

SYNOPSIS

A great deal of the commonly accepted “truths” about King Arthur and his knights does not fit easily into the Celtic Britain or Roman ethos. The code of chivalry, martial skills on horseback, women elevated to near divinity, all of which exemplify the legends, are not from either group. Both held women as second class citizens and Rome is known for foot soldiers and single combat in the coliseum. Many of the elements can not be traced to 5th -6th century Britain when Arthur is alleged to have lived either.

Arthur of the legends is an archetypal hero. The quests of his knights all follow a format. They travel through wilderness, come to a pool, lake or stream in a grove of trees where they rest and meet a damsel among the trees or in a tent. Along comes a champion/guardian or captor of the girl who issues a challenge, fights, and is defeated by the knight. The damsel then asks for the head or blood of the loser to be used in magic. The knight then moves on to the next challenge. Arthur himself remains pretty much a background figure until the affair with Guinevere forces him to drive Lancelot back to France.

Arthur (the real one) may be a composite of 7 English and 1 French Arthurs. There are facts known about all 8 of them, but beginning with Geoffrey of Monmouth “Arthur” is deemed to have lived in the latter 400s and was known to be a great war leader and a mythical figure. This exhibit deals with how the Alans figure into the source of the legends and who the players were. It is the culture of the Alans that most closely mirrors the culture of the legends. The legends themselves grew - first by oral telling - then by written word and continue to be expanded even today

The purpose of this exhibit is to explore and explode truth and myth about Arthur and his knights and other connected persons. I have done a great deal of reading and researching through many opinions on the subject and have concluded that the approach I am taking is likely to be as close to the truth as is possible to determine since “Arthur” lived during a time where there is a black hole in written history and little is known for certain. Most of what is known comes through legend. The real Arthur may not even have been named Arthur.

Within the exhibit you can expect to find a variety of elements: stamps, covers, cancellations, blocks, strips, souvenir sheets, booklet cover, signed die proofs, certificate of posting, progressive color proofs, certificate of post office registration, gummed block print, booklet interior, inverted misplaced color, semi-postal, perfed, imperfed, horizontal imperf with vertical perf, and I may have missed some in this quick review. It has taken me 13 years to research an approach that would expand the exhibit from 3 to 4 frames and gather enough material to do it and I am still putting it together as I prepare this synopsis. It isn't easy to find good material on a limited subject and downright difficult to show some aspects of the story.

Bibliography of books owned: The Knights of the Round Table - L.A. Bortolussi // The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Arthurian Legends - Ronan Coghlan // A Glastonbury Reader - John Mathews // Le Morte D'Arthur - Sir Thomas Mallory // Jack White's series on Arthur // The Mabinogion - translated by Jeffery Gantz // A Brief History of King Arthur - Mike Ashley // King Arthur - B.D. Vere // The Knights of the Grail - Norley Chester // King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table - edited by Sidney Lanier // The Mary Stewart series on Arthur and Merlin // The Once and Future King - T.H. White // Arthur, the Dragon King - Howard Reid.

Some of the books also available on the subject: Arthur's Britain - L. Alcock // The Anglo Saxon Chronicle // The Quest for Arthur's Britain - G. Ashe // A History of the Alans in the West - B.S. Bachrach // Ecclesiastical History of the English People - Bede // The Romance of Tristan - Beroul // The Celtic Sources for the Arthurian Legends - Cole & Young // Parzival - Wolfram von Eschenbach // The History of the Kings of Britain - Geoffrey of Monmouth // The Sword in the Age of Chivalry - R.E. Oakeshott

There are many more, but this will give you a start.