

The Young Explorer's
Companion to



The Search for
the Stone of Excalibur

THE OFFICIAL ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO
CHRONICLES OF THE STONE BOOK 2

Fiona Ingram

THE YOUNG EXPLORER'S COMPANION

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THERE IS NO WORSE DEATH THAN THE END OF HOPE ~ KING ARTHUR

CONTENTS

WHY I WROTE BOOK TWO

WHAT'S THE BOOK ABOUT?

ARTHUR AND THE DARK AGES

ARTHUR IN LITERATURE & HISTORY

ARTHUR AND CHIVALRY

TIPS FOR TEACHERS: CLASS ACTIVITIES ON CHIVALRY

ARTHURIAN CHARACTERS

TAKE THIS QUICK ARTHURIAN QUIZ!

THE DRAGON IN CELTIC MYTHOLOGY

JOURNEY WITH KING ARTHUR

WHO SUCCEEDED ARTHUR?

WARFARE IN THE DARK AGES

ARTHUR'S BATTLES

EXCALIBUR

THE HISTORY OF THE SWORD

SWORDS OF MYTH & LEGEND

ARTHUR'S OTHER WEAPONS

THE 13 TREASURES OF THE ISLAND OF BRITAIN

AN ARTHURIAN LEGEND: THE RED DEER & THE UNICORN

READERS' GUIDE & GLOSSARY

QUIZ ANSWERS

COMING NEXT!

AUTHOR'S NOTE



Writing *The Secret of the Sacred Scarab*, the first book in *The Chronicles of the Stone* series, was an amazing journey that changed my life. I experienced some incredible adventures, and then found that there was so much more to discover about the ancient Egyptian civilization. That's why I created the first *Young Explorer's Companion* as an official guide for readers who have enjoyed the first book, and those who are still thinking about reading it. If you are about to read *The Secret of the Sacred Scarab*, then don't miss out on any of the clues that begin with the *Writings of Thoth* right in the front of the book.

The same goes for *The Search for the Stone of Excalibur*. You'll find that the information Justin and Adam learn on their journey helps them unravel the many clues and pointers they need to locate the Seven Ancient Stones of Power on their quest. When I began researching King Arthur, I found that although there was very little documented history on Arthur, his life and times, there was an enormous amount written by various experts on the legends, ideas and possibilities surrounding Arthur's life. I felt I had to share with readers much of the information I uncovered in my research!

Please feel free to email me fiona@fionaingram.com with any questions. I love hearing from readers.

WHY I WROTE BOOK TWO



The Search for the Stone of Excalibur grew from Book One, *The Secret of the Sacred Scarab*. As I neared the end of the boys' adventure in Egypt, I found they hadn't had enough time to save the world, and by then I'd also had the idea of the Seven Stones of Power. Definitely more adventures were needed, but where should the heroes go next?

I am a huge King Arthur fan and having travelled all over Scotland, visiting castles, I decided that Britain would be the location of the boys' quest for the Second Stone of Power. The legends and stories about King Arthur and Excalibur are the perfect vehicle for this book. There is so much magic and mystery surrounding this historical figure that I had enough material to craft a fascinating adventure.

Readers familiar with Book One will remember that my two young nephews inspired the characters of Justin and Adam. But who inspired the character of Kim, the young African girl who joins them on their second quest? In the year that we went to Egypt, I fostered and then later adopted a young African girl, Mabel, who gave rise to the character of Kim. Readers will find out more about my daughter by following Kim's story as well!

If you love history, geography, action, adventure, archaeology and a story that grips you from page one (plus lots of danger!) then this is the book for you. This will also appeal to anyone who wants to save the world or (for those readers a little older) remembers their plans to do so!

If you'd like to know when each adventure is coming out, send your request via the book or author website and your name will go onto the mailing list. Don't miss out on the action!

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MAP OF ARTHURIAN BRITAIN C.AD 500



THE CHRONICLES OF THE STONE: BOOK 2



WHAT'S THE BOOK ABOUT?

Having escaped the clutches of the evil Dr. Khalid in Egypt and rescued the first Stone of Power, Justin and Adam are keen to locate the next Stone of Power. Continuing the adventure from a few months prior in [*The Secret of the Sacred Scarab*](#), cousins Adam and Justin Sinclair are hot on the trail of the second Stone of Power, one of seven ancient stones lost centuries ago. This quest takes them to Britain, and unravels the mystery behind King Arthur—half myth, half legend—and his fantastical sword Excalibur. What gave Excalibur its incredible powers, so great that even historians have recorded its singular abilities? Could it be because a Stone of Power is embedded in the hilt? Right from the start, this adventure is not like the first.

Their travels take them from Oxford, England, to Scotland, where the location of the quest is in an old castle, a ruined chapel, and with a few ghosts thrown in as well. And who are the enigmatic and scary Eaters of Poison, driven by an ancient purpose? What is their connection to the castle's past and James' ancestor, Bedwyr the Curious Monk, whose research into history started all the trouble? This time the cousins and their companion, Kim, might be outnumbered, since Dr. Khalid more than likely survived falling into the abyss in their previous adventure.

Time is running out as the confluence of the planets draws closer. Can Justin and Adam find the second Stone of Power and survive? And why did Aunt Isabel send a girl with them? Will she get in the way? Join Justin and Adam as they search not only for the second Stone of Power, but also for the Scroll of the Ancients, a mysterious document that holds vital clues to the Seven Stones of Power. As their adventure unfolds, they learn many things, and face dangers that make even their perils in Egypt look tame. And how annoying for them that their tag-along companion, Kim, seems to have such good ideas when they are stumped?

ARTHUR AND THE DARK AGES



WHO WAS ARTHUR?

A number of identifiable historical figures have been suggested as the real Arthur but since the name occurs from the 7th Century, it is more likely that people were named in his honour. This has caused confusion. There was a real Arthur, a great and skilled war leader who performed many brave and epic deeds. It is thought he came from an area called the kingdom of Powys which is now West Midlands and central Wales. He most likely was a nobleman of British-Roman ancestry. Arthur was believed to have had extensive knowledge of Roman military strategies and warfare which he successfully used against the Saxons during the late 5th and early 6th Centuries. His possible birth date was around AD 478/488. An important aspect of Arthur's heritage, whoever he was, is that he was a Celt by tradition and history. Often, and because of later embellishments by English and French writers, people tend to think of Arthur as English. But at the time Arthur lived, there was no distinct 'England' to speak of. He was a Briton, of Celtic stock, the product of a Celtic society.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO ARTHUR

Gaius Julius Caesar invaded Britain twice—in 55 and 54 BC. The first of these incursions was little more than a reconnaissance mission, which established a beachhead on the Kent coast but went no further. The second proved more enduring, resulting in the defeat of Cassivellaunus, and his replacement with the more Roman-friendly Mandubracius. Cassivellaunus was an historical British chieftain who led the defence against Julius Caesar's second expedition to Britain. The first British person whose name is recorded, Cassivellaunus led an alliance of tribes against Roman forces, but eventually surrendered after his location was revealed to Caesar by defeated Britons. Mandubracius was the king of the Trinovantes of South-Eastern Britain in the 1st Century BC. However, having won a military victory, the Romans then left Britain. They would not return until AD 43, when Britain was incorporated into the Roman Empire. It would remain a colony of Rome until the last legions were withdrawn in AD 410.



After almost 400 years of being a Roman colony, the island (called Britannia by the Romans) was prosperous. Britons had adopted the Latin tongue and Roman laws, customs, dress, and methods of warfare. The Roman laws had been accepted. Yet the inhabitants did not lose their integral sense of a Celtic character, whatever their original tribal identity. Trade was booming. Exports of grain, iron, coal, hides, hunting dogs, and even slaves were regularly traded to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire and beyond. Britain was nearer to self-sufficiency in the 4th Century than it had ever been before. Rome, however, had growing problems because invading tribes such as the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Vandals and Lombards, Franks, and other Germanic and Eastern barbarian tribes were pressing against Rome's borders. The Roman Empire under Emperor Honorius (AD 384—423) began a steady withdrawal of troops from Britain during the period of AD 383 to 407 to defend the empire. In the late 4th Century, Britannia was under attack from increasing numbers of Pictish, Irish, and Germanic raiders, leading the great Roman general Stilicho to send military aid to the province in AD 398. However, just four years later he was forced to withdraw the legion that he had sent because they were needed to fight against the Visigoths in Italy. In AD 410, the island was formally cut off from imperial protection. The British economy, previously currency-based, collapsed as the Romans withdrew and no more coins came into the country to pay troops. From the middle of the 4th Century to the 7th Century, trade and barter replaced hard currency. The Romano-British leaders were faced with an increasing security problem from sea-borne raids, again particularly by Picts on the east coast of England.

What remained of Rome's territory, was defended by Flavius Aëtius or simply Aëtius, (c. AD 396—454), who successfully turned each of Rome's barbarian invaders against one another. In 436, with the help of Hunnic forces, he defeated Visigoths at the Battle of Arles, and later achieved victory at the battle of Narbonne (against the forces of Theodoric I). Later in 451, he led a force which included his former enemies the Visigoths against hostile Hunnic forces at the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains. Tragically, Aëtius was killed by the Emperor Valentinian III himself who felt intimidated as Aëtius had once supported Valentinian's rival. Also, Valentinian was convinced Aëtius wanted to place his son upon the imperial throne. By 476, the Western Roman Empire was in the hands of federated Germanic tribes. When they finally revolted under the Germanic General Odoacer (the son of Attila's General Edeko) the Emperor Romulus Augustus was deposed. The Empire in the West had finally fallen. The Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) was to persist for 1,000 more years and, for two centuries after Rome's fall, continued trying to win the territory back in a series of campaigns (most notably under Belisarius). Eventually, Rome's strategic and economic importance faded as the Byzantines became more concerned with problems on their immediate borders.

The collapse of Rome as the defender of Europe against the barbarian tides had an unprecedented widespread effect. Everywhere, including Western Europe and Britain, saw the

gradual breakdown of economic and social linkages as the waves of invaders flooded Western Europe in a series of mass migrations. This heralded the beginning of the Dark Ages (also called the Early Middle Ages), a period of chaos and warfare that lasted from the 5th Century to approximately AD 1000. It is appropriately called the Dark Ages, not only because it was a time when civilization collapsed but it is an era from which very few records survive. It is for this reason that so little is known about the period in which Arthur is said to have lived and why there is such debate concerning his historical existence.

This period was characterised everywhere by a decrease in town building, the deterioration of urban centres, and the decline of literary and cultural expression. This breakdown was often fast and dramatic as it became unsafe to travel or carry goods over any distance; there was a consequent collapse in trade and manufacture for export. The previously maintained Roman roads fell into disrepair from lack of use. Major industries that depended on trade, such as large-scale pottery manufacture, vanished almost overnight in places. Administrative, educational, and military infrastructure quickly vanished, and the loss of the established civic positions led to the collapse of the schools and to a rise of illiteracy, even among the leadership. Rome had left a legacy of order and stability in Britain which, due to the island's relative isolation from the rest of Europe, endured for a while. However, once the last links had been severed and the Britons were on their own, the Roman ways began to fade over time. The Britons gradually reestablished their tribal Celtic identity but they kept what they'd learned, such as knowledge of Roman military techniques, warfare, and ways of improving upon weaponry.

Soon the barbarian tribes that the Roman troops had kept at bay began to reappear. There was no way of coping with this threat without help. The Romano-British leaders, under the urgings of a local war lord, possibly Vortigern (called a *superbus tyrannus* or 'proud tyrant' by Gildas), hired Anglo-Saxon mercenaries (known as *foederati*), to whom they ceded territory in exchange for protection. 'Anglo-Saxon' is a general term referring to the Germanic peoples who came to Britain during the 5th and 6th Centuries, including Angles, Saxons, Frisii, and Jutes. 'Anglo Saxon' also refers to the language spoken at the time in England, which is now called Old English. But by AD 442, the Britons had lost control of their guests and Romano-British society was finally breaking down. Within a short time, the Anglo-Saxons mutinied, apparently because they had not been paid. Now beset by both internal (Anglo-Saxons) and external (Picts and Irish) invaders, the British responded in AD 446 by appealing to the Roman commander of the Western empire, Aëtius, for help (in a document known as the *Groans of the Britons*), even though Honorius, the Western Roman Emperor, had already written to the British leaders in or about AD 410 telling them to look to their own defence.

Again, therefore, the wretched remnant, sending to Aëtius, a powerful Roman citizen, addresses him as follows: 'To Aëtius, now consul for the third time: the groans of the Britons. ... The barbarians drive us to the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians: thus two modes of

death await us, we are either slain or drowned.’ —Gildas *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*; 1:20)

Soon the invasions were increasing in size and number as the news spread that [post-Roman Britain](#) was easy pickings and practically defenceless since the British clans and kingdoms were unable to unite for their own protection. It is here that history starts to merge with legend and the famous names of Vortigern, Hengest, Horsa, Ambrosius Aurelianus, and Arthur appear. By AD 500, Britain had fragmented into a number of smaller kingdoms, a situation aggravated by the tendency of rulers to leave their realms to be divided amongst their sons, instead of direct inheritance to the eldest. Thus tribal groups became even more splintered. The largest and strongest of these kingdoms was Powys. It is against this background that the figure of Arthur emerges. Arthur is thought to be one of the princes in South-Western England who fought in an alliance of British leaders against the Saxons and their allies, the Angles, Jutes, and Frisians, as well as the [Picts](#) and Scots who came from the north after the Romans left. The fighting continued until around AD 516 when, at the Battle of Mount Badon, the united Britons inflicted a severe defeat on the Anglo-Saxons. This victory turned the tide of the barbarian advances for the next fifty years, permitting a final ‘golden age’ for Celtic civilisation in Britain. The utterly defeated Saxons did not attack the Celts again until 571.



KING ARTHUR FIGHTING THE SAXONS: FROM THE ROCHEFOUCAULD GRAIL

But this was not the end of trouble. There followed a period of relative peace, but the country had suffered dreadfully. Gildas, a 6th-century British cleric, writing during this period, says:

‘... the cities of our land are not populated now as they once were; right to the present they are deserted, in ruins and unkempt. Foreign wars may have stopped, but not civil ones. For the remembrance of so desperate a blow to the island and of such unlooked for recovery stuck in the mind of those who witnessed both wonders. That was why kings ... kept to their own stations. But

they died; and an age succeeded them that is ignorant of that storm and has experienced only the calm of the present.'

With its cities starting to crumble, its leaders squabbling amongst themselves rather than consolidating their positions, and its citizens suffering the ravages of civil strife and outbreaks of plague, the Britain of the mid-6th Century was a shadow of the Roman province of only 150 years earlier. When the old Germanic enemies, the tribes of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and Frisians began to grow and expand again, it seems that there was no one strong enough to mount an effective defence, let alone a counter-attack. Within 25 years the Saxons had pushed their boundaries northwards and westwards from their lands in Hampshire as far as central Somerset and, in 577, they won a great victory at Deorham near Bath. There the British 'kings' of the Roman cities of Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath were killed and the Saxons reached the Bristol Channel. For the first time, the Britons of the West Country were cut off from their allies in Wales and the North West. From then onwards, the transformation of most of the old Roman province of Britannia into England was inevitable.

Gildas has much to say about the barbarian presence in Britain: *'For the fire ... spread from sea to sea, fed by the hands of our foes in the east, and did not cease, until, destroying the neighbouring towns and lands, it reached the other side of the island, and dipped its red and savage tongue in the western ocean. In these assaults ... all the columns were levelled with the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering-ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with their bishops, priests, and people, whilst the sword gleamed, and the flames crackled around them on every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies, covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press; and with no chance of being buried, save in the ruins of the houses, or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds; with reverence be it spoken for their blessed souls, if, indeed, there were many found who were carried, at that time, into the high heaven by the holy angels ... Some, therefore, of the miserable remnant, being taken in the mountains, were murdered in great numbers; others, constrained by famine, came and yielded themselves to be slaves for ever to their foes, running the risk of being instantly slain, which truly was the greatest favour that could be offered them: some others passed beyond the seas with loud lamentations instead of the voice of exhortation ... Others, committing the safeguard of their lives, which were in continual jeopardy, to the mountains, precipices, thickly wooded forests, and to the rocks of the seas (albeit with trembling hearts), remained still in their country.'*

By the time the [Anglo-Saxons](#) had eventually conquered much of Britain in the 6th and 7th Centuries, the native Britons had already been driven into the mountainous country to the north and the west of the British Isles. Only Wales, Scotland, and Ireland remained of the great Celtic tribal kingdoms that had once dominated Europe. The territory held by the Saxons eventually became known as England (Angle-land) and the people in Wales were called 'Welsh' from the

Saxon word *weala* meaning ‘foreigners.’ Two distinct languages also developed in Britain: English, which came from the tongue of the Germanic Anglo-Saxons, and Welsh, which developed from the original British language Brythonic. The Welsh called themselves ‘Cymry’ meaning ‘fellow countrymen’ and their country ‘Cymru.’ This division could explain the lack of evidence about Arthur. It’s possible the Saxon conquerors were hardly likely to be interested in the exploits of a ‘foreign’ leader who was successful in holding them at bay. Maybe it is for this reason that Arthur is not mentioned in early English chronicles while his name occurs in Welsh ones. The renewed strife and unrest lasted for some 400 years until the Saxon king Athelstan became the first king of a unified England. Athelstan (c. AD 893/894—27 October 939), called the Glorious, was the first king of all England, and Alfred the Great’s grandson. He reigned between AD 925 and 939. A distinguished and courageous soldier, he pushed the boundaries of the kingdom to the furthest extent they had yet reached.

PROBLEMS WITH HISTORICAL REFERENCES

History is an ever-changing subject where what is thought to be fact today can be considered fiction tomorrow! In archaeology, as well, opinions and interpretations change. Archaeology deals with sites and objects, with groups and societies in general, not individuals except in the case of graves and inscriptions. Many times objects and artifacts do not survive the ravages of time, especially in the damp, boggy climate of Britain. Then archaeology looks at written sources when physical sources are exhausted. A modern interpretation of an historical event is surely based on fact, one would assume. Medieval historians did not think that way at all. They would ‘adjust’ historical fact for one reason or other so modern historians can’t rely completely on them. They would sometimes report something told as a factual account even if it did not actually happen. Or else they would place a story in a context familiar to the listeners/readers, thus causing much confusion. Names of places, people, and rivers would also change according to an era or the writer’s interpretation of events.

ARTHUR IN LITERATURE & HISTORY



King Arthur is, without doubt, the greatest legendary figure in the western world. Countless poems, books, screenplays, and material have been written about him, speculating on his birth, his exploits, his legacy, and what he has come to represent to the world. Even death cannot touch him since legend says he is not dead, but sleeping in a cave on the isle of Avalon, waiting to be awakened in time of his country's direst need. Mystery and magic surround the figure of this man who became a leader, a kingly figure, a symbol of hope, renewal, and the representative of people's needs and ambitions. Despite the lavish literary embellishments of writers from the 11th Century onwards, even in his own time Arthur's name became synonymous with heroic deeds, bravery, and victory on the field of battle. Who, we wonder, was the real Arthur, the man who lived and fought in the tumultuous period in history called the Dark Ages?

HISTORICAL REFERENCES

The monk Gildas (AD 500—570) does not mention Arthur in his work *De excidio et conquestu Britannia* ('*On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain*'). Gildas' work is of great importance to historians because, although it is not intended primarily as history, it is almost the only surviving source written by a near-contemporary of British events of the time. Unfortunately, Gildas was not an unbiased historian. He mourns the loss of the Roman way of life and reprimands the British leaders (Constantine, Aurelius Caninus, Vortepor, Cuneglasus, and Maglocunus) who had usurped imperial power and (in his opinion) corrupted Christian values. He praises Ambrosius Aurelianus and also mentions the Siege of Mount Badon, though not the name of the victor. Nor does the Venerable Bede (672/673—26 May 735) in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* mention Arthur by name. Bede was a monk at the Northumbrian monastery of Saint Peter at Monkwearmouth, today part of Sunderland, England. Bede's work, translated as *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, is also an important record of the time and gained him the title 'The Father of English History.' It has been surmised that Arthur was not mentioned by name in these works because he was not a king. He was a military chief, a war lord, a *dux bellorum*.

The first early reference to Arthur appears in a Dark Age battle saga called *Canu Llywach hen* ('*Song of Llywach the Old*'). Written around AD 700, it is now in Oxford's Bodleian Library. It refers to the Dark Age kings of Powys as 'Arthur's heirs.' As the historical Arthur was one of the native Britons, it was in Wales that the stories of his exploits survived and in the Welsh language

that they were preserved. The Britons had a tradition of composing poems about their battles and many survive from the Dark Ages which are collectively known as ‘war-poems.’ Arthur is mentioned briefly in the early 7th Century poem *Y Gododdin* by Aneirin, the famous bard from the Royal House of the North Pennines. This work praises the efforts of the northern British armies, headed by those of Din-Eityn and Gododdin, at the battle of Catraeth around AD 600 and one warrior is described as having ‘*fed black ravens on the ramparts of the fort, although he was no Arthur.*’ It has been argued that this shows the early spread of Arthur’s fame.

The oldest extant writings on Arthur appeared in the 9th Century in *Historia Britonum* (‘*The History of the Britons*’), a compilation by the Welsh priest Nennius. According to Nennius, Arthur was one of the last native British leaders to make a successful stand against the Anglo-Saxons in the 5th and 6th Centuries AD. This was during the Dark Ages, an era of bitter feuding that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire. The country had suffered from infighting amongst the various kingdoms, following the death of a previously strong leader, identified as possibly Ambrosius Aurelianus, or Arthur’s father Uther Pendragon, the brother of Ambrosius. As a warlord, Arthur united the various tribal factions in battle against invaders. Arthur had extensive knowledge of Roman military strategies and warfare, a skill he used successfully against the Saxons. It is interesting to note that Nennius does not describe Arthur as a king, but as a military chief or war leader (*dux bellorum*), and it is to him that he attributes the British victory at *Mons Badonicus* or Mount Badon. Nennius, undoubtedly Arthur’s biggest admirer at that time, wrote: ‘*Then it was, that the magnanimous Arthur, with all the kings and military force of Britain, fought against the Saxons. And though there were many more noble than himself, yet he was twelve times chosen their commander, and was as often conqueror.*’

In the 10th Century, Arthur is mentioned in *Annales Cambriae* in connection with the battles at Mount Badon and Camlann (Camlau). The *Annales Cambriae* (‘*Annals of Wales*’) is a chronicle written in Latin, dating from around AD 957, covering 533 years in time, starting from the year AD 447. It is a collection of relatively obscure Welsh material. Used to calculate Easter dates, this document also records historical events alongside many of its yearly entries. Two of these entries mention Arthur. AD 516 refers to the Battle of Badon. AD 537 records ‘*The Strife of Camlann in which Arthur and Medraut perished.*’ Since all other characters mentioned elsewhere in these annals appear to have been real historical people, one can assume that Arthur and Medraut (his nephew Mordred) were also real.

The Mabinogion is the title given to a collection of eleven prose stories collated from mediaeval Welsh manuscripts. The tales draw on pre-Christian Celtic mythology, international folktale motifs, and early mediaeval historical traditions. The tales *Culhwch and Olwen* and *The Dream of Rhonabwy* have interested scholars because they mention older traditions of King Arthur. The question of the dates of the tales in *The Mabinogion* is important because if they were written before Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* and the romances of Chrétien de Troyes then some of the tales, especially those dealing with Arthur, would provide important

evidence for the development of the Arthurian legend. The stories of *The Mabinogion* appear in either or both of two mediaeval Welsh manuscripts, the *White Book of Rhydderch* or *Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*, written circa 1350, and the *Red Book of Hergest* or *Llyfr Coch Hergest*, written about 1382–1410, though texts or fragments of some of the tales have been preserved in earlier 13th Century and later manuscripts. Scholars agree that the tales are older than the existing manuscripts, but disagree over just how much older.

LITERARY REFERENCES

The half-mythical, half-historic nature of the original [Arthurian legends](#) developed with the retelling of the tales. With Arthur's name becoming increasingly more mythologised, it was perhaps inevitable that, with the advent of the first 'fiction' writing, Arthur would appear in an even more heroic light than before.

William, Chaplain to Bishop Eudo of Leon wrote in the preface to *Legend of St. Goeznovius* (c.1019): *'In the course of time, the usurping king Vortigern, to buttress the defence of the kingdom of Great Britain which he unrighteously held, summoned warlike men from the land of Saxony and made them his allies in the kingdom. Since they were pagans and of devilish character, lusting by their nature to shed human blood, they drew many evils upon the Britons. Presently their pride was checked for a while through the great Arthur, king of the Britons. They were largely cleared from the island and reduced to subjection. But when this same Arthur, after many victories which he won gloriously in Britain and in Gaul, was summoned at last from human activity, the way was open for the Saxons to go again into the island, and there was great oppression of the Britons, destruction of churches and persecution of saints. This persecution went on through the times of many kings, Saxons and Britons striving back and forth. In those days, many holy men gave themselves up to martyrdom; others, in conformity to the Gospel, left the greater Britain which is now the Saxon's homeland, and sailed across to the lesser Britain.'* (Brittany, France)

The 12th Century yielded two well-known mentions of Arthur. William of Malmesbury (c. 1095/96—c. 1143) was the foremost English historian of the 12th Century. He wrote in *The Deeds of the Kings of England* ('*De Gestis Regum Anglorum*'): *'This the Arthur about whom the foolish tales of the Britons rave even today; one who is clearly worthy to be told about in truthful histories rather than to be dreamed about in deceitful fables, since for a long time he sustained his ailing nation, and sharpened the unbroken minds of his people to war.'*

Henry of Huntingdon (c. 1088—c. 1154), was a 12th Century English historian who wrote *History of the English* ('*Historia Anglorum*'). *'The valiant Arthur, who was at that time the commander of the soldiers and kings of Britain, fought against [the invaders] invincibly. Twelve times he led in battle. Twelve times was he victorious in battle. The twelfth and hardest battle*

that Arthur fought against the Saxons was on Mount Badon, where 440 of his men died in the attack that day, and no Briton stayed to support him, the Lord alone strengthening him.'

Geoffrey of Monmouth (1100—c. 1155) was a cleric and one of the major figures in the development of British historiography and the popularity of tales of King Arthur. He is best known for his chronicle *Historia Regum Britanniae* ('*History of the Kings of Britain*'), written around 1136, which was very popular in its day and enjoyed a wide readership well into the 16th Century. It was translated into various other languages from its original Latin. *Historia Regum Britanniae* is now acknowledged as a literary work of national myth, alas containing little reliable history. It appears that Geoffrey never let facts stand in the way of a good story! This has since led many modern scholars to agree with William of Newburgh, who wrote around 1190 that '*it is quite clear that everything this man wrote about Arthur and his successors ... was made up, partly by himself and partly by others.*' Geoffrey claims in his dedication that the book is a translation of an '*ancient book in the British language that told in orderly fashion the deeds of all the kings of Britain,*' given to him by Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford. Modern historians have dismissed this claim. It is, however, likely that the Archdeacon may have furnished Geoffrey with some materials in the Welsh language that helped inspire his work. Geoffrey's position and acquaintance with the Archdeacon would make it doubtful as well that he would invent such a claim.

The early portion of his history retells the mythology of the Celtic peoples and the stories of their gods. Later, however, he turns to real history, borrowing from earlier works by Bede and Gildas, amongst others. Geoffrey is also best known for introducing the figure of Merlin into the Arthurian realm of literature. Geoffrey combined existing stories of Myrddin Wyllt (*Merlinus Caledonensis*), a north Brythonic prophet and madman with no connection to King Arthur, with tales of the Romano-British war leader Ambrosius Aurelianus to form the composite figure he called Merlin Ambrosius. According to folklore, the original Myrddin was a bard driven mad after witnessing the horrors of war, who fled civilization to become a wild man of the wood in the 6th Century. Geoffrey had this individual in mind when he wrote his earliest surviving work, the *Prophetiae Merlini* ('*Prophecies of Merlin*'), which he claimed were the actual words of the legendary madman.

Despite Geoffrey's many liberties with his interpretation of the historical figure of Arthur, this did not detract from his readers' appreciation of his reworking of the old tales. There might be some truth in Geoffrey's claim of an older, original source of historic information since he was the only person to mention the existence of a little-known king of Britain, until the modern discovery of Iron Age coins bearing his name. Tasciovantus was an historical king of the Catuvellauni tribe before the Roman conquest of Britain (circa 20 BC). He appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* as the legendary king Tenvantius, son of Lud.

Wace (c. 1115—c. 1183) was a Norman poet who wrote *Roman de Brut* ('*Romance of Brutus*'). It is based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and was probably begun around 1150 and finished in 1155. It was intended for a Norman audience interested in the legends and history of the new territories of the Anglo-Norman realm, covering the story of King Arthur and taking the history of Britain all the way back to the mythical Brutus of Troy. Wace was the first to mention the legend of King Arthur's Round Table and the first to ascribe the name 'Excalibur' to Arthur's sword.

Chrétien de Troyes, a French mediaeval poet introduced the characters and elements we have come to associate with the Arthurian legends, such as Camelot, the Holy Grail, and Sir Lancelot. He was born about the time Geoffrey was publishing his *History of the Kings of Britain* and was closely associated (during 1160—1172) with the Countess Marie, daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine, who later became queen to England's Henry II. From this association and a possible visit to England, Chrétien fosters a keen interest in court life and love. Borrowing from Geoffrey's initial 'history,' Chrétien transforms the original characters, and adds to the existing Celtic mythology to create a romantic, chivalrous, and completely unhistorical saga of Arthur and the exploits of his knights.

Robert de Boron developed and extended the scale and scope of the Arthurian literature. He was a French poet, originally from the village of Boron, in the present *arrondissement* of Montbéliard. He wrote in about AD 1200—1210 an account of St. Joseph of Arimathea called *Joseph d'Arimathie*. In it he suggests that the Grail is the cup or chalice of the Last Supper and that Joseph of Arimathea catches Christ's very Blood in the Grail. Robert de Boron also wrote *Merlin*, in which we read about King Arthur's early life and rise to glory, including the famous Sword in the Stone story, and other works such as *L'Estoire du Graal* or *Romance of the History of the Grail*, and *Perceval*. His writings inspired the anonymous Vulgate Cycle which further elaborated the Arthurian story.

The Vulgate Cycle: in the early 13th Century (ca. 1215–35), a group of anonymous French authors produced five immensely long prose romances, which modern scholars refer to collectively as the Vulgate Cycle. The Vulgate romances fill in important gaps left in the Arthurian saga by earlier romancers. It is certainly the work of clerics whose motive was in part to disparage earthly chivalry in contrast with the spiritual chivalry, which they idealized in the 'Quest for the Holy Grail.'

The *Black Book of Carmarthen* was written in 1250 and is the oldest manuscript written in Welsh. It contains forty poems, some dating from the 12th Century and older. The most substantial and important poem is called *Pa Gur?* ('*Where is the Porter?*'). It describes Arthur and his men asking for entry into a banquet hall. In it Arthur has to name his men and list their achievements. Three other references include mention of: a battle; one of Arthur's sons; and Arthur's final resting place. The *Book of Taliesin* (dating from 1325) contains some of the oldest and most obscure Welsh poetry. Some of the fifty-six poems date from the 12th Century, while

others appear to be older, dating from the 10th Century and earlier, particularly those attributed to the Dark Age poet Taliesin who was active towards the end of the 6th Century. Arthur is mentioned in five poems, although only one is about him. Mention of Arthur in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* and the *Book of Taliesin* in relation to ancient tales all indicate that already Arthur's name was forming part of an historic tradition at that early time. The manuscript is kept in the National Library of Wales.

The Vulgate Cycle is the main source of Sir Thomas Malory's romances, which he often refers to as 'the French book' and which William Caxton first printed under the title *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Sir Thomas Malory (c. 1405—14 March 1471) was an English writer, the author or compiler of *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Borrowing from Chrétien de Troyes and earlier writers, the book interprets existing French and English stories about Arthurian figures, with some of Malory's own original material. His interpretation transformed Arthur from an obscure Dark Ages leader to the epitome of heroic chivalry and bravery. Being written in English and printed by Caxton, Malory's work was instantly available to the masses and they loved it. The work remains highly popular even today as a classic work of literature. However, there is very little history left amongst his pages.

Despite the fact that the original Arthur of the 5th and 6th Centuries is a far cry from what his legendary figure became, what is important about these writers is that cumulatively they set a new standard in literature, a standard on which much of modern adventure, romance, and fantasy is still based.

The Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809—1892) based his retelling of the legends in his epic work *Idylls of the King* primarily on Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* and *The Mabinogion*, but with many expansions, additions, and several adaptations. *Idylls of the King*, published between 1856 and 1885, is a cycle of twelve narrative poems which retells the legend of King Arthur, his knights, his love for Guinevere, and her tragic betrayal of him, and the rise and fall of Arthur's kingdom. The whole work recounts Arthur's attempt and failure to lift up mankind and create a perfect kingdom, from his coming to power to his death at the hands of the traitor Mordred. This sparked a resurgence in popularity of material about Arthur, his heroic deeds and character (real and fictional) seeming to express a collective hope or represent a national aspiration. Recently the trend in books and movies has tended towards exploring the original and historical Arthur, perhaps hoping to discover who he really was, since he has come to represent so much to so many.

ARTHUR AND CHIVALRY



WHY IS ARTHUR IMPORTANT?

Arthur is important to us because he appears as the ideal of kingship during peace and war. He stands for all that is true and good in a leader. Writers of the Middle Ages tended towards using ancient myths and legends and placing them in a context of knighthood and chivalry. Thus, it is no easy task to arrive at a reasonably accurate chronology of Arthur's life as the chaotic 5th and 6th Centuries were the darkest period of the Early Middle Ages. Although exact dates are hard to pinpoint, a hazy outline of events emerges.

- Year c. 478/488 claimed to be Arthur's birth. Legends say he was son of Uther Pendragon and Ygerne of Cornwall. Tintagel Castle in Cornwall is thought to have been his home and birthplace.
- 512 Uther Pendragon died. Arthur became a military leader in the fight against the Saxons.
- 516/7 Battle of Mount Badon in the war against the Saxons. Arthur is victorious. A long peace ensued.
- 535(-7) Battle of Camlann (Camlau), where both Arthur and his kinsman and antagonist Mordred (Medraut) fell.

Following Arthur's death at Camlann, his fame spread all over Europe. Like religion, cultural drives—science, literature, music, the art of song, tradition, legends—most often follow the trade routes. The Arthurian stories journeyed with merchants and other travelers from country to country, from city to city, from monastery to monastery, and from one royal court to another. Arthurian tales helped to define a new way of thinking in Europe. A code of chivalry emerged, no doubt enhanced by the various interpretations and embellishments of the original story. However, this new code emphasized that one should live and conduct oneself with honor and bravery. Women were respected, adored, and not treated as mere possessions. Arthurian chivalric codes reshaped the manners and values of Western Europe. Writers immortalized Arthur and his men, even if their writings were more fiction than fact! The Norman bards, the *trouveres*, created their own versions of the story material and so too did the German *minnesinger* and the *troubadours* of Provence. A rich literature developed and has continued to grow.

The effect of these incredible tales is immeasurable but their contribution to social, cultural, and literary development was huge, especially among the nobility and royal classes. The English

kings Henry II, Edward I, Henry VI, and even James I and IV all revived the legends to some degree to inspire their courts and the nation. New Arthurian tales are still appearing. Most recent is *The Fall of Arthur*, a long, narrative poem by J.R.R. Tolkien (*Lord of the Rings*), begun in the 1930s. Tolkien recounts Arthur's expedition overseas, Guinevere's flight from Camelot, the great sea-battle on Arthur's return to Britain, and his confrontation with the traitor Mordred, among other legendary stories.

During the centuries following Arthur's death, Arthur's role changed. From a local chieftain he became a conquering hero, a champion of peace and justice, a king of kings. Often well-known characters were used to enhance traditional wisdom: a remarkable ruler of high character and achievements, or a well-known figure came to represent inspiring ideas. No matter who or what Arthur was originally, the essence of what he came to represent both to his own people and to those living centuries later will always be remembered.



TIPS FOR TEACHERS



CLASS ACTIVITIES ON CHIVALRY

You don't have to go back in time to become a Young Knight. Chivalry is really just changing the way you think and behave towards people, helping them, being kind to others less fortunate, being courteous to absolutely everyone. You and all your classmates could become Young Knights in a few days, that's how easy it is. See if you have what it takes to become a Young Knight.

Teacher instructions:

In this activity, students will be asked to fulfill the duties of a knight in regards to chivalry.

First: Explain the Code of Chivalry.

Code of Chivalry: It was a knight's duty to behave in a manner that brought them honor. This included being brave, courteous, honorable, and gallant particularly toward women, but also addressed the knight's behavior with regard to those lower in station than the knight. To exhibit contrary behavior would bring dishonor to a knight's name.

Second: Tell students that they will be asked to perform according to the Code of Chivalry for a set number of days. A period of 5 days is usually sufficient, but may be altered according to the age of students and when the assignment is given.

Third: Explain to students that they will be expected to perform their chores at home without being asked or paid, do something for someone in their family that they would not ordinarily do without offering any explanation or accepting any pay, and also try to help someone out that they do not know without offering any explanation or accepting any pay. Give students examples of what they duties they may perform, like cleaning their bedroom without being asked; offer to wash the dishes, fold clothes, clean out the car, etc. They may also offer to carry a grocery bag for a stranger, hold a door open for someone, assist a person with sitting down by holding the chair for them, etc. Be sure students understand that in order to be considered for knighthood, they must perform their duties for the duration of the assignment without telling anyone why they are helping them.

Fourth: Put the following chart on the board for students to copy and use during the assignment.

DAY	Chore	Performed For Whom	Reaction
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Fifth: Tell students that at the end of their allotted time, they are to bring their chart in and share their experiences with classmates.

Sixth: Reward students with a Knighting Ceremony. Let students pick the name they choose to be knighted with, like Sir Lance for boys and Dame Edith for girls.

These exercises were suggested by Cheryl Carpinello, a children's author and expert on all things Arthurian. To find out just what life was like for a young person in the days of Arthur, especially someone wanting to become a knight, read her wonderful MG book, *The King's Ransom (Young Knights of the Round Table)* 2012 Children's Literary Classic Silver Award for YA Fiction; 2012 USA Best Book Awards Finalist for E-Book Children's Fiction. For girls there is the absolutely superb *Guinevere: On the Eve of Legend*, 2011 Global E-book Finalist. (Both books available on Amazon)

ARTHURIAN CHARACTERS



KING VORTIGERN VORTENEU

Born c.AD 370-459 (Welsh: *Gwrtheyrn*; Latin: *Wurtigernus*; English: *Vortigern*)

Vortigern the Very Thin (or more properly Gwrtheyrn Gwrtheneu) appears to have been the son of a certain Gwidol, probably a man of some importance from the Gloucester area if his supposed ancestry is to be believed. However, the lands of Vortigern's sons indicate that, while his power-base eventually stretched across Gwent, Powys, Buellt and Gwrtheyrnion (in north-west Radnorshire), the latter area, being named after him, may show his original homeland.

According to the inscription on the famous 'Pillar of Eliseg,' Vortigern married a daughter of the Emperor Magnus Maximus named Severa and it was probably this imperial link which enabled him to take control of Britain as some kind of high-king, probably around AD 425. The unreliable Geoffrey of Monmouth first tells the story, but we have no way of knowing whether there is any truth in it. When the High-King Constantine was murdered by Pictish assassins, Vortigern urged that the late king's eldest son, Constans, be raised to the throne, despite the fact that he was a monk. Vortigern became the young boy's chief advisor, but this was not enough for him and he soon plotted Constans' death. Vortigern then seized the crown, while Constans' younger brothers, Aurelius Ambrosius (the historical Ambrosius Aurelianus) and Uther fled to Brittany (France).

However, Vortigern had not chosen a good time to take on the governance of Britain, for, as the earlier Nennius, put it, '*during his rule in Britain he was under pressure, from fear of the Picts and the Irish ... and, not least, from dread of Ambrosius.*' Ambrosius did not return from Brittany until 437 when he fought a man named Guidolin (alias Vitalinus) at the Battle of Wallop. Ambrosius was victorious and was '*given all the kingdoms of the western side of Britain*' to keep him quiet. The raids from the Picts over Hadrian's Wall and the Irish on the west coast grew in frequency throughout Vortigern's reign. By around 440, after the Roman withdrawal in 410, the organised defence of the nation had more or less completely collapsed. Vortigern, however, came up with a cunning plan to thwart the invaders. He decided to employ a Jutish and/or Anglian element of the Germanic enemy as mercenaries in particular to repel the Picts and their fellow Northern Europeans. In return, they were given land. According to Geoffrey, this was in Lincolnshire around Caer-Correi (Caistor). While employing such *foederati* was a well-used

Roman practice, it was one which was to go horribly wrong for Vortigern and gain him a reputation as the man who handed Britain to the Anglo-Saxons on a plate.

However, it may be that further foreign invasions obliged Vortigern to once more to ask for Anglo-Jutish help around 451. The exiled Jutish leaders, Hengest and Horsa, and their men arrived in Ceint (Kent) and were welcomed by the King of Britain. He agreed to clothe and house them in return for their mercenary services. Eventually, however, Vortigern was unable to uphold his side of the bargain, so the Jutes sent for reinforcements to prevent their expulsion. Plying Vortigern with drink, they persuaded him to hand over the Kingdom of Ceint (Kent) to them in return for the hand of Hengest's beautiful young daughter, Rhonwen. At the same time, her brother, Otha, was sent north to settle the region and hold back the Picts.



VORTIGERN'S STRONGHOLD AT DINAS EMRYS

Despite the initial success of Vortigern's *foederatus* employment policy, the secession of Ceint (Kent) was not a popular move, especially with its former king. In 455, Vortigern's sons, Vortimer and Cadeyrn, rebelled against him. They raised an army and fought Hengest at the disastrous Battle of Derguentid (Crayford) after which Hengest's men chased the British army back to London. Vortimer was subsequently poisoned by his step-mother. The following year, the less decisive Battle of Rithergabail (Aylesford) appears to have been a British victory, though Cadeyrn was unfortunately killed in the fighting. Eventually a peace conference was called at Amesbury Abbey (or nearby Stonehenge) in Wiltshire; but the Anglo-Jutes unexpectedly pulled knives from their shoes and massacred the whole British contingent save for Vortigern himself. The king was ransomed in return for control of Essex, Middlesex and Sussex. This event was to become known as the 'Night of the Long Knives.'

Vortigern fled to the extremities of Wales where he decided to build himself an impregnable stronghold on the southern slopes of Yr Aran, above Beddgelert (Gwynedd) called Dinas Emrys.

However, after construction began, it was found that each night the previous day's work was destroyed by unknown forces. Vortigern consulted the druids, who suggested he look for a young fatherless boy, born of the fairies, whose sacrifice would placate the gods and allow for the fortress to be finished. Vortigern's men searched throughout Britain until just such a boy was discovered; most commonly it is said in Caer-Fyrddin (Carmarthen). The boy, called Myrddin Emrys, shortened to 'Merlin,' laughed at the druids and explained that the building works collapsed because they were shaken by the battling of two fierce dragons buried beneath the mountain. The white dragon, representing the Anglo-Saxons, was defeating the red Welsh dragon, thus prophesying their eventual conquest of the majority of Britain.

With the dragons removed, the fortress was completed, but Ambrosius Aurelianus seems to have become the centre of resistance against both the Anglo-Saxons and Vortigern at this time, and he ousted Vortigern from his new home. He fled once more, but the site in which he took refuge is much disputed. The most popular traditions, however, indicate the old hill fort of Little Doward, above Ganerew in Ergyng. Vortigern's stronghold was miraculously struck by lightning and burnt to the ground, with Vortigern inside. He is sometimes said to have been buried in Nant Gwrtheyrn, also on Lleyrn. This was around AD 459.

KING AMBROSIUS AURELIANUS

Born c. AD 403 (Welsh: *Emrys*; Latin: *Ambrosius*; English: *Ambrose*)

Ambrosius Aurelianus, the second son of the Emperor Constantine, was known to the Welsh as Emrys Wledig (*the Emperor*) or Emrys Benaur (*the Golden-Headed*). Geoffrey of Monmouth tells us how he was still a young child when his teenage brother Constans' short-lived reign came to an abrupt end. With his father executed and his brother murdered, little Ambrosius, along with his brother, Uther, was bundled up and taken across the English Channel to the safety of the court of his cousin, Budic I of Brittany. Here he grew up, while the evil Vortigern reigned in Britain, but always Ambrosius planned to return and claim his rightful inheritance.

His chance arrived some years later. Ambrosius returned to Britain, landed at Totness (Devon) and it may be at this point in history that he clashed with Vitalinus (probably Vortigern or a supporter) at the Battle of Guoloph (Nether Wallop in Hampshire) as recorded by Nennius. This may have resulted in victory for Ambrosius who was, at some point in history, '*given all the kingdoms of the western side of Britain*' by Vortigern. Ambrosius was, however, unsatisfied with such a compromise and the struggle between the two continued for most of his life. Vortigern's pro-Saxon policies eventually led to his downfall though and, (probably) in the late 450s, the British people finally rallied behind Ambrosius. Vortigern was hounded into taking refuge in one of his mountain strongholds. While under siege, possibly, at Caer-Guorthigirn (Little Doward, Herefordshire), the fortress was miraculously struck by lightning. Vortigern and his entire garrison were burnt to death.

After Vortigern's death, Ambrosius was conciliatory towards his old enemy's sons and let them keep their lands in Buellt, Gwerthrynion, Gwent, and Powys. Despite this magnanimity, King Pasgen of Buellt and Gwerthrynion later rebelled against Ambrosius and twice attempted to overrun Britain with help from the Saxons and the Irish. The main Anglo-Saxon forces had retired north of the Humber and Ambrosius met Hengist (one of Vortigern's Saxon mercenaries) in battle at Maesbeli and then Conisburgh (Caer-Conan). Later he besieged Otha (Hengest's son) and Osla at York (Caer-Ebrauc). All were defeated, but Ambrosius let them settle their people in Bryneich (Bernicia).

Ambrosius is credited, by Geoffrey, with the building of a monumental stone circle, the 'Giant's Ring' (possibly Stonehenge or Avebury) on Mount Ambrius as a memorial to those massacred by the Saxons at the 'Night of the Long Knives' during King Vortigern's reign. He was buried there himself after being poisoned by a Saxon at Winchester (Caer-Guinntguic).

Ambrosius was certainly an historical figure as recorded by his near contemporary commentator, Gildas. In his *Ruin of Britain*, the monk describes how the Saxons rampaged through the country before they ‘returned home.’

‘The remnants (of the British) ... take up arms, and challenge their victors to battle under Ambrosius Aurelianus. He was a man of unassuming character, who, alone of the Roman race, chanced to survive the storm in which his parents, people undoubtedly clad in the purple, had been killed. Their offspring in our days have greatly degenerated from their ancestral nobleness. From that time the citizens were sometimes victorious, sometimes the enemy...up to the year of the Siege of Mons Badonicus.’

We know from Gildas that Ambrosius was of high birth, and had Roman ancestry; he was presumably a Romano-Briton, rather than a Roman from elsewhere in the empire, though it is impossible to be sure. It also appears that Ambrosius was a Christian—Gildas says that he won his battles ‘with God’s help.’ Ambrosius reportedly organized the survivors into an armed force and achieved the first military victory over the Saxon invaders. However, says Gildas, this victory was not decisive: *‘Sometimes the Saxons and sometimes the citizens (meaning the Romano-British inhabitants) were victorious.’*

Added to this are the comments of Nennius, who, in line with Geoffrey, recorded Ambrosius as one of the chief dreads of King Vortigern. Nennius also describes Ambrosius as a young boy without a father, called to help Vortigern out during the building of his fortress at Dinas Emrys, a role later taken on by Merlin. He ties the period down by implying that Vortigern’s reign had begun by at least AD 425, and that Ambrosius fought at Guoloph twelve years later. This is most interesting for it poses a bit of a problem. Many people take Gildas’ reference to *Mons Badonicus* to imply that it was Ambrosius, rather than the usually attributed King Arthur, who was the commander at the famous battle of Mount Badon, the decisive British victory over the Saxons around 495—500. In the year AD 495, Ambrosius would have been at least 74 years old, and it would, indeed, be difficult to imagine a man of this period living to such an age, let alone wielding a heavy sword and leading a mounted charge against the Saxon positions. So what is the solution?

There isn’t a definitive one, but some have solved the problem by postulating two men named Ambrosius; the elder, whom Vortigern dreaded, and the younger, the hero of the British resistance of the mid-to-late 5th Century and the victor of Mount Badon. This is certainly possible as there seem to have been a number of people with the same name in those days (e.g. Maximus, Constantine, etc.). Why not two Ambrosii? The more likely possibility, though, is that there was just one Ambrosius. Arthur may indeed have been the real commander of the victory at Mount Badon; or perhaps as *‘the great king among all the kings of the British nation,’* Ambrosius Aurelianus could have been the aging overall supreme commander of the

engagement, with the function of front line battle leader going to a younger man, perhaps Arthur?



IS THIS THE 'GIANT'S RING' AT STONEHENGE?

KING Uther PENDRAGON

Born c.AD 410-495 (Welsh: *Gwthyr*; Latin: *Uturius*; English: *Uther*)

Uther's story is first told by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of Kings of Britain*. As one of the two younger brothers of the murdered King Constans, he apparently fled at a young age to the royal court of his cousin, King Budic I of Brittany, and here he was raised. As a young man, Uther returned to Britain with his elder brother, Ambrosius, and together they fought for their ancestral rights, eventually defeating the usurping Vortigern and placing Ambrosius on the throne.

Throughout Ambrosius' reign, Uther was his brother's staunchest ally. He commanded the king's forces in Ireland when, with Merlin, he acquired the 'Giant's Ring' as a memorial to the dead of the 'Night of the Long Knives.' Later, it was Uther who was victorious over the rebellious King Pasgen of Buellt and Gwerthrynion at St. Davids (Mynyw).

Uther took the crown under the title of 'Uther Pendragon' after a dragon-shaped comet appeared in the sky at the time of his brother's death. Most of his reign was taken up with campaigning against Saxon and Irish invaders in the north of Britain, where he held court at Pendragon Castle in Westmorland. He was, at first, unsuccessful against the Angles of Bernicia. Osla, allied with the Jutish Octa, defeated Uther's armies at York (Caer-Ebrauc). However, he soon turned the tables at the ensuing Battle of Mount Damen. Uther later travelled even further north to help the Kings of Strathclyde pacify the Scots.

It is at this point that the most famous episode in Uther's life is related. Returning to London (Caer-Lundein), he met Ygernia (Ygraine), the beautiful wife of Gorlois, Duke of Cornwall, and fell instantly in love with her. Determined to see her again, he invited the Duke to return to the royal court, but the suspicious Gorlois refused. The two quarrelled and Gorlois and his wife fled to Cornwall. Uther invaded the Duke's lands, but impatient to be with his new love, he persuaded Merlin to use his powers to magic him into Ygernia's bed. Thus, while Gorlois was being killed at nearby St. Dennis (Dimilioc), Uther was transformed into his likeness. He walked straight into Tintagel Castle (Din-Tagell) and seduced the lovely Duchess. Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* claims that the price for this deception was that Uther's son, the future King Arthur who was conceived on that night, had to be given to Merlin to be brought up as he saw fit. Robert de Boron says Uther was responsible for the founding of the Order of the Round Table.

In old age, the sick and elderly Uther was drawn into a renewed war with the Northern Angles. When his commander, King Lot of Lothian (Gododdin) was unsuccessful, the King was carried to St. Albans (Caer-Mincip) to besiege the Anglian Princes himself. He won through, but the Germans poisoned the water supply and Uther, along with many of his men, died in the days that followed.

Despite the popular myth to the contrary, King Uther Pendragon was not created from the imagination of Geoffrey of Monmouth. He appears several times in earlier Welsh tradition, both in his own right and as the father of King Arthur. In the 10th Century poem *Pa Gur* one of Arthur's companions is given as 'Mabon ap Mydron, servant of Uthir Pen Dragon.' A poem in the *Book of Taliesin* (some of which may date back to the 6th Century) mentions Arthur and is named after Uther himself as *Marvnat Uthyr Pen. Ymiddiddan Arthur a'r Eryr* ('*The Colloquy of Arthur and the Eagle*'), a poem contemporary with Geoffrey yet showing a primitive tradition independent of him, identifies the eagle as Eliwlat mab Madawc mab Uthyr and a nephew of Arthur. Uther also appears in several early *Triads of the Island of Britain* and the personal name is known from other pre-Galfridian sources.

As an epithet, Pendragon can be interpreted as something like 'Foremost Leader,' 'Chief War Leader' or 'Chief of Warriors.' In the Cambridge version of Nennius' *History of the Britons*, there is an addition to Arthur's name of the line '*in British mab Uter, that is in Latin terrible son, because from his youth he was cruel.*' This unlikely reference to Arthur's early character has encouraged some researchers, to see *Uthr-Pen-Dragon* as a mere title (Terrible Chief War Leader) which should be applied to a king of another name.



MERLIN THE MAGICIAN

Born c.AD 400 (Welsh: *Myrddin*; Latin: *Merlinus*; English: *Merlin*)

Merlin was the illegitimate son of a monastic royal princess of Dyfed, Wales. The lady's father, King Meurig ap Maredydd ap Rhain, was probably a sub-king of the region bordering on Ceredigion. Merlin's traditional biography describes him as a *cambion*: born of a mortal woman, sired by an incubus, from which he inherits his supernatural powers and abilities. The name of Merlin's mother is given as Adhan in the oldest version of the *Prose Brut* (a mediaeval legendary and historical chronicle of England named after its first hero, Brutus, a descendent of Aeneas and the epic founder of Britain). The original story may have been invented to save his mother from the scandal which would have occurred had her liaison with one Morfyn Frych (the Freckled), a minor prince of the House of Coel, been made public knowledge.



BRYN MYRDDIN, SAID TO BE THE BIRTHPLACE OF MERLIN

Legend then tells us that after the Roman withdrawal from Britain and the usurpation of the throne from the rightful heirs, Vortigern was in flight from the Saxon attacks and went to Snowdonia, in Wales, in hopes of constructing a mountain fortress at Dinas Emrys where he might be safe. Unfortunately, the building kept collapsing and Vortigern's house wizards told him that a human sacrifice of a fatherless child would solve the problem. One small difficulty was that such children are rather hard to find. Fortunately for Vortigern's fortress, Merlin was known to have no human father and happened to be available.

Before the sacrifice could take place, Merlin used his great visionary powers and attributed the structural problem to a subterranean pool in which lived a red and a white dragon. The meaning of this, according to Merlin, was that the red dragon represented the Britons, and the white dragon, the Saxons. The dragons fought, with the white dragon having the best of it, at first, but then the red dragon drove the white one back. The meaning was clear. Merlin prophesied that Vortigern would be slain and followed on the throne by Ambrosius Aurelianus, then Uther, then a greater leader, Arthur. It would fall to him to push the Saxons back.



IN THIS 15TH CENTURY PAINTING, YOUNG MERLIN SHOWS VORTIGERN TWO DRAGONS FIGHTING

True to the prophecy, Vortigern was slain and Ambrosius took the throne. Later, Merlin appears to have inherited his grandfather's little kingdom, but abandoned his lands in favour of the more mysterious life for which he has become so well known. After AD 460, British nobles were massacred at a peace conference, as a result of Saxon trickery. Ambrosius consulted Merlin about erecting a suitable memorial to them. Merlin, along with Uther, led an expedition to Ireland to procure the stones of the *Chorea Gigantum*, the Giant's Ring. Merlin, by the use of his extraordinary powers, brought the stones back to a site, just west of Amesbury, and re-erected them around the mass grave of the British nobles. We now call this place Stonehenge.

After his death, Ambrosius was succeeded by his brother Uther, who seduced Duke Gorlois' beautiful wife Ygerna with Merlin's help. Ygerna conceived a child, Arthur. Gorlois, not knowing what was going on, went out to meet Uther in combat, but instead was slain by Uther's troops.

After Arthur's birth, Merlin became the young boy's tutor, while he grew up with his foster-father, Sir Ector (alias Cynyr Ceinfarfog (the Fair Bearded)). In the defining moment of Arthur's career, Merlin arranged for the sword-in-the-stone contest by which Arthur became king. Later, the magician met the mystic Lady of the Lake at the Fountain of Barenton (in Brittany, France)

and persuaded her to present the king with the magical sword Excalibur. In the 12th Century romances, Merlin is the creator of the Round Table, and is closely involved in aiding and directing the events of the king and kingdom of Camelot. He is pictured by Geoffrey of Monmouth, at the end of Arthur's life, accompanying the wounded Arthur to the Isle of Avalon for the healing of his wounds. Others tell how having fallen deeply in love with the Lady of the Lake, Merlin agreed to teach her all his mystical powers. She became so powerful that her magical skills outshone even Merlin's abilities. Determined not to be enslaved by him, she imprisoned the old man in a glass tower, a cave, or similarly suitable prison. Thus his absence from the Battle of Camlann was ultimately responsible for Arthur's demise.

According to Geoffrey's *Vita Merlini* (c. 1151), Merlin/Myrddin was a 6th Century prophet living in the north of Britain where his career extended beyond Arthur. Merlin travelled north, after Camlann, to the court of King Gwendoleu of Caer-Guenoleu (north of the Salway) where the locals called him Lailoken (or Llallogan). Shortly afterwards, a war broke out between Merlin's royal master and the three allies, King Riderch Hael (the Generous) of Strathclyde and Kings Peredyr and Gwrgi of Ebrauc (York). Gwendoleu was killed in the ensuing Battle of Ardderyd (Arthuret) and Merlin, sent mad with grief at the death of his nephew and four brothers, fled into the Caledonian Forest. He lived there in a mad frenzy for over a year, becoming known as Myrddin Wylt (the Wild), before Riderch, who was his brother-in-law, found him and brought him to safety in the Strathclyde Court.

There is much speculation as to the location of Merlin's prison and/or burial place. Some sites include: beneath Merlin's Mound at Marlborough College in Marlborough (Wiltshire), at Drumelzier in Tweeddale (Scotland), Bryn Myrddin (Merlin's Hill) near Carmarthen (Wales), Le Tombeau de Merlin (Merlin's Tomb) near Paimpont (Brittany) and Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island) off the Lley Peninsula (Wales).



THE WIZARD'S WELL AT ALDERLEY EDGE

TAKE THIS QUICK ARTHURIAN QUIZ



How much do you really know about King Arthur and all the legends? Take this quick quiz and see how you score. You may find some of the answers as you read this book. Answers are at the back of the book.

1. What was the name of King Arthur's wicked half-sister?

Niniane

Morgana le Fay

Vivienne

2. Who was King Arthur's wife?

Elaine

Guinevere

Isolde

3. Name King Arthur's magical sword

Joyeuse

Excalibur

Durendal

4. What was the name of King Arthur's legendary castle?

Camelot

Castle Perilous

Glastonbury

5. Which knight is not a Knight of the Round Table?

Sir Gawain

Sir Lancelot

Sir Bruce

6. What relation to Arthur was Uther Pendragon?

His uncle

His grandfather

His father

7. Sir Gawain had a very scary encounter with a strangely-coloured knight. Was this knight:

Yellow

Purple

Green

8. On which date in the year this encounter take place?

- Christmas day
- Boxing Day
- New Year's Day

9. Before King Arthur died, he surrendered his famous sword to a mysterious woman. Was she:

- The Lady of the Sea
- The Lady of the Lake
- The Lady of the River

10. Some legends say that King Arthur was born in Tintagel. In which English county is

- Tintagel?
- Cornwall
- Devon
- Somerset

Thanks to author Wendy Leighton-Porter for devising this quiz. Wendy's adventure series, *Shadows of the Past*, includes the exciting *The Shadow of Camelot* for Arthurian fans. Available on Amazon.



THE DRAGON IN CELTIC MYTHOLOGY



Stories of dragons appear all throughout history and almost every culture has their own idea about dragons. Some reasons for this could be the finding of dinosaur fossils. Dragons could be used to describe the indescribable bones of gigantic unknown creatures. In Celtic mythology, the dragon was believed to inhabit a world that was parallel to the physical world. Druids believed that the dragon's power affected the ley or energy of the land. They believed that the path the dragons took, called a 'vein,' was important to the flow of energy through the physical world. Where dragons trod, magical power flowed, and where they laired were invariably places of great sanctity and mystical harmony. Areas where a dragon passed often, where dragon paths crossed, or places a dragon stopped to rest became more powerful than the areas surrounding it. Druids hunted for these lines, and made a ley lines map for their people, instructing them to build their temples and homes along the lines in order to harvest the energies. Stonehenge is thought to be one of those places. In addition, some believe that the Celtic cross surrounded by a circle is a symbol of the crossing ley lines and how the circle of life should be centered on that power.

King Arthur himself was burdened by dreams of dragons; although it is unclear which color he saw. He saw them specifically at the time of Mordred's conception and before his death. He is eaten by dragons in his final dream and it is at his next battle that Mordred kills him. It is said that when a king sees dragons there will be much ruin come to his kingdom and himself.

There are two types of dragons in Celtic lore. There is the standard winged version with four legs that most people are familiar with and there is a sea serpent that is depicted as either a giant wingless serpent or a huge serpent with wings, but no legs. The dragon was a gatekeeper to other worlds and guardian to the secrets and treasures of the universe. They were often depicted side by side with the Celtic gods. As creatures that protect the Earth and all living things, Celtic dragons are considered the most powerful of all the Celtic symbols.

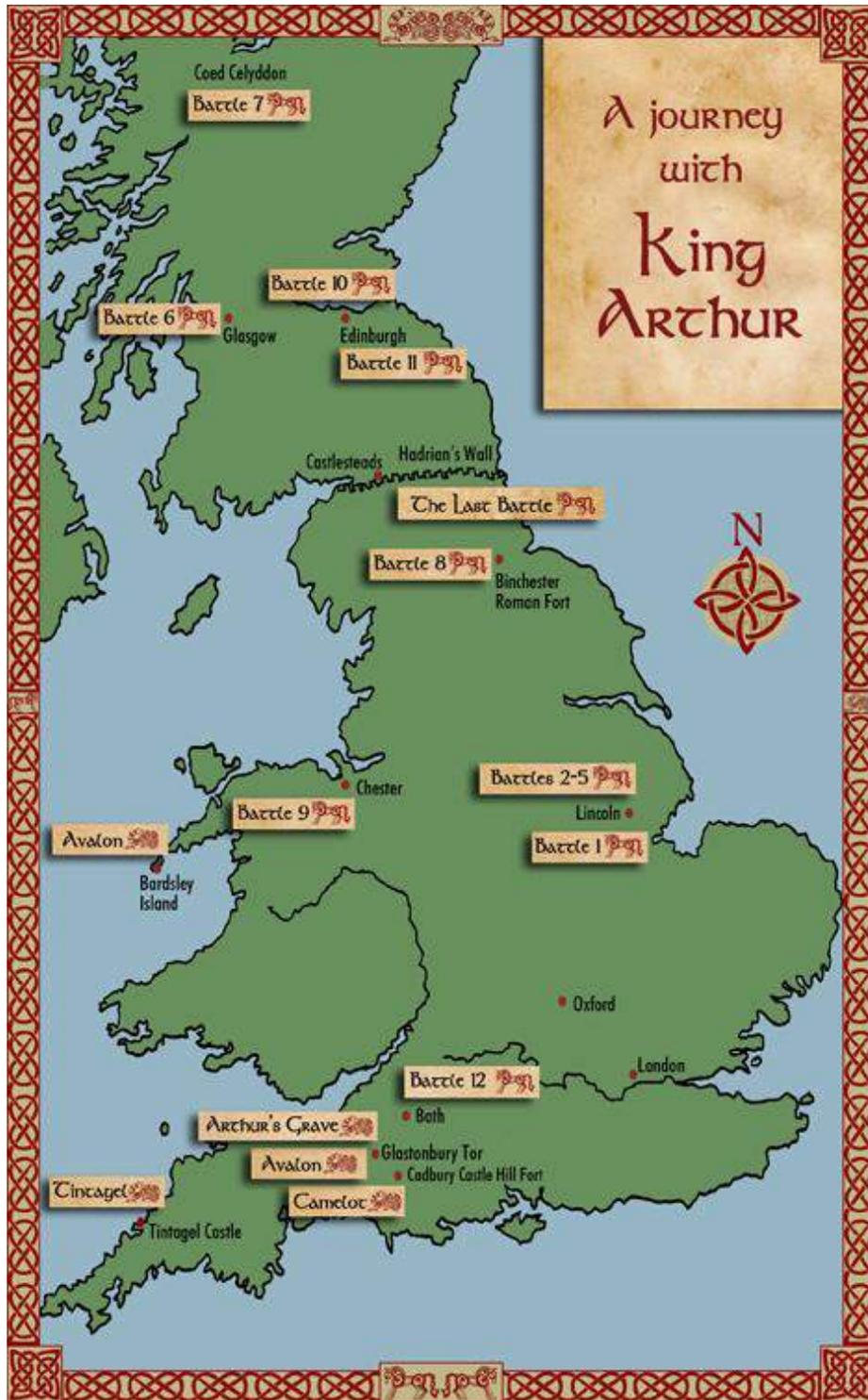
Dragons are used as a symbol of power and wisdom among leaders. Dragons are seen on many coats of arms. The Welsh flag proudly displays the Red Dragon and their motto reads: *Y Ddraig Goch Ddyry Cychwyn*, meaning 'The Red Dragon Leads the Way.' *Y Ddraig Goch*, the red dragon, was derived from the Great Red Serpent that had represented the Welsh god Dewi.

As a heraldic symbol, the dragon varies greatly, especially the ears. The wings are always that of a bat, and its tongue and tail can be barbed or smooth. King Arthur was one of the first leaders to use the red dragon. It was prominently shown on his helmet. Dragons are often depicted in Celtic

artwork, many times drawn with their tails in their mouths. This symbolizes the cycle of nature in the world and immortality. The dragon is usually twisted upon itself, with tail, ears, and body parts weaving in and out of other parts, much like a regular knot work piece.

Before the arrival of Christianity, dragons were seen as powerful creatures that were as natural to the world as the mountains. After Christianity was introduced, dragons began to be cast in a different light. They became a symbol of trouble, strife, and infertility. It was said that dragons laid waste to the land and prevent growth. Priests began to use the dragon as a symbol of evil and the Devil.





JOURNEY WITH KING ARTHUR



There are so many places in Britain associated with King Arthur that it is hard to know which ones are real and which are legendary. Follow Arthur's journey from birth to death. The places you will read about are listed on the map (previous page).

TINTAGEL CASTLE

Was This Arthur's Birthplace?

Though it is always said that King Arthur was born at Tintagel, early literary sources only ever actually say that he was conceived there. The rest is presumed or implied. But is Tintagel Castle really that old?

Tradition: Geoffrey of Monmouth first told us of King Arthur's association with Tintagel Castle in 1139 when he wrote his *History of the Kings of Britain*. Duke Gorlois of Tintagel lived at the castle. One day, he brought his young wife, Ygernna, to the court of his High-King, Uther Pendragon of Britain, in London. Uther fell deeply in love with the beautiful Ygernna and determined to have her for his own. Gorlois noted the attention paid by the king to his wife and returned to Cerniw (Cornwall). Upon being summoned back to court, Gorlois refused to return and quickly found his lands invaded by his overlord. Ygernna was hidden away in the impregnable Tintagel, while Gorlois himself defended the nearby stronghold of Dimilioc. Uther, meanwhile, persuaded his magician Merlin to turn him into the likeness of Gorlois. Using this disguise, he slipped into Tintagel Castle unhindered and seduced Ygernna. That night their son, the future King Arthur, was conceived. Gorlois was killed the next day and Uther and Ygernna quickly became husband and wife.

Archaeological Facts: Extensive excavations undertaken on Tintagel Island in the 1930s revealed that there was indeed Dark Age occupation around Tintagel Castle. Some 20+ rectangular stone buildings were uncovered along terraces on the eastern slopes of this promontory, and on the plateau around the Castle Chapel (dedicated to St. Juliot). The discovery of huge quantities of 5th and 6th Century Mediterranean pottery amongst these ruins led to their being dated to this period. There was more pottery than the total haul from all other Dark Age sites in Britain: huge Tunisian oil jars, Carthaginian dishes, Aegean amphorae, and distinctive Byzantine jars.

More recent investigations have re-dated these buildings to the mediaeval period, though the Castle Chapel appears to have been rebuilt on earlier foundations. An extensive fire on the island in 1985 gave the ideal opportunity to survey the whole area. The contours of perhaps fifty more buildings buried beneath the landscape have now been recognized, particularly across the expansive plateau. Further keyhole excavations on the eastern terraces indicate that less substantial stone buildings do exist on a lower level to the excavated structures. Other buildings may have been of turf. These are the original source of the Dark Age pottery where investigations in 1998 discovered the famous Artonou Stone. This small piece of slate is inscribed with the name 'Artognou' which some experts have linked to the name 'Arthur.' The damaged inscription reads: PATER COLI AVIFICIT / ARTOGNOV / COLI FICIT and translates as 'Artognou erected this memorial of Colus, his grandfather.' Although the stone has been dated to the 6th Century, the jury is still out on whether it links directly to Arthur.



TINTAGEL CASTLE, CORNWALL

The excavations of the 1930s were explained, at the time, as having revealed the cells and out buildings of a post-Roman monastery complex. This theory has been swept aside by modern archaeologists. The name of the place itself, Din-Tagell meaning *Fort of the Constriction*, indicates a secular residence. The high levels of expensive pottery imported to the site from the eastern Mediterranean indicate it was under the control of an important chief with access to large amounts of tradable commodities, probably Cornish tin. In fact, just such a man as Gorlois, the supposed Duke of Tintagel, or King Mark of Cerniw who is also associated with the island. One could easily have followed the other at Tintagel. Such an exposed Dark Age palace must surely have been the summer residence of the Kings of Cerniw and Dumnonia. Though their main feasting hall has not been located, it is thought to lie beneath the ruins of the mediaeval castle. Experts have suggested adjoining areas of high-status, specialist and war-band occupation, as well as a marine landing site and caretaker's residence.

CADBURY CASTLE

Arthur's Camelot or Dumnonian Capital?

Camelot, the legendary court of King Arthur, conjures up images of a place where chivalry was born and history was made. Just the word is synonymous with being a special, unique location. Where was the real Camelot, and was there even a real court of King Arthur? Some historians think it actually existed and here's why.

Cadbury Castle is an Iron Age hill fort in the parish of South Cadbury in the English county of Somerset. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (meaning it is a nationally important archaeological site or historic building) and associated with King Arthur. When considering that Arthur flourished late 5th to early 6th Century, it is entirely possible that he made one of these earthen strongholds his headquarters. During Arthur's time, many hill forts were refurbished and put into use, as they had been centuries before the Romans came. The Saxon expansion of the mid to late 400s pushed many native Britons out of their urban dwellings and it made good sense for them to redevelop the hill forts for housing as well as for protection.



SOUTH CADBURY, POSSIBLY THE SITE OF CAMELOT?

The Tradition: The stories of King Arthur at the hill fort of South Cadbury, near the villages of Queen and West Camel, are actually not particularly old. The travelling historian, John Leland, first recorded the association in 1542:

'Right at the South end of South Cadbury Church stands Camelot. This was once a noted town or castle, set on a real peak of a hill, and with marvellously strong natural defences ... Roman coins of gold, silver and copper have been turned up in large quantities during ploughing there, and also in the fields at the foot of the hill, especially on the East side. Many other antiquities have

also been found, including at Camelot, within memory, a silver horseshoe. The only information local people can offer is that they have heard that Arthur frequently came to Camelot.'

As for the name Camelot, one must look at British place names over centuries, for instance the word 'bury' referring to a fortification. Certainly this castle stands close to the River Cam with the villages of West Camel and Queen Camel in proximity. Militarily, the location makes sense as a place where the south-western Britons (perhaps from the kingdom of Dumnonia in the south-west) could have defended themselves against attacks. Refortification may have been a response to the great Saxon raid of c. 473. If Arthur was indeed conceived at Tintagel, as tradition asserts, as a prince of Dumnonia, Cadbury would have been close to his eastern frontier. The name 'Cadbury' is generally considered to be a Saxo-Brythonic hybrid meaning 'Battle-Fort.'

Local people also believed that King Arthur and his knights slept in a hidden cave beneath the hill fort. When archaeological research first began there, an old man from the village asked anxiously if the excavators had come to remove the King. In some stories, the entrance to this cave is guarded by a giant Iron Gate, which opens once every seven years on Midsummer's Day to let Arthur and his warriors ride the night. They ride from Cadbury Castle to a spring near Sutton Montis church to water their weary horses. In the Dragon Legend, according to cryptozoologist Richard Freeman, an enormous winged dragon was said to fly nightly over the Exe Valley, lighting up the sky with its flaming breath. It flew back and forth between Dolbury Hill and Cadbury Castle, guarding two hordes of treasure. A local saying goes:

*"If Cadbury Castle and Dolbury Hill delven were
All England might plough with a golden share"*

Archaeological Facts: Taking their lead from Leland's writings, in 1965 the Camelot Research Committee was set up to excavate large areas of the South Cadbury Hill fort. They soon discovered that the fort had indeed been re-fortified in post-Roman times. The ramparts were strengthened with large quantities of dressed masonry from derelict Roman buildings and mounted by raised wooden walkways. These were pierced at the south-west corner by a sturdy wooden gate-house through which passed a cobbled roadway (10 feet across). The remains of a large timber feasting hall (63 by 34 feet) with an internal partition towards the east end were discovered at the centre of the site. It was easily dated to the 5th/6th Centuries from large amounts of imported Mediterranean pottery scattered over the floor and in the postholes indicating active trading. Similar pottery was discovered in a possible kitchen just to the north. Smaller buildings in the surrounding area were of uncertain date. The whole area probably went out of use in the early 7th Century, but there was extensive evidence for the use of the fort in later ages. The most interesting was perhaps the discovery of an unfinished cruciform Saxon Church from the fort's time as one of King Aethelred's defensive Burghs.

Possible Interpretations: Only an important British chieftain could have afforded to trade in such lavish imports and build on the scale discovered at South Cadbury. Comparing the hill fort with the known Royal Deiran Hall at Yeavinger (Northumberland) indicates the builder was a king. Furthermore, the incomparable size of the Cadbury fort has led to the suggestion that a High-King such as Arthur would be the most likely resident. However, Cadbury lay within the Kingdom of Dumnonia, and there seems evidence that it was the capital of the Dumnonian Kings. Such a prestigious settlement would warrant the use of the biggest hill fort in the area. It probably took over from the nearby deserted Roman town of Caer-Pensawel-Coyt (Ilchester). This theory is highly strengthened by a possible interpretation of the fort's name. Usually translated as 'Battle-Fort,' Cadbury may really mean Cado's Fort: Cado being the name of an early 6th Century King of Dumnonia.

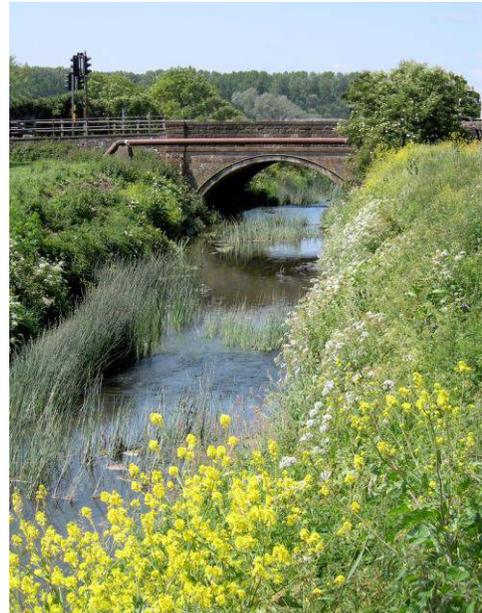
POMPARLES BRIDGE

Was Excalibur Returned to Somerset?

The Tradition: The sword's famous origins were, according to legend, from a lake. The Lady of the Lake supposedly gave Arthur the sword Excalibur after he had broken his original sword (from the stone) in battle with King Pellinore. It seems only fitting that after Arthur's death Excalibur should be returned from whence it came. Legend says Bedwyr (or Bedivere) threw the great Excalibur back into the swirling waters after King Arthur fell at the fateful Battle of Camlann. The battle supposedly took place on the nearby River Cam although historians have also identified the battle-site as the Roman fort of Camboglanna, on Hadrian's Wall. Although this can cause some confusion, it's hard to argue with legends. The mortally wounded King was, some say, taken to the Isle of Avalon, where he was eventually buried.

Then Sir Bedivere departed, and went to the sword and lightly took it up, and so he went unto the water's side; and there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and threw the sword as far into the water as he might. And there came an arm and a hand above the water and took it and clutched it, and shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished with the sword into the water. So Sir Bedivere came again to the King, and told him what he saw.—
Thomas Malory, *Le Morte D'Arthur*, c. 1460

Archaeological Facts: Pomparles Bridge, *the Pont-Perles* or 'Perilous Bridge,' just outside Glastonbury, once guarded the southern approach to this well-known Dark Age settlement. In the 6th Century, Glastonbury stood on high ground above the marshy waters of the Somerset Levels that have now been largely drained away. This boggy ground below Wearyall Hill once formed the lake that claimed to be the home of the Lady of the Lake, and Pomparles Bridge spanned its western end.



WHERE IS KING ARTHUR'S LAST RESTING PLACE?

THE RETURN OF THE KING

One recurring feature of Arthurian literature is the notion that he would one day return in the role of a messiah to save his people. A poem, in triplet form, entitled *The Stanzas of the Graves*, preserved in the *Black Book of Carmarthen* (c 1250) says this of Arthur's end: '*A grave there is for March (or 'Mark') a grave for Gwythur, a grave for Gwgawn of the Ruddy Sword; a mystery is the grave of Arthur.*' These lines suggest that after the battle of Camlann, Arthur was spirited away, as legend says, by the three queens on a barge to a mysterious otherworldly location.

The possibility of Arthur's return is first mentioned by William of Malmesbury in the early 12th Century: '*But Arthur's grave is nowhere seen, whence antiquity of fables still claims that he will return.*' In the '*Miracles of St. Mary of Laon*' ('*De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudensis*'), written by a French cleric named Herman in c. 1145, but referring to events that occurred in 1113, mention is made of the Breton (Brittany) and Cornish belief that Arthur still lived. Towards the end of the 12th Century, in the very heyday of the British king's renown as a romantic hero, the monks of St. Dunstan's at Glastonbury professed to have discovered the mortal remains of Arthur in the cemetery of their abbey church.

A number of locations were suggested from whence Arthur would actually return. The earliest-recorded suggestion was Avalon. Geoffrey of Monmouth asserted that Arthur '*was mortally wounded*' at Camlann but was then carried '*to the Isle of Avallon (insulam Auallonis) to be cured of his wounds*' with the implication that he would at some point be cured and return therefrom made explicit in Geoffrey's later *Vita Merlini*. Another tradition held that Arthur was awaiting his return beneath some mountain or hill.

One Anglo-Norman text recounts of the Welsh that '*openly they go about saying ... that in the end they will have it all, by means of Arthur, they will have it back. They will call it Britain again.*'

The mystery of Arthur's grave still remains unsolved and, according to legend, Arthur was fully healed at Avalon and he lives today, waiting for the time when his people will have great need of him. Then he will appear and restore his kingdom.

Sir Thomas Malory wrote in *Le Morte d'Arthur*: '*Yet some men say King Arthur is not dead ... and men say he shall come again ... I will not say it shall be so but many men say that there is written on his tomb this verse: here lies Arthur: once and future King.*'

The quotations above all hint that King Arthur lies in a special, almost mythical place, waiting to be roused to save Britain in time of need. But where is this place, this mysterious Isle of Avalon.

Three possible places exist: Glastonbury Abbey, Glastonbury itself, and the Island of Bardsey. Which one do you think is the most likely last resting place of Arthur, the once and future King?

GLASTONBURY ABBEY

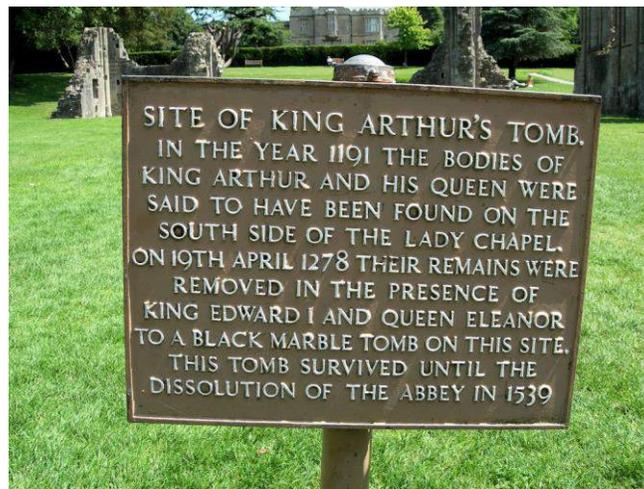
The Tradition: Early stories tell us that Arthur was taken to the Isle of Avalon to be healed of his wounds after the Battle of Camlann. Although late tradition declares that Arthur died and was buried in Avalon, earlier legends say the location of his grave is unknown. From this came the idea of his lying under a mysterious hill waiting to return and lead his people to victory. When Avalon became linked with Glastonbury in the 10th Century, Arthur was assumed to have been buried at the ancient Abbey there. This was an eminently suitable spot for the last resting-place of the High-King. It is the most holy place in Britain, for Glastonbury's *Vetusta Ecclesia* or 'Old Church' is said to have been founded by St. Joseph of Arimathea himself.



RUINS OF GLASTONBURY ABBEY

Ancient Discoveries: Unfortunately, the identification of Glastonbury with Avalon immediately follows the miraculous events of 1190. In this year, the monks of Glastonbury claimed to have discovered the bodies of both King Arthur and Queen Guinevere between two 'pyramids' in their ancient cemetery near the Lady Chapel. They were excavating the area on information passed to King Henry II by 'an ancient Welsh bard' after a disastrous fire. The quickest way to attract pilgrims and make money selling relics was by discovering a holy site or important grave. The monks needed to rebuild their monastery. This so-called discovery could have just been a fund-raising venture on the monks' part. The Norman kings, moreover, were concerned about the prospect of a Welsh rebellion, and were eager to prove that King Arthur was certainly dead and would not return to lead it. As proof of the bodies' identification, the monks produced a convenient leaden cross found above the grave, recording (according to Giraldus Cambrensis) *'Here lies buried the renowned King Arthur with Guinevere his wife, in the Isle of Avalon.'*

Archaeological Facts: Glastonbury was a religious site in pre-Christian times. The abbey was founded in the 7th Century and enlarged in the 10th, before a major fire in 1184 destroyed the monastic buildings. Reconstruction began almost immediately and the Lady Chapel, which includes the well, was consecrated in 1186. There is evidence that, in the 12th Century, the ruined nave was renovated enough for services while the great new church was being constructed. Parts of the walls of the aisle and crossing had been completed by 1189, but progress was then continuing more slowly. Just in time came the amazing discovery of the bodies. If pilgrim visits had dropped, the discovery of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere's grave in the cemetery in 1190 provided fresh impetus for visiting Glastonbury.



Any trace of the wooden *Vetusta Ecclesia* or 'Old Church' has been completely destroyed by the crypt of the Lady Chapel, but excavations did find the post holes of four early buildings in the ancient cemetery area to the south. Also revealed were extensive details of King Ine's Abbey Church built to the east in 720, extensions of the 760s and St. Dunstan's partial rebuilding in 1000, as well as the medieval Abbey. At the indicated original site of Arthur's grave, excavation revealed two mausolea. Between these was a large irregular hole dated to the 1180s from its infilling with waste from the building of the Lady Chapel.

Possible Interpretations: Though there is no dating evidence for the *Vetusta Ecclesia*, it probably existed in the early Dark Ages. An abbey of some sort is indicated at this period by a surviving land grant from an early King of Dumnonia (possibly Bledric) dated to 601. These early postholes might be the remains of the cells of Dark Age monks, though this is hotly disputed. The two mausolea near the site of Arthur's supposed burial were probably the graves of revered saints or founders, marked by tapering stone crosses, the so-called 'pyramids' of early writings. Adjoining burials would have been reserved for highly important persons, if not kings. The large hole was, presumably, all that remained of the monks' earlier excavations. Arthur's memorial cross disappeared in the 18th Century, but a 1607 engraving still exists. Unfortunately this does not show any mention of Guinevere, though this could have been engraved on the reverse. The

lettering is 10th Century style and suggests the cross was placed in the grave at this date when St. Dunstan had the ground level of the cemetery raised and any standing memorials removed. Similarly dated leaden crosses have been discovered associated with burials excavated at nearby Wells Cathedral.

GLASTONBURY AREA

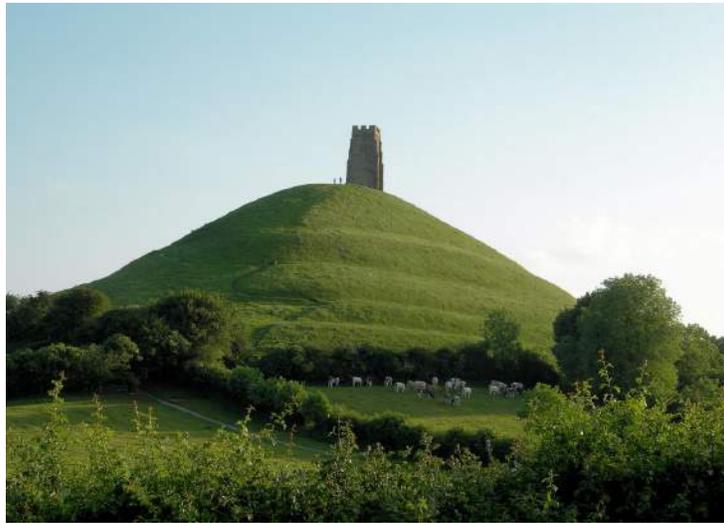
Glastonbury, in addition to many other places, like Caerleon and Tintagel, has been linked to King Arthur. This link, though, is in death rather than life. The connection of the Isle of Apples or Avalloc, to Avalon was thought to have been first made in about the 12th Century and then reported by William of Malmesbury the interpolator, in his *De antiquitate Glatoniensis ecclesie* and Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia regum Britanniae*. Why is Glastonbury identified as the ancient and mysterious Isle of Avalon where King Arthur was taken to be healed of his fatal battle wounds? Surely, Glastonbury lies in the middle of Somerset, miles from the sea. How could it ever have been considered an island?

The Tradition: Glastonbury is built on high ground surrounded on all sides by the Somerset Levels, some of the flattest land in the country. Today it is a rich agricultural area due to massive drainage over the centuries. In the Dark Ages, however, the Levels were marshland and Glastonbury stood proud as an island towering above them. Hence, its ancient British name was *Ynys Witrin*, which may translate as ‘Island of Glass,’ though this is disputed. ‘Island of St. Gwytherin’ is a more plausible explanation. He may have lived in the Dark Age buildings excavated on the Tor. Glastonbury was cut off from the mainland by a defensive bank and ditch known today as ‘Ponter’s Ball,’ while Pomparles (Pont-Perles) or the ‘Perilous Bridge,’ kept communications open with land to the south. Some say, it was at the latter location that Bedwyr returned Excalibur to the swirling waters after the Battle of Camlann.

An island then, certainly, but why Avalon? Avalon was the Otherworld home of one of the Celtic Otherworld Gods, Afallach. Both names relate to the Apples that grew in this mystical land of the dead and show Avalon’s possible relationship to other legendary realms such as the Garden of the Hesperides from Greek mythology. Obviously, this is where a Celtic king, such as Arthur, would go when near to death, but there is still no hint of identification with Glastonbury. The *Isle of Glass* interpretation of the place-name could relate to *Caer-Wydyr* or ‘Fort of Glass,’ a third name for part of the Celtic Otherworld; but the real confirmation comes when you hear an old legend about Glastonbury Tor.

The Tor is said to be the entrance to Annwfn, the Celtic Otherworld, and the Palace of Gwyn ap Nudd, the primary Otherworld god (and Afallach’s brother), stands within it. Certainly it once had an otherworldly aura and was held to be an abode of strange beings—as indeed it still is, by some. The 7th Century hermit, St. Collen, was often told that Gwyn lived there, but the saint would have none of it until, one day, he was invited to visit by one of the god’s fairy-folk

followers. He entered the Tor and the Fairy Palace, and sat through a fairy banquet but refused to eat anything. He then flung holy water all around him and all his surroundings disappeared! It was doubtless because the monks felt the Tor to be uncanny that they built a small church on top, and dedicated it to St Michael the Archangel, conqueror of the powers of hell. The powers of hell were perhaps not quite conquered, because it fell down in an earthquake. The present tower is the last fragment of another church of St Michael, built to replace it. Local legend speaks of a hidden chamber under the tower. It is said that people who find their way into it go mad. The idea may be a last echo of ancient Celtic belief about the entrance to Annwfn.



GLASTONBURY TOR & TOWER OF ST. MICHAEL

Archaeological Facts: The Tor (hill) that dominates the countryside around Glastonbury is a strange formation, with its whaleback shape and its ruined tower on top. It can be seen a long way off. The Tor's stepped or raised appearance, though usually ascribed to agricultural work, has prompted theories about its use in pre-Christian ritual. If the terraces around the Tor's sides were made for any ritual purpose, they must date from an earlier period than St. Collen because they are very worn and weather-beaten. However, attempts have been made to reconstruct a pattern in the shape of a spiral path winding in and out and in again, circling the hill several times, and ending near the top. The strength of the argument is that the same septenary maze-spiral occurs in other places—though not carved in hillsides—and was clearly strong magic thousands of years ago.

BARDSEY ISLAND

The Tradition: Legends claim that after the Battle of Camlann the wounded Arthur was laid in a barge and sailed to the Isle of Avalon (*Avalonia* means *Apples* in ancient British) for his wounds to be healed. In most of these accounts, though the island is described in detail, its exact location

is rarely pinpointed. Geoffrey of Monmouth, famous for his expansion of the Arthurian legends has this to say about Avalon:

'Arthur himself, our renowned King, was mortally wounded and was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to.'— Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, page 261

'The Island of Apples gets its name The Fortunate Island from the fact that it produces all manner of plants spontaneously ... and apple trees spring up from the short grass in its woods. All plants, not merely grass alone, grow spontaneously; and men live a hundred years or more.'—Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Vita Merlini*, lines 908-914

In trying to work out the whereabouts of Avalon, a particular location springs to mind. This is Ynys Enlli, also known as Bardsey Island off the very tip of the Lleyn Peninsula in Gwynedd. Gwynedd is a county in north-west Wales, named after the old Kingdom of Gwynedd. Gwynedd was an independent kingdom from the end of the Roman period until the 13th Century when it was conquered and subjugated by England.



BARDSEY ISLAND – IS THIS AVALON?

Several old stories claim that Ynys Enlli was Merlin the Magician's last resting place. Here he sleeps in a magical glass castle, surrounded by the Thirteen Treasures of Britain, and is constantly attended by nine bardic companions.

Archaeological Facts: Ynys Enlli is an ancient Holy Island whose religious associations pre-date the Christian era as indicated by the name given to it by raiding Vikings, Bardsey—the 'Bards' Island.' As with so many pagan centers, the Christians took the site over and St. Cadfan and his companions founded a monastery there in AD 546. It became a sort of Iona of Wales, a holy burial place for royalty and holy men alike. Some 20,000 saints are said to lie beneath its soil: an assertion which led to the Pope proclaiming three pilgrimages to Ynys Enlli to be equal to one to

Rome. The place has always been considered something of a health spot. Giraldus Cambrensis (a mediaeval clergyman and chronicler of his times) declared of the island that ‘no one dies except from old age.’

Ynys Enlli has been associated with the Isle of Avalon where King Arthur was taken to be healed of his wounds after the Battle of Camlann. For that to be true, the battle would have taken place at nearby Porth Cadlan on the mainland. Merlin’s ‘Castle of Glass’ on Ynys Enlli would appear to be the ‘Chamber of Glass’ where Queen Morgan Le Fay lived and worked with her nine sisters (Merlin’s companions) to heal King Arthur on the Isle of Avalon. Avalon, meaning ‘Place of Apples,’ was a feature of the Celtic Otherworld, usually called Annwfn, also called Caer Wydyr, the ‘Fort of Glass.’ It’s now thought that this could have been a sort of early greenhouse, attached to St. Cadfan’s monastery, where apples could grow, away from Ynys Enlli’s treacherous south-west winds and where sick patients could recuperate in solarium-like conditions. Perhaps this was the origin of the famous Bardsey Apple Tree which has recently been identified as a unique breed. Today, its apples are the rarest in the world.

What better place for King Arthur to eventually be buried than the *Insula Sanctorum*. A little-known 14th Century manuscript known as *The Death of Arthur*, apparently written to replace Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of the Great King’s demise, does actually state that Arthur ‘gave orders that he should be carried to Gwynedd, for he intended to stay in the Isle of Avalon.’

Hic jacet sepultus inclitus rex Arthurus in insula Avalonia

‘Here lies interred the famous King Arthur on the Isle of Avalon’

You decide which location could possibly be the isle of Avalon...

WHO SUCCEEDED ARTHUR?



When I began researching King Arthur and the Dark Ages, I had a pretty hazy view of Arthur based on popular fiction and movies. I was astounded to find so much material, some more fiction than fact, on this enigmatic figure. As the facts around Arthur solidified and merged with real history, I then began wondering who came after Arthur. We know he died at the Battle of Camlann, but history and Britain did not disappear into a black hole after that. Even though Arthur was no more, someone else must have continued in his role of leader. Someone did.

There has been much speculation as to who took Arthur's place after the battle of Camlann. Geoffrey of Monmouth (circa 1100-1155) says: *'He handed the crown of Britain over to his cousin Constantine, the son of Cadoc Duke of Cornwall.'*



Modern historians are not convinced of Geoffrey's reliability as an historian. Sadly Geoffrey did not let the facts stand in the way of a good story. He could almost be called one of the earliest novelists. William of Newburgh, who wrote around 1190, said that *"it is quite clear that everything this man wrote about Arthur and his successors, or indeed about his predecessors from Vortigern onwards, was made up, partly by himself and partly by others."* Ouch! Harsh

words indeed! Given Geoffrey's tendency to elaborate on the Arthurian legends, one might wonder if this anecdote of handing over the crown to Constantine was another literary invention.

Cador (*Latin*: Cadorius) was a legendary Duke of Cornwall, known chiefly through Geoffrey of Monmouth's pseudo-historical *History of the Kings of Britain*, but he is mentioned in a manuscript called *Vita Sanctus Carantoci* written circa 1100 (*The Life of St Carantoc*). Cador is said to be King Arthur's relative (a cousin?), though the details of their kinship is usually left unspecified. Cador was the historical son of a Dumnonian king named Gerren Llyngesoc, and succeeded him as monarch. Traditionally Cador was a good friend of Arthur; they even ruled together says the *Vita Sanctus*. According to literary tradition, the two fought together many times against the Saxons and other enemies. At the famous Siege of Mount Badon, Cador commanded the British contingent that chased the invaders back to their boats at Thanet.

Cador appears in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, a medieval romance. In it, Cador hands Arthur's sword Caledfwlch (Excalibur) to the king, and when the story's protagonist Rhonabwy asks who he is, his guide Iddawg replies that he is '*Cadwr Earl of Cornwall, the man whose task it is to arm the king on the day of battle and conflict.*' Cador probably died at the beginning of the 6th century. Traditionally this was at the Battle of Camlann (AD 537), after which he was buried in the Condolden (or Cadon) Barrow near Camelford in Cerniw, Wales.

Constantine III (c.AD 520—576), the son of Cador, was a legendary king of the Britons, as recounted by Geoffrey of Monmouth. Constantine fought in the Battle of Camlann and was apparently one of the few survivors. Arthur, about to be taken to Avalon, passed the crown to him. Constantine continued to have trouble from the Saxons and from the two sons of Mordred, who were Melehan and Melou. He eventually subdued his enemies, however, and chased Mordred's sons into churches where he murdered them. Constantine reigned only four years before being struck down, apparently by God's vengeance. He was buried at Stonehenge beside the body of Uther Pendragon.

Constantine's brother ought to have reigned next, but Constantine's nephew Aurelius Conan attacked him, imprisoned him, and slew his two sons. Though mostly forgotten in later continental romances, the British retained some knowledge of Constantine. He appears, for example, in the *Alliterative Morte Arthure* and Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* as Arthur's cousin and successor.

Facts are unclear after that, and for me this indicates that no one had the leadership and charisma of Arthur to unite people, to repel the enemy, and to create the kingdom that perhaps Arthur envisaged.

WARFARE IN THE DARK AGES



Most of us probably picture Arthur riding out from a huge, imposing stone castle ahead of his knights in shining armour. The truth is far from this movie-inspired image. Instead, his castle would have been a hill fort. This is an elevated site with one or more ramparts made of earth, stone, and/or wood, with an external ditch. Hill forts in Britain are known from the Bronze Age. In Britain, the Bronze Age was from around 2100 to 750 BC, but the great period of hill fort construction was during the [Iron Age](#), between 200 BC and the Roman conquest of Britain in AD 43. The British Iron Age lasted until the Roman Conquest and until the 5th Century in non-Romanized parts (Wales, Scotland, and Ireland). The Romans fortified many Celtic Iron Age hill forts for their own use by building wooden palisades and gateways. They occupied some forts, but others were destroyed and abandoned when the Romans withdrew from Britain. These strongholds provided post-Roman Britons with a network of defenses in the absence of Roman military power. Post-Roman buildings were wooden and with thatched roofs, although stone-built buildings are more common in Wales and Scotland. The centres of at least the highland kings and their chieftains were fortified strongholds. These would have formed the foci for campaigning. Here is an example of an Iron Age hill fort at Wareham.



Contrary to popular belief, wild woodland did not cover most of Britain in this period. It is thought that primeval forest had long been cleared by this time, especially in the Roman period.

Woodland was a managed resource, and though much more common then than now, should not be thought of as unbroken, impenetrable tracts of forest. Rivers and streams were also common features on the post-Roman British battlefield. The ‘Twelve Battles of Arthur’ include several, which seem to have been sieges of, or battles by, such hill-forts. The aim of serious warfare would be annihilate such strongholds, capture, and kill the enemy king or chief. Another way of bringing an enemy to battle would be to position one’s army by such a well-known centre, effectively challenging one’s opponents to come and give battle. Trapping or surprising an enemy which was besieging a fort would be another strategy to aim at (dawn attacks are also mentioned in the poetry and in 7th Century Anglo-Saxon sources).

ARMIES & TACTICS

Every king or ruler had his war-band or personal retinue who would fight with him, sometimes to the death. One can see how easily this rather romantic concept of a band of loyal warriors was adopted by 12th Century writers to become a band of knights in shining armour who embark upon quests to prove their worth and adherence to a code of chivalry. Forget any idea of thousands of horsemen streaming across a battlefield, armour glinting in the sunlight, pennants flying—a ferocious sight indeed. In Arthur’s time a war-band of 300 men would have been considered impressive.

From the early poetry of Taliesin (c. AD 534—c. 599) who was an early British poet of the post-Roman period and Aneirin, (a Dark Ages Brythonic poet) it would seem that British warriors often fought mounted. The same literature suggests that their accompanying infantry (foot soldiers) fought in something that we might call a ‘shield-wall.’ This military tactic was common in many cultures in the Pre-Early Modern warfare age. There were many slight variations of this tactic, but in general, a shield wall was a ‘wall of shields’ formed by soldiers standing in formation shoulder to shoulder, holding their shields so that they abut or overlap to create an impenetrable wall. Each man benefits from the protection of his neighbour’s shield, usually the man to his right, as well as his own. It was important in the heaving, pushing, and fighting to maintain the shield wall and slowly drive forward. If the shield wall collapsed in the centre, or the line became overstretched or outflanked by the enemy then the real slaughter began and the battle would be over very quickly. The drawback of the shield wall tactic was that once the wall was breached, it could prove difficult or impossible to re-establish a defensive line, and panic might well set in among the defenders. Untrained troops gained morale from being shoulder-to-shoulder with their comrades, but typically fled once this was compromised. Cavalry were limited in this kind of warfare until the shield wall was broken and they could rampage in and destroy the fleeing enemy.

The Saxon style of combat was something that had little real discipline. The Saxons would usually line up against an enemy, build their courage, and then charge like madmen. There were

few troops, even trained troops that could withstand this kind of maniac charge. They were excellent warriors, with excellent war leaders, but did not have the discipline of trained troops.

Ambrosius Aurelianus' victories most likely occurred because of the Roman training of his troops; they would form a solid wall of shields, each shield locked to the next one by special grips. Each soldier carried a short spear, which was thrown just before the two sides met in combat, and a short thrusting sword. It was the discipline of these troops which overcame the Saxons; if one man fell, another took his place in the line of battle, thus maintaining the shield wall. However, with the Saxons pushing harder against borders and in greater numbers, this was no longer effective. The Saxons were everywhere, and foot soldiers simply did not have the mobility to go where they had to go and strike hard.

Arthur's innovation, probably, was mounted cavalry. It is clear from this war poetry that British warriors could fight mounted. No Saxon line could withstand a charge by lightly armoured cavalry, and the Saxons would have had no experience with this. The warriors would charge the line, break it up into segments, and either finish off the enemy on horseback, or get off the horses and fight on the ground. The horse gave Arthur the mobility to be where the Saxons were, wherever they were. It was a true innovation in warfare at the time.

The British method of fighting was varied: throwing javelins at the enemy before closing for hand-to-hand fighting using fast and furious tactics. There was no rigid division between 'cavalry' and 'infantry'; the specialist post-Roman warrior was a master of several forms of fighting. He was at home on horse and on foot; individually and in formed bodies; at a distance and hand-to-hand. This was also before the introduction of the stirrup which is important in striking downward blows, and anchoring a horseman more securely. (Dark Ages horsemen would have used a simple toe loop or anchored their feet under the girth of the saddle.) In this period, dismounted enemy warriors who got in amongst riders might more easily tip them from the saddle. The cavalry commander would then be concerned with keeping his troops out of the range of a sudden rush by foot-warriors, or being pressed up against an obstacle. Instead he would try to wear down an enemy by skirmishing until they were demoralized or disorganized. Close combat would ideally be brought about by a charge, when the extra impact of the horse and rider could be more frightening to the other side's foot soldiers. On the other hand, the infantry commander would want to press forward against mounted skirmishers until they were driven off, pushed up against an obstacle, close enough to be hit by volleys of javelins or other missiles, or sufficiently near for a short rush to be able to get his spearmen in amongst the horsemen.

ARMOUR & WEAPONS

The armour and weapons of the 5th Century Britons would have been modelled on those used by the Romans; in fact some troops may have used actual old Roman equipment, given the length of

time Britain was a Roman colony. Traditionally, it is thought that the weaponry and armour of post-Roman 'British' warriors is something of an enigma. Because of the lack of weapon burials in the highlands, very little weaponry is known from these regions. The Celts had stopped manufacturing their distinctively crafted swords because under the Roman occupation (AD 55—410), only Roman soldiers were allowed to own swords. Given the Romanized nature of 5th Century Britain, and the fact that the Roman technology and methods of warfare were preserved by the Britons long after the Roman exodus in AD 410, it is more likely their weapons and armour would have retained a strong Roman influence. Military leaders of this era would have used the *spatha*, a cavalry sword originally designed by the Romans. It would have been around two feet long with a stunted cross guard.



A 5TH CENTURY SPATHA

As usual, the question of armour is problematic. The poetry of the early Welsh bards Taliesin and Aneirin mentions the *lluric*. Whether this means metallic armour or not has been the subject of debate. The word comes from the Latin *lorica* literally meaning 'body armour' and may refer to a number of types of Roman armour. In the *Y Gododdin* (Aneirin's great poem about the British defeat at Catraeth) it is fairly clear that chain mail is meant. However, most foot soldiers would have had very basic (hardened) leather armour, their only protection against weapons designed to brutally hack a man to pieces. Most warriors would have been armed with a circular shield and a spear. The small amounts of available armour, helmets, sword, and chain mail at that time would have been reserved for the high-born or professional warrior class.



SWORD BLADE DETAIL

Shields were often quite small 'targets' with bosses (raised rounded sections) aimed at catching and deflecting blows, used as a weapon as well as defence. Shields also served to smash the enemy to the ground or clear the way for arrows and spears.

Armaments included a large number of missile weapons, including throwing spears and javelins, and throwing axes are known from the south. The poetry of Taliesin seems to refer to 'shield wall'-like formations of spearmen.

The Draco: The Dacian Draco [dra'ko] was the standard and ensign of troops of the ancient Eastern European Dacian people. *Draco* (Latin) and *Drakon* (Greek) mean 'serpent' or 'dragon.' The root of these words means 'to watch' or 'to guard with a sharp eye.' It has the form of a dragon with open wolf-like jaws containing several metal tongues. The hollow dragon's head was mounted on a pole with a fabric tube affixed at the rear. In use, the *draco* was held up into the wind, or above the head of a horseman, where it filled with air and gave the impression it was alive while making a shrill sound as the wind passed through its strips of material. The Draco was generally introduced in the 4th century as a Roman standard. Draco probably continued in use in Sub-Roman and Anglo-Saxon Britain. King Arthur and his knights may have their origins in the Sarmatian heavy cavalryman stationed in Britain, the surname 'Pendragon' borne by Arthur and his father Uther may also refer to the Draco standard.



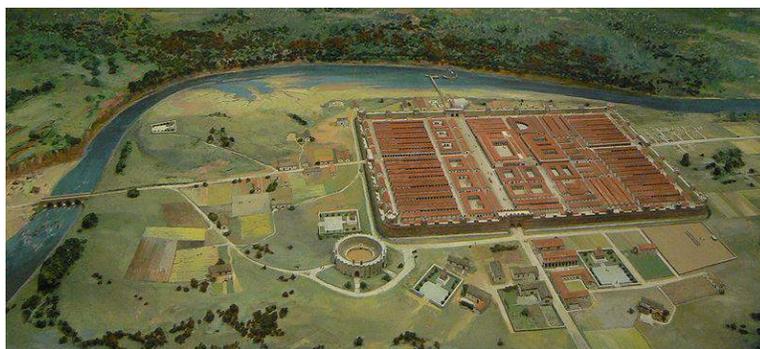
ARTHUR'S BATTLES



The 9th Century Welsh historian, Nennius, records twelve great victories in battle during Arthur's time as *Dux Bellorum* (leader of battles). He says: '*Arthur fought ... together with the Kings of the British; but he was Dux Bellorum.*' This would seem to confirm the popular view today that Arthur was a professional soldier: a brilliant military leader heading an alliance of British Kings to engage in warfare against all coming enemies. Some historians have argued against Nennius' testimony, saying that this is too great a number for one man's lifetime, and their locations may well have been too widespread for a single leader to fight in each. Some historians believe Arthur headed up a war band of cavalymen, traveling around the country and championing the British cause, hence his widespread popularity. Given the tendency of early writers to adapt the names of places, battles, or events to suit their own purposes, or even to attribute one battle or event to another leader, actually pinning down Arthur's battle sites is difficult. You can follow Arthur's battles on the map Journey with Arthur.

- ❖ '*The first battle was at the mouth of the river called Glein*': This has been tentatively identified as one of the two Rivers Glen in Britain today—one in Lincolnshire and one in Northumberland. Unfortunately, *Glen* stems from the Celtic for 'pure' so there were probably many rivers thus named in 6th Century Britain.
- ❖ '*The second, the third, the fourth and the fifth were on another river, called the Dubglas, which is in the region of Linnuis*': The River *Dubglas* is modern Douglas, meaning 'black water.' If the Saxons translated this directly, it might be any one of the many Rivers Blackwater around the country today. So, we must first identify *Linnuis*. The better-known Roman *Lindum* is now the city of Lincoln. The surrounding area would be *Linnuis*: it is still called Lindsey today. Unfortunately, there is no longer a River Blackwater or the like here, but one of the waterways flowing off the muddy peat moors could easily have been originally described as such. Geoffrey of Monmouth (AD 1100—c. 1155) indicates this as the correct identification. His chronicle relates how immediately Arthur came to the throne, he swore to rid Britain of the Saxon menace and so set out to attack the Anglian stronghold at York. Hearing of this, the Deiran leader, Colgrin, assembled an alliance of Saxons, Scots, and Picts, and marched south to meet him. They clashed on the River Douglas. Geoffrey also describes an ensuing Battle of Lincoln, probably one of the successive battles on the same river, thus identifying it as the Witham.

- ❖ *'The sixth battle was on the river called Bassas'*: Cambuslang in the southern suburbs of Glasgow, Scotland, already has Arthurian associations as the burial place of the great king's Northern British enemy, Caw. Perhaps he was killed in the battle.
- ❖ *'The seventh battle was in the Caledonian Forest, that is, the Battle of Celidon Coit'*: The seventh battle site can almost certainly be identified as the Caledonian Forest in modern Scotland: *Coed Celyddon*. Welsh tradition indicates the area of the Scottish border.
- ❖ *'The eighth battle was in Guinnion fort, and in it Arthur carried the image of the holy Mary, the everlasting Virgin, on his shield, and the heathen were put to flight on that day, and there was great slaughter upon them ...'*: *Guinnion* is another site that is difficult to identify. The name is very similar to the Roman fort of *Vinovium* at Binchester, Durham. Binchester Roman Fort (called *Vinovia* or *Vinovium* by the Romans) is situated just over one mile (1.6 km) to the north of the town of Bishop Auckland on the banks of the River Wear in County Durham, England.
- ❖ *'The ninth battle was in the City of the Legion'*: The *Urbe Legionis* or 'City of the Legions' causes problems because there were two cities so called: Caerleon and Chester, at either end of the Welsh border. Chester appears to be the likeliest candidate. It was actually recorded in the *Annales Cambriae* as *Urbs Legionis* and was the site of a well-attested Battle of Chester in Dark Age times. In 613, King Æthelfrith of Bernicia invaded the Welsh Kingdoms in order to stop King Iago of Gwynedd restoring Æthelfrith's old enemy, Edwin, to the Deiran throne. The armies of Gwynedd, Powys, Pengwern, and Dumnonia rose to repel him, but were bitterly defeated at the Battle of Chester. Kings Iago of Gwynedd and Selyf Sarffgadau of Powys were killed. This brave British stand against the Northern Saxons was probably transported back a hundred years to the time of Arthur.



REPLICA OF THE ROMAN FORT AT CHESTER, DEVA MINERVA

- ❖ *'The tenth battle was on the bank of the river called Tribruit'*: Tribruit is more properly *Tryfrwyd*. The battle is mentioned in an 11th Century Welsh poem from the Black Book of Carmarthen, *Pa Gur*. Cai Hir (the Tall), Arthur's foster-brother of traditional legend, apparently fought there against a foe named Garlwyd. Presumably, Arthur, as Cai's

patron in the poem, was the British commander at the battle. *Manawyrd* is conceivably an eponym for the Picts of Manaw, an area between Edinburgh and Stirling in Scotland. Though no particular river can be identified with the name *Tribruit*, the general location suggests the Firth of Forth, an estuary.

- ❖ *'The eleventh battle was on the hill called Agned'*: Geoffrey of Monmouth identifies *Monte Agned* as Edinburgh and the rock of Edinburgh Castle was certainly occupied at this time. It was a strategic point of some importance at the center of the Kingdom of Gododdin. Perhaps the battle was connected with King Lot of Gododdin being one of the eleven kings who rebelled against Arthur at the beginning of his reign. Edinburgh, alias *Din-Eityn*, specifically relates to the settlement on top of the rock, of course. Geoffrey calls this the Castle of Maidens or the Dolorous Castle. There was apparently a 7th Century Siege of *Din-Eityn*. Could this have been the real Battle of Mount Agned pushed back to Arthur's reign?



ARTHUR'S SEAT, NEAR EDINBURGH

- ❖ *'The twelfth battle was on Badon Hill and in it nine hundred and sixty men fell in one day, from a single charge of Arthur's, and no-one lay them low save he alone.'* It was at the Battle of Mount Badon that tradition says the Saxon advance into Britain was finally halted. It was Arthur's greatest victory and, not surprisingly, there are many claimants for its location. Forts are preferred since Gildas, in his *De Excidio Britanniae*, more properly called the battle a 'siege.' Welsh tradition backed up by Geoffrey of Monmouth is, however, almost certainly correct in identifying the battle site with Bath, *Caer Baddon*, or, at least somewhere in its vicinity.

ARTHUR'S FINAL BATTLE

Nennius does not mention Arthur's last battle, where he was fatally wounded. We learn about it from the *Annales Cambriae* as: '*The Strife of Camlann in which Arthur and Medraut perished.*' Generally, however, modern historians recognise the battle-site as the Roman fort of *Camboglanna*, on Hadrian's Wall. The place is now called Castlesteads in Cumbria.



THE BATTLE OF CAMLANN, SUPPOSEDLY WHERE ARTHUR FELL, NEAR HADRIAN'S WALL

EXCALIBUR



THE SYMBOLISM OF THE SWORD

The sword is the perennial symbol of empires, knighthood, chivalry, and fantasy. But it's also one of the world's most ancient technologies, connected with breakthroughs in metallurgy that would change the world. There are even some types of ancient swords so strong that modern science still can't work out how they were made. Legendary figures throughout the world have long been associated with magical swords or weaponry with special powers—the sword is often the symbol of kingship. The names given to many swords in mythology, literature, and history indicate the significance of the weapon and the wealth or importance of the owner. Celts were the first people to name weapons and attribute special powers to them. The most famous example is the legendary Excalibur, sword of King Arthur, often also associated with the rightful sovereignty of Great Britain.

In many ancient legends, magical swords are usually forged by a deity or fairy blacksmith. As the 'people of iron' it is only natural that the Celts would have a smith-god as one of their primary deities. His name was Gofannon. In Germanic and Norse mythology, the god was called Weyland the Smith and he was a legendary master blacksmith. The Roman god Vulcan and the Greek god Hephaestus also personified the art of smithing. It has been suggested that the legend of Excalibur is based on Norse mythology, which has several swords and weapons of legend including Gram (forged by Weyland), a sword that Sigurd used to defeat the dragon Fafnir.

As the sword has historically been a weapon of status, it has become symbolic of warfare or state power. Thus the surrender of a sword is a well-known universal symbol of defeat, perhaps even symbolising death itself. Depositing swords, weaponry, and other valuables in sacred lakes and rivers was a popular practice among the Celtic peoples, often as an offering to the goddess of the water. Perhaps this is how the 'Lady of the Lake' legend developed, when (according to lore) Sir Bedivere, after defying Arthur's request to throw the sword back into the lake, finally obeys his lord. To this day, many rivers in England have been the best source of Celtic swords and artefacts.



Celts were well known for their fierce fighting and placed a high value on fine weaponry. Many Celtic swords had richly decorated hilts, inlaid with amber, ivory, or gold-leaf. Scabbards, shields, and helmets were similarly decorated and often adorned with an adder (thought to have mystic powers). The Celtic warriors were renowned swordsmen using both heavy, long-bladed slashing swords and one-handed short swords. Both versions of early Celtic swords were easily recognized by their human-shaped hilts (see photo above Celtic sword and scabbard c.60 BC). This sword design is unique to Celtic swords and incorporated matching upper and lower guards which curved away from the grip (symbolizing the arms and legs) and to complete the figure, a head-shaped pommel was used. However, what would the historical Arthur's sword really have looked like? In the Arthurian romances Excalibur is often depicted as a medieval broadsword. However, if Arthur lived around AD 500 then his sword would have been of a very different design.



IRON SWORD WITH BRONZE HILT FITTINGS

This 1st Century AD Roman long sword (above) has Celtic-style decoration on the hilt fittings. The Roman garrison in the fort at Hod Hill, Dorset, included detachments of both auxiliary cavalry and legionaries. This sword may have belonged to a soldier of either unit, though its size is perhaps better adapted to use by a cavalry trooper.

Under the Roman occupation (AD 55—410), only Roman soldiers were allowed to own swords. This, as well as the practice of offering weapons to the spirits of the water, would explain the complete lack of the distinctively crafted Celtic swords after the Roman invasion, and also after the legions pulled out. The Brythonic Celts had not been forging swords for 400 years and if they were acquiring them it was under the noses of the well-organized Roman legions, or as Roman soldiers. There is some evidence that after the rebellious Celts had been defeated and things had settled down, the Romans subdivided Britain along tribal boundaries, and gave authority to local nobles, possibly people who could be shown to be related in some way to the pre-Roman princely class. Given the Romanized nature of 5th Century Britain, and the fact that the Roman technology and methods of warfare were preserved by the Britons long after the Roman exodus in AD 410, it is more likely their weapons and armour would have retained a strong Roman influence. Military leaders of this era would have used the *spatha*, a cavalry sword originally designed by the Romans. It would have been around two feet long with a stunted cross guard.

It seems likely that the only people who had swords once [Roman Britain](#) collapsed obtained them either from a Roman military source (as they were probably the remnants of the executive class) or from a Germanic source; there are examples of Anglo Saxon graves with imported Frankish swords in them. The British may have imported Roman swords, similar to the ones found in Denmark at Nydam and Illirup, which were late Roman *spatha* or riding swords. A common practice throughout European history is the importation of blades from a region with good ore and a tradition of making good sword blades, which the local lord or chieftain would then have hilted by local craftsmen. In the case of the Roman *spatha*, many of them had organic hilts, made out of carved wood or bone. If the blades were pattern-welded imports from the Franks, or *spatha* blades from the Romans, which are very similar in any case, it would be very difficult to date any recovered artefacts unless they were found with other non-metallic objects or in a grave that clearly showed signs of the period of the burial. The sword that the historical Arthur would have used is a *spatha* with a hilt constructed by local British craftsman, maybe carved with decorations.

EXCALIBUR IN MYTH AND LEGEND

In all the later myths and legends that developed around the figure of Arthur, descriptions of Excalibur certainly give rise to the belief that this was a sword with almost magical powers. In Welsh legend, Arthur's sword is known as *Caledfwlch* ('Hard-cleft'), a Welsh word derived from *Calad-Bolg* meaning 'Hard Lightning.' In *Culhwch and Olwen*, it is one of Arthur's most valuable possessions and is used by Arthur's warrior Llenlleawg the Irishman to kill the Irish king Diwrnach while stealing his magical cauldron. Irish mythology mentions a weapon *Caladbolg*, the sword of Fergus mac Roich. *Caladbolg* was also known for its incredible power and was carried by some of Ireland's greatest heroes.

Arthur's sword is described vividly in *The Dream of Rhonabwy*, one of the tales associated with *The Mabinogion*: 'Then they heard Cadwr Earl of Cornwall being summoned, and saw him rise with Arthur's sword in his hand, with a design of two chimeras on the golden hilt; when the sword was unsheathed what was seen from the mouths of the two chimeras was like two flames of fire, so dreadful that it was not easy for anyone to look. At that the host settled and the commotion subsided, and the earl returned to his tent.'—From *The Mabinogion*, translated by Jeffrey Gantz.

The sword is first mentioned by name in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *The History of the Kings of Britain*. According to this account, Arthur receives a sword called *Caliburnus* in Latin (Caliburn), which was made on the Isle of Avalon. Later legends describe the sword being returned to the Lady of the Lake when Arthur is mortally wounded by Mordred (Medraut) at the battle of Camlann. Later the name evolved to become Excalibur in Sir Thomas Malory's account of the legend in *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Here the name means 'Cut-steel.' In embellishing the sword's special attributes, Malory describes how when Excalibur was first drawn, in the first

battle testing Arthur's sovereignty, its blade blinded his enemies—'*... thenne he drewe his swerd Excalibur, but it was so breyght in his enemyes eyen that it gaf light lyke thirty torchys.*'

Robert de Boron, in his story *Merlin*, introduced the story of the young Arthur drawing a sword from a rock, thus proving that Arthur was rightful king of Britain, the true heir of Uther Pendragon.

The 19th Century poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson, described the sword in full Romantic detail in his poem '*Morte d'Arthur*,' later rewritten as 'The Passing of Arthur,' one of the *Idylls of the King*:

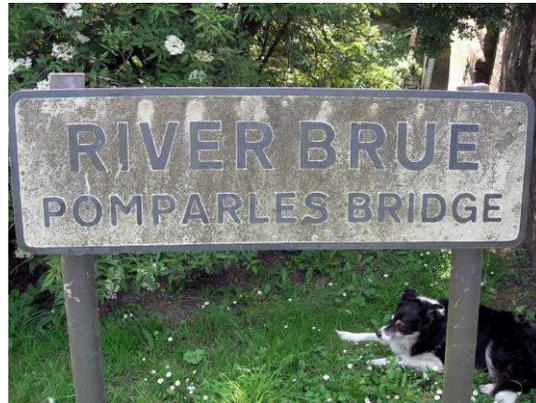
*There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery.*

In the multitude of versions of the legend of Arthur, writers became extremely creative as they introduced elements of magic and mystery, especially in the figures of the wizard Merlin, the Lady of the Lake, and the many knights who later populated the romantic tales from the 11th Century onwards. Malory records both versions of the legend—a sword drawn from a stone and a sword from a lake—in his *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and confusingly calls both swords Excalibur so that it appears as if King Arthur had two swords. The sword drawn from the rock is different from the one given to Arthur by the Lady of the Lake. The sword drawn from the stone is later broken in battle with Sir Pellinore. Excalibur is certainly the magical, unbreakable sword given to him by the Lady of the Lake, along with an enchanted scabbard.

In England, there are several historical locations that involve Excalibur, and many early historians believed firmly in the existence of both the sword and the lake. Although legend is very vague on exactly where one could find this magical lake, there is a possible location, mentioned by John Leland (13 September, c.1503—18 April, 1552), an English poet and antiquary. Leland has been described as 'the father of English local history and bibliography.' Leland believed steadfastly in the existence of King Arthur. Leland drew on a wide range of literary, linguistic, archaeological, and oral sources to defend the historicity of Arthur. His work preserved much evidence for the Arthurian tradition that might otherwise have been lost. He suggested that Pomparles Bridge might be the site of the mystical lake. Pomparles Bridge crosses the River Brue just south of the town of Glastonbury. The derivation of the name Pomparles Bridge is from the French *pont perilleux*, meaning 'perilous bridge.'

'A mile before [the river Brue] reaches Glastonbury, it comes to a bridge of four stone arches, which is known as Pontperlus, and it was here, according to legend, that King Arthur cast his sword into it.'—John Leland's *Itinerary*

Before the draining of the region, the Pomparles Bridge area used to be under water, and today the Pomparles Bridge only spans a small river. When the Somerset Levels were covered with water, the Glastonbury Tor became an island. Many people believe this to be the Isle of Avalon where Arthur was taken to treat his mortal wounds from the battle at Camlann.



Even Excalibur's scabbard was said to have powers of its own. Injuries from losses of blood, for example, would not kill the bearer. In some tales, wounds received by one wearing the scabbard did not bleed at all. The scabbard is stolen by the sorceress Morgan le Fay and thrown into a lake, never to be found again. As a result, when Arthur is wounded by Mordred, he receives a mortal wound, and without the healing properties of the scabbard, must surely never recover.

THE HISTORY OF THE SWORD

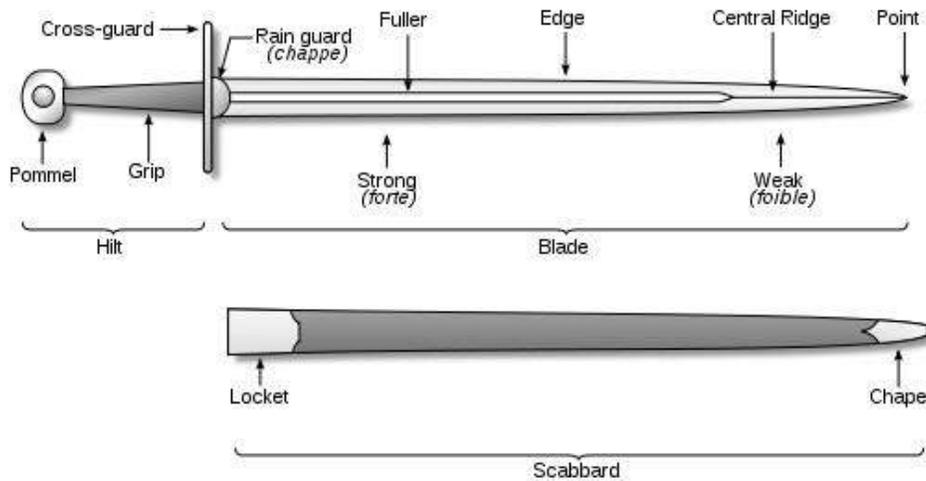


WHAT IS A SWORD?

The word *sword* comes from the Old English *sweord* from a Proto-Indo-European root *swer-* ‘to wound, to cut.’ The basic principles of swordsmanship have remained fairly constant through the centuries, but the actual techniques vary among cultures and periods as a result of the differences in blade design and purpose.

Iron-working was introduced to the Celts during the Hallstatt period (8th—6th Centuries BC), but it was Roman influence on Celtic sword development that made the Celtic sword a masterful weapon. During the Roman occupation of Britain, local Celts who were armourers, weaponsmiths, and swordsmiths found themselves in Imperial workshops making auxiliary Roman swords and weapons using steel and advanced folding and forging processes. These Celtic craftsmen quickly learned the new modern techniques of making weapons which became an asset for the Celts as they fought the Saxons after the Roman occupation. With stronger materials (steel), Celtic swords became longer and stronger swords. Celtic broadswords, like the Scottish Claymore, were some of the largest recorded in history at 5’ to 6’ in total length.

A sword is a bladed weapon (*edged weapon*) used primarily for cutting or thrusting. The precise definition of the term varies with the historical epoch or the geographical region under consideration. Basically, a sword consists of a blade with two edges, a hilt, and a cross guard. But in some cases the term may also refer to weapons without a crossguard, or with only a single edge (backsword). The sword consists of the blade and the hilt. The term *scabbard* applies to the cover for the sword blade when not in use.



Swords may have either a straight blade or a curved one. A straight sword was thought to be primarily intended for hacking and stabbing, yet recent studies have shown this to be untrue, as many slicing techniques were used. Blades are sometimes marked or inscribed, for decorative purposes, or with the mark of either the maker or the owner. Blade decorations can be of inlay in some precious metal (gold or silver). Celtic warriors were renowned swordsmen; they placed an extremely high value on fine weaponry. Many swords had richly decorated hilts inlaid with amber, ivory or gold-leaf. Scabbards, helmets and shields were similarly decorated. Excalibur was supposed to be studded with jewels such as jacinth, topaz, and diamond.

The hilt (sometimes called the haft) of a sword is its handle, consisting of a guard, grip, and pommel. The grip is the handle of the sword. It was usually of wood or metal, and often covered with shagreen (untanned tough leather or shark skin). The pommel (the name is derived from the Latin for a 'little apple') is a counterweight at the top of the handle. The guard protects the user's hand from the opponent's sword, and also prevents the user's hand from sliding up onto his own blade. This feature barely appears in the earliest swords, such as those of the Bronze Age in the 17th Century BC. Later, guards often took the form of a straight crossbar ('quillon') perpendicular to the blade.

Non-European weapons called 'sword' include single-edged weapons such as the Middle Eastern *saif*, the Chinese *dao* and the related Japanese *katana*; these would more accurately be described as sabres or backswords, but their high prestige in their respective cultures favoured the use of 'sword.' The Chinese *jian* is an example of a non-European double-edged sword, like the European models derived from the double-edged Iron Age sword.

Most historians tend to place the first appearance of a true sword somewhere around the 16th or 17th Centuries BC, in the Black Sea region and the Aegean, during what would later come to be

known as the Bronze Age. The sword developed from the dagger when the construction of longer blades became possible, from the late 3rd millennium BC in the Middle East, first in arsenic copper, then in tin-bronze. The oldest sword-like weapons are found at Arslantepe, Turkey, and date to around 3300 BC. However, it is generally considered that these are longer daggers, and not the first ancestors of swords. Sword blades longer than 60 cm (24 in) were rare and not practical until the late Bronze Age because at longer lengths, the tensile strength of bronze starts to decrease radically, and consequently longer blades would bend easily. It was not until the development of stronger alloys such as steel, and improved heat treatment processes that longswords became practical for combat. They were also used as decorations.

THE BIRTH OF BRONZE

Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin, and while it is still composed primarily of copper, the addition of tin lends the homogenous mixture a harder quality than copper possesses on its own. The use of bronze instead of copper meant that these swords could be fashioned in the range of 20 to 35 inches in length. Longer, sturdier swords in the range of 2 to 4 feet, however, would not emerge until the Iron Age, beginning around the 13th or 12th Centuries BC.

THE RISE OF IRON

Iron became increasingly common from the 13th Century BC, mainly due to the collapse of the bronze producing civilizations. The Hittites, the Egyptians, and the Proto-Celtic Hallstatt culture (8th Century BC) figured among the early users of iron swords. Iron has the advantage of mass-production due to the wider availability of the raw material. Iron's high melting point meant the smelting process limited primitive swordsmiths to the production of a porous mass of iron called a bloom, which was subsequently hammered out over the course of numerous heating and cooling cycles to produce the desired blade. Early iron swords were not comparable to later steel blades. Longer, stronger iron swords did not emerge right away, however. In fact, many of the original iron swords were only marginally better than their bronze predecessors. What iron ultimately had going for it was availability.

Iron ore was readily accessible in just about every region of the ancient world, and while the copper required in the production of bronze was also abundant, the simplicity in producing workable iron and the relative rarity of tin meant that iron swords could be produced on a much larger scale, and could therefore equip more impressive armies. The iron was not quenched-hardened (by cooling) although often containing sufficient carbon, but work-hardened like bronze by hammering. This made them comparable or only slightly better in terms of strength and hardness to bronze swords. They could still bend during use rather than spring back into shape. But the easier production and the better availability of the raw material for the first time permitted the equipment of entire armies with metal weapons, though Bronze Age Egyptian armies were at times fully equipped with bronze weapons. The Iron Age sword remained fairly

short and without a crossguard. The *spatha* as it developed in the Late Roman army became the predecessor of the European sword of the Middle Ages,

THE CHANCE CREATION OF STEEL

What early swordsmiths who were practiced in the art of crafting iron swords probably didn't realize was that, through the process of smelting, they were in fact introducing trace amounts of carbon into the iron that they were purifying from iron ore. Much in the way that tin mixed with copper produces a superior alloy in the form of bronze, adding carbon to iron in the proper quantities and with the correct technique gives rise to the vastly superior alloy commonly known as steel. The trouble with adding carbon to iron is that it is a decidedly difficult process to control. Consequently, many of the earliest swordsmiths working with iron were wont to produce swords of vastly different qualities from one day to the next. The fact that early iron blades were work-hardened (meaning they were formed by way of hammering out a bloom over the course of several cycles of gradual heating and cooling, as described above) rather than quench-hardened (an incredibly meticulous process wherein the alloyed blade is rapidly cooled in a way that reduces the formation of unwanted crystallization within the blade while increasing its overall structural integrity) meant that the superior qualities of true steel remained elusive and poorly understood for hundreds of years.

Even when early swordsmiths happened to imbue their iron blooms with the optimal quantities of carbon, their chances of producing a steel blade—while possible—are believed to have been exceedingly slim; while some regions gradually came to demonstrate varying degrees of mastery over the production of steel, the process eluded many swordsmiths until as recently as the Early Middle Ages. Among the regions of the world believed to have mastered the production of steel earliest is India. Archaeological evidence suggests that manufacturing processes in southern India and Sri Lanka gave rise to a practice of steel production known as pattern welding as early as the 3rd Century BC.

THE LEGEND OF DAMASCUS STEEL

Pattern welding is well known for producing the widely-recognized alloy known as Damascus steel (also known as wootz steel). Wootz steel originated in India and Sri Lanka and later spread to Persia. From the 3rd Century to the 17th Century, India was shipping steel ingots to the Middle East for use in Damascus steel. In Europe, research has demonstrated that high quality swords with damask patterns were produced by various pattern welding techniques since at least the 3rd Century BC by the Celts and Germanic peoples.

This distinctive looking blade is characterized by intricate patterns reminiscent of oil slicks and flowing water, and while fanciful tales of Damascus swords being able to slice through the barrel of a rifle or cut a hair falling across its blade have obviously gone unproven, studies show that

ancient Damascus steel has a microstructure containing carbon nanotubes, giving the blades an almost mythical strength in their time. Incredibly, the original method of producing a Damascus blade remains a mystery to this day; the genuine formula for Damascus steel, as it is commonly referred to, is believed to have been lost centuries ago. The process was lost to metal smiths after production of the patterned swords gradually declined and eventually ceased circa 1750. Several modern theories have ventured to explain this decline, including the breakdown of trade routes to supply the needed metals, the lack of trace impurities in the metals, the possible loss of knowledge on the crafting techniques through secrecy and lack of transmission, or a combination of all the above. Modern efforts to reproduce the iconic Damascus blade represent just a fraction of the time and energy that is, to this day, dedicated to producing the ideal sword. Steel remains the alloy of choice for sword makers the world over, but advances in smithing, and the incorporation of elements such as chromium and molybdenum, continue to elevate the rare but honored occupation of swordsmith to new heights.

USE OF SWORDS TODAY

In the Early Modern period, the sword developed into the rapier and eventually the smallsword, surviving into the 18th Century only in the role of dueling weapon. By the 19th Century, swords were reduced to the status of either ceremonial weapon or sport equipment in fencing.

SWORDS OF MYTH & LEGEND



Although Excalibur is possibly the most famous sword of myth and legend, there are many more that appear in world mythology. Here are just a few well-known ones.

SWORDS FROM CELTIC & ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE & MYTHOLOGY

- Hrunting, the magical sword lent to Beowulf by Unferth. (Anglo-Saxon or Old English verse describing the exploits of a hero of the same name, who battles a monster called Grendel, his mother, and then a dragon.)
- Nægling, the other magical sword of Beowulf. Found in the cave of Grendel's mother.
- Caladbolg (also *Caladcholg*), the sword of Fergus mac Róich, (the Irish King of Ulster) and powerful enough to cut the tops off three hills; related to the *Caledfwlch* of Welsh mythology.
- Caledfwlch, often compared to Excalibur (and might be an alternate name for it), this sword is used by Llenlleawg Wyddel (one of King Arthur's warriors) to kill Diwrnach Wyddel (a giant) and his men.
- Claiomh Solais (The Sword of Light), the sword of Nuada, leader of the Tuatha de Danann, the king of the gods in Irish mythology. In legend, the sword glowed with the light of the sun and was irresistible in battle, having the power to cut his enemies in half.
- Fragarach (also *The Sword of Air* or *The Retaliator*), forged by the gods, was the sword of Manannan mac Lir (a sea deity in Irish mythology) and later, Lugh Lamfada (a High King of the ancient past). No armour could stop it, and it would grant its wielder command over the powers of wind. It was said that no one could tell a lie with Fragarach at his or her throat, thus it also bore the name 'Answerer.' It gave a piercing wound from which no man could recover.
- Dyrnwyn aka The Sword of Rhydderch (a ruler of one of the Dark Ages Celtic kingdoms). It is a flaming sword not unlike Excalibur in abilities and is one of the Spoils of Annwyn. (A cryptic early mediaeval Welsh poem of sixty lines, apparently written by the poet Taliesin.)
- The Singing Sword of Conaire Mor, a High King of Ireland.
- Móralltach, the greatsword of the god Aengus in Irish mythology.
- Legbiter is a *gaddhjalt* (Viking style) sword of the Viking King Magnus Barelegs killed in battle at County Down in 1103.

- Chrysaor—in Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* Chrysaor was the golden sword of Sir Artegal, the Knight of Justice. The sword was given to him by Astræa, who had been holding it since the days when Zeus used it to battle the Titans. Because it was tempered with Adamant, it could cleave through anything.

WORDS FROM THE MATTER OF BRITAIN

The Matter of Britain is a name given collectively to the body of literature and legendary material associated with Great Britain and its legendary kings, particularly King Arthur.

- Clarent is said to be the sword in the stone which Arthur pulled free to become King of Britain. Sometimes it is said to have been the blade used by Mordred (Arthur's nephew) to kill King Arthur. Sometimes called the *Coward's Blade*.
- Excalibur, also known as Caledfwlch in Welsh and Caliburnus in Latin, King Arthur's magical warsword.
- The Grail Sword, a cracked holy sword which Sir Percival (a knight of Arthurian legend) bonded back together, though the crack remained.
- Carnwennan, the dagger Arthur used. Sometimes described as being able to shroud the user in shadow.
- Galatine, Sir Gawain's sword. (A knight of Arthurian legend)
- Arondight, Sir Lancelot's sword. (A knight of Arthurian legend). He is also supposed to have had a sword called Tanlladwyr, or 'Bright Killer.'
- Sword of Mercy—Edward the Confessor's Curtana sword is a symbolically broken sword that is part of the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom. The sword has a blade cut off short and square, indicating thereby the quality of the mercy of the sovereign.
- The Wallace Sword, a large Scottish Claymore alleged to have been used by famous Scottish patriot and knight William Wallace, when leading the resistance against England in the late 13th Century.
- Jewelled Sword of Offering, Sword of King George IV of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (1820–1830), is the only sword actually presented to the Sovereign of the United Kingdom during the Coronation and is part of the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom.

WORDS FROM NORSE MYTHOLOGY

- Balmung/Gram ('Grief'), the sword that Odin struck into the Branstock tree which only Sigmund the Volsung was able to pull out. It broke in battle with Odin but was later reforged by Sigmund's son Sigurd/Siegfried and used to slay the dragon Fafnir. After being reforged, it could cleave an anvil in half. (Norse mythology)
- Freyr's sword, The Sword of Sharpness, a magic sword which fought on its own. If the wielder was worthy enough it could cut through anything. Freyr was one of the most important gods of Norse mythology.

- Tyrfing (also Tirfing or Tervingi), the cursed sword of Svafrlami made by dwarves, from the Elder Edda. (A collection of Old Norse poems; also said to be the sword of Odin in Wagnerian mythology)
- Hofud, the sword of Heimdall (the Norse god of light), the guardian of Bifrost, a burning rainbow bridge that reaches between Midgard (the world) and Asgard, the realm of the gods.
- Nothung, the sword from *Die Walküre*. (Wagnerian mythology)
- Angurvadal, sword of Frithiof, the hero of a legendary saga from Iceland.
- Dáinsleif is Högni's sword, (son of the Danish King Hálfðan) used in the never ending battle known as the Hjaðningavíg.
- Laevateinn, in Norse mythology, is the flaming sword of the fire giant Surt. Meaning 'Wounding Wand' or 'The Staff of Destruction,' it is said to make the wielder invincible and even fight by itself if willed to do so. It was forged by the elf Volund and taken to Asgard where it became Freyr's sword. However, he traded it to the giants in exchange for Gerd's hand in marriage. At Ragnarök (an epic end-of-the-world battle), Surt (lord of the realm of fire) wields the sword, severing the roots of the tree of life, Yggdrasil, thereby instigating the destruction of the universe.
- Mistilteinn ('Mistletoe'), the magical sword of King Prainn, the *draugr* (or living dead), later owned by Hromundr Gripsson, a hero of Norse mythology.
- Quern-biter, sword of Haakon I of Norway (the third king of Norway, ca. AD 920) and his follower, Thoralf Skolinson the Strong.
- Skofnung, a sword with mythical properties associated with the legendary Danish king Hrólfr Kraki.

SWORDS FROM THE MATTER OF FRANCE

The Matter of France, also known as the Carolingian cycle, is a body of literature and legendary material associated with the history of France, in particular involving Charlemagne and his associates. Charlemagne (AD 742—28 January 814) was King of the Franks from 768 and Emperor of the Romans (*Imperator Romanorum*) from 800 to his death in 814. The Paladins, sometimes known as the Twelve Peers, were the foremost warriors of Charlemagne's court.

- Joyeuse, the sword of Charlemagne. Joyeuse was allegedly lost in a battle and retrieved by one of the knights of Charlemagne. Joyeuse, used as a coronation sword in France, still exists today and is kept in the Louvre, Paris.
- Murgleis, sword of Ganelon, traitor and cousin of Roland. Roland was a Frankish military leader under Charlemagne who became one of the principal figures in the literary cycle known as the Matter of France.
- Durandal (also *Durendal* or *Durlindana* in Italian), the unbreakable sword of Roland, alleged to be the same sword as the one wielded by Hector of Ilium, the leader and mightiest warrior in the Trojan army. The tale of Roland's death is retold in the eleventh

century poem *The Song of Roland*, where he is equipped with the Olifant (a signalling horn) and Durandal.

- Courtain (also *Curtana* or *Cortana* in Italian), first of the two magical swords of Ogier the Dane, a legendary Danish hero, and a Paladin of Charlemagne.
- Almace (also *Almice* or *Almacia*), sword of Turpin, Archbishop of Reims.
- Balisarda, the sword of Ruggiero (the son of a Christian knight and a Saracen woman) from *Orlando Furioso*, an Italian romantic epic. The action takes place against the background of the war between, on the one side, Charlemagne and his Christian Paladins, and, on the other side, the Saracen army which is attempting to invade Europe.
- Corrougue, sword of Otuel, a pagan knight, miraculously converted, who became one of Charlemagne's Paladins.
- Hauteclere (meaning 'Very Bright'), the sword of Olivier, a wise and prudent man and Roland's best friend.
- Précieuse, sword of Baligant, Emir of Babylon.
- Mimung, which was forged by Weyland the Smith to fight the rival smith Amilias, according to *Thidrekssaga* (a 13th Century Old Norse chivalric saga about the Gothic King Theodoric the Great). Mimung later came into the possession of Landri or Landres, nephew of Charlemagne.

SWORDS FROM GERMANIC MYTHOLOGY

- Mimung, sword that Wudga (a hero in several early Germanic legends and later Scandinavian ballads) inherits from his father Weyland the Smith (a legendary blacksmith, the son of the sea giant Wate and the sea nymph Wac-hilt).
- Nagelring, the sword of Dietrich von Bern, heroic figure of Germanic legend, apparently derived from Theodoric the Great, an Ostrogothic king of Italy who reigned from c. AD 493 to 526.
- Nothung, the sword from *Die Walküre* (Wagnerian mythology), also known as Gram, or Balmung wielded by Siegfried, hero of the *Nibelungenlied*.
- Schritt ('The Lopper'), sword of Biterolf, a 12th Century Mediaeval poet knight.
- Waske, a sword of great renown belonging to Iring (a knight), from *Der Nibelungenlied*. The *Nibelungenlied*, translated as *The Song of the Nibelungs*, is an epic poem in Middle High German. The story tells of dragon-slayer Siegfried at the court of the Burgundians, how he was murdered, and of his wife Kriemhild's revenge.
- Welsung, sword of Dietlieb (the Dane) and Sintram. Sintram was the Greek hero of the German romance, *Sintram and his Companions*, by Baron Lamotte Fouqué.

SWORDS OF CHRISTIAN MYTHOLOGY

- The Sword of Michael, a flaming sword used by the archangel to defeat Lucifer in heaven.

- The Sword of Yahweh, the sword of God which is mentioned in the tale of the destruction of Leviathan.
- The Sword of Death, a grey sword that can kill a person if you just cut a lock of their hair off.

SWORDS OF GREEK & ROMAN MYTHOLOGY

- The Sword of Peleus, a magic sword that makes its wielder victorious in the battle or the hunt. (Greek mythology)
- Philipian, the sword given to Marc Antony by Cleopatra. Antony lost the sword when he was defeated by Octavian at the Battle of Actium.
- Crocea Mors ('Yellow Death'), the sword of Julius Caesar according to the legends presented by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

SWORDS OF ARABIA & PERSIA

- Zulfikar is the name of the sword of Ali ibn Abu Talib, the son-in-law of Muhammad and the model for Islamic chivalry. Zulfikar was given to Ali during the Battle of Uhud.
- Shamshir-e Zomorodnegar (Persian: راگن‌درمز ری‌شمش) is 'The Emerald-studded Sword' in the Persian mythical story *Amir Arsalan*. The hideous horned demon called Fulad-zereh was invulnerable to all weapons except the blows of Shamshir-e Zomorodnegar. Wearing it was a charm against magic. A wound inflicted by this sword could only be treated by a special potion made from a number of ingredients, including Fulad-zereh's brains. This blade originally belonged to King Solomon.

SWORDS OF EASTERN MYTHOLOGY

- Kusanagi-no-tsurugi (Japanese: 草薙の剣) (also known as *Ama-no-Murakumo-no-Tsurugi* (天叢雲劍[?]) or *Tsumugari no Tachi* Japanese: 都牟刈の太刀), sword of the Japanese god Susanoo, later given to his sister Amaterasu. It is one of three Imperial Regalia of Japan. (In Japanese mythology The Imperial Regalia of Japan (三種の神器 *Sanshu no Jingi / Mikusa no Kandakara*), also known as the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan, consist of the sword Kusanagi (草薙劍), the mirror Yata no Kagami (八咫鏡), and the jewel Yasakani no Magatama (八尺瓊曲玉). The regalia represent the three primary virtues: valour (the sword), wisdom (the mirror), and benevolence (the jewel).
- Savash, legendary sword that was wielded by Attila the Hun; claimed to have originally been the sword of Mars, the Roman god of war.
- Heaven's Will, also known as Thuận Thiên, was the sword of Vietnamese King Le Loi.

- Chandrahas, the sword given to Ravana (one of the greatest rulers of ancient Sri Lanka) by Lord Shiva, the powerful and fascinating deity of the Hindu Trinity, who represents death and dissolution.
- Totsuka no Tsurugi, the sword Susanoo used to slay the Yamata no Orochi.
- Sword Kladenets, a fabulous magic sword in some Old Russian fairy tales.
- Taming Sari is a *kris* owned by mythical Malay warrior Hang Tuah of the Malacca Sultanate. It possesses supernatural powers, bestowing invincibility to its wielder. According to one story, Hang Tuah fought the Majapahit warrior who owned the *kris* to a standstill, unable to defeat him. Later, after using trickery to switch weapons, Hang Tuah won easily.
- Gan Jiang and Mo Ye are legendary Chinese twin swords named after their creators.

SWORDS FROM LORD OF THE RINGS

- Anglachel is one of the two swords forged by Eöl the Dark Elf out of a black iron meteorite. It is said to be able to cleave any iron from within the earth. Anglachel appears to be a sentient sword that speaks on occasion and has some will of its own.
- Glamdring, Orcrist, and Sting are High-Elven swords; they glow with a blue or white flame when Orcs are near.
- Morgul-blade is a magical poisoned dagger wielded by Nazgûl.
- Caudimordax: This sword cannot be sheathed when a dragon comes within five miles of its bearer's presence.
- Andúril/Narsil is the sword of Elendil used to cut the One Ring from Sauron's hand. The sword was reforged several ages later by Elrond; the reforging of the shards was foretold as a sign of the coming of the true King of Gondor.



JOYEUSE, SWORD OF CHARLEMAGNE, ON DISPLAY IN THE LOUVRE MUSEUM, PARIS

ARTHUR'S OTHER WEAPONS



Excalibur is so famous that usually people don't even think of any other weapons that Arthur may have used. But of course, a Dark Ages battle leader would need quite an armory to himself if he was going to survive campaigns and skirmishes against the enemy.

Arthur speaks to Culhwch:

'You shall have the request that head and tounge name, as far as the wind dries, as far as the rain wets, as far as the sun rises, as far as the sea stretches, as far as the earth extends, excepting only my ship (Prydwen), my mantle, my sword Caledwlch, my spear Rhongomyriad (Cutting-Spear), my shield Wynebgwrthucher (face of evening), my knife Carnwennan and my wife Gwenhwyvar (White Shadow?).' The Mabinogion, trans, Jeffrey Gantz, Penguin, 1976, pp. 139-40.

'Arthur donned thigh pieces of steel, wrought strong and fairly by some cunning smith. His hauberk was stout and richly chased, even such a vesture as became so puissant a king. He girt him with his sword, Excalibur. Mighty was the glaive, and long in the blade. It was forged in the Isle of Avalon, and he who brandished it naked in his hand deemed himself a happy man. His helmet gleamed upon his head. The nasal was of gold; circlets of gold adorned the headpiece, with many a clear stone; and a dragon was fashioned for its crest. The helm had once been worn by Uther, his sire. The king was mounted on a destrier, passing fair, strong, and speedy, loving well the battle. He had set his shield about his neck, and, certes, showed a stout champion, and a right crafty captain. ... In his hand the king carried his lance, named Ron. Sharp it was at the head, tough and great, and very welcome at need in the press of battle.' Wace and Layamon Arthurian Chronicles, trans, Mason, E., pp. 47-48, Dent, 1962 (1912).

Reading the above words we can see that Excalibur is by no means the only weapon associated with Arthur, nor the only sword. Welsh tradition also knew of a dagger named Carnwennan and a spear named Rhongomyriad that belonged to him. Carnwennan ('Little White-Hilt') first appears in *Culhwch and Olwen*, where it was used by Arthur to slice the Very Black Witch in half. Rhongomyriad ('spear' + 'striker/slayer') is also first mentioned in *Culhwch*, although only in passing; it appears as simply Ron ('spear') in Geoffrey's *Historia*. In the alliterative *Morte Arthure* (a 4346-line Middle English alliterative poem, retelling the latter part of the legend of King Arthur), there is mention of Clarent, a sword of peace meant for knighting and ceremonies as opposed to battle, which is stolen (by Mordred) and then used to kill Arthur.

- Armor: Wigan is the name of Arthur's armor.
- Dagger: Carnwennan is the dagger Arthur used. Sometimes described as being able to shroud the user in shadow.
- Spear: Rhongomyniad is mentioned in *The Mabinogion* and by Geoffrey of Monmouth. He calls it '*long, broad in blade and thirsty for slaughter.*
- Shield: Pridwen ('Fair Face' from Geoffrey of Monmouth) or Wynebgwrthucher ('Face of Evening' from *The Mabinogion*) is the name of Arthur's shield. This is the first weapon mentioned by writers of the Dark Ages. It is described as having some kind of symbolic motif painted on it. Some Celtic legends describe how the image on the shield of their leader would afford protection to his whole army.
- Ship: Prydwen is the name of Arthur's ship. There is some explanation for the ship and the shield having practically identical names. This could be a distorted memory of an ancient Celtic war tactic. The army following the Celtic war leader Brennos, in 280 BC, used their shields as rafts to aid them in swimming across a river.
- Helmet: Arthur's helmet is described as having a gold nose guard, circlets of gold decorating the headpiece; and a dragon for its crest. Legend says the helmet was once worn by Uther, his father.
- Cauldron: A cauldron, even though it seems an item of domestic use, was a very important part of a king's household because food for his followers was cooked in it. Arthur's cauldron was carried by Hygwydd. Legend say he was a servant of Arthur assigned the task of bearing the magical cauldron that Arthur seized from Diwrnach the Irishman. In order to secure the loyalty of their followers, kings and military leaders had to provide their followers with food and land. From the Dark Ages this practice continued into the Middle Ages.
- Arthur's Mantle: Called Gwen, this mantle is had a special power—whoever wore it could not be seen, yet the wearer could see everyone.

ARTHUR'S ANIMALS

Animals were very important in early societies and great value was placed on an excellent hunting dog, or falcon; and a superb horse would have been worth its weight in gold. Arthur's dog Cavall (Cabal or Cafal) merits a mention by the Dark Age writer Nennius. He mentions a stone bearing the huge imprint of the dog's paw. Over the years more stones were piled up on the spot and it came to be known as Carn Cafal. Cavall is also mentioned in *The Mabinogion*. Arthur also had a mare called Llamrei, reputed to be able to bear great loads. One Welsh legend describes how Arthur and his war-horse destroyed a water monster living in a lake. A rock nearby the lake is supposed to bear the hoof print of Arthur's horse. Another horse, Hengroen, is also mentioned in legends associated with Arthur.

THE THIRTEEN TREASURES OF THE ISLAND OF BRITAIN



In the times before the Anglo-Saxon invasions that divided up the Island of Britain and before the conversion to Christianity, there are tales of thirteen treasures that originally belonged to the Celtic gods. These are the Thirteen Treasures of the Island of Britain. Legend says the keepers of the Treasures met in an unknown location.

Here Merlin spoke and requested that the Thirteen Treasures be handed over to him. The keepers were unwilling but they finally agreed that if he could obtain the Horn of Bran of the North, they would all surrender theirs. This man was known to never part with any possession so it was believed that he would never surrender this Horn. However, Merlin succeeded in obtaining the horn and the others gave up their treasures to him.

Merlin took the treasures to 'The Castle of Glass' and there they are kept today. The site of that castle remains a mystery although some legends place the location on Ynys Enlli, also known as Bardsey Island off the very tip of the Lleyn Peninsula in Gwynedd. It is said that the Welsh Goddess, Arianrhod, lives in the Castle of Glass hidden somewhere in Snowdonia (Wales) where she spins the threads that make the web of life.

Avalon, meaning 'Place of Apples,' was a feature of the Celtic Otherworld, usually called Annwfn, also called Caer Wydyr, the 'Fort of Glass.' Another possibility is Glastonbury Tor, also said to be a portal to the Welsh otherworld. This is a place of joy and eternal youth where souls wait to re-enter the mortal realm.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF BRITAIN

The Knowledge of Britain is the knowledge of the properties of the Thirteen Treasures.

The burning blade one cannot hold	1. Excalibur
The whetstone to prefer the bold	2. The Whetstone of Tudwal Tudglyd
The cauldron to reveal the brave	3. The Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant
The horn that many drink might have	4. The Horn of Brân Galed

The hamper whereon a hundred feast	5. The Hamper of Gwyddno Garanhir
The halter to tame the wildest beast	6. The Halter of Clydno Eiddynd
The chariot fleet for the journey's wish	7. The Chariot of Morgan Mwynfawr
To please the hungry man's need, the dish	8. The Dish of Rhygenydd
The knife serves twenty-four places laid	9. The Knife of Llawfrodedd Farchog
The coat for the wellborn man is made	10. The Coat of Padarn Beisrudd
The board of silver and of gold will deal	11. The Chessboard of Gwenddoleu ap Ceidio
The ring and stone can a man conceal	12. The Warrior Ring of Eluned
The mantle will not him reveal	13. The Mantle of Arthur

- 1) White-Hilt, the 'flame blade,' sometimes thought to represent Excalibur. If anyone but the owner drew it, it burst into flame from its hilt to its tip.
- 2) The Hamper of Gwyddno Garanhir. Food for one man would be put in it, and when it was opened, food for a hundred men would be found in it.
- 3) The Horn of Brân Galed contained whatever drink might be wished for.
- 4) The Chariot of Morgan Mwynfawr ... if a man drove in it, he only had to wish for his destination, and he would be there quickly.
- 5) The Halter of Clydno Eiddynd: whatever horse he might wish for, he would find in the halter.
- 6) The Knife of Llawfrodedd Farchog would serve for twenty-four men to eat at table.
- 7) The Cauldron of Dyrnwch the Giant: if meat for a coward was put in it to boil, it would never boil, but if meat for a brave man were put in it, it would boil quickly.
- 8) The Whetstone of Tudwal Tudglyd: if a brave man sharpened his sword on the whetstone, then the sword would certainly kill any man from whom it drew blood. If a cowardly man used the whetstone, though, his sword would refuse to draw blood at all.
- 9) The Coat of Padarn Beisrudd: if a well-born man put it on, it would be the right size for him; if a churl, it would not go upon him.
- 10) The Dish of Rhygenydd. Whatever food you wished for would appear.
- 11) The Chessboard of Gwenddoleu ap Ceidio: if the pieces were set, they would play by themselves. The board was of gold, and the men of silver.
- 12) The Mantle of Arthur: whoever was under it could not be seen, and he could see everyone.
- 13) The Warrior Ring of Eluned—whenever wore this ring became invisible.

THE LEGEND OF THE RED DEER & THE UNICORN



Cheryl Carpinello, an Arthurian storyteller, has made this exciting contribution of one of her Arthurian tales. “Arthurian stories are steeped in legend. While perceived as fiction, legends often contain elements of factual happenings. It is left up to readers to decide if they believe or not. In the Arthurian tales I write, I always add one or two of my own legends. *Guinevere: On the Eve of Legend* contains one of my favorites: The Legend of the Red Deer and the Unicorn. I’ve recited this story at readings and at Medieval Festivals where I have been the storyteller.

“A long, long time ago when the forests were young, the unicorns roamed the land of what is now called England. They numbered in the thousands. One day a red deer washed up on a sandy shore during a violent storm. Not knowing the land, the red deer soon became lost, unable to find fresh water and enough grasses to eat. The unicorns found the deer near death from thirst and starvation. These kind creatures nudged and pushed the deer to fresh water and later showed it the best grazing grounds and the safest places in the forest to bed down. Before long the unicorns adopted the deer, which, in turn, promised that all future generations of red deer would protect the unicorns. A few years later, another red deer washed up on the shore, was discovered and saved by the red deer and the unicorns. The two deer later mated and left the unicorn herds.



Hundreds of years passed and in those years, the red deer herds grew in number until there wasn’t a forest without the deer across the land. Sadly, the same could not be said for the unicorns. As men populated the island, a myth arose about the unicorn. It was believed that a unicorn’s horn held strong magic for man, and some even thought it could

cure all of men's ills. To that end, unicorns were hunted ruthlessly for the magical horn, their bodies left to rot once the horn was harvested.

The numbers of unicorns across the land dwindled to just a handful when the unicorns and the red deer met once more. The unicorns asked if the red deer remembered when the unicorns had saved them. The red deer remembered because the memories of the first red deer were passed on to each new deer. Filled with dismay at how few unicorns remained, the red deer kept their promise to protect the unicorns.

Today if you are lucky enough to come across a herd of red deer in England, you must be very quiet and patient. If you wait long enough and look hard enough, between the legs of the red deer, you may catch a glimpse of white. At the middle of each herd, the unicorns thrive and play.”



THE LADY AND THE UNICORN (FRENCH: LA DAME à LA LICORNE)
A SET OF 15TH CENTURY TAPESTRIES IN THE CLUNY MUSEUM, PARIS

READER'S GUIDE & GLOSSARY



In this glossary, you'll be able to look up information on words or ideas that you read about in *The Search for the Stone of Excalibur*. It will add to your enjoyment of Adam and Justin's incredible adventure because there are clues everywhere! This will increase your knowledge of King Arthur's era.

Alfred Jewel: Mentioning The Alfred Jewel is the clever way Kim has of getting them into the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. This is an Anglo-Saxon artefact made of enamel and quartz enclosed in gold that was discovered in 1693, and is now one of the most popular exhibits at the Ashmolean Museum. It has been dated from the late 9th century. It was made in the reign of Alfred the Great and is inscribed 'AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN,' meaning 'Alfred ordered me made.' The jewel was once attached to a rod, probably of wood, at its base. After lots of discussion, it is now generally accepted that it is the handle for a pointer stick for following words when reading a book. It is an exceptional and unusual example of Anglo-Saxon jewellery.



Ankh: If you've read *The Secret of the Sacred Scarab*, you'll remember that Adam discovers he has a mark on his back resembling the ankh sign. This is very important and marks him as the bearer of the sacred scarab, which contains the first Stone of Power. This sign was also known as breath of life, the key of the Nile or *crux ansata* (Latin meaning 'cross with a handle'). It was the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic character that read 'life,' a triliteral sign for the consonants. It represents the concept of eternal life, which is the general meaning of the symbol. The Egyptian gods are often portrayed carrying it by its loop, or bearing one in each hand, arms crossed over

their chest. The ankh appears in the hands or nearby almost every deity in the Egyptian pantheon (including pharaohs).

Anglo-Saxons: The Anglo-Saxons inhabited Great Britain from the 5th century. They comprised people from Germanic tribes who migrated to the island from continental Europe, their descendants, and indigenous British groups who adopted some aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture and language. The Anglo-Saxon period denotes the period of British history between about 450 and 1066, after their initial settlement, and up until the Norman Conquest.

Antidote: When the kids and Ink come up against one of the Eaters of Poison on the train, Ink and Smudge get poisoned. They need an antidote. An antidote is a substance which can counteract a form of poisoning. The term ultimately derives from the Greek *antididonai*, ‘given against.’ You’ll find much more on poisons in *The Book of Venoms & Antidotes*, which you can also download from the website.

Archaeomancer: Someone with the skill to simply touch an object and see things about that object. He would be a living link to history. Although Archie is overjoyed to discover Adam has this skill, or so he thinks, Humphrey believes that no one should know about Adam’s connection to the Stones of Power.

Arthepius: It is said that in the twelfth century Arthepius, an alchemist, wrote *The Art of Prolonging Human Life* and is reported to have lived for a period of one thousand years, having perfected the secret of longevity. His writings are what the Eaters of Poison are looking for.

Arthur: King Arthur is a legendary British leader who, according to medieval histories and romances, led the defence of Britain against Saxon invaders in the late 5th and early 6th centuries AD. The details of Arthur’s story are mainly composed of folklore and literary invention, and his historical existence is debated and disputed by modern historians. The sparse historical background of Arthur is gleaned from various sources, including the *Annales Cambriae*, the *Historia Brittonum*, and the writings of Gildas. Arthur’s name also occurs in early poetic sources such as *Y Gododdin*. Arthur is considered to be one of the Nine Worthies. ‘Arthur among the Nine Worthies is always identified by three crowns, which signify regality, on his standard, his shield, or his robe.’ -- Geoffrey Ashe, *The Quest for Arthur’s Britain*. King Arthur is depicted here as one of the Nine Worthies, detail from the ‘Christian Heroes Tapestry’ dated c. 1385.

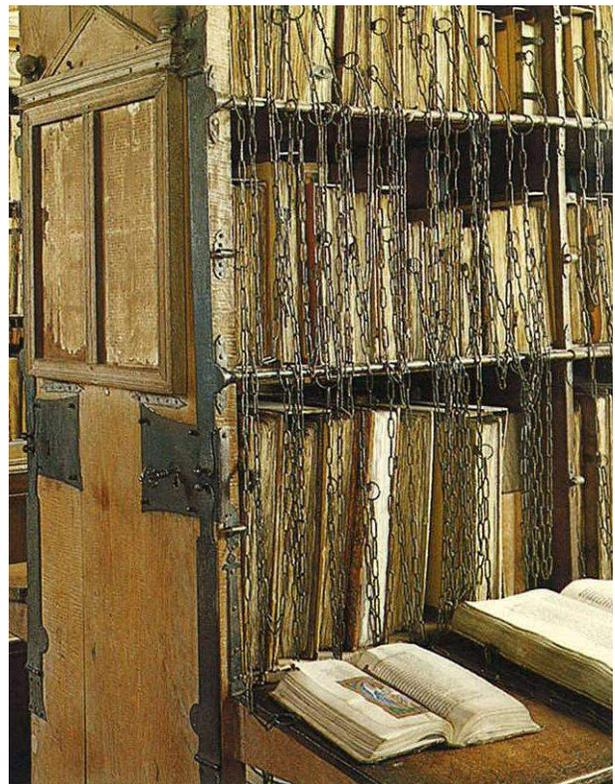


Atlantis: This is a summary of the story told by the philosopher Plato (428—348 BC). He claimed the original story came from Solon, an Athenian traveler, poet, and lawmaker (638—558 BC). According to Plato, Solon learned of the story of Atlantis from an Egyptian priest living in Sais, Egypt, when he visited Egypt. The writings of Plato have prompted theories and debate for over 2000 years. Plato was not the only person to speculate about Atlantis. There are numerous references to Atlantis by ancient authors, whose works date from 4000 BC to 450 AD (Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Indian writers). Many people believe the tale to be complete fiction; others believe that the story was inspired by catastrophic events that may have destroyed the Minoan civilization on the islands of Crete and Thera. Still others maintain that the story is an accurate telling of a long-lost and almost completely forgotten land.

“... there existed an island nation located in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, populated by a noble and powerful race. The people of this land possessed great wealth thanks to the natural resources found throughout their island. The island was a center for trade and commerce. The rulers of this land held sway over the people and land of their own island and well into Europe and Africa. This was the island of Atlantis. For generations the Atlanteans lived simple, virtuous lives. However, slowly they began to change. Greed and power began to corrupt them. The end of Atlantis came when a massive volcanic explosion rocked the island, creating gigantic tidal waves of destruction. Soon, in one violent surge it was gone. The island of Atlantis, its people, and its memory were swallowed by the sea.”

Atlantis is the source of the stories of Thoth, the great Egyptian god of wisdom, learning and writing. The magical powers of Thoth were so great, that the Egyptians had tales of a *Book of Thoth*, which would allow a person who read the sacred book to become the most powerful magician in the world. The book, which ‘the god of wisdom wrote with his own hand,’ was, though, a deadly book that brought nothing but pain and tragedy to those that read it, despite finding out about the ‘secrets of the gods themselves’ and ‘all that is hidden in the stars.’ The person who unites the Seven Stones of Power with the Stone of Fire will be able to read this book and become the greatest magician. Adam has to stop that happening!

Chained Library: When Bedwyr mentions in his diary about the books being chained to the shelves, he was not joking. A chained library is a library where the books are attached to their bookcase by a chain, which is sufficiently long to allow the books to be taken from their shelves and read, but



not removed from the library itself. This would prevent theft. The practice was usual for reference libraries (that is, the vast majority of libraries) from the Middle Ages to approximately the 18th century.

Caractacus: was a first-century British chieftain of the Catuvellauni tribe, who led the British resistance to the Roman conquest. He resisted the Romans for almost a decade, mixing guerrilla warfare with set-piece battles, but was unsuccessful in the latter. After his final defeat, he fled to the territory of Queen Cartimandua, who captured him and handed him over to the Romans. He was sentenced to death as a military prisoner, but made such an eloquent speech before his execution that the Emperor Claudius spared him.

Druids: A Druid was a member of the educated, professional class among the Celtic peoples of Gaul, Britain, Ireland, and possibly elsewhere during the Iron Age. The Druid class included law-speakers, poets and doctors, among other learned professions, although the best known among the Druids were the religious leaders. Very little is known about the ancient Druids. They left no written accounts of themselves, and the only evidence are a few descriptions left by Greek, Roman, and various scattered authors and artists, as well as stories created by later medieval Irish writers. Druidic lore consisted of a large number of verses learned by heart, and Julius Caesar remarked that it could take up to twenty years to complete the course of study.

Green Language: When they are looking at the birds, Adam hears something about 'the green language.' This is very important because the person who could read the *Book of Thoth* would be able to understand the language of the birds. In mythology, medieval literature and occultism, the language of the birds is thought to be a mystical, perfect and divine language, an angelic language or a magical language used by birds to communicate with the initiated.

Green Man: The Green Man is an ancient symbol of nature. He is generally depicted as face surrounded by or made from leaves. Branches or vines may sprout from the nose, mouth, nostrils or other parts of the face and these shoots may bear flowers or fruit.



Jacinth: When Archie reads out a description of Excalibur, he mentions that the hilt contains the gem jacinth. Jacinth is an orange-red transparent variety of zircon used as a gemstone.

Library of Alexandria: Adam hears about the Library of Alexandria when the kids are reading Bedwyr's diary. The Royal Library of Alexandria or Ancient Library of Alexandria in Alexandria, Egypt, was one of the largest and most significant libraries of the ancient world. It was dedicated to the Muses, the nine goddesses of the arts. It flourished under the patronage of the Ptolemaic dynasty and functioned as a major center of scholarship from its construction in the 3rd century BC until the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC, with collections of works, lecture halls, meeting rooms, and gardens. The library was part of a larger research institution called the Musaeum of Alexandria, where many of the most famous thinkers of the ancient world studied. The library is famous for having been burned down, resulting in the loss of many scrolls and books; its destruction has become a symbol for the loss of cultural knowledge.

Mordred: He is known as a notorious traitor who fought King Arthur at the Battle of Camlann, where he was killed and Arthur fatally wounded. Tradition varies on his relationship to Arthur, some speculating that he was Arthur's illegitimate son by his half-sister Morgause. However, he was considered the legitimate son of Morgause, also known as Anna, with her husband King Lot of Orkney. His brothers or half-brothers are Gawain, Agravain, Gaheris, and Gareth.

Nine Worthies: The Nine Worthies are nine historical, scriptural and legendary personages who personify the ideals of chivalry as were established in the Middle Ages. All are commonly referred to as 'Princes' in their own right, despite whatever true titles each man may have held. In French they are called *Les Neuf Preux*, meaning Nine Valiants, which term gives a slightly more focused idea of the sort of moral virtue they were deemed to represent so perfectly, that of soldierly courage and generalship. The study of the life of each would thus form a good education for the aspirant to chivalric status. The Nine Worthies include three good pagans: Hector, the son of King Priam of Troy, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar; three good Jews: Joshua, David, and Judas Maccabeus; and three good Christians: King Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey of Bouillon.

Neteru: The Neteru are mentioned in Bedwyr's diary. Ancient Egyptians described the 'First Time,' the *Zep Tepi*, when the gods ruled in their country, as a golden age during which darkness was banished and humanity, emerging into the light, was offered the gifts of civilization. They describe the gods as strong and beautiful beings called the Neteru, who lived on earth with humankind and ruled from Heliopolis and other temples up and down the Nile. All possessed a range of supernatural powers that included the ability to change into animals, birds, reptiles, trees, or plants. Their words and deeds seem to have reflected human emotions and preoccupations. Likewise, although they were portrayed as stronger and more intelligent than humans were, it was believed that they could grow sick—or even die, or be killed—under certain circumstances. The ancient Egyptians viewed the Neteru—the ten founder gods—and their

descendants, the Shemsu Hor as to be actual historical personages, who formed an ancient prehistory of which we know very little.

Palimpsest: A palimpsest is a manuscript page, either from a scroll or a book, from which the text has been either scraped or washed off so that the page can be reused, for another document. Parchment and other materials for writing or engraving upon were expensive to produce, and in the interest of economy were re-used wherever possible. Adam is very worried that this might have happened to the Scroll of the Ancients.

Paleographer: Humphrey Biddle is a paleographer who is very important in helping the kids in their quest. It is the study of ancient and historical handwriting (that is to say, of the forms and processes of writing, not the textual content of documents). Included in the discipline is the practice of deciphering, reading, and dating historical manuscripts, and the cultural context of writing, including the methods with which writing and books were produced, and the history of scriptoria. This is important in understanding, authenticating, and dating ancient texts.

Shemsu-Hor: This group is very important in Adam and Justin's quest, as they held the great secrets of power, handed down from the Neteru. The greatest of the ancient centers of astronomical wisdom was the temple city of Heliopolis, also called the 'City of the Sun.' It now lies completely buried under the Al Matareya suburb of modern Cairo. The Heliopolitan priests were very well informed in the mysteries of the heavens since they spent most of their time recording and observing movements of the sun and the moon, the planets and the stars. Over thousands of years, the Heliopolitan priesthood had kept careful records of the movements of these astral bodies. Even the Greeks and Romans were in awe of the level of astronomical knowledge these priests had acquired. Herodotus, Aristotle, and Plato credited the Egyptians with the invention of the solar year and the zodiac, and also noted that they had accumulated thousands of years of astronomical records, possibly over 10,000 years' worth. It was at Heliopolis that the Shemsu-Hor kept the knowledge of the ancient Egyptian astronomical religion alive for thousands of years. This ancient priesthood, some believe, had lived in Heliopolis for thousands of years before even the beginning of the historic period in Egypt (from 3100 BC). There they carefully guided the local population, teaching them the arts of astronomy, mathematics, agriculture, and especially architecture, in order to ensure that the ancient astronomical knowledge would continue. The results of their efforts were what we now know as the pyramids and Sphinx—hieroglyphics in the form of architecture, the ancient astronomical knowledge frozen in stone. The Shemsu-Hor were not kings, but rather powerful and enlightened individuals practising their skills at the sacred site of Heliopolis-Giza thousands of years before history began.

QUIZ ANSWERS

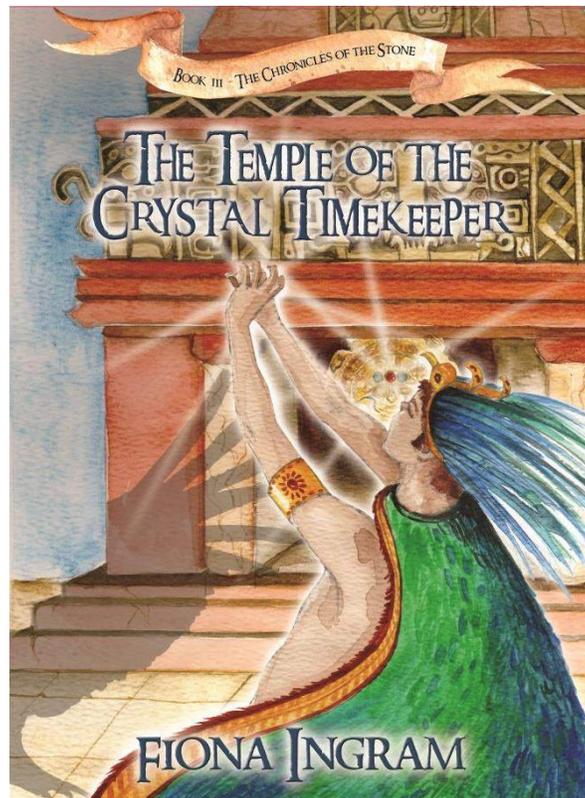


1. What was the name of King Arthur's wicked half-sister? Morgana le Fay
2. Who was King Arthur's wife? Guinevere
3. Name King Arthur's magical sword. Excalibur
4. What was the name of King Arthur's legendary castle? Camelot
5. Which knight is not a Knight of the Round Table? Sir Bruce
6. What relation to Arthur was Uther Pendragon? His father
7. Sir Gawain had a very scary encounter with The Green Knight.
8. On which date in the year this encounter take place? New Year's Day
9. Before King Arthur died, he surrendered his famous sword to The Lady of the Lake.
10. Some legends say that King Arthur was born in Tintagel which is in Cornwall.

COMING NEXT

THE TEMPLE OF THE CRYSTAL TIMEKEEPER

Continuing the adventure that ended in Britain just a short while ago, cousins Adam and Justin Sinclair, with their friend Kim Maleka, are once again hunting for the third Stone of Power, one of seven mysterious stones lost centuries ago. The third stone might be located in an ancient city, hidden in the depths of the Mexican jungle. Of course, their old adversary, Dr. Khalid, is close behind as the trio make their way through the jungle in search of the lost city of stone gods. This time Adam will clash with a terrible enemy who adopts the persona of an evil Aztec god, Tezcatlipoca. Will they emerge alive from the jungle?



PICTURE CREDITS

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