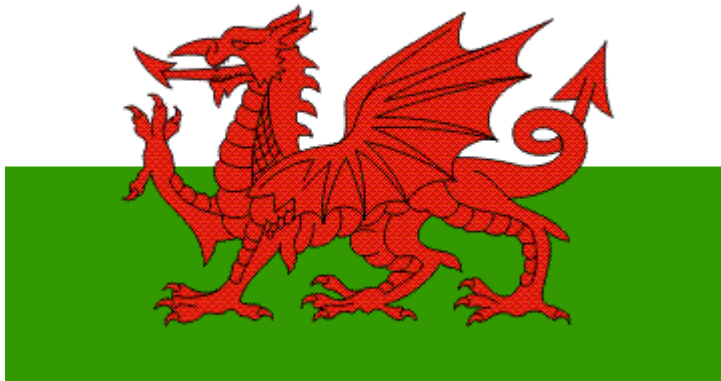


# Uther Pendragon



## *King Arthur and The Knights of the Round Table*



The story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Roundtable is one of the greatest tales ever told – replete with hidden meanings that remain unknown to this very day.

Coat of Arms - House of Pendragon

Some say it is all myth, others say it is history. Many choose the middle ground. I will present the evidence and leave it up to the reader to decide for themselves: what is real and what is unreal; what is fact and what is fiction; which is history and which is legend; and whether both can be the same.

### **Background History**

When speaking of ancient Brittany, we are talking about the indigenous Celtic people of England, Scotland, and Wales, both before and after the Norman Conquest. Previous to the Norman invasion, Rome had ruled much of Brittany from about 40-400 A.D. Rome referred to the land it controlled as Britannia.

Caesar had thought that the Brits were aiding and abetting the Gauls, whom he was fighting against. He sent a reconnaissance expedition into Kent around 55 B.C. Caesar chose not to mount a full-scale invasion at the time, nor did Augustus later on, although he had fully prepared and planned to do so.

Strabo indicates that the early relationship with the Brits was one of trade not war, as Brittany was famous for its tin mines. The ancient Greeks referred to the Isle as the Cassiterides, which meant: tin islands.

Around 115-117 A.D., Hadrian invaded the Isle. He constructed the famous Hadrian Wall, which acted as a boundary line of defense, keeping the Northern Highland Scots and Picts out of his domain. Later in 142 A.D., Antoninus Pius built the Antonine Wall further north, creating a buffer zone against the invading tribes from the Scottish Highlands.

In 180 A.D., the "barbarians" made a serious breach of the wall, which put the Roman occupation into no man's land for the next 20-30 years, with various uprisings that eventually led to full fledged civil war.

From this time on, Brittany became a thorn in Rome's side. To rule the Isle required a strong leader with a large number of troops. Such a power base provided the ambitious with the requestant strength needed to contest Roman authority back home.

If Rome sent the several legions required to defeat any revolts in Britannia, the depletion of its armed forces caused it to be militarily weak not only back in the homeland of Rome, but also on its many other military fronts of conquest. This is similar to what the United States is presently experiencing: over-reach of its military troops.

It is not possible to control the world with an army less than the size of the rest of the world's armies combined, and even then it is near impossible. It really is that simple. Perhaps some day they will figure it out, and stop trying to do the undoable. Winning a war is one thing – keeping the peace after the war is another.

In the years just before 300 A.D., Constantius Chlorus won a very successful series of battles and gained control for Rome once more. He divided Britain into four distinct areas:

- Maxima Caesariensis (based on London): from Upper Britannia
- Britannia Prima: from Upper Britannia
- Flavia Caesariensis: from Lower Britannia
- Britannia Secunda: from Lower Britannia

It is with Constantius Chlorus that are focus sharpens. There is no doubt that he was a historical personage who left behind many written records that substantiate his existence. During much of the fourth century, Britain was coming under more and more attacks by the "barbarians".

The King of the Brits was a title bestowed upon the most powerful ruler of all Brittany. Historically, there are at least a couple of dozen identifiable rulers. Nevertheless, the history is sketchy at best. The earliest rulers prior to Rome's conquest, as well as those after the Roman occupation, are considered to be a mix of both history and legend.

History has been witness to several authors that have different versions as to what occurred during this time. One of the more well known is Geoffrey of Monmouth, and his *Historia Regum Britannia*, *Prophetiae*, and *Mabinogion* – a series of writings.

Vortigern was said to be the tribal king of the Brits in Wales and in England during the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Bede says that Vortigern invited the German leaders Hengest and Horsa to Kent, to help him fight against the Picts and Scots. Hengest and Horsa are described as the sons of a Jutish chief named Wihtgils.

William of Malmesbury, who wrote shortly after Geoffrey of Monmouth, considered Vortigern to be evil:

"At this time Vortigern was King of Britain; a man calculated neither for the field nor the council, but wholly given up to the lusts of the flesh, the slave of every vice: a character of insatiable avarice, ungovernable pride, and polluted by his lusts. To complete the picture, as we read in the *History of the Britons*, he had defiled his own daughter, who was lured to the participation of such a crime by the hope of sharing his kingdom, and she had born him a son. Regardless of his treasures at this dreadful juncture, and wasting the resources of the kingdom in riotous living, he was awake only to the blandishments of abandoned women."

Following his victories over the Picts, Hengest invited more immigrants from Germany to settle in Great Britain. Soon they rebelled against Vortigern. The Brits had refused to honor an agreed upon payment: the establishing of Hengest, as king of Kent.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle dates Vortigern's death at around 488, but it does not provide a definitive cause. According to Arthurian legend, the British king Uther Pendragon killed him.

Often times the story of the father is as important as the story of the son – perhaps even more so; this is one of those times. Uther Pendragon is said to be King Arthur's father. Pendragon translates as: head dragon.

There are several interpretations as to what head dragon refers to. Some claim it means chief warrior, while others tell of a dragon shaped comet that gave Uther cause to use dragons as his crest of honor. There are other tales that the ever vigilant prune from the tree when the season is ripe.

The Book of Taliesin contains the immortal Death-Song of Uther Pen, Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* tells of Uther being the creator of one of the Three Great Enchantments of Brittonum, and how he taught the knowledge to a wizard named Menw.

It is because of the Great Enchantment that Uther is sometimes referred to as the gatekeeper, which title will be elaborated on another time. So we have a head dragon that is a gatekeeper and teacher of a wizard. A boring life his was not.

Menw is none other than Merlin – one of the most powerful magi said to have walked upon the land. He also goes by the name of Aurelius Ambrosius, the latter being from the same root as ambrosia. Not all agree with the Ambrosius comparison.

Both legend and history tell the story of the above-discussed King Vortigern, attempting to build a tower at one of his castles. The tower would always collapse just before it was finished.

The soothsayers were consulted, who then advised that the foundation of the tower must have the blood of a fatherless child cast upon it. Merlin was said to be such a child, so the King summoned him to his court (note the distinction that Merlin had no father).

Merlin was no court jester – he was a powerful wizard taught by Uther Pendragon himself. He told the King that the true reason for the towers continual demise was that below the foundation of the tower was a secret lake that was the home of two dragons: one red and the other white; and that it was the fighting of the dragons that was destroying the tower.

Merlin convinced Vortigern to spare his life, and in return he would explain the prophecy of the two dragons to the King. The King agreed. Merlin foretold of the coming battles between the native Celts of Brittany, and the invading Normans and Saxons.

During the early Dark Ages the Kingdom of Powys was ruled by the Gwerthernion dynasty, an old family whose lineage is easily traced back to the marriage of Vortigern and Princess Sevira. But it goes beyond this time as well, which will be discussed another time.

The historical King Maelgwn of Gwynedd was one of the most powerful rulers during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the most infamous leaders in Welsh history. The Christian writer Gildas referred to Maelgwn as "the island dragon", and wrote: "... you the last I write of but the first and greatest in evil, more than many in ability but also in malice, more generous in giving but also more liberal in sin, strong in war but stronger to destroy your soul..."

I personally find Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* to be a spellbinding account of King Arthur, Uther Pendragon, Merlin, and several other most fascinating characters found within the pages of this work. An individual named Mazadân is said to be the father of two sons: Lazaliez and Brickus.

Brickus becomes the father of Utepandragûn, who in turn becomes the father of Arthur. The elder son of Lazaliez becomes the father of Gandin: the Angevin father of Gahmuret – the father of Parzival/Perceval.

**Uther Pendragon and Arthur** are therefore, **the scions** of the 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century **House of Anjou**. And what of the House of Anjou? That will be forthcoming.

### The Celtic Cauldron



Celtic Cauldron