

Edited and published by Paul Screeton, of 5 Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland, TS25 2AT. Occasional organ of terrestrial zodiac research. Available free, but donations of cash, stamps, etc. and, of course, written contributions welcome.

ALLISON GROSS

(Ugliest Witch in the North Country -- or Everywhere)

By Steve Hamilton

Whilst looking for clues to see if my Cuffley/Hertfordshire zodiac really does exist, the position of the effigies made me think about the way the zodiac was designed, that is if it was and not just thrown down in ten years. (Purely a guess, we don't know how long the building of a zodiac would really take if they are manmade). Surely its blueprint would be remembered in song or just folktales? It did

as I found out, based on something like the Bible as well. One of the best examples is the northern folksong/tale of Alison (Allison) Gross, which should really refer to Stanley or Fleet Shot Hill zodiacs, but I have no details to check.

The basic story is that where Alison Gross lured a man into her bower and made him "many fair speeches". She showed him many fair gifts which he could command if he became her "lemman so true" but he refused and she turned him into an ugly worm. Every Saturday night (why Saturday?) his sister Maisry came with a silver basin and comb to tend to the worm's head until Hallowe'en, when the fairy court rode by. The queen took the worm over her knee and when stroking it three times it was restored to its original shape.

The connection with the zodiac is with Leo and Virgo, who, in Arthurian legend are Lancelot and Guinevere. Their fatal love brought the round table into disrepute so I wondered if they were also Adam and Eve. Between them in Trent Park is Snakes Lane, perhaps suggesting the serpent on the apple tree in the garden of Eden. Anyway, I came up with an outline for some sort of reptile, perhaps also Hydra. It coils as if to protect Camlet moat which is an important place in the zodiac. (one of the apples?-). The name Camlet was once Camelot! The snake's back is the road called The Ridgway and "Leeching Beech Gutter" appears within the outline.

Some lines of the song Alison Gross, immortalised by Steeleye Span, are clearly references to most zodiacs. Here then are the clearest ones and the way they suggest a zodiac. They are only parts of verses:

Verse (2): She stroked my hair and she stroked my head,
She set me down softly on her knee

LETTERS

From Sam Wildman:

"I suppose like everything else T.s have to go through a rather vagur state at first until sufficient facts have been collected and sorted out, and the more way-out ideas pruned down a bit. As you say, like leys. For instance, I would tale a lot of convincing about the enormous figures suggested by Mollie Carey and A.D. Jack. I can't make out any of them on the map myself except perhaps one of the bear's paws. One figure alone is so easy to make a mistake about, wheras 12 in the right order are harder to dismiss. It's a bit like "national" hill figures like the Howgill Black Horse or the Prestatyn fish -- you do get them from time to time just by chance. There's a fine profile of a woman's head and shoulders made by the windups of the Wye near Mor-diford, but it can't conceivably be due

to anything but chance; and I'm inclined to put down Jack's and Mrs Carey's figures to the same things. (We have a very good red dragon on the hills near here; it's a patch of bracken and that's all, but this is Owain Glyndwr country and an imaginative Welshman could perhaps make a lot out of it.

If we see Leo as the man (who is speaking) this is common to couples but is more like what you would do to a cat; Leo the cat or familiar?

(2) Sir if you will be my lover so true,
So many good things I would give to you.

This, perhaps, recalls part of the original rituals of the zodiac and the "good things" that may or might or should occur if performed correctly. The next three verses are all descriptions of three gifts which probably represent the types of good things that would occur: successful harvest, etc.

(7) Away away you ugly witch, go far away and let me be,
I never would kiss your ugly mouth, for all the gifts that you could give.

This is sometime later on. The man obviously does not want to participate, perhaps because it involves some kind of human sacrifice and he is the "chosen one".

(8) She turned her 'bitern' round about,
And thrice she blew on a grass green horn,
she swore by the moon and the stars up above,
and she makes me boon the day I was born.

The word bitern is unclear if I have the right word* but a bittern is a heron-like bird. The grass green horn is clearly the wheatsheaf or triangular object of all zodiacs, particularly Glastonbury's which is very horn-like. An excellent clue is the "moon and the stars up above" which is clearly the rest of the zodiac farther north than her. I can offer no explanation for those reversed like Ongar etc. I am also in doubt about the word boon which means "favour", and not the opposite as I expected*. The mention of this birthday, perhaps, says something about the return to the womb and burial mounds, in which case he may rejoice.

* Regarding verse 8 I tackled a folksinger and Morris dancer pal who loaned me a copy of "The Penguin Book of Ballads". This gives the contentious words clearly as not as Steve has heard them. The Penguin version is:

She's turned her right and roun about,
An thrice she blaw on a grass-green horn,
An she sware by the meen and stars abeen,
That she'd gar me rue the day I was born. *

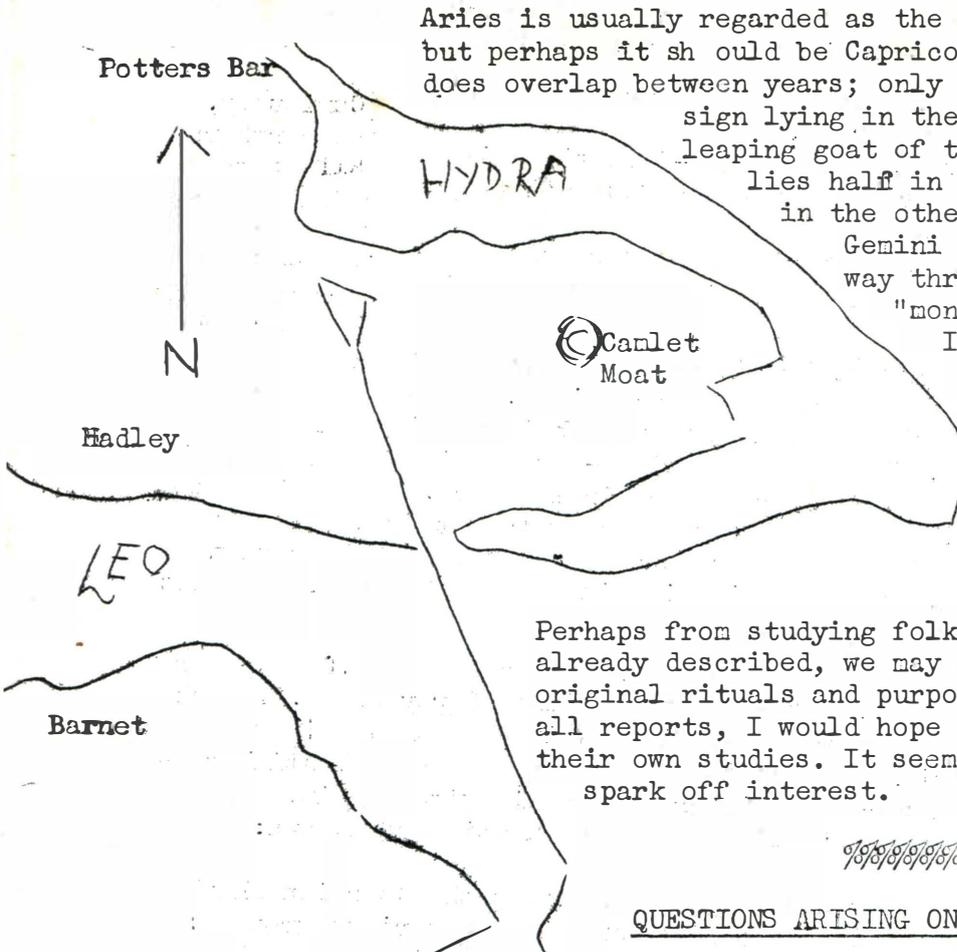
id the wheatsheaf again, and the fact of three times is interesting, but as yet I can see no connection with the zodiac. Perhaps the worm is the snake effigy, which lies behing Leo and is about to bite his leg (perhaps an indicator to the "dragon power" or Christianity against paganism). I should like to point out that my "hydra" is not unique or ahything like it. This should be found to exist in most zodiacs. Already clues are starting to show. These are: Janet Roberts's Aller dragon and even in the Pumpsaint/Ffarmers areas is a placename suggesting a hydra, which is now thought to be part of Scorpio.

(9) Then out she has taken a
silver wand,
She turned it three times round
and round
She muttered such words that my
strength it did fail
And she turned me into an ugly
worm.

This is clearly part of the ritual being performed, but as to what is done I can let only the words say. Perhaps the wand

The song ends here (* Actually Steve's last line is the first line of verse 10 and there are verses 10 to 13 with material on Hallowe'en and a changing-back again. I'm sending Steve a copy of the lyrics as printed in the Penguin book, and, perhaps, he will care to comment further. These in no way make the article invalid. Incidentally, the book is edited by Geoffrey Grigson, a man who wrote a crazed and disgraceful review of John Michell's "The View Over Atlantis" for "The Listener" while that magazine was being edited by Karl Miller) but the story has an ending which shows good overcoming evil and the continuous cycle of the year and zodiac itself. I don't know just how old the song or story are; I may be quite wrong about it referring to any zodiac. Perhaps if the birthplace of the story was found it would refer to yet another zodiac or at least part of it.

There is, however, some indication of the zodiac being planned. This was discovered when the vesica piscis shape of the temple was spotted.



Aries is usually regarded as the first sign of the zodiac but perhaps it should be Capricorn, although the sign does overlap between years; only a small portion of the sign lying in the older year. The leaping goat of the circle

lies half in one and half in the other. Also Gemini is half-way through the "monthly" year.

It is the last of the effigies in the NW circle and no others enter it apart from Capricorn, for the reason already mentioned. In other words the zodiac's effigies follow closely the calendar of the year.

Perhaps from studying folktales and song like the one already described, we may get that much closer to the original rituals and purpose of the zodiacs. This, as with all reports, I would hope that other researchers will do their own studies. It seems pointless to write and not spark off interest.

QUESTIONS ARISING ON "THE AGE OF THE GLASTONBURY ZODIAC"

BY J. J. JEMMIS

Sam Wildman raises some interesting and important points in his article in T.Z.N. 6. I hope that his identification of the star Aldebaran as the initial point of the Glastonbury Zodiac will be given the consideration it deserves and finally be accepted. He has indeed nailed the Sumerian origin-theory, the only good basis for which was the evidence of the "equinox line".

Mr Wildman prefers to examine zodiacal iconography, an approach that has been pursued by Nigel Pennick (Journal of Geomancy 2/2) and myself (TZN:4, JoG 3/3) among others. We may differ in our conclusions, but it remains a fact that iconography is one of the best leads we have on the question of zodiacal origins. These things are works of art and they have a definite style -- they bear the visual stamp of the culture that created and used them.

The hedge count is an excellent example of the kind of practical work that can be usefully done in zodiac research to back up the less strenuous study of maps and books. The results given in the article certainly demonstrate that the roads used to outline the zodiac figures are generally older than other roads in the area. As the author says, this proves that the figures are real artefacts. Does it prove that they are mediaeval? Shrub counting gives reliable results in relative terms (i.e. in demonstrating that hedge A is older than hedge B), but it cannot be used for absolute dating. The "one species to a century" rule for a hedge is at best a good approximation. As with all archaeological dating methods (even carbon-14 testing) there is a margin of doubt, usually expressed as a statistical probability. The other practical disadvantage of the hedge count is that it can only take us back to the era when a given road was first hedged -- it tells us nothing of the use of the road before that time. Altogether, this means that we can say "this road is no later than the x-th century", but we cannot reasonably say that the same road is no earlier.

The idea that the fully-fledged terrestrial zodiac is based on an earlier calendar circle (as at Crookbarrow Hill) is intuitively attractive and demands

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further examination elsewhere. I'd suggest looking at the points where the outlines of two (or more) figures touch, some of which may be marked by old and/or sacred places. There are examples of this in the Glastonbury Zodiac:

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|---------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Sagittarius - Capricorn : | Ponters Ball (Iron Age linear earthwork). | (Curiously, |
| Capricorn - Aquarius : | Gogmagog oak trees. | the northern |
| Aquarius - Pisces : | Glastonbury Abbey (on pre-Christian site). | half of the |
| Pisces - Whale : | Pomparles Bridge (on Roman foundations). | zodiac has a |
| Pisces - Aries : | Street Cross. | full set of |
| Aries - Taurus : | Marshalls Elm (pre-Roman crossroads). | inter-figure |
| Taurus - Gemini : | Compton Cross (socket still in position). | markers whereas |
| | | the southern |

half seems to have none -- any comments?). Mr Wildman, himself, quoted Ponters Ball and Pomparles Bridge as markers in the circle of church sites. I'm not sure that markers have to be equidistant from the centre, although obviously it would be encouraging to find that this is so. There is an equinox-marker in the Ongar Zodiac (Tips Cross), so I'll renew the search for a calendar circle there. If we find such circles of sites in other TZ areas, we may adopt the theory that they preceded the figures, assuming that individual calendar-markers can be shown to be older than the roads and other outlines. I suspect that this will indeed be the case, and that a Neolithic/Bronze Age origin is by no means unlikely.

Finally, in a note on page 7 of the last TZN, Sam Wildman asks the 64,000 dollar question: "Why are they always zodiacs?" It seems that Mollie Carey and A.D. Jack have begun to answer this by finding non-zodiacal figures in Wessex. Good! But to rephrase the question: are terrestrial zodiacs the same thing as the celestial zodiac? It is apparent that they are not -- the differences begin with a Ship, a Dove and a Phoenix, nor need they end there. I'd like to ask a question of my own:

Why a Scorpion?

- There seems to be a general acceptance that the Scorpion should be found in terrestrial zodiacs, but this is open to question on various grounds:
- 1) In those TZs so far published there is a tendency for the Scorpion to be the least convincing of the figures -- there are even two quite different versions of the figure in the Glastonbury Zodiac.
 - 2) The Scorpion came from Mesopotamia, and in the Middle East it is an obvious symbol of hostility/cunning/death -- but it is not found in Britain (*see article following). The use of the symbol is known here only through the celestial zodiac originating in the East.

Taking these two points together, it is apparent that TZ researchers look for what they expect to find. However, it may be that preconception obscures vision. There are alternatives:

- 3) In British legend (as elsewhere) the sacred king (i.e. the Archer) is killed by a poisoned spear (Bran, Llew Llaw), a wild boar (Diarmuid in Ireland) or perhaps a serpent. These three dooms share with Scorpio the qualities of sharpness/penetration and poison/treachery.
- 4) This is my opinion only -- terrestrial zodiacs are an essential element of the "Mysteries of Britain"; it is unnecessary to look as far as Sumeria (let alone Atlantis) for their origin. The story that the figures tell is in a sense archetypal and capable of many different interpretations. What we are dealing with here is the British (and very probably Celtic) interpretation of the archetype.

This suggestion could be completely wrong, but we won't know until it has been tested. If we mentally erase the Scorpion from our maps and take a fresh look, it's possible that we'll find something else. Lewis Edwards, looking around Pumpsaint, found a combination of Scorpion, Serpent and Eagle. Why shouldn't there be found spearmen or wild boars in other places?

ONGAR SCORPIONS

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Scorpions are not regarded as British wildlife but "Albion" magazine reports in issue 3 these arachnids have been found as a colony at Ongar London Underground station and commented that this argument against their "nativeness" must be silenced. A colleague told me David Attenborough showed them on a TV programme.

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THE LION, THE UNICORN AND THE ZODIACS

by ROSEMARY PARDOE

I've been having some thoughts myself on the lion and unicorn and their connection with terrestrial zodiacs, and if you've got the room in TZN I'd rather like to share them with others:

For some time I've been wondering why the terrestrial zodiacs researchers haven't applied one of the myths of the lion and unicorn to TZs. It does seem to me that it has possible connections. The well-known way to trap a unicorn is, of course, with the aid of a virgin, but there is another way, much used by lions, apparently. The lion taunts the unicorn until she runs at him; he hides behind a tree and the unicorn impales her horn in the tree; the lion then can eat her at his ease! This method was mentioned in Spenser's "Fairie Queene" (ii, 5, 10), and in Grimm's "The Brave Little Tailor". The hero uses the same method. Odell Shepard in his "The Lore of the Unicorn" suggests that the myth "may be much older than the Holy Hunt allegory" (i.e. the virgin capture).

In most of the TZs, of course, Leo (the lion) and Capricorn (the unicorn) are diametrically opposed, and in several of the zodiacs (including Glastonbury) the unicorn points her horn directly at the lion. Sometimes the horn points straight through the centrepoint of the zodiac. There are some zodiacs in which this centrepoint is a wood or wooded area (e.g. Cuffley, Bury St Edmunds). Could it be coincidence that in these cases the only thing protecting the lion from the wrath of the unicorn is a wood? Is there any evidence that a wooded area of some sort could originally have formed the centre of all the zodiacs?

In some cases, where there is no central wood, the unicorn's horn itself consists of a wood (e.g. Holderness).

There are frustrating problems with the theory unfortunately....for instance, in the zodiacs where there is a central wood, the unicorn seems to be determinedly not pointing at the lion....oh well!

Shepard's explanation for the myth is that the lion and unicorn represent the sun and the moon. I don't find this idea at all convincing, though it has its possibilities.

Another thing which could be followed up is the myth (mentioned by Mary Caine in her Glastonbury book) that the unicorn's horn was a water purifier. In how many zodiacs does the Capricorn figure encompass an important water source? At Ongar the River Roding flows straight through the unicorn figure and joins it to the lion. Unfortunately though, the river doesn't itself touch the horn. In the Winchester zodiac, on the other hand, the horn is formed by an ancient fish-pond. At Bury the horn is formed by the River Linnet whilst -- almost too good to be true -- at Old Bolingbroke the tip of Capricorn's horn touches the remains of a castle, "in its day....of great importance as it was in control of the main water supply for some distance around" (S. Satchwell in JoG 3/4).

Whilst on the subject of Mary Caine's book, I would be a little wary of her explanation of the origin of the Scottish heraldic unicorn. The fact is that no one knows for sure its origin.....even heraldry has its mysteries.

By the way, my use of "her" for the unicorn doesn't necessarily mean anything, I just used it to differentiate 'her' from the lion.

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LETTER: From Steve Satchwell.

On the subject of information to back up the T.Z., I have managed to dig up one interesting piece of folklore in the area of Boston. Legend has it that the breezes that blow around the exposed tower known as Boston Stump (sited on the dragon's throat in the sign of Leo) are said to be a result of a struggle between St Botolph and the Devil. The saint so belaboured Satan that he huffed and puffed raising a wind that has not yet died down. As I said in my previous letter, the dragon appeared to be communicating with its rider, whilst pointing out something.

Now obviously the winds of the dragon's huffing and puffing, in the legend, seem to indicate that its saintly rider is in fact forcing the dragon to point something out. On looking at the figures though the rider does not appear to have too much of a commanding force over its mighty serpent.

Unfortunately I have now been posted out of Lincolnshire, so more research of this kind is to say the least difficult.

However, I have a suggestion I would like to put forward on terrestrial zodiacs as a whole. This being on the possibility that the figures are laid out on water, i.e. rivers, streams and underground streams. The latter then being traced through to the surface by means of water divination and then laid out in more permanent form by the use of tracks, roads, etc.

It may seem ~~partfatched~~ that underground streams could produce such precise figures but the enormous profusion of geodetic phenomena produced by underground water, does give rise to certain possibilities. Guy Underwood, in his book "Pattern of the Past", states that one of the primary forms of geodetic line -- the track line -- always traces the route of old roads.

After some preliminary dowsing I found this to be true. However, when relating this to the zodiac I found the area too vast to be able to discern anything of proof as to whether or not the outlines were laid out on geodetic principles.

As more zodiacs appear to be composed of streams, rivers and roads it may be of interest to TZ hunters to bear the idea in mind. Particularly in areas where a TZ has been partially destroyed as it may be possible to pick up the original trace.

At this stage I would like to point out that if one looks carefully at the drawing of the Old Bolingbroke Zodiac, you will notice a general fluidity to the figures, merging and continuing on into each other. This is what led me to the idea of a water system being involved as a form of underlying basis. Furthermore, if TZs are laid out upon forces of water, then this would tie in with Underwood's theories on ancient sacred sites of Britain -- thus adding to the reality of the TZ phenomenon.

..... Next newsletter will have a publications special.

Any articles or letters of comment would be welcome -- as soon as possible.

