

OTHER SCENES

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers

Almost all the unsigned information in this issue is from my new book, "The Quest for Magic—Rediscovering Pagan Britain," to be published by London's Sidgwick & Jackson in 1975. I completed six thousand miles of travel throughout Britain to compile this book and I am now continuing my researches throughout Europe for a similar book to be published by Harper & Row. Most of my year in Europe (with the exception of the period spent producing a daily paper for the Cannes Film Festival in May) has been spent on this travel and research.

At this point (late fall 1974) I'm heartily sick of Europe, especially England, and yearn to return to the United States, which I plan to do shortly after this issue is published. It's been a bad year for me in many ways—a broken marriage, colossal expenses and very little chance to publish or write beyond that for the books mentioned. Once I have finished work on next year's Witches Almanac I plan to start a new life in California when, hopefully, I shall be busy again with contemporary matters. First I plan to do a guest-editing stint in San Francisco for John Bryan's weekly **Phoenix** and then my intention is to head for L.A. and try to raise the money for a new tabloid; the first stage perhaps, of that international newspaper I told you about in the last issue. receive from other parts of the globe.

Other Scenes, a subscription to which begins and ends each spring with the Witches Almanac, costs £4 or \$10 a year. Sample issues of OS or Nomad are sent at any time for \$1 as also are Nomad press cards "good for what you can get away with." The address is Dawes Press, 81a Dawes Road, London, SW6

Cheers,

JOHN WILCOCK.

COMPREHENDING CALLANISH

What some people believe was the last active Druidical site in Britain is on the Hebridean Island of Lewis, at Callanish, 14 miles north of Stornaway, and it is impressive enough to have earned the soubriquet "the Stonehenge of Northern Britain." Stornaway itself is rather an amazing place—a big fishing port, centre of the island's fishing industry and Harris Tweed output, and yet seemingly right at the end of nowhere. It has one of the most phenomenal sites of standing stones in Britain but the local tourist office doesn't mention it and it seems likely that a substantial proportion of casual visitors to Stornaway never even hear about it. And yet even the subject of witchcraft is still extant in Stornaway as a report of a case at the city's Land Court in 1947 will show. On October 18th of that year, according to **The Scotsman**, a will was disputed on the grounds that the testator believed in witchcraft. It seems he accused a neighbour of taking the milk from his cows by walking three times around the barn against the sun. (The judge said, in effect, so what? Even if the deceased had been superstitious, it didn't prove him incompetent to make a will).

Despite all the books and magazine articles and endless speculation, nobody knows for sure what Britain's

standing stone circles are all about. Some of the theories make sense but that doesn't mean they are right. Working out complex astronomical calculations by computer may seem to prove that a certain site or sites were related to eclipses of the sun or phases of the moon or the position of certain stars in the sky, but even if these are correct for some stone circles, what about the others? We can only guess.

And not only that, **how** were they built? Every now and again a dramatic reconstruction will purport to demonstrate how a score of schoolboys can transport blocks of stone weighing several tons across flowing streams and rugged, semi-forested terrain, erecting these mammoth pillars with nothing more than patience, rounded wooden staves and rawhide. But whenever such painstaking "reenactments" take place, one is tempted to think back to Francois Lenormant's discussion (in **Chaldean Magic**) of the legend of the priests of On who could raise huge stones by sound. Or the Chinese alchemist Liu An who was reputed to have discovered an anti-gravity liquid back in 200 B.C. Or even the Buddhist jakatas which refer to a magical gem which can raise into the air any man who holds it in his mouth.

Questions like these inevitably come to mind when confronted with a site like Callanish. Here, at almost the northernmost extreme of what must have been the 'civilised' world, is an immense circle of stones, 18 in all (historians tell us there were more than twice as many as late as 1931) around a central monolith 17 ft. tall. This "temple of the sun" is approached by a great avenue almost 100 yards long and which, originally, was apparently balanced by a similar wing at the opposite side. Herodotus and early Greek scholars referred to "The Great Winged Temple of the Northern Isles," which may or may not have been Callanish. Even today the area is sparsely populated and there can't have been many more people around in the days when it was first built which, by the way, was as long ago as 2,000 B.C.

So what on earth was this circle—and so many other similar ones—for? That Callanish was actually a burial ground may be true (the centre of its circle contained a covered cairn) but it's much more likely that some important personage was buried in an already-sacred place (just as today) rather than it was created especially for his/her burial. F. Marian McNeill suggests that ancient pagan cemeteries may have been the chief rallying points of tribal life." and she may be right, but places like Callanish were only cemeteries in a limited sense; **everybody** wasn't buried there.

Henry Callendar (in **Natural History**) offers the other inevitable explanation. "That the position was chosen and laid down by astronomical observation can easily be demonstrated by visiting the spot on a clear night when it will be found, that by bringing the

upper part of the line of stones to bear on the top of the large stone in the centre of the circle, the apex of that stone coincides exactly with the pole star." It all sounds too pat, even if provable, and no more likely or unlikely that T. C. Lethbridge's theory that such sites were built as landmarks for travellers coming by sea or through the sky. He talks about the Greek gods who legendarily 'flew' in their chariots from Mount Olympus. "If then you had an apparatus in a flying machine set to the right wavelength," Lethbridge writes in '**Legend of the Sons of God**' (Routledge, Kegan Paul), "you could pick up the rays from the stored energy in the stones and hone in on it like a moth to its mate. These rings of stone could have been used as both visible and invisible navigational beacons." And he asks if there might have been as much as 5000 years ago, a series of exploratory visits to this world from another?

Dazzled by the clever scientists, historians and archaeologists of today, we are inclined to dismiss such theories as nonsense. But such an attitude smacks of arrogance and implies a presupposition on our parts that nobody was ever as clever as we are now and nobody in the ancient world could ever have raised stones or flown through the air. Which may, of course, make us all feel very superior about modern civilization but isn't necessarily correct.

One of our more learned academics, Professor A. Thom is not one of those who underrates the skill of ancient man, claiming him rather, as one of our own. An expert on **Megalithic Sites in Britain**, which was the title of his 1967 book, Thom makes the point

that megalithic man was a competent engineer who travelled up and down the coast of Scotland traversing dangerous waters about which he needed to know tides and phases of the moon or he wouldn't have survived. (Unless, of course, he was privy to some magical or occult secrets we no longer understand.)

Thom says in his **Megalithic Lunar Observatories** (Clarendon Press, Oxford) that most of the British sites of standing stones were originally lunar observatories and the reason why there are so many is because obsolete observatories were constantly being replaced with more up-to-date ones. His book is highly technical, full of abstruse mathematical formulae, diagrams and charts that are almost inexplicable without some technical training, and he admits that he assumes that the reader "has some knowledge of descriptive astronomy." But he may have a point—just as might Erich Von Daniken who theorises that all these sites were constructed by long-ago visitors from outer space.

Astronomer Boyle Somerville is another expert who found a theory to fit Callanish, or maybe it was the other way around, when he visited the place. Of the 56 megaliths examined by him in Scotland and Ireland, he averred, only half a dozen lacked evidence of astronomical orientation. As for Callanish, its central pillar cast a shadow exactly on the line of the grave and the passage at sunset on the day of the equinox, and furthermore, the west and south lines were accurate cardinal points.

Reporting on this in his **The Islands of Western Scotland** (Eyre Methuen, 1973) W. H. Murray advances the ar-

gument that Callanish is too elaborate to be just a seasonal calendar but if its primary purpose had been for sun worship or fertility rites, then precise dating of the seasons by alignments might logically follow. Some stone circles, he said were known in Gaelic as Bel Beachd meaning the circle of Bel, the Celtic sun-god, and the celebration of Beltane was still being observed in remote areas of Scotland as late as the 18th century. Murray recalled such old customs as walking sunwise around cairns or monuments, the poor people who made three sunwise turns around their benefactors and the way young folk would cut a circular ditch on the moors, sit around a lighted fire and choose a 'sacrificial victim' who would symbolically leap through the flames to ask Bel's favour for a productive year.

Callanish, he felt, had been built about 200 years later than Stonehenge. Hence.

Some observers have pointed out that Callanish was constructed in the shape of a Celtic cross with a central circle. And this may well be true except that other writers tend to account for the Celtic cross as being a fusion of the druidic circle and the christian cross—which coalition presumably took place at least, 1,500 years later if the archaeologists estimates of when Callanish was built are correct. But are they? You see how when you start cross-checking the so-called experts' theories they tend to cancel each other out? Why don't we just attribute the whole thing—the building, the purpose and the consequences—to some kind of magic, whatever that is, and leave it at that?

Coming a bit nearer to the present, we again run across the indefatigable

Martin Martin who was assured on his visit in the early 18th century, that Callanish was a pagan place of worship where the chief druid stood near the big centre stone to address the crowd.

Certainly it is an impressive meeting place, high on a hilltop with the jagged, grey stones etched against the blue-grey skyline. A few cottages dot the surrounding countryside, but even so, the bleak windswept hill remains aloof, silent. The breeze rarely abates and the occasional gull circles overhead with keening cries. The grey loch below is cold and menacing, shallow as it obviously is, and the low rocky hills that stretch for miles all around seem to be brooding, waiting, as they have for centuries.

What happened here? There are Christian tales that St. Kieran turned the ancient giant inhabitants to stone at their annual council because they refused to accept his faith, but the legends also speak of Atlantis and how the survivors came here and erected these monuments long before Druidism or Christianity.

Maybe it's because of the remoteness of the site but there's something quite eerie about Callanish and, incidentally, don't be misled into thinking that the main circle and its avenue are the only things to see. The area around shelters three or four others and having seen one, your curiosity encourages you to look for the others.

Martha says the whole place is very enervating because the day she arrived she was suffering from a headache, toothache and cursing the day she had ever heard of Druids. Yet at the sight of the main circle we was immediately out into the freezing wind walking up the stone approach and feeling very excited and exhilarated.

In her book **The Outer Hebrides and Their Legends** (Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1966) Otta F. Swire records that when her mother was staying on Stornaway about 80 years ago, she talked to a group of friends who'd returned from visiting the Stones (women didn't visit the Circle in a mixed party in those days because it was still the custom for couples to exchange their betrothal vows at the spot. Before the party set off, an elderly maid had told them that they wouldn't see much through the thick, cold mist that day because "only those to whom it is given may see," and sure enough when the visitors got there, the Stones were shrouded in fog. But they all had the distinct impression that eerie grey forms were moving around the area, something definitely there, but not quite human.

Scotland's coming oil boom is now threatening the existence of Callanish. There is, alarmingly, a move afoot to pull down the ancient stone circle to use the land for buildings. Further comment on this outrageous proposal seems pointless.

Studying the Signposts along The Old Straight Track

The pleasantly sleepy town of Hereford was the birthplace in the middle of the 19th century of Alfred Watkins, whose book, **The Old Straight Track** (Garnstone Press) first published in 1925, is a seminal work for those interested in British prehistory.

The bedrock of contemporary British occult thought is a belief in what Watkins defined as ley lines, the invisible, but nonetheless potent, network of channels that criss-cross the surface of the earth in rough correspondence to an acupuncture chart of the human body.

Paul Screeton defines them as the veins of a life force which crystallised around the globe as earth cooled, and it seems at least possible that leys were channels through which energy flowed to power the antediluvian society, rather as electricity is used to-day. Watkins, an amiable Herefordshire businessman and part-time archaeologist, was the pioneer researcher in this field and the person who formalised the use of the word "ley." In **The Old Straight Track** Watkins reasoned that ancient man must have had some means of finding a place remote from his home (for example, a flint quarry) and that this might have been done by taking sightings over miles of rough countryside.

These sightings might be a series of progressive notches in the hillside, islands in lakes or other natural or roughly shaped monument stones to guide his path. His book traces the etymology of the word ley, justifying its association with the straight-sighted track, and is akin, he says, to our present Welsh "llan," a prefix now indicating "church place" and earlier "enclosure." The word ley in various forms (ley, lay, lea, lee, leigh) still exists in the place names of many towns, communities and landmarks, and indeed a trace of the straight track survives in the now misleading comment by almost any countryman when asked directions to continue "straight on and you can't miss it."

Incidentally, to "lay" a gun in artillery is to aim it, and dictionaries have listed *leye* as an obsolete word meaning "island"—islands in lakes and ponds are constantly found on straight-sighted tracks.

Many academics have predictably reacted with skepticism to Watkins' theories but they are easily confirmed by anybody who chooses to test the main theory, either on foot or with a one inch to one mile scale ordnance survey map. Choose any area of the map and circle the following types of

site: standing stones, stone circles, tumuli, barrows, moats, hill forts, earthworks, churches, abbeys — in fact anything old and traditionally sacred—and then try to align them along the straight edge of a ruler. In order to rule out coincidence, ley hunters require that an alignment worth investigating further must have at least five valid points lining up with a distance of 10 miles or so. There are innumerable examples of this, and every edition of the fascinating mimeographed magazine **The Ley Hunter** confirms these findings.

Paul Screeton, quoted earlier, editor of **The Ley Hunter**, cautions: "Those who have studied the subject and looked at it rationally have determined that to seek utilitarian purposes for leys is to follow a false trail. Realisation that leys have a spiritual basis brings a total dismissal of orthodox archeology and a true beginning of a quest which leads the seeker along the serpent paths to the sites of the dragon pulse, while mentally his consciousness is raised as the psychic vibrations transmitted from rocking stones to fairy mounds to oak groves affect his perceptions of life, ancient and modern."

Watkins revelation took place in the early 1920's. In the subsequent half-century a great deal of work has been done by enthusiasts to corroborate and enlarge on his findings, the result being that new light has been shed on the nature of the landscape of Britain. It is becoming increasingly difficult in the 20th century, when many new constructions are hiding this landscape, to go out into the field and investigate the area which is crossed by the chosen alignment, trying to trace it along the ground. Winter is the best time of year for ley hunting

as there are no leaves on the trees to interfere with the view.

The real purpose and origin of ley lines is obscure. Watkins believed that they were the track ways of early man. Now researchers believe that this is only a partial answer and that leys do in fact follow lines of energy and power meandering across the landscape in certain patterns. Early man was aware of this power which he harnessed for his spiritual and material benefit by erecting places of worship at certain highly-charged points along the path. Sensitives and other people often mention receiving shocks when they touch certain once holy stones, but the stones apparently are not charged with power all the time.

The ley system is certainly very ancient and it is impossible to estimate a date of origin. Many of the markers that can be seen to-day are recent when compared with the age of the leys on which they lie, but churches and other such buildings were often constructed on top of more ancient pagan sites, long venerated as being of special importance. Leys presumably exist in all parts of the world but they have been most enthusiastically and thoroughly investigated in this country. Some are short, some stretch for miles across the countryside.

An interesting one to follow on the map and perhaps at least partially to explore on foot to get the "feel" of it, begins in Cornwall and ends in East Anglia. Starting from St. Michael's Mount it passes through the stone Cheeswring on Bodmin Moor; St. Michael's Church, Brentor; Burrow Mump; Glastonbury Tor; Avebury and so on, ending on the east coast near Lowestoft. There are innumer-

able old churches, earthworks, stones, etc., to confirm it all along the way. Many roads were built along old straight track ley lines, especially by the Romans, but obviously, as John Michell and others have pointed out, there could never have been ordinary roads running over sheer hillsides and marshes. Michell states: "The secret of the straight tracks must have perished centuries before the Roman invasion," and goes on to say, "Probably the Celtic Druids never fully understood the meaning of the system they inherited. Celtic legends are full of reference to the great men of the past whose works have been left to decay." Screeton additionally comments: "Leys also have connections with geological faults, underground springs, astronomy, astrology and geometry. Stone circles from which they often radiate are computers for predicting eclipses and these radiating leys will go to crosses and tumuli which are often arranged in patterns of heavenly bodies."

The precisely arranged stones and mounds make up a truly scientific system of 'natural power' along the ley lines, and in fact may well fit in with the legends of flying dragons or chariots of the gods, which today are known as UFO's or flying saucers. Today's UFO adherents often claim that ley lines are the energy routes along which these phenomena travel, although unless UFO's travel particularly slowly and at a low level, it is rather difficult to pinpoint whether they are actually following a ley line.

The nature of these mysterious flying objects is still problematic. What they are and where they come from no one has been able to explain categorically. Visitors from other planets, other galaxies and the future,

beyond the grave, from other dimensions, from the centre of the earth, or projects of the human psyche? These and other ideas are regularly offered to explain the many mysterious lights and objects seen in the sky which may well be using ley lines as a power source.

Paul Devereux, a young artist and student of the occult, maintains that some UFO's display "the cosmic impersonal intelligence (lights, colours and symbols); a few are archetypal forms (figures; others are everyone's bad dreams); malevolent aerial phenomena (and many are our mechanical alter egos reflected back); the nuts and bolts spacecraft type." The scoffers, among whom is University of California sociologist Herbert Blumer, maintain they are a type of mass hypnosis, recognised by people who are affected by excitement and the general malaise and uneasiness of the times. Professor Blumer says that if people are prepared to see something they are more likely to see it under conditions of excitability, it being easy for people to sensitize one another and arouse each other's interest. What he calls "the process of circular interaction." In these days, with a background of the development of space achievement, air travel and science fiction, he says, people see UFO's. At other times in history they saw sea serpents!

It is almost 50 years since the first publication of **The Old Straight Track** and in an introductory note to the current edition (Garnstone Press) the renowned John Michell describes the genesis of Watkins' theory. "The revelation took place when Watkins was 65 years old. Riding across the hills near Bredwardine in his native county

(Herefordshire) he pulled up his horse to look over the landscape below. At that moment he became aware of a network of lines standing out like glowing wires all over the surface of the country, intersecting at the sites of churches, old stones, and other spots of traditional sanctity.”)

“The vision is not recorded in **The Old Straight Track** but throughout his life Watkins privately maintained that he had perceived the existence of the ley system in a single flash and for all his subsequent study, he added nothing to his conviction save only the realisation of the particular signific-

ance of beacon hills as terminal points in the alignments.”

Many previous writers had commented on the way in which old stone crosses or monuments had appeared to be on straight lines, but before Watkins few had perceived the significance. In Michell's own summatory book **The View Over Atlantis** (Abacus), reference is made to a now out-of-print book, Blight's **Ancient Crosses of West Cornwall** in which the author referred to an ancient Cornwall where there were no boundaries, fences or even roads “but there were strange and narrow paths across the moor-

The Fiery Dragon of Aller

The following story was told me in the summer of 1885 by a farmer at Aller in Somersetshire (Mr. Dudridge) to account for the origin of the name of the village.

He also informed me that there was a monument to Aller in the church, but this was incorrect.

The village of Aller is distant about two miles from Curry Rivell, both villages are on the sides of hills, and the intervening country is flat and marshy.

The spot pointed out to me as the site of the encounter is a bare patch of sand, very noticeable on the green hill-side as you approach by the Langport road.

The rector of Aller had never heard the story.

“Many years ago a fiery flying dragon lived at Curry Rivell. At certain

times it used to fly across the marsh to Aller and destroy the crops and all it came near, with its fiery breath. This continued for a long time. At last one John Aller, a brave and valiant man, who lived at Aller, vowed that he would kill it. He laid in wait, and when next the dragon flew across to Aller hill he attacked it, and, after a fierce struggle slew it, and cut off its head. Then its fiery blood ran out and scorched up all the grass around, and from that day to this grass has never grown on the spot. John Aller was so burnt by the dragon's breath that he died almost at the same moment as the dragon. The people took up his body, buried it in the church, and called the village after him.”

T. W. E. Higgens.

(Folk-Lore, Sept. 1893)

land which the forefathers said in their simplicity were first traced by angels feet."

The legend was that along these paths from time to time were crosses, erected as guides on the straight way between holy centres and, says Michell "they have the same mythical origin as the creation tracks known to the Australian natives, they mark the seasonal flow of the fertilizing earth current."

W. H. Auden refers to these mysterious trackways in a poem called "The Old Man's Road" (**Collected Shorter Poems 1927-57**), Faber and Faber).

"Across the Great Schism, through our whole landscape,

Ignoring God's Vicar and God's Ape.
Under their noses, unsuspected,
The Old Man's Road runs as it did."

Undoubtedly the ley lines exist, aligned and divined by acts of natural magic performed long ago. Nor are they peculiar to these isles. For countless centuries their counterpart existed in the Chinese concept of Feng Shui, the plotting of magnetic forces or 'dragon currents' over the undulating body of the countryside. There was a time—and it is still true even today in Taiwan—when no Chinese would dream of building a house or any other structure without consulting the geomancers, who would inform him of its correct positioning to be in most harmonious line with the prevailing terrain and natural forces.

One British expert on geomancy is Nigel Pennick, who writes: "Geomancy is the ancient art of divining centres of energy on the earth's surface and the alignments linking them together. Geomancy was employed in ancient times to discover the correct sightings for places of worship

and their geometrical relationships with roads, wells, burial places, high points, beacons and astronomic observations. That most churches of medieval date are founded upon sites of much vaster antiquity can be seen from the early christian practice of building a church wherever a heathen or pagan stone circle, temple or menhir stood. Religious sites were an obvious choice for sighting upon lines of energy, especially at intersections where the flow crosses. To find these points a system of sighting from other points in a form of divination similar to dowsing was used. It is claimed that lines of energy can still be dowsed and some people have felt certain vibrations by just standing at an intersection. This is possibly an explanation of why modern churches sited haphazardly, without even the correct solar alignment, have no 'atmosphere'."

Pennick concludes that geomancy was abandoned at the Reformation and to-day survives only in a truncated form.

Many students of the occult believe that geomancy was the base of which all harmonious relationships with nature were built and maintained. Anthony Roberts talks about the "pattern of existence" and says that "the seeking of this archetypal pattern was the foremost task of the alchemists, philosophers and magicians of antiquity, with the faint memory of a once universal geomantic tradition the main inspiration for their quest."

"The central pivot upon which all coherence turned was geomancy," Roberts says, "and with the steady decline of geomantic knowledge, the human race has gradually moved into eras of materialism, chaos and despair. The possible destruction of the

species looms ahead as humanity moves further and further away from the natural rhythm and harmonies that once regulated its underlying cosmic consciousness."

Possibly the Druids were the last race on these isles to understand the fundamental principles of direct sighting and maintaining a correct proportion (symbiosis—union of two differently constituted organisms dependent for existence on each other) between the terrain and the forces and properties that interact with it. When the christians came, they inherited much of this geomantic knowledge and all the early cathedrals and churches were geomantically placed and astronomically orientated to retain the power of the ancient beliefs. Once geomancy was abandoned by the christians, humanity became increasingly cut off from its basic spiritual origins and to-day almost the only traces lie in the remains of the ley system and the sacred sites, both pagan and christian, that lie along ley routes. Abandoned and forgotten, the leys have lost most of their ancient power and meaning.

One of the roots of ancient geomancy was the sacred geometry of Euclid, which was among the few pieces of classical lore which survived when the library at Alexandria was burned in 391 A.D. This geometric lore, later translated into Latin, was extensively used by gothic architects in the building of their cathedrals. Labyrinths and mazes in various parts of the world are part of the geomantic tradition and are believed to be a manifestation of the spiral motion generated by the earth's energy. According to Nigel Pennick, the pathway that leads to the centre of the maze was so constructed as to produce in

the pilgrim an emotional and psychological effect which was heightened by, "the telluric energies flowing beneath the ground." The reason why suicides were often buried at cross roads, he explains, was that the evil energy accumulated by the corpses was nullified by the intersection of the ley power at this point. The connection between ley lines and underground "blind springs" radiating from the centres of prehistoric temples has never been positively pinned down, although two French archaeologists, Louis Marle and Charles Diort, published papers in the 1930's suggesting that anybody can verify this connection by using a divining rod. That pioneer researcher in this area, Guy Underwood, hesitated to publish his book **The Pattern of the Past** while still alive for fear of ridicule. The book appeared not only after its author had retired after a lifetime of service at the British Museum, but posthumously as well!

Underwood taught himself dowsing and visited a great proportion of the magical sites throughout the British Isles. He claimed to have found hidden springs at almost all sites, fanning out in a pattern very suggestive of the ley line system.

The tiny village of Wing, in what used to be the smallest English county, Rutland, is renowned for possessing an unusual maze. This is about thirty yards in diameter and cut into the turf on the edge of the village in such a way that the sandy, pebbly soil shows through at a depth of about three inches. The design of the maze is similar to one that exists in Alkborough in Lancashire, and both resemble pavement mazes in the French towns of Chartres and Poitiers as a sign at the site indicates. The maze

is composed of incomplete concentric circles forming a series of loops, being therefore the type of maze that it is impossible to get lost in because a solitary path leads to the centre. Innumerable generations of thinkers have speculated why it would be necessary to take this particular path and what goal one achieved when the centre was reached. The mystery of the maze is lost in the past but because of its numerous associations with temples and royal palaces, its function must have been more than decorative. Perhaps the best line of thought to follow is that of the French journalist Louis Charpentier, who commented in a book on Chartres Cathedral (which has its own maze), "it is a well-known effect of an electric current that all bodies moving through its field acquire particular properties." The maze may possibly

be linked with the geodetic currents running through the earth, more easily divivable at all sacred sites.

The name of Wing, incidentally, derives from an old Norse word *Vengi*, meaning field, but it is highly likely that the maze pre-dates the Anglo-Saxon settlement. The post office sells home-made cakes and postcards of the parish church, whose booklet quotes from an 1846 directory: "There is an ancient maze in which the rustics run at the parish feast." This, it suggests, may refer to a custom which was similar to dancing round the maypole. Others believe that walking the paths of the labyrinth may have been a form of penance in the Middle Ages. Some authorities suspect it produced a form of mystical enlightenment.

Megalithic Memories

Western England is liberally sprinkled with impressive megalithic (mega - great; lithos - stone) burial chambers,, which are described variously as quoits, dolmens, tumulus or cromlechs. What they all have in common is immense slabs of stone erected above ground, topped with an even bigger rock and then sometimes covered with earth. Usually they were mass graves holding up to scores of people and date back to at least 2000 years before christianity. Occultists,

naturally suspect they were used for other purposes and only incidentally used as tombs later on; or at least that they were infused with a magic that would enhance the chances of the soul even if unable to preserve the body. (Coffins were not in use in those days). Many of the burial chambers are located on ley lines, all are pretty spooky and to spend a dark night in one might well convince you that communication with one's remote ancestors is not only possible but achievable.

Dancing with Reindeer Horns in the Rutting Season

Probably the oldest fertility rite still celebrated in England—if, indeed, that is what it is—takes place at the Staffordshire village of Abbots Bromley on the Monday after the first Sunday after September 4th each year. The earliest account of the ceremony, in 1686, notes that it used to be performed at Christmas, New Year's and 12th Night, all originally pagan festivals before Christianity took them over, as the town's former vicar, the Rev. A. R. Ladell, cheerfully admits. In an explanatory pamphlet written in 1932, he dates the ceremony back to before Norman times suggesting that the dance probably grew out of the excitement following a successful hunt, when the hunters wore the hides and antlers of their victims. It is possible that this ritual dates back to the shamanistic magic of the prehistoric era.

“The Dance is still celebrated when the stags are rutting,” he writes, “and the young men of the village may well

have shown their readiness for marriage by parading as hunters of proved ability, just as in the performance of the Dance itself there is obvious mimicry of the stags challenging their rivals.”

The reindeer horns, each set weighing between 16 and 20 pounds, still worn each year by the dancers, are very rare and probably date back to the 16th century. They are kept on hooks inside the church, taken down only once a year when the six dancers, supplemented by six other assorted characters, make their way gradually from the church to Blithfield Hall, stopping to perform their ritual manoeuvres at various spots along the way.

Abbots Bromley, a sleepily pleasant village for most of the year, has a tiny village green beside which sits a pub called the Goats Head, a horned creature with many other pagan associations.

Shetland Islands' *Snaim Magic*

The three knots on a thread are used as a charm for other purposes than against the Evil Eye.

A native of Bernera in the Western Highlands gives the following information. A lad took ill with internal pains. His mother sent him to a man in the neighbourhood who was reputed skilled in the healing art. After having told what was wrong, the man asked him if he had blessed himself and his work that morning. He answered that he had taken the books (read a portion of Scripture) as usual, but had not blessed himself specially. "Well," said the man of skill to him, "be sure to bless yourself and your work every morning, for it is that nasty man that lives near you that has a grudge against you." The man then, by means of the **snaim** (three-knot charm), cured the lad.

When a person fails to use the precautions effective against injury by the Evil Eye, he is dangerously exposed to injury from it. A young man, possessed of good looks, was taken ill. A woman, who had "Eolas" (knowledge), visited him and asked him how he was. She then said, "You were taken ill at once?" "Yes," said the lad. "I know what is wrong," said she, "and can soon put it right." She then caused everyone to leave the room where the sick lad was, and getting a ball of red yarn, three ply, she wound it round the points of her thumb, mid-finger, and ring-finger of her left hand, taking care to hold the thread while winding it between the thumb and mid-finger of her right hand. Having wound it in this manner she took a small piece of burning

stick and passed it three times through the circle formed by the thread, which remained as it had been wound on the fingers of her left hand. She then put a knot on the thread, and while doing so brought it near her lips, at the same time going through a lengthy incantation, beginning with the words "Ni mair an obair so" (I do this work), and in which there were frequent allusions to the eye. When the knot had been put on and the charm had been repeated she took the yarn off her fingers, and, commencing at the crown of the lad's head, she rubbed him in a round and round way all over. At this stage a knock "came to the door," and the performer called out, "You are there, I know you." Without opening the door she put the knotted yarn into the fire, saying, "An galar's easlainnte chuirrin air mulach an teine" (I put the disease and the sickness on top of the fire). This she repeated three times, but on the third occasion, instead of putting the thread on the fire, she tied it round the lad's neck. He got well at once. The thread is always tied somewhere that it may not be seen, but it must be on the skin. The woman explained that the knock at the door while she was performing the cure was the act of the one who had done the injury.

In the following case the reciter witnessed the performance. A cow took ill, and the "Eolas" woman was sent for. On arriving she asked them to get her a little yarn in which alum had been used in the dyeing. (It is a necessary condition that any yarn to be used should have mordanted in the dyeing with alum, and as alum is always used in dyeing red, red is very generally used on these occasions). The woman then proceeded to wind the yarn round her fingers as described above, and it is explained that

THE FAIRY FLAG OF DUNVEGAN CASTLE

the forefinger must not be allowed to touch the yarn during the performance of the charm. She then took what she had wound off her fingers, opened it, and put a knot on the thread, which she held to her lips, muttering the charm. With equal care she, for a second and third time, repeated the winding and tying. She then took the yarn with the three knots, and, commencing at one horn of the cow, rubbed the animal round and round all over, coming back to the other horn. She then tied the three threads on which were the knots, one after the other, with a piece of the yarn to the under hairs of the cow's tail, taking care to have them out of sight. When the cow showed signs of improvement the first knot was taken off and put in the fire, as in the case of the lad. In like circumstance the second knot was burned; the third knot only was allowed to remain on the animal's tail. The woman being asked for the words she used when tying the knots said she would tell them to no one but one of her own family.

In the case of persons affected, the cure is believed to be the more effectual the greater the admiration of the one having the secret for the person operated on. Some persons get a thread so tied to wear as a precaution, even though they have never been affected by the Evil Eye. The charm sent herewith is intended to be worn as a protection. The use of red thread as a protection against the Evil Eye is a Shetland one. It was common to wear "a small piece of the branch of the roan tree, wrapped round with red thread, and sewed into some part of the garments to guard against the effects of the Evil Eye, or witchcraft.

'Roan tree and read thread
Will drive the witches aa wud.'

(Folk-Lore, June 1895)

It is worth a trip across to the Isle of Skye to Dunvegan Castle with its 10-foot thick walls. The castle is the home of the famous Fairy flag which reputedly came into the possession of the MacLeod family early in the 14th century when the fourth Lady MacLeod heard a strange noise from her son's room and disturbed a lady in a green petticoat lulling the child to sleep. (The lullaby can still be heard as the Dunvegan Cradle Croon in **Songs of the Hebrides**.) The mother uttering some saintly cry, the fairy vanished leaving on the bed a silken banner which has remained in the possession of the MacLeod family ever since. Used to call upon the supernatural powers for help, the tattered banner, shot with gold thread and marked with crimson "elf spots," supposedly helped the Clan to victory at the battles of Glendale (1490) and Waternish (1580) and is good for one more occasion before its "power" is spent.

Thomas Pennant, shown the Bratach Sith (fairy flag) by clan chief Norman MacLeod when he visited the castle during his **Tour of Scotland**, writing about it in his book published in 1769. He was told that the flag was a gift to the clan from the fairy queen Titania "with powers of the first importance which were to be exerted on only three occasions" after which "an invisible being" would carry it back to its original owner. The castle was once accessible only via the loch, and when the new "fairy bridge" was built, it was said a horse would not cross it without shying.

HARE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW

To start with, I shall admit that the hare is regarded as an "uncanny" animal. Sir Thomas Browne tells us that in his time there were few above threescore years that were not perplexed when a hare crossed their path. Aubrey epitomizes Browne, but in another passage notes the same prejudice, apparently from his own observation. Napier says many a person meeting a hare while going to work would return home and not again venture out until the next meal had been eaten, "for beyond that the evil influence did not extend." From India we learn that it is as unlucky to meet a hare as it is to meet a one-eyed man, an empty water-pot, a carrier without a load, a fox, a jackal, a crow, a widow, or a funeral. Dalyell couples the hare with the weasel as ominous. At the Wheal Vor mine it is linked in similar ill-fame with the white rabbit; the appearance of either in one of the engine-houses presages a fatal accident in the mine. These are a few out of many illustrations of the bad repute of the hare.

When we enquire into the origin of any superstition it is prudent not to limit investigation into the exact form of the folk-lore which it is intended, if possible, to explain: let us, therefore, see with what other qualities than those of mere power to frighten we find the hare credited.

In the first place it is confessedly one of the most melancholy of animals in popular opinion. When Falstaff complains that he is as melancholy as a gib-cat, or a lugged bear, Prince Henry suggests "Or an old lion, or a lover's lute;" and when Falstaff, in the same vein, goes on with "Yea, or the drone of a Lincolnshire bagpipe," the Prince replies "What sayest thou to a hare, or the melancholy of Moor-ditch?" and brings down upon himself the retort, "Thou hast the most unsavoury similes, and art, indeed, the most comparative, rascalliest, sweet young Prince." Dyce cites from Turberville (through Staunton), "The hare first taught us the use of the hearbe called Wyld Succory, which is very excellent for those who are disposed to be melancholicke: shee herselfe is one of the most melancholicke beasts that is, and to heale her own infirmitie she goeth commonly to sit under that hearbe." In a note to a long passage from Levinus Lemnius, **de Complexionibus**—which may be consulted by those who care—Dr. White Kennett supplies us with an excellent reason for the melancholy of some intelligent hares culminating in suicide:

"Memorand: It is found by experience that when one keeps a hare alive, and feedeth him till he have occasion to eat him, if he telles be-

fore he kills him that he will doe so, the hare will thereupon be found dead, having killed himself."

Cogan, at least, would not have advised the death of a hare with a view to the table, for he tells us that "hare-flesh beside that it is hard of digestion, maketh grosse and melancholy bloud, and is one of the foure kindes of flesh that breed melancholy, mentioned before in the chapter of these. Wherefore it is not for the goodness of the flesh that this silly beast is so often chased with hounds and hunters, but for pastime. Yet thus much will I say to the commendation of the hare, and of the defence of hunters' toyle, that no one beast, be it never so great, is profitable to so many and so diverse uses in physicke as the hare and partes thereof, as Matth. [lib. 2, Dios. cap. 18] sheweth The ankle-bone of the foote of the hare is good against the cramp."

In the Kaffir story of "the great chief of animals," it is to a hare that the woman who has to go home for a time leaves the care of her children; but the hare is a poor guardian, for she runs away to a distance to watch, and when the terrible monster comes and demands the names of the children, she gives them at once, upon which the animal immediately swallows them entire.

But the hare is not regarded always as merely melancholy, silly; or frightening without apparent reason. The hare is often credited with supernatural powers. It was certainly made use of in augury—on a celebrated occasion in the history of our own country by Boadicea—but its legendary association with witchcraft is not, in my opinion, directly traceable to

any traditional augury. The hare appears to be like the cat, an ally of the witch. Fishers of Fifeshire "look on all maukens (hares) to be devils and witches, and if they but see a sight of a dead mauken it sets them a trembling." Mr. Gregor notes that to say to a fisherwoman of the north-east of Scotland that there is a hare's foot in her creel, or to say to a fisherman that there is a hare in his boat, arouses great ire, and calls forth strong words; the word "hare" is not pronounced at sea. In Cornwall a maiden who has been deceived and dies, haunts her deceiver in the guise of a white hare, sometimes saving his life, but **in the end** causing his death. So, too, in South Northamptonshire, the running of a hare along the street of a village, portends fire to some house in the immediate neighbourhood. In the Isle of Man they say women are turned into hares, and can only be shot with a silver sixpence. When a witch is in shape of a hare, the Scotch continue, she can only be hit by a crooked sixpence. "It is unlucky" Dr. Brewer corroborates, "for a hare to cross your path, because witches were said to transform themselves into hares." Indeed, the greatest of all northern wizards, Sir Michael Scott, was turned into a hare by the witch of Falsehope. Several curious hare stories will be found in Mr. Henderson's valuable notes on north-country lore.

The spot which discovered witches to the world sometimes resembled a hare's foot in the experience of continental experts, but it must be borne in mind "ce cigne n'est pas toujours de même forme ou figure; tantôt c'est l'image d'un lièvre, tantôt une patte de crapaud, tantôt une orraignée, un petit chien, un loir."

Having gathered together these few illustrations of the unhappy repute of the hare, I shall now similarly group some instances of an altogether different association of ideas.

The hare is the good genius of the Calmuck. One family of the Moguis believed that they were descended from a hare, and that after death their spirits entered into hares again. They accordingly worshipped the hare, as did other families the deer, the bear, the prairie-wolf, and the rattlesnake for similar reasons. The hare was regarded with superstitious reverence by the Indians of the North; the rabbit was the "sign" of the divine years in the Mexican calendar. In China we remember that the people of Yo-yang would not hunt the hare because it was a telluric genius. "Albino hares," says Dr. Dennys, "are regarded as omens of good, and their appearance is a mark of heavenly approval." It was into a hare that the highest lord of heaven, according to the Mongolian belief, changed himself to feed a hungry traveller, and does not therefore the hare sit in the moon? The Ceylon tale tells how Buddha was wandering through a wood and met a hare, whom he told, in answer to his question, that he was poor and hungry. "Art thou hungry?" said the hare; "make a fire then; then kill, cook and eat me." Buddha made a fire, and the hare leapt into it. Then Buddha exercised his skill as a god, rescued the benevolent hare from the flames, and placed it in the moon. In Indian superstition Chandras, the god of the moon, is said to carry a hare. Children in Swabia may not make shadows on the wall to represent the sacred Moon Hare. In a Kaffir tale, the hare, if not playing the part of a god, appears as the very crafty Ulysses of the animals. The animals,

we learn, had made a kraal and appointed one after another the coney, the muishond, the duiker, the blue-buck, and the porcupine to keep watch over the fat stored therein, and to signal the approach of the inkalimeva (a fabulous animal). Those all failed in the duty and were killed by the other animals. The sixth time that fat is put into the kraal the hare is selected as keeper of the gate, rather against his will. He skilfully makes an end of the dreaded inkalimeva, but as he eats the tail, which should have been reserved for the chief, he has to flee for his life. In Scandinavian mythology Freya is said to have been attended by hares.

Without attempting to found any sweeping generalisation upon the above facts, I may point out that the hare's celebrity is almost as great as its notoriety, and for my own part I am inclined to think that among primitive peoples the hare occupied a very high and honourable place in religion. By-and-by, when animal worship began to yield to something more spiritual, while at the same time the relative character of the hare as contrasted with that of other animals became by experience better known, the hare lost its high estate. It did not at once acquire the repute of being either stupid or inspired by a witch. A blind hare it was, in the North German tale of "The Blue Riband," which ran before the princess, and by plunging in a brook, diving thrice under water, recovered its sight and scampered off, thus teaching her to lead Hans to the same water, with the satisfactory result that after her had plunged in it three times, he, like the hare, recovered his sight. That the flesh of the hare was not eaten in Britain because Boadicea used the hare in augury, could be no reason for the

Chinese refusing to eat of it from the earliest dawn of Chinese history. The animal had been sacred, and the tradition perhaps shown in the use of the hare in augury perhaps was that the remembrance of this holiness long lingered. From primitive regard the descent is generally rapid, and we readily find an explanation for the hare's connection with witchcraft in the degradation of its character from the days of Buddha—a sacred animal becomes an uncanny animal, as heathen gods become devils when their worshippers change their faith. The process is a very common one.

It is curious to note that in the same way that many worthy people have from time to time consulted professed charmers, crediting them, through a reason never discussed, with supernatural powers, so the unhappy hare, like the unhappy cat, although banned and despised, is readily made use of in folk medicine. Thus we read in "Notes and Queries" of but a year

ago that a Dorsetshire mother in the autumn of 1881 was somewhat troubled with the care of recently-born twins. "On paying a visit to inquire after the mother, my wife was consulted as to the desirability of a dose of hare's brains (as a soporific). Mentioning the circumstances to my keeper in the hope of eliciting some information as to the prevalence of the belief, he told me that about a fortnight ago the wife of the keeper of the adjoining manor, who had been recently confined, called at his house and told his wife that she had been down to the squire's house to beg a hare's head from the cook in order to give the brains to her baby as a sedative." Cogan, we have seen, mentions that the ankle-bone of the foot of a hare is good against cramp. The hare appears to be occasionally employed as an Easter emblem in Germany.

William George Black.

(The Folk-Lore Journal, March 1883)

SUSSEX SUPERSTITIONS OF A CENTURY PAST

Sussex is rich in legends and superstitions as befits a region that is said to have been the last part of pagan England to turn Christian. A great many of these beliefs were still lingering late in the last century and many were collected by Charlotte Latham and published in the "Folklore Record" for 1878. It was said, for example, that a tree with a magpie's nest in it was never known to fall, and there are other superstitions about magpies. If one perches on the roof of your house it is a good sign and a proof that the house is in no danger of falling. On the other hand, if you

see one on your left, it's a certain sign of coming woe, and if a magpie perches on any beast, it is certainly a bad omen for the animal. "Whenever I questioned my poor neighbours about their evident dislike of the magpie," Miss Latham says, "they always answered that it was a bad bird and knew more than it should do and was always looking about and prying into other people's affairs."

The cuckoo too, is a bird of omen, and when you hear its voice for the first time in the spring, you should turn over the money in your pocket

if you wish to be lucky for the remainder of the year.

You must not turn a feather bed on a Sunday or the person who sleeps on it will have fearful dreams for the rest of the week.

Never have your clothes mended on your back or you will come to want, and never put your left shoe on before the right because that's a sign of evil to come.

Beware of singing before breakfast, because if you do you will cry before night.

Don't get married on Friday or you and your wife will lead a cat and dog life.

Don't begin work any work on Friday or you will never finish it.

Don't set off on a journey on Friday or put out to sea because all these things will bring you misfortune. This tradition incidentally, is said to date from Friday being the day on which Adam and Eve ate the apple. There is still the custom in the cider districts of Sussex to wassail the apple trees, singing to them to bring luck to the crop. There was a curious belief that on October 10th the devil went around spitting on all the blackberries so that if you hadn't collected them before that time, you would die by eating any you collected after that date.

In Sussex one black sheep is regarded as an omen of good luck to his flock.

Miss Latham also reported (a century ago) that on the Sussex downs, near Broadwater, an old oak tree stood around which a group of skeletons had been seen dancing, hand in hand, by a young man from the nearby village of Findon on his way home at midnight on Midsummer Eve.

The Witches and Fairies of Cornwall

There was a time when anyone in Cornwall who aspired to be a witch would make his or her way to one of the numerous logan or rocking stones, the ritual being to climb on top or merely rock the stone nine times at midnight. Many Cornish people appear to be natural mystics and being predominantly rural, they have always retained a strong belief in natural, even supernatural, forces. Scores of people dabbled in black magic and extolled the skills of the 'charmer,' whose powers might include everything from averting the evil eye to curing whooping cough by passing the infected person under the belly of a relatively-rare, piebald horse. Many of these cures, because of Cornwall's geographical isolation, have lingered on today—especially the numerous remedies for removing warts by drawing them out with a piece of meat and then burying it. And in so far as Britain still has witches, Cornwall has most of them.

The Witches Rock at Treen (not to be confused with Treen on the north-western coast), a tiny village on B3315 was a popular magical site, as was the nearby granite pinnacle known as Castle Peak, where covens reputedly gathered on moonlit nights to watch the sinking of ships which they had bewitched. Martha says the Logan Rock Inn is one of her favourite pubs! flowers blooming everywhere and sandwiches definitely something out of a fairy tale.

The rock itself, which used to tip but is now stable, sits on the edge of

cliffs overlooking a magnificent beach. It's a popular spot for picnics or just to admire the wild flowers and gaze out to sea and think. In the nearby Logan Rock Inn an ancient clipping from the Cornish Telegraph recounts how the rock was wilfully overturned by a certain Lt. Goldsmith in 1824 and replaced (at his expense) on Tuesday, November 2nd of that year at 4.20 p.m. Then follows a long list of people hired to put it back, headed by somebody who was recompensed for 47 days at 2 shillings per day; 58 men paid a total of £5 16s. for one days labour lifting the rock. Lodging for the workmen, timber, crabs, winches, hire of horse and cart to carry the men and luggage, all brought the total to £130 8s. 6d.—which had to be paid by the lieutenant.

The best time to visit the rock, according to locals, is at midnight on a moonlit summer night, because then you'll be able to look over to the south west and see the splendid multi-coloured gardens of the Small Folk down below. Although there is much understandable skepticism about the activities, and even the existence, of these fairy folk today, Cornwall is still a stronghold for believers. Many serious writers have given credence to them, including W. B. Crow who writes in **A History of Magic, Witchcraft and Occultism** (Aquarian Press) that fairies and druids are intimately connected.

"Fairies are tiny people one foot tall with supernatural powers," he explains, "who behave as human beings and have a strong inferiority complex (representing displaced persons, formerly landowners for example, ousted from their domain." A legendary way to avoid meeting up with fairies is to turn your coat inside out. Rings of

darker grass, actually a kind of fungi, are to be found all over the countryside and these are often referred to as fairy rings.

Some writers have theorised that Cornwall was once populated by hordes of undersized, nomadic Celts—a real race of prehistoric dwarfs—who crossed from Europe and whose presence gave rise to the legends of fairies or piskies. In contradiction to this is the suggestion that fairies were once pagan giants who shrunk before the onslaughts of the new religion, christianity, which sprinkled them with holy water.

Not everyone can see the little people, of course, and usually it takes some special sense or second sight.

The miniscule village of Bosfracan is the scene of the legendary tale of the milkmaid who found dozens of piskies skittering around the cows one day as she took them to be milked. It transpired that the grassy pad on her head, on which she carried her bucket, included a four-leaf clover which traditionally gives the owner the gift of second sight.

Arthur's Round Table

On the A6 is Eamont Bridge with its romantically-titled King Arthur's Round Table, surely big enough for a banquet for all the knights for miles around. It's a beautifully symmetrical grassy bank at least 300 feet in diameter with a sunken moat around most of it, broken by two level approachways down which the knights rode or marched onto the arena for their contests and games. It was here, say the old tales, that Sir Lancelot duelled to the death with the local brigand named Tarquin who some say is the giant buried in an enormous grave in Penrith.

OBSERVING THE FULL MOON WITH A VIGIL AT LOCH NESS

What are we to make of the Loch Ness monster? Obviously it exists—there have been too many sightings, photographs and even films for it to be a myth—but are we to deal with it in concrete terms, summarising its numerous physical appearances and documenting the methods and increasingly sophisticated equipment deployed searching for it in the past half century? Or should we concentrate on its magical associations—the obvious similarity between the elusive monster and the legendary kelpies, or water horses which have haunted Scottish lochs and rivers from the earliest times? As far back as the 6th century St. Columba told his biographer Adamnan, who succeeded him as abbot of Iona, that on crossing the river Ness he came across a group of locals burying a man who'd died after being bitten savagely by “a water monster.”

Sending out a man to retrieve the rescue boat, Columba suddenly saw the monster rising to the surface in search of this new potential victim and, raising his arms to form the sign of the cross, commanded the beast: “go no further, nor touch that man: go back at once!” And to everybody's amazement the beast slunk off.

The mysterious beast seems to have lain low for several centuries after that, although the desolate nature of the area around the loch, coupled with the lack of national media, may have had a lot to do with the public's ignor-

ance of the phenomenon. And then in the 1930's when a new road was built along the loch's northwestern shore the fuss began. First workmen, then local residents, then the local papers (a report on May 2nd, 1933 in 'The Inverness Courier' was the first to use the phrase “The Loch Ness Monster”), then national newspapers and radio programmes and finally tourists, all took an interest. It soon became clear that there was more than one monster because of the varying descriptions and even photographs, of which the most familiar, and among the best, are those taken by Frank Searle. This man exchanged his job as a store manager in London for a lonely, full-time vigil, living in a tent just south of Dores village, beside the loch. His pictures, which have appeared in Fleet Street papers, are also reproduced on postcards sold at the Inverness Tourist Office.

At first Fleet Street treated the whole subject as a big joke—there have, of course, been numerous hoaxes, but there have also been a number of group sightings and unimpeachable scientific reports—but growing interest in the occult and related matters has made this skeptical attitude unfashionable and by the 1970's everybody seemed to agree that the monster(s) definitely existed. In fact the efficient Loch Ness Investigation Bureau which reported 1,500 “mostly skeptical” visitors in 1965 was, four years later, applauding the serious and sympathetic attitude of the 32,000

visitors it had received during that

Although many people aboard boats on Loch Ness have reported disturbances in the water which rocked their craft—and specially-equipped boats have detected massive unidentified objects beneath them on sonar apparatus—nobody has apparently been directly attacked by the monster since the day of St. Columba's encounter in 565 A.D. However, never fully explained was the fatal crash of the famous racer John Cobb whose boat capsized on the loch back in 1952 on his attempt to break the world water speed record. Witnesses hinted at a sudden unexpected turbulence in the water ahead of the boat causing it to capsize and explode.

Probably the most interesting and comprehensive documentation that can be found about all the attempts over the years to document and explain the Loch Ness phenomenon is the excellent paperback by Tim Dinsdale, **The Story of the Loch Ness Monster** (Target Mystery). This book summarizes the development of the story since 1933, listing and classifying the various sightings, photographs, films, recordings, and expeditions. Dinsdale himself has made more than a score of expeditions to the loch, once spending nearly 82 consecutive days living alone on its surface in a 16-foot boat. Because he so exhaustively catalogues the various other books and researchers who have written extensively on the subject, there seems little point in repeating them here. But since his book, there has been an interesting £250,000 expedition (in 1972) by the Japanese promoter Yoshio Kou who appeared with a staff of scientists and zoologists and a remote-controlled submarine containing photographic gear and computers.

The dark, peaty-coloured shade of the water defied their attempts at underwater photography just as it had frustrated similar attempts before them, but Kou claimed to have acquired enough data to encourage a return trip at a later date. What might be an incentive was the suggestion in *Variety* (September 5th, 1973) that "the first to capture the monster-lass on film for world TV stand to win lotsa coin."

So the hunt continues. On our visit to Loch Ness in the summer of 1974 we parked in a pretty spot where daisies, wild roses and strawberries lined the bank beside the 8-milestone marker on the road at the northern side of the loch. Our companions nearby, vacationing photographers in a Granada Television car, said that the frequent "No Parking Overnight" signs which cropped up at most of the favourable viewing spots were undoubtedly there as a result of pressure from caravan site owners and might safely be ignored. They said they had already spent two days at this spot keeping a vigil for the monster and although they hadn't seen anything "we believe it is there."

It was the night of the full moon and absolutely a magical place in which to spend it. We saw nothing except the moon shimmering in the water, but getting lightly stoned had an untroubled night although Martha reported waking up before daybreak to hear "a high-pitched yelping, screaming that didn't sound like any animal."

There are naturally all kinds of theories about what the monster(s) might be, ranging from giant eels or seals to some form of creature once-believed extinct that has adapted itself to the fresh water conditions of the largest (23 miles in length) and deepest (al-

most 1,000 feet in parts) lake in Scotland.

In his **Dragon and the Disc** (Sidgwick and Jackson, 1973) F. W. Holiday says that water monsters known as dragons were described in mankind's earliest cuneiform writings. "A careful study of Bronze Age, Iron Age and early Christian art leaves little doubt that the water monsters or dragons observed by those ancient societies were substantially similar to the objects seen in Loch Ness and elsewhere by modern witnesses."

And A Dictionary of Fabulous Beasts (MacMillan) suggests that in many old myths concerning dragons their form was attributed to their control over "watery elements" and they were therefore believed to live at the bottom of the sea where they guarded vast treasures, frequently of pearls.

But, to conclude, a final word on that legendary Scots creature, the kelpie, which has been described as "the personification of the sudden blast of wind or whirlwind which sweeps over the surface of the lakes and pools . . . of the Highlands."

Writing in **Myths Associated with the Mountains, Springs and Lochs of Scotland**, a minister named A. M. Macfarlane, explains: "The latter strikes the water suddenly, leaves behind a ripple like the wake of living creature swimming beneath the surface, and then halting for a moment raises, a few inches above the surface, a dark crest of little waves which bear a remote resemblance to the back and mane of such a creature . . ."

Our view is that if the monster is in any way an occult creature, then maybe looking for it by mechanical means is not necessarily the best approach.

Pixie-led in the Hills of Blackdown

Somerset's celebrated Blackdown Hills were always a predominantly fairy-filled region, "the place which they most ordinarily showed themselves" being between the parishes of Pitminster and Chestonford, near Taunton. "Those that have occasion to travel that way," wrote Richard Bovet in "**Pandaemonium or the Devil's Cloyster** in 1684, "have frequently seen them there, appearing like Men and Women of a stature generally near the smaller size of Men. Their habits used to be of red, blew or green according to the old way of Country Garb, with high crowned hats."

He goes on to say that about 50 years before (i.e. 1630's) a man riding from Comb St. Nicholas, near Chard, saw a pixie fair, but when he got nearer all the little people became invisible even though he could feel them crowding all around him, and when he got through and looked back he could see them all again.

"There were all sorts of commodities . . . as at our ordinary fairs, pewterers, shoemakers, peddlars with all kinds of trinkets, food and drinking booths."

F. W. Mathers wrote in 1923 of some of the customs that still prevailed in his lifetime, such as passing a child through a split ash tree to cure a hernia. The ash must be split for 2-3 feet, he explained, and the naked child passed in by a maiden and received by a boy. The tree is then bound up and if it heals, the child's hernia will disappear. Hanging a stone with a hole in it from the roof of a

barn was said to keep witches from bothering the cattle.

In one of his **Tales of Blackdown Borderland**, Mathers told of visiting a farm where the farmer's wife saw a rake lying with its teeth down and scolded the children while she turned it over. It would bring rain in such a position she explained, and she cursed three times to the sun "so he won't be offended."

And fairies were everywhere up to their little tricks. Many a person trying to cross a field in the dark went round and round unsuccessfully trying to find the gate until they realised they were "pixie-led." The remedy then was to go through the ritual of turning a pocket, or one's coat inside out to shake free from the spell.

Witchcraft in Durham (1883)

The Rev. W. Featherstonhaugh, rector of Edmundbyers, writes as follows to the Newcastle Daily Chronicle:— During an incumbency of twenty-six years I have come to know that charms are quite commonly resorted to for healing of complaints, and that even positive witchcraft still lingers and is practised. For all ordinary complaints, especially of children, there are well-known and recognised charms, as for ringworm, whooping-cough, thrush, &c.; and certain persons are noted for their success in the use of certain formularies and the accompanying acts. One woman here is greatly resorted to in "blowing for burns," that is, breathing on the wound with the accompaniment of a form of words. In a late case, a leg affected with erysipelas, which did not

yield to the doctor's remedies, was cured by stroking with a stone kept for the purpose and a secret form of words, used by a man in the parish noted for it. An old woman, now dead, reputed as a witch, was always avoided if possible; and if met, her evil influence was counteracted by doubling the thumb into the palm of the hand. Positive witchcraft has been practised in this village within the last thirty years, when a farmer, having a horse taken ill, sent for a well-known witchman, and carried out an incantation, with all the accompaniments of killing a black fowl, taking out the heart, sticking it full of pins, and roasting it before the fire at night; when, as a man present informed me, something uncanny was seen to pass the window and look in, and the horse was cured. Even so late as the year 1865, a large sum of money having been stolen from the office of some works near here, a witchman was consulted for its recovery and the detection of the thief. These things are strange but true, and are going on day by day in the midst of us. How about our boast of "advanced civilisation"?

(The Folk-Lore Journal, March 1883)

Reading Runes

In Cumberland is the Bewcastle Cross, carved with runes and mysterious 8th century messages. Runes, an ancient Norse system of secret and sacred writing, have never been fully understood but this is partly because it was never a general language but one confined to magical arts. In later days, after the Christians arrived, the runic characters began to appear on tombstones and boundary markers. The old English word *run* meant literally "mystery" or "secret."

Tracking down the Giants of Brutus' Pagan Britain

The Cerne Abbas Giant is probably the most astonishing of all Britain's various hill figures, if only for the unabashed vulgarity of its private parts. An erect penis measuring 30 feet causes instant comment and its continued existence says a lot for the broad-minded attitude that has persisted here through the centuries when similar figures in other parts of the country have been emasculated. Obviously the giant figure (180 feet high, 44 feet across the shoulders) is a fertility symbol of some kind, a conclusion fortified by the presence of a rectangular earthwork enclosure above it in which maypole dances used to be held around a freshly-cut fir tree for centuries. A tradition in the village is for childless couples to sleep between the figure's legs if they wish to improve their luck.

In the giant's right hand is an up-raised club, 120 feet long and ominously knobbed, as if, said a writer in 1764, it was raised to strike a blow "sufficient to overturn a mountain." The chalky channels that outline the figure, about two feet deep and two feet wide, have been kept in good shape through the centuries and the whole figure is fenced off to keep out the cows that graze around it. The puzzle is, who originally carved it? When? and Why? There are dozens of theories. The most colourful legend recounts that the local people found a real giant on the hillside one day, sleeping off the effects of a heavy

meal of sheep, and killed him on the spot, drawing his outline to mark the event. Others suggest it may have been a satirical joke about the abbot or monks at the nearby abbey at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries and this, of course, would explain why it was never defaced or obliterated by its religious neighbours.

The 12th century historian William of Malmesbury wrote that when St. Augustine arrived in this very pagan area in the 6th century, the locals showed no overwhelming urge to be converted to christianity and hounded the missionaries out by tying tails to their garments. Whereupon the saint petitioned God for the villagers' children to be born with tails in return. Evidently this changed the villagers' attitudes and they invited St. Augustine and his monks back to found the abbey. He named Cernel from a combination of the Latin "cerno" to see and the Hebrew "El" for God. Later in the 13th century, the historian Walter of Coventry adds that the god Helith was once worshipped in this district and the 17th century writer Camden attributes the founding of the abbey to commemorate St. Augustin's having there "broken in pieces Heil, the idol of the English heathen Saxons and chased away the fog of heathen superstition." If this were true, of course, it hardly seems likely the successful christians would have allowed a giant image of the former god to continue dominating the hill-

side. Even so, William Stukeley, writing in 1764, comments that the giant was known locally as Helis.

When Stukeley addressed the Society of Antiquaries on the giant later that year, however, he had another suggestion; that the giant was a representation of Hercules—not the original god but the Roman emperor Commodus (186-195 A.D.) who regarded himself as a reincarnation and gave himself the title of Hercules Romanus when he appeared in public as both consul and gladiator.

“What can we learn from the figure itself—this rude but vigorous representation of a giant or superhuman personage with his great club, his powerful physique and abnormal generative power, his traditional name of Helis, Helith, or Heil, and his association with the maypole cult?” asks Norris Marples. The whole thing does suggest a Hercules, he writes in his book “White Horses and Other Hill Figures” (Country Life, 1949)—“a Hercules who was also regarded as a god of fertility. The figure has all the necessary attributes for this identification.”

The National Trust is responsible for its upkeep today and although a fence surrounds it, most visitors seem to find it irresistible to climb through and walk all around the giant's outline—an unusually full one with indentations not only for sexual organs but ribs, nipples and facial markings.

Not much remains of the ancient Benedictine abbey, although M. R. James in his “Abbeys” (The Great Western Railway, London, 1925) recommends a visit. “I have always supposed it was set up here as a counterblast to the worship of the wicked old giant . . . perhaps the most striking monument of the early

paganism of the country. Whether he is British or Saxon, who shall say? Some have thought he represents what Caesar describes—a wicker figure in which troops of victims were enclosed and then burnt to death. On this hypothesis the figure would have been marked out by palisades of wattles on the ground, and the figures, bound, crowded into the enclosure.”

Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote that Britain was originally inhabited by a race of giants who were conquered by Brutus about 1,000 years before the christian era. One of Brutus' followers, the Trojan general Corineus, was made ruler of Cornwall, and in this role he killed off all the giants of the region wrestling with the last one, Gogmagot, and throwing him into the sea.

The rock at Plymouth from which the last giant plunged is still pointed out and official records exist of the giant that was once carved into the turf at Plymouth Ho, even though no trace of it can today be seen.

But the story has curious echoes in London where in the beautiful Guildhall, two nine-foot giants representing Gog and Magog stand guard over the medieval stained glass windows of the main hall. Carrying lances the kilted, bearded figures, weighing just over half a ton each, are impressive enough but mere striplings compared with the 14½ foot figures they replaced (in 1953) which were destroyed in the bombing in 1940.

Why Gog and Magog though? Geoffrey of Monmouth's giant (“in stature 12 cubits”) was named Gogmagot and although there were eventually two giants carved into the Plymouth turf (a 15th century audit book notes the cleaning of only one) the second was believed to have repre-

sented the Trojan General Corineus in the legend.

The giants first appeared in London in the 15th century when records show that £9 14s. 10d. was spent to erect the pair on London Bridge to welcome Henry V on the way to his coronation in April 1413. Most pageants in the capital featured the giants thereafter, and the pair that welcomed Philip of Spain in 1554 and appeared in the Lord Mayor's show in 1605 were still called Gogmagog (slight change in spelling) and Corineus. Later that century, in 1666, the pair were destroyed in the Great Fire of London and around that time, theorizes T. C. Lethbridge, Corineus was forgotten and somehow the name of Gogmagog confusingly became split, probably because of the two characters known as Gog and Magog in Ezekiel (chapter 28).

Lethbridge wrote a book, *Gogmagog, the Buried Gods* (Routledge & Kegan Paul) about his excavations on Wandlebury Hill outside Cambridge where he uncovered turf carvings of the two gods. John Hale had written about them in 1640, attributing their origin to the work of scholars from the university.

So the twin Gods stand proudly in the Guildhall, their mystery not entirely solved. In *Archaic Britain* Harold Bayley suggests that Gog was "a great pagan deity" and Magog "a mother goddess." Maybe we'd better leave it at that.

MICHAEL SCOT'S RECIPE FOR GOLD

The red sandstone ruin of Melrose Abbey house the bones of the renowned wizard Michael Scot, born in Scotland around 1175 and who died while in the service of the Holy Roman

Emperor Frederick II in Sicily. Mathematician, alchemist and physician, he wrote some celebrated books on astrology, among them *Liber Introductorius* and *Liber Particularis* and his extensive knowledge of magic led Boccaccio to describe him as "a great master of necromancy." Dante felt that Scot belonged in his "Inferno," and his fellow countryman, Sir Walter Scott, wrote about him in "The Lay of the Last Minstrel."

Scot was supposedly turned into a hare once by a witch in the village of Falsehope (wherever that is) but it isn't clear when this was, or how he regained his normal shape. Certainly there's a long tradition of regarding hares themselves as witches, and in Scotland and the Isle of Man it's believed that such creatures can only be shot by loading a gun with crooked sixpences.

Scot's alchemy studies led him to believe that "gold grows and is born" underground by the combination of heat and sulphur and this observation may have been the basis of some of his experiments. Here is one of his recipes for making gold in the laboratory.

"Take the blood of a ruddy man and the blood of a red owl, burning saffron, Roman vitriol, resin well-pounded, natural alum, Roman alum, sugared alum, alum of Castille, red tartar, marcasite, golden alum of Tunis which is red and salt. Pound in a mortar, pass through a sieve, treat with urine of taxo or the juice of wild cucumber, dry, bray, and put in a crucible with copper."

Scot, who maintained that the three kings of the bible were originally trickster, sorcerer and sage ("illusor, malefious, sapiens") before conversion to Christianity, wrote about aerimancy, the art of divining from aerial

phenomena such as clouds, fog, lightning, thunder and falling stars and warned "cloud formations in the shape of dragon, horse or man betray the presence there of demons and it is a good time to invoke them with conjuration . . ."

Michael Scot was also reputed to be the constructor of "flying machines." He was said to have built a mechanical horse on which he flew to both Paris and Italy.

His grave in the abbey is not marked, but is well known to the custodian who will direct you to walk straight down the colonnaded archway on the right to a small window below which are two flat headstones; Scot's grave is the larger of the two. He was said to have been buried clutching a book of his most potent spells!

THE HELL HOUNDS OF DARTMOOR

Dartmoor's lonely Wistman's Wood, near Two Bridges, is said to be haunted by the dreaded Wist or Wisht hound whose legend supposedly inspired Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's **Hound of the Baskervilles**.

These jet-black hell hounds who, accompanied by a ghostly keeper with hunting horn said to be the ancient god Woden, supposedly roam the moors on stormy nights. They will reputedly bring death within the year to anyone unfortunate enough to meet with them. This, strangely enough, hardly discourages curious visitors, who head on foot up the valley from Two Bridges, past Cravern's Farm and following the stream north eventually reach the eerie wood on its right bank.

It is very still and quiet here except for the constant, low whistles of the

wind sweeping across the barren moors. The wood, a tangle of gnarled curiously moss-covered trees interspersed among half-buried boulders, slopes down to the stream where sheep tend to congregate. Here and there a pile of bloodstained bones and tufts of wool indicate that one of them has fallen victim to some predator. Late on Sunday night is said to be the most favourable time to encounter the spectral hounds but at that time we were in bed at a nearby inn. Martha said she heard dogs barking during the night, but then who doesn't? Wistman's Wood was also the alleged scene of Druidical rituals, and is commented on as such by early local historians.

This grotesque wood of ancient oak trees, one of the few patches that remains from a time when Dartmoor was almost completely forested, lies just below the remains of a prehistoric village which itself is reputedly haunted. But it is not the only spot where the glowing Wist Hounds have been seen. Their route takes them in full cry across the lonely moors to the Dewer Stone at Dartmoor's southern tip, where they apparently disappear over a precipitous crag, sweeping any pursuers along with them. And since 1677 they have been seen breathing fire and smoke in the vicinity of Buckfastleigh where the Lord of Brook Manor, a man of evil reputation named Sir Richard Cabell, was supposedly whisked off to hell on the night of his death. Cabell's body is buried in a pagoda-like building in the Buckfastleigh churchyard where, legend records, one needs only to insert one's finger in the keyhole to feel it being nibbled by his spirit.

Writing about Dartmoor's hell-hounds in an article in the **Quarterly Review** of July 1873, R. J. King com-

The Magical Significance of Bells

mented: "The cry of the whish or wished hounds is heard occasionally in the loneliest recesses of the hills whilst neither dogs nor humans are anywhere visible. At other times (generally on a Sunday) they show themselves—jetblack, breathing flames and followed by a tall, swart figure who carries a hunting pole. Wise or Wish, according to Kemble, was the name of Woden, the lord of "wish" who is probably represented by the master of these dogs of darkness."

Another story of the dreaded hounds, recounted by J .R. W. Coxhead in his book **The Devil in Devon** (West Country Handbooks, Bracknell) concerns the farmer who set off on horseback for his Chagford home after a busy day and too much imbibing of ale at the Widecombe fair sometime in the late 17th century. On Hamel Down, near an ancient circle of upright stones, he suddenly heard the sound of a hunting horn and espied the ghostly pack charging by. Bolstered by the drink he shouted to the huntsman: "What sport have you had" Give us some of your game."

"Take that," replied the huntsman flinging him a small limp bundle which the gathering clouds prevented him from being able to identify.

Until he arrived home and by candlelight recognized he was holding the lifeless body of his own child.

The legend of the wish hounds also persists west of Dartmoor at Buckland.

NIGHT RIDER

St. John's Wort was widely regarded in Scotland as being a charm against witches and fairies. Lewis Spence repeats the belief from the Isle of Man that if you tread on St. John's Wort after sunset, a fairy horse will rise from the earth and carry you about all night leaving you only at sunrise.

The site of St. Mary-le-Bow, like many other churches, is believed to have been sacred ground for centuries before the christians arrived. Sir Christopher Wren, who rebuilt the church in the 17th century, topping it with a 248 foot spire and an enormous copper dragon, said he believed the original church dated back to Roman times.

Today what used to be the churchyard is a miniscule city park in which a statue of Captain John Smith (who led the Jamestown settlers) watches over the trees and benches. A plaque in the church wall commemorates the death of John Milton who died in the adjoining parish.

But St. Mary-le-Bow has a more important claim to fame; people born within the sound of its bells, according to the legend, are true cockneys (from 'cockernay' or 'cok's egg,' a contemptuous old-fashioned term for a townie). It's a fascinating concept—that of geographical definition within the radius of bells—and is thought to have originated in the 14th century when a 9 p.m. curfew prohibited all who heard the bell from wandering after that time.

At about that time in history, it was a popular belief that bells themselves were not above wandering. A medieval fancy throughout Europe was that at least once a year, on Good Friday, all church bells made a pilgrimage to Rome and woe betide any parish whose bell missed the outing: the

result would be poor harvests and bad luck all round. Church bells were not only felt to have a will of their own, ringing prophetically even when buried underground or sunk in wells and lakes, but were also regarded as a potent spell against witches and evil spirits and were always sounded on May Day, 12th Night and other potentially maleficent times.

Writing in the 14th century the theologian Durandus commented: "Bells are rung in procession that demons may flee in fear. For when they hear the trumpets of the church militant—that is, the bells, they are afraid."

But oddly enough, their sound was also on occasions used to grant exemption. In Northumberland an annual fair was preceded by the tolling of The Thief and Reaver Bell which traditionally offered immunity to "all manner of whores, thieves, dice-players and other unthrifty folk" to attend without being arrested. "This protection," explained M. Aislabie Denham in 1858, "caused multitudes of loose persons of both sexes to resort to fairs of this description who otherwise durst not have appeared in public."

Church bells, of course, have received the most attention but bells of one kind or another have been used for at least 3,000 years and renowned all over the world for their magical properties. In the American south and in parts of Ireland it has long been thought that drinking liquids out of bells would cure ailments; some African tribes encourage rain by imitative magic—pouring water on to the ground from the bowl of a bell. Siberian shamans wear bells for incantations and prophecies and in the bible (Exodus XXVIII, 35) priests wore gold bells in the hem of their

garmens to keep away the demons. In myth fairies often appeared to the sound of bells, and many fairies wore them on their clothing.

Bells have served "among almost all people for thousands of years as amulet, fertility charms, summons to a god, prophetic voice, curative agent or purely musical instrument," says Funk & Wagnall's **Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend**.

"If all the bells in England were rung at one time," remarked Bishop Latimer in 1552, "... there would scarcely be a single spot where a bell would not be heard." And it is quite true that the English, even more than most people, have always loved bells. This is one of the few countries in the world where the art of campanology has become universal. Up to the 14th century church bells both here and abroad usually hung on a solitary spindle but after that time, bell ringing became increasingly sophisticated, with up to a dozen bells mounted on wheels and, in Britain at least—the scientific art consisted of literally ringing in the changes. More than 40,000 changes can be rung without repetition on a set of eight bells, and for 12 bells—it would take a team of ringers almost 30 years to exhaust all the possibilities.

In actual practice certain specific routines became standardised and some elite societies of skilled ringers founded before the 17th century still exist to-day, the most famous example being the College of the Holy Ghost. This particular group was founded in 1424 by that renowned Lord Mayor of London, Dick Whittington, whose call to London came from the bells of this very same church, St. Mary-le-Bow, chiming out to him "Turn again, thrice mayor of London."

Water in Worship, in Prophecy But Mostly in Wells

by A. W. Moore

I have entitled my paper "Water and Well-Worship," as I am persuaded that the superstitious use of wells in Man, which cannot be said to be quite extinct even now, had its origin in the worship of water generally, and I think that I can show that this has been the case from still existing superstitions. Water, like earth and fire, was doubtless once worshipped as an animate being having powers which it might exercise either beneficially or the reverse, and it was therefore considered desirable to propitiate it by adoration. One of the powers possessed by it when in the form of a river was that of stopping diseases from crossing it, as is shown by the following story found among the MSS. of the late Robert Gawne of the Rowany, parish of Rushen:—

Small-pox, called in Manx **Yn Vreac** ("The Spotted One"), being personified in the ghostly likeness of a man, met a member of a well-known insular family on the bank of the Peel river, near St. John's, and, being unable to cross, asked him if he would carry him over, promising that, if he did so, neither he nor any member of his family should ever be afflicted with the disease in question. The man complied with his request, and it fell out as "Small-pox" had promised. This meeting with "Small-pox" occurred

at a time when the population of the Island was decimated at short intervals by that fell disease.

Running water was also supposed to be capable of preventing the passage of spirits and ghosts. Was it not on account of this superstition that the dead in Celtic countries were formerly so frequently buried in islands? Thus, in Man, the islet of St. Patrick, off Peel, was once a favourite place of sepulture. It is significant, too, of the prevalence of this superstition that it was supposed that the Manx fairies were in the habit of celebrating the obsequies of any good person on a stone in the middle of a lake. I would also call attention to the fact that some of the graveyards which surround the ancient **keeills** are artificially raised, and are surrounded with a ditch, into which water would naturally fall. An instance of the superstition that spirits could not cross running water was communicated to Mr. Roeder in 1883:—"The ghost of a lady in silk walks the mountain passes in the evening time. As soon as you go after her, and she comes to the water or running brook, she changes; she cannot go on, as she cannot pass."

As water was supposed to be capable of stopping the passage of diseases, we need not be surprised at

its also being supposed to be capable of curing them; and perhaps the water of some of the sacred wells in Man has an actual sanative value, though, as will be seen later that of one of the most famous of them has none. Quite apart, however, from any sanative qualities, there was a belief in the magical power of water generally. "Even sea-water," writes Professor Rhys with reference to the Isle of Man, "was believed to have considerable virtues if you washed in it while the books were open at church (i.e. during service), as I was told by a woman who had many years ago repeatedly taken her own sister to divers wells and to the sea during the service on Sunday, in order to have her eyes cured of their chronic weakness."

Among these magical powers of water was that of being a vehicle for divination. Thus, at Hollandtide, girls obtained information about their future husbands by filling their mouths with water, holding a pinch of salt in each hand, and then betaking themselves to the next neighbour's house but one. They then listened through the keyhole to the conversation, and the first name mentioned would be that of their future husband. On the same eve also, as well as on the last night of the year, ivy leaves marked with the names of a family were put into water, and if one of the leaves withered, it was supposed that the person whose name was on it would die before the end of the year. Of similar significance, as regards the powers of water, was the use of it in a bowl for the purposes of divination by a notorious witch, who prophesied that the herring fleet would never return. As the prophecy came true, the witch was put to death in the usual manner by being rolled down the steep side

of Slieauwhallian in a spiked barrel. By the use of water, too, it was supposed to be possible to divine who was a witch, and who was not, as the witch would float, while she who had been falsely accused of practising witchcraft would sink. Not only could water detect a witch, but it had also the quite distinct function of contributing to the making of a witch, as will be seen from the annexed story, told to my informant by a man still living, who said he had it from the victim herself about the year 1875, when she was an old woman:—

An old crone, who had practised witchcraft and charms during a great part of her life, had grown very feeble, and so, being wishful to endow her daughter with her magical knowledge, made her go through the following performance. A white sheet was laid on the floor, and beside it was placed a tub of clean water. The girl was made to undress and go into the water, and, after thoroughly washing herself, to get out and wrap herself in the sheet. While she stood in the sheet she had to repeat after her mother a number of words, the exact nature of which, as she was in an abject state of terror, she had forgotten, only remarking that their general purport was that she swore to give up all belief in the Almighty's power, and to trust in that of the Evil One instead. The mother died soon afterwards, but the girl made no attempt to avail herself of the attributes with which she was supposed to have been endowed.

Water had yet another connexion with witches, i.e., that of being used as a protection against them. For it was supposed that washing the face in dew on May morning rendered their hostilities innocuous. It is possible,

too, that this supposed protective power of water rendered the rite of baptism acceptable to the converts from paganism as a safeguard against the "evil eye." In the same way, also, the Church seems to have persuaded them that it was equally efficacious against their abduction by fairies, and, at a much later date, it was able to

convince the people that the sprinkling of water on the places haunted by fairies would suffice to drive them away. I believe also that the practice of putting crocks of water out for the fairies at night arose from the persuasion that not only would it propitiate them, but that it would guard the occupants of the house from them.

KEY MAGIC

To the Editor of FOLK-LORE.

Sir,—The key, either in conjunction with the Bible or alone, played an important part in our East-Anglian divination ceremonies. But a use to which it was put is, I think, almost unique, namely, to influence wind and tide on behalf of a vessel coming into or leaving port.

The following is a brief account supplied by our friend and representative for Norfolk, Miss Matthews; and it is the more interesting as it is corroborated by a friend at Lynn, who states in a letter to me that he well remembers seeing the action, but did not attach any value or interest to it at the time (not being a folk-lorist, perhaps). But since I told him of the information I had received he called it to mind; but, though he has since been on the look-out at intervals for its recurrence, he has not been able to trace even an isolated instance of its survival at this date. If it does still exist he has not been fortunate enough to observe it. Possibly the decrease in the shipping may partly account for this; or possibly it has been proved to be ineffectual in its results. But in any case it does not appear popular with the younger generation of seamen's wives, and will probably be, ere long, entirely forgotten. The following is the account supplied to Miss Matthews by a friend.

"At a time when there were no docks at Lynn, and all ships trading to the port moored in the harbour, I have seen groups of women, no doubt the wives and sweethearts of the sailors, assembled on the quay, watching for the arrival or departure of a ship, in the crew of which one or all might have an interest. Each carried in her hand a key, generally apparently the key of the house-door; and if she was watching for a vessel expected 'up with the tide' she would, by inserting one finger in the bow of it, and placing a finger of the other hand in the angle of the wards and the stem, continue turning the key towards herself until the vessel arrived, or until the tide turned and its coming was, for a time, hopeless. The object of the winding motion was to bring the vessel home. If, however, the person was watching the departure of a ship, the key would be turned in the same manner, but in the contrary direction, viz., from the holder, which act was supposed to invoke good luck for the vessel and the crew. I have little doubt that the custom is still (1891) observed, though now probably to only a very limited extent."

I should be glad if any member could give other examples of a similar custom elsewhere.

Great Yarmouth. W. B. GERISH.

And now, coming to the superstitious use of well-water in particular, it may, I think, be reasonably conjectured that it was the employment of water in baptism, at the time when paganism was giving way to Christianity, that made the worship of water in wells more fashionable than the worship of river or sea-water. For the **keeills**, or cells, of the ancient recluses, who lived in Man during the dawn of Christianity there, were invariably near a well, whence they would draw water both for their own consumption and for baptising those who came to them for that purpose. And it was, doubtless, part of their policy to place their cell close to a well, which had hitherto been made use of in the performance of pagan rites, so that the memory of the old beliefs might be obliterated by the practice of the new. It is probable, too, that the old Manx name of the Epiphany, **Lail Chibbyrt Ushtey** ("Feast-day of the Water Well") may record a similar attempt on the part of the Church to interfere with pagan observances on the last day of the Saturnalia, by celebrating the baptism of Christ by a ceremonial visit to the sacred wells. These attempts, however, to turn a pagan ceremonial into a Christian one have not been successful, as the very wells which in Man, as in Ireland, were named after Christian saints, and were probably visited on the festivals of these saints, have been, till quite recently, resorted to at a festival connected with pagan and not with Christian rites. This festival, which was formerly kept on the first of August, is called **Laa Lhuanys**, or **Laa Lhunys** ("Lhuanys's Day"), and was probably originally associated with the Celtic god Lug, who, as he was said to have been brought up at the Court of Manannan, the eponymous ruler of Man, was closely connected with the myth-

ical history of that island. He was a divinity, corresponding partly to Hermes and partly to Apollo. In Ireland, his festival, called the **Lug-Nassad**, or the wedding of Lug, was "the great event of the summer half of the year, which extended from the Kalends of May to the Kalends of winter. The Celtic year was more thermometric than astronomical, and the **Lug-Nassad** was, so to say, its summer solstice." A fair, till recently held on this day both in Man and Ireland, at which games took place, is, together with the well-visiting, all that remains of this festival within living memory. As regards the rites practised at the well-visiting, it is clear that the Manx Church, in the 17th and 18th centuries, fully recognised their pagan tendency, as it attempted, though in vain, to put an end to them. It is, however, probable that the alteration of the date of this festival from the first day of August to the first Sunday in that month, called in Manx **yn chied Doonagh ayns ouyr** ("the first Sunday in harvest"), was due to ecclesiastical influence, which was thus exercised with a view of giving it a semi-religious character.

Let us now inquire what were the objects for which the Manx visited these wells, by what ritual they sought to attain these objects, and what was the meaning of this ritual. The objects were mainly for the cure of diseases, but also the acquiring of charms for protection against witches and fairies, and, generally, the securing of good luck. The usual ritual was to walk round the wells one or more times sunways, to drink the water, to wet a fragment of their clothing with it, and to attach this fragment to any tree or bush that happened to be near the wells. Then to drop pins, pebbles, beads, or buttons into them, and to repeat a prayer in which they men-

tioned their ailments. Such was the ritual for the cure of diseases. When the wells were visited for the other purposes mentioned, the only difference in the ritual was that the rags were dispensed with. As regards its meaning, it may be considered certain that, though the rags were occasionally offerings, they were not so in all cases, but were "vehicles of the diseases which the patients communicate to them when they spit the well-water from their mouths." This view is strengthened by the fact that it was supposed that anyone who was rash enough to take away a rag thus deposited would be sure to catch the disease communicated to it by the person who left it. It was thought that when the rag had rotted away the disease would depart. In fact, the process of reasoning was the same as with regard to many charms. Thus, for instance, a penny was rubbed on fat bacon and then on a wart; after this the bacon was buried, and it was supposed that by the time it decayed the wart would be cured. As regards the pins, coins, beads, and buttons, I believe that they also were formerly vehicles of disease, but they are now invariably considered to be offerings. But, with reference to the practice of dropping pebbles into or near the wells, it should also be borne in mind that it was probably once believed that the pebbles themselves were endowed with curative properties, so that they perhaps added to the supposed efficacy of the wells.

The pebbles found in or near Manx wells are almost invariably white, and, in connexion with this fact, some other uses of white pebbles may be mentioned, as a reference to them may lead to some elucidation of the question of their significance. It was by immersing a white pebble in water

that St. Columba, who has left so many traces of his influence in Man, is said to have performed numerous marvellous cures. White pebbles have been found in the churchyards of the parishes of Bride and Maughold, and in the churchyard of the old Keeill, called Kilkellan, in the parish of Lonan, at from two or three feet below the present level of the ground. These are the only churchyards which have been examined with a view of finding pebbles, but it is probable that they exist in all the older churchyards in the island. In some of the tumuli of the Bronze Age, similar pebbles, but of a larger size, have been found ranged round the urns containing the ashes of the deceased. No Manx fisherman, at the present day, will go to sea with a white stone in his boat, as he believes that it will bring ill luck upon him. Here the influence of the white stone or pebble is noxious instead of efficacious.

Coming now to the pins, I may remark that they seem invariably to have been thrown into the wells, and not stuck into the adjacent trees; and, in connexion with this fact, it is noticeable that there is no trace of the use of the wells for purposes detrimental to others, as is not unusual elsewhere. This may be regarded as a certain proof of the superior amiability of the Manx people!

There was one further object for which wells in Man were once visited i.e., for raising a wind; but this superstition has quite passed out of memory and is only known from a solitary entry in the insular records, in the year 1658. From this it would appear that a certain Elizabeth Black had been accused of emptying "a springing well dry for to obtain a favourable winde." When this charge was investigated by

the court, in which the Governor presided, several witnesses deposed to the emptying of the well, and to the supposition that the said Elizabeth Black had done it, though no one had seen her so occupied. She, however, "utterly denied" the truth of these allegations, but was, nevertheless, fined "for such a folly tending to charming, withcraft, or scorcery."

(Folk-Lore, September 1894)

Tintagel Castle — Birthplace of King Arthur ?

Tintagel Castle was first nominated as King Arthur's birthplace by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *History of the Kings of Britain* in 1145, and later repeated and embellished by numerous French writers. With the revived interest in Arthurian romance of the 19th century, the tale was embedded in popular folklore, assisted by the romantic poems of Tennyson which seemed to leave no doubt.

Geoffrey of Monmouth was a somewhat fanciful scholar whose documentation has been taken with a pinch of salt by later writers, but nevertheless there could have been truth in his story. Excavations at Tintagel—and the adjoining site once known as Bossiney—have produced evidence not only of Roman and Saxon habitation, but also traces of an earlier Celtic settlement, or monastery.

The major part of the fortress was situated on the island which towers up above the sea so steeply that the only entrance through the rock could, said

Geoffrey of Monmouth, have been defended by only three men against the might of England. Until recently steps wound down from the mainland almost to the sea level and then steeply up the other side of the island, but storms caused subsidence and the steps fell away so the island is—temporarily one assumes—inaccessible.

But even the view from the promontory on the mainland is breathtaking and it is easy to see how so many romantic fantasies could have attached themselves to the place. Only scattered remnants of the ramparts remain, and these offer a perch to hundreds of seagulls which swoop and wheel over the headland with piercing cries.

In the rocky cove down below can be discerned the entrance to the massive cave in which legend says Merlin lived. According to some stories the infant Arthur was thrown up by the waves, right outside Merlin's cave; other versions of the story allege that Merlin himself, one of the last of the ancient Druids, procured Arthur's birth and arranged for his upbringing, an early example of the occult power behind the throne that has been a repetitive pattern of history.

Among Merlin's fanciful exploits you may recall was his supposed transporting of a circle of stones from Ireland to Britain's Salisbury Plain, to be re-erected as a monument to British nobles killed in battle by the Saxon warrior, Hengist. In actual fact archaeologists date Stonehenge to a period about 2000 years before the appearance of both Merlin and Arthur.

Perhaps the famous magician's most notable feat was obtaining the accession of the young Arthur to the throne by assembling all the contenders in London when King Uther Pen-

dragon died. This was the celebrated occasion when Arthur, and only Arthur, was able to pull a glittering sword from an anvil and thus claim the monarchy.

Merlin was last heard of enticed and entrapped in some fair damsel's castle in Europe, shortly after being reported at the Roman court disguised as a stag. But of course he pops up Wales imprisoned in a tree and some say he is buried at the heart of the Glastonbury Zodiac, in tiny Park Wood. The legend is ubiquitous, the facts obscure, but the legend is fact.

At any rate, to return to Tintagel, whether or not it was the actual site of Arthur's birthplace and the home of his magic mentor will probably never be established, but millions of people apparently want to think so. In the 1930's a group of people who wanted to perpetuate the old legends set themselves up as a reconstituted "Order of the Knights of the Round Table of King Arthur's Court of Camelot at Tintagel." Their instigator, Thomas Glassnock, a millionaire Arthurian scholar, built a magnificent King Arthur's Great Hall where members meet to further "the Arthurian ideal of an honorable life through brotherly love." The Order declares that it is "not dogmatic about any point regarding the history and legends" surrounding Arthur and welcomes all information and views. Membership is open to all. (Write Royal Building, Royal Parade, Plymouth, Devon, for details).

Another interesting, more literary, organization that shares these ideals is The Pendragon Society: (Write Mrs. Jess Foster, 22 Alma Road, Garden Flat, Clifton, Bristol).

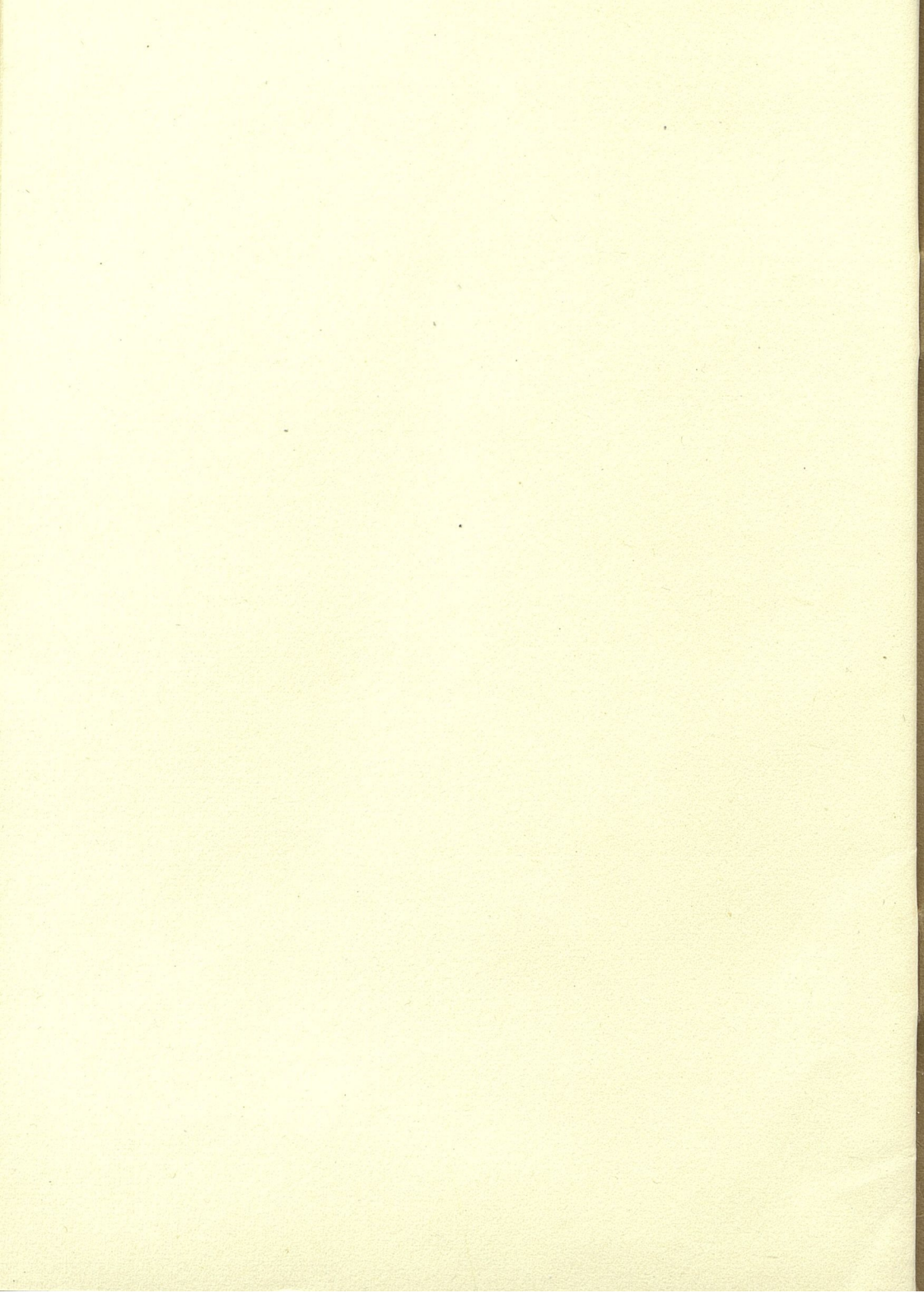
Grant's Grave

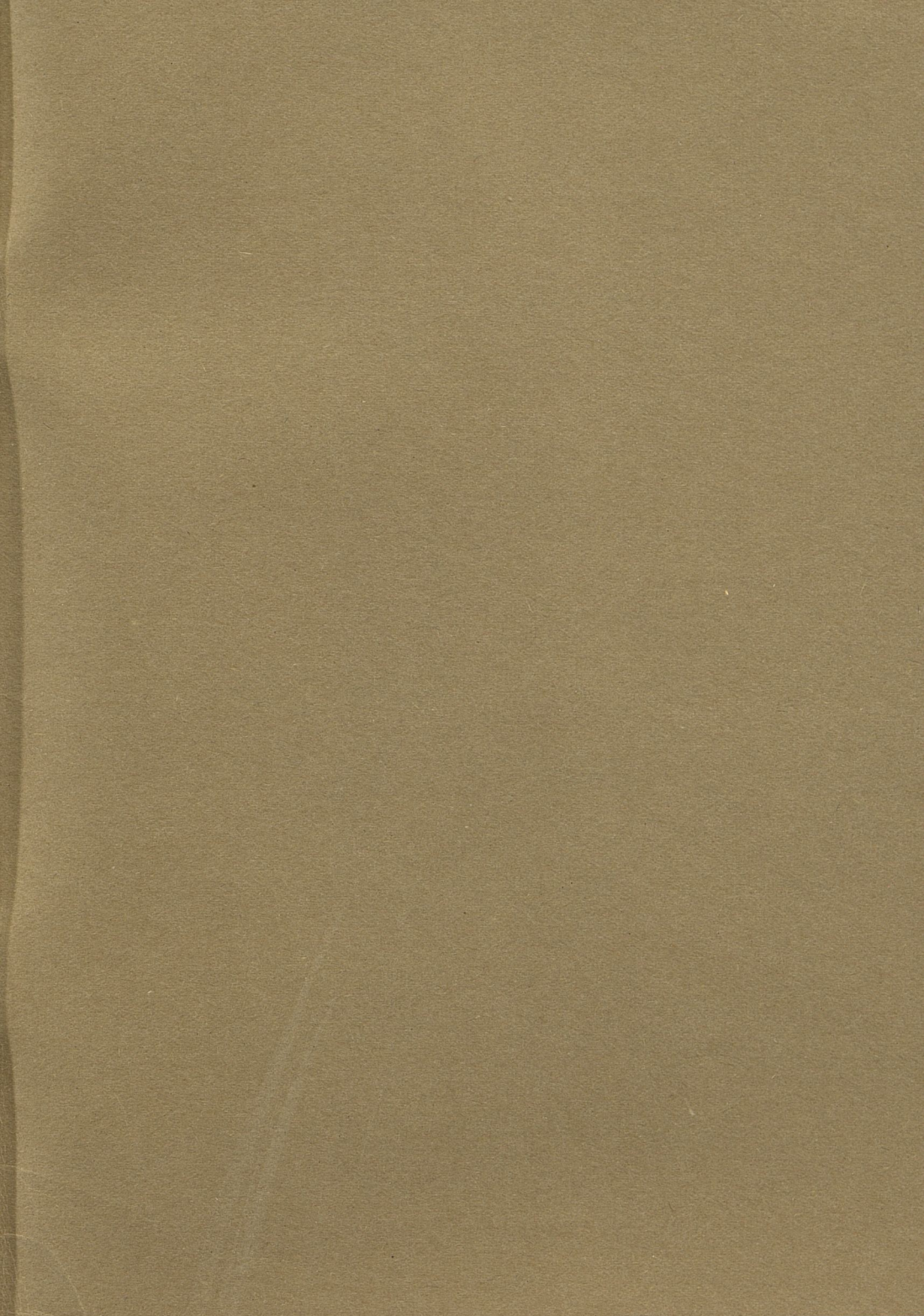
The grave of a real giant, John Middleton (1578-1623) can still be seen in the churchyard at the village of Hale, on the north bank of the Mersey east of Liverpool. Middleton, known as the 'Child of Hale,' lived in the sort of thatched cottage that is still so characteristic of the village today. He grew to a height of nine feet three inches and some aver it happened overnight as a result of magic. He was said to have fallen asleep on a fairy mound. After he had been buried some years, there were the inevitable doubts about whether his size had been exaggerated but the body was exhumed and the measurements found to be correct.

Banishing Witches

The annual ceremony of banishing Cleer near Liskeard, still retains many pagan touches, including the casting of various herbs into a bonfire as well as a wooden sickle cut from an oak tree. The festival was not only to banish witches but to keep away all forms of evil from the town for the coming year. On this St. John's Eve, June 23rd, it is still customary in many parts of Cornwall to light bonfires in imitation of the lifegiving sun whose power begins to wain after this midsummer day. The first bonfire in a countrywide chain is lit at St. Ives with a preliminary blessing in the old Cornish language by the master of ceremonies. Most of these bonfires are on prominent beacon hills, which were also noted prehistoric sites.







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