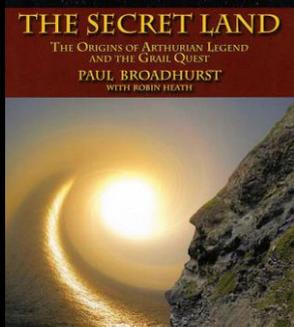


THE SECRET LAND

by Paul Broadhurst

with Robin Heath



THE GREAT BEAR OF TINTAGEL

outlined by ancient roads, looks directly at Tintagel Island, the place of Arthur, the Bear King's, birth. A host of spiritually potent names and sites refer to this giant figure, including, just above the Bear's head, a place named Pentargon (Arthur's Head in Cornish).

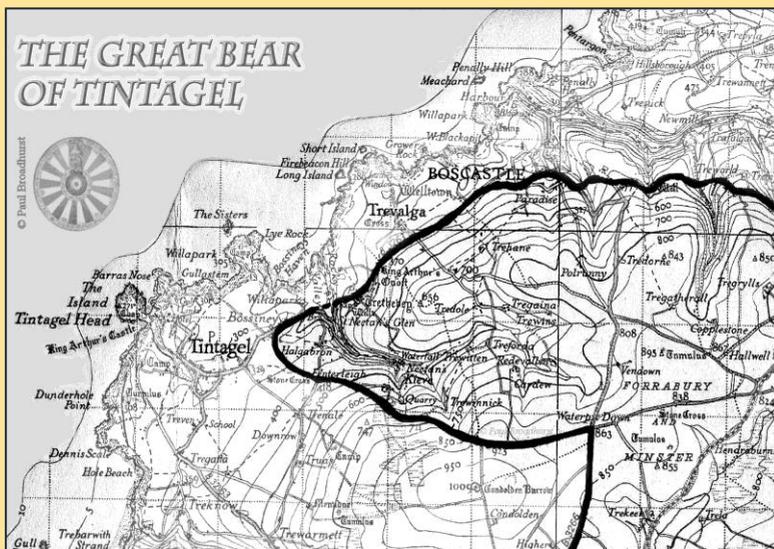
On the leg of the Bear is Slaughterbidge, so called because it is the traditional site of Arthur's last battle with the evil Mordred.

In THE SECRET LAND you will discover the extraordinary image of a Great Bear embedded in the landscape at Tintagel, Cornwall, the place where according to the legend, King Arthur was born.

This giant figure is outlined by ancient roads and has some of Britain's most spiritually potent sites located in relation to it. This discovery has profound implications for our understanding of the origins of Arthurian mythology.

The mystery deepens when we realise that in the old British language, *Arthur* (*Arth Fawr* in Welsh) means *Great Bear*.

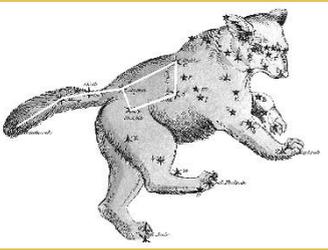
This gigantic effigy, clearly visible on maps, aerial photographs and Google Earth, has been hidden in the landscape since very ancient times, and is looking straight at Tintagel Island, the legendary birthplace of King Arthur.



The existence of such a remarkable image at this place, immortalised by Geoffrey of Monmouth who included much Celtic Wisdom Knowledge in his *History of the Kings of Britain*, re-awakens the idea of King Arthur sleeping in the land, and is so striking that once seen, it can never be forgotten.

All this begins to make sense when we understand that the constellation of the Great Bear was of enormous significance in ancient times. It guarded the Gate of Heaven and the centre of the 'Round Table' of the stars, and was deeply linked to ideas of cosmic harmony and order, reflected in its endless motion around the still point of the universe.

It still does, of course, even if we today rarely look at the stars. But in Druid star-lore which stemmed from even earlier traditions, the Great Bear ruled the shamanic Pole of the Heavens, from where souls were believed to come into incarnation, and to where they were destined to return.



By its motion it also represented the source of earthly time and the cycles of the seasons. Just like King Arthur, it presides over the stellar Round Table, and its familiar seven stars, amongst the brightest in the night sky, were known as *Arthur's Wain*, as their revolutions around the pole were believed to order both time and space. The heavenly influence of this constellation was thought to affect all life

on earth, and so the tradition of Bear Kings called *Arthur* became rooted in human experience. It is from such an intimate relation with the patterns of the cosmos that Arthurian myth originates, why it has had such a great influence throughout history and why it still affects our ideals and aspirations to this day.

It can be no accident that Tintagel Island, being a flat-topped plateau set against the level horizon of the sea, creates an ideal observatory for circumpolar constellations such as the Great Bear when viewed from the clifftop church opposite. Long before the church was built, a single standing stone was set up to mark the spot where ancient astronomer-priests could observe the wheeling of the northerly constellations over the Island. It is something of a miracle that this stone still exists, now half-hidden amongst the gravestones.

Here, especially at the winter solstice (the time traditionally associated with the birth of mythic kings, like that of Christ at Christmas), a great cosmic spectacle could be experienced that would have been full of symbolic meaning for our forebears. As the dying sun of the old cycle descended into the 'underworld' of the Atlantic Ocean, the darkening skies would gradually reveal the seven shimmering stars of the Great Bear hovering over the Island, as if being 'born' to initiate a new cycle. Is this the true origin of the legend that recalls, through the writings of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the old British myth of Arthur, the Bear King, being born at Tintagel?

The story of Arthur's conception and birth at Tintagel is also a cosmological myth, which is probably why it has survived so many centuries. The King of Britain, Uther Pendragon, is said to have enlisted the help of Merlin in order to gratify his passion for Ygraine, the Duke of Cornwall's wife.

Merlin gave him a magic potion so he could shape-shift and pass himself off as the Duke, so gaining access to Tintagel Castle and Ygraine. Thus was King Arthur conceived.



But yet again, when we realise this story is astronomical and not just a fairy-tale, it becomes clear it is a precessional myth marking the change of ages. Uther Pendragon is the 'Head Dragon' (*Pen* means *head* in Cornish) and refers to the constellation of Draco whose star Thuban marked the centre of the starry 'Round Table' in the era that preceded the gradual shift of the North Star to its current location, Polaris in the tail of the Little Bear. And so Draco, that is the Dragon at the Head of the Heavenly sphere, shape-shifts to create a new age under the influence of the Bear.

It may seem astonishing to us that the ancients codified their deep knowledge of stellar cycles in myth and legend, but all over the world this can be seen to be true in whatever culture is studied, and the Arthurian mythos is no different. The King Arthur myth is so much more than the memory of a Dark Age warlord; it harks back to a very ancient tradition of the Bear Kings, who were all given the title *Arthur* and represented the cosmological understanding of earlier ages.

When this is realised, many otherwise inexplicable mysteries are solved, such as why King Arthur legends occur so widely across the northern hemisphere, and why so many megalithic monuments that were built thousands of years before the 'Dark Ages' of the official Arthurian period are called 'King Arthur's Quoit', 'King Arthur's Hall' or a myriad of other such epithets. Of course they have nothing whatever to do with a sixth-century chieftain, but everything to do with stellar lore. Many of the Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments are aligned towards True North, the centre of the Round Table of the stars and the realm of the cosmic Bear King.

References to the Great Bear of Tintagel also appear in old manuscripts, and, as often happens, one surfaced just after the publication of *The Secret Land*. In John of Cornwall's *The Prophecy of Merlin* (c. 1150) he refers to the Normans taking over the old British sites and specifically mentions the place 'where the Great Bear looks'. Where else could this be other than Tintagel?

Since the discovery of the Great Bear, a series of other giant figures have also revealed themselves, which are described in *The Secret Land*, each representing a particular constellation, which, like the figure of the Bear, are easily seen when pointed out.

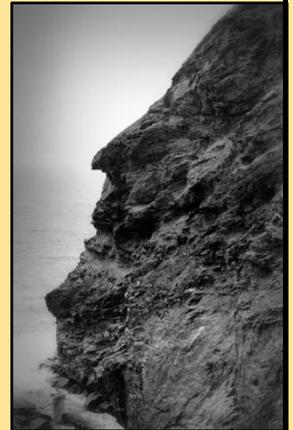
Each one is readily identifiable, with many of them being enormous totem animals traditionally linked with important constellations. These clearly demonstrate that the old British mythology was based on ancient star-lore and that the original Merlin material stemmed from shamanic traditions.

All these correspondences between the landscape figures, the constellations and the most ancient British mythology show that the old myth-makers were master



astronomers who left in the land, as if written in a great book that could never be destroyed, many clues to the depth of their skills, vision and understanding. It is significant that in the Mabinogion, amongst the earliest writings concerning the British Mysteries, Cornwall is frequently referred to as King Arthur's Court of Celliwic. Other legends state, as we have seen, that the Round Table was brought to his Court by Cornwall's Queen Guinevere, and that the King himself was born at Tintagel.

All this points to a resurgence in our understanding that far from being an antiquated myth, the celestial story does in fact strike a deep chord in our collective consciousness. The Round Table of the Stars is symbolic of the Knights' quest to find the Holy Grail, for the earliest form of Arthurian myths has strong archetypal overtones as each of us aims to restore order and harmony within ourselves. The astronomer-priests of old were aware of this, and they must have known that, due to the cosmic cycles of the stars which influence earthly life, this knowledge would one day return, just as in the story of King Arthur, who is not dead but asleep in the land.



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