

Wisht Maen

Devon Earth Mysteries Magazine

WINTER 1993

No 1



BRENTOR - HILL OF VISION

DEVON CROP CIRCLES

WISTMANS WOOD

SCORHILL CARVINGS?

OMPHALOS - KING ARTHUR - FAIRIES

CONTENTS

Editorial.....	p1
BRENTOR - HILL OF VISION Paul Broadhurst.....	p2
CROP CIRCLES IN DEVON Pete Glastonbury.....	p5
THE OMPHALOS OF DEVON.....	p10
THE MATTER OF BRITAIN William Saxton.....	p13
PREHISTORIC CARVINGS DISCOVERED?.....	p16
BOOK REVIEWS.....	p17
WISTMANS WOOD.....	p18
THE FAIRIES Iris Andrews.....	p24
PATTERN OF THE STONES Cheryl Straffon.....	p25
EXCHANGE MAGAZINES & ADS LISTINGS.....	p27

Articles and Artwork copyright of WISHT MAEN and the individual authors/artists. The opinions expressed in WISHT MAEN are not necessarily those held by the Editors. Contributions are welcome and should be sent to:-
CONDORS EXETER STREET NORTH TAWTON DEVON EX20 2HB

Please, if you want contributions returned or a reply to an enquiry, enclose an SAE!

* * *
Skills and Energy Sharing
Week
24 DECEMBER '93 - 1 JAN '94
* * *

Limited Numbers! EARLY BOOKING ESSENTIAL!
FUN SONGS PRACTICAL SKILLS JUGGLING NEW
DISCUSSIONS MASSAGE LA CIRCLE DANCE GAMES
NO DOGS VOICES START WELCOME UNIVERSE OF PEACE
IMPROVISATION WHAT EVER COMES

DEVON; 1 mile from Dartmoor, close to old woods. Sleep in warm 3-room Hall, or camp.
COST per day: £7 adults, £2-3 children.
This is to cover food, hire of hall, and heating.
-OR DETAILS & DIRECTIONS ring DAVID/HABIBA
0272 - 699454

BRING: mattress, cushions, rugs (tents), books, musical instruments, games, anything you'd like to share

SUBSCRIPTIONS

£7 3 issues a Year
£2.30 sample copy
Cheques payable to:
WISHT MAEN

FRONT COVER:

Wistmans Wood by Nicola Sellars

BACK COVER:

by Mary Coombs

Artwork on p1,9,10,11,12,
Nicola Sellars 17,23

Artwork on p2,5,6,16,24
Anna Clarke

PRINTED ON THE ISLE OF
ARRAN BY CLAN DALRIADA

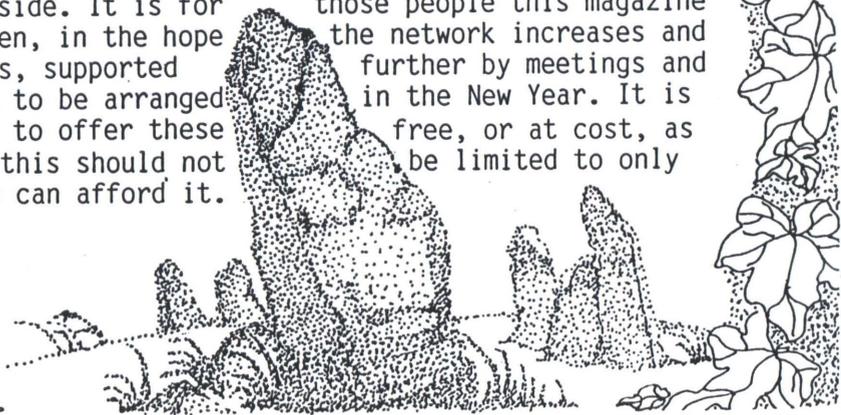
Wisht Maen

The motivation for this magazine is grounded in an innate attraction to the ancient sites and Earth Mysteries of Devon, and the lack of accessible information. In short, I knew that if I wanted to read such a magazine, then I'd have to make the first attempt, and start one myself.

Earth Mysteries - alternative studies of past and place - offers a set of techniques and a paradigm of thought by which hitherto fragmented bits of knowledge and ideas might be connected and made sense of, offering us new knowledge, wisdom, an ability to develop ourselves, our relationships with others, and by our connection with it, the Land itself. It is hoped that this alternative magazine will stimulate and support the readers' own awareness and subsequent enquiry.

Local mainstream media view 'New Age' travellers as a bigger threat to the environment than ever encroaching quarrying, privatisation of the forestry commission, and the occupation of land by large scale landowners and the Military.

It is heartening indeed that so many people have responded who clearly are concerned by current issues, and who are inspired by our beautiful Devon coasts and countryside. It is for those people this magazine is written, in the hope the network increases and develops, supported further by meetings and seminars to be arranged in the New Year. It is our hope to offer these free, or at cost, as access to this should not be limited to only those who can afford it.



One of the most vivid memories I can recall is of that slumbering crag of rock known as Brentor. The traveller, heading along the main road to and from the West, catches sight of it guarding the northern slope of Dartmoor, and is reminded that it is one of the principal sanctuaries visited by previous pilgrims on their way from Glastonbury to St Michael's Mount. Its hermitage-like church, remote from the sophistries of modern civilization, evokes that primitive feeling associated with early Celtic Christianity, and the old hill with its ring of prehistoric earthworks seems always to have been recognised for its atmosphere of sanctity.

I still don't really know why, some fifteen years ago, I had this strong urge to get up at four o'clock in the morning and drive through the dark Devon lanes to see the Mayday sunrise from its summit. I was aware that some would consider it a certain sign of encroaching insanity. I hadn't yet heard of the St Michael Line and its string of churches dedicated to the archangel of high places, and its relation to the Mayday, or Beltane, sunrise. Even so, I felt a powerful inner compulsion to honour the Sun, and the Earth, for some reason that was beyond my understanding.

It is strange how some events possess the power to transport you back to a special place and time. I can smell the dew-damp slippery grass and hear the crowing cock whenever I think of it. As I stood in front of the altar, watching the twilight transformation as the stained glass window depicting St Michael slowly filled with dawn light, it occurred to me that there was some almost tangible power pouring in with the light; a subtle, excitable energy that made everything crisp and clear, vibrating with life. The five senses had a special intensity, or perhaps others, unknown, stirred from somewhere deeper.

Outside, as I surveyed the Dartmoor sunrise, a remarkable spectacle took place on the horizon. The orange disc of the Sun appeared not on, but above it. A reddish dot appeared first, hanging low above the hills to the east, which grew steadily into an arc, and then, by some curious atmospheric effect of the mist, created a glowing crescent, its horns pointing towards the Earth. It only lasted a fragment of time, yet it seemed powerfully symbolic.

Years later, Hamish Miller and I arrived at the foot of Brentor after having tracked the current of earth energy that had led us from the westernmost tip of Cornwall, and was later to draw us to Glastonbury, Avebury and beyond, as chronicled in THE SUN AND THE SERPENT. We stood on a series of overgrown mounds, thought to be the remnants of mining activity and a medieval rabbit warren. The Dartmoor drizzle condensed out of the mist, and the church was completely hidden. We were tired, soaked and longed to steam gently in front of a glowing fire with a glass of that famous sacred Scottish elixir known to lift flagging spirits. As Hamish discovered the energy focussing down to a specific spot in the earthworks, a voice called out through the mist. It seemed natural and unremarkable, and indeed, may have been. We will never know.

A few minutes later, the church bell rang out seven times from somewhere above our heads, eerily beckoning us to the invisible church. Again, we thought little of it, and slipped and slid up the steep slope, the church gradually congealing from the greyness. We opened the door, dripping onto the slate floor, and were struck that there was no sign of any other footprints. When we got back to the car park, ours were still the only ones there. Amongst the weird and weighty annals of Dartmoor lore, it hardly rated as a supernatural experience. Nevertheless, the whole affair was distinctly uncanny, and left a vivid impression on us.

The next morning was very different. Sunlight sparkled on the grass and everything was exceptionally vivid. I took a series of photographs as Hamish dowsed the spot where the current of energy appeared to funnel down to a thin point and disappear into the earth. A curious distorted geometrical figure was dowseable, and we wanted to mark it out precisely with pegs and a ball of white string. The black and white photographs showed everything as seen by the eye, and one of these is reproduced in the book.

However, when the series of transparencies returned from processing, they showed a strange effect. Gradually, during the dowsing, an amorphous misty effect became more pronounced. It hung in the air directly over the figure, an irregular pentagram, and grew more noticeable picture by picture. Then, it began to fade until normality was resumed (unfortunately this effect cannot be reproduced here in black-and-white, although some readers may have seen it during my talk/slide shows). At first I thought it must be lens flare from the wide angle lens, but this couldn't explain why it was not present in each photograph. Also, it did not have the appearance of flare, which I was familiar with. Naturally, I was intrigued. In fifteen years as a professional photographer, only one other example of what might be psychic photography had ever surfaced (at the fogou at Carn Euny ancient village in Cornwall).

Such experiences lead one to wonder what exactly is going on when something invisible to the eye can apparently register on film emulsion. Film is sensitive to light. Yet the visible spectrum is only a tiny area of the true spectrum, from below infra-red to ultra-violet and beyond, those high-frequency levels of vibration perceived by clairvoyants who can 'clear-see'.

It has also been noticed by those who regularly produce psychic photographs that the state of mind of the photographer is crucial. For this reason, a snap-type camera is far superior to a 'real' one, where all the technicalities of film speed and f-stops interfere with the natural receptivity of the mind. One can only assume that because of some degree of heightened awareness, such an effect was made possible despite the preoccupation with correct exposure.

But perhaps there is another important point here. It is easy to forget that what we are dealing with is LIGHT. St Michael himself is an angel of light, replacing earlier gods of light. The whole universe is composed of light, visible and invisible, all vibrating at different rates. What if there is, as many claim, an interaction between the human mind and old sacred sites which alters the vibratory rate of both? Multitudinous are the reports of strange lights glimpsed at such places, and people often report that they appear to 'glow' or seem particularly vivid after meditation or a visit in a naturally-receptive state of mind. The most likely explanation would appear to be that a mind in a state of wonder, awe, respect, alpha rhythm, (choose whichever comes closest to that intangible sense of oneness that we have all experienced at one time or another) creates a resonance in the energies of the Earth itself.

Thus it may be that prayer or meditation, that is, consciousness deliberately raised above the affairs of ordinary everyday life, may have a remarkable effect on not only the site itself, but may also set in motion a tide of inner change, even perhaps unrecognised at the time, that causes shifts of awareness that lead to illumination.

The landscape of southern Britain is amazingly rich in such places of former veneration, remembered for their sacred character. In these times when the Earth cries out for understanding, many of them are now re-awakening in our collective consciousness. Among the most significant is surely that extraordinary guardian of Dartmoor, the Hill of Vision.

THE SUN AND THE SERPENT is available at 10.95 (post free) from Pendragon Press, P O Box 888, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 7YH. Paul Broadhurst is also the author of SECRET SHRINES, a beautifully illustrated study of ancient holy wells in Cornwall; and TINTAGEL AND THE ARTHURIAN MYTHOS. Both books available from above address.

DARTMOOR NEWSLETTER

EVERY TWO MONTHS

News Information and Features
History, Old Dartmoor, Book News,
Walks, Local History Societies, &
lots more

Subscription: £6 from Paul
Rendell, 20 Rolston Close,
Southway, Plymouth, Devon,
PL6 6PE. Cheques payable:
PAUL RENDELL.

Also available: IVYBRIDGE INFORMATION CENTRE
& OWENS BOOK CENTRE, TAVISTOCK, DEVON

the dandy-lion

CRYSTALS
AROMATHERAPY

Ladies Fashions

Red Lion Yard
Okehampton
Devon
Tel: (0837) 54306

CROP CIRCLES IN DEVON PETE GLASTONBURY

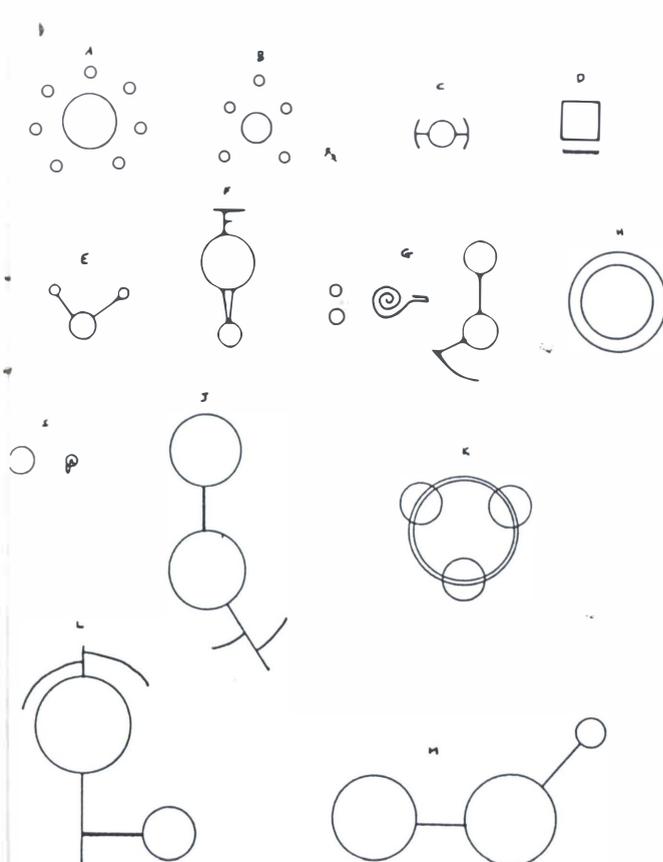
Devon has played host to many of the enigmatic shapes found in our fields each Summer. The phenomenon came to public attention in the 1980's and appears to have reached a peak in 1991. Since then there has been a marked decrease in the number of reported circles. The explosion in numbers is partly due to the fact that a number of groups have been making their own circles to prove to themselves that it could be done or to fool researchers and make them look gullible. Those who are immersed in the research are certain there is much more to this phenomenon than anyone had first imagined.

My own research started in the late 1980's. In 1990 I spent the Winter and Spring preparing for a set of experiments. In June a set of 6 circles appeared at Herebere near Newton Abbot (b). This formation was too close to the road to carry out my work. I wanted to use the music I had recorded as part of a night-time experiment to see if I could elicit a response from whoever, or whatever, made the circles.

A single circle with two arms and two arcs appeared in the Aller Valley near Dawlish (c). At the end of June, a massive set of 8 circles appeared at Bickington (a). This set was perfect. A single large circle with 7 evenly spaced satellites around it. I carried out my night-time experiments and in the daylight I carried out my surveys, and traced the lines from the centre of the largest circle through the centre of each satellite. I noticed that it was near a group of mounds and tumuli on top of Ingsdon Hill. The church at Bickington is dedicated to St Mary. I traced the line in the south west which went through the circle set at Herebere and on towards Denbury Wood, where there is an Iron Age enclosure. It then went on to Torbryn which has an ancient yew in its churchyard. Further on, this imaginary line runs through Berry Pomeroy Castle and on to Stoke Gabriel. There are ancient yews in both churchyards - three at St Marys in Berry Pomeroy and a single magnificent yew at St Gabriels and St Mary. The line carried on to an Iron Age fort at Hill Head between Brixham and Kingswier. The fort used to be called "Godmerock", and was once reputed to be the home of the Giant Goemagot, who did battle with Brutus when he stepped ashore at Totnes further up the River Dart.

On the boundary of Brixham and Churston I found a strange crop formation; a 17ft square with a rectangle in the south (d). In the field between the formation and the fort was a single flat standing stone used as a boundary marker. I dowsed the stone and the square, and found the same dowable energy spots. The spots were shaped like a six rayed star, or hexagram.

During the Winter I found a stone buried in the next field. One week-end a group of friends and myself unearthed it and set it upright. When viewed from the hill where the crop square appeared, the stones are clearly to be seen, both at the same elevation and orientation, even though there is a hill between the two stones, and one cannot be seen from the other. If a line is drawn through the stones and carried



DEVON
CROP
CIRCLE
FORMATIONS
1990 -
1993

- (a) Bickington 1990
- (b) Herebere 1990
- (c) Dawlish 1990
- (d) Godmerock 1990
- (e) Godmerock 1991
- (f) Godmerock 1992
- (g) Berry Pomeroy 1992
- (h) Beacon Hill Berry Pomeroy 1992
- (i) Barton Pines Berry Pomeroy 1992
- (j) Berry Pomeroy 1992
- (k) Cheriton Bishop 1992
- (l) Berry Pomeroy 1993
- (m) Brixham 1993

Farewell, Rewards and Fairies

Witness those rings and roundelays
Of theirs, which yet remain
Were footed in Queen Mary's days
On many a grassy plain;
But since of late Elizabeth
And later James came in,
They never danced on any heath
As when the time hath been.

By which we note the fairies
Were of the Old profession;
Their songs were Ave-Maries,
Their dances were procession.
But now, alas, they are all dead;
Or gone beyond the seas;
Or farther for religion fled,
Or else they take their ease.

Richard Corbet (1582-1635)

L'Allegro

And he by Friars Lanthorn led
Tells how the drudging Goblin swet,
To ern his cream-bowle duly set,
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,
His shadowy Flae hath thresh'd the Corn
That ten day-labourers could not end.

John Milton (1608-1674)



south, it goes through the woods where there are more stones and finally comes out at a tumuli on top of Guzzledown, a winding road from the fort into St Marys square at Higher Brixham.

In June 1991 I found a set of 3 circles exactly where we had visualised the line from the stones (e). At Berry Pomeroy in July, a single circle appeared at Glazegate and a dumbbell near Collaton St Mary. The Bickington site did not have a circle, and nearby Herebere has not had one since.

In 1992, all the circles clustered around Berry Pomeroy and Godmerock. The Summer started with a dumbbell at Glazegate Cross (f), and the next night a massive dumbbell formed at Guzzledown (g). Both circle sets were only yards away from the 1991 formations. Over the border with Cornwall, circles started to cluster around Callington Henge.

At the Berry Pomeroy dumbbell I took part in a night-time meditation with various Kindred Spirits, to see if we could entice our shy Summer visitors back. Two days later, a remarkable single circle formed in the field across the road between Glazegate Cross and Barton Pines (h). The circle was swirled clockwise and in the southern quarter we found that the seed heads of the barley had been carefully laid out with the beard facing the edge of the circle. Elsewhere, the seed heads appeared to have been randomly laid down. The rows of barley heads lined in spirals looked stunning. In the north I found two stems standing six inches into the circle. Crop was laid around and between the stalks, which were totally undamaged. The next day a single circle appeared in the Aller Valley, and this also had the seed heads in the south laid out in rows. This was a smaller circle and the crop laid anti-clockwise.

I had been joined by Chris Cordrey who had been helping me in previous years with my musical experiments. I wanted to try out playing diatonic music (no sharps or flats), as Professor Gerald Hawkins had published a paper on his findings on circles found around Stonehenge. He had found a new set of Euclidean theorems that appeared to be linked with diatonic ratios. Chris tuned his dulcimer and my harp to a diatonic scale and we both entered the circle at midnight on 17th July. We performed a small meditation and carried out a small ritual. At first we sat in the north but we both felt uncomfortable, moved to the south and felt much better. Under a canopy of stars we played our music freely, inspired by the Elements, and the circle.

After ten minutes or so, we both heard a sound coming from elsewhere in the field. It was loud enough for us both to stop playing at the same time and listen. The sound died away to the north as we both stopped. We talked about what we had heard and hoped that the sound would come out more clearly on the microcassette we were using to record the sounds we had made. We played on till lam and went home.

The next day the farmer called, to say there were more circles in his field, a large ringed circle had appeared in front of a combine harvester that was left overnight in a half cut field. It was cut down as soon as work resumed early that morning. At midmorning he found a dumbbell in another field that was being harvested, and in a third field there were six scattered circles. I rushed up to Barton Pines to check the single circle. Sometimes, additions have appeared on circles.

I found that a small, ringed circle had formed to the north and was exactly in the spot from where we had heard the sound. Alongside the first dumbbell I found a spiral pathway and a miniature dumbbell with crossed arms (i).

Two days later, a massive dumbbell appeared at Glazegate (j). The crop was oats and the field was just ready for harvesting. The oats shed as I walked through it towards the first circle. The spiral patterns looked incredible. The oats had not yet shed and lay in neat rows in both circles. The second circle had an arms with two arcs. The arm pointed to the single circle where we had played the music. In all, 11 circles appeared around the Barton Pines single. The only other formation to appear in Devon in 1992 was the set of four rings, at Cheriton Bishop (k).

In 1993, I moved to Sussex to carry out more musical experiments. The fields at Brixham and Berry Pomeroy had been left fallow so I decided to base my experiments around Cissbury ring. There were two formations in Devon, one at Berry Pomeroy, in the only field planted (l), and one at Churston, between St Mary's church and Godmerock (m). During my research I couldn't help noticing that the formations were occurring near churches dedicated to St Mary. During 1993 this is again apparent. The Knights Templar church at Sompting in Sussex is called St Mary's, and the church at Shoreham is dedicated to St Nicholas and St Mary (of the harbour). This may not be so at all circle sites, but it seems to be true for all the formations that have appeared near me.

This year, my work with music took another leap when I tried using a computer to play a precise sequence of notes. Professor Gerald Hawkins sent me a letter with a series of notes taped onto the back. He told me that he did not know why he did this and his letter said nothing about them. I assumed that he was suggesting I try out these notes, which I played inside a single circle at Titch Hill, Sompting, Sussex. Within 8 hours the circle had turned into a pictogram. When I phoned Gerald to tell him what had happened, he asked me if I knew where the notes were from. He sent me some literature on the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). The notes has been created by Sir Oliver J Lodge, as a means of communicating from beyond the grave.

If I had known this, I would not have tried the notes, as this would be an attempt to contact the dead, rather than whoever, or whatever, is responsible for creating the crop circle formations.

Could it really be the dead?

Fairies are said to be the souls of the dead, and in folklore, it was the fairies who gave grain to humankind as a gift from the gods.

The diatonic chart that Professor Hawkins has found enables me to ask questions with musical notes. I tried this in the pictogram at Titch Hill and several things happened. The pictogram had many new additions, including a triangle, a spiral and several new pathways. A second celtic cross appeared on the west of the church, making one at each side. In the field next to the pictogram a ring with a tail appeared, that has been dubbed the "Sperm".

Amongst the surveys I hope to find the numbers that are Cabalistically identical to the questions and hopefully some answers.

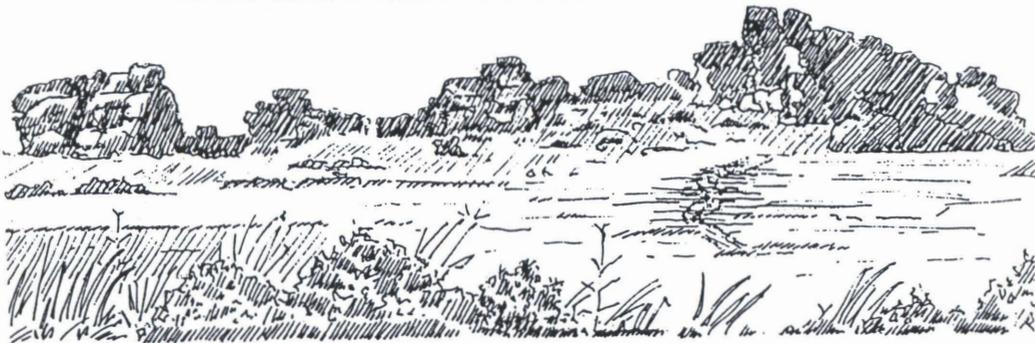
This will take a lot of research over the coming Winter months. In preparation for next year's research I would like to ask you, the reader, to take part.

Assume that the circlemaker is an unknown intelligence of either supernatural or extra-terrestrial abilities.

What three questions would you ask?

Please send your questions on a postcard to me c/o WISHT MAEN and I will try some of them out next year, and publish the results (if any) in a future issue.

If you would like to know more about circle research and how you could take part, please send me an SAE c/o WISHT MAEN. If you are lucky enough to find a crop circle formation in 1994 please tell the Hotline for the Centre for Crop Circle Studies (CCCS) Tel: 0726 832367. PLEASE DO NOT ENTER A FORMATION WITHOUT THE FARMERS PERMISSION.



FROM THE WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK:

I am undertaking some research for the Women's Environmental Network on ancient sacred sites in Britain under threat. Possible threats could include road building programmes, quarrying, military use of area, forestry, vandalism, access problems etc. The information will be written up into a report to be used as a campaigning tool. Please contact me at 30 Bois Hall Road, Addlestone, Surrey, KT15 2JL. All correspondence will be dealt with in confidence and nothing published without your permission. Thank you, and blessings.

DARTMOOR GUIDED WALKS COMING UP.....

BRONWEN GRIFFITHS

WINTER SOLSTICE WALK Thursday 21 December 5.30pm 1½ hours £1.50. Exploring Bronze Age remains at Merrivale. Meet at Four Winds GR SX561749 (large walled car park in trees on S side of B3357 Two Bridges-Tavistock road). With Brian Byng, author of DARTMOORS MYSTERIOUS MEGALITHS, based on the astronomical work of Alexander Thom. Tel: 0275 851639.

THE SUN, MOON AND STANDING STONES 1hr illustrated talk 3pm free. High Moorland Visitor Centre, Princetown. With Brian Byng. Saturday 19 March 1994.

SPRING EQUINOX WALK Sunday 20 March 5.30AM 1½ hours £1.50. Exploring Merrivale and see the sunrise over the stones. Meet at Four Winds (as above). With Brian Byng.

FOLKLORE AND LEGENDS OF DARTMOOR Tuesday 29 March 1994 1 hr talk 8pm £1.50.

Held at DNPA HQ Parke Bovey Tracey with Dave Addis, Dartmoor Guide.

DARTMOOR ARCHAEOLOGY YEAR 1994 Centenary Walk to Grimspound where archaeological excavations began on 31 March 1894. Route 4-5 miles. Thursday 31 March, 10am and 2.15pm.

3 hours. £2.00. Meet Shapley Common, in car park on N side of B3212 between Moreton-hampstead and Postbridge. With archaeologists from the DNPA. Go & ask some hard questions!! NB: WALKS START EXACTLY AT TIME GIVEN SO GATHER YE 10-15 mins BEFOREHAND.



The Nine Maidens Belstone

THE OMPHALOS OF DEVON

MEYN MAMVRO and MERCIAN MYSTERIES (see Exchange List) have featured articles on the Omphalos (navel) - the sacred centre of the world, or a particular area. To the Ancient Greeks it was at Delphi, site of the oracle of Apollo; to the ancient Babylonians it was at Eridu, the head of the Persian Gulf; and to the Muslims it was (and is) in Mecca, called the Goddess Al'Lat, a black meteoric stone that originally represented the Goddess Al'Lat, although patriarchy converted it to the Hand of Allah. (1)

There are several places deemed to be England's sacred centre. In The Mabinogian, the mythical King Llud was instructed to measure the length and breadth of the land to find the exact centre, where there would be a pool with two dragons fighting. This he did, and found it was in Oxford. Other possibilities are High Cross (on the Leicestershire and Warwickshire border), Royston (formerly on the Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire border); Dunstable in Bedfordshire; Lichfield in Staffordshire; Croft Hill in Leicestershire; and Meriden in Warwickshire. Every Celtic land had its own sacred centre; in Ireland it was the holy hill of Tara; in the Scottish Hebrides it was Iona. Cornwall's omphalos is Lanivet, near Bodmin. The name Lanivet means the church-site (Lan) at the pagan sacred place (Neved) - the word Nymet (from the Old British Nemeton meaning "a sacred place") has the same meaning in Devon (Nymet Tracey, Kings Nympton, Nymet Hayes, Nicholls Nymet etc). Lanivet is 13.5 miles from Padstow in the North and Fowey in the South; 50 miles from Lands End and 40 miles from the River Tamar. A note on the church door proclaims it as the geographical centre of Cornwall. (2)

The site of all these omphalos were often marked with a special pole or sacred tree, the "axis mundi" of the world, which later became the Maypole, or by some special stone. They marked these places of great spiritual energy where the Mundane World and the Otherworld met, symbolic centres of the spiritual heart of the Land (3). Lanivet has a wheel cross marking its centre, with a decorated shaft.

Where is Devon's sacred centre?

Tracing the outline of the county of Devon onto a graph and measuring where the centre would be indicated the area around Kings Nympton to be a favourite. Investigation of most of the villages around there however yielded no corroboration. Trevor Beer has this to say on the subject of the centre of Devon... "We used the method used in Scotland in recent times to determine the 'centre' of that country. This is based simply on centre of gravity and interestingly it fits well with leys and mystic sites wherever we have used it. An exact cut-out of the county or country is made and literally pin-pointed to

find the centre of balance or centre of gravity. For us it came at Belstone Tor. Obviously the slightest error in the template will alter the result so great care has to be taken. Five of us did five separate pieces and all arrived at Belstone. Dowsing at this site also provides an affirmative so I believe it is correct. Another method employed by some engineers is that using concentric circles but I have not tried this".

It is much more exciting to learn that Belstone Tor (SX614921) could be the omphalos of Devon. The St Michael ley as traced by Paul Broadhurst and Hamish Miller in THE SUN AND THE SERPENT runs through the centre of The Nine Maidens stone (cairn) circle at the foot of the Tor and through the Tor itself. The circle originally marked the circumference of a round barrow. The kistvaen in the centre has been long vanished, though the depression in the earth where it once stood remains. There are more than nine stones, but dowsing shows only nine stones as having energy lines connecting them to the centre within the circle. Broadhurst states that it must have once been a sacred site. There are hut circles nearby, and perhaps the circle was converted once to a hermitage or dwelling, hence more than nine stones. The stones are supposed to be women who were turned to stone for dancing on the sabbath (as are the Merry Maidens in Cornwall); a folk-memory of a coven of 9 priestesses who worshipped in the circle on a sabbat; 9 being a ritual, magical, sacred and symbolic number - 3 times 3, the triple Goddess of maiden, mother and crone.*

The St Michael ley then "ran right through the summit" (4), of Belstone Tor. The name Belstone would appear to be where a stone of Bel - the Celtic Sun God, Belenos the Brilliant, or Baal -once stood. Victorian writers believed that an altar to the Phoenician Sun God Belus had once been set at the summit of the Tor; this has been much scoffed at in later Dartmoor books. There is also a Bel Tor between Poundsgate and Ponsworthy at SX698729, and Bellever Tor at SX645763. Fires were lit on the hills of the ancient world to honour the sun and celebrate the Midsummer solstice; "a vision of great fires sparkling like a jewelled web across the countryside" (5). Wisht Maen hopes to be instrumental in reviving the Fire Festivals on some Dartmoor Tors. Kit Hill, just over the border into Cornwall, was host to a Midsummer bonfire this year, so a start to this vision has already been made.

Another candidate for the omphalos of Devon is Spinsters Rock, the only surviving cromlech/dolmen in the county. It is described as "nearly in the middle of the county of Devon, being within two and a half miles of the centre by its circumscribing circle" (6). Of course, the county boundaries may have been different then. The circles and stone rows are no longer there - the antiquary Polwhele was the only one to have mentioned them in 1793 - but remains were recorded in the 1800's, and the last of the stones were stolen in 1865. Wisht Maen is to study this remarkable dolmen in greater detail in a later issue.



Spinsters Rock
(SX701897)

Hamel Down could also be a contender. Samuel Rowe refers to it as "the saddleback of Devonshire" and states that Hameldon Beacon "commands a vast extent of country in all directions" (7) and that it was the site of a signal-flame to alarm the country. There are also many sacred sites on Hamel Down. Grimspound is at the foot of the Tor, and on its summit is Broad Barrow, Single Barrow and Two Barrows. It was here, in 1872, that one of the most important finds on Dartmoor was made. Mixed up with the bones of the body under a stone was an amber ornament, inlaid with gold pins (now in Exeter Museum). In another barrow, a "beautifully built-up cairn of small flat stones - a perfect little beehive hut in fact" (8) was found; about 3ft high, with nothing inside, and no evidence of anything having been inside. The remains of the body was far away from the centre, close by the edge of the stone circle enclosing the mound. The beehive cairn was put there to mislead any possible intruder/disturber, so the body must have once been an important person.

If any readers have other suggestions for the centre of Devon, or, as Cheryl Straffon suggests "Perhaps Dumnonia itself had an omphalos rather than the current area of Devon" (The Warren House Inn?), please write in. It's fun investigating....honest.

* For an excellent and thorough explanation on this theme please refer to PAPAN CORNWALL - LAND OF THE GODDESS by Cheryl Straffon. Meyn Mamvro Publications 7.50 ISBN 0 9518859 2 8

- (1) Straffon, Cheryl. CORNWALLS SACRED CENTRE from Meyn Mamvro No.22
- (2) Ibid.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Broadhurst, Paul and Miller, Hamish. THE SUN AND THE SERPENT. Pendragon Press 1989. p65
- (5) Ibid., p65
- (6) Chapple, William. DESCRIPTION AND EXEGESIS OF THE DREWSTEIGNTON CROMLECH 1779; in A PERAMBULATION OF DARTMOOR, Samuel Rowe, Devon Books 1985. p115
- (7) ROWE, Samuel. ibid. p147
- (8) Ibid. p148



PAGAN VOICE

is the monthly newspaper of Paganism and Magick

keeping you in touch every month with news • interviews • topical articles • astrology • reviews • readers' letters • huge What's On guide • humour

...and much more!
£1 sample, £5.50 6 months.
Just £10 one year
(cheques/POs to 'Pagan Voice')
Pagan Voice -
13 Barnstaple Walk, Knowle, Bristol BS4 1JQ
(also available at all fine esoteric stores)

Mercian Mysteries

Alternative studies of past and place
in the Midlands

Much more than a regional
Earth mysteries magazine.

Now A4 format with regular articles of
general interest as well as details of history,
places and field trips in the Midlands.

Quarterly. £1.75 for a sample issue
£6.00 for four-issue subscription.

Mercian Mysteries
2 Cross Hill Close, Wymondslw.
Loughborough. LE12 6UJ



KING ARTHUR
THE MATTER OF BRITAIN

Wm A Saxton

ARTHUR on Dartmoor? Do we have one? It depends. There are three: the tough leader of a mercenary band of mounted guerilla-fighters; the chivalric founder of the Knights of the Round Table; or the faery (NOT = fairy, but = Underworld figure of religion).

On Hameldown, the highest part of the southern Moor, looming over Widecombe, is the King's Barrow. A little further north is furnum regis, latin (of the Celtic period) for the King's Oven. And we have a King's Way, K-Stone, K-Wood, K-Cross, K-Head, and K-Tor. There is a folk-legend in which Arthur leads the Dartmoor Wish Hounds. Old King Cole' (Coel Hen in Welsh)'s daughter was the beauteous Helen. Not the Troy/Totnes/Brutus one but the one that the Roman military roads are named for - Sarn Helen on OS maps. She married one of the Roman Emperors from Britain, the uncle of St Catherine of Alexandria, of our boss and side-altar. Their grandsons were Uther the Pendragon, and Ambrosius, Arthur's father and uncle; or were they? One version has Guinevere 'gat' instead of Arthur, and he getting kingship by right of his marriage to Guinevere. This is quite likely for the mythical Arthur, who is the Summer King.

We have an instinctive reverence for the Old Things: our ancestors' burial places. The people that were driven from the face of the earth, underground or to high untillable land, where their sacred sites were by an invader, become magically powerful in our mythology. We invest greatest power in the Pixy King, and glamour in the Prince of Darkness, signs of whom are still assiduously sought by visitors to Widecombe church. Witches are said to be 'OK', and not cruel hags, if they are 'priestesses of the Old Religion'. So with King Arthur. Cavalry war-lord, dux bellorum, has become a Prince of Chivalry, though Duke in Cornwall, yet King from Tintagel to Glastonbury.

He created the Round Table brotherhood. Round-table knights cannot have out-of-joint noises as there is no top and no bottom. The Garter of that later Order is a symbol of lasting friendship and the bonds of brotherhood. The dartboard of Dartmoor, Forest, Commons, and outer parishes, matches a Round Table. The bounds were fixed by the king's order by a double-coven of 24 knights. Richard Earl of Cornwall, it is currently being proved, was also recreating the ethos of King Arthur for his own advancement, (to King of the Germans and, hopefully, to Holy Roman Emperor, and to help his image, he built a grand castle on the island at Tintagel, for which there was no military or residential point.

There, for the first time in the UK, there has been dug up a stone libation cup: a holy grail!

And in rounds or stone circles, and two rock-carved mazes! and Gallant-le-Bower on the hill-top above Holne Chase, Dartmoor has several entrances to the underworld. It has others which we call pixies' caves. And, near Lustleigh, there is among the Tor stones,

a Heaven's Gate. These mazes were re-awakened whenever a king wished to re-activate the Arthurian myth. This was frequent: that Richard the Earl, who built Tintagel and cut a maze pattern on the rock there, King Edward who founded the Garter, the Tudor kings, and the early Stuarts, they all needed it.

NOTES:-

"Underworld" is an ambiguous name. It should include the heavens and immortal star clusters. So "Otherworld" is sometimes used.

"Arthur, b AD501, died childless, leaving his kingdom to his nephew, Constantine, Earl of Cornwall, AD542", who may be a historical one!

Untaught: Jesus in the Temple - "all were amazed at His answers" Luke 2.47

The legendary Arthur is the chivalric; the historical Arthur is more often said to be the dux bellorum, or war-duke of the Dumnonii - Somerset, Devon and Cornwall. King Mark of Cornwall in Tintagel was not one of the sub-kings but one of the kings 'employing' the dux. An employed status was the only way an army could operate when all the kingdoms were small. Aelfred King of Cornwall was of Bel's date, 100BC, but Emperor Maximus' line.

It is strange that, in the chivalry story, Arthur is begotten in a quarrel with the King of Cornwall, over a woman, Igerne, and in the myth story, Arthur is involved in a struggle over a woman, Guinevere abducted by the King of Somerset. The Green Man boss in Widecombe church roof, is the same, really, as the king of Somerset (confusing word - of a later age, better to say Avon), as Arthur is the Summer King and his queen's abductor, the Winter King, the Green Man who dies at the end of Winter.) He gives way to his tanist. The Winter king, the Green Man, is the Green Knight of the chivalry story, who carries an axe. The Green Man is always killed with his. To give place to his tanist is equivalent to the "He must increase, I must decrease" saying of John the Baptist's - and his head was axed! And John was a wildman, crying in the wilderness and eating locusts and wild honey.

A wildman is a "natural", a heraldic version of the Green Man, differing only in being a leaved or hairy body, not head.

Honey is associated with the Matter of Britain, as the Arthurian legends were known over Europe too, and with the King of Somerset whose name was Melwas. Bees are melifera in latin and melifera is honey in Greek. Honey is the food storable for winter; that is why bees make it. It is made of one thing only, but many of it; Merlin's name in Celtic form means "many, "legion". This is the name of the madman/shaman/diviner whose cure was disaster for the



Gethsemane area. The gods drink is ambrosia, made from honey.

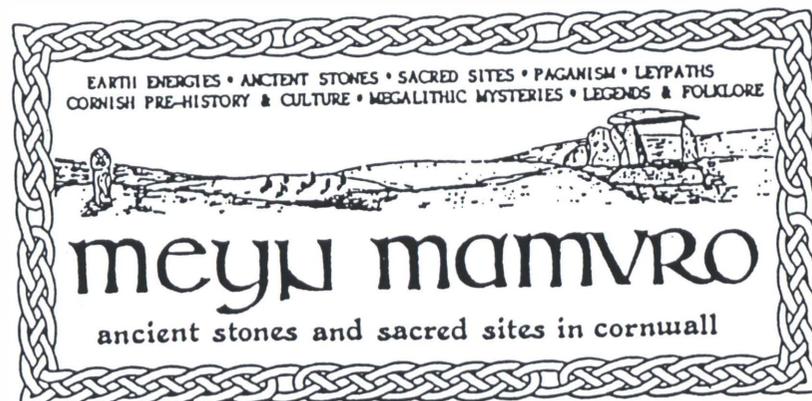
Merlin is an example of these OtherWorldly myths / figures - not "mythical figures" which might imply their unreality. Like Arthur there were three Merlins; one at least may have been historical; that one is of no use to the twentieth century. The true Merlin was the contemporary link between God and His people here. Call him prophet, avatar or whatever; it does not matter. The interesting thing is how different episodes, like virgin-born, hold good through all of them, even if inconsistent within one figure. He got hung-up, in or on a tree, like Odin, like Lugh, like ...

The correspondences are, for example, death involving a Tree; three; (scape)goat; spear; thirst; stone; asphyxiation (the crucified suffocate/drown from fluid in the lungs); self-sacrifice; and resurrection.

The inconsistent death for Merlin is of interest to Dartmoor churches - he does not die, but lives for ever encircled in a glade, enticed there by a virgin just like the unicorn avatar of the (scape)goat. The (e)scapegoat is the one who does NOT die, but goes from the sacrificial altar to new free full life in the wild (erness), Leviticus, ch 16. In some legends rather than myths, Merlin is a horned wildman ie the 'king' wildman. An avatar of an avatar. None of these gods or avatars are what stories or songs make them: the Devil. (He was only invented much later, perhaps, some say, from a mistranslation, as escape, of Azazel, which should not be translated; it is a proper name of a Semitic pagan wilderness demon, to whom the goat was despatched.)

The avatars and the lesser gods are but emanations, aspects, visions, of the One God.

"THE MATTER OF BRITAIN" is a known phrase used by the troubadours. It was one of three; the other two were THE MATTER OF FRANCE (the Horn of Roland & fighting the Moors) and THE MATTER OF ROME (Crusades - fighting the Saracens).



Sample copy £1.70 (inc p&p). Annual sub - £5 (inc p&p).
from 51 Carn Bosavern, St. Just, Penzance, Cornwall TR197QX



The story began when Calum MacIntosh, a Meyn Mamvro reader, wrote to subscribe to Wisht Maen; and to disclose an amazing discovery that he had made when he went to Scorhill (SX655875) just before Samhain 1992, to check whether a sunset alignment exists to a nearby ridge. From a previous visit and some map-work at home, he thought the target would be the cairn on Hangingstone Hill (SX617861). In fact, he found that Imbolc/Samhain sunset takes place over the giant cairn on the closer horizon at SX629861. The cairn is very distinctive, and appears to be the only one visible from the circle. It is the next large "lump" on the horizon if the eye travels south along the ridge from Watern Tor.

Walking around the outside of the circle as the light began to fade, he noticed something which had escaped attention on three previous visits. Carved on the outside of at least four stones were paired "breast" carvings. They were in high relief, almost like mirror images of cup-marks, which are quite commonly found.

These carvings are well-remarked in Brittany, in the various chambered barrows - barren women would rub themselves against the breasts in the hope the Goddess would bestow on them Her gifts of fertility - but he had not come across them before in Britain. They look nothing like any other quarrying marks that are often to be found on ancient stones. Scorhill appears to show an element of male and female pairing of stones, so the sign of the Goddess would not be unexpected. A male and female spirit/guardians have been 'seen' and sensed here by different people. Calum is convinced the markings are artificial, probably taking advantage of little outcrops of harder rock within the stone.

Aware of Calum's remarks that "if they can be confirmed, they would, perhaps, be opening a new chapter in prehistoric carvings here; usually, once a type is identified, it is then noticed elsewhere"; I went to Scorhill. I had visited this site many times, sometimes alone, sometimes with several others, and had never noticed these carvings. When I arrived armed with Calum's drawn-from-memory plan however, I could clearly see the carvings from a distance away. I have looked through old photos I took of the circle, and the carvings are clearly to be seen. I had just never noticed them, nor, it would seem, has any other Dartmoor writer, ancient or modern.

I have been unsuccessful in my attempts to get archaeologists to visit the site with me and confirm whether the carvings were made by human hand or are naturally occurring - the stones chosen for the circle because they manifested signs of the Goddess. Pete Glastonbury has visited Scorhill and cannot say one way or the other, as the carvings have weathered and eroded. Is it all "in the eye of the beholder?" Am I "seeing the dryad in every tree"? I have not noticed anything like them on any other Dartmoor stone, and although the outlier stones on the path to the circle, and leading down to the Tolmen holed stone, have several nodules, they are not as rounded as the "breast carvings". Calum sent me a photograph of a well-attested carving from a Brittany passage-grave at Mogau-bihan, Finistere; it would seem to be the same type as the Scorhill carvings.

Perhaps a tribe (or its descendants) from Brittany settled on Dartmoor at Scorhill (there are hut circles on Scorhill Tor); which is why only that monument displays carvings more commonly found on megaliths in Brittany, and why nowhere else on Dartmoor (as far as I am aware) are such decorations to be found. Another explanation is that the markings on the Scorhill stones, and possibly the large flat boulders along the path towards the Tolmen holed stone in the River Teign; are constellation plans (like the recumbent stone in the Rothiemay circle, Aberdeenshire), or "ley maps", the nodes representing sites on the local system of alignments (see THE NEW VIEW OVER ATLANTIS by John Michell pp 33-37). If anyone recognises these carvings elsewhere on Dartmoor please let me know; and if there is an archaeologist/geologist/Earth Mysteries expert out there, likewise, please get in touch.

BOOK REVIEWS

HAUNTED DARTMOOR - A GHOST HUNTERS GUIDE R W Bamberg
Peninsula Press £3.99

The first 'cream-tea-and-hiking-boots' guide I've seen that attempts to explain what might lie behind legends and superstitions attached to haunted sites, e.g. the giant who devours sheep at Scorhill is explained as a distorted folk-memory of ritual sacrifice and cannibalistic feasts. Wild! (TB)

PAGAN CORNWALL - LAND OF THE GODDESS Cheryl Straffon
Meyn Mamvro Publications £7.50

This book discovers a continuity of Goddess-tradition in remote Cornwall from ancient times right up to the present, using evidence from archaeological research, folklore and legend, rural tradition and custom. Highly recommended. Cheryl Straffon has also written two excellent Earth Mysteries Guides to the moors of West Penwith and Bodmin, invaluable for adventures in the otherworld of our sister county, as well as editing MEYN MAMVRO magazine. (TB)

DRAGON SLAYING MYTHS ANCIENT & MODERN Bob Trubshaw
Heart of Albion Press £1.95

The familiar church window depicting a dragon impaled by a saintly figure is examined in depth. Who started the claim that dragons depict the 'forces of evil' or paganism? The message of the macho monster-marauders in the masonry might be better seen as a permanent conflict, an expression of two inseparable aspects of the psyche.

THE CELTIC COLLECTION by THE PLEIADES Sharkti Laureate £4
Not strictly speaking Celtic, the poems are beautifully written and may inspire others to study the myth & lore that surround us. Still, most of the poems here are reprints from other magazines, and at £4 is not cheap. You'd be better off spending £1.95 on the Dragon Slaying book. (SM)



WISTMANS WOOD (One mile north of Two Bridges at SX610770)

"The whole world cannot boast..a greater curiosity in sylvan archaeology than this solitary grove in the Devonshire wilderness..the ancient storm-stricken oaks of Wistman are without recorded parallel, there is something almost unearthly in their aspect." Rev. Samuel Rowe, 1848.

"...certainly the most wierd and curious wood in England if not in Europe." Canon Ellacombe, 1896.

Wistmans Wood is first mentioned in 1605 as being one of "three remarkable things" to be found on Dartmoor, according to the antiquary Tristram Risdon, "...the third is some acres of wood and trees, that are a fathom about, and yet no taller than a man may touch to top with his hand, which is called Wistman's Wood" (1). Issue 1 is featuring Wistmans Wood firstly rather than thirdly because of the inspiration it gave in starting a Dartmoor magazine, and the similarity in name to this publication. Risdon's other remarkable things; Crockern Tor and Childe's Tomb, are to be featured in later editions of Wisht Maen.

Wistmans Wood is one of the most tranquil and fascinating features of Dartmoor. Gnarled stunted (pedunculate) oaks grow over 4 acres inbetween enormous granite boulders, covered with ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens of many varieties. It is the oldest natural oak copse in England and dates from the time of the Norman Conquest. The trees that grow at present are around 200 years old. The Wood is owned by English Nature and the Duchy of Cornwall and small areas have been fenced off in order for unmolested growth of rare species of lichens and subsequent studies to take place. It is a very popular location with walkers who often bypass the wood to walk part of the Lych Way, which runs above and parallel to the wood, up to the Beardown Man, a standing stone 11ft high at SX595795 (burial mound nearby).

Two similar woods stand on Dartmoor, Black Tor Beare/Copse at SX568890 and Piles Wood/Copse at SX646622. All three woods lie in an almost straight line across the moor, about 9 miles apart; each wood stands on a steep slope of westerly aspect in a deep valley- at Wistmans Wood there are many hut circles along the side of the hill above the middle and north woods. "All these woods are so exceptional in their main characteristics as to be unique not only in Britain, but also probably the whole world" (2). Only Wistmans Wood lies within the bounds of the ancient Royal Forest of Dartmoor. These woods could be the last remaining examples of a number of similar groves which grew in some of the more sheltered valleys of Dartmoor, and according to Worth, were "destroyed by the early tanners, in the course of their smelting operations, just as the ancient oak woods of Sussex were destroyed by iron smelters in the C16th"(3). It seems Wistmans Wood escaped obliteration because of the extreme difficulty in (a) removing the giant boulders and (b) transporting the logs across the "clitter".

The interior of the Wood in the C19th was almost impenetrable due to the tangle of prostrate branches resting on the boulders, and the luxuriant mat of ground vegetation that covered the surface and hid the dangerous clefts between the rocks. In 1912 a Geological Survey party tried to cross the length of the Wood and had to give up after 3 hours. Epiphytes covered trunks and branches so thickly that they appeared to

be swollen to many times their real size. At one time the mosses hung down from the branches a foot or more, creating an impression that it was a Louisiana swamp and not a Dartmoor copse. In the 1880's there was a fire in the Wood that destroyed much of it, caused by tourists boiling a kettle.

There is a belief that Wistmans Wood, Black Tor Beare and Piles Copse are remnants of a primeval forest that once covered the whole of Dartmoor, probably based on it having once been called The Royal Forest of Dartmoor, but forest in that instance meant "unenclosed land which was the specific hunting ground and prerogative of the sovereign"(4). He adds however that peat analysis has shown that trees were once more widespread than now. Most of Dartmoor was forested until about 2,500BCE but by the end of the Bronze Age the trees had been largely cleared and the remnants were subsequently felled for tin-smelting.

The Moretonhampstead to Tavistock road was built in 1792, and after this date visitors to the Wood were frequent - too frequent for the National Park Authority's liking. They would not support this publication as "it would encourage even more visitors to the Wood"; which the DNPA want to discourage. It was explained that it was hardly likely that thousands of Wisht Maen readers would invade the Wood; and even more unlikely that they would be the sort of people who would trample/damage it. However, the Wood's isolation is the main part of its beauty. Here, the veil between the worlds is very thin...

THE NAME

The name Wistmans Wood has several meanings. Wisht Maen, the name chosen for this publication, is a combination of WISHT (the old Devon word for "eerie" "uncanny" "pixieled" "haunted" and "spooky") and MAEN, the Celtic for "stone". Although correctly the adjective comes after the noun in Celtic giving us MAEN WISHT, I preferred WISHT MAEN because it sounds like WISTMAN. Was Wishtmaen perhaps the original name for the wood, evolving over the years to become Wistman? An old moorman once spoke to Mrs Bray (5) that the Wood was a "wisht old place sure enough, and as full of adders as can be". Eric Hemery believes G M Spooner, the Editor of Worth's Dartmoor, is probably nearest proposing "Wisht-man's Wood". To the country folk, the Wisht Man was an ancient medicine man, hermit, or the devil. (A Dartmoor woman, when told the name of this magazine, said "Ah, devil stone"!)

Other suggestions include VISG/WYSG MAEN COED which means "stony wood by the water" (literally water-rock-wood) in Celtic. Old locals once spoke of the wood as Welshmans Wood; this could have been a corruption of Wealasmans Wood; wealas meant "foreigner" and so it could have been the "wood of the Celts" who were regarded as foreigners by the Saxon settlers. (The Saxons first thought of the Wood as the home of Odin and his Wild Hunt). Other suggestions include "Wood of the Wisemen" as it has long been supposed that Wistmans Wood was a sacred oak grove to the Druids. Various interpretations of the word Druid include "Wise man of the Oak".



A SACRED DRUIDIC OAK GROVE?

Dartmoor writers are dismissive about any Druidical activity ever having taken place on the moor. Rowe, whilst admitting there was no evidence to indicate a Druid presence, suggested that the last of the Danmonian priesthood may have found shelter in the wood from the Roman occupiers, who gave Dartmoor a wide berth. He notes however that no sacred circle, rock basin or logan stone, all traditionally associated with Druidism, are to be found anywhere near the wood. Mistletoe, also traditionally associated, is not nor has ever been found at Wistmans Wood, but Rowe states in ancient times mistletoe was scarce even on oaks, so if it was found, it was gathered with "great devotion and many ceremonies". He also states that whatever they found growing on the oaks, they "esteemed to be a gift from the Divine, and as a sign that their god had made that tree his peculiar choice"(6). If as many epiphytes were growing then as now, the trees must have been accorded great veneration.

Many early antiquarians were convinced that Wistmans Wood was a sacred oak grove, as were similar groves sacred across Britain until the sack of the Druid centre on the Holy Island of Anglesey by the Romans in AD78 and the subsequent deliberate destruction of the oak groves; and their theories have been much vilified and ridiculed by later writers, but, as Paul Broadhurst states in THE SUN AND THE SERPENT, "...antiquaries of previous centuries were not so much concerned with the precise classification of when an Iron Age priesthood reigned as with pointing out the immense antiquity of the ruins, which in the classically educated C17th and C18th meant pre-Roman. In this climate, Druid simply meant the priests of the ancient Britons"(7).

There was real fear in times past of the Wood being full of reptilian monsters, possibly an inverted folk-memory of serpent worship, Druidical or earlier. This report by Shirley Wallis of Plymstock, who "visited" the Wood using psychoexpansion, throws some light. She had never been to the Wood before and the exercise (controlled "astral projection") was done two days before physically visiting. She noted her impressions from her "astral" visit:-

"The woods are set upon granite and there is a seam of quartz running through the central underground, making great sensitivity in centering the energy field. It has an inverted force field -it contains its own heightened awareness due to the centering of energies invisible to the naked eye but visible to me through psychoexpansion as two spirals set side by side moving in opposite directions...the whole place was enclosed and parcelled up..I then moved back in time to the period between 400 and 500AD... It was used by Mithraic/Druidic people as a purifying centre where much good was wrought. A spring of water is tumbling over rocks through the trees down to a river. Only certain people are allowed here. Their energy fields or vibrations are in tune with the surroundings. It is very isolated, like a world within our world. I received another distinct impression that there is nothing "wrong" with the Wood. The unusual feeling that my mind senses can be described as being absorbed by the area when amongst the trees giving a mysterious quality as if harbouring a secret.



My visit two days later...surprised seeing so many granite boulders among the trees.. became conscious of being "wrapped around"... uniqueness was geographical, geological, mineral and magnetic. I came to an upright stone and leaned against it, receiving a strong gravitational pull rooting my feet to the spot. Physically, I felt relaxed, peaceful and rather tired, concluding that this was due to the walk; as I came into a clearing, this feeling went, then returned when moving back among the trees; I then noticed that the clearing divided the Wood into two groves side by side, and the impression of a quartz seam I had "seen" underground and running through the centre of that area, was through this clearing, one large stone had a surface of quartz. In the second grove I noticed a subtle difference in the effect upon my own force field, rather milder and more uplifting. as if there was a positive and negative flow side by side in these two groves. This place will react upon visitors in a variety of ways according to their own personal energies or force fields, for the Wood contains its own ability to evolve through time absorbing mysteries and memories, as I was absorbed when there. Once I'd left I felt refreshed and full of energy, perhaps having experienced the purifying agent used long ago." (8)

Shirley Wallis states that the wood was used by Mithraic (worshippers of the Roman god Mithras) /Druidic peoples; but in most Dartmoor literature we read time and time again that the Romans and the Druids avoided Dartmoor. In fact, so vehement are later writers in their denial of anything Druidical, that it seems they were hiding something! Also, the Roman empire collapsed in 410AD, so if Druidic peoples were "seen" by psychoexpansion, between 400-500AD, they must have indeed been the last vestiges of the ancient people who took refuge in the Wood; as stated by Rowe (see earlier in this article).

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHARGES

Interesting though is Shirley Wallis' experience of feeling tired when walking to the wood yet feeling energized walking back from it, when logically one ought to be tired walking back from the wood and energized walking to it! Many people I know are affected in different extremes by the Wood. Paul Rendell, local historian, qualified Dartmoor Guide and moor walker of many years, is not keen on Wistmans Wood at all. In daylight he has been physically sick near the Wood, with symptoms such as "weakness, head spinning and feeling drained of all life" and "headache and legs turning to jelly". These symptoms appeared seconds after nearing the Wood and seconds after feeling absolutely fine.

A woman wrote to me "I felt a great sense of sadness and loneliness about the place.. and noticed no birds singing in the trees at all, it felt very eerie, even when I was out of the Wood walking home." This may have something to do with Shirley Wallis' positive and negative charge theories - the two spirals flowing in opposing directions - or with the fact that in ancient times only certain people were allowed there?

In Paul Devereux's PLACES OF POWER he states that he has had similar experiences whilst returning from a long days fieldwork feeling energized and "decidedly more energetic that when we had commenced in the mornings" and "tracking across difficult terrain with a substantial

backpack, I suddenly 'switched' into a much faster rhythm of walking, covering great strides with absolute ease, breathing as calmly as if I were seated in a chair. This was not 'second wind' that I have often experienced in fieldwork, but a distinctive state that verged on the paranormal" (9). He also mentions Sabine Baring-Gould's A BOOK OF DARTMOOR (1900) and the story therein of the "exceptionally good health of the prisoners" in Princetown Prison despite appalling conditions, and that it was not uncommon for people suffering from lung conditions to stay for a while in a farm/cottage on the moor to aid recovery or be cured.

THE WOOD AND THE WISH HOUNDS

In legend, the devil and his Wish or Wisht Hounds are said to lie up under the trees between hunts for human souls. "A glimpse of the huge black dogs with their eyes like red hot coals means death within the year or a brief run before the slavering jaws into cardiac arrest or a nastier conclusion."(10). The Saxons first thought of the Wood as the home of Odin and his Wild Hunt. "This (the wild hunt) was originally the connection of the hunter with the spirit of the beast being hunted, a theme that goes back to Paleolithic shamanistic times, but which became christianised into the devil hunting for human souls" (11).

They set off at midnight, the devil himself riding a headless black horse. They chase their victims towards the Dewerstone, driving them over the precipice of this near vertical rock face high above the River Plym, near Shaugh Bridge at SX539639. The devil is also said to live on the Dewerstone, Dewer being another name for the devil. It is more likely though that the Dewerstone gets its name from the Celtic for water, "dwr". Dewerstone could also be derived from Tiw, who was the Viking god Woden's companion (12). Devon tradition regards unbaptized infants as the special prey of the Demon Huntsman, and many macabre stories abound of dead babies and children being displayed to understandably distraught parents. A sure way of course of getting the little ones baptized to the One and Only Path as quickly as possible and keeping an uneducated and superstitious populace terrified of ever straying from the christian faith!

In the North, the devil and his Wisht Hounds are known as Gabriels Hounds, an odd blend of mythology. Gabriel is a christian archangel, but in Jewish fable he is Lord of The Underworld, like Dewer or the devil. Black dog stories are found all over the country, some dogs are helpful, most are dangerous. In England, black dogs are supposed to be the form taken by a human ghost, which would fit in with the legend of the devil hunting for souls. This has implications for there being a Black Dog path (13) between the Wood and the Dewerstone; as part of the black dogs "hunting ground" is the Lych Way, the old Way of The Dead. Aligned between the Wood and the Dewerstone is Devils Bridge (SX584729).

Belief in the Wisht Hounds certainly existed up to the end of the last century. When a mans body was found on the banks of the River Yealm in the 1870's, the coroners jury, unable to establish any cause of death, decided that he must have been "struck down by the phantom hunt." They wanted to give a verdict of "death by supernatural agency" and were with great difficulty persuaded to substitute one of

"accidental death" instead! (14)

Wistman's Wood will continue to enchant with its numinous beauty and hues of soft greenness. It is truly a place of power and energy and one of the most special of our Dartmoor sacred sites; and will continue to inspire and energize as long as there are those who care.

"All I've ever found in the Wood is peace and beauty; and one Spring morning just after Hitler's War I looked down from the Devonport Leat and saw a vixen and her cubs leave the clutter to play in the sun. If you meet the devil there or anywhere else on the moor you brought him with you" (15).

- (1) Hemery, Eric. HIGH DARTMOOR. Robert Hale, London 1983. p454
- (2) Worth, Richard Hansford. WORTH'S DARTMOOR. David & Charles, Devon 1971. p74
- (3) *ibid.*, p75
- (4) Hemery, Eric. HIGH DARTMOOR. Robert Hale, London 1983. p48
- (5) *ibid.*, p454
- (6) Rowe, Samuel. A PERAMBULATION OF DARTMOOR. Devon Books 1985. p201-202
- (7) Broadhurst, Paul and Miller, Hamish. THE SUN AND THE SERPENT. Pendragon Press, Launceston 1989. p102
- (8) Wreford, H and Williams, M. MYSTERIES IN THE DEVON LANDSCAPE. Bossiney Books 1985.
- (9) Devereux, Paul. PLACES OF POWER.
- (10) St Leger Gordon, Ruth E. THE WITCHCRAFT AND FOLKLORE OF DARTMOOR. Bell, New York.
- (11) Straffon, Cheryl. PAGAN CORNWALL - LAND OF THE GODDESS. Meyn Mamvro Publications, Penzance 1993. p74
- (12) Drayton, Penny. DANELAW GODS AND GODDESSES. Mercian Mysteries No 16, August 1993. p7
- (13) Devereux, Paul. JOHN MICHELL AND SPIRIT LINES. The Ley Hunter No 119, 1993. p12
- (14) St Leger Gordon, Ruth E. THE WITCHCRAFT AND FOLKLORE OF DARTMOOR. Bell, New York. p28
- (15) Carter, Brian and Skilton, Brian. DARTMOOR - THE THREATENED WILDERNESS. Century Hutchinson Ltd London 1987. p108



Common tradition has known and recognised the ancient mystery of the presence of the fairies. These memories are embedded in the matrix of legend and myth as well as the alchemy of the human experience.

Today the expediencies and shortcomings of the thought processes of the twentieth century block out the original ability to open out with awareness to unseen and unfelt (to most peoples) phenomena. As with all cosmic functions the fundamental laws follow patterns of behaviour based upon the physical and spirit body. At times these two interact or follow their own nature independently.

Fairies and humans react to each other on the spirit plane. On that level there is understanding, and a recognition of a mutual form of existence as spirits, although in the human case they lost their spirit state on earth in order to live wholly on the material plane. The love of the fairy will always exist, as long as the human has a genetic recall of a time when the human too was a living spirit form, in a world in which they too were living with the Natural Laws and under the loving care of the spirit of creation.

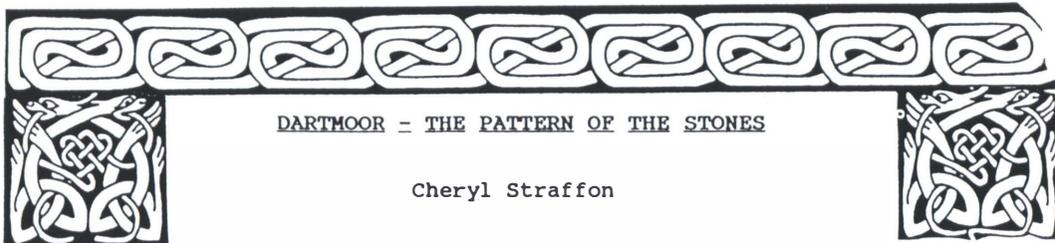
Although humans attributed a human likeness and human-like behaviour to these little spirits in an endeavour to associate them with the material world, these spirits were completely androgynous, and free of so-called 'normal' human activities. They also have, over time, become indented with the small beings who lived on a material level; pixies, dwarfs, gnomes, elves etc. The races' memories of very small peoples living very much close to the natural world and its laws, and particularly associated with working at open cast and deeper mining are very strong; and again owing to the vast time span these memories have become subject to influence by various doctrinal notions, especially by the religious factions.

On a purely material level - for any of these little people to be able to survive in the atmosphere of the planet as it has been affected by the humans - they must have remarkable resources at their disposal and I do not doubt this for one moment. They have been - and are still - seen by people. Their morals are based upon a respect for the natural world in the state it was originally intended to be, where the driving force was "need" - not greed. A world of rocks and moorland and inaccessible places would afford a camouflaged environment. Accounts of encounters with these small people are in the main reported from areas of moorland, forest and rocky places.

They seem to offer the human state a compassionate contempt. Reports of their mischief and their help have been the main theme of legend in especially remote or wild rural communities. Yet as a sensitive (in the right use of the term), I have become acutely aware when sitting or standing in remote and wild spots, of presences "sizing me up". These have a very different vibration from animal life, being on another plane of thought. There are a number of such spots in the Dartmoor National Park, which "call" to the sensitive.

As late as 1960 four little men came from a bracken stook in a field in Widecombe-in-the-Moor, seen in broad daylight. Chagford and Chudleigh Knighton have their share of "pixie" sightings, associated with dancing on a dancing rock in the first instance, and walking towards buried treasure in the second. Tiny miners and buried treasure seem to ring a familiar bell in the human consciousness. Treasure in all likelihood would have been precious metal. Gold was mined in the South West among other places along with silver and gemstones. The possible use for these materials may provide a clue as to the survival tactics of these little beings, who have to contend with the systematic material ruin of the natural world as practised by the human races.

The fairies have no such problem, for their manifestations can be linked with the natural order, so that as long as one flower or a tiny plot of unsoiled land exists, there they will continue to harmonise with the natural laws for the good of the planet. For men will soon outgrow their natural environment in their material greed, and the response of the Natural Laws will leave a planet convalescing under the domain of those who have its spiritual comfort at heart.



DARTMOOR - THE PATTERN OF THE STONES

Cheryl Straffon

Dartmoor contains a huge number of ancient sites, settlements, and ritual monuments, so much so that it may appear a daunting task to sort out any significant landscape or geomantic pattern within the complexities. In addition, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish prehistoric remains from natural granite deposits. However, Dartmoor does possess the great advantage of having sites that are clearly contemporaneous with each other, so that we may reasonably infer that they were deliberately laid out in a certain pattern, and not just by fortuitous chance.

A study of the extant sites seems to reveal a deliberate grouping of different types of sites. This may represent different tribes or social groupings from the Neolithic and Bronze Age society who inhabited the area of the Moor. Within each group there are usually (a) hut circles/enclosures/settlements (dwelling area); (b) remains (ritual/astronomical) consisting of at least one stone circle, perhaps a double, with stone rows leading to many megaliths, either at the end of the rows or close-by. There may in addition be (c) 'marker megaliths' nearby, usually at significant lines of sight, which lead to the remains. A good example of this would be at Drizzlecombe (SX596667) where 4 small standing stones lead over and down the hill to the 3 stone rows below. Finally, there will inevitably be (d) cairns (burial area) nearby. This pattern is repeated over and over again, although not all remains are complete.

This pattern can best be illustrated by a couple of examples:-

(1) Shovel Down. Within a small area there is a network of remains criss-crossing the Moor. A fourfold/triple circle, stone rows, cairns and outlier standing stone (the Longstone) around SX660860, leading to Scorhill circle at SX655875, which can be viewed from

surrounding hills and tors. Nearby, a stone row at Thornworthy Tor (SX840660) runs direct to a stone circle and double row now in Fernworthy Forest (SX659825) and to the well-known Grey Wethers double circle just outside the Forest at SX638831. On Hurston Ridge (SX668826) a double stone row leads to a 6ft standing stone and aligns with the Warren House cairn (SX672813) and the Challacombe triple rows high on the opposite hillside at SX691809. Nearby is the famous hut circle settlement Grimspound (SX701809).

(2) Hingston Hill. (SX585694). 160 small stones lead to a 9ft standing stone and a perfect circle of 26 stones. Nearby the Yellowmead fourfold circle (SX575678) aligns to Drizzlecombe (SX596667) with its 3 stone rows, each with a standing stone (one of 14ft, re-erected 100 years ago by the DPA). Brisworthy circle is at SX564655. Again, nearby there is a hut circle settlement on Trowlesworthy Warren together with a stone row and circle (much hidden) at SX576639.

In each of these groups there appear to be stone rows and standing stones aligned to stone circles and outliers in the vicinity of a settlement. Of course, each of the generic groups may have contained a number of smaller inter-dependent groups. For example the Erme Valley seems to consist of two generic groups on opposite sides of the valley with settlements and very long stone rows (over 2 miles) at Butterdown Hill (SX655587), Stalldon (SX632624) and Stallmoor (SX635645). Here these may have been special processional ways as part of a seasonal ritual pattern involving two related family groups. Or, as Paul Devereux has suggested, stone rows may have been spirit paths for either the spirits of the dead to travel along, or pathways for the out-of-body experiences by the shamans and shamankas of the tribe.

However, there are in addition some puzzles that don't really fit into the formula, e.g. the Langstone circle and standing stone at SX550788 seems to stand in isolation on the NW of the Moor, but the circle has been so much destroyed by the Army firing at it (shells and broken stone can still be found around it) that it is quite likely other remains would have been destroyed too. The Beardown Man stands in splendid isolation at SX595795, though he does have a burial mound nearby. And there is a single cromlech just off the Moor, Spinsters Rock, at SX701897, although up till 1865 it did have surrounding rows and circles. Both of these may have been special ritual focii, for a number of family groups to have come and connected with the powers of the universe or the spirits of the dead ancestors.

So notwithstanding these isolated examples, the general pattern does seem to be that stone circles, rows and megaliths were linked together in specific generic groups. These may be complex, such as the Merrivale complex (SX555747) with its 3 stone rows, circle, burial cists, and standing stones, which seem to denote significant phases of the moon's cycle; or they may be much simpler, such as the Cawsand Hill triple row, with standing stone on the hillside above (SX642918) leading to the White Moor 17 stone circle and standing stone outlier (SX633896). Of course, this begs as many questions as it answers: why precisely at those locations? Why always the circle and the outlier? What was astronomically aligned and why? But it may at least answer the question - why were sites grouped in the way they are? So that patterns in the landscape could be linked together in significant geomantic ways. The ritual monuments were an intrinsic part of the body of Mother Earth, literally 'alive' in the land of Dartmoor.

Exchange Mags & Ads

THE CAULDRON Pagan journal of the Old Religion. Wicca & Earth Mysteries. £1.50 single, £6 sub. M A Howard, Caemorgan Cottage, Caemorgan Road, Cardigan, Dyfed, SA43 1QU. DALRIADA Journal of the Native Celtic Tradition. 40 page A5 qtrly. £6 sub, single £1.75. Cheques "Clan Dalriada", Dun-na-Beatha, 2 Brathwic Plc, Brodick, Isle of Arran, Scotland, KA27 8BN. DARTMOOR NEWSLETTER Current Moor issues, history, walks. £6 sub, 6 issues. Paul Rendell, 20 Rolston Close, Southway, Plymouth, PL6 6PE. FORTEAN TIMES Journal of strange phenomena. £12 for 6. Box 2409, London, NW5 4NP. G E M Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries. £5.75 sub 3 issues, £2.25 sample. Cheques "GEM" P O Box 258, Cheltenham, Glos, GL53 0HR. GREENLEAF Robin's Greenwood Gang. Free lifestyles, travellers to trees. Festivals and sites. £3.50 sub, 75p single. George Firsoff, 96 Church Rd, Redfield, Bristol 5. MERCIAN MYSTERIES Alternative studies of past/place with a Midlands emphasis. A4 40 page qtrly. £1.75 sample, £6 sub. 2 Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, Leics, LE12 6UJ. MEYN MAMVRO Ancient/sacred sites in Cornwall and related EM studies. £5 sub, £1.70 sample. 51 Carn Bosavern, St Just in Penwith, Penzance, Cornwall, TR19 7QX. MOEBIUS TRIP/ASMODEAUS Lively pagan mag. Sample £2.50. 25 Rose Terrace, Moorview Park, Newcastle on Tyne, Tyne & Wear, NE5 3AU. NORTHERN EARTH Long established radical journal of EM, antiquarianism & cultural tradition. £5 4 issues sub, £1.50 single. 10 Jubilee St, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge, W Yorks HX7 5NP. PAGAN VOICE Paganism today, news, contacts, interviews. Monthly. £10 sub, £1 sample. 13 Barnstaple Walk, Knowle, Bristol, BS4 1JQ. PENDRAGON Arthurian history, mythology, legend. £6 sub, 4 issues. Smithy House, Newton by Frodsham, Cheshire, WA6 6SX. THE LEY HUNTER Foremost in EM studies worldwide. £7 for 3. P O Box 92, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2XL. QUEST 23 years old! Western ritual magic, pagan philosophy etc. £5 sub 4 issues, £1.50 sample. BCM-SCL QUEST, London, WC1N 3XX *****DEVON GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS S.C.A.N.- (Society for the study of cryptozoological anomalies of Nature ...phew) Black Dogs, Beasts, Legend etc. "Tawside" 30 Park Avenue Barnstaple Devon EX31 2ES. AQUARIAN DISCUSSION GROUP Gaia Earth Healing, leys, crystals spirituality, healing, meditation. Lois Lloyd, Plymouth 786716. DARTMOOR PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION £5 year, OAPs & Under 23s £2.50. FREEPOST Plymouth Devon PL1 1BR. DEVON DOWSERS Field trips, lectures, classes, courses, library & social events. £10 per year. Corfe Close High Bickington Umberleigh Devon EX37 9AY.

WISHT MAEN IS ALSO ON SALE AT PRINCETOWN STORES,
PRINCETOWN, DARTMOOR and THE DANDY-LION, RED LION
YARD, OKEHAMPTON, DEVON. MORE OUTLETS TO FOLLOW!

IN ISSUE 2 due out April/May 94

BRIDESTOWE, SACRED CENTRE AT BOW, THE MILITARY ON
DARTMOOR, THE Lych Way, and whatever else you send
in!! Please write and let us have your comments on
Wisht Maen. As it's very much an experiment and the
first issue we need to know people's impressions.

Spinning web, woven maze, down the corridor of days.
 Eyes which watch, unseen, unknown, down the cove
 where time does sleep, cracked the egg, on pebbled beach.
 When she goes, A five mast schooner, tide turns slow, breathes a sigh,
 where spiders dwell. Down the cove, where time does sleep, cracked the egg,
 on pebbled beach. Eyes which watch, unseen, unknown, down the cove
 where time is thrown. Earthen mound, lonely stone, ancient woods,
 where times unknown. A five mast schooner, tide turns slow, breathes a sigh,
 when she goes. Spinning web, woven maze, down the corridor of days.

