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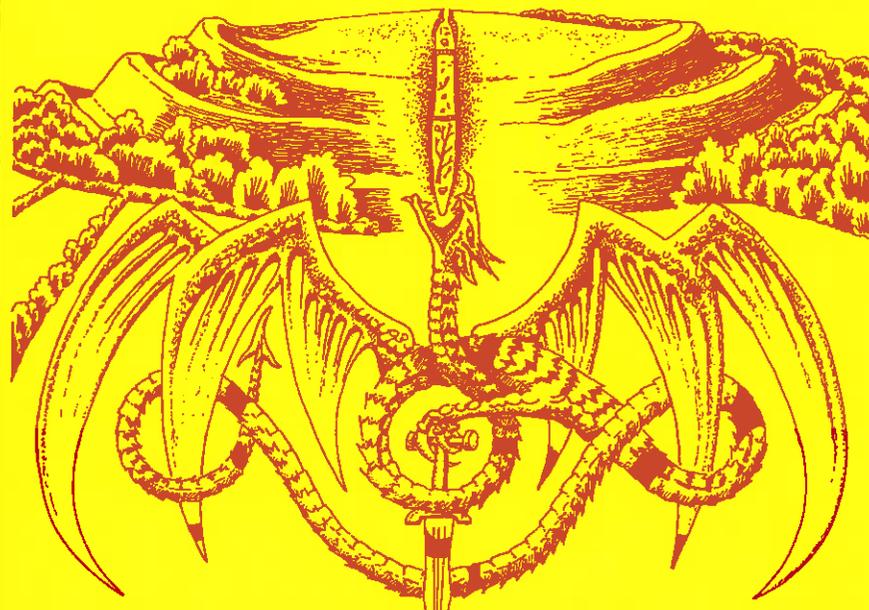
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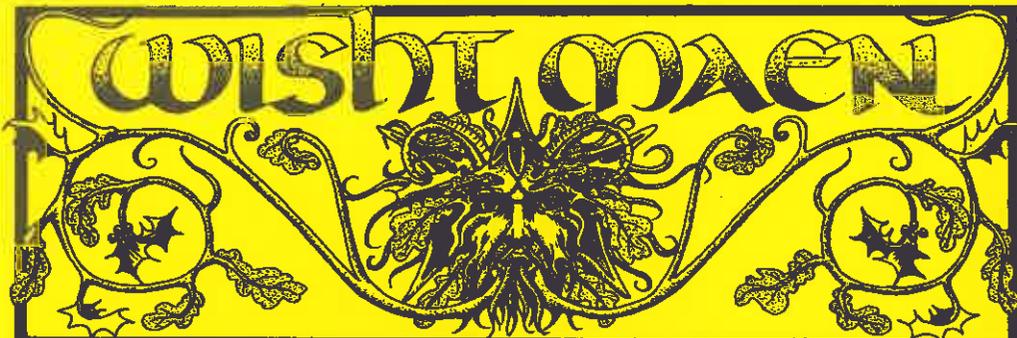


THE WAY OF THE DEAD

FRITHELSTOCK PRIORY

CADBURY CASTLE

HOUNDS, HOLLOW HILLS & ANCIENT WAYS



This is the final issue of WISHT MAEN until I find myself in Devon again. I start an OU degree in February so spare time will be taken up with studying World Religions. I'm now in Frome, Somerset where I was raised and schooled; making a new beginning living alone and providing a life and home for my two daughters. It's wonderful to be back in beautiful countryside again and visiting ancient sites, woodlands and hills. Best Wishes for 1999 and many thanks to all those who subscribed to this magazine, to those who contributed artwork/articles and those who wrote to me over the years.

SCORHILL by Terri Windling, Weaver's Cottage, Chagford, Devon, TQ13 8AW

Mist hangs heavy on the moor and
wraps the world in pale grey silk,
obscuring the distant church towers
the rise and fall of the hills.
We follow sheep trails through the gorse
and down the slope to Scorhill.
The ancient circle of standing stones
holds silence in their centre.
I step between two portal stones
and silence locks out the world.

We stand together among the stones,
the bracken turning from green to brown,
three women thinking our private thoughts,
three women facing our private gods,
three women, dark and golden and light,

praying for strength,
which all women have:
to live, to love, to rage, to act,
to create light out of darkness,
to spin straw into gold.

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FRONT COVER ARTWORK: CADBURY CASTLE DEVON BY ANDY NORFOLK
GREEN MAN on p21 by ANNA CLARKE

Editorial Address: 144 RODDEN ROAD FROME SOMERSET BA11 2AW
Many Thanks to those who kindly read and reviewed books -
Anna Clarke, Spike Rycroft, Andrew Sanders, Elaine Grayson
Thanks also to Mary Coombs for writing an article. All
other articles and book reviews by Tracey Brown.

GODS & GODDESSES General Editor: Elizabeth Hallam
Blandford £16.99 Hardback
Studies over 130 deities and tales from world mythology. Comprehensive and useful.

CELTIC BARDS, CELTIC DRUIDS R J Stewart and Robin Williamson
Blandford £18.99 Hardback
Looks like yet another New Age/Celtic coffee table book but, rewards with reading. A neatly woven marriage of authors whose contrasting styles re-work some familiar lore and legend and incorporate enough original material to inspire. The "Lammas" poem on page 109 lifts the hair on the back of your neck. R J Stewart's uncompromising "way forward" summary in Appendix 1 tells it like it is. A book with a mission! (Anna Clarke) Editor's Note: The illustrations in this book are dreadful and let the quality of it down badly.

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN Claire O'Rush
Blandford £14.99 Hardback
The author's grandmother was a wisewoman and healer and has passed on much of her knowledge to O'Rush; how to attract the blessings of the Earth Angel and fairies by using spells, rituals and meditations. Some practical advice on companion planting and creating a magical space in your garden. Downside of all this is that most of the rituals involve being buck naked so not terribly practical if you live in a terrace or housing estate. Overpriced for so few pages but lots of sumptuous pre-Raphaelite paintings throughout. (Elaine Grayson)

MYTHS OF THE MIDDLE AGES Sabine Baring-Gould Ed. John Matthews
Blandford £16.99 Hardback
12 stories collected from Baring-Gould's little-known 1869 "Curious Myths". Dreadful artwork again.

SECRETS OF ANCIENT AND SACRED PLACES Paul Devereux
Blandford £11.99 Softback
Sacred geography of sites from all over the world focussing on the most well-known ones, this is a detailed study covering all aspects of each site - archaeology, geomancy and folklore. Highly recommended.

CELTIC WOMEN IN LEGEND MYTH & HISTORY Lyn Webster Wilde
Blandford £17.99 Hardback
Assesses the role of women in Celtic society, comparing them to their Anglo-Saxon and Roman counterparts. The section on contemporary women who are by some means "Celtic" is naff. Quite good but illustrated by - what a surprise - Courtney Davis.



FRITHELSTOCK PRIORY

Received for review was TWILIGHT OF THE CELTIC GODS by David Clarke and Andy Roberts, in which was a tantalising paragraph concerning a Devon chapel, erected by and with the full cooperation of the monks at the nearby priory of Frithelstock, housing a pagan statue that drew quite a large crowd by all accounts. The authors were slightly wrong in their assertion that it was "in the heart of the oak forests of central Devon", as Frithelstock is in north west Devon, near Great Torrington at grid reference 465195 (OS 180).

The ruins of the priory at Frithelstock are the only remains extant of any religious house in North Devon. The parent house was Hartland Abbey, the ruins of which were visible up to 1779, but these have long since gone. Frithelstock was founded around 1220 when Robert de Bello Campo or Beauchamp founded this little monastery in honour of St Gregory. Hartland Abbey was founded by St Nectan. The local name for daffodils, which come into flower around the date of St Gregory's death, is "Gregories" or "Giggaries". In 1796 they were growing in vast numbers in a pasture east of the church, and daffodils are used in the patronal festival of St Gregory at Frithelstock as the foxglove is in that of St Nectan (17 June) at Hartland.

On 17 November 1351 Bishop Grandisson of Exeter complained that the prior and convent of Frithelstock, Richard de Bittedene, "who could not be excused by their simplicity or ignorance of the law, had with sacrilegious daring caused to be erected a certain house under the name of a chapel, near a certain wood called "Wadeclyve", close to their own monastery, and had reared an altar as well as an image or rather an idol in it, so that it was deemed a house of idolatry rather than a chapel. Some parishioners, being turned aside from the right faith by the prior and convent's vain, wicked and damnable assertions, flocked on pilgrimage to that profane spot, deserting their own churches and other consecrated places, and did not hesitate to do sacrifice - nay, more truly, sortilege - to idols.



The church of St Gregory with adjacent priory ruins Frithelstock

The bishop, therefore, ordered the dean of Hartland and the vicars of Monkleigh and Buckland Brewer to proceed to the priory and warn the prior and convent to destroy the so-called chapel before Christmas, and to overthrow the altar; further, they were to forbid all the Faithful in Christ to approach the place as pilgrims or offer any oblations there under penalty of the Greater Excommunication. On 31 December the three commissaries reported to the bishop that they had carried out his orders, and that the prior and convent had overthrown the altar and carried it away, and had also caused the image and the board for candles to be taken away, leaving the house empty and deserted; and they offered to pull down the house too, if required.

This did not satisfy the bishop, who on 28 January again wrote a very strong letter on the evil of disobedience, quoting "Obedience is better than sacrifice" and other texts, and requiring the house to be levelled with the ground and utterly demolished within twenty days. The timber and larger stones were to be removed to the precincts of the monastery, and used for its advantage. In this letter the bishop refers to the chapel as built to the memory of proud and disobedient Eve or of unchaste Diana, rather than of the most lowly and obedient Blessed Virgin Mary, in a grove without the precincts, - built for dissoluteness than devotion, and for temporal advantage than the salvation of souls. He exhorts the prior and convent that, in the chapel of the Blessed Virgin Mary within the precincts, they shall reverently pay that devotion which the Holy Ghost has inspired in them to the same Glorious Virgin Mary, as is meet, casting quite aside and putting from them all kind of inordinate wantonness and all occasion of wandering. The prior was cited to appear before the bishop on 20 February to answer personally touching his disobedience, insolence, and contempt, and touching other articles to be preferred against him. On 15 February the dean certified that he had carried out the bishop's instructions." (1)

(I have quoted Pearse Chope in full above as it is quaint and amusing and he puts it so much better than I could! Ed.)

The church next door is dedicated to St Mary and St Gregory, and an interesting snippet in the church guide relates to the abovementioned dispute. The fifteenth century pews are carved with various symbols, one of which is a hart which "recalls our connection with Hartland Abbey and the two heads of ecclesiastics facing each other with their tongues out. This is probably an allusion to a dispute between the Bishop of Exeter and the Prior of Frithelstock in the Middle Ages" (2).

"The Rev. W Forster Coppard, late vicar of Frithelstock, informed me (Pearse Chope) that there was an isolated cottage, now known as Mount Pleasant, but traditionally as "Waddycleave" or "Waddacleave" (possibly derived from "Woden"? Ed.), in the farm of Pencleave, and standing on the top of a high peaked hill overlooking the valley of the Torridge. It can now be seen distinctly from Torrington railway station, but was formerly surrounded by thick woods (Pencleave Wood) which have only recently been cut down. Pencleave Farm adjoins the old priory territory, and the cottage is about a quarter to half a mile from the priory." (3) The present owner of Cloister Hall (who owns the priory ruins) says that Mount Pleasant is on private land.

Theo Brown cites an alleged sighting of a black dog "seen 1932 on new road cut round hillside where the priory stood (Mrs Carbonell loc.cit.)". She states that this is "possibly identical with the Black Dog of Torrington legend". She goes on to say "Perhaps the chapel was nominally in honour of Our Lady, using an ancient statue locally discovered. In view of grove and adjacent Nymets and the black dogs, could this have been a form of Nemetona-Diana?" (4)

Actually George Nympton, Kings Nympton and Bishops Nympton are between 12-20 miles east, the other side of the River Taw. There is a village called Frithelstock Stone just down the road from Frithelstock. Clarke and Roberts quote Frithelstock as meaning "sacred stone"; and indeed Frithelstock parishioners have always believed their village name has meant this, but I could find no reference to this in "The Place Names of Devon". If there was a sacred stone in the area however it would be more than likely that pagan worship continued after the stone had gone, directed at the statue in the chapel.

The priory ruins are not owned or administered by the church authorities. They are part of the estate belonging to Cloister Hall (the Old Rectory) behind the ruins. As it is private property a £1 per person charge is levied to cover insurance costs. When we turned up the owner was not in but we were told that for your £1 you get a guided tour, and it is best to phone beforehand to arrange a viewing - (01805) 623163.

Sources:- (1) R Pearse Chope, Transactions of the Devonshire Association Vol 61 1929 p167, using Bishop Grandisson's Register (3 vols) held in Westcountry Studies Library, Exeter. (2) Church guide of St Mary & St Gregory, Marland Press. (3) as (1). (4) Theo Brown "The Black Dog in Devon" TDA Vol 91 1959.

BOOK REVIEWS

TWILIGHT OF THE CELTIC GODS David Clarke with Andy Roberts
Blandford £16.99 Hardback

An account of Britain's surviving Celtic tradition; combining first-hand accounts with folklore, mythology and archaeology. Centred in the main around the Peak District the book does feature other pagan survivals from across the British Isles. Highly recommended.

THE SACRED YEW Anand Chetan and Diana Brueton
Penguin Arkana £7.99 Paperback

An excellent book examining the traditions, religious practices and myths associated with the yew, blended with science and history and a gazetteer of all known ancient yews in mainland Britain. The yew predates humankind by millions of years but is disappearing now under development and neglect. Witness the poor yew trees at Bampton, Devon - they have been encased in concrete; or the many churchyard yews that have railings around them, or doors fitted into them. I for one spent many years poking around churches looking for Green Men or Celtic fonts, completely oblivious of the yew tree outside that predated the church building by thousands of years. I've now visited nearly all the churchyard yews in Devon - that is the ones listed in this book - and they speak to you; they really do. An incredible book and one not to be missed.

DICTIONARY OF WITCHCRAFT David Pickering
Cassell £18.99 Hardback

A comprehensive A-Z guide to the world of witchcraft.

DICTIONARY OF NORSE MYTH AND LEGEND Andy Orchard
Cassell £20.00 Hardback

A comprehensive A-Z guide to the myths and legends of northern Europe.

CELTIC MYTH & LEGEND - AN A-Z OF PEOPLE AND PLACES Mike Dixon-Kennedy
Blandford Hardback

An extremely comprehensive and authoritative text, 15 years of research in the making. Includes a valuable bibliography, genealogies, spelling and pronunciation guide.

HOUNDS, HOLLOW HILLS & ANCIENT WAYS BY MARY COOMBS

Holy Trinity church occupies a dominant hilltop site high above Buckfastleigh (1) where it may be reached from the street by climbing the hundred-plus 'Devil's Steps'. Not a pilgrimage for the faint hearted! Fortunately there is a road route via Buckfast.

From this lofty position the church spire presents a noted landmark to travellers passing along the A38, which is probably one of the oldest and longest cross-country routes in Britain.

A local legend states that attempts to build the church (2) on a lower more accessible site were repeatedly thwarted by the Devil, who insisted on moving building materials up to the top of the hill overnight; as he is wont to do in many similar legends. Finally, in the belief that he would then leave the church alone, construction went ahead up there. The superstitious may well be wondering whether the Devil has since decided that a church was not welcome even there, for a devastating fire occurred in 1992 (believed to be arson) in which all but the bell tower and bells were destroyed (3). Christmas 1995 saw the bells rung for the first time since this incident; though it is doubtful that the whole building will ever be restored. However, during restoration work on the bell tower, and work to shore up weakened roofless walls, the opportunity was taken to do an archaeological survey of the floor plan. This was initially achieved through the use of an electronic scanner, similar to that used at a certain notorious address in Gloucester. A number of very old lead coffins were subsequently revealed, which on closer inspection strongly suggest Roman use of this site. As the Roman invaders so often utilised religious sites and trackways familiar already to indigenous peoples, as did the Christian church thereafter, there is good reason to believe that we have here a site of spiritual importance with some considerable pedigree.

Those who believe that one of the Devil's own lies buried in this churchyard would not doubt his interest in the site. The story goes that Richard Cabell, a keen huntsman and heir to the estate of Brook Manor, suspected his wife of adultery (4). He followed her up to the moor (the Abbot's Way near Water Oak Corner (5)) where he murdered her. Her faithful black hound, on witnessing the foul deed, went for Cabell's throat. The animal met the same fate as its mistress, stabbed to death with a hunting knife. But later, as Cabell himself lay dying at Brook Manor, the dogs of the Wild Hunt raged around the estate waiting to escort another evil soul to its eternal reward.

Whilst some have claimed to have heard the Wild Hunt in full cry, others say they have seen Cabell's headless ghost ride from his distinctive house-tomb on certain nights in July (6). Yet another tradition states that a huge black hound still stalks the moor and re-appears to haunt each successive generation of Cabells. This story vies with others as the basis for Conan Doyle's "The Hound of the Baskervilles".

Beneath the ruins of the church, and that of a chapel contemporary to the fire ravaged building, sleeps a magical subterranean world. This has been managed since 1962 as the William Pengelly Cave Studies centre. Tree roots, serpent-like, reach through the low flaking roofs of the upper levels. Beyond this hobbit-hole world the extensive cave system unfolds in a series of deep rifts, glistening crystal chambers and claustrophobic squeeze-belly tunnels, with much territory remaining to be explored.

Within Reeds Cave nature has sculpted an 8ft 'toadstool' in creamy white with beautifully fluted sides (8), and has decorated the dark cave walls with translucent white fan-like structures. The floor of a nearby grotto is populated by a colony of white 'hedgehogs', whose long needle-sharp crystalline spikes threaten serious injury to the unwary explorer. Elsewhere further traps await in the form of pools of water so crystal clear that they are often not seen until fallen into.

Most memorable of all perhaps is The Canyon, where a stalagmite drape forms a natural 'carillion' which, when struck, produces an amazing range of bell-like notes. Elsewhere in this chamber, which has a pool at its centre, an alcove accomodates an amazing calcite formation. Standing only 5 inches high, with arms outspread and head crowned with a rather large top hat is 'The Little Man'. These delights are only for the serious caver to enjoy. The less adventurous among us must make do with a visit to the Joint-Mitner show-cave with its inevitable display of prehistoric animal bones gleaned from the cave system. Further caves exist along the road at Dean, which also has a hound tale.

In this legend (9), reflecting the once prosperous woollen mill industry which the town once had, a rich weaver living at Dean Coombe died. The day after his burial his son dutifully returned to the cottage to do whatever was necessary. To his surprise he saw his father sitting at the loom, as in life. A local priest was summoned, who, as per tradition, promptly threw a lump of churchyard earth at the spectre. Instantly it assumed the form of a black dog. Undaunted, in this Devonshire version of the Cornish Jan Tregagle, the hound was led to Pan (Hound) Pool on the Dean Bourne and there set to work on bailing out the pool with a perforated nutshell, and promised no rest until the task was done. At midday and midnight the hound may still be heard hard at work. Some claim to have seen it.

Besides natural caves, the Buckfastleigh area is riddled with a series of man-made subterranean chambers. Some are a residue of the districts other major industry, metal mining, and yielded copper or tin. Others are clearly mythical but of great interest nonetheless.

One of these mythical tunnels (10) is said to run between Brook Manor to its near neighbour across Holy Brook, Hawson Court. In the Domesday Book this manor is recorded as 'Mainbowe'. Back in the 1980s a woman living in a modern house built on Hawson land (facing Holy Trinity across the fields) awoke one night to see three black hounds drift across her bedroom. The apparition was observed to travel at just below ceiling height. When it met the window; the glass, for a second, retained the image like a photographic plate, until it finally faded from view. A most disturbing experience which to my knowledge has never been repeated. Worth noting perhaps is that it occurred one night in July, when the Cabell hound is doing its rounds.

The waters of Holy Brook (12) "believed to this day to have curative powers" especially beneficial in the treatment of rheumatic and muscular problems, has been proven to be "slightly radioactive." This is not uncommon in the case of holy wells and springs, nor in a number of ancient sites worldwide. Radioactive readings have also been noted in Kingswood, between Skerraton and Brook, where in the 1960s Cold War era uranium was discovered in the old copper mine workings. Officially it was never recovered.

High on a hill overlooking this very atmospheric stretch of pine forest sits Hapstead House. This is the former home of the towns benefactors, the Hamlyn family. Built upon the foundations of a much older structure (13) the Subsidy Rolls for 1286-1672 record it as 'Hapstrete', and we are asked to consider 'True Street' which runs from Marldon to Totnes (Bridgetown) in reference to this. Did a Roman 'via strata', possible incorporating an earlier Bronze Age track, run from the coast at Torbay via Totnes, then to the moor via Buckfastleigh, perhaps to link with what became the Abbots Way, itself but a short distance from Hapstead? If so, what clues may lay in a study of road and district names and features between Totnes and the moor?

As to the old house, it had a few tales of its own to tell when I knew it in the 1960s, these apparently still unrecorded. There was talk of a 'White Lady', believed to have been a tragic Civil War era bride. There was also allegedly a tunnel which linked the house to Buckfast Abbey. Such rumours of tunnels were dismissed as ridiculous. The distance was too great; yet not as awesome as the rumour of tunnels linking the Abbey with Syon (Marley) House out near Rattery, or the even more unlikely Forde House at Newton Abbot! Man-made tunnels which lack concrete proof of their existence and are said to cover seemingly impossible distances remain for all their incredulity, persistent in folk-memory. They may be in fact distorted memories of forgotten leys; a not uncommon feature of which at certain points and often at certain times of the day or year, sightings of black dogs, white ladies or even UFOs are noted to occur (19).

Ivan Bunn's research into black dog sightings and legends in East Anglia revealed that of the 62 cases studied almost all were seen near water, be it inland or on the coast. At the very least none were ever observed more than 2-5 miles from a major water source. Fairly predictable if they are real flesh and blood beasts. But also we find that a water course or well, which may have sacred connotations, to be a common geographical feature along a ley.

Legends of tunnels linking manor houses with churches abound all over Britain. One explanation was that church treasures were moved down them during the Civil War whenever there were warnings of Roundhead attacks, the lords of the manors being more often than not for the King and church; and these tunnels are passed down via folk memory and legend. (The Editor remembers as a child being fascinated by the persisting legend of a tunnel from the church at Leigh on Mendip (Somerset) to a ruined manor house some 3 miles north and many hours spent with other children searching for it, scares and adventures aplenty).

One tentative link with the Abbey was found in that same era in Hapstead House however (15), this in the form of a window salvaged from the original Abbey. This was dutifully removed and restored to the present building. It is now thought that at the very least Hapstead may have served as one of a series of 'rest houses' dotted along the Abbots Way for the monks travelling between the Abbeys of Buckfast, Buckland and Tavistock.

Just west of Holy Trinity (16) at 241 feet is Knollthorne, site of a former fire beacon. Another beacon existed down the road at Dean Prior, this at a height of 607 feet, where it commanded 'a long stretch of the great road to the west'. The existence of these beacons parallel to the A38 would further seem to reinforce the value of the church as a landmark along the route, and a pointer to what lay beyond and beneath. It would also seem to underline the importance of this 'great road', which we today take so readily for granted.

If the hill upon which the church came to be built already had value to the earlier occupants of the area, what of the unique underworld over which it stands? Although plenty of evidence of animal habitation of the caves has been discovered, none to my knowledge has been as to its use by humans. However if not lived in the caves may have been used, as "in both Celtic and pre-Celtic belief caves and grottoes were symbolic of the Great Mother" (17). This is an area rich in Goedelic (Irish) Celtic placenames, so their culture and beliefs were probably transferred here too. Some caves and grottoes were "once the scene of divinatory rites and oracular prophecies" and places of initiation. If large animals could find their way into these caves there is no reason why a human could not either, albeit initially through tracking an animal to its lair perhaps. Certainly there could be few more magical subterranean places of initiation in Devon than these caves, particularly if, at the time, they contained even half the wonders time and nature have bequeathed to us today.

Sources: (1) Moor to Sea at Buckfastleigh - Buckfastleigh Tourist Commission. (2) The Secret Country - J & C Bord. (3) "Westcountry Live" 27.12.95. (4) Dartmoor Magazine No 14 Spring 1989. (5) pers.com. Mr David Evans, former Head Boy, King Edward VII School Totnes & Hapstead House. (6) Dartmoor Magazine op.cit. (7) Buckfastleigh - A Town In The Making - Sandra Coleman. (8) Transactions of the Devonshire Association (TDA) Vol LXXXII 1950. (9) TDA 1989. (10) TDA Vol 108 1976. (11) TDA Vol 115 1983. (12) TDA Vol 108 1976. (13) Placenames of Devon Part II-Gover, Mawer & Stenton. (14) TDA Vol 108 1976. (15) A History of Buckfast Abbey 1018-1968 - Dom John Stephan. (16) TDA Vol LXXXVII 1955. (17) Earth Mysteries - Michael Howard. (18) Alien Animals - J & C Bord.

THE QUEST FOR KING ARTHUR David Day
De Agostini Editions £14.99 Hardback
Explores the historical, mythical and literary origins of all the major figures and themes, retells more than 25 of the most important legends and has many beautiful colour paintings. Very good.

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CELTIC MYTHS, CELTIC LEGENDS R J Stewart
Blandford £9.99 Softback
A wide ranging collection of themes from Celtic myths & legends, from early sagas to the author's own retellings of classic tales. With some illustrations by Courtney Davis - whose work, though admirable, is getting into overkill. Do publishers think there's only one artist that can illustrate these kind of books?

CADBURY CASTLE

Lying just off the A3072 at map reference SS915053 (Landranger 192), Cadbury Castle is a small contour hillfort west of the Exe Valley, constructed in the early Iron Age (1st/2nd century BCE). The builders were contemporary of those who built Hembury. The hilltop is steep sided, rising to 829ft on the summit. The view in all directions is astounding. The village of Cadbury with church dedicated to St Michael lies below; the village of Cadeleigh lies just north. The prefix "Cad" means "corpse", "burial" or "place of a battle".

In 1847 the castle was excavated and a well shaft was discovered in the centre of the inner enclosure on the hill summit. It is visible today as a dark green patch that grows nettles when the field is under grass. It measures 8ft diameter at the top, narrowing to 6ft at a depth of 25ft and to 3ft at a depth of 54ft. Overall it tapers to 58ft deep. It was lined with puddled clay.

A substantial amount of Roman treasure was discovered in this well which had been deposited when the shaft had been partly filled about 25ft down. The finds were chiefly women's possessions - bracelets, beads, rings, earrings, pottery, horses teeth, bones, ashes, and an iron knife blade. These finds were the only significant collection of the period found west of the Exe apart from Mount Batten in Plymouth. Mount Batten was post-settlement where all sorts of Roman goods might be expected but finds of "sophisticated personal ornaments seem extraordinary things to find in a well at the centre of a hillfort. These finds would be more in place in a rich Roman villa in the lowlands" (1). As no weapons were found it would not be unreasonable to assume that some so-called "hillforts" were not places that were actively and constantly defended from attack, or used for battle at all. These finds are kept in Fursdon House, the manor at the rear of the fort. George Fursdon was the landowner who carried out the original excavation.

There is the possibility that a timber dwelling was nearby and that the jewellery came from there but it is unlikely that 24-odd bracelets would be thrown away by accident. Perhaps the jewels were lowered into the well for safe keeping at a time of attack and never recovered. However women's personal ornaments are often found as offerings at native temples. Such sites are commonly found on hilltops - Lydney, Glos; Cissbury, Sussex; Maiden Castle, Dorset. A deep well or shaft is often associated with these cult centres - Pagans Hill Somerset for instance, and places in Kent (2).

Serpent stories are associated with acknowledged prehistoric sites. Dolbury Hill and Cadbury Castle, on opposite sides of the Exe Valley, share a dragon who haunts them both. Great treasures lie hidden in them, guarded by the dragon who flies from one to the other at night. This tradition can be traced back to the early C17th, in a local rhyme which boasts

"If Cadbury Castle and Dolbury Hill down delved were
Then Denshire might plough with a golden coulter
And eare with a golden share" (3)

Thomas Risdon, writing about 1626, recorded "The Circuit of an antient Castle is here to be seen which stands aloft and overlooketh the Country about it; whereof men speak marvellous matters, that a Dragon (forsooth) should be seen there often..." (4). Cissbury, which also has a well, has a legend of a hoard of gold which lay buried somewhere under the huge hillfort. It could be reached by way of a two mile underground passage but nobody has succeeded because halfway along the tunnel a pair of monstrous serpents would drive off the intruder. Its more than likely the protective dragon legends are connected to a folk memory of the treasures inside the shafts.

Cadbury also has a tunnel legend which it shares with the caves of Wookey Hole in Somerset. Apparently a dog disappeared down a hole in the hillfort and reappeared at Killerton near Exeter with its fur singed as if by fire!; but the legend doesn't specify whether the dog came out in the Iron Age hillfort in the grounds of Killerton House (National Trust's south west headquarters - five miles south east of Cadbury at SS974001). In the Somerset legend the dog reappeared several miles away also with singed fur. Incidences of "dragon's breath", the vaporous weird mist popularized in John Boorman's film "Excalibur" has often been seen around the fort while the rest of the landscape is clear.

Overall though, dragons in Devon are thin on the ground. There was a legend of a flying serpent who lived in an old tin mine at Manaton, near which it is supposed to have been killed. Nearby are hut circles and Grimspound Bronze Age settlement. Barrows at Challacombe were allegedly haunted by dragons. A dragon at Winkleigh was mentioned only once in the C17th. There is a "Dragdon Hill" leading to Spreyton. Combe Martin on the North Devon coast once had a hobby horse possibly derived from a dragon (5). There is a carved dragon with fruit and foliage curling from its mouth in Sampford Courtenay church, and at St Michaels church, Shebbear there is a carved dragon roof boss. It is at Shebbear that the "Turning the Devil Stone" ritual on 5 November is performed.

Sources: (1) Roman finds at Cadbury Castle - Aileen Fox. Transactions of the Devonshire Association No 84 1952 p105-114. (2) op.cit. (3) Here Be Dragons - Ralph Whitlock. (4) The Sun and the Serpent - Paul Broadhurst & Hamish Miller. (5) Whitlock op.cit.



PLANTS OF MYSTERY AND MAGIC Michael Jordan
Blandford £18.99 Hardback

A photographic guide covering the magical, ritualistic, legendary, medicinal and decorative attributes of each plant or fungus that the author has selected (this is not an exhaustive study). Well presented.

MIRRORS OF MAGIC - Evoking The Spirit Of The Dewponds Philip Heselton
Capall Bann £9.95 A5 Softback

Well researched and written with great affection and spirituality, this book examines legend and folklore which surrounds ponds and pools and reveals the relationship which the country people had with them; locations where consciousness can be changed and places where divination and magic were and are practised. Moonraking and scrying are also examined.

THE WAY OF THE DEAD

A letter in The Ley Hunter magazine no 117 carried a number of letters concerning Corpse Ways, Church Roads and Church Lines. Folk tradition relates that it was very unlucky to use any other route for the bearing of the corpse or coffin, for to do so would mean the spirit could not rest at ease. Several traditions from all over Britain tell of how a certain road was adhered to as strictly as possible even though easier routes were often available, and if the road went through private land the owner was told in advance to clear a way - by removing stones from a wall for example - to allow the cortege access. Very often the roads that lead to the church are straight. The Lych Way was one of the Death Roads mentioned in the letters as being worthy of investigation. Parts of it are straight, but being 15 miles long and crossing mountains, rivers and valleys would make such straightness impossible! Corpse Lane leading to Coffin Wood (see picture) seems to align straight into the centre of the wood.



The medieval Lych Way was the route by which coffins were taken from all the Ancient Tenements in the central basin to Lydford Church, the parish church of Dartmoor. As with all ancient tracks, alternative branch and loop paths served different periods, people, purposes and terminals. Dartmoor's unique topographical shape meant that

unlike a funeral cortege in a Highland glen, Cumbrian valley, Yorkshire dale or Welsh mountain; where a coffin could be carried down to the parish church, on Dartmoor the bearers had to climb out of the central basin in order to cross its rim and river valleys separated by long, steep ridges between basin rim and outer escarpment of the Moor.

Devon was settled by the Saxons in the late C7th, soon becoming Christianized. In Norman times the central basin Ancient Tenements were established, 35 isolated holdings far out in the middle of the Forest of Dartmoor, (76.6 sq.m.) making it the largest parish in England. Funerals were obliged to make a journey described by one old writer as "eight miles in fair weather, fifteen in foul". At least eight bridgeless streams or rivers had to be negotiated, the last being the Tavy, the swiftest river in England. The distance by the most direct route from the tenements of Babeny and Pizwell was about 12 miles, when adverse weather prevailed alternative crossings had to be

found, making the route less direct and increasing the journey to 17 miles. In 1260 therefore, the tenements successfully petitioned Walter Bronescombe, Bishop of Exeter, for permission to use Widecombe church for burials instead.



Church Way at Kingshead Corner. Tower of St Pancras Widecombe can be seen down the valley.

Jolly Lane Cot, the last dwelling on Dartmoor to have been built in a day according to the age-old law). Her funeral was in 1901, and she herself had led pall-bearers over the Church Path, chanting a dirge before them and halting at the Coffin Stone.

Beatrice Chase in "From A Dartmoor Window" (Longmans) recalls that in 1915 a local man died and had required an old-fashioned funeral. Ninety bearers turned up at the starting-place of the path, pausing to rest on the Coffin Stone. Two bearers were brothers, and nothing was thought of it until the procession got to the graveyard, where a "wise woman" was among the spectators. She scolded the two brothers, saying that if two blood relations carried a coffin together, it meant certain death for one of them. She was laughed at; but a week later one of the brothers died and his was the next coffin to be rested on the Coffin Stone. Tradition has it that the Coffin Stone split in two when the corpse of a particularly evil person was laid on it, and there was the usual peal of thunder and bolt of lightning from above etc etc. Even the shorter routes from the central tenements to Widecombe were just as arduous in winter (4 miles) so Chapels of Ease were built at Postbridge and Huccaby in 1868 (1).

Hemery mentions the old church path from Batworthy to Gidleigh as passing very near the Tolmen holed boulder in the river Teign, it crossed the river at an island in the gorge by means of two wooden footbridges (clams), one from each bank to the island, but these have long since rotted away. The path is now totally overgrown.

From Norman times until the early C19th the Forest courts were held at Lydford Castle, which was also the official prison of the Stannary (tin trade) authority. New farms that sprang up in the 15th and 16th centuries - Smithill, Cherrybrook, Stannon and Crockern for example - did not have Ancient Tenement status but the dwellers still had to use Lydford for all secular purposes. Therefore instead of traffic on the Lych Way decreasing after 1260, it increased until the

construction of the turnpike roads, the commuting of tithes and the transfer of the Duchy of Cornwall's Forest administration to Princetown, all within a few years of the turn of the C19th.

Harsh weather brought all sorts of horrendous conditions and often it was necessary to store the corpse somewhere until the bearers could carry on the journey. There is a famous story of a traveller staying overnight at the Warren House Inn, who, on finding a large casket in his room, opened it to discover a corpse. The traveller was horrified and thought he had discovered a murder, but the landlord replied casually that it was only his father and that they had salted him down till they could get him to Lydford. Another tale relates how father and pig were salted down together in brine in an isolated farmhouse (2).

Eric Hemery's book WALKING DARTMOOR'S ANCIENT TRACKS (see Sources) lists in detail the exact route but I list here the sites of interest that lie along or near it. The first section of the track which starts from Babeny and Pizwell leads through Bellever Forest, wherein lies the Lakehead Hill antiquities - Kraps Ring village settlement, a kerb circle, kistvaen and retaining circle, and opposite, a large kistvaen with a cover stone 8'x6' (restored by Baring-Gould and Robert Burnard circa 1895) with stone row and retaining circle. South west of this are more cists and a cairn circle, where there were once three graves forming a wide base triangle: at the tip of this triangle is a partly destroyed retaining circle which once enclosed cists, the north east circle still has its grave.

The Lych Way is marked in the plantation with guide stones and wooden posts. It goes through the lands of Powder Mills, the old gunpowder factory and now a pottery. An old broken wall represents the original track, now a watercourse. The line of the wall was almost certainly dictated in Tudor times by the Lych Way when in regular use by moormen travelling to Lydford Forest courts - the wall predates the powdermills by several centuries. Wistmans Wood (see Wisht Maen 1) appears along the track, and further on a ruined cist discovered by Hemery in 1956 (map ref 604782).

Lydford Tor (599782) is an important landmark for travellers on the Lych Way, which passes by its south foot; at no other point on the route is a tor of any significance so nearly approached. Even Bellever Tor, geographical centre of the moor, lies almost a mile south of the route. Hemery notes that a knife-edge triangular stone south of Lydford Tor has no apparent significance but its axis is aligned precisely with the centre of the tor on one side and with another slab, now leaning out of vertical, on the other (south) side (3).

At Conies Down Water on the north verge of the Lych Way is a double stone row discovered by Robert Burnard, its length was later determined by Worth as 588ft (map ref 585790). It is in poor condition with only a few stones standing, and there are no traces of a grave. The row terminates with a blocking stone at its upper end at a height of 1,660ft - the highest placed stone row on Dartmoor, and presumably in Europe. The menhir known as Beardown Man, unassociated with any other monument, dominates the upper east valley side of the Cowsic Head. It is 11'4" and when viewed from the south looks very wide, yet

from the north east looks very slender.

At Cowsic Fork the Lych Way crosses Traveller's Ford, and Hemery relates a fascinating incident that happened along this part of the route. "In 1953 a man of unusual character and antecedents came to me for two days guided walking on the Moor: a German royal prince, Frederick of Saxe-Altenburg, to whose great-grandfather Beethoven had dedicated a masterpiece, he was a person of great intellect, in whom dignity and humility were admirably met. The Prince had never before visited the West country and was without any knowledge of Dartmoor's history, and the choice of the Lych Way for our first excursion was mine. As we walked from Beardown Farm up the Cowsic valley, I resolved to keep my dramatic flourish about the Way until the moment of reaching Traveller's Ford. But my companion effectually took the wind out of my sails. We had passed through the gateway above Broad Hole and were walking down the sunken way to the ford when, speaking with a quiet conviction I could not forget, he said: "This is an extraordinary place; I feel much sadness, much unhappiness, as though long lines of people have walked here with some burden of sorrow." Somewhat astonished, I told him of the medieval use of Lych Way, and that it had ceased seven hundred years ago, whereupon he fell silent and walked for some way without uttering a word" (4).



A moorman's funeral in 1932—an echo of the grim treks along the ancient Lych Way

Cistercian order at Buckfast Abbey, who must have been far out of their usual course to be seen on the Path of the Dead (5).

The Lych Way passes White Barrow (567794), a large despoiled cairn with a few stones piled on one side and the central hollow occupied by the grave, which is a recorded boundary point of the Forest of Dartmoor. Here the traveller would have had the first glimpse of the destination 1000ft below - Brent Tor, Gibbet Hill and the Lyd

Valley can be seen, as can the Cornish moors on a clear day. The trees of Round Wood (South Common Plantation at 558807) being the first seen since leaving Wistmans Wood, the traveller had three directions to choose depending on the spate of the river Tavy. It rises at 1,840 ft in the heart of Britain's largest highland blanket bog, and falls a thousand feet in seven miles: a river of such rapidity is only surpassed, equalled even, by the river Spey in the Cairngorms (6).

The track passes through the ancient farming settlement of Baggator, recorded as existing in 1230 when yet another generation of moor dwellers had to carry their dead behind Bagga Tor on the old Lych Way. A medieval vicar of Tavistock must have owned land or actually lived there, and although not strictly relevant to the article, I relate the following from the TDA 70 of 1938 because it is amusing. It is stated that, in the year 1385, "Bishop Brantyngham's register reports a grave complaint from Master David Baggetorre, then vicar of Tavistock, against Abbot Cullyng, Richard Bond, monk and others, servants and retainers of the abbot. Alleged that they "enslaved by some evil spirit and sacrilegiously minded" did on Sunday 19th March burst suddenly into church armed with weapons, slashed the vicar's vestments with their swords, pulled him from his seat and threw him headlong, and finally "inhumanly dragged him out of the church". This and other disorders drew down upon the Abbey episcopal visitations" (7). Sir Simon Tony was vicar in 1385-6 so it appears Baggetorre did not remain vicar very long after the bizarre incident.

If the Tavy was in spate the cortege would have had to pass through Baggator Gate to follow the Peter Tavy road for half a mile. The track passes through Yard Gate, once known as Seven Stars Gate due to indecipherable markings on one gatepost. The Lych Way then emerges from the Yellowmead enclosures below. Another crossing was via Cataloo Steps, following Brousentor Lane (normally a watercourse). It passes through a beautiful glade to Cataloo Steps; the woodland above the river's left bank is called Coffin Wood. Here a coffin awaited the arrival of the body, which had been brought thus far by packhorse or litter, so ensuring a more dignified journey on the last three miles. Coffin Wood is traditionally very haunted. There is a medieval lane with crumbling walls on the west bank called Corpse Lane. (see picture on title page).

The third choice of route over the Tavy was over Standon Steps, of sufficient width to allow two corpse-bearers to cross abreast rather than fore and aft. Unfortunately a modern bridge has been built right on top of the original medieval steps, erected by German POWs. This bridge collapsed however but the good old Ministry of Defence helpfully rebuilt it again on exactly the same site so the original steps are still despoiled. The MoD have vandalised the final part of the Lych Way as it leaves the moor at Beardon Farm (reported in WM2) as well.

The track passes by Higher Willsworthy Farm, where there is a medieval chapel window incorporated in the wall of a barn. The original chapel of "Wilfleurde" mentioned in the Domesday book was sited nearer the farm of Lower Willsworthy and was a chapel of rest and hostel, the only one on this arduous route. Willsworthy was the only large farm settlement on the route since leaving Bellaforde. Here was provided food

and rest for the living, a hallowed place for the dead and refreshment for the horses. The hillside track descending from Willsworthy is aligned on Lydford church and castle. When it reaches Lydford it passes up Silver Street, named after the Saxon mint. A huge earthen rampart above the road - containing a gap where the South Gate once stood - is the former Saxon defensive earthwork once mounted by a stockade. The corpses would finally come to rest in the graveyard of St Petrocks, next to the remains of the Norman keep.

LYDFORD In 920 Lydford was granted a market and became a borough -second in size only to Exeter. The traveller Leland visited Lydford circa 1540 and wrote "It is now only a poor village, but was formerly a considerable place, as it appears from the Conqueror's Survey book that it could be taxed only when London and Exeter was taxed and in the same manner; and the custody of this castle was given to men of the greatest quality. They formerly sent members to Parliament" (8). During the reign of Aethelred II, a mint was built, and coins were minted here for the next century. (A specimen is kept at The Castle Inn in the main street). The Saxons had built a wooden church on the present site and a fort on a motte. In 997 Vikings sailed up the Tamar and Tavy and sacked the town, with the church built of stone by the Normans along with a stone castle, of which now only the keep remains.

West of the church and keep is Lydford Gorge, a spectacular place now owned by the National Trust. 300-odd steps lead down to the 123ft high White Lady Falls, the abode of a white lady who in local folklore saves people from drowning in the river here providing they see her first. The "St Michael Line" as dowsed by Miller & Broadhurst (9) passes within feet of this waterfall and spans half the bridge that crosses the river Lyd. The line goes up to Tunnel Falls and Pixie Glen and onto the Devil's Cauldron. There is a smaller cascade called Kit's Steps, haunted in legend by the ghost of a woman called Kitty Lampiere. One version of the legend says she slipped and fell to her death; another relates how she was returning on horseback from the Lydford village feast, fell asleep on her horse's panniers and awoke to find herself suspended by those panniers over the River Lyd, while the horse floundered in the river below (10). This version does not state whether she joined the horse eventually in the water. The legend may be a folk memory of those "called" by the White Lady in the tradition of sacrifices to the river goddess. Some believe that "Kit" is merely a corruption of "skit", denoting broken, scattered rock such as Skit Bottom near Hartor.

At the end of the gorge walk (or the beginning depending on which access point you use) is the Devil's Cauldron, a rock chasm rounded by centuries of boiling, swirling water. There is a narrow iron bridge going through the chasm, where the rushing water reaches a deafening crescendo.

Sources: (1) Ruth E. St Leger Gordon - The Witchcraft and Folklore of Dartmoor (Bell New York - no date) p31. (2) *ibid.* p31. (3) Eric Hemery - High Dartmoor (Robert Hale 1983) p401. (4) *ibid.* p399. (5) St Leger Gordon op.cit p31. (6) Hemery op.cit p939. (7) Hemery op.cit p945 (8) Eric Hemery - Walking Dartmoor's Ancient Tracks (Robert Hale 1986) p240. (9) Paul Broadhurst & Hamish Miller - The Sun and the Serpent (Pendragon Press 1994) p62. (10) Lydford Gorge Devon National Trust

Guidebook 1993. Also see THE LEY HUNTER No 117 pp9-16 and SHAMANISM & THE MYSTERY LINES Paul Devereux (Quantum 1992). NB - Paul Rendell (Dartmoor Guide) leads walks along the Lych Way in the spring and summer season. (Next date: August 30th Lych Way Night Walk, 9pm from Lydford. Need to book - Tel: (01837) 54727.

Ernest Hazell of Down Thomas in the South Hams has reinstated earth stars in his locality after several years studying stone circles and other megalithic sites. He has discovered that standing stones make up hexagon shapes, and these in turn comprise tetrahedrons - four sided pyramid shapes. Studies of tetrahedrons have shown they reveal complex mathematical formulae tied up with the harmonics of light, magnetism and gravity. Ernest believes these "earth stars" are the earth's own acupuncture system and has buried some tetrahedrons 12" wide and 9" high in secret places. The project is only three-quarters complete but already he has noticed a shift in consciousness, or small spiritual awakenings, in his neighbours. In 1996 crop circles appeared around the reactivated sites. His local maps show correlations between the sitings of local churches which were often a uniform distance apart. One church at Mannamead has several others on a line of a megalithic mile, and further examples are to be found in the line of churches between Plymstock and Staddiscombe, and Plymstock, Hooe and Turnchapel. Staddiscombe once had a castle at which several leys converged.

Basil Wingfield Digby writes in The Dartmoor Newsletter "I am told that somewhere in the writings of Dietrich Eckart (1868-1923) regarded by some as Hitler's occult mentor, is information on 'Whispering Stones', this information probably taken from the German explorer and traveller Ernest Borschmann. Among the areas listed as having whispering stones was Dartmoor. These ancient stones have runic inscriptions and have been "charged" with some kind of force enabling those who can tune into them to obtain the records and information stored within the stone. Does anyone know of the whereabouts of such stones on Dartmoor, or even rumours of such stones? Many years ago I recall an elderly Chagford resident telling me of an old stone near Raybarrow Pool, which he referred to as a talking stone and which if spoken to in the correct way under a full moon would give the name of the one you would marry. From the same source I was told that in earlier times at first light on new years day the shape of a beautiful woman could be seen by the stone." Editor writes: I know of runic stones in the River Cowsic at Beardown Farm, near the island that contains the grotto known as Merlin's Cave. I have found no mention of them in any Dartmoor "classic" (Hemery, Worth, Crossing et al) and at first thought they were part of the Reverend E A Bray's collection of inscribed boulders (see High Dartmoor by Eric Hemery pp 395-6) dedicated "To Shakespeare" "To Milton" etc; and have been trying to translate the runes (no joy as yet). The inscriptions read thus:

NV7 · 067CK↓↓NOY · YVIM · YNVHY · <CIV
· 7NV · YVH · C1NH · YIH · YO · <77 · Y>V7
Y77VNV · XYIV · YVIM · XCO · 7N77NOCV
(V) (H)

POINTS OF COSMIC ENERGY Blanche Merz
C W Daniel £7.95 Softback

Geobiologist Merz has researched ancient sites in Egypt, India, and Tibet as well as Chartres, Santiago de Compostela, Lourdes and Annaya in Lebanon, where the corpse of a Maronite monk has remained intact since 1898. His guardians change his clothing every two months when it shows perspiration stains. Before his death he left precise instructions as to exactly where his body should lie. Merz also discovered an old woman living in an ashram 36 miles from Jodhpur, Satimatha (Hindu for "holy mother"), who is 80 years old yet has taken no nourishment for 35 years. She meditates and sleeps on specific points where Merz has measured 14000 units on the Hartmann network, the same as the highest vibrations at temples. Written with great scientific exactness Merz is also totally enthusiastic and clearly "blown away" by the findings she has made and people she met. A great book, good value but a little stilted and awkward in its translation from the French.

WE ARE ONE ANOTHER

THE CATHARS AND REINCARNATION

THE GREAT HERESY

Arthur Guirdham C W Daniel £8.95, £6.99 and £7.95 Softbacks
A fascinating series by a psychiatrist whose client showed remarkable memories of a past life in 13th century France, and the authors search for confirmation of the statements and discovering his own previous life as a Cathar Parfait, linked with the people he met in this life. Guirdham's constant stressing of his own scepticism and disbelief, and painstaking and exhaustive checking out of facts and figures, gets irritating but makes the reader not question what is being said. "We Are One Another" describes a group of people who had lived and suffered together in the 13th century Languedoc and re-assembled in the 20th century in a limited area in the west of England. Independently of each other these people tuned in to the same tragic events in the years 1242 to 1244. "The Great Heresy" is a history of Catharism and its horrendous persecution and obliteration by the Inquisition, which was organised to subdue a philosophy which threatened the very existence of the Catholic church in the Midi. Cathars had female priests and had no marriage service, and provided workshops and centres where the community learned and passed on skills. They lived simple lives with no trappings or worldly goods. The final chapters record the instruction the author received from the discarnate entities described in the previous two books, concerning reincarnation on other planets, animals as potential humans, auras, creation, alchemy, herbalism and the use of healing jewels.

UNIVERSAL SUFISM Dr H J Witteveen

Element Books £8.99 Softback

An exploration of the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan, the Indian mystic who modernized the age-old wisdom of Sufism at the turn of the century.

GOTHICK DEVON Belinda Whitworth

Shire Publications £3.95

A gazetteer of haunted places with map references and directions. Plenty of photos but also unfortunately some dreadfully amateur

sketches that look like hurried scribbles.

GOTHICK CORNWALL Jennifer Westwood

Shire Publications £3.95

As above but the line drawings, though dull, aren't quite so bad. The author obviously hasn't read anything new on fogous as she trots out the same old claptrap about them being cold stores or refuges. Useful guides though to take on holiday and there are a few little-known places mentioned.

READING TOES Imre Somogyi

C W Daniel £9.99

Yes - this really is a book studying toes and how they can reveal your hidden true personality etc etc....each toe represents an emotion and the author claims that he has been right every time when he has read a stranger's toe positions. A good Christmas present for Fergie perhaps?

THE ROBOTS' REBELLION David Icke

Gateway Books £9.95

It would be easy to read this book and dismiss it all as paranoid wind-ups but one is aware of a growing gnawing feeling in the stomach at the end of each chapter that just doesn't go away, however hard one tries to laugh it off and say "The guy's mad." This is the feeling that deep down I knew it was true and did not want to face the truth, because it throws you naked and exposed to the forefront of HAVING TO DO SOMETHING and that kind of realisation is painful. Icke reveals the extent to which people of all nations have allowed themselves to be programmed by the ideas fed to them by those in power. Veils of hypocrisy, built up for generations by the corrupt forces of church, state, science and commerce, and the frightening influence wielded throughout the planet by a merciless and manipulative network of secret societies. The conspiracy theory to end all conspiracy theories. Essential reading.

THE GOSPEL OF THE ESSENES Translated by Dr Edmond Szekely

C W Daniel £5.95

The "Gospel of Peace of Jesus Christ" are the pure, original words of Jesus translated directly from the Aramaic tongue spoken by Jesus and his disciple John 2000 years ago. It caused a sensation when it was first published in 1936. It concerns Jesus' teachings on the natural healing forces of sun, water and living foods and throws light on the values and terminology of early Christianity and those of the Essene Brotherhoods of the first and second centuries before Christ. Although it was only a fraction of the original Aramaic manuscript, more than 500000 copies have been sold throughout the world. After 40 years of work the translator has finally completed the whole manuscript. Revealing, moving and inspiring, the Gospel is a useful key to life.

THE WHEEL OF ETERNITY Helen Greaves

C W Daniel £6.95

This book unfolds the story of two earth-bound souls "living" beside the author in her country cottage, imprisoned by their own ignorance and selfishness, technically "dead" but unaware of the fact. Helen Greaves is best known for her book TESTIMONY OF LIGHT, written in the early 1970s which is regarded as a classic in the field of rescue mediumship. WHEEL OF ETERNITY is very much a continuation of the same theme and was originally published in 1974. This was all in the days

when mediumship was largely the preserve of the Spiritualist Church and a few kindly vicars, and indeed, the book is foreworded twice - by a Reverend, and then by an officer of the College of Psychic Studies. This gives the book a rather old-fashioned and "fuddy-duddy" feel to it which today's reader might find off-putting. There are frequent references to praying, God, Jesus, and similar religious sentiments. But Helen really knows her stuff as a rescue medium and her ideas are bang up-to-date as far as working with spooks is concerned. She handles multi-dimensional realities and time-phases and is well ahead of the field in some areas of psychology. For this, the book is well worth reading and is perhaps still "ahead of its time" when compared to many people's thinking. There is a nice moment in the story when a number of spooks are in her cottage at the same time, but remain unaware of each other because each person is operating only in their own reality - and I've met people like that! (Spike Rycroft)

MOON OVER WATER Meditation Made Clear for Beginners and Initiates
Jessica Macbeth Gateway Books £6.95

A really complete and useful guide and conversation for anyone with an interest in meditation. The author's experience flows through a text brimming with her internal knowledge of the subject. The pitfalls for and queries of the new practitioner are all covered and there is a reassuring sense of "so you felt like that too" for those who have had experience of struggling with their own attention. An extremely welcome addition to their library for teachers and practitioners of the healing arts and exercises as well as their students (or anyone else). Dip in anywhere in this pool and a pearl awaits! (Andrew Sanders)

MAGIC CASEMENTS The Use of Poetry in the Expanding of Consciousness
Sir George Trevelyan Gateway Books £5.95

A lovely thought inspiring collection of poetry from many sources, reminding me as a reader that my own insights and reflections are ripples in the same river that is shared with those who went before and those who are yet to come. If you had forgotten that truth seeking in literature could result in the exultant experience of joy as well as the more familiar minute examination of despair then this is a happy find and useful for finding apposite quotations, if one lacks an encyclopaedic knowledge of literature. "Let there be many windows in your soul, That all the glory of the Universe may beautify it. Not the narrow pane of one poor creed can catch the radiant rays that shine from countless sources. Tear away the blinds of superstition; let the light pour through fair windows broad as truth itself, and high as Heaven...." (Ralph Waldo Trine "In Tune with the Infinite"). Drawing from sources as varied as Wm. Blake, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Traherne, Manley Hopkins, Donne, Stephen Spender and the Bhagavad Gita Sir George commented on the poems to illustrate his lectures on the imminent transformation of the human spirit....I'm sorry to have missed them. (Andrew Sanders)

BEYOND THE LODGE OF THE SUN Chokecherry Gall Eagle
Element Books £8.99 Softback

Another book about the Native American way; supposedly sharing the core wisdom of the culture and beliefs with outsiders for the first time, having been given permission to speak of it once and only once in this book. I was rather put off though by a photograph of the author with the holy man Grandfather Eagle Bear, Frank Fools Crow, which apparently shows the two men in the handclasp of warrior peers, and the

accompanying caption "Grandson, when I am no longer here, this picture will speak for me. Show it". Presumably this was an important moment to be preserved pictorially. Why then is the holy man holding the author's hand on the right but still has a fag in the other? The author goes on a lot about how tobacco is sacred (i.e. in using it as gifts) but this picture rather cheapened the spiritual message. And I always believed the old sacred baccy was wrapped in little leather pouches with feathers and stuff stuck on. But maybe a packet of shag does just as well these days. The book was too personal and shows more of the authors beliefs and biases, like beware of false shamans. Many anecdotes and adventures are recalled but they never seem to lead anywhere or have an ending.

THE COSMIC CONNECTION Worldwide Crop Formations and ET Contacts
Michael Hesemann

Gateway Books £12.95 Softback

Gateway publish some storming stuff and this is a fine example of thorough research and fine writing. As well as a concise and readable history of the phenomenon there are several explanations and theories of the possible source and meanings, and some amazing photographs of both the circles and UFOs.

THE EARTH GODDESS - CELTIC AND PAGAN LEGACY OF THE LANDSCAPE

Cheryl Traffon (Blandford £16.99 Hardback)

The Editor of Cornwall's Meyn Mamvro magazine has written this excellent book covering the native spirituality found most often in the landscape and the folklore and legends thereof. The Gazetteer of Goddess sites throughout England Wales Ireland and Scotland is very informative and well researched. The book is divided into chapters examining The Goddess in.... Prehistoric Sites, Temples, the Land, Legends, Saints (The Bride connection), the Church and the pagan galaxy. The Scorhill circle breast carvings are featured in the Devon gazetteer as are Spinsters Rock, Frithelstock, Dartmoor sites, Bridestowe and the Rivers Erme and Tamar. Beautiful cover art too.

TALKING TO HEAVEN - A MEDIUM'S MESSAGE OF LIFE AFTER DEATH

James Van Praagh (Piatkus £8.99 Paperback)

A quite extraordinary book in which the author (a very receptive and sensitive medium) relates several cases of communication with spirits of humans and animals who have died. His waiting list for private readings has reached three years. Very comforting and reassuring both for those wanting to know more about the other side and those who have recently experienced the passing on of someone close.

NOSTRADAMUS - THE FINAL RECKONING

Peter Lemesurier (Piatkus £6.99 Paperback)

The author gives specific dates for over 150 of the Geezer's prophecies from now until 4500, all depressing stuff with no hint of anything pleasant until, well, a very long time from now. Other prophecies are included from Edgar Cayce, Mario de Sabato and the Biblical prophets. Still the message is, change or die. Much the same thing really I suppose.