

WISHT MAEN



DEVON EARTH MYSTERIES MAGAZINE



THE BLACK DOG

SACRIFICE & WHEELS OF FIRE

A SACRED BUS JOURNEY

EAST DEVON HILLFORTS

NEWS

REVIEWS

LETTERS

PRICE £2.30

ISSUE No. 4

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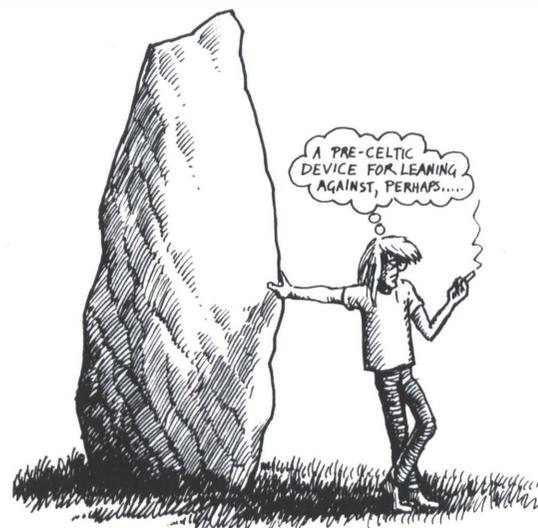
It's been a year since the last WISHT MAEN (No 3) for which I am extremely sorry. You have all been very patient and I only received a few letters of complaint. A house move and a child due on Christmas Eve are some of the factors as well as a drying-up of artwork, articles and support in general, although much has been promised! WISHT MAEN will continue, but given the circumstances, even three issues a year seems unlikely. Subscriptions will be taken on a three issue basis in future, coming out as and when I can manage! Thank you for your continued support - your letters and ideas inspire and remind us of our original purpose. Again if you could help in any way with research, articles, poems, pictures, artwork or just a letter please do.

Lastly, we are attempting to organise a Moot/Camp for 10 days over Beltane. If this is successful perhaps a summer solstice camp will follow. A number of sites are being considered in the area of the sacred grove of old Nymet Wood, in the hope that we can help resacralize this area. Although camp-based, our Moot will be open to those wishing to join us for the earth mysteries/field trip part of the programme. Again if this project is of interest, let us know by the Winter solstice, when a more detailed programme will be available.

GRAIL OF THE HEART

a full colour A2 poster by ANNA CLARKE, based on the illustration for TINTAGEL AND THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE KINGSHIP in Wisht Maen No 3, with new additions (instead of the twelve shields in the border as in the original black & white, the colour poster depicts a miniature scene from the Arthurian Mythos/Cycle i.e. Avalon, the Wasteland, the Cauldron, the Wounded King, Merlin etc). Ideal Yule/Solstice gifts!

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ON THE TRAIL OF THE BLACK DOG *Jeremy Harte*

Between Coplestone and Torrington in Devon there runs a ghost, the Black Dog. So say the stories, and local folklore was backed up by a lengthy research programme carried out in the 1920's by an early earth mysteries researcher, Barbara Carbonell of Bow. Thirty years later, when she had moved to a different part of the county, she was contacted by the ghost-hunter James Wentworth Day and asked to write an account of her conclusions, which she did, in a long letter published in his next book in 1956 (1). The Black Dog of Torrington has been the subject of much interest amongst researchers lately, and in summarising the evidence in his favour I am concerned, not simply with the proof for his existence as a ghost - there seems to me to be no doubt about that - but in the conclusions which we may draw about haunted landscapes.

The trail began in 1923 with a conversation between Carbonell and one of the villagers at Bow - her gardener, as it happened. During a break from the flowerbeds he told her about his father, who used to work as a waggoner for Coplestone Mills. Carting was hard work, and involved long hours; about three times a week he would be making the trip to Torrington, the nearest market town, and this meant coming back in the small hours of the morning. It was then that he used to see the Black Dog.

Carbonell went to see this man. He was a respected local character, a teetotaler and a member of the Plymouth Brethren; in his late sixties, he had not long retired from the mills. It seems that he had been their waggoner for forty years, almost all his working life. He had seen the Black Dog on what is now the B3220: it appeared regularly after he crossed Aller Bridge (SS706068), and would accompany him past Blackaditch (716061) and melt away after they had passed the crossroads at Stopgate (726056). The first time he saw it he was "scairt" and scrambled underneath the big canvas hood that covered the cart. As time went on he got more familiar with the apparition, and sat on the shafts while it accompanied his team. Finally he just carried on walking and holding his horses by the reins, while the ghost padded along beside him, a "gurt hound so big as a calf". He never got overfamiliar, though: "I dursn't touch him, nor speak when he were nigh."



Carbonell's curiosity was aroused, and she made further enquiries. Yes, other people had seen the Black Dog near Stopgate; and he was known at Down St. Mary, too. She set about her research carefully. "There was, and still is, a very definite 'cliqueyness' about Devon villagers, which not even modern conditions have really broken down. Their own parish, their own church (even if they don't attend it very regularly), their own customs, and, very strongly, their own legends, are strictly their own, not to be confused with those of other villages." So she tended to approach the subject indirectly, and having let out that she was interested in local history generally it was a matter of waiting for ghost stories to come up in the conversation.

The village of Down St Mary lies around a crossroads (SS743044). Back in the 1920s, this crossroads was the focus of three village buildings - the church to the west of it, the parish schoolhouse to the north and the smithy to the south. It was between these buildings that the Black Dog ran. One man remembered seeing him as a boy, when after singing in the church choir he and his mates and been kept up late for a Christmas supper. Their way home lay south-east from the crossroads and, as they were setting out, they heard a noise coming this way up the lane. It was the ghost. The boys ran for cover into the nearest field and watched him. He was quite black, with shining eyes, and about as big as a calf. He came up past the smithy, baying loudly, and squeezed through between the church and the schoolhouse. There was a crash like a wall of stones falling down, and the sound of the baying dog grew fainter as he continued northwest along the line. When the lads scrambled out of cover, ready to run for home, there was nothing to be seen.

Several other villagers agreed that this was the dog's customary route. He would rush up the lane and past the smithy - the old smith, now dead, had often seen him - then head across the crossroads, between the church and the schoolhouse. At midnight you could hear him knocking down the corner of the schoolhouse. Carbonell pointed out to one old man that the schoolhouse wall showed no sign of damage, but he simply shook his head and replied, "Well, there 'tis, he do knock'n down. I've a-heard the stones fall as he goes roarin' by, and I've heard the same from my father and my grandfather time and time again. It's true, right enough."

The last reports in Carbonell's survey came from Coplestone, a village which has grown up around the railway station on the line to Crediton. Coplestone Cross, the oldest thing in the settlement, is an Anglo-Saxon standing cross set up at a road junction on the Crediton boundary; for many years it was preserved in its old position (six feet above road level) but in 1969 the road engineers had it moved ten yards to the north (2). The Black Dog of Torrington was said by many of the villagers to come to Coplestone Cross, but nobody had actually seen him.

What Barbara Carbonell had discovered, then, was a series of hauntings along a stretch of road running about five miles, most of it the present B3220. Down St Mary is now off the road, but it looks very much as if the old route ran through the village, and the present one bypasses it to save climbing the hill. Carbonell had spoken to people who knew that a Black Dog haunted Stopgate Cross, and to one man who had repeatedly seen it come eastward with him from Aller Bridge to

Stopgate. At Down St Mary many people had heard, and at least one man had seen, the dog running in the other direction - westwards through the village. And at Copplestone he was supposed to come eastwards down the road to the cross.

The reports from Down St Mary, where the schoolhouse wall seemed to be falling down each night, are curious. In a more robust era one imagines that the ghost would have knocked down the wall itself, once and for all, since it seemed to be standing in his path; but although traditions from elsewhere speak of house corners being knocked down by their human owners because they obtruded onto a fairy path, I have yet to come across a spirit which does the demolition itself. It sounds the sort of thing you would expect of the Wild Hunt. Wentworth Day, in his section just following his transcript of Carbonell's research (3) says that the Black Dog of Lyme Regis used to knock down the corner of a pub in this way, but I think he was simply misreading his sources in the light of the Down St Mary tale.

Carbonell researched her haunted road for about eight years, and during that period she became convinced that this stretch formed only part of a much longer line, a 20 mile cross-country alignment that started at Torrington itself. She had two pieces of further evidence to support this.

Firstly, "there were vague tales of 'something' that haunted the road by Smythen" and this farm at SS642108 is by a crossroads on the projected Copplestone - Down St Mary - Stopgate alignment. In fact the road continues more or less straight as far as the outskirts of Hollacombe. Here, unfortunately, "the country folk were not inclined to speak of legends, and when, tentatively, the Black Dog of Torrington was mentioned, I noticed a secretive look (called in Devon 'looking sideways') as they shook their heads".

Secondly, there were well-attested sightings outside Torrington itself. Carbonell was told that the road by Little Silver (SS515194) was haunted, but could find out no more until she happened to discuss the matter with Mrs Jewell of the village shop in Bow. This lady turned out to have come from St Giles' parish, east of Torrington, and to have seen the Black Dog herself. As a girl, back in the 1870s, she was walking home with her father after a day in the village. It was about 11pm (they had been to a Harvest Festival supper) and they were starting to climb the hill up to Allens Week at about SS523187. "It was a moonlit night and suddenly a sound of something panting came from behind us, and a great black dog as big as a calf with great shining eyes came alongside us. I caught at Father's hand and cried out. Father said ' 'Tis the Black Dog! Hold my hand, don't speak, walk along quiet and don't cry out'." The dog accompanied them for a quarter of a mile until they turned off the road to their cottage, and then it continued along the road and disappeared.

Jewell had seen the dog again as a teenager when she was crossing a footpath over Week Hill with two friends; it was running with its nose to the ground and baying loudly. On another occasion it rushed past her, just as she reached the turning off the road to her home. She saw him once in later years, driving a pony and cart back from Torrington to Allens Week, when he suddenly ran from the ditch and scared the pony.

The Black Dog was seen by other people in other places - 'he's all about in St Giles parish' - but on Jewell's evidence he appeared most frequently on the road across Week Hill, between 510194 and 523187.

Towards the end of her researches, Carbonell was told about the Black Dog by her own daughter, who had seen him in the small hours of a January night in 1932, when she and her husband were returning in their car towards Torrington. On the A386 where it runs next to, and twenty feet above the Torridge, the road is hemmed in by cliff on one side and river on the other. Here the Black Dog suddenly appeared: they were sure they had run over him, but on getting out of the car there was nothing to be seen.

What first set Barbara Carbonell on the trail of the Black Dog? She had read The Old Straight Track when it was published in 1925 - her copy, well annotated, is at present in the hands of Philip Heselton (4) - and she invited Watkins to visit Devon the following year. In fact it was at her suggestion that the Old Straight Track Club was formed. The Black Dog line was therefore being researched in order to corroborate the ley theory, as Carbonell herself states in the letter to Wentworth Day. It is worth noting that already, in 1926, a researcher could assume that a ley was a secret line of supernatural manifestations, not just an early British trackway. Mystical ley hunting flourished long before "The View Over Atlantis".

What Carbonell had discovered, however, was not a prehistoric pathway at all, but the old Bideford-Exeter road. This can be traced as a series of minor routes skirting Huntshaw and Roborough, passing through Ashreigney and Wembworthy, and so down through Down St Mary to Copplestone and Crediton. It seems to have been superseded over most of its length by the Barnstaple-Exeter turnpike road in 1847. The old route is roughly straight, and the best part of Carbonell's evidence, from Smythen through to Copplestone, lies along nine miles of it. The two sites on the outskirts of Torrington - Week Hill and the road by the Torridge - are not on the old Bideford-Exeter road: but then, as Carbonell herself realised, they are not on the Copplestone-Stopgate alignment either. Even after being extrapolated from 9 to 20 miles, it misses them by 400 yards and 1 mile respectively.

In later years Carbonell developed a new approach to these sightings. Theo Brown, in an overview of Black Dog studies (5) quotes her conclusion that the apparitions tend to appear along parish boundaries (and Copplestone, Blackaditch Cross, Allens Week and the Torridge road do in fact bear out this claim). Unfortunately she does not seem to have published any further research.

I don't know if the Black Dog still runs along his old route, or if anyone is there to see him. Millers' waggons have long been consigned to museums, and these days children who walk home in the dark are more likely to be run down by a Saab than a spectre. But Carbonell's research is still important, because her conclusion - that the sightings were proof of a ley - has never been critically addressed.

Leys, like many other things, ain't what they used to be. When the Old Straight Track Club was formed, it was taken for granted that there could not be chance alignments of sites. Three-point alignments, maybe; but "four-point alignment is exceedingly strong evidence that such is design, not accident" (6). The same optimistic view was held in the

modern revival of earth mysteries studies. Unfortunately, as many readers of this magazine will remember, the belief that leys were way beyond chance was rudely shaken by research in the mid-1970s. The resulting statistical debate swayed to and fro (7) and continued to fuel the unfriendly critique of Williamson and Bellamy (8) but anyone reviewing the literature impartially must accept that the sceptics had the best of it. The number of Watkinsian alignments on an average 1" OS map is pretty much equal to the number of chance alignments to be expected among sites of similar dimensions scattered similarly among the landscape.

Since then, much ingenuity has been shown in an attempt to find leys that are supported by something better than the old, discredited assumption of statistical probability. We have had single-period leys, superleys, parallel leys, radiating leys, mediaeval leys, and dowsable leys, not to mention shadow paths, corridors of sanctity, holy hill alignments, and lines variously characterised by site intervisibility, boundaries, metrology, earth energy, corroborative fieldwork, and folklore.

This is where I come in. I don't know what the above factors can do to shake the natural inference that Watkins was wrong (not much, is my guess) but I do have a specialist interest in folklore. Certain classes of legend, certain types of apparitions are brought into play to offset the deficiency of map evidence. Leys are a priori likely, it is argued, since folklore evidence suggests that the landscape is already criss-crossed by lines of supernatural force. If phantom funerals, spectre coaches and the rest ran in straight lines, this argument would be plausible: but they do not. Local studies do not support the idea of long, straight, phenomenal highways (9). Therefore Carbonell's Black Dog line is the only alignment of haunted roads in the literature.

And now it seems that this line is not a ley at all, but simply a five-mile stretch of mediaeval road. Very interesting, as a ghost legend: but in no way fulfilling Barbara Carbonell's intention of vindicating Watkins against his critics. She spent eight years on the trail of the Black Dog, but in the end I am afraid she was really trailing a Red Herring.

References: (1) James Wentworth Day, A Ghost-Hunter's Game Book (London 1958) pp204-215. (2) Transactions of the Devonshire Association 102 (1970) p271. (3) Day, op.cit. p217. (4) Philip Heselton, 'The Ley Hunter's Club: A Retrospective View', Northern Earth No 13 (1981) pp3-4. (5) Theo Brown, 'The Black Dog', Folklore 69 (1958) pp175-192. (6) Alfred Watkins, The Old Straight Track (London 1925) p204. (7) Paul Screeton, Seekers of the Linear Vision (Santa Barbara 1993) pp42-43. (8) Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy, Ley Lines In Question (Tadworth 1983) pp94-109. (9) Jeremy Harte, 'Haunted Roads', The Ley Hunter 121 (1994) pp1-7.

NB: "RUNNING OF THE BLACK DOG" from Morchard Bishop to Black Dog. Saturday 7 October, assemble London Inn, Morchard Bishop, 6.30pm.



SACRIFICE AND WHEELS OF FIRE Mary Coombs

Many years ago whilst living at Buckfastleigh I was obliged to attend a meeting of the Dartmoor Hunt at Cross Furzes. Raised anti-hunt I wasn't wildly enthusiastic about the prospect, but obediently tagged along. Standing there at the crossroads, watching hounds and riders descend to Water Oak Corner, Dean Bourne, and the Abbot's Way out on to Dean Moor, I had a strange experience. In my 'mind's eye', surging down across the moor from a point high on the north east horizon, (which I have since estimated to be the Holne/Scorriton area), I 'saw' a wave of energy/presence flow in the wake of the hunt. Whatever 'it' was I felt it to be extremely ancient, older than the earliest inhabitants of the moor, and hungry for blood.

Whether the hunt by its activities had awakened something long dormant, or whether all hunts might unconsciously respond to some long forgotten need within the earth itself - their bloodied prey becoming a symbolic 'sacrifice', is a subject for further debate.

Investigation into the folklore of this srea reveals that Buckfastleigh and area has far more to offer than just the well-documented legend of Squire Cabell, whose dastardly deeds were said to have inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to write that classic of Dartmoor fiction "The Hound of The Baskervilles". The Buckfastleigh area has a rich pool of Irish Celtic rooted placenames. Echoes back to influences from Celtic missionaries? Or an Irish invasion of the South Hams in 1067? Buckfast as a Christian ecclesiastical settlement compares in age with Glastonbury, and "talea", Celtic iron trading bars that have been found at Glastonbury Lake village, Hod Hill in Dorset and more recently at Poole, have also been found at Hembury Fort near Holne, the only places they have been found thus far in Britain. The caves beneath the parish church of Holy Trinity (which has a siting legend) have fantastic crystal chambers, one has a stalagmite figure called "The Little Man".

An article in the South Devon Times last summer recounting midsummer traditions referred to a wheel rolling ceremony once having taken place in the area. Spurred on by my childhood experience I decided to find out more about the custom and how it might relate to the land in question.

On ploughing through all the Transactions of the Devonshire Association I could find, plus numerous Dartmoor books, I could find only one reference to this practice having taken place in this area, this recounted by an elderly Buckfastleigh resident, who in turn had been told of it by his grandfather. This account locates the event as having been staged "somewhere off the road towards Combe and Scorriton", speculating that it was "possibly midsummer" and recording that a bonfire was lit in addition to igniting the wheel, which, true to traditions practised elsewhere, was guided towards the river Mardle ('smiar-glasso' in goidelic (Irish) celtic) by "the boys and young men of the village" using poles to keep it on course, as failure of the wheel to reach water would be interpreted as an ill-omen for the whole community.

The South Devon Times article goes on to speculate that the wheel and bonfire may once have formed elements in what evolved to be the annual Lamb Pie Fair, the pie in question containing newly docked lambs tails donated by local farmer's wives.

Not far away at Holne it wasn't just the lamb's tails that were served up at the annual feast, but the whole carcass; for like Kingsteignton, Holne once hosted a regular "Ram Roast", which in the early days was both heavily ritualistic and decidedly bloody, and, as one account suggests, were held at Whitsun. However, William Crossing tells us this event was held on Old Midsummer's Day eg 6 July, rather than the solstice, although later was apparently switched to Beltane.

Before daybreak the young men of the area would go up onto the moor and there select a ram lamb, which they would run down to Play Park, where the animal would be tied to an upright structure variously described as a "pillar" or "menhir", and there killed by cutting its throat, then roasted, fleece and all. At midday, armed with knives, the youths would engage in a mad scramble for a slice of meat, often risking their own blood being spilt in the process. The risk of personal injury further increased when "as an act of gallantry held in high esteem among the females, the young men sometimes return to fight their way through the crowd to get a slice for the chosen amongst the young women". The account goes on to tell us how celebrations were extended into nightfall via games, dancing and wrestling. This would more than likely have been "Devonshire Wrestling", a sport banned by statute in 1861 due to its violent nature in which "the shins of the party were often found streaming with blood, from sharp and violent blows they receive from each other", the result of wearing hard shoes, with which opponents were encouraged to kick out.

In sharp contrast to the Holne festivities, where the principal players were male, at Kidlington in Oxfordshire girls with their hands tied behind their backs competed to fell a lamb by tugging at its fleece with their teeth, the victor being rewarded with the title "Lady of the Lamb". The successful girl was then next day honoured in a triumphal procession, following which she presided over a feast in which the thrice-cooked (ie. part boiled, part roasted, part baked) lamb was served.

In Europe we find clear references to the upright as a place of slaughter/sacrifice and the fiery wheel having indeed been brought together in one ceremony. At Vorlberg in the Tyrol the upright was a tree, to which a straw effigy called "the witch" was secured and then burnt. In Swabia (Bavaria) the effigy was called "The Old Wife" and sometimes "Winter's Grandmother" providing a good indication as to the symbolic purpose of the festival, namely that of banishing Winter and the Old Year and welcoming in Spring or Summer and the New Year. The Bavarian effigy was tied to a pole and the single large wheel replaced by a series of smaller flying discs. However it is to ancient Egypt and Greece that we must look to find an early reference relating to the format of the Holne Roast. In Thebes, once a year, a ram sacred to the god Ammon was slaughtered, not so much as a sacrifice to the god, but as the god himself, and its fleece placed over his statue. In Thessaly the ram became accepted as a "vicarious sacrifice in the room of the royal victim", a reference here to the old belief that the fate of monarch/god was interwoven with that of the land, and how on the waning of his power/virility the god-king must be killed so that fertility and

power could be transferred to a new bearer, thus ensuring the well-being of the land and its people.

The sun, of course, plays a vital role in the success of the harvest to come, and as such it would be reasonable to assume that the blazing rolling wheel (which in some places itself was used to dispose of the effigy) of Scorriton, or the flying discs of Bavaria, might be representative of the solar disc itself, that by "imitating the desired result you actually produce it, but counterfeiting the sun's progress through the heavens you really help the luminary to pursue his celestial journey with punctuality and despatch". However there may be more to this once widespread custom than first meets the eye and we may erroneously read symbolism where none was intended, as Frazer in "The Golden Bough" wisely reminds us: "the use of the wheel may be merely a mechanical device to facilitate the operation of fire-making by increasing friction." Indeed in some places the wheel was reduced to its most basic components, that of two uprights which supported a central spindle covered with combustible materials. By tugging at two ropes, much like starting a petrol-driven chainsaw, a spark was produced and torches lit from the resultant fire, which in turn would be used to ignite the new hearth fire.

Alternatively various cultures traditionally associate deity with flying wheels or variations thereof. On the Isle of Man the old god Mananan "rolled on three legs like a wheel through the mist". Cneph, the sacred winged disc, was invoked at places like Knap Hill and Stukeley's Navestock. Elsewhere he was replaced by St Catherine and her fiery wheel. In the often shape-shifting world of mythology the flying disc or wheel can sometimes be interchangeable with giant worms, serpents, dragons and even dogs, in which Buckfastleigh folklore is particularly rich, Cabell not having the monopoly on phantom hounds.

Chinese mythology speaks of the "Celestial Dog", a strange creature which at a distance appears as a moving star, but on earth assumes the form of a dog, with curious dragon-like characteristics. In keeping with many dragon legends, and the preferential abode of the gods, the celestial dog lives on mountain and hill tops, these places also being traditionally the designated area where long ago "when the gods walked among men" the chosen were delivered up as willing "sacrifices", knowing that immortality would be theirs, a belief which also has its parallels in faery lore.

Scorriton is fairly high, as is nearby Holne - both places hosted a beacon in 1977 to commemorate the silver jubilee of the present monarch. On 20 May 1965 local resident Ernest Bryant experienced a close encounter of the third kind on Scorriton Down, in which three humanoid beings described as wearing "diving suits" gave him a tour of their craft and a youth calling himself "Yamski" warned Bryant of the threat posed by a race from "Epsilon" who abducted humans for breeding experiments - the "greys" of contemporary UFO lore perhaps? Bryant's encounter came within hours of the death in America of George Adamski, a prominent "contactee" of the 1950's. (UFO researchers state that Bryant could not have known, because Adamski only confided it to a few close friends, that after he died the extraterrestrials would return him to Earth, incarnated as a teenage boy). Generally cited as a one-off incident in the annals of the area's folklore, Bryant's experience may not be as unique as it appears.

A personal friend, and former head boy of a Buckfastleigh children's home back in the 1960's, encountered a "shining being" also wearing a "diving-suit like garment" in nearby Kingswood, a wood above which I often saw a single red light glide low at night, too low for the safety of conventional aircraft. Of course this object may have been a classic example of the "earthlight" phenomena, the Buckfastleigh area in general being rich in mine workings and cave systems. He and I weren't the only kids at the children's home who had strange experiences in the area. There was subtle pressure operating to dissuade talk of such experiences, this was during the early to mid 1960's, coinciding with the period of Bryant's experience. Twice the Home was completely evacuated due to a supposed "escaped prisoner" having entered the property (Winter 1962-3 and Autumn 1964) with no clear explanation available to us when we were finally allowed back indoors. Each time it was made sure that we did not look within sight of the Home, and that none of us returned until given the all-clear. Apparently the media never picked up on it - or were told that they covered it at their peril? In 1978 a group of local teenagers found themselves plagued by strange aerial lights and observed, again, a diving-suited glowing figure near one of the dual carriageway support legs.

Could the wheel-rolling ceremony at Scorriton have been a distant folk memory of an event with celestial associations, Bryant's contact maybe not being the first to occur in the area? The fiery wheel might have been representative of some sort of airborne craft with fire or lights. Might a potent ley run through the area, attracting UFO's and generating many ghosts and other phenomena recorded in the district, as many believe? There was once a tradition practised on the moor where people assembled at a designated spot to "see the sun dance" at sunrise on Easter Morning, apparently not all who actually attended saw this happen - as is the case with many 'visions'. Women in particular would have their own vigil, hoping to see "The Lamb & Flag in the sun". Could the UFO abduction theory, so prominent today, relate to the practise of "sacrifice"? There are many similarities between reported abductions and faery lore - perhaps each era interprets according to their level of sophistication - today's "aliens" may have been yesterdays gods, demons and faeries.

Footnote: The TDA Volume for 1955 records that there was an attempt to revive the wheel rolling custom by the people of Leusdon in the parish of Widecombe in 1954 on St Johns Eve. The cart wheel, loaned by a local farmer and launched from Mel Tor, failed to reach the river, wedging itself in a clump of trees en route. The revival proved short lived, and the local vicar on investigation could find no verification that such a custom was ever practised in the area. Perhaps, had the wheel been ignited then the "revival" would have proved more successful!

Sources: South Devon Times 23.6.94. Transactions of the Devonshire Association (TDA) Vols for 1908, 1935, 1938, 1975, 1989. Guide to Dartmoor by William Crossing. The Golden Bough by Sir J G Frazer. The Flying Saucer Vision by John Michell. A History of Holne by the people of Holne (St Nicholas Books). "Adamski at Scorriton?" The Unknown (magazine), November 1985. Plymouth UFO Research Group Report. The Ley Hunter magazine No 121 Summer 1994. Mysterious Britain by Janet & Colin Bord.

NB: Northern Earth magazine no 63 includes an article on "The Magic of the Rolling Mayo Sun". At Croagh Patrick in Ireland on certain days, the sun appears to roll down the side of this sacred mountain, akin to the "watching the sun dance" tradition mentioned in this article.



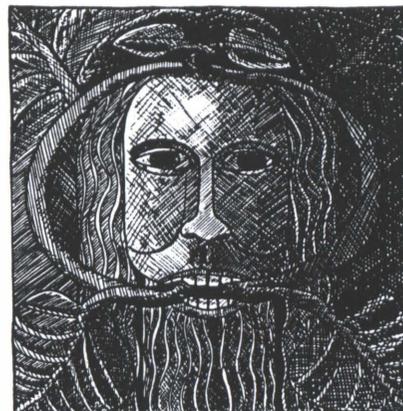
A SACRED BUS JOURNEY

Tracey Brown

Before I passed my driving test (at the age of 29!) I was often one of the coach passengers on the Okehampton-Exeter route, craning my neck out of the window to look at the landscape, possible alignments of church spires and hills etc, and other interesting features that earth mysteries buffs keep a look out for. The journey to Exeter along the A3072 is full of prehistoric sites. The road itself is the old prehistoric causeway from the Exe Valley to North Cornwall, and along its route are signposts to the various Nymet villages (covered by Hugh Franklin in Issue 2).

At Stone Cross just outside North Tawton, there once stood a very ancient cross. This was the site of the 1549 Prayer Book Rebellion battle between the royal army and the Cornish and Sampford Courtenay rebels. After the battle, this place was called "Bloody Park" and the short road nearby, now known as Battishill's Lane, was called "Battle Lane". The royal army defeated the rebels and marched into Sampford Courtenay where they left between five and six hundred rebels dying in the street.

Tom Greeves (1) details the powerful images of green man in Sampford Courtenay church, which also has the tinner's rabbits and a



Green Man; Sampford Courtenay Church

wonderful dragon with foliage and fruit curling out of its mouth. Only six miles away at Bow is the centre of the nemetons, Bow Henge, and Greeves thinks it is more than likely that these foliate images linked back to the Henge and the worship in the "sacred grove". "These images obviously meant as much to the local people as they did to the woodcarvers, which in 1549 they consciously or otherwise perceived to be threatened. That there may have been a deep-rooted folk memory of beliefs that the early church had somehow accomodated, but which now seemed under attack from an outside authority, is not so fanciful bearing in mind the respect still paid to many a venerable village oak"(2). Of course many legends and traditions are connected to trees, especially oaks.

It could be that most churches' ornate waggon roofs, with animal head bosses and carved foliage, the beams arching overhead, were deliberately carved to represent the sacred grove of ancient nature worship, mimicking the overhead branches of trees and leaves. This could have been one of the ways in which the incoming religion integrated and converted the population. Here they could worship in a place not dissimilar to their precious grove, and not get rained on either!

Recent research tends to show that the green man and its female counterpart, the female exhibitonist or "sheena-na-gig" is more likely to be of medieval origin and represents Lust of the Seven Deadly Sins. Bob Trubshaw, (editor of Mercian Mysteries) in a recent letter to Northern Earth, states ".there is no reason to suppose that the carvers of such figures in, say, the thirteenth of fourteenth centuries were consciously placing 'pagan' images within churches"(3). Not consciously maybe, but is it not interesting that those images are nevertheless the ones that were carved? Trubshaw goes on to say "This link does suppose that the 'wild woodland' was connected with what we would now label as pre-Christian 'fertility rites', perhaps those of May Day. Quite emphatically, this does not imply any deliberately 'pagan' activity, simply something that (as with all folk customs) 'We have always done' - despite the probable displeasure of the clergy".

Further down the road, past some Nymets, in the field opposite Silver Street Cottages, is the now invisible Bow Henge. "Culturally, it may well be the most significant site in the whole county, rivalling Exeter Cathedral in importance (4)". Interestingly enough, Exeter Cathedral is built on an ancient pagan site, (which the Romans made into the Legion Bathhouse), and which contains twenty green men carvings, one of the highest number of such representations anywhere in Britain. And the Holy See was once in Crediton - just a few miles up the road from the Henge - before it was moved to Exeter. So there were two focal points of religious activity very close to each other, but no prizes for guessing which one had long been subjugated first. (The "Centre For Christ" - a monastery-type community - is now at Burston Manor opposite the Henge!).

The two churches closest to the Henge, Broadnymet and Nymet Tracey, were originally dedicated to St Martin of Tours, an extremely active 4th century missionary, preacher and determined destroyer of pagan sites. "What more appropriate choice of dedication could have been made by missionaries wishing to christianize a remote, pagan, sanctuary?" (5) It's strange that the Henge has been so completely destroyed so as to leave no trace, no raised earthwork or bank, and only showed up in the dry summer of 1984 as cropmarks in an aerial photograph; when one considers that in 1940 the walls of the Roman fort "Nemetostatio" near North Tawton were still 7ft high. Of course many years separate the building of the Henge from the building of the Roman fort, but someone did a very thorough job of getting rid of the Henge. They didn't think to change the giveaway Nymet names, which persisted for thousands of years to give us clues today.

Fewer than one per cent of Devonian placenames are Celtic, which might indicate that the Saxons found a sparsely populated landscape, many Britons migrating from the South West to Brittany. But the Celtic placenames in remoter parts of Devon, such as the Nymets and Nymptons, nearby Crooke, Treable, Trusham, Marshall, Dunchideock, together with names such as Charles, Landkey and Wallower on the fringes of Exmoor indicate that British habitation continued in some areas (6).

Martin of Tours was no doubt a great example to the later St Wynfryth of Crediton, later to become famous also as a destroyer of pagan sites (and oak trees in particular) in his guise as St Boniface, whose massive, grandiose and ostentatious red church of the Holy Cross is in Crediton, and despite its architectural splendour, feels as cold,

dead, and empty as a crypt.

In the eighth century Boniface drew up a list of thirty condemned pagan practices, the "Indiculus Superstitionem et Paganiarum" of which the sixth included "sacred rites of the woods which they call "nimidas""(7). He was probably well aware and much irked by the possible survival of pagan belief only a few miles west of his birthplace. Despite his fame as missionary to Germany, in the mid-13th century the Poles and East Prussians were still pagan, so there is a possibility of lingering survival in mid-Devon.

The henge itself had nineteen pits - significant as nineteen is a sacred and magical number. The pits once contained massive timber posts, like Woodhenge, no doubt carved ornately with images similar to those that were carved later in churches, in which the craftsmen -consciously or not - left us a legacy of enduring images that were of great importance to them.

I always had a quiet chuckle at this point on the journey, because just past the site of the Henge is the Burston Inn (the word "Burston" is significant also - see Hugh's article Issue 2), which now holds "raves" on Friday nights. So the continuity of "ecstatic pagan rites" and dancing is still going on a few yards away; although the "ravers" are probably unaware that they are continuing this tradition! (Or are they?) The Burston is also reknowned as "The Country & Western Centre of Devon" on a Saturday night, but I don't think they dance to this in quite so "heathen" a fashion. The inn sign for the Burston is a picture of monks tending a field, this could represent the monastery in Burston Manor opposite, or represent the tradition of pastoral religious activity associated with the immediate area? Incidentally, the lettering underneath the inn title says "The George And Dragon". Excited by the ancient significance of dragons and slayers - the old Christians v pagans bit -I asked the landlord why it was thus called. Of course I fell for the old joke that the previous landlord was called George, and his wife was.....

On the right hand side of the bus route is the tiny hamlet of Clannaborough complete with church of St Petrock, built in the middle of a raised circular churchyard. This also ties in with our Nymets, for local tradition insists that both Broadnymet and Nymet Tracey churches were built by William II de Tracy, of the Bradninch (Exeter) de Tracy family. It was de Tracy who was one of the four knights of King Henry II, Thomas a Becket's four murderers, at Canterbury on 29 December 1170. The tradition claims that de Tracy built several churches to atone for his part in the murder, which saw Becket acclaimed martyr and canonized by Pope Alexander III in 1173. Morteheo's church of St Mary Magdalene was supposedly founded by him in 1170 as was a church at Sourton near Okehampton. Becket's death seems to have made an impact locally since churches at Bridford, Lapford and Newton Tracey are dedicated to him, and there is a legend which tells of his ghost being seen annually at Lapford, riding a white horse to Nymet Rowland on 7 July, the date of his festival. Lapford Revel, revived in July 1978, is held in remembrance of Becket's death. de Tracy's ghost certainly gets around, because he has also been in legend condemned to making ropes of sand on the beach at Braunton Burrows near Barnstaple. Each time his rope nears completion, a black dog appears, carrying a ball of fire in its mouth with which it breaks

or burns through the cord, and the penance must begin all over again (7).

There are speculations that Becket organised his own murder and "became a King", as Osiris was sacrificed and scattered in pieces and Jesus was sacrificed yet declared "King" at the same time. It does smack of a ritual murder, because the knights each took great care to deliver a deadly blow to the body. As he lay dying on the floor of his church one of the knights said "He wished to be King, he wished to be more than King. Let him be King!" It is known that he met the four knights in his chambers beforehand and promised to be there on time and that he would not flee when the four came to kill him. Some of his brother monks who were obviously not fully informed, tried to warn and save Thomas but he kept his appointment with destiny and "became a King", surrounded by four soldiers, as Christ became a King at the centre of the cross.

The contemporary writer of the account of Becket's murder, de Hoveden, reported that the four murderers fled west to "Cnaresburc". This has generally been taken to mean Knaresborough, Yorkshire, although this lies north of Canterbury. Barbara Carbonell (8) considered "Cnaresburc" is more likely to represent Clannaborough, which does lie west of Canterbury and whose Anglo-Saxon spelling was "Clonesburg, Clonesburc and Clanesberg". She also makes the interesting point that traditional accounts relate that the Becket murder was known in Devon on the same day that it took place. If, as several writers have suggested, the death of Becket was a ritual murder, the Nymet area, with its ancient role of pagan forest sanctuary (the forest or wildwood was always a sanctuary for outcasts, misfits and those who chose to live outside the dominator society), might seem an appropriate place to which the murderers might have fled. William de Tracy may have chosen to repay the area of his sanctuary and at the same time expiate his crime by building the churches he is connected with in tradition.

I visited the chapel of St Martin at Broadnymet, which is now derelict but being restored (after a fashion...) by the farmer on whose land it stands. The wheel carvings that were on either side of the entrance have been plastered over and repointed - the farmer was unaware that there were ever carvings there, they must have been very faded. Now they've gone forever! Whilst in conversation with him, I mentioned the Becket murder. He said that he had long been aware of the area's association with Becket, because he understood that Canterbury Cathedral had a leper colony in its grounds, and that when de Tracy was ordered to build chapels and churches as compensation, he had to provide shelter and accommodation for lepers, and that the land next to Broadnymet chapel had been a leper colony. There is a hole in the wall through which communion was passed to the infected. When I first walked in the chapel before I met the farmer, I was "aware" of a large, dense cloud of black flies that seemed to descend on me, and all day I had the most appalling throbbing headache that no medicine shook off.

He also showed me an old granite shaft of a cross with the arms broken off that is right next to the chapel wall. He said it was a village cross from Dartmoor but he did not know which village. He then asked if I wanted to see some ostriches, and I thought "Oh no, help! I'm stuck out here in the middle of nowhere with a wierdo.." - but it turned out to be true! A hundred ostriches, making no sound apart from

a huge rush of large feet and wings as they ran to the barn door, bobbing and racing and displaying their glorious wings and rockpool eyes. The farmer told me that also in the area were emu and kangaroo farms. "There's some strange things on farms in Devon", he said. "Not as strange as the people who eat them", I thought. On either side of the A3072 there are ostrich farms 2 miles apart, one near Down St Mary and one at Bow. What a totally wierd day, I thought as I drove home; and there, on the left side of the road in the hedge, was a tree on which the ivy had grown into the exact shape of an ostrich in mid-step!

Then we come to dear old Copplestone Cross. I have been fascinated by this for some time, particularly whilst investigating Bow and The Nymets, and was convinced this old cross must be connected. Whilst perusing one of the Transactions of the Devonshire Association in Exeter Library, a periodical penance I have to do for my sins, I came across an address given to the Association in 1876 by R J King, concerning a Charter of Eadgar AD974 (7). This was 10th century so not as old as I'd hoped, since Boniface was 7th century and Martin of Tours 4th century, but it concerns a grant of three "hydes" or "mansas" of land at a place called Nymed, which once encompassed Copplestone. A considerable extent of country at the time of the charter seems to have been known as Nymed or Nymet. This area was more than likely wooded, Devon and Cornwall having a sparser population than that of most of the other parts of England and therefore clearing less farming land. Morchard Bishop to the NW of Copplestone was once called Morchet in the Domesday Book, as was Cruwys Morchard. Morchet is a Celtic word relating to the Welsh "mawr" (great big) and "coed" (wood), the "Morchard" being the later English for orchard (orceard)(8).



NE side

Copplestone itself is named after the cross which is mentioned as the starting and returning point in the boundaries of Nymed granted by Eadgar. The cross stands at the meeting place of three parishes - Crediton, Colebrook and Down St. Mary. The name may mean the "headland stone", or the "chief stone" since the old English word "cop" means "head" "summit" or "chief". It may also mean the "headless" stone since the old name for it was spelt "Coplestan", and the cross has not had a top since time immemorial. According to King, it's antiquity "exceeds that of any other monument of its class in Devonshire" and it is the only stone cross this side of the Tamar which displays Celtic interlaced carvings "which are comparatively common in the north of England - the ancient Northumbria - and sometimes found in Cornwall". It stands on the extreme border with the great parish of Crediton, which, long before any date we can assign to the cross, had become the principal possession of the bishops of Devon, in AD909.

It has been alleged that the cross was erected in the year AD905 in memory of Bishop Putta who is said to have died in the village square. Nobody really can explain the meaning of the carvings, reproduced here from the 1876 drawings which even then were much eroded. The socket on the south-east side was added at a later date, maybe after the loss or destruction of the top of the cross, and designed perhaps to contain a metal crucifix.



NW side

SW side



It was the custom in the earlier period of Saxon Christianity -and this custom was continued long afterwards -for the lord of the land, in places where no church had been built, to erect a cross of wood or stone "to which outlying ceorls and serfs might repair to offer their prayers" (9). Coplestone is far from any church and may have been raised as a boundstone and as a central religious and gathering place. I like to think it was a menhir that existed long before christianity, that was converted and thus carved with Celtic Christian symbols. King says that the cross predates the Saxon charter but is no older than AD909, the year in which the Crediton bishopric was founded, but I believe this is unlikely, and that the menhir predates any of it, linked with the complex of circles and rows that were at North Tawton (now the town's football field). Could I go so far as to suggest that the Omphalos Stone of Devon is this forgotten and grimy stone cross at Coplestone? It is similarly decorated to the Celtic Cross omphalos stone at Lanivet, (also derived from the word "nymet"/ "neved") in Cornwall, and geographically the central part of that county. The Nymeds are considered to be at the centre of Devon.

Coplestone Cross is also the subject of an interesting "curse" legend. It was deemed to be hazardous to traffic by Devon County Council and was moved on 13 March 1969 in "10 yards in a slightly northerly direction" (11). Nothing was

found under the socket of the old site. There were strong protests from some locals about the removal of so ancient a landmark, some claiming a curse might fall on those responsible for the deed. I was told some time ago by Crediton locals that the contractor in charge of moving the cross died of a sudden heart attack. (I've heard all the jokes already viz. "I'm not surprised, if he tried to lift it himself!").

After Crediton the bus goes past the turning to Colebrooke, whose church contains Green Men carvings, then through Newton St Cyres, Half Moon (sort of name that whiffs of mystery..), Cowley and terminates at Exeter, which is an article in itself and must follow later. (I don't have to write that as well do I?) (Yes. Ed.)

References: (1) Tom Greeves WOODHENGE ECHOES from PULP! Summer 1989 Common Ground Limited Edition* (2) Greeves op.cit. (3) Angela Blaen DEVON'S SACRED GROVE Toucan Press Guernsey 1983* (4) Blaen op.cit. (5) Blaen op.cit. (6) WITCHCRAFT & FOLKLORE OF DARTMOOR Ruth E St Leger Gordon, Bell: New York (7) Barbara Carbonell and M Wauton THIRTEEN CENTURIES IN BOW ALIAS NYMET TRACEY WITH BROAD NYMET DEVON Exeter: Townsend 1949 (Westcountry Studies reference copy) (8) R J King COPLESTONE CROSS AND A CHARTER OF EADGAR AD974 Transactions of the Devonshire Association Vol 8 p351-9 (9) Blaen op.cit. (10) King op cit. (11) Transactions of the Devonshire Association 102 (1970) p271 See Also: Hugh Franklin SIGNPOSTS IN NYMETLAND Wisht Maen No 2 * "PULP!", Common Ground and "Devon's Sacred Grove" are detailed in Book Reviews p27.

SE side



EAST DEVON HILLFORTS

Steven Shipp

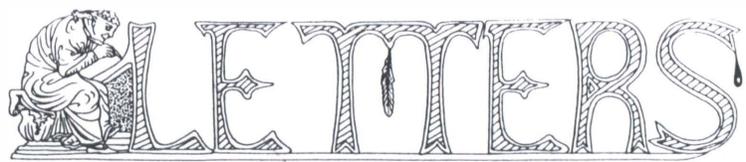
The hillforts of East Devon rise from the landscape like guardians of this ancient land. Mostly built in the Iron Age, to provide shelter and protection to the occupiers, they are sited on prominent natural hilltops.

The exception to this is Blackbury Castle (SY187924) which straddles a narrow ridge with steep sides to the north and south. It was here, in the 1960's, that the archaeologist and dowser Tom Lethbridge found sling shot pebbles amongst the wooded deep ditches and ramparts. Using his unique dating method with a pendulum, he found that the stones were the same as those on Branscombe beach, a few miles south. (See his book ESP: BEYOND TIME & DISTANCE). If you wander through the heart of this ancient place in early spring, the area is a mass of bluebells and the light, broken by the huge beech trees, dapples the ground. It is not hard to imagine this site as something special and very peaceful.

Directly north of here and the other side of Honiton is Dumpdon Hill (ST176040) - a pear shaped hillfort with the south east end planted with scots pine. The remainder of the site is open space and -although in the hands of the National Trust - one can explore it without restriction. It is a tricky and steep path to the top and not recommended in wet conditions! The views from the summit are magnificent. On one of our visits, the wind whistled through the trees producing a strange sound. It reminded me of a theory connected to the ley system of Alfred Watkins. He speculated that various sites and special places linked together in straight lines to form trading routes. His sites included earth mounds, ponds and fire beacons. These obviously represent the three elements of Earth, Water and Fire. Many ancient burial chambers and hillforts are covered with scots pine and it has been postulated that the wind (representing the element of Air) passing through the branches produces a special sound, thus signifying the location as a unique site (See Jimmy Goddard, "The Significance of Sound" in SKYWAYS & LANDMARKS REVISITED).

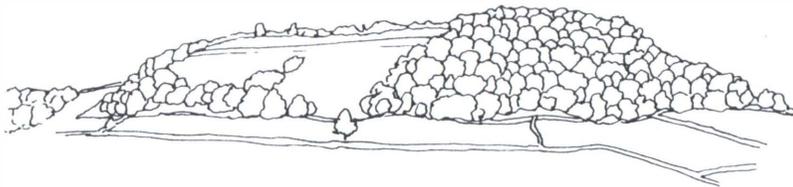
We dowsed the hillfort independently using copper angle rods and both found a definite line of 'something' running approximately north to south. We unfortunately had no magnetic compass to hand and a return trip is planned to undertake a more detailed survey. We can find no possible ley running through this hillfort using 1:50000 Landranger Ordnance Survey maps.

Hawkesdown Hillfort (SY264914) looks down on the village of Axmouth and the Axe Valley - a very beautiful place. The hill itself is private land, but the undulations of the ramparts and ditches can be seen from miles around. This fort was believed to be the defensive stronghold of the Durotriges - the British tribes of Dorset - against the Danmonii from further west in Devon. The Fosse Way and a branch of the Icknield Way converge in the Axe Valley, and Axmouth was one of the first Saxon settlements in Devon. In the beautiful church of St Michael's in Axmouth can be found medieval wall paintings on the supporting pillars. There is a legend of a ghostly warrior who haunts the earthwork with his fire-breathing dog.



A little further north east we find Musbury Castle (SY282942) - a large hillfort looking down on the village of Musbury. This site again was believed to have been used by the Durotriges. The name Musbury appears to come from "the camp of the mouse" or "quiet camp" - a "deserted place". There are breathtaking views of the Axe Valley, and a public footpath passes through the earthworks.

Due west to Sidbury with its fascinating church, just outside the village, are the tree covered remains of Sidbury Castle (SY128914), an Iron Age encampment now in private hands. Here, an ancient dew pond can be found, and roe deer can be seen if one is quiet on a summer evening. We have got within a few feet of them. Sidbury Castle has never been subjected to the tools of excavation and, sadly, a large area is now lost under the unchecked growth of trees. It was here, during the Napoleonic sea invasion, that the women of the area dressed in soldier's uniforms and walked the ramparts to fool the invaders that the defending army was larger than it really was.



Near here there is reputed to be a burial cairn made from dry flints known as "The Treasury" or "The Money Heap", where it is claimed a hidden fortune awaits the lucky finder. We have searched the area exhaustively but cannot find such a cairn. Legend also tells of a secret underground passageway from the hillfort to the spot where the old manor of Sidbury once stood. I have been shown by locals the possible entrance site on the side of the earthworks - now just a dip in the ground.

Woodbury Castle (SY032874) on Woodbury Commons commands a lofty position. This earthwork must be unique for it is still occupied! Within the ramparts there stands a private house and garden. It's good to know that the place is still being used as a dwelling. This hillfort too has scots pine clad mounds which have a strange atmosphere.

**3rd
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With reference to Issue 2 - "Gods and Goddesses of Devon" and the legend therein of Tamara, I have known a piece of music for some time on this theme, entitled TAMAR by the Russian composer Balakirev, based on a poem by Lermentov. The sleeve notes of the record states "Its principal character is a sensual and terrifying Georgian princess who inhabits a castle standing above a deep gorge through which runs the River Terek. The castle gates are ever open, and from the princess' bedroom a scarf flutters to lure passing strangers. A nobleman is attracted and invited inside to be greeted by traditional festivities. He is eventually persuaded to perform a dance with the Princess Tamara and, with the dance reaching a fantastic climax, the sinister woman stabs her victim. His body is thrown into the river below and the scarf resumes its significant position at the window. The symphonic poem was completed in 1882 and the first performance in England took place in 1913 with the Diaghilev Ballet and Tamara Karsavina in the title role. Some musicians have considered that Rimsky-Korsakov was aware of this symphonic poem when he composed his famous "Scheherazade", and some consider TAMAR to be a finer work".

Apologies for the lurid nature of this fairy tale which I take to be symbolic of rejection, or spurning - with the princess as some kind of femme fatale - an image which has at some time or another loomed large in the male psyche. I know next to nothing about the poet Lermentov apart from the fact that he spent some time in the Caucasus. Students of Russian literature would of course know more. It is interesting to speculate as to the connection with the River Tamar. Interesting to think of the steep cliffs near Gunnislake and the almost gorge-like nature of the river in some parts.

The piece itself is excellent - exciting and colourfully orchestrated. The last time I heard it live was, curiously enough, in the Great Hall at Exeter some years ago. **KENNETH ASHBURNER** Chagford Devon

DRIZZLECOMBE CARVINGS DEBATE RAGES!

Dear Editor

On the inside back cover of Issue 3 you mention the carvings found on the Drizzlecombe Menhir and ask for theories/explanations. I have known about them for about ten years. They were put there by students from Plymouth College in the 1950's as a joke. I am told it is Japanese and its meaning is rude! **PAUL RENDELL** Editor **THE DARTMOOR NEWSLETTER**

Dear Editor

There is no mystery about the Drizzlecombe menhir carvings - sorry! They are ordinary common Christian church symbols. The right-hand one is unfinished or worn: there should be a  to match the . It is the sign for the mass. The altar cross is obvious and needs no comment. The one on the left is ambiguous in itself. In itself, as it is, and associated with the other two, it stands for an altar viewed from the side and a heart. Devotion to the heart of Christ and its pictorial representation is very common. However, there could be a hilt above and it stands for a downward pointing sword piercing Mary's heart (Luke 2.35), but I do not go for this. It must at one time have been an altar, even if only on one occasion. These symbols are, or pretend to be, - (there might be a mystery there!!) - early in date. Altars used different ones, later. **WILLIAM SAXTON** Taunton Somerset

Dear Editor

Regarding the carvings found on the Drizzlecombe stone shown in Issue 3, they resemble Greek letters as they were written in ancient times:



Phi



Zeta



Gamma



Xi

equivalent to our ph, z, g, x; where the discrepancies might be due to weathering, the fancy of the carver, or later embellishments by others. This is probably wide of the mark, but, even if it was a bullseye, the mystery remains unsolved until it can be shown what the letters mean. I've no idea. **BERNARD GUILÉ** Heathfield East Sussex

Tom Greeves, chairman of the Dartmoor Tinworking Research Group and ex-DNPA archaeologist, alerted Wisht Maen to the fact that the Sites and Monuments Register in County Hall, Exeter were aware of these carvings. Upon enquiry I was told that the School of Oriental and African Studies

in London had examined the carvings and confirmed that they dated from 1950 and translated them as "ASHLEY"! A Chinese person also had offered his translation - the first symbol could mean "ASIA" or "SUB"; the second symbol "WANG" or "KING" (now that sounds like a schoolboy joke..) and the third means simply "1 100th" as in a unit of measure. Confused? You will be. Dr Philip Stokes of Trent Polytechnic who first researched the carvings and sent them off for examination, stated at the time that there was "occult activity" in the area. The SMR are still bemused as to what they really mean and welcome any other explanations. Keep them coming!

SCORHILL "BREAST CARVING" DEBATE RAGES!

Dear Ms Brown

SCORHILL

I have now at last had an opportunity to visit the stone circle at Scorhill. I spent some time there and I am afraid that my view is that the possible "breast carvings" on the stones are not of human origin. I think they are natural geological inclusions, or xenoliths, occurring at the time of the formation of the granite. The reasons I think this, are that their features are of a different colour from the surrounding stone - blacker - and also they occur on many of the natural boulders in the area. I think they are probably harder than the granite, whose surface has weathered away over many millions of years, leaving these inclusions standing proud. Quite whether prehistoric man (or women) deliberately chose stones with these nodules to use in the circle at Scorhill is probably something we could never find out. I cannot help feeling that it would have been hard to avoid using stones like these in this area. If you would like me to come out with you sometime, I would be happy to do so, but I would recommend a slightly warmer time of year! **DEBBIE GRIFFITHS**, Dartmoor National Park Archaeologist, Bovey Tracey, Devon

Calum MacIntosh, who first noticed the "breast" carvings, wrote to the Prehistoric Society concerning his find. They assigned Dr Aubrey Burl to the challenge. He happened to be leading a study group on Dartmoor in May 1995, and was happy to inspect the carvings on site. The study group's view was that: ".....we did recognise the 'breasts', but have come to the firm conclusion that they were natural....the markings do indeed resemble the breasts known on some Breton megaliths, like inverted cupmarks, but the Scorhill 'bosses' are not artificial." He records that the group then examined other rocks scattered elsewhere on the moor, and found the same effect on a number of others. He concluded that it must be some geological effect common on stones in the district. He considers the possibility that the large pillar stone at Scorhill "...was chosen by the builders of the ring specifically because of these features but that must remain a speculation worth mention but impossible of proof....the effect is probably amygdales, or small hollow cavities or nodules whose walls are lined with crystals, presumably in this case, quartz."

Jeremy Harte sent us this old press cutting from his archives, dated 1958: "To the Editor of The Times - "FIGURED ROOF TILES"

"Sir,- The interesting article in THE TIMES of August 24, dealing with the Chinese practice of using figured roof-tiles, is a reminder that similar use was once common in the West Country. On old Devon houses the first ridge-tile on the main gable was often moulded to represent a horse and rider. A century or more ago they are recorded as being in common use but in the early years of the twentieth century the antiquarian and writer, the Revd Sabine Baring-Gould, could only find examples at Tavistock, Exeter, Totnes, Plymouth, Truro and West Looe. Fortunately he made sketches of them, for all seem to have disappeared.

The use of such tiles in England is said to have dated from the seventeenth century, and before that actual skulls of animals were built into the walls of a house. There was the pagan custom of making a sacrifice of an animal when an important building was started, and again when it was finished. The skulls incorporated into the structure were supposed to ensure good fortune. Such practice was carried out in churches too, and when rebuilding took place at St Cuthbert's church, Elsdon, Northumberland, in 1877, three horse skulls were found to be walled into the bell turret.

Later, instead of using actual skulls, wooden carvings of animal heads were substituted, and these were displayed in the house itself. Cotehele House, the main part of which was rebuilt in the latter part of the fifteenth century, had an ornate carved head of a horse, the main part of which is preserved, though a part has gone to dust with passing centuries. Then the practice of using the figured ridge-tile came into use. The horse's head appears to have come down from Anglo-Saxon days, and was associated with the grey hell-horse of Woden about which there is so much tradition and history. Animal heads appear to have had other associations besides the pagan ones. It seems only a lord with power of life and death could display a horse's head in his house or on his gateposts. In Elizabethan times the round balls in courtyards and on gateposts were supposed to be confined to manors with capital rights. I am, Sir, yours faithfully, **W L JULYAN**, Cotehele House, East Cornwall."

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(This practice is discussed in Sabine Baring Gould's A BOOK OF FOLKLORE - see Book Reviews last issue - it seems balls on gateposts of manor houses and other fine residences are actually substitutes for the human heads which would have adorned them many years previously. According to him, the mummified dogs and cats found in the walls/attics of numerous old Devon houses can also be explained by this tradition, and carvings of heads in churches also represent the "sacrificed" animal - or human. Readers may have watched the BBC's 1994 programme OUT OF THIS WORLD (an attempt to explain the "paranormal") in which a foetal skeleton was found bricked up in a cottage wall in Brixham and the grisly tale attached thereto told in true penny-dreadful style by a ham actor, viz. that whosoever touched the little body was cursed and more often than not, died. Neither of the "experts" (a disappointing performance from Lyall Watson) stated the fact that the skeleton must have been put there for a reason, and no-one mentioned that all the bad luck occurred when it was moved! (Ed)).

Dear Editor

Jeremy Harte's "Tinner's Rabbits" in Issue 3 was very good indeed. He impressed me with his disciplined scholarship and references to authorities. A pity he quoted R J King: this was written in a very funny period of squarson scholarship. Harte does not give himself enough credit: "no proven connection between the triple rabbit and the tinner's"? But he gives it! The fecundity of the rabbit and the fertility goddess - metal ores came from the generous womb of the Earth via a birth canal! He has unfocussed his eyes, as it were, by not realising that he has first to talk about hares, and think in Latin. Only at the end, may he say, in parenthesis, that at Dartmoor they call the hares rabbits. The original Latin speakers just did not know that there were two distinct animals. To them the rabbit was just the African sun-shrunk hare. Especially as they were like the hare, overground animals. Roman soldiers on African stations learnt to house them, and on Dartmoor men used the free stone to make cities to protect them from predators that would in nature keep them off the Moor. Escaped rabbits cotton(tail!)ed on to making burrows for themselves.

The Latin name given to this new animal was cuniculus because they were kept in passages and because the female rabbit was so fertile. The female passage was cunnus. The mine or military adit took the same word - both cunnus on the continent and cuniculus on Dartmoor. Latin speakers, unlike modern English, were loath to invent new words: they preferred to make old ones do double duty. The -culus is an established diminutive or 'fond' name; translate as 'little' perhaps. A homunculus is a little man, or pixy on Dartmoor. All that I need add is to say that the three hares are not restricted (eg Beverley as Harte says - I know of two English cathedrals with them and I have not travelled widely. They are on the continent too). I am not worried that they are sometimes four. Of course then they will not stand for the Trinity or the feminine in God by the route of the Celtic triple goddess, but they will stand as a religious symbol. Our scriptures use any combination of three or four to bear sacred meaning: I could give an editor an article on that, but it has now to do with Dartmoor! Two is Adam & Eve, ie. all people: add the crucial one more (which is God) and you have "All" (God and his creation). Four is the parallel, Everywhere.

I support Cheryl Straffon in taking Jeremy Harte to task for dismissing the association of goddesses with animals. What about Egypt's Bastet? And wasn't Freyja's chariot drawn by cats? Isis turned Apuleus into an ass, temporarily to bring him to her feet; I cannot recall any malevolent hags (Isis was no hag!) turning themselves into anything, in "The Golden Ass". Artemis and Diana were "Mistress of Animals" and were depicted with hunting cats. Diana would even take the form of a cat. I will not start on other animals, or other goddesses! By the way, "East Devon Ways" - All Saints church at East Budleigh is orientated along an east-west axis, not north-south. Witch scratching was not cursing but scratching or pricking. People who had served under the Devil supposedly did not bleed if certain parts were pricked. Shylock - "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" Jews, so people once thought, served the Devil and were his instruments in having Jesus crucified. It was on this account that they were periodically persecuted. WILLIAM SAXTON Taunton Somerset

Editor's Note: Boscastle Witchcraft Museum has an original church witch-pricking pin complete with purple velvet cushion. It is brass and about 9" long. Ow.

Tom Greeves sent Wisht Maen a copy of his article on THE TINNERS' RABBITS - CHASING HARES? that appeared in The Dartmoor Magazine No 25, Winter 1991, containing information that Wisht Maen readers would be interested in, namely that the rabbits are more than likely meant to be hares, who appear prominently in Dartmoor folklore and are often associated with witchcraft. The hare appears in many cultures of the world as a sacred or magic creature. Other churches containing the symbol as a roof boss are Idlesleigh, Throwleigh, Ilsington, Bridford and Broadclyst - showing a far wider distribution than just Dartmoor. Some of these parishes are not strongly associated with tinworking and Greeves makes the point that this symbol is not found in Cornwall, a far more important tinworking area. The cathedral window triple rabbit/hare symbol found in Paderborn, Westphalia, Germany has a tenuous link with Devon. In the eighth century a bishop was consecrated there by St Boniface of Crediton, the famous extirpator of pagan tree worship. Crediton is an area full of the resonances of Nymets (sacred groves), Green Men and the possible long survival of pagan belief (see article SACRED BUS JOURNEY this issue and Hugh Franklin's SIGNPOSTS IN NYMETLAND Issue 2). It may be significant that in eight of the Devon instances, the triple-hare roof boss immediately adjoins a boss showing a Green Man or "foliate" head (Idlesleigh, two at Sampford Courtenay, South Tawton, Spreyton, Throwleigh, North Bovey, Widecombe). If the Green Man represents male potency and natural regeneration, it would be possible that hares, associated with the Moon in mythology, stand for female sexuality and fertility. In particular, the space between the joined ears may well represent the pubic triangle. Alternatively, if the Green Man represents an earth-bound passion, perhaps the hares represent spiritual love.

Dear Editor

Jeremy Harte points out in his article on the Tinner's Rabbits that the carvings are all found on roof bosses dating from the 15th Century and that it is usually agreed that the rabbit was introduced (or possibly re-introduced as I have previously come across references to an earlier and ultimately unsuccessful introduction by the Romans) from the continent in the 12th century. Although originally a jealously-guarded year-round food supply, it is highly unlikely that the rabbit had not made a bid for freedom and was living wild by the time that the carvings were made. In other words, by the 15th century we can safely

assume that the rabbit was a familiar beast to the carver, although in the years immediately following its introduction few common people other than warreners would ever have seen one.

This could not have been the case, however, with the famous dog'n'bunny carving to be found on old Kilpeck church some 6/7 miles SW of Hereford. The church and its carvings have been reliably dated to between 1130 and 1140, with some suggestions putting them a good decade earlier than this; if the rabbit were introduced to this country in the 12th century it is unlikely that it is a rabbit which is featured on this carved corbel either because it is possible that the carving predates its introduction or because the rabbit, having been so introduced, was highly unlikely to be readily familiar to a local stonemason. For my own part, therefore, I regard Kilpeck's 'bunny' as a hare.

Jeremy also quite rightly points to the other difficulty in this case -ie. that there is no identifiable folklore concerning the rabbit earlier than its late medieval and subsequent connection with fertility and sexual proclivities. This is far from the case with the hare however. Myths concerning the sacredness of the hare occur worldwide -from the moon-gazing hares to the hare-in-the-moon, from the hare as the shape-changed witch to the hare as the beast of omen and divination. So what was the carver thinking of if he did indeed carve three rabbits?

It seems to me that we are looking at one of a handful of possible explanations: firstly that we have a reference to a lost folk association or belief which was meaningful to the carver and to his audience but which is lost on us; secondly that the design was the admittedly elaborate trademark of the craftsman who oversaw the carving of the roof (not unlike the harvest mouse carved by "Mouseman" or "Mousie" Thompson in Yorkshire on all of his pieces of furniture), which must be considered given that these carvings are found only in a single, small, part of the country and dating from a period which could easily be covered by one man's lifetime; thirdly that it was the heraldic emblem of a local family, perhaps fairly minor in the grand scheme of medieval society but one which endowed local churches and sponsored churchbuilding and whose generosity was therefore commemorated by the carver (enquiries at the College of Heralds in London might be useful on this one); and fourthly that they are not rabbits after all but hares.

While I am aware that there is not always complete agreement between earth mysteries buffs and pagans on the significance and interpretation of many sites and phenomena, I think it is worth pointing out that in pagan lore the hare has traditionally been associated with a number of Goddesses - notably Andraste, to whom, Caesar writes, Boudicca released a hare as a form of divination just before her rebellion. My interpretation of Kilpeck's 'bunny' as a hare is perhaps strengthened by its association with a dog, or rather a hound; while the hare has been widely associated with a female sacred power throughout many European cultures, the hound is equally associated with the male power - the God as Lord of the Wild Hunt - Herne the Hunter, Gwyn ap Nudd; thus the two powers, male and female, are seen side by side and equal.
ROWAN Redditch Worcestershire

Dear Editor

Cheryl Straffon's comments on my letter in Wisht Maen 3 are thought-provoking and, up to a point, I would agree with her approach. I think it is far better to approach stone circles through stories of petrified dancers and moon-maidens than to regard them as so many lumps of rock on waste ground. We need folklore, like poetry and artwork, to liberate the imagination and I believe that imagination can be an objective supernatural force. So yes, using modern legends for "a probable insight" into the past is OK. But to say that folklore - or poetry or artwork - is based on actual facts needs a lot more justification, which must be provided case by case. I would not, for instance, accept that "the gods of the old religion become the devils of the new" without itemised lists of gods and devils. If Cheryl Straffon wants to convince me that mediaeval devils are descended from Celtic horned gods, she will have to produce something to cover the gap in tradition between the last Roman sculpture in 400 and the first horned Satan in 1200; eight centuries is a long period with no evidence. Surely the general drift of folklore studies has been away from a facile assumption of continuity, precisely because research into individual traditions has failed repeatedly to support general notions about survival.

I think we must be wary in handling sources. For instance, I cannot find any classical reference to hares as a sacrifice to Andraste or to Boudicca's moon-hare banners: perhaps these are elaborations on the passage of Dio Cassius which I mentioned in my letter? I rather think that Straffon's mention of cave paintings which show nine women dancers may be derived from the rock art at Cogul described in The White Goddess p399. If so, it shows the importance of checking back to primary evidence: for this painting, which Robert Graves interprets in his usual fantastical way, simply shows a group of women with children chatting by a cattle compound.

Frankly, I think that any case for continuity must be built upon a chronological series of primary evidence and not on "the underlying meaning behind the legends themselves". Meaning is something added to narratives by story-tellers, like cooks with Parmesan, and cannot be used to support a theory about the original ingredients. In the Middle Ages dragon legends were about land rights. To the Victorians they were about good and evil. To the readers of The Dragon Chronicle they are about man's rape of his environment. Same old stories. I still think that the discovery of neo-pagan meanings in local legends tells us much more about 1995 AD than 2000 BC. All the best. JEREMY HARTE Ewell Surrey

Dear Wisht Maen

On reading the LETTERS page in Issue 2 and the notes about the psychometrist Iris Campbell, I enclose the following quote from psychometrist Olive C B Pixley's book THE TRAIL (mentioned in John Michell's NEW VIEW OVER ATLANTIS) dated 1934. She wrote in an antiquated manner and didn't go into detail, was obsessed by God the Father, Christ the Perfect Being, Light Light and more Light, but I thought you/your readers might find it of interest:-

BOOK REVIEWS

"...to me it seems quite outside the capacities of architects or archaeologists to speculate on that construction (Stonehenge) until we know why it was necessary to build it at all. They did not erect buildings in those days for the protection of the race against the elements, as men do now; houses to keep out the wind, rain and cold; and for our animals, stables and farm buildings. In those days, aeons before the Christian era, they built to co-operate with the elements. They not only worshipped the Light, but they knew how to draw the rays of the Sun into their very being. They did not just worship with their minds. Their ritual included the knowledge of how to draw into their bodies the creative energy of the Sun Force. I came across the same thing in Devonshire; at a place called Drewsteignton, the remains of one of the most wonderful centres of Initiation in the West. So little of it is left, but that little is alive, a vital record of a wonderful past race who lived, loved and learnt the Mysteries of life with an energy and passionate vitality of which I can give you only the faintest idea. Their religion was not remote, the worship of a glowing disk, so far from the earth, so inaccessible to humanity. They knew their God. Those of you who know Dartmoor know well the multitude of stone Circles scattered all over the Moor. I was taken to one that gave me the key. (She doesn't say which one!!) It had never remotely entered my mind before that there could be any scheme of construction that united them. Here I got a picture of a little stone temple built in the shape of a star - a special star - and the temple would only be used when that star was at its zenith. (Tallies with the discoveries made in the recent ORION MYSTERY of the Pyramids?) It was not used just to worship its brightness, but was a little storing house of stellar force. It came through to me so strongly that the heavenly bodies, the planets, the various constellations, and even the comets, were reproduced in stone on Dartmoor, Salisbury Plain, and possibly other open places where I have not been. The influence of individual stars on physical conditions was a science in those days, a divine Mystery into which priests were initiated. The place of Initiation in the West was Drewsteignton; a vast, a marvellous, University, where the Mysteries of the laws of life were taught and lived. (This is concurrent with the theory of the antiquarian writers, that the name derives from "Druids Town On The Teign"; a theory much derided by later authors of course). There was a co-ordination of sound signals and worship all over the moors and plains. I tapped one receiving station, but it was a cold, wet, day, and it seemed so complicated that I did not go fully into it. There was something missing; but the sound seemed to come in on a spiral, and go hissing up in a rocket-shaped sound. I think that the shapes that sounds make on the air were known and exploited in the Stone Age...." page 30 & 31 THE TRAIL - LECTURES ON THE TECHNIQUE OF REVELATION Olive C B Pixley. Stanley Drew, Black Dog, Devon.

Dear Editor

With reference to the article by Hugh Franklin on Spinster's Rock (Issue 3). Guy Underwood dowsed Spinster's Rock and his findings are shown on page 93 of "The Pattern of The Past". He dowsed two different geodetic lines going from the dolmen to some "node stones" by the hedge to the SSW.

I cannot make Guy Underwood's map match up with the Major Tyler map you published. One of them must have got at least the north sign in the wrong direction. Are the "node stones" - about 160ft from the dolmen according to Guy Underwood's map - still there? Do they mark any interesting astronomical events? - either from the dolmen or other sites? Hugh Franklin mentions a magical spring. Underwood claimed that dolmens "mark blind springs of exceptional importance, but presumably with some sanctity arising from an additional feature not yet recognized and identified." His plan shows that he dowsed a blind spring under Spinster's Rock. **ANDY NORFOLK** Camborne Cornwall

GARLANDS OF FANTASY The Art of Linda & Roger Garland; Text by Nigel Suckling. (Paper Tiger, Dragon's World Ltd 1994 £12.95.)

Most people into folklore, legend and goddess art will be familiar with the work of the above artists. This book contains many of their creations, which are jewel-like, pre-Raphaelite inspired, lush and imaginative. Roger's series of Middle Earth illustrations are included and especially noteworthy are the paintings by Linda on themes such as moon/corn/vegetation goddesses, and Brigit, Demeter, Circe, Selene, Sirens, and paintings on the theme of the triple goddess and the phases of woman. Also included are the series of paintings "Crystals" with the ruling planet and angel symbolism, "Elements", "Ruling Planets", "Seasons" and fantasy landscape/creatures, including their commissions for book covers, calendars, adverts and private works. The Arthurian paintings included are "Gates of Avalon", "Merlin", "Guinevere" and "The Lady of Shalott", which glow with an intensity similar to that of John William Waterhouse. Most powerful (to me) are "Celtic Twilight", featuring Lanyon Quoit in Cornwall; "Uath - She Of The White Track", which features St Nectans Glen, clouties in a tree and the May Hare; and "Cornish Legends" featuring mermaids, St Michaels Mount and the legend of the witch's funeral that shows the pallbearers fleeing from the hare that kept leaping from the coffin. The "White Lady" of Lydford Gorge in Devon is also depicted but the text says "Lifton Falls". The artists' thorough knowledge of folklore, legend and mythology is evident and the artwork thoroughly absorbing, stirring and a joy to get lost in time and time again.

The Garlands' Lakeside Gallery is on the A388 Launceston - Callington road, Lezant, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 9NW and is open 10-5pm every day except Sunday. Work on sale includes cards, prints, limited edition prints and some originals.

PULP! (£2.50 Limited Edition) by COMMON GROUND 45 Shelton Street London WC2H 9HJ.

A hefty newspaper/magazine on Trees, Woods and The Green Man. Many articles on the ecological indispensability of trees, tree as symbol, tree in myth etc. William Anderson writes on The Green Man and Tom Greeves writes on Woodhenge Echoes, focussing on Bow Henge and the sacred grove of the Nymets.

COMMON GROUND is a charity working to conserve nature, landscape and place, and mounts touring exhibitions and events to increase people's awareness of the cultural and spiritual importance of their locality and its distinctiveness. Projects include Parish Maps, where local people devise as a community a map of their locality and its important features; the revival of Tree Dressing Day on the first weekend in December; Apple Day on October 21st and a campaign to save old orchards; and New Milestones, a scheme which encourages communities or landholders to commission craftspeople and sculptors to create a sculpture expressing what the locality means to them in an imaginative and accessible way. Peter Randall-Page created Granite Song which sits on a riverbank on Dartmoor. Various publications are available including books, pamphlets, postcards, posters, maps, newspapers, slides, envelope re-use labels etc. They have a good range of books/cards of the work of nature collaborator-artist Andy Goldsworthy, whose work is included in many of their projects. Send an SAE for details.

A GUIDE TO BRITAIN'S PAGAN HERITAGE by David Clarke (Robert Hale £9.99)
"Organizing Britain and Ireland into seven different historical regions, this book takes the reader on a mystery tour through fifty little-known places to visit where the magic of the Old Religion survives" says the publicity accompanying this book. I wouldn't say that places like Avebury, Silbury Hill, Bath, Wookey Hole and Callanish are "little-known" but I suspect that the author (a Wisht Maen ex-subscriber!) did not write the publicity blurb. Quite a well-researched guide though and we are acknowledged in the references at the back for details on Wistmans Wood which is included in the chapter on South West England, as is Crazywell Pool (mistakenly called "Clakeywell" here), and the Holne and Buckland-in-the-Moor Ram Feasts. The Cornwall bit is Madron Well and the Padstow Obby Oss celebrations.

THE EARTH MYSTERIES GUIDE TO MID CORNWALL AND THE LIZARD by Cheryl Straffon (£3.30 Meyn Mamvro Publications 51 Carn Bosavern St Just Penzance Cornwall TR19 7QX)
A comprehensive guide to the megalithic sites, wells, crosses, inscribed stones, alignments, ley paths and anomalous energies of this landscape, including Kit Hill and Rame Head, with OS references. As with the other EM guides in this series, it is highly recommended, very thorough and good value.

THE SUN AND THE SERPENT - An Investigation Into Earth Energies
by Paul Broadhurst and Hamish Miller (£12.95 from Pendragon Press P O Box 888 Launceston Cornwall PL15 7YH)
Re-issue with section of 8 colour photographs and some updated text. I've never understood why some EM researchers are so scathing of this book, which has done more to awaken interest in the concept of pilgrimage and communion with the land and Earth Spirit than several others. Many ancient places, once neglected and forgotten, are again attracting pilgrims and visitors intent on connecting with ancient paths, due to this book. Since it was first published in 1989, a huge amount of correspondence with the authors from around the world has been forthcoming. The authors are now working on their diary following the European St Michael Line, which has its solar and lunar components in exactly the same way as its English counterpart (dubbed "Apollo" and "Athena", to differentiate from "Michael" and "Mary"). I consider this book to be of paramount importance to read if you are at all interested in the sites of the South West, as is Broadhurst's other book **SECRET SHRINES**, which is about the ancient holy wells of Cornwall and much else besides.

TINTAGEL AND THE ARTHURIAN MYTHOS by Paul Broadhurst (£16.95 plus £1.50 postage from Pendragon Press, P O Box 888, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 7YH)

This is the book I could never afford when it was out as a collector's edition (leather-bound gold embossed £35!) but! - it is now out in softback. Paul Broadhurst wrote a resume of this book, called "Tintagel and the Mystery of Divine Kingship" as an article for Wisht Maen Issue 3. This is a magnificent work with full page colour photographs and is profusely illustrated with photographs, line drawings, engravings and

maps. It travels back through the ages, beyond the medieval romances, to the reality behind them, originally drawn from Celtic and earlier Mystery Wisdom. It unlocks the understanding of why Tintagel was a sacred place in early times, and why it persists in popular mythology as the birthplace of Arthur. These discoveries demonstrate an ancient knowledge of the natural energies of the Earth and Sun, and their significance in the evolution of human consciousness. This is not simply a book about Tintagel, but a way of understanding the power behind solar mythology and the living Earth. The Arthurian mythos is a native mystery wisdom of undiminished power, a map into the recesses of the human spirit and its connections with the earthly and celestial environment. Broadhursts' style is in the tradition of lyrical and linguistic artistry attributed to the bards of ancient times. There is a detailed study of the landscape of Bodmin Moor and Stowes Hill; the straight Brentor road in Devon, when projected to the south-west, leads to Stowes Hill - an important prehistoric centre. There are links with Tintagel and Plymouth along the midwinter solstice sunrise alignment and ancient sites around and along them in Devon and Cornwall. Broadhurst always uses local printers too. In these days of publishers sending work abroad to be printed by cheaper Spanish and Italian firms it is refreshing to see local firms being used and doing excellent jobs.

DEVON'S SACRED GROVE Angela Blaen West Country Folklore No 17 Toucan Press, Rue des Monts, Delancey Park, St Sampson, Guernsey CI. 1983. ISBN 0856942758 £1

I discovered this on sale in Crediton parish church of the Holy Cross but have never come across this "West Country Folklore series" before in any bookshop of bibliography. It is a very interesting and detailed booklet on the Nymet area, its placename history, chapels and folklore, with photographs of the symbols that were carved on either side of the doorway of St Martins Chapel, Broadnymet (now derelict) and which have now been plastered over by the farmer who owns it. Good intentions I'm sure, but what a damn shame.

THE MYSTERY OF MICHAEL Dr Angela Blaen West Country Folklore No 20 Toucan Press Guernsey (address as above) 1987. ISBN 0856943908 £1
Again bought in Crediton church, this booklet examines the British concept of St Michael and answers some questions raised by the traditions, depictions and customs concerning him, particularly by relating Michael first to Manannan Mac Ler, a Celtic deity, and to St George.

TOUCAN PRESS publish other titles in the WESTCOUNTRY FOLKLORE series. Send an SAE for a list. Several will be reviewed in the next WISHT MAEN whenever that may be!

WALKING THE STORIES AND LEGENDS OF DARTMOOR by Michael Bennie. (Peninsula Press 1995 £5.99)
A collection of 20 walks ranging from short, easy strolls to more challenging hikes, taking in sites and the stories behind them. Useful maps, written directions, parking information, length of walk and degree of difficulty (i.e. suitability for grannies and/or toddlers). As well as the well-known and done-to-death sites and stories (Bowermans Nose, Childe's Tomb) there are some little-known ones, like

the Kiss-In-The-Ring stone circle on Stall Moor, The Gubbins outlaw family who lived in Lydford Gorge, and the Phantom Pigs of Merripit Hill. The author also includes the "Faithless Wives and Fickle Maidens" legend supposedly attached to Scorhill circle and the Tolmen, about which there was some argument in previous Wisht Maens.

WITCH AMONGST US by Lois Bourne (Robert Hale £6.99 1995)
This is the autobiography of a witch and is very readable, albeit frustrating because the author never does really tell you anything juicy - as with all true circles of the Craft, lips are as tightly sealed as the proverbial camels' bottom, but there are some interesting anecdotes. Not the sort of stuff I normally get for review but if it's free I'm not complaining.

Also recommended:

THE MEGALITHIC ODYSSEY - A Search For The Master Builders of the Bodmin Moor Astronomical Complex of Stone Circles and Giant Cairns
Christian O'Brien Turnstone Press Ltd Wellingborough Northants 1983
ISBN 0855001887 (Out of print apparently but available through the Library book ordering service - well worth a read).

THE DRUIDS Peter Berresford-Ellis Constable & Co London 1994 £16.95

THE CELTIC DRUIDS YEAR - SEASONAL CYCLES OF THE ANCIENT CELTS John King Blandford London 1994 £15.99. This one is very highly recommended.

AND SHALL THESE MUTE STONES SPEAK? - POST-ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS IN WESTERN BRITAIN Charles Thomas University of Wales Press 1994 £35.00. I agree with Cheryl Traffon's review of this book, I found it rather stuffy and far too technically detailed, although a very valuable addition to the EM researcher's bookshelf (if one could afford it...)

MAGAZINE REVIEWS

MEYN MAMVRO No 26 includes an article by Kris Bond on the Men-an-Tol and its astronomical orientations, its architectural affinities with Little Hound Tor circle on Dartmoor and the Merry Maidens in Penwith, Cornwall. He says it is noticeable that these circles, along with Boscawen-un, all have possible entrances, as may the Men an Tol; and that all three rings are orientated on the major southern moonrise.
THE MOON-AN-TOL by Kris Bond, Meyn Mamvro 26 £1.70 Address in exchange magazines on back cover. **MEYN MAMVRO** No 27 has also come out and is a corker! Mary Coombs has an article on Mt Edgecumbe, there is a fascinating study of landscape patterns around The Lizard, St Mabyn and The Scilly Isles and Andy Norfolk on "Bride's Bed Revisited".

MERCIAN MYSTERIES No 23 includes among many other excellent researches an article by Jeremy Harte entitled **THE POWER OF LONELY PLACES**, examining moot/meeting places in the wilderness. Included is Crockern Tor, the meeting place of the Devon tinnars Stannaries. Don't be put off by the title of this magazine, it doesn't cover only Mercia in the way we cover Devon. Bob Trubshaw writes some of the most innovative and thoroughly researched stuff around in Earth Mysteries at present covering all aspects of this field of study. His bibliographies are fascinating in themselves! **MERCIAN MYSTERIES** £2.00 Address in Exchange Listings. Issue 24 is out now. NB: Reissued as **AT THE EDGE**.

3rd STONE No 20 is a revised and expanded Gloucestershire Earth Mysteries (GEM). They now cover national EM studies as well as keeping a Glos/Cotswolds bent. Articles include Jeremy Harte (he gets around) on Pixy Leading/Pixilated with some references to Devon incidents/legends. Also Turin Shroud & Leonardo, alignments & the sacred landscape, Stanton Drew and excellent news/reviews page. Address in Exchange Listings.

NORTHERN EARTH No 61 £1.30 Long established and expertly produced A5 magazine. This one features St George, Druids & Stone Circles as well as local (that is Northern) articles of interest. Another one that has an excellent and wide-ranging News & Ephemera page covering international EM subjects. Address in Exchange Listings.

THE DRAGON CHRONICLE No 5 £1.50 features a short article on Cadbury Castle, Devon by Anna Clarke whose Dragon Hatchling design, which first embellished a page of WM3, appears on every page in this issue. A study of Cadbury Castle and legends will appear in the next WISHT MAEN (all together now - "whenever that may be!")

FORTEAN TIMES No 80 £2 is essential reading for anyone - there is a battle in our house every two months to get to it first. Hilariously funny, it chronicles strange phenomena and events around the world from alien big cats, crop circles, UFOs, strange deaths, strange coincidences, hauntings,, SHC and WSH, bizarre, peculiar and weird stuff of all natures. Excellent writers with blinding humour -one of my favourites is the review of James Redfields' much-publicised book **THE CELESTINE PROPHECY**, much beloved of New Age handmade-shoe wearers (having a go at Totnes again..). It goes "Apparently selling in epidemic proportions in the US, this is an indigestible mess of vapid New Age witterings served up as a badly-written adventure novel. Cardboard characters spout pages of simplistic philosophy, then get shot. Avoid it like the plague". Brilliant! I'm relieved WISHT MAEN didn't get quite the same treatment when reviewed in FT75....Address in Exchange Listings.

PENDRAGON No XXIV/4 Winter 1994 features Anna Clarke's "Arthurian Tree" picture originally drawn for Paul Broadhursts' article "Tintagel and the Arthurian Mythos" from Wisht Maen 3. It's worth seeing it here as Pendragons' printers have done a considerably better job than mine on Anna's artwork. So impressed by her work were the Editors that they set a competition for their readers to compose a story inspired by the illustration. The winning entry is printed in **PENDRAGON** No. XXV/I Spring 1995. Address in Exchange Listings.

NB: Anna Clarke has redrawn the "Arthurian Tree" in colour on a limited edition A2 poster, now entitled "Grail of the Heart". Instead of the shields of the knights there is a scene from the life of Arthur. I wish I could reprint it here in colour; it is staggeringly beautiful

and the detail, knowledge and understanding of the Mythos is outstanding. To order please send £4 (incl. p+p) payable to Anna Clarke to Flat 8, Ryan Court, Station Road, Okehampton, Devon, EX20 1ED.

CELTIC CONNECTIONS features an article entitled CELTIC CARVINGS - A CELTIC HEAD FROM EXMOOR by Jeffrey Samuel. He found a carved head in his farmland and took it to Taunton Museum, who said that it "was probably carved by an artistically minded farm worker in his dinner hour, and could not be of any great age". Unconvinced by this, he took it to the British Museum, where it was classified by Dr Anne Ross as being c.300AD and probably of Celtic origin. The stone is now on display in South Molton Museum, Devon. (CELTIC CONNECTIONS No 11)

WISHT MAEN has been reviewed in a hefty journal called TRANSGRESSIONS -A JOURNAL OF URBAN EXPLORATION; a new journal with an international perspective that aims to situate itself at the heart of the debate on the contemporary city, drawing on activists, cultural workers and writers from urban planning, architecture, art history, sociology, geography and cultural studies. "3RD STONE" was also reviewed, well, a listing of the contents of each magazine was given with no opinion whatever. Still, it was flattering to be picked out of a fair few other longer-established and more regularly-appearing journals!

CORRECTION FROM ISSUE 3
TINTAGEL AND THE MYSTERY OF DIVINE KINGSHIP by PAUL BROADHURST

Fourth paragraph on page 3 should have read "...In Celtic lands the Cosmic dimension of these magical principles were preserved from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, and vestiges of them still remain even in the modern world. Certain places, hallowed in tribal teachings since the earliest times, were the focus for rituals of initiation and empowerment, and wherever one looks in these regions the evidence of their former power is still vaguely remembered. Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh, Arthur's Tomb at Glastonbury and Arthur's Birthplace at Tintagel are merely some of the many places that lay claim to the illustrious king. There are hundreds more across Europe and even further afield...."

Many apologies for the omittance of a few words during my typing on to disc from Paul's original article. All part of the Mystery of Not-So-Divine Editorship?



A UFO research group has been set up in Plymouth. Part of BUFORA (British UFO Research Association) in London, the group consist of professional and semi-professional people, some of whom have contacts with the MoD. The telephone number is manned after 3pm until 10am the following day, 01752 785303. Reports, call-outs (whatever time of day or night) or contacts are strictly confidential. J Turnbull, Senior Investigator, Sky Watch UK, UFO Research Group, 104 Taunton Avenue, Whitleigh, Plymouth, Devon. So next time you have a CE3K, or any WSH on Dartmoor, you now know who to call.

MID-DEVON EARTH MYSTERIES GROUP have disbanded, citing lack of interest and poor attendance at meetings despite emphatic promises from initially interested people; Devon being too large a county to co-ordinate, no convenient, central and cheap meeting place and reluctance on the part of the members of the group to (a) organise and arrange trips and lectures due to other commitments, (b) give out their own home address/phone number as the groups HQ. A project studying Bow Henge was started and the field where the henge once stood was dowsed with interesting results: the outer bank of the henge was found, and a natural distorted pentagram shape was dowsed (as at St Mabyn featured in MEYN MAMVRO No 27 and at Brentor featured in THE SUN AND THE SERPENT details on page this issue). The farmer's son came up to visit and was very interested to see the results of the day. St Martins Chapel at Broadnymet round the corner was also visited. The ex-members would still like to join a group if there is such a one. The week the group disbanded and appealed for a Devon Earth Mysteries Group to be formed, Wisht Maen received a letter from Mary Coombs with a "PS" suggesting a "pilgrimage" type group, visiting ancient and sacred sites. And by strange coincidence, the next day in the post came the following press release....

Jenny and Pat Selfe are running PILGRIMAGES, a group who meet to visit ancient sites and also celebrate saints days and solstices. Trips have included Equinox visit to Restronguet, Roseland and Helman Tor on 21st March; St George's Day roast lunch at Lydford and visit to Gorge on 23rd April; May Day Celebrations at Padstow; Oakapple Day at Wistmans Wood on 29th May; and various other trips and outings around Devon and Cornwall. If you would like to join in some of these, telephone Jenny or Pat Selfe on 0208 815868 or 0548 830452. For a leaflet and a list of trips write to J & P Selfe, Old Zanzig, St Issey, Wadebridge PL27 7RD.

Two fields in SE Cornwall, 5 miles from Plymouth have become famous as the "Dragonsfields" after reports of strange crop marks which appeared last summer. The marks looked like huge dragon's footprints complete with toes and claws, which ranged in size from 2' to 20' long. The investigation by the Plymouth UFO Research Group yielded photographs of strange lights, some like golfballs, pingpong balls and firework sparklers. In some of the round lights, faces were discernible. Cattle nearby behaved oddly, charging towards the investigators, who also saw large white flying shapes like bats or butterflies. The Group plan to return this year for further investigation. (Plymouth Evening Herald 14.2.95)

Interesting developments concerning St Michael. The famous church of St Michael de Rupe atop Brentor was struck by lightning on 29 December,

causing considerable damage to the tower. The shock wave displaced a panel of wood above the altar close to the stained glass window depicting our Michael, and a heavy wooden bench outside the church which was bolted down was lifted clean off the ground by the blast. In early February there was a major fire in the NAAFI stores at the MoD Army camp at Okehampton. The nearest building to the camp is St Michaels bungalow, and there was once a large chapel, dedicated to St Michael, at the farm nearest to the camp, Lower Halstock. The "St Michael Line" as tracked in "The Sun and The Serpent" runs through Brentor, Yes Tor (near the MoD camp) and the chapel at Lower Halstock. Is Michael being a bit over the top with the old fiery lances, or is the dragon fighting back?

There are apparently some carvings at Kestor near one of the rock basins, as reported in The Dartmoor Newsletter. I could not find it/them although I searched round all the basins, even the tiny ones, and there is no detailed description of either their appearance or location. Anybody who does find it/them please let me know.

Has anyone ever found the fogou at Leather Tor Farm at Burrator? Stephen H. Woods in his book DARTMOOR STONE (Devon Books £12.95) lists it as having a map reference of SX567697, and states on page 260 that "it appears as a dark patch in a green bank on the outside, but has been built up and lined with stones on the inside". Woods doesn't say which map he used, but the OS Outdoor Leisure Map 28b 1:25 000 does not have this site marked as "fogou" as stated in his book. Needless to say we spent a long day searching for it, found countless "dark patches" in countless "green banks", but alas it eluded us. There is a well-preserved potato cave on the track to Leather Tor Farm (ruins of) at SX569699. We looked in every cave-type opening we could find but none had a stone-lined chamber.

SHILSTONE OAK in Bridestowe has been cut down due to Devon County Council's opinion that it was "unstable". The oak, which stood in the remains of a raised earthbank with a track on either side in the Leawood estate, is owned by the Calmady-Hamlyns who have lived in the village for generations and were well aware of the legend and importance of the tree. It seems many parties got their lines crossed as Devon County Council says they only wanted the oak "pollarded" (i.e. removing the crown) and that there was no need to remove the whole tree. Owner Joan Calmady-Hamlyn says she received an official order to "lop or cut" the tree but that the estate (i.e. the forestry workers I suppose) had "regretfully" cut down the whole tree. Some local residents are angry at the seeming conspiracy to remove it, but Bridestowe parish council have said that the tree was marked with a cross for 18 months signifying that it was due for removal and that notices had gone up in the village, but that not one person came forward to formally object. Another case of people protesting when it's too late and not noticing or valuing their local sites until one day, they've disappeared, and then suddenly everyone realises! Shilstone's Oak was believed to have been the local gallows and has been referred to in books and legends as the "Ghost Tree" "The Crooked Oak" and the "Royal Oak". The name Shilstone denotes a spot of great antiquity, almost certainly the site of a long-vanished Neolithic dolmen (many other examples in Devon), superstitious veneration was later

transferred from this monument to the old oak growing nearby. This tree is also connected with the ghost of Lady Mary Howard, a famous Devon victim of misplaced blame. She is reputed to have murdered two of her four husbands and cruelly treated her daughter, for these crimes she is doomed to journey nightly, sometimes in the guise of a large black dog, other times in a coach made from the bones of her victims drawn by the usual sable horses and headless coachman, from the site of Fitzford House in Tavistock, along the Blackdown road past Gibbet Hill to Okehampton Castle, whose park was once part of the Fitzford estates. Here she has to pick one blade of grass and return with it to Fitzford, and her soul cannot rest until all the grass has been picked - another "eternal damnation and inescapable punishment" legend. Some versions have Lady Howard just as a black dog appearing at Lydford Castle, then outside the "Royal Oak" pub in Bridestowe, and again at the Shilstone Oak. She then picks up her coach again on Maddaford Moor, and travels the old King Way to Okehampton Castle, where there is a pathway still called "Lady Howard's Walk". Mary Howard's father was actually the evil one, as was her husband Sir Richard Grenville, and it appears that her name has been wronged for a very long time. However, hers is a very famous Devon legend and it's a great sadness that a landmark associated with it has gone forever, due to somebody's silly mistake.

GOG AND MAGOG Some old notes concerning these hill figures have come to light via the Plymouth Evening Herald. A reader sent in an old pamphlet of a lecture given in Plymouth in 1844 by Courtenay Prance, her great-grandfather-in-law. It has always been supposed that when Plymouth Citadel was built, just after the Restoration, the two giants "the one bigger, the other lesser, with clubs in their hands" were obliterated by the construction of the fortifications. But that was not altogether the end, as "it would appear the site of this monument was removed from one part of the eastern Hoe to the other. For when my grandfather came to Plymouth in 1763/4, one of the first lions (sic) he was taken to see was Gog and Magog's footsteps. The story then ran that Gog and Magog were brothers and, fighting near the sea, they fell over the cliff and drowned. The Hoe was then a rough and dreary spot, overrun with furze and brambles. The footsteps remained free from grass (as every visitor put his foot in them) until 1816, when all traces were obliterated by the construction of the carriage road and walks. If the figures were destroyed by the fortifications, the place must have been near the public bathing place; which place certainly agrees much better with the description (ridges of craggy rocks). There is now a very high and pointed rock there; the precipice is also much higher than at Brethren steps (where the footsteps were) where the landing place was recently built." Apparently the reconstruction of these figures is being held up because the site intended for the recut is MoD land and they have yet to give the final approval.

June - Another terrible accident has occurred on Dartmoor due to an unexploded shell going off after a boy picked it up and then threw it when told to leave it alone. An eight year old girl and her two brothers, out letterboxing on Great Mis Tor on the Merrivale firing range, ended up in hospital after being hit by shrapnel from the exploding mortar bomb. The shrapnel cut through the girls' abdomen and went through her body. Her spleen was damaged and she had chest injuries. The eldest brother has had to have plastic surgery after damage to his foot. The Army's Explosive Ordnance Department

investigation revealed that the device dates from 1942, was probably buried and had since risen to the surface. They believe the Americans fired it. (As if that fact makes it any more acceptable - the Americans have become rather good at killing/maiming their own side.). The Council for National Parks have called for yet another urgent review of military use of National Parks, as they always do after these accidents. Prince Charles, who as Duke of Cornwall owns most of Dartmoor, used to review the military's lease of parts of Dartmoor every seven years, but for some reason in 1991 the Duchy simply granted the lease for 21 years. Rather belies Prince Charles' green, conservationist reputation, and seems a bit strange when military personnel are being made redundant, the Cold War is supposedly thawing rapidly, and there are several losses of Army bases here and overseas. See the Dartmoor Newsletter No 26 for a complete list of the accidents that have happened on Dartmoor since 1953 (when they started being recorded - there were no doubt several before that, as well as damage to ancient sites and monuments used as target practice (that was probably the Americans too...)). Needless to say - you never know where unexploded shells and bullets are lying anywhere on the moor. Remember live firing ranges were once all over the moor, so don't think that staying away from the present live firing ranges will keep you safe. They could be anywhere, so just pray you won't be the next addition to the DPA's military accident list next time you enjoy an Dartmoor excursion.

Paul Devereux, editor of The Ley Hunter magazine, is leading a weekend workshop at Dartington Hall, Totnes on 10-12 November on "The Landscape of The Spirit"; an exploration of spirit paths, death roads, shamanic landscapes, and the nature of place. Further details from Brenda Blewitt, Dartington Hall, 01803 866688.



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During the construction of a reservoir in the Raddon Hills near Crediton, "one of the most important prehistoric sites to be discovered in Devon in modern times" was unearthed by South West Water and Exeter Museum's Archaeological Field Unit. Instead of the simple Iron Age enclosure or hillfort they had expected, they discovered an interrupted ditch system of a Neolithic causewayed enclosure with finds of a polished stone axe (possibly jadeite/nephrite), Neolithic pottery and leaf-shaped arrowheads. Samples of charcoal were taken for radiocarbon dating. Also discovered was a possible palisade enclosure (?Bronze Age) which was replaced by a ditched and banked hillslope enclosure in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age. The latter phase incorporated part of the area of the original Neolithic enclosure. A possible well-shaft, graves and a circular post-setting were among the internal features found but these cannot be attributed to a specific phase. It is not known if the site had been continuously occupied. The hilltop on which the site stands is not the highest in the area but commands extensive views to Dartmoor, the Blackdown Hills (including Hembury hillfort), the East Devon coast and Peak Hill, and Bodmin Moor on a clear day. No visitors are allowed on the site. (Devon Archaeological Society Newsletter No 60)

Evidence of a previously unknown Romano-British occupation site at SX87406888 at the northern limit of Kingkerswell on a small terrace overlooking the Aller Brook on its west side had been discovered during archaeological evaluation for the proposed Kingkerswell bypass. The site indicates occupation during the Iron Age and both the Early and Late Roman periods. Roman activity was indicated by a series of ditches and gullies, dated to 1st/2nd and 3rd/4th centuries AD, the main period of occupation being the latter. (DAS Newsletter No 60)

In the 1980's a hilltop concentration of flints and prehistoric ceramics were discovered at Membury, and excavation revealed part of an early Neolithic feature which archaeologists believe to be part of a causewayed enclosure running around the crown of the hill. Trench digging in 1994 yielded finds of ?late Bronze Age and Romano-British pottery. Larger scale excavations will take place shortly. (DAS Newsletter No 60)

Dartmoor Livestock Protection Society - Send for their yellow Information Card that is useful for keeping in the car or on your person when walking on Dartmoor. DLPS, The Old Mill, Charlecombe, Combeinteignhead, Newton Abbot, Devon. Includes phone numbers to ring if you find a sick/injured animal anywhere on the moor. DLPS pay the vets bill.

Part of a Euro-route London-Penzance, a 15 mile dual carriageway near Exeter started in March 1995, has felled some 5000 trees including ancient coppice and mature oak hedges; a natural pond and 15 badger setts also stand in the way. The contract is now going back to tender. There are now three protestor camps, including the Old Oak at Fairmile, and one where a large community is digging its own hillfort. Eviction attempts are possible. The sites are actively defended by protesters. Support needed urgently, contact 0385 278157/6. (from GREENLEAF, May 95)

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STOCKISTS OF WISHT MAEN by place:

Barnstaple, Devon: Now and Zen.
Boscastle, Cornwall: The Mystical Place.
Brixham, Devon: Drawing Down The Moon.
Chagford, Devon: Willow.
Crediton, Devon: Crediton Courier.
Exeter, Devon: Evolution.
Okehampton, Devon: Dartmoor Museum.
Plymouth, Devon: In Other Words (Mutley Plain).
Princetown, Devon: Past & Present.
Tintagel, Cornwall: Dragon's Breath.
Tiverton, Devon: Dandy Lion.