

ARTHURIAN CORNWALL - *Guide to Sites*
ARTHUR AT LANDS END - *Craig Weatherhill*
TRISTAN AND ISEULT - *Joy Wilson*

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From this edition, the cover price of Meyn Mamvro is increased to £1.50. We have managed to hold our price down for some time now, and this is in fact the first increase for three years. We hope that you will continue to support the magazine, the only one of its kind in Cornwall, so it may maintain its reputation for quality and care. For our regular subscribers, the annual sub stays at £5 including p & p.

VISIONS and JOURNEYS

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Meyn Mamvro

Stones of our Motherland

**EARTH ENERGIES • ANCIENT STONES • SACRED SITES • PAGANISM • LEYPATHS
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There seems to be increasing pressure on ancient sites in Cornwall, particularly West Penwith. Four recent examples illustrate this. Firstly, the Peninsula Project announced that the Men-an-Tol was in need of renovation as the centre stone was in danger of being eroded away. Secondly, English Heritage capped Carn Euny fogou beehive hut with a galvanised steel grating which was then turfed over. Thirdly, the new tenant farmer was given permission to remove Cornish stone hedges near the Merry Maidens stone circle. And fourthly, the Cornwall Archaeological Unit announced that they had drawn up a plan to restore Carn Glûze (Balowall) Barrow, which would involve it being covered in and supplied with an observation window. Now, most of these decisions stem from good motives: the Men-an-Tol obviously needs to be maintained, Carn Euny has been done more sympathetically than the original threat of an ugly iron grid, the Merry Maidens itself is not threatened, and Carn Glûze is to be returned to something closer to its original state (except for the window!). But all are symptomatic of the increasing desire by a proliferation of official bodies and people to "tidy up" or interfere with the ancient sites, instead of just leaving them alone or maintaining them as they are.

All too often the sites are seen not as sacred places bequeathed to us for safe-keeping by our ancestors, places at which people can commune freely with the earth spirit, but as potential tourist attractions. With the best of motives, Penwith Council organises off-peak "Experience" trips to the sites at an inexpensive price, but if they can do it, albeit properly, there are plenty of others who can cash in and do it badly. How long before we have fleets of "Magical Mystery Tours" dying to take us away, complete with taped commentary and videos of maidens dancing around stone circles? How long before visitors with no real interest in the sites are directed by the coach-load to well-signposted tourist trails so they can take photos of their children jumping on Chûn Quoit or aunty getting stuck in the Men-an-Tol! After all, we keep being told that we have a unique "heritage" here, the "potential" of which has not even begun to be tapped. And when the uniqueness and specialness of the sites has been destroyed, when the spirituality of the places has long vanished, well never mind, we can always get a few locals to dress up as Druids and prance around pretending to have a ceremony. An unrealistic vision of a nightmare scenario that will never happen? Well, don't let's get too complacent. Explanatory plaques are appearing at some sites, signposting is on the increase, Master Tours are being arranged, and Carn Glûze is to be "restored". It wouldn't take too much more of all this to turn Cornwall from a place that people visit because the sites are still unspoiled, the energies still alive, to a fenced-in, walled-round, covered-over, re-built and guided-tour archaeological theme park.

It's so easy for someone to think that they have the "answer" as to how the sites should be "maintained", and everyone wants a finger in the pie. Those who just love the sites for what they are should say "thanks, but no thanks" to these official well-meaning bodies and individuals, "please just leave them for us and future generations to enjoy". We only have the one chance to get it right.

CORNISH EARTH



**news
page**

Mysteries Group

The Cornish Earth Mysteries Group has now been in existence for some eighteen months, during which time it has presented talks by Paul Devereux, Cheryl Traffon, Craig Weatherhill, Hamish Miller, Nick Johnson & Robin Meneer, and Rose Lewis, covering ancient sites around the world, in Britain and Cornwall. In addition it has organised a dowsing day, and a ley walk in the summer. The Group felt it was time to canvass members' opinions as to the future direction it should take, and accordingly a questionnaire was devised, asking members and visitors to the talks to indicate their level of interest in the following topics:-

- [1] Alignments (leys, geomantic corridors, parallel lines)
- [2] Astro-archaeology (alignments marking sun/moon/star rises/sets)
- [3] Metrology/geometry (site design and location to "sacred" measure)
- [4] Anomalous phenomena (UFOs/earth lights, electromagnetic anomalies)
- [5] Folklore/mythology (hauntings, dragon lore, tunnel legends)
- [6] Dowsing/Sensing (water/energy lines, psychometry, bio-assay)
- [7] Topographical location (skyline/site outline matches, shadow paths)

The feedback indicated a range of interests, with most people highlighting field work and dowsing as main focuses of attention. Therefore, this Summer the Group have organised a number of Field Days at specific sites, during which a range of interests, such as magnetic anomaly work, ultra-sound testing, & dowsing can be carried out. People will be free to come and stay for as long as they wish.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

Sunday April 28th - Tregeseal Stone Circle (SW 3866/3238)
Arrive dawn to see the Beltane sunrise alignment over Boswens menhir, or at 11am with lunch for field day research and exploration of the area.

Sunday May 19th - Nine Maidens (Boskednan) Stone Circle (SW 4343/3512). Arrive 11am for field day & exploration.

Sunday June 23rd - Boscawen-un Stone Circle (SW 4122/2736)
Arrive dawn to see the Mid-summer sunrise alignment to the centre stone, or at 11am for field day & exploration.

For further details ring Andy Norfolk (0209-211364 daytime)



NOTICEBOARD

OBBY OSS DAY Wednesday May 1st
Padstow's famous pagan festival.

THREE WELLS WALK Annual 11-mile
walk to sacred wells in Penwith.
Sunday May 5th. Ring 0736-787612.

SUMMER SOLSTICE SUNSET RITUAL
Friday June 21st at the Nine Maidens
(Boskednan) stone circle. Contact
Kevin & Ingrid Carlyon, 16 Cross St,
St Leonards-on-Sea, E.Sussex.

MAZEY DAY SERPENT DANCE Saturday
June 22nd in Penzance town centre.
Ancient Cornish custom revived.

MIND, BODY & SPIRIT FESTIVAL
Saturday July 6th 10am-6.30pm Truro
City Hall. Stalls & activities.

TINNERS WAY SUNSET/FULL MOONRISE
13 mile walk across Penwith moors (if
fine). Sunday August 25th. Further
details from MM (0736-787612).

WOMENCRAFT WORKSHOP Psychic &
spiritual development for women.
Fortnightly sessions at Penzance
Family Centre. Further details Dawn
(0736-871625) or Cheryl (787612)

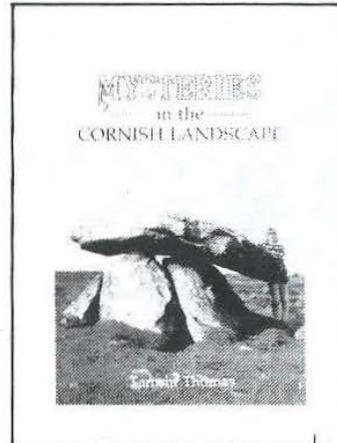
CIRCLE DANCING Each Wednesday 8pm
at The Acorn, Parade St, Penzance

HARMONY POTTERY Wheal Rose,
Scorrier, Redruth. Festival celebrat-
ions (see back page) & introductory
workshops. Further details from
Geraldine Andrew on 0209-890581.

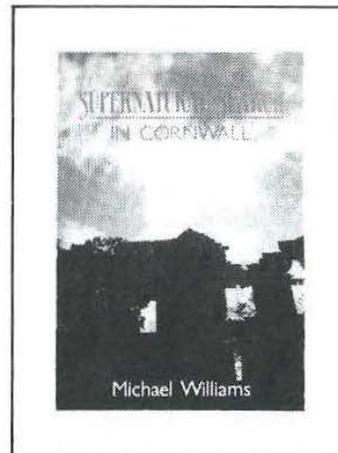
WELLBEING CENTRE Old School House,
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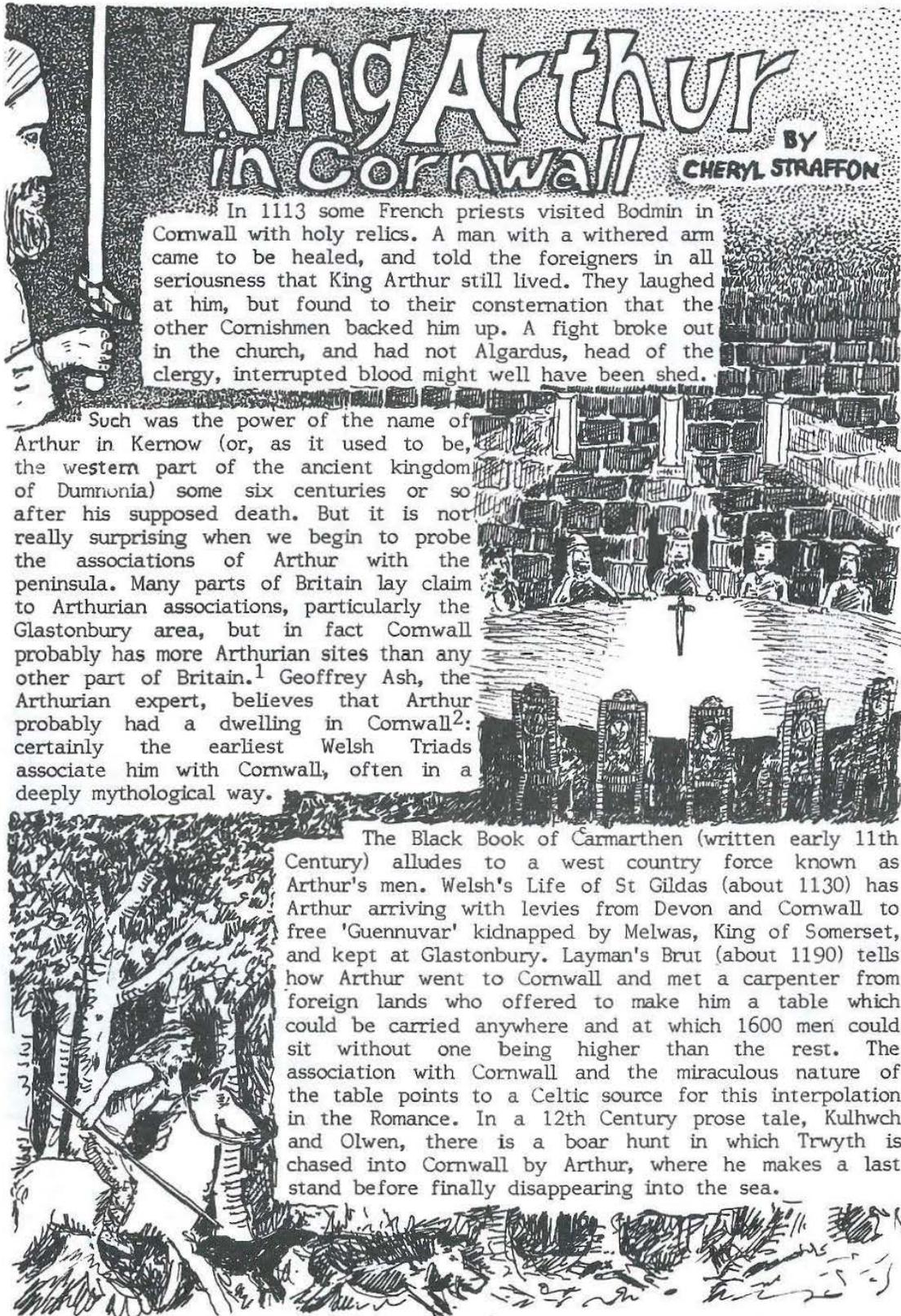
ARTHURIAN CORNWALL

This special edition of MM is largely devoted to an examination of the Arthurian links with Cornwall. As is usual in MM, we attempt to get behind the popularisation of the legend to a deeper understanding of the reality of the Arthur mythos. Later articles look at Arthur in other parts of Cornwall, but to begin with we turn to Tintagel and its Arthurian associations.

TINTAGEL

Any search for the Arthurian connection with Cornwall must sooner or later face Tintagel, with its "King Arthur's tea rooms" and "King Arthur's car park"! Tintagel is "known" as the birthplace of Arthur the world over, and the shopkeepers and hotel owners of Tintagel should give up a fervent prayer of thanks each night to Geoffrey of Monmouth who in 1135 first associated Arthur with the place, some five centuries or so after he was supposed to have lived. Charles Thomas has pointed out that any Arthurian connection with Tintagel is entirely spurious - the castle remains there date from the 12thC onwards, prior to which there was no permanent occupation of the site. There was, however, an earlier settlement, remains of which have been newly excavated. In Thomas' words: "New interpretations explain Tintagel as a post-Roman stronghold, or citadel, of local 'royalty' during the 5th-6th centuries A.D." This purely secular settlement had trading links with the Mediterranean and was obviously a centre of power and tribute. It may well have been a local or regional citadel held by potentates or kings of Dumnonia, someone indeed like King Mark or Gorlois of legendary fame. Possibly Geoffrey of Monmouth's attribution of Tintagel (which he surely would not have plucked out of the air) was based on either folk memory or remains still then visible from its occupation in the 6thC. Either way, there is no denying that the site was well-established at just the time that Arthur, if he existed, was supposed to be living! Indeed it is just the sort of settlement where a future Celtic leader might have been born! Despite the understandable wish of archaeologists to disassociate Tintagel from the Arthurian hype so that serious excavation and research can take place there, the paradox is that all the evidence now being produced places Tintagel as exactly the right kind of settlement at the right period of time for an Arthurian association! Perhaps one day excavation will reveal something more definite; but meanwhile, although we can certainly do without King Arthur's Car Park, we cannot entirely dismiss any possibility of Tintagel as his birthplace.

(CS)



King Arthur in Cornwall

BY
CHERYL STRAFFON

In 1113 some French priests visited Bodmin in Cornwall with holy relics. A man with a withered arm came to be healed, and told the foreigners in all seriousness that King Arthur still lived. They laughed at him, but found to their consternation that the other Cornishmen backed him up. A fight broke out in the church, and had not Algardus, head of the clergy, interrupted blood might well have been shed.

Such was the power of the name of Arthur in Kernow (or, as it used to be, the western part of the ancient kingdom of Dumnonia) some six centuries or so after his supposed death. But it is not really surprising when we begin to probe the associations of Arthur with the peninsula. Many parts of Britain lay claim to Arthurian associations, particularly the Glastonbury area, but in fact Cornwall probably has more Arthurian sites than any other part of Britain.¹ Geoffrey Ash, the Arthurian expert, believes that Arthur probably had a dwelling in Cornwall²: certainly the earliest Welsh Triads associate him with Cornwall, often in a deeply mythological way.

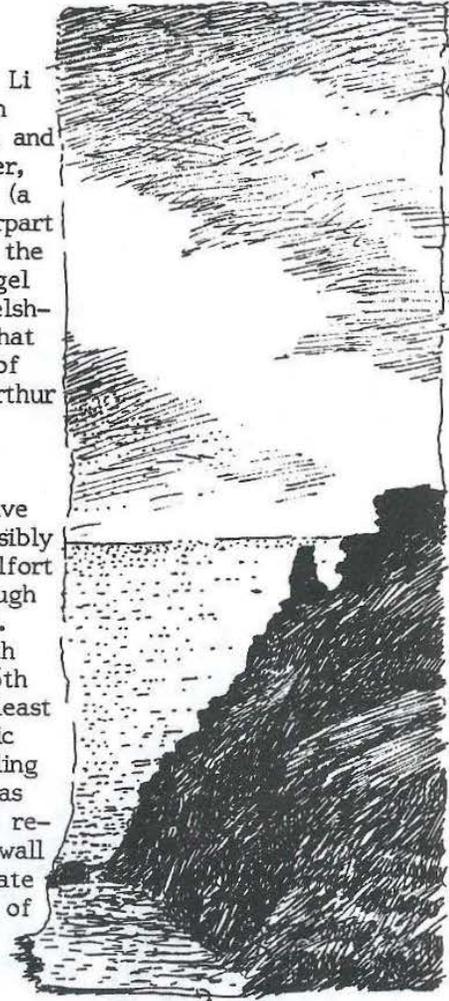
The Black Book of Carmarthen (written early 11th Century) alludes to a west country force known as Arthur's men. Welsh's Life of St Gildas (about 1130) has Arthur arriving with levies from Devon and Cornwall to free 'Guennuvar' kidnapped by Melwas, King of Somerset, and kept at Glastonbury. Layman's Brut (about 1190) tells how Arthur went to Cornwall and met a carpenter from foreign lands who offered to make him a table which could be carried anywhere and at which 1600 men could sit without one being higher than the rest. The association with Cornwall and the miraculous nature of the table points to a Celtic source for this interpolation in the Romance. In a 12th Century prose tale, Kulhwch and Olwen, there is a boar hunt in which Trwyth is chased into Cornwall by Arthur, where he makes a last stand before finally disappearing into the sea.



Many of the magical Arthurian elements in the early Welsh tales point to a pagan origin of Arthur as a sun-god incarnate in a human body. As a 6th Century warrior Arthur, in accordance with the Celtic doctrine of re-birth, is an ancient Brythonic deity mortalised.³ There was much interchange of these traditions between one Celtic country and another, so that when the Breton jongleurs in the middle ages reworked the old Arthurian material into the romances we know of today, they subconsciously incorporated strands of the old pagan mythos into it, even if they did not fully understand its implications. Pagan gods and goddesses make their appearance in the Arthurian matter, suitably disguised as knights and ladies for the courtly Christian consumption of the middle ages.

In these romances (for example, Percival Li Gallois) legend has it that Arthur was born in Cornwall, the illegitimate son of Uther Pendragon and Ygerne, wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall. Uther, aided by the magical arts of Merlin the wizard (a romantic fiction, but who had a historical counterpart in Myrddin, a 6th Century British bard) took on the likeness of Gorlois, entered his castle at Tintagel and seduced Ygerne. Geoffrey of Monmouth, a Welshman writing in the early 12th Century, claims that Arthur was born there, calling him 'The Boar of Cornwall', and in fact the Welsh never claimed Arthur as their own.

His youthful years were supposed to have been spent at Kelliwic (meaning "woodland"), possibly Castle Killibury or Kelly Rounds, a prehistoric hillfort dominating the valley of the River Allen, although there are other candidates (see pages 12-13). Several other fortifications are associated with Arthur, and it is quite possible that a 5th - 6th Century leader like Arthur would have made at least one of his centres in Cornwall. It was a Celtic stronghold ruled over by King Mark whose dwelling was probably Castle Dore near Fowey, which was originally constructed in the 3rd Century BCE and re-occupied during the 5th - 7th Century AD. Cornwall held out against the Anglo-Saxons until very late and was not finally conquered until the battle of Hingston Down in 825.

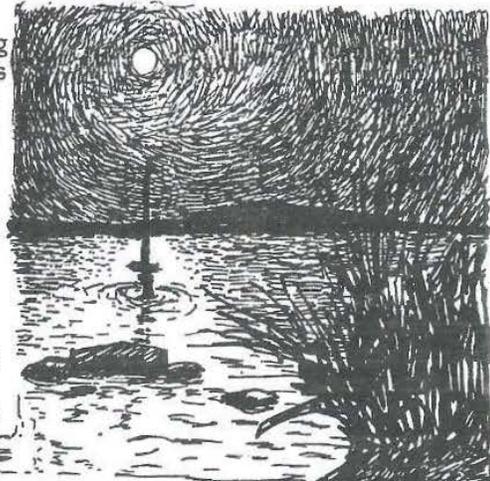


Legend also has it that Arthur fought a great battle against the Danes at Sennen near Lands End (see pages 15-16). This would appear to be rather late, as the Danes did not begin to harrass England's shores until 787, unless this was a local raid centuries earlier. But this little-known event in the life of Arthur is curiously specific in detail, and it is surely a memory of some real event that happened between an invading force and a defender of the land.



Finally, according to Gerald of Wales (1190) and Geoffrey of Monmouth, Arthur was defeated at the Battle of Camlann by his nephew, the traitor Modred. Modred is associated with Cornwall in an early Welsh Triad 'The Three Wicked Uncoverings' in which he and his followers break into Arthur's castle at Kelliwic and "consume all". Modred drags Guinevere from her chair and strikes her. Arthur makes a retaliatory attack on the castle of Modred, and leaves neither food nor drink in the castle or the district. Modred's eventual revenge takes the form of a treacherous treaty with the Saxons. Arthur fights him at Camlann, is mortally wounded and born away to Avalon. A location for Camlann has been suggested at Slaughter Bridge near Camelford where there is a Dark Age stone called 'Arthur's Tomb', though the inscription attributes it to another Celtic chieftan.

From here Sir Bedivere takes the dying Arthur's great sword Excalibur, or Caliburn as it was called by Geoffrey of Monmouth (from the Welsh "caleduwllch" or Irish "caladbolg", both meaning "lightning sword", associated with the pagan thunder-god), and at his insistence throws it into a lake (variously identified with either Dozmary Pool or Loe Bar). A hand rises up out of the water belonging to the Lady of the Lake, catches the sword and pulls it beneath the surface. This whole incident is redolent of the giving of great ceremonial objects to the spirits (Goddess?) of streams and rivers in Iron Age and Celtic times.



Finally, Arthur's body is taken to Avalon, an island paradise, perhaps a mythical place of the otherworld, but perhaps the Scilly isles themselves. Two islets on the Scillies are named Great and Little Arthur, and Charles Thomas believes⁴ they may have taken over Arthurian associations as the "islands of the dead". Arthur's journey to Avalon is reminiscent of pre-Christian boat burials, and links Arthur into an ancient tradition that has its roots in a Celtic and Iron Age society that lies at the dawn of Cornwall itself.



References ¹ See for example: Duxbury, Williams & Wilson "King Arthur Country in Cornwall/The search for the real King Arthur" [Bossiney, 1979]; Hutchings "The King Arthur Illustrated Guide" [Truran, 1983]; Hoskins "Westward to Arthur" [Pendragon, 1978] & Fairburn "Travellers Guide to the Kingdoms of Arthur" [Pevensey, 1985].

² Geoffrey Ash "The Quest for Arthur's Britain" [Pall Mall, 1968], "A Guidebook to Arthurian Britain" [Longman, 1980], "The Landscape of King Arthur" [Webb & Bower 1987]

³ For more evidence of this see: Ward Rutherford "Celtic Mythology" [Aquarian, 1987] & John Darrah "The Real Camelot" [Thames & Hudson, 1981].

⁴ Charles Thomas "Exploration of a Drowned Landscape" [Batsford, 1985].

TRISTAN and Iseult

TRACING the legend in CORNWALL

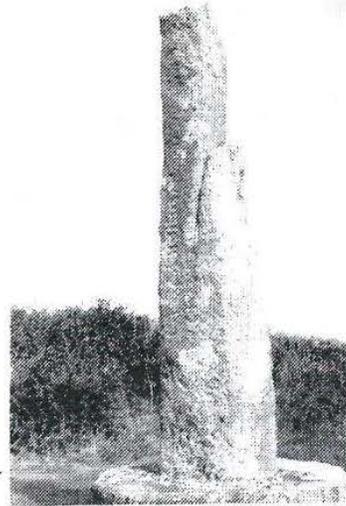
by JOY WILSON

Joy Wilson is author of "Cornwall - Land of Legend" (Bossiney Books, 1989), an examination of the Tristan and Iseult legend in Cornwall. In this article, especially written for "Meyn Mamvro", she explores the possible reality behind the Arthurian legend of Tristan and Iseult.

King Arthur does appear as a character in the earliest version of this story, a poem fragment that was part of the repertoire of Beroul, a travelling minstrel in Brittany and Cornwall. Eventually in 1160 AD his song was written down. Like other early versions, it was clearly based on an earlier Cornish telling of the legend that has been lost to us. But though King Arthur is depicted dressed in rich silk jousting with his knights at the ford of Malpas and as witness to Iseult's ambiguous oath of innocence, in truth he is a shadowy figure of little substance in the tale. The other main characters have much more evidence for their real existence traceable in Cornwall today. About them Beroul tells a dramatic tale of illicit love, pagan magic, and jealousy, with humour and his own eccentric comments on the action too. The action is all set in Cornwall and following the many place-name clues he gives it seems to me likely that he may have been elaborating on an earlier story of an event that took place at the stronghold of a 6th century Cornish ruler, a story of betrayal, adultery and perhaps even incest. Events that caused enough of a stir at the time to catch the imagination of ordinary people. Later generations repeated the story in Cornwall till it came to the ears of a travelling minstrel. This is a brief summary of the tale as he retold it.

Tristan, a Celtic prince born in Lyonesse, came to the court of his uncle King Mark of Cornwall, first at Tintagel and then at Lancien. He defeated Morholt, brother of the Irish Queen, at Saint Samsons Isle and then travelled to Ireland where he met Iseult the Fair, the Queen's daughter. He brought her back to Cornwall as bride to King Mark, but during the journey the couple drank a magic love potion intended for Mark and Iseult and fell deeply in love. Mark became suspicious of them, and later saw (the reflection of) them together in an orchard. The lovers were held captive (Tristan for a funeral pyre), but escaped and fled to the Forest of Morrois where they visited a hermit Ogrin in his chapel on a rock. After three years the power of the potion faded and Iseult returned to King Mark and made an offering of her silken robe to the Church of St Samson nearby. She was forced to swear an oath that she had not been unfaithful, but managed to trick Mark by being carried across the Truro river at the Perilous Ford Malpas by Tristan disguised as a leper in rags. When she came to the King's Hunting Lodge at Goodern in Blancheland she could then swear that no man had ever been between her thighs except King Mark and the leper! Eventually Tristan left Cornwall for Brittany and married another Iseult - of the White Hands. He was mortally wounded in battle and sent for Iseult the Fair with her healing potions, but his jealous wife told him the ship bore a black sail meaning Iseult the Fair was not on board. At this news Tristan lost heart and died of his wounds. Iseult the Fair, learning of this when she landed, despaired herself and died soon after. When King Mark heard this news he was overwhelmed with grief and regrets. He brought the bodies of the two lovers back to Cornwall and at Lancien buried them side by side. An ancient stone was placed to mark the spot and from the two graves a hazel and a honeysuckle plant grew forever intertwined.

DRUSTANUS HIC IACIT CUNOWORI FILIUS
 "Here lies Drustanus, son of Cunomoris"
 is the inscription – two vertical lines of 6th century lettering on a tall granite stone that stands beside the road that leads to the harbour of Fowey, not far away from the great earthwork of Castle Dor. Drustanus was a very rare name in Dark Age times and has only been found in Cornwall with a rare mention in Wales. Under the shoulder of St Breock Down near Wadebridge is an old farm on a site that dates from Celtic times. It is named Tredrustan (Tristan's homeplace) Not the Tristan/Drustan of the legend of course but proof that the name was in use in Cornwall in early times. The Drustan of the stone described as the king's son hints at a more scandalous relationship with Mark's queen if this is truly the "Tristan Stone".



Cunomoris or Cynwawr is certainly one of the kings of Cornwall mentioned in the Dumnonian king-list of rulers in the south-west, while in the life-story of St Pol de Leon there is a description of how the saint converted a Cornish king Cunomoris, also known as Mark, who ruled over lands in Cornwall and Brittany. There are also many Breton legends and place-names associated with Mark so that his existence as an important ruler seems well documented.

In the 16th century, Leland the traveller recorded another line of inscription on the stone, no longer to be found today. He claimed that it read CUM DOMINA CLUSILLA ("with the lady Clusilla"). Some scholars claim that Clusilla could be transcribed into the Cornish name Eselt that became the Iseult of the troubadours. But as nothing remains of this line on the Stone today it is difficult to be sure it ever existed, although Leland was usually an accurate observer. Even so two at least of the characters in the love story seem to be commemorated here.

Not many people notice that on the back of the great stone, which was perhaps originally a longstone of pagan times re-used, there is carved a T-shaped Tau cross. This was an early version of the Christian cross put there perhaps to sanctify the stone. But the Tau cross was also a Druidic symbol of eternity – the priests trimmed sacred oaks to that shape – so possibly Mark may have retained something of his earlier beliefs from before his conversion. In 10th century times another wheel headed cross carving was added to sanctify the stone a little more.

CASTLE DOR The original site of the Tristan Stone was much closer to this ancient Iron-Age earthwork that dominates the hill overlooking both the Fowey river and the Par estuary. Until recently it was thought to have been the 6th century stronghold of King Mark, but this is now doubted. Certainly a visit walking over the great ramparts is enough to convince anyone of its past strategic strength and domination of surrounding territory.

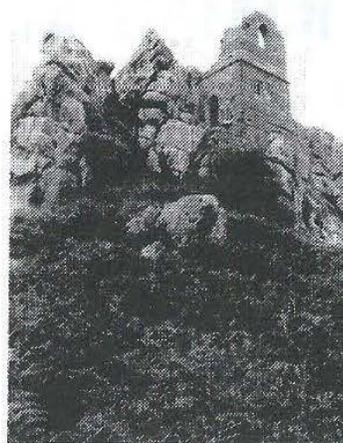
LANTYAN Beroul in his poem speaks of Lancien as the name of King Mark's south coast palace, and Lancien, or Lantyan exists still as Lantyan Barton near Fowey. Once it was a great Cornish manor named in Domesday on whose former lands Castle Dor is situated. One of the fields on the farm has always been called Mark'sgate and named as such on the tithemap of 1840. From this field paths lead down through the oaks of Lantyan wood to the banks of the Fowey river and landing places there used since early times. Woodgate Pill could well have been Tristan and Mark's departure place by boat for Brittany.

CASTLE or LANTYAN PARVA The Saint's Way from Padstow to Fowey passes through the lands of Lantyan. Following it as a narrow lane towards Lostwithiel it takes one to a place where several ways meet. Here is Castle, recorded on very early mediaeval documents as Chastell or Lantyan Parva. The Tithe Map of 1840 again shows interesting field-names here that could well relate to the Tristan/Mark story. Castle Moor, Hunting Down and Gallows Down (site of Tristan's punishment pyre?), also Orchard (trysting place?). But, less a matter of surmise, on Great Hill behind the Georgian house of today is Castle meadow with a commanding view down stream of the River Fowey and the site of a former paved ford across it, and inland towards the hilltop on which Restormel Castle now stands with the site of the more ancient earthwork stronghold which it replaced. Beyond in the far distance is Bodmin Moor over which in the 6th century Irish invaders came and pagan tribes still lived on the high ground there. This site with the clues of the placenames of Chastell and Lantyan attached to it, more sheltered on its hillside than the windy summit of Castle Dor, make it probable to me that here could have been Mark's palace citadel, though no trace remains in the field today.



SAINT SAMSON'S ISLE & SAINT SAMSON'S CHURCH In the middle of this part of the river near Castle a Duchy of Cornwall document of 1300 speaks of an island on which a hermit, Brother Robert of Pelyn, lived in holy isolation. Could this have been the Ile Sant Sanson on which Tristan's duel with the Irish Morholt was fought - or was it distant Samson in Scilly where it took place? Certainly Saint Samson's footsteps are easily traced in the Lantyan area even today. His seventh century "Life" written by a relative of his states that he founded his small Lan or monastery on the banks of the Fowey at Golant. The present church stands with the shelter of hedges of his lan today. But it would have been to the Saint's mud and wattle oratory that Iseult brought her gift of her best silken robe as a thank offering. In the churchyard today it isn't hard to imagine her procession towards the chapel that once stood there. Saint Samson himself chose to occupy a cave on the river bank convenient for penitential immersions in its cold flood in the manner of Celtic holymen. According to his biographer, Samson had to vanquish a noisesome serpent that occupied the cave before him. When it had gone the pure water (that still drips from the roof today) appeared then to quench the Saint's thirst. During his education in Wales, Samson is known to have acquired a knowledge of ancient Druidic wisdom which stood him in good stead when in his journey across Cornwall he encountered a pagan Lughnasa festival taking place around a longstone on Bodmin Moor. King Mark, newly converted to Christianity himself, may have encouraged Samson to found his monastery on the banks of Lantyan.

ROCHE ROCK This has been the site of hermitage since very early Celtic times, perhaps placed there to sanctify an earlier pagan ritual site. Ogrin the hermit could have lived there and it would not have been too far from the original bounds of the Forest of Moresk for Tristan & Iseult to have walked to visit the holy man.



THE FOREST OF MORROIS/MORESK Where the lovers took refuge in their flight from King Mark still remains near Truro though much reduced by the pressures of time from the extent of land it covered when it was listed in Domesday. Its old oaks still line the river bank near Tresillian and a track along it still leads down to the perilous ford of MALPAS, no longer a ford but still a ferrying place where there still exists a crossing over to Blancheland.

There is even the site of a former leper colony near Malpas at Kiggon which gives some credence to Tristan's choice of a leper disguise. Leprosy was rife in Cornwall after it had been brought there by sea from the east in the 6th century.

BLANCHELAND Across the river from Malpas is the parish of St Kea. In mediaeval times and earlier the area was called in documents Alba Landa or "Chyrgwin", the white land, and this is still the name of a farm on the uplands there today. Called this perhaps because of the profusion of quartz stones in the soil there even today. Chacewater as a placename indicates that this was indeed a royal hunting ground, just as the legend says.

GOODERN – Woderon in Domesday. Mark's Hunting Lodge where Iseult's trial with the reliquaries took place in the meadow is named Goodern and it is there today – a square earthwork with a level field beside it and close by a strange shaped large mound said to be the burial place of Mark's predecessor, the irascible King Teudar who was killed in battle there. At Goodern in the 18th century a peasant unearthed some gold and silver treasure that made him a gentleman, while on the barrow till recent times midsummer bonfires were lit.

ESELT Although we cannot know now whether her name was ever on the Tristan Stone it is certain that the first time it was ever recorded in the world linked it to Cornwall. Before the earliest versions of this lovestory were written down the name of Eselt was well known in Cornwall. In 937AD on the Lizard near St Keverne new Saxon boundaries were defined in a royal Charter. A narrow fording place over the little Porthallow river was named Hryt Eselt – 'Eselt/Iseult's ford' in Cornish. Still there today but now a clapper bridge near Lesneague farm the name of this place can only have been to commemorate the story of the events that took place at the perilous ford at Malpas and Iseult's trick with Tristan there.

Place names and proper names in Cornwall and the mute evidence of the Tristan Stone and its inscription cannot prove that the story of the love of Tristan and Iseult really took place here. But, because so many do appear in the telling of the story, it does seem possible that this great love story may have had its origins in a family drama at the court of a local ruler that was not easily forgotten by the people of the time.

ARTHURIAN SITES IN CORNWALL

TINTAGEL CASTLE (SX 050390)

"Tintagel" comes from 'din + *tagell' meaning "fortress of the construction", and in the 5th Century it was a centre of power and tribute (see p4). However, nothing now remains from that period, and it was not associated with Arthur until the 12th Century. Nevertheless it is a spectacular site to visit on a high promontory overlooking the wild Atlantic with the remains of a 13th Century castle and holy wells.



KING ARTHUR'S SEAT, WINDOW, ELBOW CHAIR OR BED, CUPS & SAUCERS. In the 1850s the Richards family who acted as guides to the early visitors to the Castle pointed out various 'traditional' Arthurian features, mainly niches and apertures in the natural rock, although the cups and saucers may be man-made cup marks. These features may have been genuine folklore memories, or simply have been invented by the family.

KING ARTHUR'S FOOTPRINT. A footprint-shaped cavity in the rock at the southern end of the plateau forming the top of Tintagel island. According to Charles Thomas, this may have been a place of inauguration where a chieftan or king was required to stand, one or both feet implanted to symbolise domination of the land in question as part of a set ritual.

MERLIN'S CAVE. A natural rock cave at the bottom of Tintagel castle. Legend is that Merlin snatched the baby boy Arthur from the sea here. An atmospheric place.

KING ARTHUR'S QUOIT (SX 079894) Beside the road leading north from Tintagel lies a few broken stones, which are all that are left of this "Quoit". According to the C.A.U it was originally a natural feature, to which Arthur's name became attached.



BOSSINEY MOUND (SX065888) Along the same road leading north from Tintagel lies this overgrown mound. According to tradition, King Arthur's golden Round Table lies deep in the earth buried under the mound. Only on midsummer night is it supposed to re-appear, and inexplicable lights have in fact been seen here in the nearby chapel on midsummer eve.

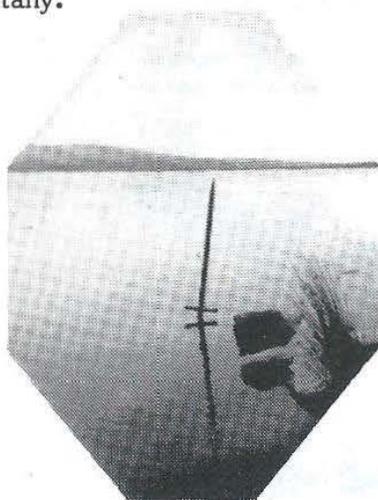
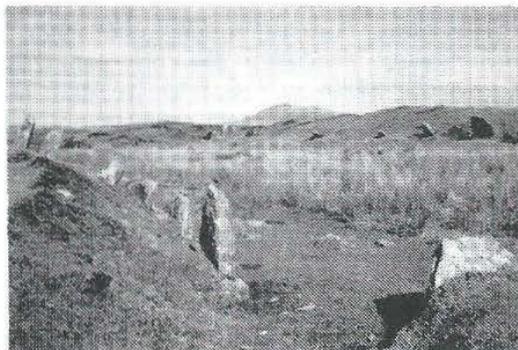
ST NECTAN'S GLEN (SX 080885) At this spot reached by a pathway off the same road lies a Glen with a waterfall at its head. Here the Knights of the Round Table were supposed to have bowed their heads in prayer before setting out in search of the Holy Grail. This Quest is a reworking of an old pagan myth of the descent by a hero into the underworld in order to restore fertility to a barren winter world.

KING ARTHUR'S TOMB - Slaughter Bridge. (SX 109857) This place, near Camelford, is reputedly the site of the Battle of Camlann, Arthur's last battle in which he received his fatal wound from Mordred. Beside the river is an inscribed stone some 9ft in length with the letters LATINI IC IACIT FILIVS MAGARI (Latinus lies here, son of Magarus).

KING ARTHUR'S COURT - One of the earliest sources of Arthurian material, the Welsh Triads, attribute one of King Arthur's courts to "Kelli Wic in Cornwall". This has been variously identified with Killibury Castle near Wadebridge (SX 019736), an Iron Age hill fort of which only about a half still remains, the rest having been ploughed over; and Castle Canyke near Bodmin (SX 086658), another Iron Age hill fort with a place name 'Callywith' about a mile away to the north.

KING ARTHUR'S HUNTING LODGE - Castle-an-Dinas (SW 946642) Another Iron Age hill fort, this one near St Columb. It is 702 ft above sea level with extensive views, built on the site of 2 Bronze Age barrows. From here Arthur was supposed to go hunting over Goss Moor.

KING ARTHUR'S HALL (SX 130777) This place on King Arthur's Downs on Bodmin Moor certainly pre-dates King Arthur: another example of how mythical heroes were grafted on to impressive natural and man-made features in the landscape. (King Arthur's Bed also on Bodmin Moor at SX 240757 is another natural example). This megalithic rectangular construction is some 50 yds long by 20 yds wide with about 60 stones in place. Its purpose is unknown but other examples have been found in Ireland, Wales and Brittany.



DOZMARY POOL (SX 195745) Legendary site also remotely situated on Bodmin Moor. Here Arthur's sword Excalibur (or Caliburn) was taken at his death and thrown into the waters, from whence came the arm and hand of the Lady of the Lake who seized it and vanished into the waters with it. There are many ritualistic elements in this story, including pagan water worship (see p8) and Celtic number symbology: Sir Bedivere goes to the lake three times with the sword, and the hand shakes the sword three times before disappearing with it.

An alternative site for the legend is Loe Pool near Helston (SW 645245).

WEST PENWITH For sites in West Penwith see article on "Arthur at the Lands End" on following pages.

ARTHUR at the LANDS END

by Craig Weatherhill

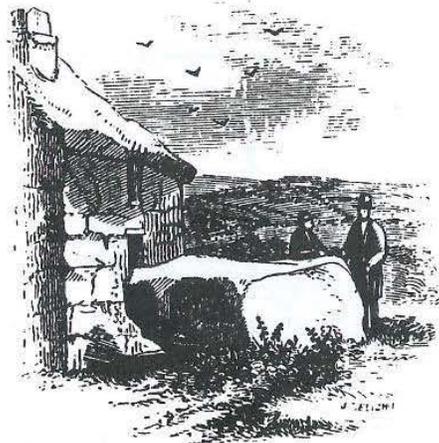
Craig Weatherhill is well-known for his books about the ancient sites of Cornwall, and his first novel "The Lyonesse Stone" has just been published. In this article, especially written for Meyn Mamvro, he brings together all the Arthurian connections with West Penwith, and comes up with a startling new theory for the identity of Arthur himself.

For a legend largely centred in north-east Cornwall, Somerset, Wales and Southern Scotland, some might be forgiven for thinking that West Cornwall was left out of the Arthurian mythos. The traditions of Penwith, though, are quite firm about it: Arthur was here, and left his mark.

One of the most powerful tales of Arthur is that of the Battle of Vellan-druchar; a tradition which has inexplicably been omitted from some recent and local books on Arthur. Briefly, this tells of a landing of the "Sea Kings" or "Danes" at Gwenver, following several unopposed raids on coastal hamlets. This time, they landed in larger numbers, set on penetrating deep inland. They crossed the peninsula to the northern coast, destroying as they went, but the beacon chain had been lit. As they returned two days later, they were met by Arthur who, with nine kings, had marched down from Tintagel. The battle was fought at Vellan-druchar, upstream from Vellansaga, east of St Buryan (SW 423263), and was such a crushing victory for Arthur that the nearby mill was worked with blood (This was not Kemyel Mill, 2 miles downstream, as some have claimed. Kemyel Mill's leat runs from a different stream).

The British rode west to Gwenver where a local wise-woman had emptied the holy well against the hill and swept the church (Chapel Idne?) from door to altar: a spell to raise wind and tide to strand the invasion ships above high-water mark. The guards were killed and the ships rotted where they stood. Even into recent times, red-haired folk in the Sennen area were reviled as "Red-haired Danes", an insult guaranteed to provoke a violent reaction. Children fathered by such raiders gave the local people the unfortunate nickname of "Sennen Bastards".

Arthur and the nine kings pledged themselves in the (presumably replenished) holy well - wherever it was - and the victory feast was held on the Table-maen (SW 359258). Large flat-topped boulders each called the Holy Rock or Carrack Sans, were once features of a number of townplaces in Sennen and St Levan - Treen, Escalls, Roskestal and Ardensaweth among them. The Table-maen, at Mayon, is the only one to survive. It is still in its original position, although its setting has dramatically altered since Blight's drawing and Gibson's photograph of the late 19th century. It is now enclosed in a private garden, the remodelling of which has buried the bottom half of the stone. It was at this victory feast that Merlin turned up to utter a typically gloomy prophecy.



The legend of the victory feast attaches itself to at least two other stones. One is on the hillside, near the road below Bosavern (SW 371303), while the other is the Four Parishes Stone (SW 430354). Geographically, the Table-maen's claim is far and away the best. Any details relating to the Bosavern stone have been sadly lost [but see MM10 p6], but in the case of the Four Parishes Stone, I believe that confusion has arisen between the Battle of Vellan-druchar and another legendary battle, Goon-adga-idniall, where the Rialobran of the nearby Men Scryfa was slain. Some recent books have annoyingly and wrongly added Lanyon Quoit to this list.

Hals, quoted by others, claimed that it was seven Saxon kings who dined around the Table-maen c.600, and names them, thereby destroying his own argument. Cissa of the South Saxons lived a good century beforehand, and while the others flourished in the late 6th and early 7th century, Aethelberht of Kent was dead 16 years before Penda of Mercia came to power. Historically, the Saxon advance on Dumnonia was still some way east of Exeter at this time and it would have been totally impossible for Saxon kings from as far afield as Northumbria, Mercia and Kent to have journeyed unscathed to the Land's End.

Arthur's nine kings are intriguing. Even if we take on board the typically Celtic 3 times 3 exaggeration, and assume it was three kings, this would immediately suggest three war-hosts of 100 men each. It falls into place when you consider that they had marched from N.E.Cornwall: the region of "Pagus Tricurius" - the land of the three war-hosts, and relace "kings" with "commanders".

There are more minor traditions, such as that of the old man of Pendeen who told Robert Hunt last century that the land thereabouts teemed with giants, until Arthur came to vanquish them. The great cliff castle of Treryn Dinas (St



Levan, not Gurnard's Head, as, again, some books are now saying) at SW 398222, was said to have been in Arthur's possession for some time. Another castle on the north coast was, for a while, occupied by him. This might be Bosigran Castle (SW 417370), and due to a mis-interpretation of the name as "Home of Igraine", Arthur's mother. It actually means "dwelling by the home of a crane."

In "Culhwch and Olwen" of The Mabinogion, the hunt for the boar runs to the headland of Penrhyn Awstin before taking to the sea. Could this be "penryn an stean" - promontory of tin, and therefore Penwith?

Interestingly, most of Robert Hunt's sources preferred to call the hero Prince Arthur: seldom is he spoken of as king (except by the old man at Pendeen). Also of note is the detail in the Vellan-druchar tale that Arthur was, at that time, resident in Cornwall. Hunt's version specifies Tintagel, probably influenced by Geoffrey of Monmouth and his successors. However, older traditions, and notably the Mabinogian and Triads of Wales, give Arthur a Cornish home at Kelliwic (Castle Killibury or Castle Canyke, which is close to a place called Callywith? Both were in Pagus Tricurius or Trigg). The oldest traditions of Tintagel are clear in saying that it was Arthur's birthplace only, so if he was there as an active soldier, then it must have been as a guest of the King of Dumnonia which at the time of Arthur was a man called Gurvawr.

Historians led by our own Professor Charles Thomas offer new and convincing evidence that Tintagel was a seasonal seat of the Dumnonian kings in the 5th and 6th centuries, though they fight shy of the Arthurian question. I am personally convinced that their findings support Tintagel's Arthurian claim: if his parents were of the nobility and somehow attached to the royal court, then there is no reason that I can see why Arthur could not have been born there. In such a huge mythos that has surrounded and obscured the real man, many places claim to have been the site of the last battle, his headquarters or his supernatural sleep. Yet, even after centuries, only one place claims his birth: Tintagel. The importance of this fact is, I feel, overwhelming, yet overlooked.

The legend of Merlin also finds its way into Penwith. Often referred to in Cornwall as Ambrose Merlin (from an earlier Merlin Ambrosius), he is much harder to pin down as an historical character. Much of his story seems to be based on a northern bard of Welsh origin, called Myrddin or Lailocen, but who lived a hundred years too late for an association with Arthur. His name incidentally was changed to Merlin by Geoffrey of Monmouth because its Latinised form, Merdinus, was too close to a French vulgarity for comfort. Other facets of Merlin were drawn from other people, Ambrosius Aurelianus among them, but, in history at least, a late 5th century Merlin escapes us. Which is not to say that one might not have existed.

Merlin's Rock at Mousehole (SW 470259) recalls his prophecy of destruction fulfilled by the Spanish raid of 1595, even though its earliest known recording is that of Carew in 1602. It survives in Cornish (Late Cornish as written by Nicholas Boson): "E ra teera war'n mean Merlin; Ra leske Paul, Penzans ha Nulyn." (They shall land on the stone of Merlin; Who shall burn Paul, Penzance and Newlyn).

Merlin vies with St Levan in being the prophet who said of the split stone in St Levan churchyard (380222): "When with panniers astride A pack-horse can ride; Through St Levan's Stone; The world will be done".



Also in West Cornwall, though outside Penwith, Merlin is said to have held that the once-sensitive loggan of Men Amber, above Nancegollan (SW 651323)

would stand "Til England had no king". During the Civil War, Shruballs's Roundheads deliberately dislodged it, ruining its poise. One thing about this prophecy seems to be amiss: the term England would have been unknown to Merlin, unless the use of that word was also prophetic.

At the Table-maen though, when as Hunt says, he was "seized by the prophetic afflatus" (wonderful phrase), his words, though just as gloomy, were of a grander nature:

"The Northmen wild once more will land; And bleach their bones on Escalls' sand;
The soil of Vellan-druchar's plain; Again will take a sanguine stain;
And o'er the millwheel roll a flood; of Danish mixed with Cornish blood;
When thus the vanquised find no tomb; Expect the dreadful day of Doom."

In the Vellan-druchar story, I think it safe to read "Saxon" for "Danish". The Saxons were thrown out of the lower Loire area of Gaul in 468 by a combined force of Franks, pro-Roman Gauls and British led by an intriguing "king of the Britons" addressed by the title Riothamus ("most kingly one"). Campaigning in Gaul for two years at the request of the Western Emperor Anthemius, he was betrayed to Euric of the Visigoths by the deputy emperor Arvandus, defeated, and fades from the Continental record retreating into friendly Burgundian territory and towards the town of ... Avallon. Here we almost certainly have the original scenarios which led to Geoffrey of Monmouth's sequence of Arthur fighting in Gaul, and his account of Arthur's end. The British settlers in Armorica (Brittany) seemed to think "Riothamus" would be back; the legend of the undying king's return is, in fact, Breton in origin. One question has yet to be answered: was Arthur the actual name of the man addressed by Bishop Sidonius of Clermont-Ferrand as "Riothamus?"

As for the expelled Saxons, those who took to their ships are known to have made a thorough nuisance of themselves in the Western Approaches, raiding Eire twice before the year 471. It is not inconceivable that it was they who were also raiding at Gwenver. Did the Battle of Vellan-druchar end their piracy, or drive them south to terrorise the coasts of Biscay, where they are heard of in 478?



If, as I suspect, the "Riothamus" who campaigned in Gaul in 468-70 was Arthur in his early twenties, an officer under the command of the ageing Ambrosius, and who escaped back to Britain after his betrayal and defeat, this might explain the inference of the local term "Prince", that the Arthur who allegedly fought in Penwith was still young and probably yet to assume supreme command as Ambrosius' successor. This would suggest that Vellan-druchar was fought in the mid-470s, and is still compatible with the current belief that his greatest victory, at Mount Badon, was around 490, with Camlann in 511. Arthur would, at Camlann, have been in his sixties, improbable but not impossible and certainly in line with the legend.

Some see Vellan-druchar as a campaign of Aethelstan's c.930, with the Saxon king's name later replaced by Arthur's, but the belief in a visit to Penwith and subsequently Scilly by Aethelstan is as vague as the Arthurian one. It is equally a piece of tradition, for there is no historical record of such a visit. His granting of a charter to the church at St Buryan (itself somewhat suspect) could as easily be done from Exeter. My own view is that the Arthurian tradition should not be dismissed lightly for I hope I have shown that it is, historically, entirely credible.



The presence of Arthur at the Land's End can't be left without at least a mention of the lost land of Lyonesse. So much has been written about this tradition that much of what is now told is added invention (especially by the tourist market which is starting to kill our authentic heritage of legend and tradition and replace it with another manufactured elsewhere). For example, I've lost count of the number of books and articles that maintain that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle records the destruction of Lyonesse in 1099. It does no such thing. Instead it speaks of unspecified coastal inundation: probably that in S.E.England which is thought to have created the Goodwin Sands.

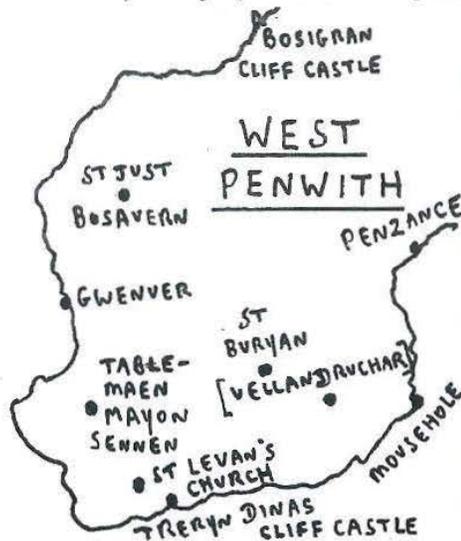
These same books and articles inexplicably fail to record the local account of the doom of the Lyonesse, as related by the Rev. Whitfield in "Scilly and its Legends" (1852). This is strictly Arthurian and deserves to be told in full rather than the following brief summary:

After Arthur's defeat at Camlann (placed in N.E.Cornwall), the traitor Mordred chased the sad remnants of Arthur's men down through the length of Cornwall. On the way, he had an altercation with a hermit at the shrine of St Buryan who warned that "the shadow of a mighty one stands before thee". A strange pillar of mist hung in the air between Mordred and his prey. Halfway between what are now the Land's End and the Isles of Scilly, the mist shrunk and solidified, taking the form of the ghost of Merlin, whose terrible spell caused the land to sink, drowning it and Mordred forever. On the newly created Isles of Scilly, Arthur's men were to found Tresco Abbey in thanks for their deliverance.

Of course, this can only be pure legend, but it is a powerful one and important in that it is the only tale to claim that Mordred survived the Battle of Camlann. Why, then, has it been ignored? Whether legends are pure fantasy or whether a germ of truth lies behind is unimportant. What is important is that Penwith's authentic legendary heritage (Irish though that may sound) should not be allowed to die or be altered to suit the tourists: it is an essential part of the Celtic culture of Cornwall and should therefore be treated as sacred.

If Penwith's claim to the presence of Arthur has not been taken up by the massive mythos which has been built around his figure, then no matter, for it is as valid here as anywhere.

Article & photographs [c] Craig Weatherhill.



* Some additional evidence that the Scillies were thought of as Arthur's last resting place may be found in the name of three of the Eastern Isles (originally one isle): Great, Middle and Little Arthur. Charles Thomas (in "Explorations of a Drowned Landscape") suggests the pre-Christian mystic importance of the Isles as the Otherworld later came to be associated with both Arthur and Avalon, and that the King slept in the mightiest cairn on Great Arthur surrounded by the tombs of his fallen henchmen. Legend had it that the Isles were still haunted, possibly by their spirits. (Ed.)

THE BATTLE OF VELLAN-DRUCHAR

by Ron Newsome

A watcher on the cliffs at Lands End in the time of Arthur would have been alarmed, for out at sea were a fleet of ships, ships well known in those parts, for these were the ships of the Sea Kings, the Fearsome Danes. That the Danes raided this part of the coast is known, but this raid was to be different from the rest. There were easy pickings for the marauding raiders, for the rich and wealthy towns of West Cornwall lay further inland. It would seem to be another raid, carefully planned, but there was something the Danes had not foreseen. On this particular day there was a heavy surf running which prevented the Danes from landing. The local people, realising this, went speedily to Chapel Hill. All across the land were high points: what better place to use to send an alarm, and what better method than a Beacon fire. And so a beacon was lit, an ancient method using the speed of light. Quickly the alarm was taken up: Castle-an-Dinas, Trecrobben, Carn Brea, northward to St Agnes the message flashed. Belovely Beacon and the Great Stone on St Bellermine's Tor were next in line, on to Cadbarrow, Rough Tor and finally Brown Willy. The alarm was passed swiftly to Tintagel - Prince Arthur was at the castle, and, realising the danger, he roused his men and set off at a forced march towards Lands End, a march that would take two days.

Gathering strength on the way, his force soon consisted of Nine Kings and their armies. The Danes in the meantime had landed at Gwenvor Cove and had marched inland, looting the hamlet of Escals. Just how far they went inland is not known: they were on their way back when scouts reported the sighting of Arthurs army. Realising they would be caught with their backs to the sea, the Danes turned inland to the plain of Vellan-druchar, and so the battle site was chosen. Arthur gave his men a brief respite, then he struck. Onlookers on the high ground saw and heard the ferocity of the battle, as Arthur's men strove to drive the invaders back to the sea. By nightfall it was all over: the Danes had been destroyed; but at a cost, as it is said that Vellan-druchar was worked with blood.

And what of the fate of the remaining Danish forces? On hearing the fate of the army ashore, they tried to set sail to escape the fate of their comrades. But fate intervened once more, by means of a woman whose name has not come down to us through time. A woman well versed in mystical ways conjured up a west wind. This she did by emptying the Holy Well against the Hill, and by sweeping the church from door to altar. The resulting wind was of such ferocity that it swept the Danish fleet ashore, totally destroying it. There it remained, and it is said that the birds nested in the rigging of the ships, though one would have thought that the wreckage would have been put to better use by the local inhabitants, ever mindful of the suffering they had to endure from the Sea Kings' raids over the years. So ended the Battle of Vellan-druchar: no more would the Sea Kings terrorise the Cornish people. Prince Arthur would become a mighty King.

A watcher in modern times may wonder if this battle ever took place. There are no memorials, no cemetaries there. Arthur's kingship would become clouded by myth and legend. But names survive: the beach called Gwenver where the landing took place is still the most accessible place to come ashore on this most inhospitable coast, and the hamlet of Escalls is still named. But what of Vellan-druchar? The mill and its name have disappeared into the mists of time, back into history. Perhaps some day a local farmer, ploughing deeper than usual, may unearth remains and artifacts, which will enable us to say without doubt: "Here was fought the Battle of Vellan-druchar."

BOOKS |**ARTHURIAN MYSTERY***by Richard Seddon*

Let us start from four widely disparate questions. Why is Tintagel so strongly connected with the name of King Arthur, when there is virtually no evidence beyond Geoffrey of Monmouth's improbable story of his birth there? Why is Arthur's name attached throughout Britain to megalithic constructs, or heights occupied in megalithic times? What occupied Tintagel headland in the 2nd/3rd centuries B.C. which caused forts to be built on the far inferior adjacent sites of Willapark and Barras Nose? Why does Chrestien de Troyes say in his "Perceval" that when Gawain left Arthur's court on the Grail quest he went first to Tintagel "because there was no other way to go"? Anyone who believes that Arthur was a 6thC war leader is challenged to provide a coherent answer to these questions!

A quite different point of view was put forward in 1924 which has never received the attention it deserves. After Rudolf Steiner, the Austrian esotericist, had visited Tintagel in the last year of his life he spoke in Torquay and London of his experiences. The main points of these and other lectures by him may be briefly summarised as follows: 'Arthur' was not a single person but a rank, held by many individuals over many centuries. He was the leader of a mystery centre at Tintagel, comparable to such Greek mystery centres as Delphi, Eleusis, Samothrace, Ephesus and many others throughout cultured Europe. Like all mystery centres, Tintagel had the task to lead specially chosen souls to experience the spiritual world, the path between death and rebirth, and the evolution of humanity, but in a manner suited to the men of north-west Europe. But it also had a special task, to carry knowledge of the cosmos gained during megalithic times by priest-sages such as those working with the cairns and circles on Bodmin Moor over into the post-Christian era.

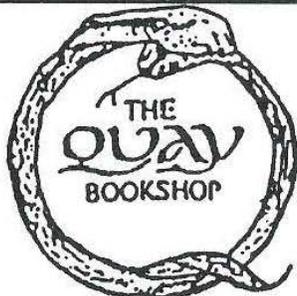
The twelve knights forming the original Round Table represented the twelve constellations, amidst whom Arthur as sun and Gwenhwyvar as moon represented the prime movers of a ritual manifesting secrets of the cosmos, with the remaining knights representing the heavenly hosts. Arthur's twelve battles were inner battles with the animalistic qualities still present in the primitive souls of the barbarian peoples of western Europe, pictured in the legends as giants and monsters. The Arthurian centre was dedicated to the Archangel Michael, whose sword in the cosmos is meteoric iron, and in man is the iron in the blood. Under his inspiration the advent of Christ in the east was known in the Arthurian mystery centre, and consequently the Celtic church could develop here without opposition or martyrdom. We may add that Tintagel was an ideal site for such a mystery centre, not only because of its easy defensibility, its fresh water at all times, and its situation on the main trade route of the Irish sea, but also because it is a volcanic outcrop strong in magnetite, an important iron ore known since early times.

My new book "The Mystery of Arthur at Tintagel" (Rudolf Steiner Press, £10.95) seeks to show further that several Welsh Arthurian legends in fact portray the actual stages by which souls were led in the Arthurian mysteries through the realms of the planets towards the zodiac, a path carried over from the clairvoyant seers of megalithic times. The stages of this path as far as the sun were followed by Gawain, before he then took the Grail path to the Castle of Wonders, the spiritual secrets of the human body, a path brought over from the cradle of Christianity in the east. This approach does provide consistent answers to the questions posed at the start of this short article, and to many others relevant to the reawakening of Arthur in modern times.

BOOK REVIEW

Another 2 Guides in the "Antiquities of West Cornwall" series by Ian Cooke have just been published. Following on from the Men-an-Tol area and the Merry Maidens area comes **CARN EUNY IRON AGE VILLAGE & FOGOU** (£1.75), & **THE TINNERS WAY (ST JUST TO ST IVES)** (£2.60). Both Guides are excellently produced, with comprehensive notes on the sites, details of walks with clear maps, and reproductions of old and new drawings. (In addition the Tinnerns Way booklet contains colour photographs). As he has shown in his book "Journey to the Stones" and in a number of original articles for Meyn Mamvro, Ian is firmly rooted in a deep understanding of the sacredness of the sites and has an empathatic approach as to how they may originally have been used. Details of alignments and earth magic aspects of the sites are included, and the Guides are a model of their kind.

It is interesting to see how some local earth mysteries research is now making its way into popular paperbacks, like the new one from Radio Cornwall's Tamsin Thomas on **MYSTERIES IN THE CORNISH LANDSCAPE** (Bossiney, £3.25). Ian's discovery of possible axe-heads carved on Boscawen-ûn centre stone visible only at midsummer sunrise is mentioned, and it is pleasing to see ancient sites featured for their "special magic" and their "relationship to Mother Earth". The spiritual qualities of the sites are mentioned, for example, the womb-like nature of Rosemerryn Fogou and its capacity to induce visionary imagery, although some impressions (eg Boscawen-ûn centre stone) are a matter of interpretation. Overall, a general book like this that contains brief but accurate information on the sites together with an awareness of their spiritual qualities is to be welcomed. (CS).



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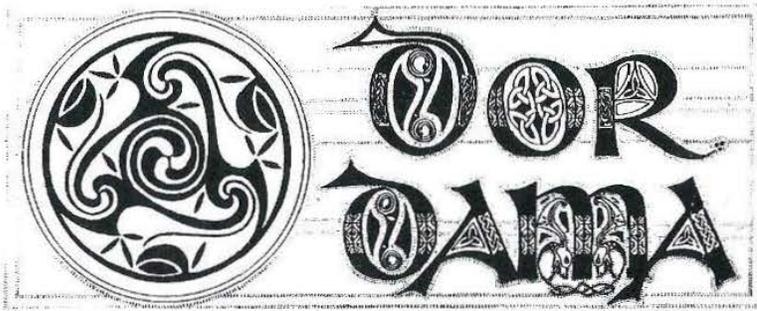
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The second of the "Dor Dama" columns (Cornish for 'Earth Mother') is by Branwen, who writes about the effect that the landscape of West Penwith has on her feelings and in her life.

A few years ago I moved to Cornwall: the promise of help and support from two friends enticed me over the Tamar. On a previous visit to check on arrangements I had been taken on a walk to Gurnards Head. It was on the 31st October (!) and heralded new beginnings in a great many ways, some of which have only become apparent in the last twelve months. The sun shone, the sea was magnificent, slight swell running ... there was something about the light, the clarity of the colours, the pure sounds of nature, the cold, clean air that made my city-polluted lungs ache. I think that many visitors to the area must have similar experiences if they allow themselves the freedom to feel. But on this day a voice deep within me said, "Welcome home, my daughter ... a great peace awaits you here". I felt "spooked", afraid, uneasy, and convinced I was going crazy! Too much fresh air and not enough to eat!

In February 1986 I moved to West Penwith. Later, an opportunity came for me to go up-country with my work. It was whilst I was in London that I had a complete nervous breakdown, feeling that there was absolutely no reason to live - no purpose, no goals, only a seemingly endless struggle against economic ruin, loneliness and isolation. Bitterly, I regretted ever having left West Penwith. Although I am a foreigner here, I felt (and still feel) that it is my home. I knew that I would have to fight my breakdown in order to be strong enough to find a way to get home.

When I left hospital, I went to see my mother. Her advice was simple. "You've got nothing left to believe in. Find something, a faith, a religion or something that works for you. Let it help you to get better." I had already developed a vague curiosity about ancient religion, and with an academic background in ancient history it was not difficult to get hold of some varied reading matter. By the time I returned to West Penwith in mid-December my interest had grown to an excited, all-consuming passion. One old friend was delighted that I had found the Goddess, and he has been a stabilising influence, yet a continuing source of inspiration. It is hard to describe how the ideas grew, but it took hard work (which continues). The effort is rewarded by great surges of insight as powerful as the lightning that startles a night landscape into brilliance. Awareness has grown too - of time, tides, light, weather, and of the sometimes elusive energies that fill everything. Above all, there is a carefree life-energy which has soothed and healed my pain of the last year. Life is not always easy, but it is fuller, more fulfilled, now than ever before.

Having an interest in wildlife, I have been able to combine nature walks with visiting the ancient sites in the area. Now able to see things through eyes reborn, the feelings I had previously dismissed as irrational excesses of imagination began to assume more manageable proportions; in other words, I felt more able to "tune in" to the atmosphere of the landscape. West Penwith has drawn me back, this time to stay, and the mysteries of the sacred places have, in their way, healed me and made me strong.



As with most people, some sites affect me more. Few would deny the power to be felt at Boscawen-un circle. For me, the first time I visited this circle at Imbolc I felt a question being directed at me, a great vortex of question, almost strong enough to be touched, the question being "what do you seek?" The next visit was easier, the stones felt less antagonistic, as if my intent now being known had satisfied the curiosity of whoever had posed the first question. The last time I visited Boscawen-un, a peace came to me that was very beautiful. I hugged the centre stone, and I felt as if strength and comfort rose up through the length of the stone, flowed in to me through my cheek, down my body to the earth to be drawn back up through the stone again and again. By far the most powerful energies lie, for me, in the Beehive Hut at Carn Euny. I have some theories of my own about that place!

I used to wonder if all these experiences could be the product of an over-active imagination. Visualisation exercises have proved to me that this is not the case, as unexpected things happen that lie beyond my control. Now I believe that the temporal world is but a tiny fragment of "reality" (whatever that may be!) and that there are realms of experience on a vast spiritual plane that are as important as the temporal.

The greatest gift the Goddess has given me is new life. In Her I have been reborn, to start afresh, the pain of the past left behind. Of course there are days when I have doubts, but the doubts are about myself. Once, I tried to put my interest in paganism to one side as it seemed to threaten a relationship. But I could not live without it! The relationship foundered. Now, there are those around me who love the Goddess, and who by their kind and gentle ways live their lives more fully than most people, for they have a greater awareness of all that surrounds them.

I am blessed indeed in this place. The expanses of moor with the sacred spaces in which my mind and spirit can soar to great heights, the sea, the colours of heather and gorse, the peregrine and the buzzard ... and the most precious, tender buds of a new beginning, nurtured in the heart, that may blossom to a full flowering of the mind and spirit in the years to come.

Contributions to this column are welcome from readers. They should be written from a personal viewpoint about the spirituality of the Cornish landscape, and marked "Dor Dama".

The Pipers Tune

The current edition of "Cornish Archaeology" (No.29) published by the Cornwall Archaeological Society contains an article of some interest to Cornish Earth Mysteries researchers. In "The possible use of West Penwith menhirs as boundary markers" Frances Peters (an archaeologist at Southampton) analyses the location and possible intervisibility of the standing stones in West Penwith, with respect to Williams' theory that "standing stones were features of overwhelming ritual significance, that burial was one aspect of some ceremonial activity and that they served possibly as the cult centres of small social groups."

Peters divides the sites into 6 main areas: 2 in the south of the peninsula (Lamorna valley & a possible area around Treen with missing menhirs), and 4 in the north (Boswens area, Trevowan Morvah area, Carfury area, & a possible area around Mulfra partially destroyed by the development of Penzance). 95 menhirs were examined, of which 43 are still extant but unfortunately the specific menhirs used in the survey and located on the maps (which lack any grid references) are not given, so there is no real way of testing Peters' hypothesis against a data base, and therefore no means of distinguishing between one sort of standing stone and another. Even in a small area like West Penwith there are marked differences between them, which could argue for something more complex than just "boundary markers", and more to do with horizon/astronomical alignments.



Nevertheless, the maps do show that most menhirs were originally intervisible from at least one another, and Peters concludes that the menhirs were purposely positioned along contours on the upper parts of slopes, that possibly they marked boundaries, and that they were placed so they were able to be seen from other menhirs*, all of which could incorporate a ritual and ceremonial function of "more than local significance". Of course John Michell said much the same thing in "The Old Stones of Lands End" some twenty years ago (although no reference is made in the article to his classic study of course!) As he said: "A significant aspect of the alignments is ... that each site in line is visible from the next, for a stone was often placed at the extreme limit of visibility, so that only its tip showed above the horizon." Nice to know the archaeologists are catching up with the ley hunters at last!

* 34 menhirs or sites were directly visible from a second menhir or site; another 17 would have been intervisible without modern obstacles; 7 field names (destroyed menhirs) would have been intervisible from another menhir field; and 15 menhirs or sites were intervisible from points near another menhir/site, a total of 73 out of 95.



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