

# A Gazetteer of Arthurian Onomastic and Topographic Folklore

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## 1. Introduction

One aspect of the Arthurian legend which has often received little consideration is Arthur's frequent appearance in the onomastic and topographic folklore of Britain and Brittany. Most usually the attitude has been that we should 'conclude that literature rather than genuine folklore accounts for most of them'.<sup>1</sup> Such notions do not, however, stand up to scrutiny. Instead, as Oliver Padel has recently demonstrated, Arthurian onomastic and topographic tales should probably be seen as central to the legend and its origins. Arthur appears to have been primarily a mythical and/or legendary hero, 'the leader of a band of heroes who live outside society, whose main world is one of magical animals, giants, and other wondrous happenings, located in the wild parts of the landscape'. This concept of Arthur was, from at least the ninth century, frequently manifested through tales attached to remarkable features in this landscape. In particular, natural rocks and prehistoric antiquities were often used by these tales, reputedly being the visible local remnants of Arthur's activity, sometimes – but by no means always – called 'Arthur's X' in remembrance of this.<sup>2</sup>

The above concept of Arthur as a local hero of topographic and onomastic folklore can be demonstrated wherever a Brittonic language was once spoken – in southern Scotland, Wales, the Welsh borders, south-west England, and Brittany – and it is present

<sup>1</sup> G. Ashe, 'Topography and Local Legends', in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia* (New York & London, 1996), pp. 455-58 at p. 457.

<sup>2</sup> O.J. Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 27 (1994), pp. 1-31, quotation at p. 14.

in even the earliest sources (see below). Moreover, such a situation is not, in fact, at all unusual; such local folk-tales, especially place-name tales, are a recurring feature of literature and folklore in Celtic languages. For example, the legend of Fionn mac Cumhaill in early Irish tradition – which Padel and others see as closely analogous to the early Arthurian legend – appears to have originated in just such disparate pieces of local folklore. These usually narrated a single episode in the hero's life and adventures in the wilderness, with a distinctive landscape-feature or place-name serving as the focus for the tale; a coherent account of Fionn's life and exploits only seems to have emerged later as a literary development of this oral tradition.<sup>1</sup> Similarly the Tristan legend, as found in the works of the continental poets such as Bérout, is now generally accepted as deriving from Cornish onomastic and topographic folklore.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, so popular were these stories that they became a genre in their own right, known to the Irish as *dinnsheanchas*, 'place-lore', the Black Book of Carmarthen *Englynion y Beddau* being a specialised Welsh example of this, concerned with the supposed resting places of mythical/folkloric heroes (including several Arthurian characters).

What follows is split into two sections. The first briefly highlights key early literary references to such Arthurian onomastic and topographic folklore. The second comprises a gazetteer of some of this material. With regards to the latter, although the gazetteer itself is restricted largely to that material associated with a name in the form 'Arthur's X', other Arthurian onomastic and topographic lore did, of course, exist. Indeed, it is recorded from the earliest period right through to the nineteenth century, and it is arguably dominant in the non-Galfridian material. Important instances of this – for example, place-names reflecting the localisation of the various tales in *Culhwch ac Olwen* in the Welsh landscape, such as *Mesur-y-Peir*, 'Measure of the Cauldron', referring to the place where Arthur and his men landed with a captured cauldron – are discussed below and in T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007). However, the nature of this material, especially the unidentified location of some of the names, means that it is not readily amenable for inclusion in a gazetteer.

For this reason the focus in the catalogue provided below is on the more easily locatable and classifiable subset of the lore which relates to a place or object named after (and by implication, belonging to) Arthur, such as 'Arthur's Stone' and 'Arthur's Chair'. This is, of course, just that material which is most often criticised and subject to scepticism over its origins. In part, this is justified. As Grooms has noted, much of this type of Arthurian topographic and onomastic folklore is only recorded from the sixteenth century onwards, with one class – 'Arthur's Quoits' – certainly unable to have an origin any earlier than this.<sup>3</sup> In consequence, antiquarian invention cannot be discounted for a number of the names. On the other hand, whilst some are late, others are most definitely early. Thus, to give a few examples, we have an 'Arthur's Seat' and an 'Arthur's Oven' recorded as early as 1113, an 'Arthur's Palace' in 1120 (which is also known as 'Arthur's O'en' in the thirteenth century), an 'Arthur's Bower' documented in the 1170s, an 'Arthur's Seat' described in *c.* 1190, and various 'Arthur's Stones' and other similar items referred to from at least the thirteenth century onwards.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, in the perhaps tenth-century poem *Marwnat Cadwallon ap Cadfan* we learn that a seventh-century battle was supposedly fought at *Ffynnawn Uetnyr*, 'Bedwyr's Spring' (Bedwyr being one of Arthur's closest companions in the earliest stratum of the Arthurian legend and having

<sup>1</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 22; D. Ó hÓgáin, *Fionn mac Cumhaill: Images of the Gaelic Hero* (Dublin, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> See especially O.J. Padel, 'The Cornish Background of the Tristan Stories', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, 1 (1981), pp. 53-81.

<sup>3</sup> C. Grooms, *The Giants of Wales. Cewri Cymru*, Welsh Studies vol 10 (Lampeter, 1993), pp. 1, 118; Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 27; T. Green, *Concepts of Arthur* (Stroud, 2007), pp. 244-45.

<sup>4</sup> See below for some discussion of these; also Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', pp. 4-6, 25-26 and Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, pp. 116, 127.

no existence outside of this material).<sup>1</sup> All this would tend to confirm that such items of local folklore had a genuine and early place in Arthurian story. Although the earliest tales (such as those related in *Culhwch ac Olwen*) are apparently dominated by topographic and onomastic folklore which is not in the form 'Arthur's X', this is clearly no reason to dismiss this material. Furthermore, Padel<sup>2</sup> has established a good context for these type of names within the non-Galfridian legend, which makes their existence comprehensible without recourse to wide-spread antiquarian invention. Quite simply, this is exactly the type of folklore that the nature of Arthur in the early Welsh sources would lead us to expect to find in the British landscape.

Indeed, it is worth remembering that both the names and the stories attached to these 'remarkable features' in the landscape – the visible reminders of Arthur's adventures and deeds – are astonishingly consistent across the centuries in their portrayal of the British non-Galfridian Arthur. The stories and place-names recorded by nineteenth- and twentieth-century collectors of oral traditions differ little from those recorded by chance in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, or even those found in the ninth-century *Englynion y Beddau* and *Historia Brittonum*. This, in itself, does give the lie to the old view that post-Galfridian and, especially, post-medieval Arthurian onomastic and topographic folklore is of no value as it mainly results from (or is contaminated by) the international literary legend.<sup>3</sup> To cite one example of this notable continuity from the perspective of stories, the Welsh *Carreg Carn March Arthur* ('Stone of Arthur's Steed's Hoof, bearing the footprint of Arthur's horse made as he hunted the monstrous Afanc) and the 'Arthur's Stone' in St Columb, Cornwall (which is said to bear the impression of the footprints of Arthur's horse and is associated with the legends of him hunting in this area), bear very close comparison with the Arthurian tale surrounding a remarkable stone atop Corn Gafallt, a hill near Rhaeadr, recorded in the *Historia Brittonum* of 829/30.<sup>4</sup>

In the light of the above, the late recording of some of this lore, especially that where the place-name is in the form 'Arthur's X' (for instance the *Coetan Arthur*, 'Arthur's Quoits'), does not seem so much of a problem as has sometimes been assumed. Whilst allowing that some examples will have been invented by antiquarians and thus not have genuine folk-tales underlying and explaining them, mass invention cannot be seen as the most credible explanation for the corpus as a whole. Place-lore appears to be too central to the early Arthurian legend, and the type and nature of the names and stories are too consistent over the course of more than 1000 years. As Padel has recently observed,

What interests us, and is so impressive, is not the antiquity of any individual name, but the vitality and consistency of the tradition in the various Brittonic areas... The folklore may in some cases have been boosted by the literary developments... [but] it remained largely unaffected by the literary Arthurian cycle, and retained its character throughout the period.<sup>5</sup>

Before ending this introduction, three final features of the material categorised and listed in the gazetteer require comment. First, all instances known to the present writer of a name in the form 'Arthur's X' are included, but the level of detail of the material covered varies considerably between instances. In some cases we have a full tale recorded or

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<sup>1</sup> J.T. Koch and J. Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe & Early Ireland & Wales*, fourth edition (Aberystwyth, 2003), p. 373; compare the 'Arthur's Fountain' and the 'Arthur's Well' noted in the gazetteer.

<sup>2</sup> Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', *passim*.

<sup>3</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', pp. 25-30; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 242-45.

<sup>4</sup> See below and Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur', pp. 2-3, 28; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 67-70, 105, 242-43.

<sup>5</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', pp. 27 and 29-30.

summarised; in others we have only the name surviving, not the explanatory story that originally accompanied it. In such circumstances the original folk-tale can only be guessed at, through comparison with either Arthurian literary texts or other similar onomastic and topographic lore, Arthurian or otherwise (this is a problem common to all characters who feature in topographic and onomastic folklore).<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, such instances where only the name – not the story – survives that are most open, still, to the suspicion of post-medieval antiquarian invention, though it should be recalled here that we find just the same situation in the medieval period too, so that (for example) only the name ‘Bedwyr’s Well’ survives in the early Welsh poem *Marwnat Cadwallon ap Cadfan*. Scepticism in some of these cases may well be justified, but hyper-scepticism is certainly not.

The second is the fact that Arthur appears to have been seen as a giant and he competes with other giants for prominence in his folkloric connection with various ‘quoits’ and other ‘remarkable’ features in the landscape. Such a concept can also perhaps be observed in early Welsh literary sources – including *Historia Brittonum* §73, *Preideu Annwfn* and *Breuddwyd Rhonabwy* – but it is particularly clear in the onomastic and topographic lore, with folklore collectors such as Myrddin Fardd referring to stories of ‘Arthur the Giant’ and a large section of Grooms recent survey of Welsh Giant-lore devoted to tales of Arthur. As is noted in the gazetteer, the very nature of many of the ‘Arthur’s X’ names necessarily implies a gigantic size and strength for Arthur.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, it should be noted that the following gazetteer is inevitably biased. Some regions saw their local folklore recorded in detail and from a very early date, whilst in others such antiquarian activity was largely lacking. This fact almost certainly lays at the root of the large number of Welsh sites in this list compared to, for example, the paucity of material from the south-west. That this situation does not reflect reality can be readily seen from the work of the mid-nineteenth-century Cornish folklorist Robert Hunt, who stated that in eastern Cornwall ‘all the marks of any peculiar kind found on rocks... are almost always attributed to Arthur’ and that ‘King Arthur’s beds, and chairs, and caves[, and quoits] are frequently to be met with’, but who then seems content to describe more fully only one such site, the stone in St Columb, Cornwall.<sup>3</sup> Another factor which affects the distribution is, naturally, the availability of such records – thus Grooms’ material from Brittany is as yet unpublished, and there is therefore very little Breton folklore in the following gazetteer. In consequence, the gazetteer must be considered a provisional list; its compilation, needless to say, owes a considerable debt to Chris Grooms’ important study and Geoffrey Ashe’s *Traveller’s Guide to Arthurian Britain*.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Arthurian Folklore: A Brief Guide to Early Literary References

### *a. Historia Brittonum §73 and Culhwch ac Olwen*

That one major expression of Arthur’s early legend was through local onomastic and topographic folklore is made very clear by the *Historia Brittonum*, written in A.D. 829 or 830. Chapters 67-75 of this work contain a description of various *mirabilia*, ‘marvels’,

<sup>1</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> See further Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, particularly chapter two for Arthur and chapter four for his gigantic companions and family. See also Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, and Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, pp. 113-28.

<sup>3</sup> R. Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England. The Drolls, Traditions and Superstitions of Old Cornwall*, third edition of 1881 (Felinfach, 1993), I, p. 186. Similarly Borlase remarked of Cornwall in the mid-eighteenth century that ‘whatever is great, and the use and Author unknown, is attributed to Arthur’, although he only identifies a few such sites: Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Grooms, *Giant of Wales*, pp. 113-28; G. Ashe, *The Traveller’s Guide to Arthurian Britain* (Glastonbury, 1997).

from Britain and Ireland that the author had either heard of or had personally experienced; two of these are Arthurian in character. One describes a topographic folk-tale relating to Arthur's murder and burial of his son, Amr:

There is another wonder in the country called Ergyng (*Erving*). There is a tomb there by a spring, called Llygad Amr (*Licat Amr*); the name of the man who was buried in the tomb was Amr. He was the son of the warrior Arthur, and he killed him there and buried him. Men come to measure the tomb, and it is sometimes six feet long, sometimes nine, sometimes twelve, sometimes fifteen. At whatever measure you measure it on one occasion, you never find it again of the same measure, and I have tried it myself.<sup>1</sup>

This is without a doubt a chance – and exceptionally early; given that most British folklore goes unrecorded before the twelfth century – survival of an onomastic topographic tale drawn from local, popular folklore, here designed to explain the name *Licat Amr* and an associated grave. The story of Arthur killing Amr is otherwise unknown, although 'Amhar son of Arthur' appears in *Geraint* as one of Arthur's four chamberlains. Nonetheless, this is sufficient to demonstrate both the early existence of this material and the manner in which remarkable features in the wilds of the landscape had explanatory Arthurian stories attached to them. Even more interesting is the other Arthurian *mirabile*:

There is another wonder in the country called Builth. There is a heap of stones there, and one of these stones placed on the top of the pile has the footprint of a dog on it. When he hunted Twrch Trwyth, Cafal (*Cabal*), the warrior Arthur's hound, impressed his footprint on the stone, and Arthur later brought together the pile of stones, under the stone in which was his dog's footprint, and it is called Carn Cafal (*Carn Cabal*). Men come and take the stone in their hands for the space of a day and a night, and on the morrow it is found upon the stone pile.<sup>2</sup>

*Carn Cabal* is a prehistoric cairn which gives its name to Corn Cafallt, a hill near Rhaeadr (Powys). Again we have an unusual and wondrous landscape feature having its existence and name being explained through the attachment to it of an Arthurian onomastic and topographic tale. This 'wonder' is particularly interesting as we know from the eleventh-century prose tale *Culhwch ac Olwen* that the hunting of the giant divine boar *Twrch Trwyth* (more correctly *Trwyd*) was a developed and important Arthurian tale. It is consequently significant that here, at its earliest occurrence, it is thoroughly rooted in local folklore. Indeed, this appears true of the tale even in *Culhwch* too: there the hunt is localised in a number of places across south Wales, such as Cwm Kerwyn, the highest point on the Preselly mountains, and various sites with names mainly associated – either correctly or through folk-etymology – with pigs.<sup>3</sup>

The tale of *Twrch Trwyd* is not the only one in *Culhwch* which appears to have been expressed through and/or had its origins in local onomastic and topographic folklore. For example, the tale of Arthur's raid on Ireland for the cauldron of Diwrnach Wyddel – which is a euhemerism of Arthur's cauldron-seeking raid into the Otherworld related in the early poem *Preideu Annwfn* – is clearly derivative of a pre-existing onomastic tale in *Culhwch*:

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<sup>1</sup> *Nennius: British History and The Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. J. Morris (Chichester, 1980), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Nennius*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> See Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 67-72.

And they disembarked at the house of Llwydeu son of Cel Coed, at Porth Cerddin in Dyfed. And Mesur-y-Peir [a place-name, ‘Measure of the Cauldron’] is there.<sup>1</sup>

This place-name is now lost; however, Kenneth Jackson has identified a *Messur Pritguenn* (‘Measure of [Arthur’s ship] Prydwen’) in the twelfth-century charters of the Book of Llandaf, which he considers to be part of this onomastic tale and confirmation of its pre-existence.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, a deeper investigation implies that many early Arthurian tales may have been expressed, at least partially, through such material. To cite some further examples, the Arthurian killings of the Very Black Witch and Dillus Farfawg in *Culhwch* both look to fall into this category of Arthurian tales which derive from (or are expressed in) local folklore, as does the clearly folklore-derived battle between Arthur and the giant Ritho/Retho in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*.<sup>3</sup>

### ***b. The Latin Saints’ Lives***

Arthur makes a number of appearances in the eleventh- to thirteenth-century Latin Saints’ Lives. There he is most usually ‘an arrogant, grasping tyrant who is humbled in ignominious defeat, not in any armed struggle but in his childish greed and even in his failure to fulfil his traditional role as giant or dragon-slayer’. Nonetheless, it has recently been concluded that ‘the Arthurian episodes appear to be genuine fragments of Arthurian legend [consistent with the portrayal of Arthur found in *Culhwch ac Olwen* etc.], manipulated so that they may display Arthur in the worst possible light.<sup>4</sup> In several instances these episodes appear, once again, to be at least in part drawn from local onomastic and topographic lore. Thus in Lifris’ *Vita Sancti Cadoci*, written between 1061 and 1104, we find two tales of Arthur unknown from any other source, one seeming to reflect a topographic folktale involving the exchange of magical or Otherworldly animals at a ford, and another that looks to be a similar folktale in which Arthur is a mighty warrior, protector, and defender of the realm/guardian of the border who exists outside of normal society.<sup>5</sup> Also otherwise unknown are the tales of Arthur slaying dragons which have been manipulated by the authors of the Welsh *Vita Prima Sancti Carantoci* (c. 1100?) and the twelfth-century Breton *Vita Eufлами*. In the case of the latter at least, the story would seem to have already been in existence by c. 1110 – judging by the evidence of the Perros Relief – and it shows very clear signs of deriving from local topographic lore.<sup>6</sup>

### ***c. Englynion y Beddau, De Rebus Gestis Anglorum & Ymddiddan Gwyddno Garanhir ac Gwyn fab Nudd***

As noted in the introduction, the mid-late ninth-century *Englynion y Beddau* is effectively an early Welsh catalogue of ‘place-lore’, concerned with the supposed resting places of

<sup>1</sup> *The Mabinogion*, trans. G. Jones and T. Jones (London, 1949), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> See J.T. Koch ‘The Celtic Lands’, in N.J. Lacy (ed.) *Medieval Arthurian Literature: A Guide to Recent Research* (New York, 1996), pp. 239-322 at pp. 256-57.

<sup>3</sup> Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, chapter three for a full discussion and development of these points; for place-names in *Culhwch ac Olwen*, see also *Culhwch and Olwen. An Edition and Study of the Oldest Arthurian Tale*, edd. R. Bromwich and D. Simon Evans (Cardiff, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> B.F. Roberts ‘*Culhwch ac Olwen*, the Triads, Saints’ Lives’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 73-95 at p.83.

<sup>5</sup> Padel, ‘The Nature of Arthur’, pp. 7-8; Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 128-29, 199-200.

<sup>6</sup> See Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, chapter three for a full discussion.

mythical/folkloric heroes. Although it claims no knowledge of Arthur's grave, it does refer to that of his nephew, Gwalchmai – 'The grave of Gwalchmai is in Peryddon (*periton*) / as a reproach to men' – and to that of one of his constant companion, Bedwyr – 'the grave of Bedwyr is on Tryfan hill.'<sup>1</sup>

Clearly in these we have further evidence for the very early existence of Arthurian burial-folklore, like that related in the *Historia Brittonum*. Unfortunately no further details are given of the stories attached to these sites in the *Englynion y Beddan*. However, the grave of Gwalchmai is also referred to by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* of c. 1125:

At this time (1066-87) was found in the province of Wales called R(h)os the tomb of Walwen, who was the not degenerate nephew of Arthur by his sister... [This] was found in the time of King William [the Conqueror, 1066-1087] upon the sea shore, fourteen feet in length; and here some say he was wounded by his foes and cast out in a shipwreck, but according to others he was killed by his fellow-citizens at a public banquet. Knowledge of the truth therefore remains doubtful, although neither story would be inconsistent with the defence of his fame.<sup>2</sup>

This expansion of the *Englynion y Beddan*'s brief reference obviously aids considerably our understanding of the underlying folktale – though much is obviously missing – and both the size of the grave and nature of the tale bear comparison with the grave of Amr, Arthur's son, in the *mirabilia* of the *Historia Brittonum*. With regards to the location of Gwalchmai's grave, the site of the grave recorded in both sources would appear, upon investigation, to be identical, suggesting that the discovery in 'the time of King William' was either an opening or excavation of the traditional site of Gwalchmai's burial recorded in the *Englynion y Beddan*.<sup>3</sup>

Incidentally, another of Arthur's sons, Llacheu, also appears to have a traditional burial site. In the perhaps tenth-century *Ymddiddan Gnyddno Garanbir ac Gwyn fab Nudd* we find evidence for the existence of some story of his death:

I have been where Llacheu was slain  
the son of Arthur, awful [/marvellous] in songs  
when ravens croaked over blood.<sup>4</sup>

Where this occurred is not stated but we find, in a thirteenth-century elegy by Bleddyn Fardd, the statement that 'Llachau was slain below Llech Ysgar'. Whilst the place is unidentified – though it was the site of one of the courts of Madog ap Maredudd, d. 1160 – Sims-Williams has suggested that there could well have been a local legend underlying the above like those cited previously.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. Sims-Williams 'The Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 33-71 at p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> E.K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (London, 1927), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 170-71; Sims-Williams, 'Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> *The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legend*, ed. and trans. J.B. Coe and S. Young (Felinfach, 1995), p. 125.

<sup>5</sup> Sims-Williams, 'Early Welsh Arthurian Poems', p. 44; O.J. Padel, *Arthur in Medieval Welsh Literature* (Cardiff, 2000), p. 99, suggests that 'below Llech Ysgar' might refer to Crickheath Hill south of Oswestry, Shropshire.

***d. De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudensis, Liber Floridus, Itinerarium  
Kambrie & Marwnat Cadwallon ap Cadfan***

Herman's *De Miraculis Sanctae Mariae Laudensis*, 'The Miracles of St Mary of Laon', is an account of a journey made in 1113 to Britain by some canons of Laon, in northern France.<sup>1</sup> From the current perspective the primary importance of this text lies with the fact that, whilst travelling between Exeter and Bodmin, the canons were shown the 'seat' and the 'oven' of King Arthur and were told that this was 'Arthurian country'. These are some of the earliest recorded instances of specific sites actually being granted a name of the form 'Arthur's X', although we lack the stories which explained why these sites were so described (see the gazetteer below for some later comparative material that might well allow these to be guessed at).

Similar unexplained pieces of onomastic and topographic folklore are found in other early sources too. Lambert of St Omer, in his *Liber Floridus* of 1120, made additions to the *mirabilia* of the *Historia Brittonum* including a building known as 'Arthur's Palace', which is now generally acknowledged to be a circular building of Roman date near Stirling (Scotland) known as 'Arthur's O'en' in the thirteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Gerald of Wales refers, in his *c.* 1190 *Itinerarium Kambrie* (I.2), to a hill 'called Kairarthur, that is Arthur's seat, because of the twin peaks of a projection rising up in the form of a chair', to be identified as Pen y Fan, the highest point of the Brecon Beacons.<sup>3</sup> And in the perhaps tenth-century poem *Marwnat Cadwallon ap Cadfan* we learn that a seventh-century battle was supposedly fought at *Ffynnawn Uetnyr*, 'Bedwyr's Spring', a potentially very early instance of Arthurian naming and one which, once again, naturally implies some kind of lost topographic legend.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. A Gazetteer of Arthurian Onomastic and Topographic Folklore**

#### ***a. Arthur's Stones***

There are numerous 'Arthur's Stones' (usually, in Welsh, *Carreg Arthur* or *Maen Arthur*). The implication is that these are enormous and remarkable stones that Arthur's gigantic strength allowed him to mark his mark upon, or place in their current position, whilst wandering in the wilds of the landscape.<sup>5</sup> Although some may well be antiquarian inventions, Padel has established a convincing context for these names and we have examples back into the medieval period – as such there is little reason to doubt that a large proportion represent the remnants of genuine onomastic and topographic folktales, created at various times over the past 1000 years. One example is a Neolithic or Bronze Age burial-chamber found in Herefordshire and first recorded in the thirteenth century (SO318430).<sup>6</sup> Other examples include:

- ❖ A double megalithic chambered tomb with capstone in Llanrhidian Lower on the Gower peninsula (SS49139055): 'Legend has it that when Arthur was walking through Carmarthenshire on his way to Camlann, he felt a pebble in

<sup>1</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', pp. 4-6, 8-10; J.S.P. Tatlock, 'The English Journey of the Laon Canons', *Speculum*, 8 (1933), pp. 454-65.

<sup>2</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 25-26.

<sup>4</sup> Koch and Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age*, p. 373.

<sup>5</sup> Padel, 'The Nature of Arthur'; Grooms, *The Giants of Wales*.

<sup>6</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 4; Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, pp. 115-16.



his shoe and tossed it away. It flew seven miles over Burry Inlet and landed in Gower, on top of the smaller stones of Maen Cetti.’<sup>1</sup>

- ❖ Two ‘Arthur’s Stone’s are mentioned in Wales in the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in Bettws, Carmarthenshire (SN6441212)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in Manafon, Montgomery (SJ12960496)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in Llanfair Caereinion, Montgomery (SJ1006)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ on Berwyn Mountains, Montgomery (SJ1139)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in Llanddwywe-is-y-graig, Merioneth (SH60332283)
- ❖ A stone circle known as ‘Arthur’s Stones’ in Llanaber, Merioneth (SH63161886)
- ❖ The ‘Stones of the Sons of Arthur’ are a group of standing stones in Mynachlog-ddu, Pembrokeshire (SN11813102) where there are numerous other Arthurian sites. They are apparently meant to represent the site of a battle
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ (in Denbigh, SJ224470) where a giantess called on ‘Arthur the Giant’ from the Eglwyseg Rocks for help against St Collen
- ❖ The 25 ton capstone of an ancient burial chamber near Reynoldston, north of Cefn Brynis, West Glamorgan (SS490905) is called Arthur’s stone and his ghost is occasionally said to emerge from underneath it – it is explained as a stone that was tossed from Arthur’s shoe
- ❖ A megalithic burial of c. 3000 BC is known as Arthur’s Stone, just north of Dorstone (SD3141)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in Llanfechell parish, Anglesey around half a mile from the parish church (SH36849025)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ near Colomendy Lodge, Denbigh (SJ13226938)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in the parish of Dolbenmaen, Caernarvonshire (SH509434)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ lying at the top of a hill in Maen Arthur Wood near Pont-rhyd-y-groes, Cardiganshire (SN726730), with the name of Arthur’s horse present in nearby Rhos Gafallt
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ near Penarthur, Pembrokeshire (SM746267) and related in folklore to a Coetan Arthur (Arthur’s Quoit)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ near Coupar Angus, Perthshire (NO261430)
- ❖ ‘Stone Arthur’ is on top of a mountain in Westmorland (NY348092)

In addition to these, there are several ‘Arthur’s Stones’ whose origin-stories directly referenced Arthur’s (gigantic?) horse:

- ❖ Two instances of *Carreg Carn March Arthur*, the ‘Stone of Arthur’s Steed’s Hoof’, one in Llanferres parish, Denbigh (SJ203626) and the other near Llyn Barfog above Aber-tafol, Merioneth (SN65059816).<sup>3</sup> The latter is associated with Arthur’s dragging of the demonic *Afanc* from Llyn Barfog, the referenced marks being left on the stone by Arthur’s horse’s hooves as he undertook this endeavour.

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<sup>1</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 117.

- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Stone’ in St Columb, Cornwall (SW913637), near Arthur’s Hunting Lodge/Seat, which is said to bear the impression of the footprints of Arthur’s horse and is associated with the legends of him hunting in this area
- ❖ The stone atop Corn Gafallt, a hill near Rhaeadr, in which Arthur’s steed left impressions of his hooves whilst Arthur chased the *Twrch Trwyd* (as recorded in the ninth-century *Historia Brittonum* §73 and fully developed in *Culhwch ac Olwen*). Although not actually named as an ‘Arthur’s Stone’, the similarity of this piece of lore to those noted above should be obvious. It may thus provide some indication of the kind of explanatory stories that many of these names once had attached to them, as well as further confirmation that such material had a genuine place in the Arthurian tradition.

### ***b. Arthur’s Quoits***

The name ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ (Welsh *Coeten Arthur*, ‘quoit’ meaning ‘discus, a solid circular object thrown for sport’) is usually applied to a cromlech and probably originally referred to the capstone of such prehistoric structures. Such features, when not being named after Arthur, are frequently associated with giants and reflect the concept of Arthur as a giant referred to above, Arthur having the requisite giant-like strength to fling these enormous stones for sport. It should be noted that these names must all date from after the sixteenth century, given that this is when the word ‘quoit’ was borrowed into Welsh. As such they are late coinings, but their relationship to the earlier ‘Arthur’s Stones’ is obvious and they fit well into the context which Padel has established for this type of Arthurian folklore. As such they testify to the continued vitality of such Arthurian onomastic and topographic folklore, although antiquarian invention of at least some of the examples below might be suspected.<sup>1</sup> Examples include:

- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ (SN40553860) with ‘a trace of Arthur’s thumbmark ... plainly seen on it now’ was tossed to Llangeler and Penboyr by Arthur from Pen Codfol; ‘another of the giant’s quoit landed on the land of Llwynffynnon; this place is called Cae Coetan Arthur’.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ A cromlech named ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ is found in Myllteyrn parish, Caernarvonshire (SH22973456). Grooms translates the following from Myrddin Fardd (writing in the nineteenth century), which is worth repeating for its illustration of the local folkloric traditions surrounding these stones:

A multitude of tales are told about him [Arthur]. Sometimes, he is portrayed as a king and mighty soldier, other times like a giant huge in size, and they are found the length and breadth of the land of stones, in tons in weight, and the tradition connects them with his name – a few of them have been in his shoes time after time, bothering him, and compelling him also to pull them, and to throw them some unbelievable distance... A cromlech recognized by the name ‘Coetan Arthur’ is on the land of Trefgwm, in the parish of Myllteyrn; it consists of a great stone resting on three other stones. The tradition states that ‘Arthur the Giant’ threw this coetan from Carn Fadrun, a mountain several miles

<sup>1</sup> Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, pp. 26-27; see further Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 244-45.

<sup>2</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 118.

from Trefgwm, and his wife took three other stones in her apron and propped them up under the coetan.<sup>1</sup>

- ❖ Three 'Arthur's Quoits' are mentioned in the nineteenth century in Ardudwy, Merionethshire (SH60852460, SH60322383 and SH58862287), where 'the tradition states that King Arthur threw it [them] from the top of Moelfre to the places where they rest presently. It is believed that marks of his fingers are the indentations to be seen on the last stone that was noted.'<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ Three 'Arthur's Quoit's mentioned in the nineteenth century in Caernarvonshire, in the parishes of Llanrug (SH536621), Llanystumdwy (SH49894132) and Rhoslan (SH48434096)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' (the remains of a burial chamber) recorded in Newport parish, Pembrokeshire (SN06033935)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Llangadog parish, Carmarthenshire (SN73772205) – this is a large rock in the river Sawddwy, which Arthur flung into position from Pen Arthur, a mile distant, and is accompanied by a similar large rock that was tossed from the shoe of a lady acquaintance of Arthur.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Llangadog parish, Carmarthenshire (SN69962298)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Mynachlog-ddu parish, Pembrokeshire (SN143325), said to have been hurled by Arthur from Henry's Moat parish, where there is a stone circle; associated with Arthur's Grave and Arthur's Cairn
- ❖ A burial chamber and large capstone lying near St David's Head, Pembrokeshire (SM725281), close-by an Arthur's Hill
- ❖ A 17 feet long stone known as Arthur's Quoit but now lost, near Llwydiarth, Anglesey (SH43278575)
- ❖ The capstone of the Llugwy dolmen near Moelfre, Anglesey (SH50138603)
- ❖ A capstone destroyed in 1845 in Llanllawer parish, Pembrokeshire (SN00683617)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' at Pentre Ifan, Pembrokeshire (SN09943701)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Caeo parish, Carmarthenshire (SN656348)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Celynin Parish, Caernarvonshire recorded in the seventeenth century (SH786719)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Llanjestin parish, Caernarvonshire recorded in the seventeenth century (SH251351)
- ❖ A lost 'Arthur's Quoit' in Caernarvonshire (SH419490)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' cromlech near Manorbier, Pembrokeshire (SS05939728)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Cas-ael parish, Pembrokeshire (SN00953025)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Llangwryfyon parish, Cardiganshire (SN60926748)
- ❖ Two 'Arthur's Quoit's in Clynnog, Caernarvonshire (SH407496)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' recorded in 1838 in Caernarvonshire (SH50894390)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' cromlech at Carn Penbery, Pembrokeshire (SM766293)
- ❖ A lost 'Arthur's Quoit' at the Pembroke estuary (SM97/00-1)
- ❖ A cromlech known as Arthur's Quoit in Pembrokeshire (SM 92)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Quoit' in Llanwnda parish, Pembrokeshire (SM919380)

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<sup>1</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 118-19.

<sup>2</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, pp. 120-21.

- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ or ‘Giant’s Quoit’ cromlech in St Columb Major parish, Cornwall (SW923619)
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ (a capstone of a cromlech) near Tintagel, Cornwall
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ near Llanenddwyn, Monmouthshire (SH588229), sometimes known as ‘Arthur’s Stone’, which is part of a chambered long cairn
- ❖ Trethevy Quoit in Cornwall (SX259689) is sometimes called ‘Arthur’s Quoit’

### c. *Arthur’s Dining Sites*

There are a number of sites which claim to be associated with Arthur dining in the wilderness. Certainly some of these, at least, ought to be seen to parallel the *fulachta* – ancient cooking places in wild areas – often attributed to Fionn and his men, whose legend closely parallels that of the non-Galfridian Arthur.

Two sites carry the name ‘Arthur’s Oven’. One of these was seen in 1113 by some canons of Laon, in northern France, who were touring England to try and raise funds for their monastery after a fire the previous year. It is probably the ‘King’s Oven’ (*furnus regis*) recorded on Dartmoor in the next century and beyond (SX674812). This was a feature prominent enough to be used as a marker in the bounds of the royal forest of Dartmoor in 1240, and it is believed to be an ancient tin-smelting furnace, which has been abandoned and (function forgotten) later appropriated by the Arthurian legend to feature in onomastic and topographic lore. Another ‘Arthur’s Oven’ is a circular building of Roman date near Stirling (NS879827), known as Arthur’s O’en (Oven) from at least the thirteenth century and destroyed in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Also relevant is *Ffynnon Cegin Arthur*, ‘The Spring of Arthur’s Kitchen’, in Llanddeiniolen parish, Cardiganshire (SH555648), which is mentioned by the Cardiganshire poet Ieuan ap Rhydderch (*fl.* 1430-70) thus: ‘Some vapour surrounding Arthur’s Kitchen, Rust on every commote of pain, an ugly riddle, phantom’s snare’. R.J. Thomas commented that ‘The spring is called Ffynnon Cegin Arthur, not because there is any direct connection with Arthur, but because it was a common custom within place-names of connecting Arthur the Giant with everything huge or exceptional’ (the spring is coloured red with iron oxide).<sup>2</sup> Related is the *Crochan Arthur*, Arthur’s Pot or Cauldron, which was supposedly used by him for cooking and which is near to Arthur’s Table in Carmarthenshire (SN170257).

In addition we might also consider whether the Cornish ‘Arthur’s Cups and Saucers’ possibly fall within this category. These are twenty small circular depressions, 5-15 cm across, found on the headland at Tintagel, Cornwall, where there is also an Arthur’s Chair, Arthur’s Footprint and, nearby, an Arthur’s Quoit.<sup>3</sup> Finally, we should note the numerous ‘Arthur’s Tables’ that exist. One very interesting ‘table’ (a flat topped stone) associated with Arthur is that at the boundary of Gulval, Zennor and Madron in Cornwall, where Arthur is said to have dined before defeating the invading Vikings of

<sup>1</sup> See Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, pp. 5-6 for both of these sites and the possibility that the second was first mentioned in 1120.

<sup>2</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, pp. 114, 127.

<sup>3</sup> Initials are cut among them purporting to date from as far back as the seventeenth century, but see Charles Thomas, *Tintagel: Arthur and Archaeology* (London, 1993), p. 49, for doubts as to the folkloric origin of the attribution.

far-western Cornwall.<sup>1</sup> A similar legend is also attached to the Table Mên, Sennen (Cornwall).<sup>2</sup> Other examples include:

- ❖ An 'Arthur's Table' from Caernarvonshire (SN170257)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Table' in the Mynydd Llangyndeyrn (SN487130)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Table' at Llangynog (SN336161)
- ❖ Bwrdd Arthur (Arthur's Table), Anglesey (SH588816), which is actually a hillfort
- ❖ Bwrdd Arthur (Arthur's Table), Denbighshire (SH961672), a circle of indentations in a rocky hillside recorded in the sixteenth century
- ❖ Caerleon, Monmouthshire (ST339906), where the old Roman amphitheatre was known as the 'Round Table'
- ❖ Maryborough, Westmorland (NY523284), which is an earthwork known as the 'Round Table'
- ❖ A 'Round Table' from Stirling, Stirlingshire (NS789936) which is first mentioned *c.* 1478 by William of Worcester

Some of these, of course, may owe their origins to the international literary legend and medieval pseudo-Arthurian events and feasts, rather than topographic folklore.

#### ***d. Arthur's Seats***

There are a large number of topographic features bearing the name 'Arthur's Seat' (Welsh *Eisteddfa Arthur*). Two of these have been mentioned in section two, being an unlocated feature in Devon shown to the canons of Laon when travelling between Exeter and Bodmin in 1113 and the hill 'called Kairarthur [*sic*], that is Arthur's seat, because of the twin peaks of a projection rising up in the form of a chair', referred to in *c.* 1190 by Gerald of Wales in his *Itinerarium Cambrie* (I.2) and identified as Pen y Fan, the highest point of the Brecon Beacons (SO010214). Another famous 'Arthur's Seat' is that in Edinburgh, first recorded as *Arthurisete* in 1508 (NT275729) but possibly referred to as the site of a mythical battle in the pre-Galfridian poem *Pa gur yv y porthaur?*<sup>3</sup> In all cases, the concept of Arthur would seem to be, once again, that of a giant, with these enormous rock-formations providing him furniture whilst he roamed the wilds of the landscape, just as they do for other giants in the non-Arthurian giant-lore recorded by Grooms. Other instances include the following:

- ❖ Examples found in north Pembrokeshire (in the modern period) in the parishes of Nevern and Meline
- ❖ 'Arthur's Seat' as an alternative name for *Cadair Idris* ('Idris's Chair') in Wales
- ❖ A mountain in the Hart Fell area, Dumfriesshire (NT110126) is known as 'Arthur's Seat'
- ❖ Certain stones known as *Cadeir Arthur*, 'Arthur's Chair' on the peak Pen-y-fâl (Sugar Loaf) in Monmouthshire (SO273188)
- ❖ An 'Arthur's Seat' at Dumbarrow Hill, Angus (NO552479)

<sup>1</sup> M.A. Courtney, *Cornish Feasts and Folklore* (1890), p. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England*, II, pp. 305-06.

<sup>3</sup> See Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', pp. 25-26; Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 114; and Green, *Concepts of Arthur*, pp. 84, 119-21.

- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Seat’ east of Liddesdale, Cumberland (NY495783), also called Arthur Seat and Arthur’s Hill
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Chair’ at Tintagel, Cornwall which has initials purporting to date back to the seventeenth century cut into it and a slit known as the Window.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ An ‘Arthur’s Chair’ north-west of Sewingshields, Northumberland (NY800700). This is found at King’s Crag and has its pair in Queen’s Crag, where there is Gwenhwyfar’s Chair. Arthur, clearly conceived of as a giant, supposedly threw a boulder from his chair at Gwenhwyfar which bounced off of her comb to land on the ground, with the teeth-marks from the comb still visible on the rock.

### e. *Arthur’s Residences*

A number of sites have been claimed as Arthur’s residence in the wilderness. One of these is mentioned in an encyclopaedia completed in 1120 by Lambert of St. Omer, whose text is related to the *Historia Brittonum*.<sup>2</sup> In his list of *mirabilia* (wonders, folklore) of the island of Britain he notes a ‘palace’ of *Arturi militis* which was located in Pictland and had sculpted on it his deeds and battles. This *mirabile* is now generally accepted as being a circular building of Roman date near Stirling (NS 879827), known as Arthur’s O’en (Oven) from at least the thirteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

Another site with a claim to be Arthur’s court is *Kelli vic*. This site appears in some of the earliest Arthurian tales, such as the early dialogue poem *Pa gur yw y porthaur?* and the eleventh century *Culhwch ac Olwen*, and it has been identified with a number of sites across the country. Certainly it is a wilderness site, *kelli vic* meaning ‘forest grove’, but whether it ever had a real location – to be derived like the above from topographic folklore – is to be severely doubted: its origins seem more plausibly fictional, or even mythical.<sup>4</sup> Other claimed sites for Arthur’s residence include:

- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Hall’, Cornwall (SX130777), a stone enclosure on Bodmin Moor which was recorded first in the sixteenth century. It consists of a rectangular bank (enclosing marshy ground) with a rectangle of upright granite slabs within. It was also known as Arthur’s Hunting Lodge. Nearby are Arthur’s Bed, Arthur’s Troughs and Arthur’s Downs.
- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Hunting Lodge’ (or Hunting Seat) in Castle-an-Dinas, Cornwall, near St Columb, from which Arthur rode in the hunt on Tregoss Moor – a stone in St Columb bears the four footprints that his horse made whilst he was out hunting.
- ❖ Treryn Dinas, an ancient fort in Cornwall, is claimed to have been a ‘castle’ of Arthur.
- ❖ *Llys Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Court/Hall/Palace’ lies close to the site of Cai and Bedwyr’s battle with Dillus Farfog, at SN787784.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See further Thomas, *Tintagel*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> D.N. Dumville, ‘The *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of Saint-Omer and the *Historia Brittonum*’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 26 (1974-6), pp. 103-22.

<sup>3</sup> Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> P.K. Ford, ‘On the Significance of some Arthurian Names in Welsh’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, 30 (1983), pp. 268-73 at p. 271; O.J. Padel, ‘Some south-western sites with Arthurian associations’, in R. Bromwich *et al* (edd.) *The Arthur of the Welsh* (Cardiff, 1991), pp. 229-48; Padel, ‘Nature of Arthur’, pp. 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 167.

- ❖ Cadbury Castle, Somerset, was recorded as Arthur's Camelot in the sixteenth century by Leland. The name 'Camelot' seems to have only become attached to the Arthurian legend in the late-twelfth century and has no place in British traditions, as indicated by *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*. In 1586, however, it was recorded that locals called Cadbury Castle 'Arthur's Palace' – a name which could conceivably have preceded (and informed) its designation as Camelot, in light of the *Liber Floridus* – and the presence of 'Arthur's Hunting Causeway' beside Cadbury Castle should also be noted, given the Cornish traditions. A 'King Arthur's Well' is found in the lowest rampart of the fort.
- ❖ There is a prehistoric hill-fort known as *le Camp d'Artus*, 'Arthur's Camp', at Huelgoat (Brittany), with a *la Grotte d'Artus*, 'Arthur's Cave' nearby.

In addition to Arthur's palaces and halls, we also have a *Burum Arturi*, 'Arthur's Bower', that is probably 'bed-chamber'. This is a topographic feature located in Carlisle and first recorded in the 1170s.<sup>1</sup> Also relevant may be numerous 'Arthur's Caves', particularly as a number of these have stories attached in which he takes temporary refuge there, or slumbers there eternally. Caves, real or legendary, with Arthurian associations include Cadbury Castle, Caerleon, Snowdonia, Ogo'r Dinas, Alderley Edge, Craig-y-Dinas, Melrose, Richmond, Marchlyn Mawr, Sewingshields, Llantrisant (Mid-Glamorgan), Pumsaint (Carmarthenshire), Threlkeld (Cumberland) and Sneep (Northumberland). There is an *Ogof Arthur* in Angelsey, another in Merioneth, and one more two or three miles north of Monmouth above the Wye in Herefordshire (SO545155).

Finally, although perhaps better included with the Arthurian graves, we have several Arthurian beds. 'King Arthur's Bed' is located on Bodmin Moor, east Cornwall (SX240756). It takes the form of a granite monolith on top of a hill, with a natural hollow in it shaped like a human torso. The first record of it is found in the works of an eighteenth-century Cornish antiquary, William Borlase (writing in 1754), who accompanies his description with the following remarks:

Round Arthur's Bed, on a rocky Tor in the parish of North-hill, there are many [rock-basins], which the country people call Arthur's Troughs, in which he us'd to feed his Dogs. Near by also, is Arthur's Hall, and whatever is great, and the use and Author of unknown, is attributed to Arthur.<sup>2</sup>

Another 'Arthur's Bed' – *Gwely Arthur* – is near Pen Arthur in Dyfed and yet another is found near Tintagel (see *Arthur's Graves*).

### ***f. Arthur's Graves***

Early-recorded graves of Arthurian heroes are discussed in the second section, above. In addition to these, there are several sites either said to be Arthur's grave or called this, despite the *Englynion y Beddau*'s claim (backed up by other early sources) that no grave for Arthur was known. One of these is 'Arthur's (or Giant's) Grave', Warbstowe, Cornwall (SX202908), which is a long barrow mound in the double-ramparted Warbstowe Bury hill-fort. Another site is *Bedd Arthur* in Preselly Mountains, Pembrokeshire (SN130325), which is a cairn on top of a hill that is sometimes known as *Carn Arthur*. The most famous 'grave' is, of course, that found at Glastonbury but this cannot be considered folkloric in origin. Other folkloric sites include:

<sup>1</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 29.

- ❖ *Bedd Arthur* ('Arthur's Grave') is associated with Arthur's Quoit in Mynachlog-ddu parish (SN10123580).<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ A cromlech near Trébeurden (Côtes-du-Nord, Brittany) is said to be Arthur's grave.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ First recorded in the thirteenth century, a Neolithic or Bronze Age burial-chamber in Herefordshire (SO318430) is said to be Arthur's grave (or that of a giant he killed), with marks in the stone being made either by the giant's elbows or knees
- ❖ There is a *Carnedd Arthur* ('Arthur's Cairn') at Snowdonia, where the king was supposedly buried after Mordred killed him at Camlann (the battle is reported to have been fought in a nearby valley) and which has a 'cave legend' attached to it
- ❖ Another cairn, known as 'Arthurhouse', is presumably another grave for Arthur and is the most northerly piece of Arthurian place-lore, located at Garvock, Kincardineshire (NO748718)

A final possible folkloric grave for Arthur is located just outside the chapel at Tintagel, where there would appear to be a rock-cut grave of the medieval period. This was recorded by Leland in the sixteenth century and so has lain open since at least this point, and in the modern period it is variously known as King Arthur's Bed, Elbow Chair and Hip-Bath. The main interest lies with the 'remarkable' properties ascribed to this topographic feature. Thus John Norden wrote *c.* 1600:

Ther is in this Castle a hole hewed out of a rocke, made in manner of a graue, which is sayde to haue bene done by a Hermite for his buriall; and the gravue will fitt euerye stature, as it is effabuled; but experience doth not so assure me.<sup>3</sup>

This obviously parallels the grave of Arthur's son mentioned in *Historia Brittonum* §73, discussed above, and Padel's comments are worth quoting at length on this matter:

Variable-length graves are recorded occasionally elsewhere in Celtic folklore, in addition to the *Licat Amr* in the *Historia Brittonum*. What is significant here is finding one in an Arthurian context, and Norden's remark of having tried its length, echoing so closely (though with a different result) the remark in the *Historia Brittonum* almost eight hundred years earlier, in relation to *Licat Amr*: 'et ego solus probavi' ('and I myself have tried it'). Not only the folklore, it seems, but the scepticism of visitors has been remarkably constant over the centuries.<sup>4</sup>

### ***g. Miscellaneous Arthuriana***

In addition to the above categories of Arthurian onomastic and topographic folklore, we have a number of other features and places named after Arthur or associated with him. Some of these describe furniture or belongings of Arthur, or marks made by him on rocks, suggestive of an underlying concept of 'Arthur the giant' similar to that behind the instances of 'Arthur's Seat' and 'Arthur's Quoit':

<sup>1</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Padel, 'Nature of Arthur', p. 28.



- ❖ *Cist Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Chest’, recorded in the parish of Llandeilo Bertholau, Monmouthshire (SO 3218) by Edward Lhuyd in the seventeenth-century thus: ‘There is upon Skerid Vawr a great stone shaped like a house called Cist Arthur’.<sup>1</sup> It is located near an ‘Arthur’s Seat’
- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Footprint/Footstep’ – this is found on the headland at Tintagel, Cornwall, on the highest point of the island. It was recorded as ‘King Arthur’s Footstep’ in 1872 and his Footprint in 1901 and 1908, and takes the form of an eroded hollow, the base of which has the shape of a large human footprint. It is reputed to have been imprinted in the solid rock when Arthur ‘stepped at one stride across the sea to Tintagel Church’ (1889) and thus may be seen to parallel tales from other areas where Arthur is a giant who leaves impressions on various rocks. Thomas has suggested that hollow may actually have had a ceremonial use in the post-Roman period.<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ Moses Williams (1685-1742) records ‘Arthur’s Spear’ (a thin standing stone) ‘close to the Llech at one end of the way that leads from Bwlch-y-ddeufain to Aber’ (Caernarvonshire, SH 73867167).<sup>3</sup>

Other instances of ‘Arthur’s X’ would seem to reference the concept of Arthur as someone who hunted in the wild parts of the landscape:

- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Hunting Causeway’ – this is found beside Cadbury Castle, Somerset, and is an ancient track passing the camp towards Glastonbury. In addition to evidencing ‘Arthur the hunter’ it would seem to be related the widespread folkloric belief that Arthur led the Wild Hunt, with tales of Arthur and his men riding along this a night-time, invisible except for the glint of silver horse shoes. The riders are said to stop to water their horses at ‘the Wishing Well’.<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Troughs’ – these are found on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, in the parish of North-Hill. They are reputed to be where Arthur fed his hunting dogs. Nearby are Arthur’s Bed, Arthur’s Downs, and Arthur’s Hall.

Finally, yet others attach his name to a variety of landscape features; what stories underlie these is beyond conjecture, but the liminal locations of some of these reinforce the notion that it is in these untamed, remote or strange parts of the landscape that Arthur was active in British folklore:

- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Downs’, located just to the north of Arthur’s Hall (SX130777) on Bodmin Moor, Cornwall. Perhaps Arthur’s hunting grounds?
- ❖ *Buarth Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Enclosure’, is the remains of a stone circle in Carmarthenshire (SN142266).
- ❖ *Fons Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Fountain’ – recorded in Crawford parish, Lanarkshire (NS956205) as a landmark in a 1339 land grant
- ❖ *Pen Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Hill’. Numerous instances of this name are recorded – they are perhaps to be related to those Arthurian tales found in the Saints’ Lives and *Culhwch ac Olwen* that begin with Arthur and/or his men sat on a hilltop, ready for adventure (a position Fionn and his men are often found

<sup>1</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas, *Tintagel*, pp. 96-99.

<sup>3</sup> Grooms, *Giants of Wales*, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> K. Palmer, *The Folklore of Somerset* (London, 1976), p. 83; Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, pp. 184-85.

in). Several examples come from within the vicinity of an ‘Arthur’s Quoit’ in Llangadog, Carmarthenshire, where there is *Banc Pen Arthur* (SH715240) and two farms, *Pen Arthur* and *Pen Arthur-isaf*. Another example comes from near St David’s, Pembrokeshire (SM722279). The two peaks of the Brecon Beacons, recorded in the twelfth century as ‘Arthur’s Seat’ are also known as ‘Arthur’s Hill’ or ‘Hill-Top’ in the sixteenth century, and there is a *Moel Arthur* (Arthur’s Hill) in Flintshire (SJ145660), a *Pencraig Arthur* in Denbighshire (SH815649), a *Ben Arthur* in Argyllshire (NN259059), an ‘Arthur’s Hill’ at Newcastle, and ‘Arthur’s Seat’, east of Liddesdale, Cumberland (NY495783), is also known as ‘Arthur’s Hill’.

- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Slough’ – the following is recorded in *Notes & Queries*, volume 10, third series, December 29 1866, p.509:

On my way from Wells to Glastonbury some years since, I overtook on the road a countryman who pointed out to me a morass which he said was known in those parts as Arthur’s Slough. Can ‘N. & Q.’ inform me whether any tradition of King Arthur, who was buried at Glastonbury, attaches to this marsh?

Unfortunately the correspondent never seems to have received an answer.

- ❖ *Coed Arthur*, ‘Arthur’s Wood’, is found at ST040715 in South Glamorgan.
- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Fold’ – a farm in Perthshire, which was near an ‘Arthur’s Stone’ but no longer exists. There is, however, a nearby Arthurbank (NO254427)
- ❖ ‘Arthur’s Well’. This is found in the lowest rampart of Cadbury Castle, Somerset. In this area Arthur and his knights are said to ride at night in the Wild Hunt and water their horses either here or at another well by the village church of Sutton Montis.<sup>1</sup> Another Arthur’s Well is found near Waltoun-Crags, Northumberland (NY677667).
- ❖ ‘Great Arthur’ and ‘Little Arthur’ – the names of two of the Scilly Isles, off the coast of Cornwall.
- ❖ ‘Loch Arthur’ – a loch in Kirkcudbrightshire (NX905690).

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<sup>1</sup> Chambers, *Arthur of Britain*, pp. 184-85.

*Arthurian Notes & Queries* is a series of brief studies of the Arthurian legend. It is published and written by Thomas Green. The original of this article is archived at [www.arthuriana.co.uk/notes&queries/N&Q2\\_ArthFolk.pdf](http://www.arthuriana.co.uk/notes&queries/N&Q2_ArthFolk.pdf) and should be cited from there.

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