

Adam Ardrey

www.finding-merlin.com

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(One)

Finding Merlin / Finding Arthur

- *Finding Merlin* - item 18/24 on the agenda for Oban Lorn & the Isles
Community Planning Group meeting on Tuesday, 11 June 2013.
- The title should really be *Finding Arthur*. (The man called Merlin was a man
of Strathclyde – Arthur was a man of Argyll.

(Two)

Introduction

My first book *Finding Merlin* was published in 2007 in the UK and in 2008 in the USA.

My second book *Finding Arthur* will be published in the USA in October 2013 and in the UK soon thereafter.

I live in Bothwell, Lanarkshire, with my wife and three children and work as an advocate and part-time Tribunal Service judge.

(Three)

Proposal

That Argyll takes advantage of its Arthurian connections to boost tourism.

A BBC documentary about Oban in May 2013 said Oban needed something to boost tourism. What better than the most famous cycle of stories in the Western canon?

(Four)

Commercial Potential - Non-Arthurian Examples

Leicester and York

Leicester and York are fighting over the body of Richard III (discovered last year).

Richard III is not nearly as famous as Arthur, no one is.

“Richard III could provide a king’s ransom for Leicester with an estimated £14 million tourism boost. Leicestershire Chamber of Commerce chief executive Martin Traynor has based his calculation on the increased flow of tourists into Leicester since the discovery of the king’s remains and all the national and international press coverage of the city.”¹

Loch Ness Monster

Inverness makes millions out of the myth of Loch Ness Monster and it isn’t even real.

St. Ninian Trail

In August 2011 the BBC reported that Galloway was to open a pilgrim / tourist trail to Whithorn, where St. Ninian was active. This report made much of the increasing interest in such trails.

The promoters and the local people said that this would increase shop usage, secure jobs and help keep local schools open. This ‘means everything’ said one woman (although that was probably a bit of an exaggeration).

The minimal cost of such a promotion in relation to the return was emphasised.

No one, bar a bare few, knows anything about Ninian (even Bede writing in the 8th c. knew next to nothing about him and much of what he said was wrong).

Arthur on the other hand fascinates people from California and Oregon to Western Australia and Germans too, at least according to my ‘mailbag.’

¹ I have used relatively random quotations I found on-line, simply as examples. There are hundreds of others I could have used.

Cumbria

Cumbria has the Rheged Centre, Penrith.

Its website says:

§ *“Named after the Ancient Kingdom of the Dark Ages, Rheged is one of the largest visitor attractions ever to open in Cumbria.*

Rheged is an all-weather, all year round visitor centre of national importance. Situated in Britain’s largest grass covered building...” Blah, Blah, Blah.

Even the people who lived in Rheged didn’t know they lived in Rheged before this Centre was opened.

Almost everyone in the world knows Arthur.

Oban, with Iona and Benderloch to the north and Tarbet and Dunadd to the south, is ideally placed to be the site of an equivalent centre (in a few years).

Rosslyn Chapel, near Edinburgh

Almost no one had heard about Rosslyn until *The Da Vinci Code* was published. Its place in the public eye has come, and it will go.

Arthur is a permanent feature in the common consciousness.

“At Rosslyn Chapel in Midlothian, visitor numbers soared from 40,000 to... 175,000 a year after it featured in the Dan Brown blockbuster and subsequent film The Da Vinci Code... "We didn't know how dramatic the effect was going to be. We managed to cope, just," said Colin Glynne-Percy, director of the Rosslyn Chapel Trust.”

Rosslyn Chapel opened a new multi-million pound visitor centre this year.

I have given only five examples. There are many more.

(Five)

Commercial Potential - Arthurian Examples

England

- English Heritage

- If you Google English Heritage and King Arthur you will find innumerable links to, for example, Tintagel Castle, where they say Arthur was born. Even the sources that place Arthur in the south don't say this.
- *"Tintagel Castle is steeped in legend and mystery; said to be the birthplace of King Arthur, you can still visit the nearby Merlin's Cave. Don't Miss - The introductory video 'Searching for Arthur'"*
- This is nonsense.
- http://www.tourismleafletsonline.com/pdfs/Tintagel_Castle_Leaflet.pdf

- Glastonbury

- Glastonbury's claim to be the place where Arthur was buried is a joke among those who know much about it.
- It is kept going because Glastonbury makes lots of money out of its Arthur connection.

- And because England's most popular Arthurian writer lives there and keeps it going. I invited him to criticise me. He came up with one thing. This is dealt with in a Blog on my website called *The Barinthus Challenge*.
- <http://www.glastonburytic.co.uk/index.php?q=Arthur-Land-and-Legend-publ.html>
- This is but one website. There are a lot of them.
- Cornwall, Somerset, Shropshire, all have Arthurian claims and tourist industries. Check the internet.
- There are more tourist websites; official and private (hotel, B&B, museums, church &c) pointing tourists to a (fictional) Arthurian England than you could shake a stick with a spikey ball at the end at.

Wales

Carmarthen, Wales, makes c. £6,000,000 p.a. from a daft *Merlin Festival* despite the fact that the man called Merlin had no historical connection with Wales.

The Welsh claim is based on the assertion that Carmarthen sounds like Caer Merlin, the fort of Merlin (I know, I don't think Marthen sounds like Merlin either). Caermarthen is really the Fort of the Sea.

Still, £6,000,000 is £6,000,000.

After *Finding Merlin* was published Wales' *Western Mail*, said,

“Scots claim Merlin's [sic]not from Carmarthen but Glasgow. A TUG-OF-WAR has broken out between officials at Glasgow and Carmarthen over which of the areas can truly call itself the home of

legendary wizard Merlin. The historian... Adam Ardrey, a Scotsman who claims Merlin's roots are in Strathclyde, not Carmarthen, in his book Finding Merlin: The Truth Behind The Legend...The claims have not gone down well with the people of Carmarthen, who hold an annual Merlin festival. Carmarthenshire councillor Dafydd Arwel Lloyd said the people of the town would be unimpressed with Glasgow's claims. "I think it's very odd. People always associate Merlin with Wales and in particular with Carmarthen. They're trying to taking one of our famous people away from us," he said..."

- East Wales

- § http://www.inspirationalwales.com/be_inspired/sense_of_place.aspx

- West Wales

- § <http://idl.newport.ac.uk/legendofkingarthur/>

- Mid Wales

- § <http://www.kingarthurslabyrinth.co.uk/>

There are a lot of Welsh internet sites for hotels; experiences; B&Bs &c.

I did not have time to pursue the tourism potential of Arthur and Merlin in 2007 because I was writing *Finding Arthur*.

France

The French claim is even slighter than the claims of England and Wales, and involves primarily, 'Merlin' and 'Lancelot.'

"The legend of King Arthur has crossed the Channel and arrived in the city of Rennes, with an exhibition on the Arthurian tales that opens

today...The exhibition... will run for six months...The exhibition... includes over 200 works linked to the story of the King... all showing just how deeply the Arthurian legends are now rooted in Europe's popular consciousness..."

Brittany - <http://travel.wikinut.com/Merlin%E2%80%99s-Tomb-in-Brittany,-in-the-Forest-of-Broc%C3%A9liande/42vcmo9o/#Merlin-in-Brittany>

The French base their Arthur / Merlin tourism upon what they say is a magic spring in Barenton, in the legendary forest of Brocéliande, Brittany, France. What the French call the magic spring of Barenton is, in reality, a spring at Barnton, five miles from Edinburgh city centre (see my website www.finding-merlin.com).

The French have gone after the cultured tourist but they go after campers too. Campers are invited to stay at the *Merlin L'Enchanteur* campsite when visiting the French Merlin sites.

If you want to know about the French claim to Avalon (which I say is Iona) just internet search *Avalon Burgundy*. The French claim is nonsense but there it is, working for the French.

Scotland

We have next to nothing Arthurian *out there* that would bring tourists to Scotland.

In the past it could have been said *we didn't know*. In the future it will only be possible to say *we didn't want to know*.

(Six)

Publicity – the difference it makes

Balamory

BBC News 2003 - *“Balamory success story. Runaway ratings for a hit children’s television show have created a toddler tourism phenomenon in a west of Scotland town”*

And that was in connection with a slight set of stories that came and will soon go.

The story of Arthur is, and has been for the best part of a thousand years, the foundation myth of the British and then the English people, if not of the whole English-speaking Western World. The Americans have bought into it in a big way. JFK’s Whitehouse was known as Camelot.

There have been over one hundred films about Arthur. He is not going to go away.

Braveheart

“SCOTLAND’S economy has raked in up to £1BILLION... thanks to a roaring trade in ‘set-jetting’. Latest tourism figures reveal one in five overseas visitors to Scotland travel here after being inspired by images on screen. Movies like Braveheart, The Da Vinci Code and TV hits including Balamory and Monarch Of The Glen have showcased our scenery and encouraged tourists to flock here.”

Argyll can offer tourists the real thing. The stone from which Arthur really took a sword, for example: not some prop of a stone from which some actor took a prop sword, but the real thing, the stone from which the real Arthur really took a sword. While standing at the stone visitors will be able to see, not the set where Camelot was filmed but Camelot itself.²

Brave

“First Braveheart, now Brave: Scottish tourism set for another massive film boost. Officials hope the film will attract extra visitors from around the world and boost the country’s economy by £140 million.”³

There are innumerable other examples other than I could have used.

It is all about publicity, but first it is necessary to have something to publicise. We have Arthur, Merlin and Camelot and much more – the publicity mother-lode. (I was going to say we have the Holy Grail of tourism but that would have been too convoluted.)

² The real stone is hidden beneath a cover.

³ Figures tend to be all over the place. I have found several widely varying figures relevant to the same thing.

(Seven)

Recent Arthurian events in popular culture

JRR Tolkien's *The Fall of Arthur*

In May 2013 *The Fall of Arthur*, an unfinished poem by JRR Tolkien, was published.

Why? Who cares about poems?⁴ No one will read it. That doesn't matter because they are only laying the ground work for the next big thing after *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, a Peter Jackson film about Arthur.

The Fall of Arthur is a spectacularly bad poem.

Where are they going to set their scene? Not Scotland, that's where, unless we do something about it. Alternatively, we interest Hollywood in the definitive film about Arthur. Remember, after innumerable Dracula films we got Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and after innumerable Frankenstein films we got Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. There will be someone out there who will want to steal a march on Peter Jackson.

King Arthur (2004)

This was a big budget Hollywood film starring Clive Owen and Keira Knightly. This was also the first Arthur film to be set in Scotland. The screenwriters on this film, untrammelled by tradition, actually paid attention to the sources. Aside from the location (the one thing they got right) this film was not a good film, it was a really bad film.

⁴ Me

Merlin TV Series

The first series was shown in 2008. There have been a number of series after that. This has millions of young viewers worldwide.

The fictional Camelot in *Merlin* is Château de Pierrefonds, north of Paris.

“Since Merlin started shooting there... it has seen a substantial rise in visitor numbers.”

Argyll has the real thing, the real Camelot, and it looks much as it did in Arthur’s day.

Camelot TV Series

The first series was shown in 2011. This was for an older audience.

I could have used innumerable examples but I stuck to the last ten years and, even then, I have missed out many examples.

(Eight)

Arthur

The above films and television programmes are but a few examples from the last few years. Do I really have to tell anyone the importance of the Arthur brand?

Before *Braveheart* almost no one outside of Scotland knew much about William Wallace and, except for *Braveheart*, almost no one outside of Scotland knows anything much about William Wallace.

Everyone knows about Arthur. Unlike William Wallace Arthur is not portrayed in just one film but in 100s of films, 1000s of books and even more websites and computer games.

(Nine)

Scholars / Academics

I have tried to get ‘scholars’ and academics to engage with me – see my website. I have been unable to find anyone who knows or wants to know. UHI told me they did not have anyone qualified to comment and, apparently, no one who wanted to find out enough to comment.

As Stephen Fry says,

“Information is all around us, now more than ever before in human history. You barely have to stir yourself to find things out. The only reason people do not know much is because they do not care to know. They are incurious. Incuriosity is the oddest and most foolish failing there is.”

(Ten)

Argyll

We have the clan connection. There are, of course, the MacArthurs of Argyll. The MacArthur connection with Argyll is not just a coincidence.

I keep in touch with the MacTavishes. I met their now late chief, a man of the USA, when he contacted me after *Finding Merlin* was published.

One recent example – this week, 27th May 2013, I received an email from a Campbell which said – *“Please contact me. My branch of the clan Campbell claim to descend from King Arthur.”* This man is a potential tourist. I met with people from Oregon two weeks ago – here to see the ‘Merlin’ sites. In June I will be meeting another tourist, from South Carolina, anent Arthur / Merlin. I received the following from a reader in Germany - *Recently me and my wife talked about a further vacation in England or Scotland and I told her that I am still waiting for your book to do a final planning.*

The potential tourists are *out there*.

We can also work with the Homecoming thing the government does.

(Eleven)

Ben Arthur

Why do you think Ben Arthur is called Ben Arthur?

(Twelve)

Arthur of Argyll

- The Sword and the Stone.

- The legend says the legendary Arthur took a sword from a stone.
- This magic sword is usually depicted as stuck in a magic stone.
- The legend is obvious nonsense.
- (There is no magic in my book).

- What happened was this. In 574CE Arthur, that is, Arthur Mac Aedan, son of the king of Scots, put his foot into the footprint cut into the summit of Dunadd.
- He was given a sword, just as the Queen was given a sword at her coronation.
- When Arthur Mac Aedan stepped out of the footprint cut into the stone of Dunadd holding the sword, he literally took a sword from a stone – there was no magic.
- The magic was added later, after 638CE, when our stories were taken south.
- In the South the stories were sexed-up. Magic was added just as CGI is added to stories today to make them more commercial.
- Now, does this not *just make sense*?

Arderydd/Dunardry

- The earliest written reference to ‘Merlin’ has him at the battle of *Arderydd* (fought on the Scotland-England border in 573 CE).
- The historical Arthur Mac Aedan had his headquarters at Dunardry in Argyll (his father, Aedan, was inaugurated at Dunadd in 574 CE).
- Note the proximity of the dates 573 and 574.
- Mere coincidence?

Badon/Badden

- Google ‘King Arthur Badon’ and you will find that the legendary Arthur’s most famous battle was the battle of Badon.
- Now look at at Ordnance Survey map and you will see that the land between Dunardry and Dunadd is, even today, called Badden.

- Simple coincidence?

The above three items of evidence all relate to one spot. This more than the Welsh, English and French have, put together.

There is a lot more evidence relevant to this same spot.

There is a lot more evidence all over Argyll.

The Isle of Avalon

- Avalon is said to be a special island set in the western sea where the legendary Arthur was taken after his final battle, the battle of Camlann (actually Camelot, Falkirk).

(Now for some fun.⁵)

- Where could this be?
- An island in the western sea?
- Where kings and princes were buried?
- Ah but, you say, there is no record of where Arthur Mac Aedan was buried and you are right about that.
- His father Aedan was buried in Kilkerran, Kintyre (because he didn't get along with Columba) but Arthur Mac Aedan's other ascendants were all buried on Iona.
- I wonder could it be...?
- Avalon is the island we know as Iona.

(Twelve)

The Future

- To be discussed.

⁵ I find this stuff fun so that you don't have to.

- However we could start by change the Gaelic name of Inveraray.
This is a stand-alone idea.

(Thirteen)

Arthur and Merlin

How did I come to write about Arthur and 'Merlin'?

I had no particular interest in Arthur and Merlin. I thought they were men of the south, if they were real at all, until I found an Argyll connection.

No one is really interested in anyone else's family and so, because my name is Ardrey, I looked where no one else had looked and found what no one else had found.

See below a 16th century map of Argyll showing one of many Ardrey place-names in Argyll (easily found on National Library of Scotland website maps.nls.uk/pont/)



I got into this matter because of my name but I would emphasise, as I emphasise in my books, there is nothing special about me or my family-name. There are no *Da Vinci Code* or *Holy Blood and Holy Grail* special families in my books, just history, pure and simple.

