once been independent. Certainly the Gyrwe had a royal family: their alliances are recorded by Bede (*Hist.Eccl.* IV: 19). So perhaps the *Herstinge* of Hurstingstone hundred, and the *Sweord ora* of Sword Point, had once been led by *ealdors* who aspired to all the pomp and pride of Tamburlaine.

'Is it not passing brave to be a king And ride in triumph through Persepolis?'. Or, as the case may be, Spalding.

How did they do it? How did a polity like the Aro saete, population circa 400, survive alongside an international state like Mercia which could have overrun it in an afternoon? When a small nation survives, like Bhutan or Belize, it is usually because it occupies an awkward spot of land and is sandwiched between two large neighbours, neither of whom wishes to create a *casus belli* by annexing it. The small peoples of the Hideage can be explained in this way, particularly since most of them (the 'Middle Angles' to be) lie in the inaccessible fens on the Mercian-East Anglian frontier. Their independence, like that of most small states, was relative: the nobleman who aspired to be king in his own hall became a *subregulus* on arrival at the Mercian court, and little more than a *comes* when his back was turned. Guthlac, who came of the Mercian house of the Iclings, grew up c.690 in one of these small communities, where he was encouraged to spend his adolescent years burning the villages of his neighbours. Repenting of this lifestyle, he took refuge as a hermit *on middan Gyrwan fenne*, becoming a saint and so bypassing the ladder of advancement for kingship altogether (Dumville 1989: 131) Indeed, one motive of the Tribal Hideage may have been to keep track of kingship claims; Penda went to the battle of the *Winwaed* attended by thirty *duces regii*, which is about the same number as the Mercian dependencies in the document. The bewildering tendency of small units to split into even smaller ones - the North and South *Gifle*, and so on - suggests the partition of a territorial estate between two sons rather than some deep-rooted ethnic division.

If the small territories of the Hideage evolved in consequence

of a particular political situation - one which would not have existed without the presence of large, neighbouring kingdoms - then they can hardly be archaic tribes. And yet there has been a long tradition which looks for the origins of English settlement in small groups like this, preferably ones linked by a common ancestor. It is true that the Anglo-Saxon word most often used for territory is *maegthe*, 'kindred', but how literally are we to take this? The English, in the proud language of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, are the *Angel cynne*, but their kinship was of a very metaphorical character. The Saxons, like the Franks, Alemanni and other groups on the Roman frontier, created themselves as confederacies in response to imperial pressure before manufacturing a sense of common descent (Heather 1996: 64). Names like Frank, 'fierce', and Saxon, 'sword fighter', are just the kind of warrior identity which existed among the Iron Age peoples, and which is so absent in the territorial groups of early England. In a society which expresses social relations through genealogy - in which the amalgamation of kingdoms, for instance, is accommodated by rewriting kinglists - descent becomes an expression for all sorts of belonging. Hence the semantic range of *-ingas* names, for instance, which can mean 'descendants of' but are equally likely to bear the senses 'subjects of', 'tenants of', and even 'dwellers in'. On purely philological grounds - never mind the mismatch with the actual archaeology of pagan occupation - it is not reasonable to interpret placenames in *-ingas* as a record of primitive tribes from the era of settlement (Dodgson 1966: 2-3).

The Germanist view of tribal origins was based on deeply held Victorian feelings about the racial origin and destiny of the English. Understandably, it has been on the retreat since the War. The creation of England,

The Anglo-Saxons create the English landscape - a 1950s fantasy.

once confidently attributed to an irresistable influx of Teutonic settlers, has been rewritten as an essentially political event and the hordes crossing the North Sea are much less numerous. Soon, it seems, their number will be down to double figures. With revision of this kind, Englishness is ceasing to be a genealogical fact and becoming a cultural construct, although some very ingenious argument is needed to explain why it should have been constructed at all. We are asked to believe that a few thousand warriors were able, largely by force of example, to persuade the indigenous Britons to dress up in Frisian style, convert to paganism, and take evening classes in Germanic dialects (Higham 1992: 224–236). There is something quintessentially modern about a view which sees the *adventus* as a style war, because it is only nowadays that you can pick and choose for your ethnic identity (unless, of course, you happen to be a Bosnian). And the use of archaeological rather than historical evidence for support is part of the same modern trend, since it is in High Street material culture that we habitually exercise our freedom of choice.

The abolition of Roman Britain should be measured, not by the material features which were adopted, but by the cultural ones which were lost. Abandoning the use of window glass and pewter is not traumatic: losing the promise of Christian salvation is. After eastern England had become Saxon, its inhabitants had forgotten the existence of reading and writing, and were unable to recognise coins as units of commercial exchange. The ancient laws of Kent are barbaric, not because its inhabitants had chosen barbarism, but because they could not imagine anything else. When all is said and done, recent Celticists have been too ready to diminish the extent to which the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons was a disaster. There are good contemporary reasons for this. Study of the fifth century remains, as it was a hundred years ago, 'a search for the roots of England' (Wood 1987), and it would be tactless these days to suggest that the arrival of large numbers of immigrants might be viewed as a bad thing. Instead we look for, and find, a creative fusion of Saxon and Celtic law, religion and social organisation. Multi-racial Britain was winning together.

The feeling of enduring identity which a previous generation found in their racial origin is still with us, but it has changed its locus, and is no longer in people but in the landscape. A rhetoric of deep continuity in the English countryside has grown up in tandem with the real advances in landscape archaeology - and also with the heritage industry of land management, which is what subsidises the archaeologists. Of course landscapes which have grown and adapted for thousands of years do exist - but they existed even more in 1897, only they weren't needed then for rhetorical purposes. Significantly, continuity in land management across the fifth/sixth century divide has been drawn on to support the case, even in Kent and Essex, for a substantial continuity of population. Fields remained in use, settlement patterns were not changed, the work of farming carried on - as Rackham pointed out (1986: 257), there are stretches of Roman road which must have been cleared of thorn and bramble, year by year, throughout the period of transition. Surely, then, we are seeing the native British population surviving to do these things? But that is a *non sequitur.* We know, if only from our television screens, that the inhabitants of one village will quite happily massacre their neighbours in another on ethnic grounds, then appropriate their land, and nothing changes that is perceptible to an archaeologist. Come the morning, the old scrub is cleared off the Roman road by the same axes and billhooks used more brutally the night before.

The survival of boundaries suggests a framework within which English identity could be created, either through assimilation or massacre as the evidence may suggest. In this reading, the small territories of the Tribal Hideage retain an unchallenged status as archaic units of the Conquest, only this time instead of representing the land claimed by incoming Germanic folk-groups, they are remodelled as surviving

autonomous units of Celtic self-government. The debate which Seebohm and Vinogradoff started in a previous century about the origins of the manor or vill is still rumbling on, except that in deference to the findings of archaeology its focus has moved from villages (which did not exist at the time) to communities of dispersed settlement in small *regiones* (which may have done).

Certainly some Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, particularly those of the south-east, were composed of small territories which have something in common with those of the Hideage. Kent was divided into ancient communities called lathes, which survived long enough to be harmonised with rather than replaced by the mid-Saxon system of hundreds. These lathes, originally supposed to be a Jutish feature, were afterwards taken as the basis for a model of all Anglo-Saxon settlement, and are now thought typical of landscape throughout early Britain. No longer confined to the fifth century, they have been rewritten as the estates of Roman *coloni*, or perhaps the support bases of Iron Age chiefs. With time, they may get earlier still, and following their example it has been confidently assumed that early Britain was methodically divided into *regiones*, each containing a royal vill, each supporting a peripatetic king and his retinue with a food rent, and all capable of being shuffled and dealt into the various combinations which appear as historic kingdoms (Jones 1976).

To return to the original historical example, the lathes of east Kent (habitat of the Men of Kent, not to be confused with the Kentish men) comprised the *Weo wara* to the west, the *Eastr ge* to the east, the *Limen wara* to the south, and the *Burh wara* based centrally around Canterbury. These are ancient names. *Lemanis* was a fort of the Saxon shore, and - granted that such fortresses fell into ruin after the withdrawal of the

troops - the name must have survived through being transferred to a district which existed before the crisis (Gelling 1978: 56, 62). Similarly, the *Weo wara*, based around a pagan *weoh,* can hardly have been formed after the conversion of 597. It is odd that Canterbury is called a *burg,* when every other Roman town or fortress was a *ceaster,* and this may suggest that the *Cant wara burg* was so named by people who could not compare it with other cities, because they had as yet only seen one (Campbell 1986: 102). Each of the four eastern lathes had a central royal vill which bore their name, and separate areas of the Weald belonged to each of them. These were set aside for the grazing of pigs on acorns, which suggests that they were units of taxation: where there is no money, livestock are the most easily transported means of tribute.

The east Kentish lathes look like archaic units, but they do not look political. There is no clear evidence of a separate court, jurisdiction or law: there are no leaders set over them. There were districts called *ge* or *wara* which were not lathes - the *Mersc wara* of Romney Marsh fell within the *Limen wara* lathe. And though there are other units of administration in the south-east formed on similar lines, this may be because they are imitated from the east Kentish divisions rather than being coeval with them. The lathes of west Kent do not have the same ancient names, and seem to be an extension of the system. Sussex had pre-hundredal administrative units, called rapes, but although at the time of Domesday these were delineated by a systematic series of north-south boundaries, these were the creation of Norman landowners who needed to partition the shore and its hinterland for defensive purposes. The original extent and functioning of the rapes is not clear (Welch 1989: 79). Whatever boundaries

existed in Kent and Sussex, they cannot have included the territory of the Haestingas, who maintained their autonomy until 771 when Offa of Mercia awarded them to the latter: the Hastings region seems to be another example, not of a folk-group (Chevallier 1966), but of a region creating its own identity in the gap between two powerful neighbours.

The south-eastern system has been extended to Surrey, where (in the eastern portion of the county, at least) districts continued to maintain a right of pannage in the remote Weald. A series of primary units, divided on the usual principle by north-south lines, has been proposed, but the scheme needs to be drawn using the Domesday hundreds since there are no sources to suggest earlier units (Blair 1991: 19). The hundred is a creation of the tenth century, imposed for purposes which existed then for the first time, and was imitated from Continental models (Loyn & Hearder 1974: 1–15). To expect it to reflect the status quo from five centuries earlier is a bit like using telephone exchanges to map out the Elizabethan poor law. In fact it begins to look as if *regiones* have been found pretty much where anyone wanted to look for them: and the more times the pattern is redrawn, the neater it becomes.

It is much more difficult to survey a boundary in the landscape than it is to draw lines on maps. Political boundaries, unlike roads or walls, do not survive as archaeological facts: they only exist as long as the polity which sustains them. It seems perverse to make *regiones* - whether they be tribal or sub-Roman - into the building blocks out of which Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were composed, since this begs the question of how the territorial units came to be defined in the first place. A boundary is a line drawn by the sword of the ruler. Where there is no paramount authority to establish

jurisdictions, people will still think of themselves as communities, but there will be nothing to demarcate their identity other than the facts of geography - rivers, marshes, upland districts, islands. In fact the small territories of the Hideage (and the other units which resemble them) do seem to have come into being in the post-Roman period out of such natural circumstances. They are not 'primary units', except in the sense that they draw on geographical facts which are older than any people, Saxon or Celtic. Coined on the basis of common residence, rather than shared achievement in war, their names are prosaic where those of the Iron Age had been boastful. But the political order of the seventh-century small territories cannot be taken as a clue to the way things were in the settlement, because they are themselves the product of two centuries of co-evolution with kingdoms and their administrative districts. As so often with Anglo-Saxon studies, the more we learn about the historical period, the fewer clues are offered to the emotive issue of its origins.

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A Lost Class of Central Places

A gazetteer of sacred sites in Surrey

Gavin Smith

GAVIN SMITH has been studying Old English place-names for over ten years and brings together his professional training in geography and planning with a detailed knowledge of his home county, Surrey. He previously looked at place-names in 'Recovering the lost religious place-names of England' in At the Edge No.3. *This article develops his novel interpretation of place-names, which may be relevant to other parts of England, although the examples and arguments are based around his study of Surrey.*

John Blair, considering Thunderfield ('Thunor's field') in his substantial work on early medieval Surrey, evokes 'a lost class of central places': the ancient religious foci of ancient districts (Blair 1991: 20). I attempt here, using place-name and other evidence, to identify these lost places.

Sacred sites

The significance of different sites changes over the centuries. Initially, sacred sites may have been the springs, hilltops, groves, river sources, lakes and inaccessible marshland islands felt to be special places by Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. The same or similar places attracted the more demonstrative attentions of Neolithic and Bronze Age agricultural - and increasingly hierarchical - communities, sometimes embellishing them with standing pillars, stones or earthworks. Some sacred sites were marked by burial mounds (barrows), acting as foci for communal ceremony. From the Neolithic we also find enigmatic 'cursi' (avenues) like those at Heathrow in Middlesex (Bird 1987: 81–3) [1], and circles. At least by the Bronze Age there were places, often hilltops, enclosed by embankments, of uncertain but obvious significance.

Does a pattern perhaps begin to emerge? Of local districts, forerunners of the 'Hundreds' of the Domesday Book [2]? And *within* each district, in accordance with Indo-European cosmological tradition, a multifaceted sacred site consisting of omphalos (hilltop or mound) representing the World Mountain (Navel of the Earth), a spring representing the Well of Destiny, and a grove or tree representing the Tree of Life connecting Earth and sky (compare the pagan complex of Uppsala in Sweden, reported in the eleventh century by Adam of Bremen) (Eliade 1958; Turville-Petre 1964: 244–5; Boyce 1984: 17)?
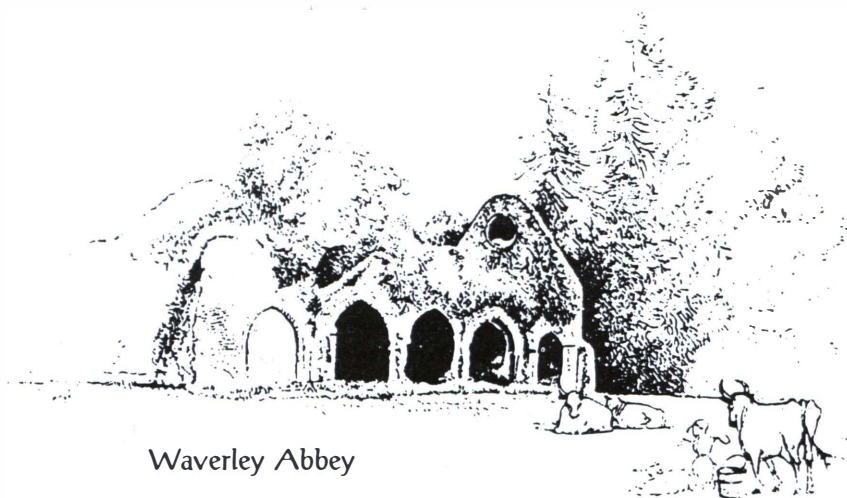
In the Iron Age, and certainly in Roman times, some sacred sites were provided with wooden or stone buildings. Roman authorities probably encouraged such, as tending to facilitate social acquiescence. The collapse of the Empire in southern England by AD 410, and domination by the material culture and war-leaders from the Germanic ('Anglo-Saxon') areas of Continental Europe, probably had a variable impact on local communities in Surrey, but it seems to have led to the names of Germanic gods appearing at some shrines (Higham 1992).

Roman centralised religion (in the guise of Christianity) reasserted itself from an urban base in the Germanic-led kingdom of Kent in AD 597. Existing rural sacred sites were deliberately Christianised [3], hence the 'saints'' hills and wells found in Surrey and elsewhere. The rationale again - social acquiescence (the Spanish did the same in Peru).

In its first 100 years, newly implanted Christianity went through several transformations in Surrey. Kentish bishops lost out to re-emergent paganism, but were rallied by Celtic Christian missionaries from the western areas of the British Isles. A second papal emissary, Birinus, made bishop at Dorchester on Thames c.635 under Northumbrian Germanic hegemony and with Celtic Christian support, is said to have (re)converted Surrey. Churches of his time seem to have been monasteries associated with local aristocratic households, and may as likely have been scenes of aristocratic feasting and debauchery, as of asceticism and magic (Fisher 1973; Wormald 1978).

After the Council of Hertford (672), 'reform' led to Roman-style minsters absorbing or replacing the monasteries, but not before a resurgence of local paganism under Caedwalla, usurper of Wessex in the 680s. Compromise was re-established. Minsters seem associated with the Hundred as the basic territorial unit, but in many

Waverley Abbey

cases they signalled a change of site - from pagan hilltop or aristocratic hall, to riverside proto-urban (often ex-Romano-British) market site. The Church played an umpiring role in a mercantile/political process of 'civilising' (ultimately, 'urbanising'). In Surrey, the City of London (Bede's 'mart of all nations') probably was influential. Local kings (in Surrey, of Kent, Wessex or Mercia) made a point of acquiring stategic local holdings, again to achieve acquiescence, so royal status may be a guide to sacredness.

Locally remembered sacred sites lived on in folklore and sometimes ritual. But the religious life of the community was by now largely channelled through the Hundred minster, and from later 'Anglo-Saxon' times (i.e. from 700 onwards) through an emerging scatter of 'parish' churches newly founded at villages and on aristocratic estates.

Religious place-name 'markers'

It was the hypothesis of an earlier article (Smith 1996) that traces of each phase of life of sacred sites may be detectable in local place-names. Below is an attempted source-list of place-name 'markers'. Conventionally accepted meanings are given [4], with my hypothesised ones added in parenthesis. Place-name elements usually have a limited period of active coinage, and within this may have shorter periods of more specialised, temporary, meaning; almost all the Old English elements cited below would seem to have been current in Surrey in the seventh century.

funta, wielle: spring (holy well).
aewiell: river source (i.e. sacred).
burna: spring, stream (*sometimes*: holy well).
leah: wood, clearing? (*occasionally*: holy grove).
cruc: barrow (pre-Germanic).
hlaw: burial mound (feudal Germanic).
beorg: barrow (undefined?).
graf: grove (holy grove).
fyrhth: woodland (woodland shrine).
treow, beam, stapol, caeg: variously: tree, beam, post, key (sometimes: pillar, cross).
stan: stone (*sometimes*: sacred stone(s), or cross).
ora: bank? (sacred enclosure or embankment?).
hoh: hilltop? (sacred mound or hill?).
hamm: enclosure, meadow (*occasionally*: sacred enclosure).
dun: (British) hill (settlement) (*sometimes*, especially if with a personal-name: religious hilltop enclosure?).
weoh: (smaller) pagan temple.
hearg: (major) pagan temple.
eg (plus in Welsh *ynys* and Scandinavian *holm*): island in marshland (*in major names*: monastic retreat).

ge: district (*in England*, seventh century Kentish minster territory).
ingas: 'people of' (*in English place-names*: household or Hundred associated with a seventh-century monastery in Northumbrian-controlled areas).
ecles, cirice: church.
sancte: saint.
caester, urbs, burh: variously: fort, manor, town (*sometimes*: monastic enclosure).
mynster: minster.
stow: (holy) meeting place.
pleg stow: play place (sports, and/or sacred plays).

A Surrey gazetteer

Since individual Surrey minsters *do* seem to be associated with individual Hundreds (Blair 1991: 13, 104), the sites are grouped into Surrey's Domesday Hundred areas. Where a locality seems (though this could be spurious) to have a *cluster* of significant names, these are treated as a group. A type-spread of suspected religious names perhaps indicates continuity over succeeding eras.

Postulated *main cluster(s)* per Hundred are itemised, as 1a, 1b, etc; other or perhaps secondary localities as, 2a, 2b, etc. An original cluster focus likewise is postulated (given in bold). Folklore evidence is indicated (Parker 1950). Personal-names where given, *may* be that of a priest. Iron Age hill-forts, and known large Bronze Age settlements, are noted as being of possible significance in Hundred organisation. Subsequent medieval monasteries can sometimes show continuity with ancient sacred localities. No gazetteer can be complete; minor holy wells and groves, etc, will have fallen through the net (indeed, in pagan times there may have been at least one religious site in each subsequent parish).

Farnham Hundred
1a. Crooksbury Hill (*cruc beorg*). Prominent hill with possible Bronze Age earthworks (Bird 1987: 128), two miles

from Farnham (see below). Associated could be: *Bintungom* ('Binta's *ingas*', now Binton Farm), given to Farnham minster in Caedwalla's charter of c.685 (Gover *et al* 1934: xiv; Cox 1976), and a significant estate in Domesday; Seale parish (perhaps *sele*, 'hall' - note Sele Priory in Sussex), contains Binton and Kingston (indicating royal status?). Close by are Mother Ludlam's Cave (strong spring, and in folklore inhabited by a witch), and the medieval Waverley Abbey.

1b. Farnham parish ('bracken *hamm*', perhaps indicating a recently abandoned site). Minster (c.685), medieval market town. Evidence of Roman activity, hill-fort at Caesar's Camp, Neolithic long barrow.

2a. Willey (*weoh leah*), near Farnham, and thought to be the *Cusan weoh* ('Cusa's temple') of the Farnham charter (Gover *et al* 1934: xii).

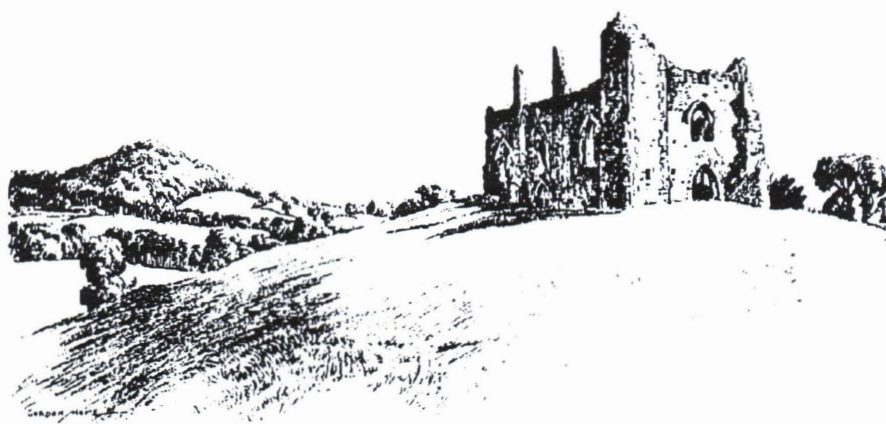2b. Churt (*ceart*, 'heath'), also in Farnham charter, and perhaps in reality '(shrine in the) heath'.

2c. Glorney (*eg*). At Tongham Moor; Roman remains in this area, near Farnham.

2d. Also two *ora* names: *Cokenore* ('Cocca's *ora*'), Cocca being found also in the Sussex *ingas* name Cocking), a wood in Wrecclesham; Britty Hill ('Beorhta's' or 'bright *ora*'), whose first element seems to occur also in the *graf* name *Bertie Grove* in Leatherhead) (Gover 1934: 347, 353).

Godalming Hundred

1a. Peper Harow parish ('Pippera's' or 'the pipers' *hearg*'). Beside it is Eashing ('Aesc's' or 'ash tree *ingas*'), an Anglo-Saxon royal fort. Local centrality passed to Godalming ('Godhelm's *ingas*') a mile away - minster, medieval market town, and royal holding. An earlier minster site is nearby at Tuesley ('the god Tiw's *leah*') [5]. Hillsbury hill-fort is two miles from Peper Harow, and equidistant from Crooksbury.

1b. Creek Copse (*cruc*). On a ridge which bears Hascombe Hill Iron Age hill-fort (Hascombe is

St Catherine's Hill, Guildford

'witches valley', and has strong springs), and adjacent to Nore (*ora*). In the plain below lies Chiddingfold parish (-*inga*-, either 'fold of the people of the hollow' or '. . . of Cidd's people') (Ekwall 1960; Gover *et al* 1934). This Wealden zone is perhaps distinct within the Hundred.

1c. St Catherine's Hill (formerly *Drakehull*, 'dragon hill'). Prominent hill with Bronze Age finds, topped by medieval chapel, in folklore two sister giants at St Catherine's and St Martha's (see below) had but one hammer between them for building, and hurled it to one another; a mile from Guildford, beside the site of medieval Shalford Fair (Shalford being a subminster), and at one end of an area of valley gravels that extends to Godalming [6]. Parish is Artington (perhaps '*dun* of Heort's people'). The locality perhaps relates to Guildford district (an extra-hundredal area at Domesday).

2a. Thursley parish ('the god Thunor's *leah*'). Somewhere near lay *Wolfore* ('wolf *ora*'), perhaps at Houndown.

2b. Haselore ('hazel *ora*', now Haslehurst). Possibly connected with the origins of Haslemere, a medieval market town and focus of this part of the Weald. Haslemere parish was formerly known as Pepperhams ('Pippera's or pipers' *hamm*' - see Peper Harow, above).

Blackheath Hundred

1a. St Martha's Hill (may be Celtic 'Holy Martyrs' Hill' (Blair 1991: 111; Bird 1987: 215).

Prominent hill, Bronze Age earthworks, medieval hilltop chapel. Folklore (see St Catherine's Hill, above). Beside it is Tyting (Farm) ('Tyta's *ingas*').

1b. Silent Pool, formerly *Shirburn Spring* ('clear spring', identical to the Dorset minster name Sherborne). Some suggestion of a megalith site (Bird 1987: 81). In folklore a wicked king causes the drowning here of a maid. Associated may be: Shere (derivative of *Shirburn*?), a subminster a mile away; Albury ('old *burh*'), a parish church still closer to the pool; Tillingbourne ('the *burna* of Tilla's people'), the river name at Shere/Albury, but conceivably an earlier name for the pool and associated with a lost *Tillingaham* recorded hereabouts (Gover *et al* 1934: 6). The pool is two miles from St Martha's Hill - could they be a cluster?

2a. Farley Heath ('bracken *leah*' - see Farnham above). Site of a wasteland Romano-British temple.

2b. Radnor ('red *ora*' - at Radnor in the Welsh Marches has recently been found an enormous Neolithic circular ditch). Seems associated either with Holmbury hill-fort, or with a second Iron Age enclosure nearby at Felday.

Wotton Hundred

1a. The Nower (*ora*). Prominent hill next to Dorking (*ingas*), a probable Roman station on Stane Street (Bird 1987: 171), probable

Silent Pool

(sub)minster, and medieval market town. Also nearby are Hoe (*hoh*), and Hampstead Lane (*ham-stede*, a term apparently used of early estate centres). Anstiebury hill-fort lies three miles away.

2a. Wotton ('wood *tun*', a term conceivably indicative of a woodland centre, like Wootten Wawen a minster in Warwicks thought to be Bede's *Stoppingas*). Remote early parish church that might have replaced Dorking as subminster (the latter reputedly burned by the Danes).

Reigate (formerly *Cherchefelle*) Hundred.

1a. *Wedreshulle* ('the god Woden's hill') (Blair 1991: 19-20). A lost barrow(?) close to Thunderfield ('the god Thunor's field'), the latter an unexplained moated earthwork, apparently site of a Council of King Alfred (Blair 1991: 19), and presumably the source both of the old Hundred name ('*cruc* field' - there is a Crutchfield Farm in the locality) and of the name Burstow (*burh stow*) a parish church a mile away. A sacred barrow in this area of valley gravels [6] in the otherwise wide marshes of the upper Mole (important grazing land? - note the various "horse" place-names of the Weald)

might explain other local names - Horleyland ('holy land'), Lowfield ('*hlaw* field'?) - and the ritual deposition of a Bronze Age sword in the river at Charlwood ("wood of the *ceorls* or peasants").

2a. Hooley (*hoh leah*) is near Blackborough ('black *beorg*'), by Reigate, subminster and medieval market town. The original focus may have been the area of valley gravels around Gatton (which in folklore was important in Holmesdale) and Merstham (with *Dragberry*, i.e. 'dragon *beorg*') (Gover *et al* 1934: 396)

Tandridge Hundred

1a. Caterham parish ('*hamm* at the *cader*', a Celtic word "fort" refering to War Coppice hill-fort on the North Downs scarp). *Cateringford/herst* (ie. *-inga-*; Gover *et al* (1934: xxi, 333) suggests Cater(ham) was the Hundred name. Below in the vale is Chivington manor, conceivably '*tun* of the people below the *cefn*' (as in the *ingas* name Chevening further along the vale in Kent), and apparently a minster at Godstone.

1b. Nore Hill (*ora*). By a Bronze Age enclosure on the downland plateau, beside Worm's Heath ('snake's head', presumed to refer to religious ritual (Dickins, App. 1 in Gover *et al* 1934). Nearby is Woldingham (perhaps '*ham* of the people of the wold' (Ekwall 1960; Gover *et al* 1934).

1c. Titsey ('Tydic's *eg*'). A Romano-British temple, perhaps sited at a source of the river Eden, and whose Roman name may be retained in that of Limpsfield parish church a mile away, containing Celtic 'elm' (as in Lyminge, a *ge* name in Kent). Possibly a focus of a district subsequently split by the Dark Ages dyke here marking the Kent/Surrey border.

2a. Tilburstow Hill ('Tilbeorht's *treow*'). Prominent hill.

2b. Oxted parish (either 'place at the oak', or 'place where oaks are obtained'). If the former, could either the circular churchyard, or the

mound at Barrowgreen, be a local *frithgeard* ('peace enclosure', i.e. 'pagan shrine') of the type prohibited in various Anglo-Saxon laws? (Linsell 1991: 161-2).

2c. St Margaret's Hill. Had a medieval chapel. In this Wealden area are Dry Hill hill-fort, and the large Lingfield parish (perhaps 'field of the people of the *leah*').

Wallington Hundred

1a. Carshalton parish (*aewiell*). Pools at source of river Wandle; in the vicinity is a large embanked Bronze Age settlement site.

1b. Croydon parish (said to be *croh denu*, 'saffron valley', *croh* being Celtic). Synod held here 809 (Blair 1991: 103), minster, market town, palace of Archbishops of Canterbury.

2a. Woodmansterne parish (either 'Wudumaer's thorn tree' or 'thorn by the wood boundary'). Also How Green (*hoh*).

Copthorne Hundred

1a. Ewell parish (*aewiell*). Pools at source of Hogsmill river with ritual Roman coin offerings (Harte and Waterhouse 1992). Roman town on Stane Street, royal holding.

1b. Leatherhead parish (Celtic *leto rito*, 'grey ford'). Minster, medieval market town, royal holding.

2a. Nower Wood (*ora*). Prominent hill.

Effingham Half-Hundred

None identified. Blair (1991: 17, 104) suggests this originally was part of Copthorne Hundred.

Elmbridge Hundred

2a. Molesey parish ('Mul's *eg*', Mul meaning 'half-breed' and the name of king Caedwalla's brother). A possession of Chertsey Abbey in 675.

2b. *Getinges* (*ingas*), now Eaton Farm in Cobham. A possession of Chertsey Abbey in 675.

2c. St George's Hill (formerly *Oldebury*). Hill-fort, but no known chapel (though possible subminster nearby at Walton on Thames, whose name *wahl tun*, 'Briton's *tun*', implies a native settlement close to an early

feudal Germanic site; Blair has suggested St George's hill-fort to be seat of the Mercian subking of Surrey (Blair 1991: 21).

Godley Hundred

1a. St Ann's Hill (formerly *Eldebury*, 'old *burh*'). Prominent hill, with hill-fort and medieval chapel. The original site of Chertsey Abbey a mile away? (Compare Abingdon Abbey, originally on Boar's Hill). Anningsley conceivably is '*leah* of the people of St Ann's' - i.e. a Hundred name. Chertsey ('Cerot's *eg*', Cerot is Celtic) was minster and medieval market town. Note possible satellite retreats (normal practice in Celtic-style monasteries), in the Thames islands *Nettle Eyot*, Burway and Bos Ait (*Boreseyt/Boresburghe*), all *eg* and *burh* names recorded by the abbey in 675 (Gover *et al* 1934: 106).
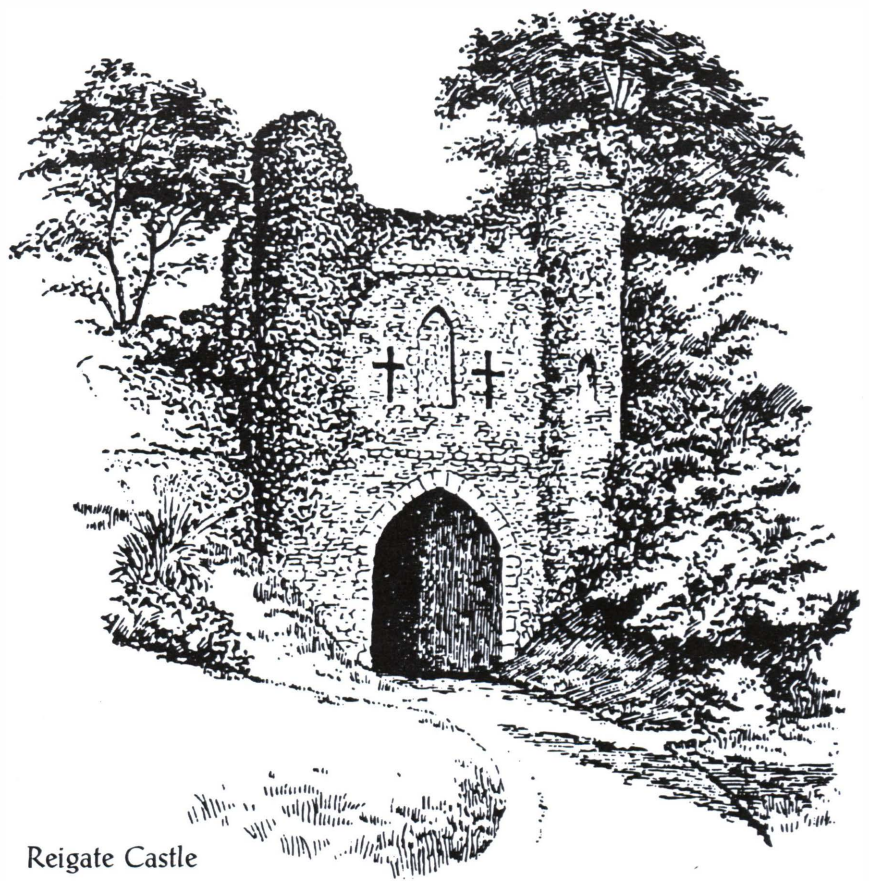
1b. Pyrford parish ('pear tree ford'). Hilltop church, conceivably the original site of the Woking monastery (known from 708-15), since the medieval Newark Priory just below it was in 1210 called *Novo loco be Andebir* (i.e. 'new site of Old *Burh*'). This area would thus be part of the original Woking zone (see below; a charter of 956 describes 'Pyrford' estate as a larger entity (Gover *et al* 1934: 132).

2a. Eccles hamm (i.e. 'church enclosure'). Recorded in 956, apparently in Bisley ('Bissa's *leah*' - Bissa conceivably a priest?) close to St John's Well (known as a site of baptisms [Blair 1991: 111]).

2b. Runnymede ('counsel meadow'), named as such *before* the Magna Carta debacle. Formerly an island in the Thames, and a large Bronze Age settlement site.

2c. Stanners Hill ('stone *ora*') in Chobham.

2d. Parley Bridge in Horsell, Purnish in Chertsey, and Pirbright parish (in Woking Hundred) are *leah*, *ersc* ('stubble land'?), *fyrhth* variants of the 'pear (tree)' found already in Pyrford; does one instance of *Parlingeford* (-*inga*-;

Reigate Castle

1229) suggest Par-/Pyr- was a Hundred name? (Unless purely agricultural, might pear trees have had a religious significance through the intoxicating effects of perry? And might *Fyrhth*, said to mean 'wood', but whose root is *frith*, 'peace', as in the *frithgeard*, be equally be interpreted as 'woodland shrine'?)

Woking Hundred

1a. Woking parish ('Wocca's *ingas*'). Early monastery, minster and royal holding. Nearby is Hoe (*hoh*). The territory may have been divided (see Pyrford, above), split between a religious focus at Pyrford, and a royal one at Hoe?

1b. Wanborough parish (*beorg*). Church by pool, in vicinity of woodland Romano-British temple.

2a. Windlesham parish (*windels hamm* or *ham*). May relate to the curious Win(d)sor names (*windels ora*: nearby in Berks, but also in Hants, Dorset, Devon).

Kingston Hundred

1a. Waleport ('Britons' town', *port* being Romano-British).

Associated with Kingston-upon-Thames ('king's *tun*'), minster, Saxon coronation place, and medieval market town. Nearby was *Hartington* ('*dun* of Heort's people').

2a. Kew parish (*caeg hoh*). One of a set of curious *caeg hoh/hamm* names, where *caeg* perhaps means 'pillar' [7].

2b. Malden parish ('*dun* with a monument').

2c. Chessington parish ('*dun* of Cissa's people').

Brixton Hundred

1a. Southwark parish (either 'southern *geweorc*' (i.e. construction), or if identifiable as *Suthringa geweorche*, '*geweorc* of the people of Surrey'; where Surrey is 'southern *ge*'). (Kentish?) monastery (probably sited over a Romano-British shrine (Bird 1987: 189), minster and medieval market town.

1b. Tooting ('Tota's' or 'lookout hill' *ingas*). A possession of Chertsey Abbey in 675. Beside Merton, a Roman station on Stane Street, and site of Merton Abbey. This may have been a focus of a separate

district, since Merton and Morden parishes (the latter in Wallington Hundred) look originally to have been a single estate (indeed *mere* ('pool') *tun*, and *mor* ('swamp') *dun*, may be versions of one name). In which case the area perhaps formerly focussed on Wimbledon ('Winebeald's' or 'Wynnmann's *dun*') with its hill-fort at Bensbury/Caesar's Camp, and subminster.

2a. Bermondsey parish ('Beornmund's *eg*'). Monastery known from 708–15.

2b. Battersea parish ('Beaduric's *eg*'). A possession of Barking Abbey (an *ingas* place in Essex) in 695.

2c. Camberwell parish (*wielle*).

2d. Penge (Celtic *pen cet*, 'chief wood' or 'end of the wood'). A woodland possession of Battersea (now in Kent), described in 957 as 'seven miles, seven furlongs and seven feet in circumferance' (Gover *et al* 1934: 14). This perhaps is explicable as a shrine, perhaps at One Tree Hill/Honor Oak (with a lost holy well, and where Queen Bess supposedly went a-maying on May Day 1602 (Gover *et al* 1934: 20)) in Peckham ('peak *ham/m*') on the wooded ridge?

Community organisation

Does this gazetteer allow conclusions about the role of religion in Surrey's community organisation up to early medieval times? Perhaps, yes.

Most Hundreds do seem to have at least one sacred centre. This could be seen as an organising or focussing influence. They are prehistoric in origin, perhaps demonstratively Bronze Age, and survived into the Christian era. Prehistoric barrows are perhaps indicated at Crooksbury, *Wedreshulle*, Creek Copse and Hooley/Merstham.

There is evidence for a three-fold character of sacred centres - i.e. hill/barrow,

spring/pool, tree/grove. This perhaps may be claimed (at least for two of three elements) for Crooksbury, St Catherine's Hill, *Wedreshulle*, Titsey, Pyrford, Wanborough.

Ora and *eg* (with notable exceptions) seem correlated with ancient centres unsuccessful at modernising. *Hoh*, and the postulated mid-seventh century *ingas* monasteries, seem to straddle a transition between rural pre-historic, and modern proto-urban, religious centres.

Proto-urban places

The subsequent economic centres of Hundreds might be explained as initially religious centres - or perhaps as 'central places' (often revived Roman sites, and/or utilising Roman river crossings) absorbing earlier neighbouring religious functions. There are pre-Germanic place-name elements in the names of the medieval market towns of Croydon, Leatherhead, Chertsey and *Waleport*/Kingston, which must therefore be older than the late Saxon date hitherto ascribed to them (Bird 1987: 211), and perhaps descend from '*capita*' centres of Romano-British districts (as postulated for Kent [Everitt 1986]).

The survival of pre-Germanic place-names occurs in the towns, in *cruc*, and in Caterham, Limpsfield, Penge. This may not be 'random' (Poulton 19: 217), rather explicable through the continuity of 'central places' and religious sites (and perhaps of religious authorities, and local population).

-Ingas-, *-inga-* seem associated with Hundreds and local '*folk*' names, perhaps especially in the Weald, and with Hundreds (though the argument may be circular).

If Iron Age hill-forts do correlate with Hundreds [8], they do so less with specific religious sites (possible exceptions being Caterham, St Ann's Hill, Hascombe, Wimbledon). This *duality* might

be precursor to that noted by Blair (1991: 20) between royal secular sites and minsters. A duality perhaps resolved during or after the seventh century, with monasteries displaced from ancient pagan sites (e.g. Crooksbury/*Bintungom*, or *Wedreshulle*/Burstow) by minsters at proto-urban sites (Farnham, Reigate).

Whether some religious centres are visibly more important than others, and could have been the focus of groups of Hundreds (viz. Blair's four *regiones* encompassing Surrey [Blair 1991: 22–4]), is uncertain. Possible candidates might be Peper Harow/Eashing (as *hearg* and regional fortress) in south-west Surrey, and *Wedreshulle*/Thunderfield (as Alfred's council site) in south-east Surrey. If so, over-arching centrality has changed, as religion and regional economics and politics have changed.

Rural medieval monasteries seem to dog ancient sacred localities, as perhaps at Waverley Abbey/Crooksbury, at Chertsey Abbey/St Ann's Hill, at Newark Priory/Pyrford, and at Merton Abbey/Tooting. This continuity may be conscious, as evidenced by the chapels at St Ann's Hill and Pyrford.

Possible priests' names (which might be largely seventh century) show some patterning. Repeats seem to include Tilla, Heort and Pippera/pipers. Especially interesting are Cedde (Cidd in Chiddingfold?), Cisi (Cissa in Chessington, Chichester and the Sussex royal lineage) and Criswa (not found in place-names): the three 'otherwise unknown' people to whom Farnham minster was granted in its charter (Gover 1934: xiv). Cusa, of *Cusan weoh*, is remarkable as presumably being the name of a pagan priest. One's concept of these people, Christian and pagan, greatly affects one's views of the 'Dark Ages'. Were some aristocratic opportunists? Others, strong-minded ascetics? If both types existed, were they carrying on the duality between

pagan war-leaders, and bards/seers - a duality of leadership evident in 'State' and 'Church' in England today?

Re-analysed place-name data can add to and modify our existing knowledge gleaned from archaeology and historical documents, for all the above aspects. It has particular relevance for the study of the history of religion (though place-name academics seem yet to accept this), and of politics. One looks forward to studies of other counties.

Notes

1. Throughout, archaeological data on the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon and medieval eras of Surrey (including the Staines area) is taken from the relevant chapters of Bird (1987).
2. Hundreds were districts of 100 hides (a hide being ploughland to support one household), perhaps derived from the 100 advisors whom Tacitus describes as assisting local justices in early Germany.
3. *Viz.* Pope Gregory the Great's letter to Mellitus, bishop at St Paul's (Colgrave and Mynors 1969).
4. Place-name interpretations, unless otherwised indicated, are taken from Gover *et al* (1934) or Ekwall (1960).
5. On Surrey minsters and subminsters see Blair (1991).
6. See geological map, foldout 1, in Bird (1987).
7. Compare Ekwall's (1960) interpretations of Cassiobury/Cashio Hundred, Cainham, Cabus.
8. Note however that some Hundreds may be late (e.g. Blair's interpretation of Elmbridge as a late Anglo-Saxon 'private' Hundred [Blair 1991: 113]. Also, the location of some hill-forts on county or Hundred boundaries clearly shows their territories have been split (*viz.* Caesar's Camp Farnham; Dry Hill; Bensbury; St George's Hill).

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Acknowledgements

Bob Trubshaw

Making time

'Time is an illusion. Lunchtime doubly so.'
'Very deep,' said Arthur, 'you should send that in to
Reader's Digest. They've got a page for people like you.'
Douglas Adams *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*

'We do not tell time, time tells us'
Chumbawomba *Anarchy* album 1994

'What is time? If no one asks me about it, I know; if I want
to explain it to the one who asks, I don't know.'
St Augustine, *Confessions* Book XI.

'There is no history without dates.'
Levi Strauss 1966 cited in Bradley 1991: 209

According to one interpretation of the Bible, the world has just celebrated its 6000th birthday. Back in the seventeenth century the Archbishop of Armagh, James Usher (1581–1656), deduced from Biblical evidence that the world was created in 4004 BC [1]. To the significant number of fundamentalist followers of Biblical 'Creation Science', mostly in the USA, this is all that needs to be said about the timescale of the world and human society.

Those of us who do not believe in 'Creation Science' live within a more complex but just as fanciful concept of time. This article explores the way modern Western society has created concepts of time as chimeral as those of 'Creation Science'.

The creation of chronologies - especially those based on absolute dates - is of quite recent origin. The concept of time used in chronological studies needs to be differentiated between, on the one hand, the way time is marked by human experience and, on the other hand, how abstract time is measured. Abstract time consists of equal segments, endlessly repeated. Experienced time creates 'recurrent moments', which together comprise the relationship to the past which makes up the 'traditions' of a society.

There has been much philosophising about time. Aristotle thought of time as an attribute of the external world. Kant saw time (and space) not as an external medium within which people moved, but as an ordering device of the human mind. Subsequently Heidegger contended that time is not simply a mental ordering device, but an aspect of bodily involvement with the world. However, more recent thinkers such as Ricouer and Bourdieu have suggested that, however 'objective' time may at first appear, human perception and experience of time is story-like. From such narratives the identities of individuals and groups emerge. [2]

The making of modern time

Europeans generally think of time as natural, real, moving, precise and accurate. Time is the basic 'unit' of clocks and calendars. Yet here lies a problem. Calendars have generally been based on celestial events - but the units used to express the passage of time lead to variable and seemingly arbitrary results. European calendars attempt to correlate days and months with the seasonal year, as well as imposing a seven day week. But, as we all know, it is not possible to relate lunar-based months with the solar cycle. As a result, calendars have needed almost continual readjustment - even the four-year cycle of 'leap years' needs the odd 'exception' to keep things precise.

The problems also arise at the 'smaller scale' of timekeeping relating to hours and minutes. Before mechanical clocks were invented, there was no reliable way of measuring short durations. The flowing of water, sand or mercury provided a measure of longer durations, but none could be kept moving at a suitably continuous and even pace to measure short durations. It was the Church, in an endeavour to regulate prayer, which patronized the development of the mechanical clock, although the invention was soon taken up by the royal courts and then the bourgeoisie. But not until the wider processes of change in the

nineteenth century did modern concepts of chronology come to the fore.

With the Industrial Age 'standard time' became part of everyday life. The advent of factories required adherence to formalised working hours. Above all, the spread of the railway network required a standard national time - previously there were numerous 'local times', which could differ by many minutes. To ensure railway passengers did not miss connections, the railways brought about a standardisation of time throughout Britain. By the mid-nineteenth century a formalised 'abstract time' had become intrinsic to most people's lives. Given the obsession with time now shown by denizens of Western culture, we should not forget that such habits are really still rather a novelty.

The broadest concepts of time were also being recreated in the nineteenth century. Newton had studied time as an attribute of physics. Linneaus's families of plants and animals implied a time-dimension (although the evolutionary implications were only appreciated after Darwin). But Archbishop Usher's chronology only began to be questioned with the work of pioneer geologists such as Sir Charles Leyell (1797–1875). His major work, *The Principle of Geology* appeared in 1830. Based on a remarkably astute pioneering scrutiny of the evidence from fossils and sequences of rock strata, Leyell showed that the rocks were a result of a sequence of events over a much longer timescale than anyone had previously considered. It is said that Leyell's work was a key influence on Charles Darwin, who set off on his famous voyage to the Galapagos Islands in 1831. As an aside, it is worth noting that Darwin's theory of evolution in the natural world was only mimicing the very strong bias towards 'progressive evolution' in contemporary politics and society.

By the time Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, antiquarianism was well-established. These mid-nineteenth century antiquarians were contempraneous not only with the heated debates about Darwinism but also with the establishing of standard time in factories and railways. It is inevitable that these same antiquarians began to adopt an 'evolutionary' approach to the development of human society. They initially distingushed broadly between the Romans and the 'British' who lived here before them, and the Anglo-Saxons who occupied the 'Dark Ages'.

Steadily antiquarianism evolved into archaeology. The pre-Roman era opened up into a vista of Iron Age, Bronze Age and Neolithic (new stone age) people preceeded by Paleolithic (old stone age) people. Soon a Mesolithic (middle stone age) was interposed. By the 1930s archaeologists were considering that each of these cultures was the result of successive waves of 'invasions' from somewhere outside - usually to the east of Europe. Along with many other interpretations of the pioneer archaeologists of the twentieth century, the 'invasion theory' has been shown to be bunkum. Nevertheless, the process of creating and recreating ever-more finely differentiated epochs of prehistory continues to this day.

While antiquarians now appear as mere collectors, modern archaeology appears to have established a more searching investigation of the past. This is comforting as it suggests 'development' and 'progress' in the discipline. As Barrett (1994: 86) notes, such 'progress' is a false premise based on Western ways of thinking about time. As I will show later in this article, if we take away the imaginary 'time line' then the implicit 'progress' is no longer there.

The history of the present

During the twentieth century historians also began to develop more sophisticated approaches to the past. It is all too easy for an historian to project present-day interests onto a past epoch. This error is often associated with claims that examples of interests in earlier times had something of their present-day significance.

Another error of historical analysis is really the other side of the same coin. This is the kind of history which finds the seed of some present interest at some distant point in the past and then shows how everything that happened in between is either part of this onward march, or is left in the backwaters. Everything is given a meaning and a place - whether central or peripheral.

To overcome both these false approaches, Michel Foucault developed what he termed 'writing the history of the present'. Foucault and his followers explicitly begin their approach to a historical study with a diagnosis of the current situation. From this unabashed contemporary orientation they attempt to recognise where the particular aspect of interest first arose, how it took shape and gained importance. What the Foucaultian historian is avoiding is any projecting of current meaning back into history. (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982: 118–9)

The long duration

Important as this revisionism of historical approach has been, it does not require any great rethinking of the concept of time. In contrast, Fernand Braudel suggested that the past could be approached on three 'levels' - and each 'level' requires a different approach to the study of history.

At the lowest level is the 'long duration', which operates

at the scale of environmental change, the history of civilizations; and stable world views.

Braudel's middle level is 'social time', which deals with the history of particular groups of people - perhaps the way most of us associate first with studies of social and economic history. It is also the shortest period of time which prehistorians can reliably study.

The third level is that of individual time, which Braudel called 'the history of events'. Its scope is that of narrative and political history.

Braudel's tripartite approach is generally known as the 'Annales school' and remains somewhat controversial among historians. Although a neat scheme of structuring, few archaeologists have attempted to apply the ideas to prehistory (cf. Bintliff 1991; Knapp 1992). One of the handful to do so is John Barrett in his *Fragments from Antiquity: An Archaeology of Social Life in Britain* (1994).

Reflecting on the discovery of the 'ice man' at Oetzal, Barrett observes '. . . the death of a single mountain traveller around 3000 BC can do no more than exemplify the routines of a population whose activities were determined by *structures* of social economic organization operating within some given environmental context.' (ibid: 2)

Indeed, modern archaeological writing produces generalised histories, not of 'people' but of 'processes'. According to Barrett, this leads to a false dualism between a long-term 'structural' history and the short-term 'event' (ibid: 3).

The complexity of time

Barrett also discusses different aspects of how time interweaves with our perception of the past. He notes that visitors to major prehistoric sites such as Avebury encounter the monuments through time - the time it takes to walk around the site. This is quite different from the armchair experience where an archaeologist's textual description collapses the experience of the place into a plan which can be observed in a single moment (ibid: 12).

The tourist also experiences the history of a place in an unnaturally compressed time depth. Major prehistoric monuments such as Avebury and Stonehenge were built up over hundreds, even thousands, of years. The same remark could be made of the older cathedrals of Europe. What we encounter today is devoid of any obvious time depth but has merely a 'simultaneous oldness'.

Indeed, the more we look at 'archaeological time', the more complexities emerge. Allow me to collage together several ideas from disparate parts of Barrett's work:

'Multi-period monuments are not a sequence of monument types as if constructed by placing one monument upon another. They arose as the consequences of reworking certain categories of space and architectural form.' (ibid: 53)

Time is linked to space. For instance, the distinction between 'home' and 'workplace' leads to an allocation of time to the movement between each locale. (ibid: 72–3)

Rituals are a specific 'use' of time. Rituals demark time, such as seasons or birth/death. 'Rituals carve out regions of time:space; they are bracketed off from other regions of social discourse by a structure which . . . is primarily concerned with a social transformation between "relatively fixed or stable conditions".' (ibid: 80; quoting Turner 1967: 23)

Hunter/gathering societies have a different relationship to time than, say early agriculturalists. Even agricultural societies differ greatly between, say, 'long fallow' and 'short fallow' societies. '[T]o move from place to place is to move along the cycles of time [and is] in contrast to observers who watch the cyclical renewal of the seasons working themselves out upon that portion of the land to which they belong.' (ibid: 147).

Are your ideas about time just a little more complex than when you started reading this article? If these 'trailers' from Barrett's book appeal to your interests then his discussion of these ideas is well worth reading in full. Meantime, as *At the Edge* deals with more than just archaeology, it's time to move on to another academic discipline.

Defining the other defines ourselves

It is perhaps inevitable that ethnographers emphasise the 'Otherness' of non-western societies. Yet, the same process also more clearly defines their own society. As Said has discussed at length (1991), Europeans have a complex concept of the Orient. Indeed, the Orient is one of the West's deepest and most recurring images of the Other. Yet that last sentence also embodies one other aspect of the Orient - however poorly defined the term, it is habitually used in contrast to 'The West' - the Europeans who created the term 'Oriental'. No one from 'The Orient' would normally refer to themselves as 'oriental'; rather they may consider themselves to be Japanese, Thai, Egyptian, etc. - and more probably would label themselves in terms of ethnic or religious subgroups.

In creating the Orient a large number of writers - as diverse as poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, administrators - have accepted the underlying distinction between east and west as the starting point for epics, novels, elaborate theories, political narrative and whatever else. These writers implicitly 'define' the Orient in terms of dominant Western ideas. The cycle is a vicious one, as the underlying Western ideas then become reinforced by the constructed contrast with the Orient. By regarding the Orient as 'Other', orientalists of whatever endeavour implicitly help to define the West.

Making people primitive

In a similar way 'temporal otherness' was emphasised by early ethnologists. They played down the on-going changes among 'primitive' societies and regarded them as almost 'outside' of time. This was followed by a scheme in which past cultures as well as living societies were placed along an evolutionary 'time line'.

'Civilization, evolution, development, acculturation, modernization (and their cousins, industrialization, urbanization) are all terms whose conceptual content derives, in ways that can be specified, from evolutionary Time. They all have an epistemological dimension apart from whatever ethical, or unethical, intentions they may express. A discourse employing terms such as primitive, savage (but also tribal, traditional, Third World, or whatever euphemism is current) does not think, or observe, or critically study, the "primitive"; it thinks, observes, studies *in terms* of the primitive. *Primitive* being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought.' (Fabian 1983: 17–18)

As with archaeology and history, the ways in which conceptualizations of time inform anthropological thought and discourse are enormously complicated. Anthropologists' use of time has been to distance those who are observed from the observer. *Now* and *here* contrast with the increasingly 'savage' *there* and *then* (Fabian 1983: 25; 27; 111–3 and Gosden 1994: 4).

While objects dated at 2000 BC or events in AD 1865 are irrevocably past, it is not valid to place 'primitive' societies in a 'typological past'. Fabian considers this 'typological past' to be a commonly-held illusion. Instead, he distinguishes between events which are synchronous/simultaneous

'Here comes the anthropologist!'
'Quick! Hide these under the bed!'

By Bob Trubshaw with apologies to Gary Larson who did it better.

(sharing physical time); contemporary (sharing abstract time); and coeval (which covers both).

The field diaries of ethnographers often reveal a 'coevalness' - but this is discarded in the published anthropological literature (Fabian 1983: 28–33). Since Fabian's book was published at least some ethnologists have begun to acknowledge that 'primitive' societies are not fossils from 'the past', but in all respects contemporaneous with our own [3]. Indeed, rather than a linear conception of time, a few anthropologists are regarding time as complex - akin to maps which can be 'read' in many directions, not simply along one axis.

I would like to give two examples. The first is a description of the Navaho native American craftswoman who '. . . instead of standing on a straight ribbon of time leading from the past to some future point, stands in the middle of a vortex of forces exerted in concentric circles upon her by her immediate family, her

extended family, the clan, the tribe, and the whole living ecological system within which she lives and functions. . . . Time surrounds her, as do the dwelling place, her family, her clan, her tribe, her habitat, her dances, her rituals.' (Toelken 1996: 277)

The second example is from the nomadic tribes of the Mongolian steppes who follow an annual cycle of pastures, requiring frequent changes of camp site. Nevertheless, these people have a strongly-developed sense of the centre - but not a fixed 'place', rather wherever they halt to camp becomes the centre. It is thought of as the hearth in the tent, with its vertical column of smoke or the central tent pole supporting the roof. This *axis mundi* links to the deified sky - the power above all powers and the only deity regarded as eternal.

The way these Mongolians use their land means that time and space are interwoven - with time being experienced more as a 'spiral' as places are revisited each year. What is fascinating is that 'The time axis, which is universal, and thus locates each household at the centre of the cosmos, is the *axis mundi*.' (Humphrey 1995: 142–3). It would take an article longer than this to demonstrate that this spatio-temporal *axis mundi* reappears frequently in the traditional European ways of thinking.

Folklore and time

Indeed, ethnology is not just about 'primitive' societies. It also encompasses the study of our own culture and customs. And, if one is looking for different approaches to the idea of time, where better to look than European folklore?

As Robert Layton has outlined (1996), folklore is an alternative way of representing space and time. This may involve such dramatic contrasts as between the mundane world and the Otherworld, or it may reflect different ways of

approaching space and landscape. Most certainly, folklore is radically different from modern Western thinking when it comes to representing time and other 'processes'. Think of how prehistoric earthworks and burial monuments are given such anachronistic names as Grim's Ditch and Devil's Dyke, or Giants' Graves and Wayland's Smithy. Early antiquarians bridge this process when they followed 'local customs' of referring to Iron Age hillforts as Roman or Viking camps.

More specifically, as Tolan-Smith notes (1997: 7), there seem to be two time-scales operating in traditional western Europe - a domestic time-scale measured in generations and a 'mythical time-scale' which is, paradoxically, timeless.

As a final comment, perhaps such 'paradoxical' traditional ideas on time are, in fact, closest of all to the way modern physicists see time. For them, time is not an immutable forward progresion but one factor in a space-time model of relativistic causality and determinism. Perhaps the cosmology of modern physics is close to mythological cosmology after all?

Acknowledgements

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Notes:

1: The date was not reached on the basis of mathematics but based of the idea that the six days of creation were equivalent to the 6000 years the world was expected to endure i.e. 4000 before the birth of Christ and 2000 after, and that the rather curious four years were added because of Herod's death and the

presumption of Jesus' birth in 4 BC. Because of these extra four years, the sixth millennia was completed in 1996.

2: For more discussion of these introductory remarks see Bradley (1991: 209–210), Gosden (1994: 1–12) and Thomas (1996: 31–41; 50–55).

3: Fabian's criticisms of anthropological research have since been criticised and developed by others; see for instance Robert Bettinger *Hunter-Gatherers, Archaeological and Evolutionary Theory* (Plenum 1991) and Adam Kuper *The Invention of Primitive Society* (Routledge 1988).

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Rhiannon rides
on Uffington White Horse

Jon Appleton

This is a story about how synchronicities and the coming together of knowledge and ideas from a number of different disciplines led to a surprising but exciting conclusion.

During 1994 I attended several 'Celtic' story-telling sessions and it seemed that every time they included the one about Prince Pwll and his encounter with Rhiannon. I heard it twice while at camps in the Vale of the White Horse and on another occasion in Glastonbury. Each time I listened more intently, trying to understand the ideas underlying the images of the tale. In particular, I focused on the 'beautiful lady on a white horse' and why she could not be caught. Perhaps a brief paraphrase of this tale from the Mabinogion would be useful.

One day Prince Pwll and his court went out to the mound of Narbeth to feast. While they were there a beautiful lady on a white horse came riding along. She was so lovely that Pwll sent one of his men to ask her to join the party. But, although she rode along slowly and steadily, the man could not catch up with her. So, disappointed by this, on the next day they all went out again to the mound. This time the prince had prepared one of his courtiers with an excellent horse to ensure that this time they would not fail. When she appeared again, riding steadily along, off went the messenger on his fast horse. But, once again, he could not catch up with the wonderful lady, even though she seemed to travel so deliberately and slowly.

Next day, for the third time Prince Pwll prepared to try to find

a way of attracting this extraordinary lady to his feast. He equipped himself with the very fastest horse in his stable and resolved that he would not fail as his messengers had done. Then, when the lady appeared, he leaped onto his horse and raced after her. She and her white horse, which even though moving so steadily had outpaced the other riders, would not evade him. To his amazement even his best mount spurred to its utmost failed to approach the lady. Having more presence of mind than his men, at this point he called out 'Oh lady, won't you stop?' To which she responded 'It were well that you asked Pwll' and reined in her horse.

To cut a long story short, after she had joined him they got on very well, as people do in stories like this, and later married. Her name was Rhiannon and the sad story of how she was treated at Pwll's court makes interesting reading. However, what matters for us now is that was clearly a Goddess with magic powers.

It is probably taken for granted these days that any Goddess on a white horse is lunar in character, a White Goddess. But I had been struck by the fact that this lady appeared during the day on a very regular schedule. Having read with interest Janet McCrickard's *Eclipse of the Sun* (Gothic Image 1990) and been reinforced in my belief that for many people and cultures, including the

Celts, the Sun was feminine, I wondered whether the best identification for Rhiannon was as a Sun Goddess. Then, having made the connection in this case with the White Horse of Uffington, I wondered when the sun might have been seen in conjunction with this famous and ancient hill figure. By the way, the White Horse at Uffington has recently been the subject of archaeological investigation which has pushed the date of its creation back into the late Bronze Age.

Because it lies on the north-facing dip slope of the Downs you have to look south to see the hill figure. It is also angled to the west so that the natural direction from which to observe the horse on the horizon is from the north-west. From that it follows that the most likely conjunction of the horse and Sun is at the winter solstice dawn. However, just to make sure I was not being carried away by personal fantasy, on the bright and frosty morning of December 22nd 1994 I drove over to see what could be seen. I then spent an hour pacing about on what I had calculated was the most likely observation point - the ground just to the north of the B4507 road that skirts along the foot of the escarpment below the Uffington White Horse and other antiquaries on the ridge above. The road separates a shelf of ground that forms a sort of giant step from the steeper slope of the main part of the hills. Because of the elevation of the hill top, the moment of
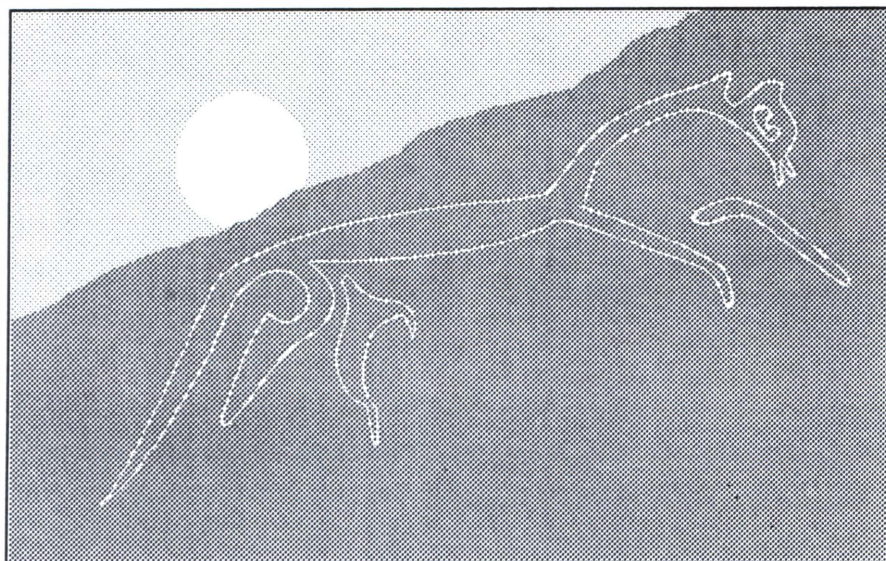
sunrise is delayed until shortly after 10.00 a.m.

There was a ploughed field in the angle between the B4507 and the road that leads down through the village of Woolstone and on to Uffington (SU296874). It forms a small plateau of level land, giving a perfect position to observe the appearance of the Sun. To the east lies the valley, with several clear springs in it, that is a continuation of 'The Manger' (the name given to the natural depression below the

White Horse). From where I was standing, when the sun did break over the horizon, it was just over the tail of the horse and moved 'steadily and slowly' along the angle of the hill, just lifting clear of the land when it reached the horse's head. I was bowled over by the experience. It is always gratifying when a hunch turns into physical reality.

When we looked again at the 1:25,000 OS map another intriguing possibility became apparent. Although I have not yet been able to prove it by observation there is a possible line of sight from the 'observation point' of the sunrise (296874) up the hill to the south-west, slipping past the southern edge of Hardwell Camp (an Iron Age hill fort; 287866) with its outlying tumulus, then on to the hilltop and Wayland's Smithy long barrow (282854). This is close to the winter solstice sunset line. However, the bulge in the lower part of the hill slope may make a direct visual link impossible - although moving the 'observation point' slightly toward the north-east of the same field could resolve this. It should be borne in mind that the original structure of Wayland's Smithy long barrow included two tall oak posts at either end of the mortuary enclosure which would have significantly improved the

chances of it being seen from the observation point.

This sort of subtle adjustment to find the ideal point is a way of investigating the possibility that this is really a geomantically-located cluster of sites. If it does appear than there is a link between monuments created more than 3,000 years ago then more hard thinking about the timing and reasons behind the sites would be necessary. Anyone who has read Professor John North's excellent book *Stonehenge* (HarperCollins 1996) will be aware of the practice of observing both the rising and setting of celestial objects over an elevated horizon. Maybe Uffington provides another example of this.

I realise that this brief report raises more questions than it answers and more investigation is needed. There may be evidence for a link between the decline of the great megalithic henges and ritual sites in southern Britain and the practices of the cultures of the late Bronze Age. Celestial observations mutating into solar ceremony and seasonal festivals might have been the development.

Shinto Torii Arches
Terence Meaden

and the trilithons of Stonehenge

An ancient, easily-recognised symbol of Japan's Shinto religion is the torii arch or gateway. Traditionally made from two vertical posts with a third as a lintel, it has the shape of a door-frame except there is no door because the gate is always open. The torii is the way to the Great Mother. At Shinto temples it is her vulvar arch, with the sanctuary and security of her womb on the other side.

The torii is both an entrance and an exit. Sometimes it is set up alone at a sacred place in the countryside or by the sea, as for instance at the two Futamigaura Wedded Rocks which represent the founding deities of Japan and which at times of ceremonial are physically joined by the traditional twisted rope. Or, again, on the Feast Day of the Dead, an arch may be raised on a river-bed, with the idea that tiny boats filled with messages and food to which the spirits of departed souls are invited, are floated on the regenerative water through the yonic gap. In all events, the torii denotes the passage to a consecrated region of space whether the shrine be permanent or temporary.
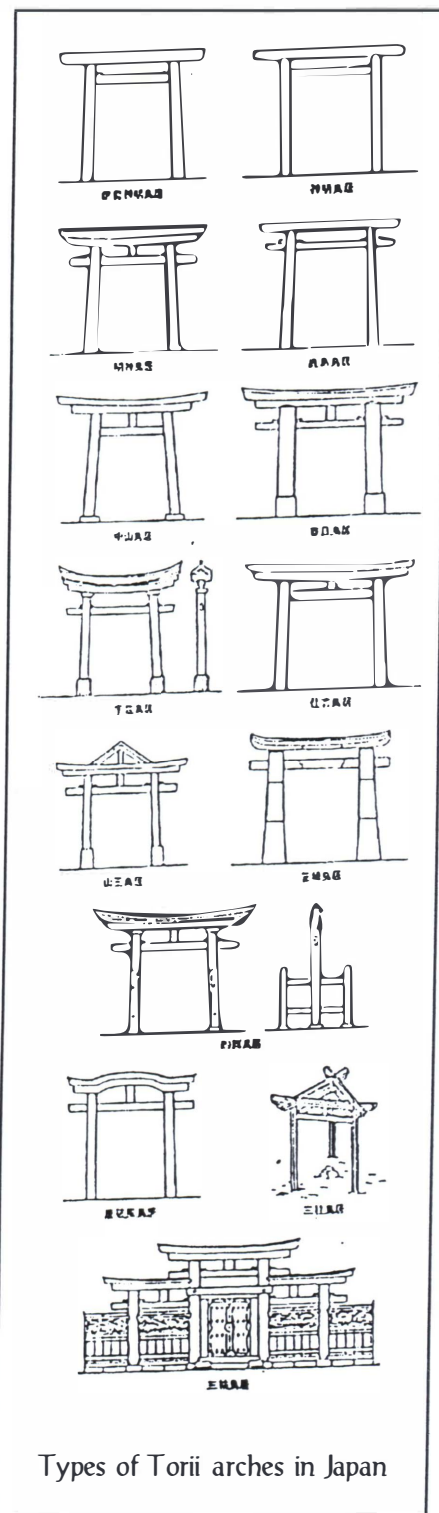
The validity of the meaning of the three-sided torii vulva is indisputable because Shinto, while dating from antiquity, is a living religion, in which the rites continue and the devout still worship at the shrines and temples.

At Stonehenge the monument's builders and Goddess worshippers are long since dead, yet there are good reasons for inferring that the significance of its three-stone symbolism is similar in principle to the Shinto three-post arch.

Besides Stonehenge, three-stone or trilithon arches are found, for example, at the entrances to stone-galleried long barrows in Neolithic Britain and at temples and altars in Neolithic Malta and numerous other places having fertility-life and death-rebirth associations. T. Cyriax, Marija Gimbutas, Michael Dames, and many others besides myself have written that long barrows served as shrines for rites and worship, and that burials were inserted in order to seek rebirth within the womb of the female deity. I have also pointed out the existence of the 2.5-metre long vulva carved at the entrance to West Kennet Long Barrow which additionally emphasises the correctness of this interpretation (see photograph on next page). Thus at Stonehenge the central entrance trilithon, like the torii Mother Goddess vulva, was the Goddess's opening which lets pass the light of the rising midsummer sun, today as it has done for the past 4500 years.

The fertilising rays illuminate the mica-filled Goddess Stone (Altar Stone) at the focus of the monument, where reflections from countless mica mirrors enhance the spectacle. This action is followed by the phallic shadow of the Heel Stone, a five-metre high megalith which could have functioned as the embodiment of the Sky God on earth.

This is the principle of the Sacred Marriage - initially a creation myth and then a world-renewal myth-for it is the Union of Opposites, by which the masculine and feminine forces of nature combine

Types of Torii arches in Japan

The biggest carving of a vulva known for Britain is on the megalithic facade of the West Kennet Long Barrow in line with the east-facing gallery. It is 2.5 metres long, up to 50 cm wide and 14 cm deep. This may be compared with the realistic vulva on Stone 106 at Avebury which is aligned with the Obelisk and May Day sunrise, and is over one metre long. Photograph by T. Meaden.

harmoniously to create and then annually re-create the universe. The rites and drama were known and loved throughout the ancient world which includes Shinto Japan (with fertility deities Izanagi and Izanami) and pre-Vedic India (and the later Hindu fertility deities Siva and Devi or Parvati).

At Stonehenge the outer ring of sarsens is composed of thirty trilithon arches. They define the sacrosanct area and, by repeating thirty-fold the primordial sign, intensify the power of the triple imagery. Inside the monument are five bigger trilithons, each one a commanding fertility symbol in which the narrow space between the closely-set upright pairs is another figurative vulva.

Accepting Stonehenge's dramatic building achievement as fertility imagery bears no problems for people well-acquainted with Shintoism, Tantrism and the archaeology of the Japanese, Indian, European,

STONEHENGE : THE SECRET OF THE SOLSTICE

Invoking well-researched concepts among early societies regarding religion, mythology and sexuality, the author Terence Meaden goes to the heart of the problems of Stonehenge, Avebury and other Stone Age monuments - he seeks the reasons why.

Why was Stonehenge built ? What purpose did it serve ? What did its unique shape signify ? Why are its circles and U-arrangements of stones aligned on the midsummer sunrise ? What was the symbolism of the trilithons ? How did the Coves and Obelisk of Avebury function ? What motivated the design of stone-chambered long barrows ?

These mysteries are answered in terms of the universally-adored, world-renewal fertility myth known as the Sacred Marriage; for this inspired the moving device by which the sexual union of a female divinity on Earth with a male god in the sky appeared as a practical revelation. The spectacle involved the mating of the sun with megaliths arranged to imitate vulva and womb. At some temples the solar component was aided by a terrestrial embodiment in stone. The whole adds to the gathering evidence concerning a belief system organised about a major goddess figure in the world of ancient Britain. In addition, details are given of lozenge shapes - regarding as fertility images by scholars of symbology - which have been recently discovered on Stone 4 at Stonehenge.

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and British Neolithic. Japan's many stone circles, shrines and burial chambers – as also cromlechs, shrines, temples and art in India – are spangled with latent or blatant fertility imagery but it is our misfortune and our loss that little is known about this in the West.

Helpful discussions with Japanese archaeologist Dr Kazuo Ueno have been much appreciated.

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LETTERS

From Valtars Grivins:

Prussian misconceptions

I would like to draw your and your readers' attention to some inaccuracies in Alby Stone's article 'A threefold cosmos' in *At the Edge* No.5 which are caused by pretentious sources. I am speaking here of the description of Prussian pagan gods and bloody sacrifices offered to them by Baltic pagans. I am not surprised by this terrible scene showing our ancestors as like African or Caribbean savages as part of a global blackening of pagan religions but I am surprised that such ideas are published by the *Journal of Indo-European Studies.*

The real situation is that a modern Prussian mythology is based only on 'internal' sources, all of which were written by Christian authors who never disguised their malevolent attitude towards Prussian pagan nature religion. If we compare sources written down in the thirteenth century (the century when Prussian and Latvian tribes were suppressed under German rule) and those from the fourteenth to nineteenth centuries then we see that 'new' gods were invented, whose worship was only the fruits of the authors' imaginations. Their fancies also garbled old, real gods.

The human sacrifices we read about in Alby Stone's article were not observed in Prussia by early chroniclers. Quite the opposite - the monk Tordan wrote in his chronicle in 551 observed that the *Aesti* are a very peaceful tribe [*pactum hominum genus omnio*]. When the Balts were surrounded by Christianity on all sides in the eleventh century, the Church started to attack the last pagan stronghold in Europe but, nevertheless, the information recorded by the Christian chroniclers was still more or less objective. Adam of Bremen wrote in 1015 that 'Prussians are strong pagans but very kind-hearted people [*homines humanissimi*] with praiseworthy qualities. They give help to unfortunate travellers, are very hospitable, etc. They have only one fault - they do not accept Christianity and never allow foreigners to come near their holy places.' Even Pope Innocent III did not speak about human sacrifices when summoning Christians in Saxony and Westphalia to take part in a crusade against the Balts in 1199. Innocent III said in his appeal 'these barbarians honour "crude" animals, trees, green grass, clear water and evil spirits.'

So human sacrifices in the Baltic are as equally worthy as stories as giant octopuses sinking ships or men being kidnapped by aliens from space. Because of the extinction of the Prussians (the process was completed by the Russians after 1945 when they occupied East Prussia) there is no longer a 'Prussian folklore'. We can search for traces of human sacrifices to the gods in both Latvian and Lithuanian folklore and again find nothing. I accept that there were human sacrifices at Lithuanian Grand Dukes' burials, but this is the perversion of rulers and nobility, not of priests.

[Apologies to Mr Grivins for not including this letter in the previous issue of *At the Edge.*]

Response from Alby Stone

The real issue raised by Valtars Grivins is the degree of trust we should place in historical documents, and the trust they have unwittingly placed in us as interpreters. Primary sources must inevitably be examined for signs of bias or deliberate falsehood, as much as for innocent error or gullibility. The problem is, how much should we take on trust if there is no evidence to the contrary? If early sources do not mention human sacrifice it does not automatically follow that human sacrifice never occurred. If Adam of Bremen says that the Prussians 'never allow foreigners to come near their holy places' then all we can conclude is that contemporary non-Prussian accounts of Prussian rites are not likely to be brimming with useful information.

It is also possible for the truth to be used as propaganda, especially where it agrees with the prejudices of an audience. As far as I am aware there are no serious objections to the general veracity of reports of human sacrifice among the Aztec and Inca - yet that practice confirmed Christian ideas of the religious rites of 'savages', and certainly played a part in 'justifying' conquest by Spain in the name of Christ.

We must also scrutinise our own motives. We have no right to reject something as a lie just because we do not like it, or because it makes us feel uncomfortable about our own ancestors. Human sacrifice is probably a fact at some stage of virtually all religions. The eminent Jewish religious historian Hyam Maccoby has shown that certain aspects of Judaic tradition are a sublimation of human sacrifice. We can accept that the religions of the ancient Germans and Celts included an element of human sacrifice. And if we can define human sacrifice as the

ritual death of a human being for reasons of religion and *in the name of a god*, to appease the deity or avert disaster from a community, then Christianity can also be seen as a religion that has performed human sacrifice.

Why should the Baltic pagans have been any different? If a sixth-century source describes the Aesti as 'a very peaceful tribe' it is not necessarily a comment on their religious practices. After all, Tacitus depicts the Germanic deity Nerthus as a goddess whose celebrations were a time of peace - yet her rites included human sacrifice. Pope Innocent III may not have mentioned human sacrifice, but the Balts *were* pagans; maybe in the circumstances it did not need to be mentioned as such. If a thing is not observed that does not mean it does not happen. Valtars Grivins accepts that there were human sacrifices at the funerals of Lithuanian Grand Dukes, but describes it as 'the perversion of rulers and nobility' - a dismissal that is, in the context of both funerary rites and accounts of human sacrifice among other peoples, quite astonishing. Funerals are generally conducted as a form of religious ceremony, and the death of a ruler is a significant cosmological event and inevitably attracts a greater degree of attention from religious functionaries. Retainers and servants were reportedly sacrificed at the funerals of Scythian kings and the rulers of the Viking Rus, as they were with the rulers of ancient Egypt. Until recently, women were immolated on their husbands' funeral pyres in India. The more one looks, the more it seems that the Lithuanian sacrifices are part of a once widespread tradition, and not merely a 'perversion'. And they were, when all is said and done, human sacrifices . . .

I freely acknowledge - for the reasons given at the beginning of this response - that the later accounts of human sacrifice at Romové may not be 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. But the truth is not always what one wants it to be. For me, the 'truth' of the matter is to be found in the three gods of Romové and the sacrificial practices attributed to them, and in the cosmological tradition that led - rightly or wrongly - to that attribution. For Valtars Grivins, the 'truth' seems to be that Baltic paganism did not and could not involve human sacrifice - even though he accepts that it did occur in Lithuania, he denies its religious status. If he wishes to believe that, it is his right to do so. I prefer to provisionally accept those old accounts of the Romové sacrifices, on the understanding that while they may not be founded on objective reality there are other factors involved that are both relevant to the idea of the threefold cosmos and worthy of study in and of themselves.

From Jessica Hemming:

Profoundly sexist and outdated

I have a response to the abstract in *At the Edge* No.6 entitled 'Mabinogi written by a woman?'. It's a pity the abstract does not include the title of Andrew Breeze's new book; I knew it was imminently forthcoming, but I still don't know its title. Anyway, your remark regarding whether his arguments are 'acceptable to fellow academic Celticists' is apt. Although I have not yet had the opportunity to read Dr Breeze's book, I was one of many 'fellow academic Celticists' in attendance at his initial presentation of his Gwenllian-theory at the Tenth International Congress of Celtic Studies in Edinburgh in 1995. Judging from the reaction of the audience (largely guffaws), his arguments are not likely to be very well-received. I do not know what he says in his book, but his conference paper made it abundantly clear that his reasons for positing a female author for the Four Branches are based on profoundly sexist and outdated notions about what men and women are interested in. I await the reviews with interest.

From Cheryl Straffon

Sex and gender confusions

I enjoyed *At the Edge*'s sex and gender edition. There are two comments I would like to make, both in response to Bob Trubshaw's opening article. Not all feminist researchers believe that the prevalence of Goddess images from gynocentric societies such as Catal Huyuk imply that these were societies of 'female power'. On the contrary, many of us believe that there is no necessary correlation between Goddess-focused societies and the status of women in those societies. There is however quite likely to be an absence of evidence for warfare, status and domination in many of those societies. Ian Hodder's on-going excavations at Catal Huyuk reinforce this point.

The other point relates to your definition of lesbianism as a 'gender', with further sub-divisions into two or more gender roles. It is not really feasible for an outsider (as men by definition would be) to comment on the complexity of lesbian society and culture, and I do not think that many lesbians would agree with your analysis. Otherwise, I found the article, and indeed the other articles, thought-provoking and interesting. Good on you for tackling a subject that many earth mysteries luminaries would prefer to go away!

From Mike Haigh

Red rocks and spirals

In Bob Trubshaw's report on TAG 96 (*At the Edge* No.5) he draws attention to observations

by certain archaeologists about the deliberate use of coloured rocks in cairn construction. I recently read a paper by Paul Frodsham in which he discusses the distribution and occurrence of the spiral motif in British rock art. One of his conclusions was that there seems to be a link between the spiral decoration and red coloured rocks. This paper is 'Spirals in time: Morwick Mill and the Spiral Motif in the British Neolithic', *Northern Archaeology* Vol.13–14, 1996 p101ff.

ABSTRACTS

Prepared by Jeremy Harte [JH] and Bob Trubshaw [RT]

Vibes in the tombs

Megalithic tombs create interesting 'acoustic environments' with enhanced sounds and echoes. Passage tombs are perfectly suited to generate an acoustic phenomenon called Helmholtz Resonance - the hollow type of sound created by blowing a stream of air across the top of a bottle - according to Dr David Keating of the University of Reading. The low frequencies needed to set a passage tomb resonating could best have ben initiated by performing rhythmical drumming in the chamber, with the speed relating to the size of the tomb. Canster Round in Caithness can be set resonating with a beat of four per second; the larger tomb at Maes Howe on the Orkneys resonates at two beats per second.

Aaron Watson, 'Hearing again the sound of the Neolithic', *British Archaeology* No.23 (April 1997) p6 [RT]

Resounding rock art

A list of over one hundred rock art sites with known 'sound reflection' anomalies has been built up over a ten year study by Dr Steven Waller and published in a series of papers since 1992. Details on S.J. Waller's WWW page: http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/9461/
[RT]

The half-human half-animal figure (note hoofed feet but human hands) from southern African rock art is known to represent the transformation into a 'spirit animal' during trance; the lines from the nose represent bleeding which results from such trances. The well-known (and controversial) engraving on the right is from the prehistoric site of Trois-Frère in France has human feet but hoofed hands; could the lines from the nose also represent bleeding?
(*left* after Lewis-Williams and Dowson; *right* after Breuil)
See: **Is all rock art shamanic?**

Sound-induced lights

When four friends visited Fourknocks chambered tomb in Ireland the splendid rock art patterns inspired them to start chanting. After some time they noticed 'little white sparkling lights' ascending vertically from the carved stones, which unexpectedly formed a ring of white light 'erupting from the tops of the stones in harmony with the chanting' and then rose a few feet where it remained 'shimmering and circling' while the chanting lasted.

Eileen Roche 'Of sound, mound and mind' *Northern Earth* No.70 p14–15 [RT]

Minimalist monsters

Strange 'hybrid' animals scratched into the wall of a cave in the French department of Lot may be 15 to 20,000 years old and were probably the work of one person. The difficulty of access suggests that there were few, if any, visitors to this cave until modern times. They offer an interesting insight into the suggestions that such images were the result of 'altered states of consciousness'.

M. Lorblanchet and A. Sieveking 'The monsters of Pergouset', *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* Vol.7 No.1 (April 1997) p37–56 [RT]

Is all rock art shamanic?

One would be forgiven for thinking that all academics in the field of rock art studies now regard the subject as synonymous with shamanism (but see next abstract) French scholar in the field, Jean Clottes has recently published a study which suggests that French rock art may be closely related to Southern African examples (see illustration on left).

J. Clottes, *Les Chamanes de la Préhistoire* (Seuil, 1996); reviewed in *Past* No.25 (April 1997) p1–2 [RT]

A lone voice in rock art

While acknowledging that prehistoric rock art often includes motifs which suggest trance-like states, George Nash considers that it is more important to understand why such art is located in 'visually restrictive' environments and concludes that carvings on north European megalithic monuments were not the result of hallucinogenic entoptic trance, but more probably the result of intentional strategies of socio-political manipulation.

G. Nash 'Every picture tells a story', *The Ley Hunter* No.127, p23–7 [RT]

The state of the art

Do you need a thorough yet lucid overview of the latest approaches to rock art? The stalwart of rock art research in northern England, Stan Beckensall, has provided just the job.

S. Beckensall 'Symbols on stone: the state of the art', *Northern Archaeology* Nos 13/14 (1996) p139–46 [RT]

Oldest henge in Britain

Claims to have discovered the oldest henge in Britain were made for a site near Wooler in Northumberland. The director of excavations, Clive Waddington, provisionally dates the earthwork to around 4,000 BC and found evidence for a contemporary 'drove road' through the henge and on to the nearby River Till. He suggested the earthwork was used in the neolithic for ritual purposes and for over-wintering livestock. 'Either the current chronological span for henges must be significantly extended, or morphologically similar monuments existed (i.e. external bank, internal ditch) at an earlier date.'

Provisional report at: http://www.dur.ac.uk/Archaeology/ArchRep/milfield.html [RT]

Neolithic 'trading centre'

A large Neolithic enclosure has been found recently on Gardom's Edge in the Peak District. It is overlain with Bronze and Iron Age cairns, field systems and other boundaries. Stewart Ainsworth of the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments of England suggest that the presence of large numbers of flint artefacts suggest that the enclosure was a trading centre. The location straddles two valleys, used as routeways between the upland areas and the flint-rich Yorkshire and Lincolnshire Wolds. Gardom's Edge represented a liminal zone between the two settlement regions.

'Neolithic "trading centre" found in Peak District', *British Archaeology* No.23 (April 1997) p4 [RT]

Out of their (Celtic) heads

Suppose that those little crescents and stars on Celtic coins are entoptic imagery. Now suppose that the coin-moulds were carved on direct instructions from trance specialists, viz. the famous Druids. Now suppose that power (and mint control) in tribes without kings was exercised by Druidical theocracies. That, you may feel, is an awful lot to suppose but John Creighton does it in 'Visions of Power: Imagery and Symbols in Late Iron Age Britain', *Britannia* Vol.26 (1995) pp285–301. What's the point of having a lunatic fringe if the academic centre can keep coming up with this sort of stuff? [JH]

Romano-British temple destroyed

Professional thieves dug large holes (up to ten feet across and four feet deep) into the site of a

Romano-Celtic temple at Wanborough in Surrey, doing extensive damage to buried Roman masonry and floors, and took the soil away - presumably to sift through for coins. The site has been repeatedly robbed during the 1980s by metal detector users who are understood to have taken thousands of coins and other artefacts.

'Wanborough looted', *British Archaeology* No.24 (May 1997) p4 [RT]

St Peter or Arimanius?

A eroded carving over a doorway on the church of St Peter at Gowts in Lincoln appears to show a seated, winged figure holding a staff and a bunch of keys. Most have interpreted this as a medieval carving of St Peter but Dr David Stocker considers it may be a reused Roman carving of Arimanius, a lion-faced deity associated with Mithraism.

'Roman Lincoln "a centre for the cult of Mithras"', *British Archaeology* No.25, June 1997 p4 [RT]

These hard-headed Romans

The mystic lore of the *agrimensores* has been drawn on by many writers who felt that the classical landscape was designed in accordance with cosmological principles. Brian Campbell in 'Shaping the Rural Environment: Surveyors in Ancient Rome', *J. of Roman Studies* Vol.86 (1996) pp74–99 looks at the evidence and finds a lot more on the practical details of how surveyors fitted into local land law than on their metaphysical standing. [JH]

Those mystic Romans . . .

Then again, Augustus, master of the empire in a golden age of philosophy, was afraid of lightning. It was not so much a natural hazard, as a sign of divine energy, according to Jane Clark Reeder in 'The

Statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, the Underground Complex, and the Omen of the *Gallina Alba*', *American J. of Philology* No.118 (1997) pp89–118. Omens also troubled the imperial mind, such as the white hen dropped in his lap by an eagle: a villa was built to mark the spot where this happened, with ritual caves and statuary exploring the meaning of the divine portent, and a sacred laurel grove grown from a cutting miraculously dropped by the same eagle. [JH]

Tales of buried treasure

Catherine Johns' article, 'The Classification and Interpretation of Romano-British Treasures' is a dry but bracing critique of theoretical archaeology from *Britannia* Vol.27 (1996) pp1–16. The supposition, by Bradley and others, that valuables found in water were thrown there as acts of ritual deposition is based on pure inference and does not match up with the known literature about treasure in historic contexts. Roman hoards were deposited by people who had every intention of returning to them, and even the consecrated treasures in temples and sacred pools remained a potential capital reserve and not the end product of ritual abandonment. [JH]

Signs, wonders, and entrepreneurial skills

The hill-top cult of the archangel Michael has long been regarded as a surviving pagan cultus, but Glenn Peters offers a more sophisticated interpretation in 'Apprehending The Archangel Michael: Hagiographic Methods', *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* No.20 (1996) pp100–121. The growing veneration of Michael had to respond creatively to his most anomalous feature: being an incorporeal angel, he had

left no body to mark the cult site. So the narratives dwell on physical traves of encounters with Michael instead - imprints actually made by him in the stones of a hillside - and these set the fashion for the hill-top cults. In the same issue (pp77–99) Christine Milner asks '*Lignum Vitae* or *Crux Gemmata*? The Cross of Golgotha in the Early Byzantine Period'. Was there a standing cross set up on Golgotha by the Empress Helena? Probably not - and this is a clue to a whole mind-set about the sacred. Early pilgrims were not interested in monumentalising the space where the True Cross had been found, because they had the relic itself to focus on. Only in the 7th century, when the relic was transferred to Byzantium, did the entrpreneurs of sacred tourism mark its absence with a geomantic monument. [JH]

In Saxon footsteps

Della Hooke provides a guide to following and understanding ancient estate boundaries, illustrating the kinds of monuments which will be encountered: 'Charter Bounds of the South West of England', *The Local Historian* No.27 (1997) pp18-29. [JH]

Anglo-Saxon 'totem poles'

A brief mention of Phil Sidebottom's suggestion that the decorated Anglo-Saxon crosses of middle England were 'tribal markers' appeared in *At the Edge* No.5 as part of the report on TAG96. He provides a summary of his ideas, concluding that they were erected soon after the region submitted to the West Saxons and Roman Church in 920, as a visible indication that the Danish settlers now accepted the authority of the Church.

P. Sidebottom, 'Monuments that mark out Viking land', *British Archaeology* No.23 (April 1997) p7 [RT]

Archetypal landscapes

Do glacial wastelands, primordial sea and forest 'labyrinth' represent some sort Jungian archetypes of the collective unconsciousness relating to landscape?

R.J. Nash 'Archetypal landscapes and the interpretation of meaning' *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* Vol.7 No.1 (April 1997) p57–69 [RT]

Buried by the highway at midnight

Proc. of the Cambridge Antiq. Soc. Vol.84 (1995) pp105–12 features an account of 'A Perambulation of the Manor of Barham, Linton, Cambridgeshire, in 1761' by L. Potter: the boundary marks included crosses (apparently turf-cut rather than free-standing), and children were conscienciously bumped against landmarks. Robert Halliday follows with 'Wayside Graves and Crossroad Burials', pp113–119, a survey running from Saxon burials of criminals where a road crossed a boundary to numerous eighteenth-century suicides, poor wretches, buried by the highway at midnight; at least one instance had a stake through the body, and there arelegends of these stakes growing into trees. The Boys Grave on the Suffolk border is still kept in memory with flowers. [JH]

Halliday has also written on the extensive folklore suggesting that criminals and suicides were buried at crossroads in 'Criminal graves and rural crosroads', *British Archaeology* No.25, June 1997 p6 [RT]

TAG96 through ley hunting eyes

My short summary of last year's Theoretical Archaeology Conference in *At the Edge*

No.5 is matched by a report in *The Ley Hunter* by Helen Woodley. Predictably, given the wide scope of the event, there is only partial overlap and the two reports combine constructively. Helen also points out that the academics are 'rediscovering' ideas which were being aired in among 'earth mysteries' enthusiasts as long ago as the early 80s.

H. Woodley 'A Moot by any other name', *The Ley Hunter* No.127, p5–6 [RT]

Spirit ways and death ways

There was a time not so long ago when *The Ley Hunter* seemed devoted to 'spirit paths'. Now it's down to four pages of the latest discoveries from various contributors - with the most fascinating being suggestions of a tradition of such spirit paths among the Buryat shamans of Siberia.

'Lines on the landscape', *The Ley Hunter* No.127, p8–11 [RT]

The Maiden of Bennachie

The Maiden Stone, on the slopes of Bennachie in Aberdeenshire, is a splendid example of Pictish carving, with Christian symbolism on one side and pagan symbols on the other. The article discusses the locations of Pictish carved stones (all are located within a mile of water) and the possible astronomical significance (in Gaelic *madiunn* means 'morning' and the sun shines on the pagan side of the Maiden Stone until midday; *meadhon* means 'centre' which could imply 'midday' [when the shadow travels from one side to another] and/or derive from the stone's location at the centre of a major administrative area).

M. Youngblood 'Maiden - the survival of a Pictish symbol stone', *The Ley Hunter* No.127, p19–22 [RT]

Cornish wells and stones

A on-going survey of the many and various (and often wonderful) holy wells in Cornwall reaches the Camelford area and a similar study of the lesser-known stones of West Penwith reveals many little-known 'neighbours' to the Merry Maidens.

'In search of Cornwall's holy wells - part 5', *Maen Mamvro* No.33 p7-11 and Raymond Cox 'Lesser-known sites in West Penwith - south-east area' ibid. p12–13 [RT]

What makes a holy well holy?

Based on the evidence of an estimated 3,000 'active' holy wells in Ireland, Walter Brenneman attempts a 'religious valuation and interpretation from a phenomenological perspective' but ends up concluding that there is no 'perfectly authentic' holy well.

W.L. Brenneman 'Religious authenticity at the holy wells of Ireland: a methodological problem' in K. Jones-Bley and M.E. Hudd (eds) *The Indo-Europeanization of northern Europe*, Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph No.17, 1996, p218–27 [RT]

Pegomancy at wells

Pegomancy - a form of scrying - was used by the ancient Greeks and some 'pin wells' in northern Britain are associated with legends which suggest that they too may have been used for this purpose. In a separate article, J.A. Hilton notes that the Greek word for well is *pegae* - a name which may also suggest water-sprites - and this *may* be the origin of the various Peg and Peggy's Wells (and Peggy's Spout).

Mike Haigh 'Pegomancy in northern Britain' and J.A. Hilton 'Return to Peggy's Spout', *Northern Earth* No.70 p16–18 [RT]

Pins in wells - 'Just in case'

A local tradition of dropping votive pins in wells on Anglesey was being maintained in the late 1980s. The local resident said 'I am a Christian, but did it *just in case.*'

'Rural archaeology', *British Archaeology* No.25, June 1997 p10 [RT]

Straight and regular

The Roman Empire used a system of land division known as 'centuriation'. How extensive this system was used in Britain has always been heatedly debated, with many lay enthusiasts being treated to the same sort of academic scorn normally aimed at ley hunters. However, the evidence for the use of centuriation in Gloucestershire is beginning to look convincing.

M. Ferrar and J. Bailey, 'Measuring the Roman landscape', *Ancient* No.56 (April 1997) p12–15 [RT]

More than holes

Is there more to the various hermitage caves of the English midlands than appears at first sight? Chris Jenkins discovers many magical connections, links to witches, plus underground tunnel legends and even a pair of caves aligned with nearly a mile of Roman road.

C. Jenkins, 'Hermitage caves and their magical associations', *White Dragon* No.15 (Beltane 1997) p18–20 [RT]

Barrows in folklore

A useful survey of the folklore and mythology of burial mounds, concentrating on the more shamanic aspects.

David Taylor [yes, the *At the Edge* illustrator] 'The undreamed region', *White Dragon* No.15 (Beltane 1997) p10–13 [RT]

Exposing and disposing

In an attempt to understand the preparation and disposal of the dead in the Mesolithic and Neolithic, the authors look at ethnographical evidence from such 'exotic locations' as Papua New Guinea and Highgate Cemetery.

G. Children and G. Nash 'The emotion of death and mortality during early prehistory', *3rd Stone* No.26 p11–15 [RT]

Time's up

We conceptualise units of time (hours, days) as measures within a single compatible system - and it takes a process of re-adjustment to realise that ancient peoples may have had quite other ideas. Even in a world as sophisticated as Periclean Athens, there was no abstract structure of time-measure, as Danielle Allen shows in 'A Schedule of Boundaries: an Exploration, Launched from the Water Clock, of Athenian Time', *Greece and Rome* No.43 (1996) pp157–168. Ordinary time was conceived through a political unit - the duration of a speech in the agora, measured by the waterclock - which had nothing to do with the variable astronomical unit of the hour. If a classical culture can differ so radically from us in this respect, how will we ever understand the meaning of the time-units at stone circles? [JH]

Was Velikovsky right?

A conference entitled 'Natural catastrophes during Bronze Age civilisations: archaeological, geological, astronomical and cultural perspectives' held at a Cambridge college in July attempts to restore credibility to the 'fringe' suggestion that an unusually high incidence of impacts by cometary debris or minor asteroids during the Bronze Age could account for the ecological catastrophes suggested by tree ring 'narrowing' and the various natural disasters which disrupted human societies at this time.

N. Hawkes 'Bronze Age cities may have been destroyed by comet' *The Times* 8th March 1997; 'Comet destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah' *The Independent on Sunday* 30 March 1997 [RT]

Taking ghosts seriously

'Suppose ghosts are actors . . .' While so much is uncertain about ghosts, should we be so sure the supernatural does not have creative skills? Jeremy Harte looks at the legends of Civil War ghosts and explores how the tales take on lives of their own.

J. Harte 'Cavaliers and phantoms, *3rd Stone* No.26 p6–10 [RT]

Dwellers of the liminal realm

This epithet is aptly used by Phil Quinn to describe the role of fairies. He surveys in detail the known fairy lore of the Bristol region.

P. Quinn 'A toast to the recently departed fairy faith in the Bristol region', *3rd Stone* No.26 p21–3 [RT]

Dragons and tunnels

A detailed account of the folklore and archaeology of Castle Hill, Huddersfield (formerly known as Wormecliffe) reveals an iron age hillfort, possible Roman signalling station, Norman castle, dragons, the Devil, underground tunnels, corpse ways and much else.

Steve Sneyd 'The dragon that lost its tale' *The Dragon Chronicle* No.10 (May 1997) p13–16 [RT]

REVIEWS

Simon James and Valery Rigby

BRITAIN AND THE CELTIC IRON AGE

British Museum Press 1997
190 x 245 mm, 90 pages, 44 colour photos, 52 b&w illustrations, paperback £9.99

This issue's review section starts with three books which deal with 'Celtic Britain'. Let's start with a book which perhaps deserves 'pole position' for being succinct, informative, well-illustrated - and affordably priced. In ninety pages, using evidence and examples which are bang up-to-date, the authors succeed in putting the Iron Age era of Britain into its wider European context.

Starting with the contentious debate about whether Iron Age Britain can be called 'Celtic' in any meaningful sense, and two pages later taking on such

philosophical thoughts as 'We do not discover history. We identify evidence and then *create* history . . .', one might be forgiven for thinking that this is a heavy-duty work. Personally I enjoyed these brief discussions and found much information of interest - such as the 'otherness' of ritual ceremonies such as the deliberate filling-in of 'food pits'. Overall, all aspects of the iron age get a 'mention' although, understandably, few of the topics are discussed in any detail.

While I would not want to put off anyone from reading this book, there is an unfortunate problem with this book. The style of writing is 'dry' and the idiom makes no concessions to readability. As the book is clearly aimed at the 'general reader', rather than those accustomed to reading archaeological journals, it is more than a little unfortunate that there are far too many sentences where things are 'perceived' when they could have just as well have been 'seen', 'deposited' rather than 'put', and such like - all too often as part of sentences made up of lengthy strings of long words. The book would have served its purpose to popularise the British Iron Age much better if the text had been edited to substantially lower the Readability Index. Apart from this scruple, a welcome up-to-date introduction to the Iron Age era.

This book has been published to coincide with the opening of the British Museum's new Celtic Europe gallery.
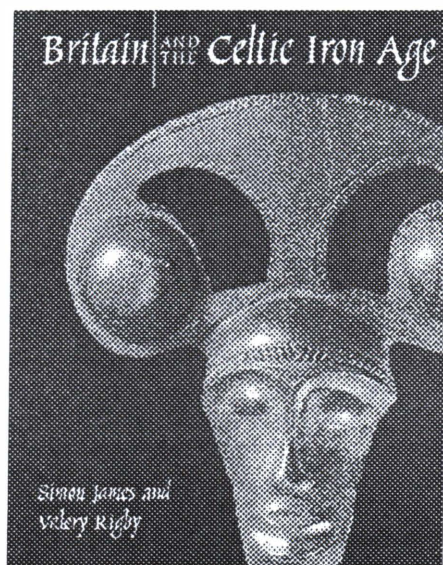
Bob Trubshaw

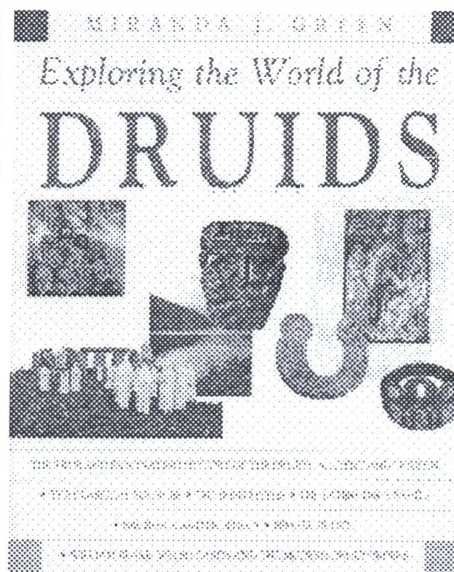## Miranda J. Green

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF THE DRUIDS

Thames and Hudson 1997
195 x 250 mm, 192 pages, fully illustrated, hardback, £17.95

Miranda Green is usually associated with academic, although most readable, studies on Celtic myth and art. With this book she moves closer to the 'coffee table' market, in an excellently-packaged introduction to everything that the word Druid brings to mind. Yes, this book manages to bring together accurate - and very up-to-date - archaeological information, an overview of Irish myths, plus the Romanticism of the eighteenth century 'Druidic revival', and the modern-day Druidic orders. All sections are fully illustrated, often with stunning colour photographs.
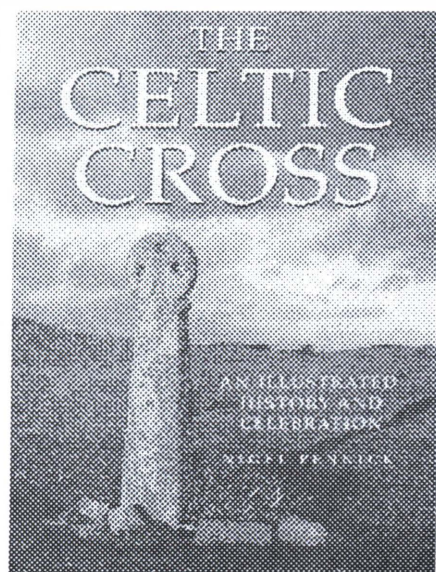
Although there has been a large quantity of 'popular' information previously published on Druids, and the 'Celtic' Iron Age in general, this book is an unusual combination of reliable

facts presented in an attractive and accessible format. Few, if any, such books deal in so much depth with modern day 'pagan' activities - the author noting, perceptively, how native American 'shamanism' has pervaded neo-paganism, including druidry.

As a reader of *At the Edge* noted, my reviews of books that I don't like tend to be longer than for those I do like, so on the basis that there's not a lot wrong with this one, brevity is appropriate. Suffice to say that this book is a worthy addition to even the most select bookshelf.

Bob Trubshaw

Nigel Pennick

THE CELTIC CROSS

An illustrated history and celebration

Blandford 1997
195 x 255 mm, 160 pages, fully illustrated, hardback, £16.99

The arrival of a new book from Nigel Pennick always get me excited - and *The Celtic Cross* is certainly a book which excites all the more as one starts to read. Celtic crosses have already led to a substantial literature by both scholars and popular writers. A new book devoted to Celtic crosses could easily end up as an illustrated

'gazetteer' with a few historical and 'art history' comments thrown in. Instead, Pennick has provided a wealth of new ideas and suggestions, providing a wide-ranging exploration of the cross image and its relationship to 'Celtic' culture.

The opening chapters look at the origins of the cross motif. Before its 'adoption' by Christianity, Pennick describes how the cross was linked to a number of other symbols (such as the Greek omphalos stones, Roman 'Jupiter' columns and medieval Maypoles) which denoted a symbolic 'cosmic axis'. The author also discusses the relationship between landmark stones, memorial stones, and other forms of carvings in 'Celtic lands'. There are many original interpretations, although none more so than when Pennick discusses the form and pattern of the decorative motifs on the Celtic crosses. These ideas deserve wider circulation; at the very least all those with an interest in Celtic interlace motifs should read Pennick's views.

Despite the popular appeal of this book, the author begins the book by emphasising that the term 'Celtic' refers only to a 'recognizable culture' and not to an ethnic group or political union. However, Pennick's suggestions that the Celtic people migrated through Europe is an old-fashioned belief

unproven by the archaeological evidence - the best that can be said with confidence is that the Celtic material culture was widely traded over a long period (the fact that I have a Tibetan Buddhist statue in my house does not mean Leicestershire has been settled by Tibetans, although it does of course imply that I have at least a superficial knowledge of Tibetan culture).

Although the publishers specialise in popular books with 'Celtic' in the title, few if any match the importance of this work. Highly recommended to all who are looking for plenty of new ideas about a seemingly well-explored topic.

Bob Trubshaw

Martin and Nigel Palmer

SACRED BRITAIN

A Guide to the Sacred Sites and Pilgrim Routes of England, Scotland and Wales

Piatkus 1997
195 x 255 mm, 320 pages, fully illustrated, hardback, £25.00

The scope of this book ought to put it close to the large collection of books from that other duo, Janet and Colin Bord. In practice, the Palmers have succeeded in producing something rather different. Starting with a selection of better-preserved megalithic sites in Britain and the better-known holy wells, plus a selection of what they consider to be 'sacred cities' (Bristol, Bury St Edmunds, Canterbury, Langport and Norwich are the contenders for England), the main part of the book deals with thirteen 'pilgrimage routes' through Britain. Some have a historical basis (such as London to Canterbury) and others are purely modern in conception.

The authors explicitly intend

Images of the World Tree from *The Celtic Cross.*

the reader to use their book as a 'travel guide' and for the routes to be followed as both physical and spiritual journeys. However, the information goes beyond the merely prosaic and reveals that the authors have some awareness of sacred landscapes - hey, even my own pet hobby horse of the 'omphalos' gets nearly a full page! As befits a hardback of this price, it is well-presented, with colour illustrations throughout - although rather too many of the photographs would be equally at home in the most ordinary of tourist brochures.

So far, so good. However, this is a book which deserves a somewhat longer review. Yes, there is one aspect I find worrying. The authors clearly regard that they have considered the sacred land of Britain from a 'multi-faith' approach. Indeed, the Buddhists' Peace Pagoda in Milton Keynes and various Sikh, Hindu and Jain temples are part of the thirteenth 'multi-faith' pilgrimage route. However, the authors are conspicuously Christian in their outlook - these 'other faiths' are clearly 'other' to their views. Above all, modern-day paganism is conspicuously absent, even in the discussion of prehistoric monuments. I would be the first to admit that this is a contentious subject but it seems more than merely odd to see mention of such places as Avebury, West Kennett long barrow, Stonehenge and the Nine Ladies stone circle at Birchover, without any indication that a large number of people in Britain regard these as sacred places. What is not clear to me is whether the authors are genuinely unaware of modern-day paganism (which would be a serious accusation given that Martin Palmer is the Director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture) or is intentional bigotry (although this fits badly with the willingness to include 'foreign faiths' such as Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and Jains).

This omission might simply be regarded as an undesirable bias in an otherwise straightforward book. But this book does not claim to be 'straightforward'. Rather, it is labelled as 'The Official Guide to the Sacred Land Project'. Elsewhere we are told that the Sacred Land 'is the focus for all the World Wildlife Fund's religious conservation work until 2002, and is the WWF's contribution to the Millennium celebrations, of a spiritual nature.' I know not whether this is an intentional attempt by WWF to offend their pagan supporters - perhaps others will want to enquire further.

An interesting book, but one which strikingly fails to meet the 'multi-faith' scheme it claims to offer.
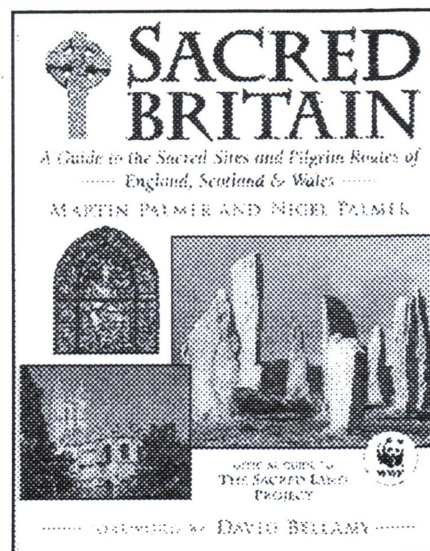
Bob Trubshaw

Bruce Osborne and Cora Weaver
THE SPRINGS, SPOUTS, FOUNTAINS AND HOLY WELLS OF THE MALVERNS

Published by Cora Weaver; revised edition 1997
A5, 47 pages, fully illustrated with line drawings, stapled booklet, £3.30
Available for £3.30 (incl. UK p&p) from Cora Weaver, 4 Hall Green, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 3QX

This booklet provides a tour of sixty-two spouts and springs of the Malverns. They are all accessible, although some require permission from landowners. Only a minority are still flowing but in every case there is some physical evidence of the basin or water source. Only a small number are dedicated to saints, or designated as 'holy wells', so this tour is more a celebration of the wide variety of Victorian

SACRED BRITAIN
A Guide to the Sacred Sites and Pilgrim Routes of England, Scotland & Wales
MARTIN PALMER AND NIGEL PALMER

WITH A GUIDE TO THE SACRED LAND PROJECT
FOREWORD BY DAVID BELLAMY

structures and fittings associated with functional water supplies. Short descriptions of the sites are accompanied by simple line drawings and, where known, a short history.

This is a useful guide to a small area rich in natural water sources. The few accessible springs which still provide a good flow are used extensively by the local population today - visiting the Malverns at weekends reveals short queues of genteel folk waiting their turn to fill up an assortment of plastic vessels.

Although too recent for full details to be included in this booklet, the authors are involved in plans, soon to come to fruition, to install six new 'springs' in Malvern town centre. Severn Trent Water have agreed to pipe water from three springs on the eastern side of the hills to Belle Vue Terrace in the town, where a new public spout to be called 'Three Springs Spout' will be built. The excess water will be piped to five other locations in Malvern town. Grants are being sought from the Arts Council for 'some rather elaborate creations' at these new features.

The authors have also published a more substantial work, entitled *Rediscovering 17th century Springs and Spas in the Footsteps of Celia Fiennes* which is available from the same address for £16.99 (incl. UK p&p).
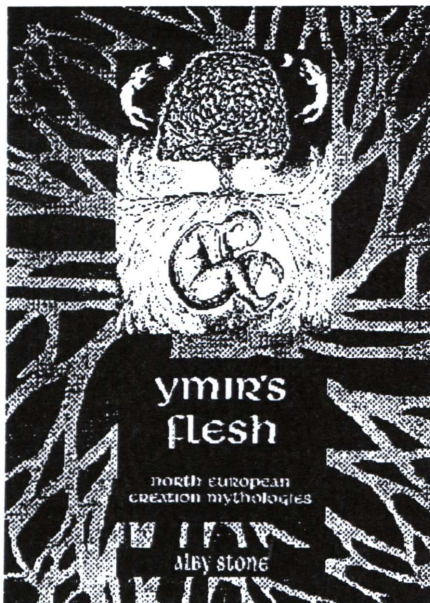
Bob Trubshaw

Alby Stone
YMIR'S FLESH

Northern European Creation Mythologies

Heart of Albion Press, 1997
234pp, illustrated, paperback
£12.95

The Scandinavian creation myths as recorded by Snorri Sturluson in his Edda may seem a rather illogical and inscrutable collection of tales. They concern the giant Ymir who was formed in the meltwater between the polar opposites of ice (Niflheim) and fire (Muspellsheim), and licked out of the ice by the cow Auðhumbla, then killed and dismembered by the grand-children of his hermaphroditic procreation. The myths as they have come down to us seem to be confused and confusing, and no doubt many readers will have found them hardly worth the attempt to understand them.

In this book, Alby Stone offers a closer interpretation of the myths in the light of the parallel mythologies from within the Indo-European tradition - the Greek, Roman, Iranian and Indian as well as the Celtic. He exposes layers of meaning in the rather bald narrative left to us by Snorri, who inhabited a world where the ancient traditions were only just giving way to Christian orthodoxy. Snorri doubtless left much that was common knowledge in his day untold, and sadly there is no way for us to recapture what he omitted but it is still possible to make the most of what has been passed down. By comparison with other ancient traditions, a plausible proto-myth for the creation may be arrived at, whereby Manu 'man' and Yama 'twin' are the first created beings along with the primal bovine who nourishes them (the 'Romulus and Remus nourished by the wolf' story is just another version of this tale).

Eventually 'man' kills 'twin' and uses his bodily matter in creating the world. The mediaeval notion of viewing the cosmos as created in man's image derives from this tradition, which may also crop up in *Beowulf* and *Solomon and Saturn* as well as elsewhere in Germanic literature outside Scandinavia.

The great drawback of Alby Stone's book is that he leaves the door ajar, where we might wish that it were thrown wide open. There are many loose ends in this work, which those of us who love delving into the culture of the period would like to see tidied up; just as an example, why is it that the three gods who give life to mankind are named Óðinn, Hænir and Loðurr while elsewhere their names are Óðinn, Vili and Vé? Even though admittedly treating such details would mean getting away from the subject which is the title of the book and would equally entail producing a larger and more expensive work, there must be many of us who would appreciate a synthesis of current opinion.

Alby Stone writes in clear and concise English, with a minimum of jargon and an occasional twinkle of humour. This and the short glossary of technical terms make this book both informative and accessible.

Those readers whose interest runs to Germanic mythology, Indo-Europe culture or shamanism will gain immensely by reading this book.

Steve Pollington

Kathleen Herbert
PEACE-WEAVERS AND SHIELD-MAIDENS

Anglo-Saxon Books 1997
A5, 59 pages, paperback, £4.95

Kathleen Herbert is probably better known as a novelist, but she is certainly a decent historian. *Peace-weavers and Shield-maidens* is a useful introduction to the study of women in the early medieval English lands, which works on another level - as a short discourse on the significance of particular types and roles of women in that period, as leaders and organisers, as foci of the sacred and as facilitators of peaceful relations. She begins by noting that the first English woman mentioned in history commanded a military expedition to the Rhinemouth in order to bring her errant husband to heel, and follows that with the story of Ethelflaed, eldest daughter of Alfred, who early in the tenth century took her dead husband's place as Mercian war-leader and conducted a brilliantly successful campaign against the Danes - and who also seems to have been a wily and determined diplomat and politician.

Herbert also discusses the place of women in Germanic paganism and notes the parallels between the Germanic seeresses mentioned by Tacitus and other Classical historians, and the holy women of early Christian England, the royal abbesses and nuns who shared some of their predecessors' more significant attributes. She looks at women's sexuality, and presents evidence that women were openly accepted as sexually-active beings, and that

they were expected to take as much enjoyment from sex as were men.

The book winds up with the story of Balthild, a seventh-century English woman sold into slavery to a Frankish household, who married the Merovingian king Clovis II and became regent at his death in 657. Like Ethelflaed, Balthild is remembered as a cunning politician who cultivated friendship with a number of powerful churchmen and effectively held the kingdom together until the heir came of age in 665, when she became a nun.

While the main thrusts are constructed around powerful figures - inevitable in the circumstances - this is by no means a one-dimensional 'kings and queens' view of history. The author's discussion of the words man and wife reveal an acute awareness of language as an indicator of social change; and she makes an intriguing connection between the title *frithuwebbe* 'peace-weaver', the Germanic conceptualisation of fate, and spinning and weaving, correctly identifying the symbolic significance of those emblematic women's occupations - cf. the articles by Bob Trubshaw ('Weaving the world') and Thorskegga Thorn ('Spinning in myths and folktales') in *At the Edge* No.6. And her look at the Exeter Riddles is a lot of fun. A short book, but well worth its place on the bookshelf.

Alby Stone

Eamonn P Kelly

SHEELA NA GIGS - THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTION

National Museum of Ireland and Country House Books (Dublin) 1996
160 x 240 mm, 48 pages, photos, paperback, IR£4.99

Saying nothing about the origins or iconographic matrix of Insular exhibitionist stone carvings, this is a book seemingly cobbled together almost contemptuously to satisfy museum customer demand. Written by an academic museum-person obviously without interest in the subject, much less any research in the field, the result is a glorified catalogue of the exhibitionist figures in the National Museum of Ireland (mostly stored in the basement), with mention and good illustration of most of the other Irish figures.

Except in the very short 'recommended reading' list at the end, there is no mention of the extensive fieldwork and decades-long researches carried out by messrs Andersen, Jerman and myself with no help from Irish academics. There is scarcely a mention of the many British figures or the thousands *in situ* on continental churches - except for a colour photo of one *non-exhibitionist* 'atlante' wrongly described as a caryatid, and said to be from a church in the Dordogne. This picture was dutifully included after a rapid scanning of Andersen's book - which does not even get its English edition listed in the bibliography.

Obsessive Victorian details - how many figures have ribs/wrinkes/tattoos or clitoris, exact positions of arms and hands, and so on, derived from early lists and writings on the subject - are a poor attempt to mask a lack of scholarship or interest in the medieval period, and show ignorance of the medieval mind-set. The author is ignorant also of medieval Latin: the two most heinous sins of *Avaritia* and *Luxuria* are translated as 'avarice' and 'lust' when they really mean, respectively, '(the accumulation of, and holding on to) wealth', and 'luxury or depraved living-it-up'.

With its lack of interest in cultural context, this booklet offers an unfortunate example of Irish myopia, seeing 'sheela-na-gigs' as an Irish phenomenon with parallels or congeners elsewhere. The actual situation of Irish exhibitionist figures is that they are crude, curious and enigmatic carry-overs from a vast Romanesque repertoire of images of one theme of sin and waywardness.

Before America largely replaced it, Ireland tended to be a sort of westernmost midden of European culture - where things (to mix metaphors) like sheela-na-gigs and sweathouses finally washed up. This booklet is an excellent example of that tendency: a collection of bizarre photos accompanied by a dull and uninformative text which make the booklet just a colour version of the antiquarian 'pornography' written a hundred years ago and more.

Anthony Weir

Last year Country House Books also published a booklet of similar format entitled *Irish High Crosses* by Professor Roger Stalley (IR£5.99). Happily, this is an all-together more satisfying survey and a welcome guide to a popular subject (see also Nigel Pennick's *The Celtic Cross*, reviewed above).

Bob Trubshaw

Laurence Main

WALKS IN MYSTERIOUS OXFORDSHIRE

Sigma 1997
A5, 130 pages, maps and photographs, paperback, £6.95

Another in the excellent series of guide books which Sigma have produced in recent years, and another by the inimitable Laurence Main. Laurence is a long-standing contributor to *The Ley Hunter* and these walks are 'illuminated' with all-manner of 'earth mysteries' and folklore. The maps and descriptions look easy to follow and average at about six miles in length. Recommended to all who are likely to be able to explore this splendid county on foot.

Bob Trubshaw

Andrew Green

HAUNTED SUSSEX TODAY

S B Publications 1997
A5, 87 pages, photos,
paperback, £5.99
Available direct from S B
Publications, c/o 19 Grove Road,
Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 1TP
(add £1.00 for p&p)

The genre of guide books to reputedly haunted sites is well-established. Andrew Green's addition to this literature is attractively produced and apparently quite comprehensive. The format is short (usually under a full page) descriptions plus photographs of some of the more attractive venues. Apart from the seemingly inevitable haunted pubs (which no doubt benefit from such rumours), Green also provides a variety of other situations including numerous examples of 'road ghosts' and the like. For those who want an alternative 'tour' of Sussex, or are fascinated by ghost tales, then this is a useful book.

The problem with this book (and many others like it) is that it simply fits all-too comfortably into the genre. Unlike the rich prose of, say, nineteenth century ghost story writers, who created dramatic, spine-tingling short stories to while away a winter's evening, these accounts are too concise and terse to be enjoyed as a 'good tale'. The lack of clear references to sources and no mention of any efforts to check the accuracy of reported events means that the evidence given is relegated to the level of hearsay. Little hope, either, of any discussion as to whether or not the witnesses have spontaneously slipped into some 'altered state of consciousness' (and, if so, why!).

Perhaps none of these criticisms are relevant to the intended readership but I for one feel that ghost lore deserves better than being reduced to the 'lowest common denominator' of popular appeal. Unfortunately the more 'serious' folklorists have largely opted out of the study of the 'supernatural'; the only major exception is Gillian Bennett's *The Traditions of Belief* (1987) whose concluding remarks (pp210–12) state concisely what needs to be recognised if ghost lore is not be treated as mere 'nursery tales' for adults. [See also the abstracts section of this issue for Jeremy Harte's recent discussion of ghosts in *3rd Stone*.]
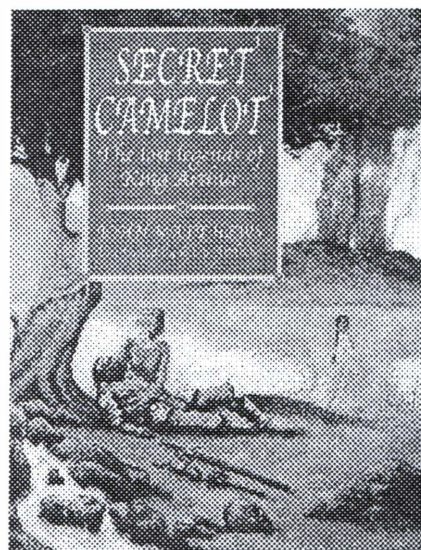
Bob Trubshaw

John Matthews

SECRET CAMELOT

The lost legends of King Arthur

Blandford 1997
195 x 253 mm, 176 pages,
hardback, £18.99

Here is another gem by John Matthews. *Secret Camelot* continues to collect lesser-known Arthurian tales following on from John's *The Unknown Arthur: Forgotten Tales of the Round Table* (Blandford 1995).

Read and enjoy a collection of hard-to-find tales, featuring Caradoc, Gawain, Perceval, Lancelot, Galahad and less well-known characters such as Tyolet and Jauffre. These retold ripping yarns are from all parts of Europe - Cumbria to Switzerland - and span a period from the end of the twelfth century to the second half of the fifteenth.

John suggests that these stories are 'old Celtic tales of Arthur and his heroes given fashionable court dress' but I would go further and say that some have developed from much older Celtic mythology. Adventures such as 'Gawain and the Green Knight', which bears considerably similarity to 'The Story of Caradoc', reminds one of Cuchulain. Here are tales, passed down by storytellers from the Celtic world, which have travelled to the Continent where they have become weaved into the growing popularity of Arthurian romance.

Whatever the origins of these tales, here we have a chance to immerse ourselves into a sea of medieval adventures. Marvel at the heroes, villains, damsels, monsters, sorcery and travel throughout Christendom and beyond. I will not give away any of the plots - just enjoy!

The text I cannot fault, except for one small point where John refers to Caradoc being connected with Glamorgan or Gwent - he is often linked with Gwynedd also and in later writings with Hereford and Radnor. However I do feel that a good story hardly needs illustrations and the artwork by Gary Andrews, which belongs more to fantasy comics, adds little to this book.

So turn off the telly, sit down with a box of chocolates, cup of tea/coffee (or something stronger), and enter the magical world of medieval heroes.

Charles Evans-Günther

CAERDROIA No.28

£6.00 from 53 Thundersley Grove, Thundersley, Benfleet, Essex, SS7 33EB

This year's issue of *Caerdroia*, the journal of mazes and labyrinths, is now out and,

as ever, contains a wealth of information on both traditional and contemporary examples. A lost turf maze in Norwich is discussed and many other examples worldwide. For the first time illustrations include some stunning colour photographs.

Bob Trubshaw

PLACE No.s 1 & 2

£15 for four issues from: Chris Wood, 45 Beatrice Road, Thorpe Hamlet, Norwich, NR1 4BB. Cheques payable to C.J. Wood

The subtitle of *Place* is 'The magazine for planning in harmony with the land' and the first issue appeared in Autumn 1996. It aims to cover such topics as ecologically inspired planning, city greening, permaculture, low-impact settlements and agriculture, spiritual landscapes, geomancy, earth healing.

The scope of the articles in the first two issues gives the magazine a 'niche' which is quite distinct from other privately-produced magazines. If *At the Edge* tends to approach 'places' from a historical perspective, *Place* takes a future-orientated – and overtly politicised – view. Nevertheless, the contents are far from being rants and provide detailed information on specific topics, or raise specific issues with suggestions for possible actions. The editor's own interests clearly include combining British cultural 'wisdom' with planning, drawing upon remarks of Nigel Pennick before suggesting that 'The future lies in a balanced harmony between the masculine urban and the feminine rural . . .'

The format of *Place* is A5, 40 pages and, although the quality of the illustrations betrays some limitations with the technology used, the appearance is attractive.

Bob Trubshaw

Editorial Afterword

I hope this unthemed issue gets the scope of *At the Edge* firmly back to 'past and place' after last issue's excursion into sex and gender. I am especially pleased that the abstracts and reviews sections have expanded to take up a major part of this issue - and this reflects the wealth of new ideas and interpretations which are now coming forth from various directions.

As many of you will know, the subscription renewal form includes space to tell me what you like most - and like least - about *At the Edge*. Most of you make some comments and my thanks to you all - the praise is reassuring but the criticisms get more attention! Suffice to say that there are only a couple of suggestions for improvements which recur and plans are afoot to affect the necessary changes.

I am most happy to know that many of you appreciate the abstracts section - Jeremy Harte and myself devote considerable time and not a little expense to this (think for a start of how much we read

which does *not* end up being abstracted!) - so we both think it is important. A few readers have suggested that there should be more coverage of new 'discoveries', which I take to mean archaeological finds and the like. Perhaps it is worth emphasising that the subtitle of *At the Edge* is 'exploring new interpretations'. Few excavations, however exciting, challenge the accepted interpretation of the past (and those that do will usually get a mention in the abstracts). There are plenty of ways of keeping up with the latest archaeological discoveries - in the UK the CBA's bimonthly *British Archaeology* and associated newsletter provides excellent scope; *Current Archaeology* also plays a major role in publicising the more major 'digs'. And if you really need to be bang up-to-date with both British and overseas archaeology then there are some excellent e-mail lists (for instance, the CBA now e-mails a weekly digest of all archaeological articles that appeared in the UK daily and

weekend papers). The quarterly publishing schedule of *At the Edge* is really a slow backwater compared to these other sources.

Extending this concept of 'abstracts' further, the appearance of Jeremy Harte's bibliography, *Research in Geomancy 1990–1994* (see back cover) is a major landmark, providing help with identifying the wealth of information now in print that in some way appertains to the eclectic scope of place-related archaeology and folklore.

The next issue of *At the Edge* will again be 'themed' and attempt to provide an overview of the current state of play in the study of prehistoric rock art throughout the world. By the time you read this, Professor Richard Bradley's major study of *Rock Art and the Prehistory of Atlantic Europe* will have been published by Routledge. Other articles will assess the extent to which prehistoric rock art can reliably be said to be associated with shamanism and altered states of consciousness.
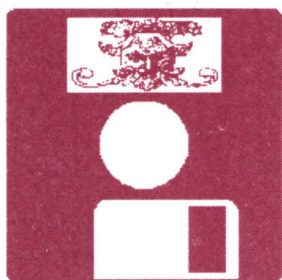
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