



THE KINGMAKER'S SHIP FOUND IN SOUTH WALES

A newly translated document from the Warwickshire county archives has thrown new light on the origins of Britain's only surviving Medieval ship. The so called 'Newport Ship', which was excavated in that Welsh town only two years ago, seems to have belonged to Richard Neville, the great Earl of Warwick, known to history as the 'King Maker'. As the richest and most powerful noble in the land, Warwick's support during the 15th century War of the Roses had meant the rise or fall of the rival factions grasping at the Crown.



The 28 foot long 'Newport Ship', which has been described as the most important maritime find since the Mary Rose, is eventually to be displayed to the public in its own museum. In the mean time, careful examination of design, as well as the use of tree-ring dating, has shown that it was built around 1465, probably in English-ruled Gascony (in modern France). Though the discovery of Portuguese copper coins and pottery onboard indicate that it was once manned by an Iberian crew. It sank in Newport harbour only five years later. It had been seriously damaged, possibly in a storm, but, strangely, though repairs had begun, they were never completed.

The Earl of Warwick had his own private fleet which, since the government was finding it difficult to raise loans for the War, he apparently allowed to indulge in a little piracy. Thus he was able to subsidise the Royal finances through the seizure of large numbers of Spanish, Portuguese and Breton ships. The Earl was the Lord of Newport, on and off, and it has now been discovered that, in 1469, he wrote a letter ordering repairs to an ocean going ship in his key port there. Surely this can only have been the archaeological vessel of today.



A Gascon vessel, captured by Warwick's men from the Portuguese a few years earlier, our ship got caught in a severe storm in the Irish Sea. Barely surviving, it limped back to the nearest friendly port, at Newport. The Earl ordered repairs and they were begun. He may eventually have been hoping to use it to defend England and Wales from an expected invasion by his former ally, King Edward IV, whom he had abandoned in favour of his rival, Henry VI. However, Edward arrived too early and the Earl of Warwick was killed at the Battle of Barnet. Stability returned. The ship was no longer required; and, with no one to pay the bills, it was left to rot.

Read more about [Richard 'the Kingmaker' Neville, Earl of Warwick](#), on BHC Online.

HAPPENING HISTORY

August Bank Holiday weekend is the last opportunity that many people in Britain have for a short Summer break or day out. It seems that everyone in Southern England heads west; and what better place to end up than Old Sarum, one of the most historic sites in Wiltshire. Originally an Iron Age hillfort, it became a Roman town, a Saxon fortified burgh and then a Norman castle. It was also the site of the original Salisbury Cathedral but, when this was rebuilt in the valley below around 1220, the place was quickly abandoned. With a history stretching over so many centuries, it is not surprising that English Heritage have chosen Old Sarum to be the location of their annual multi-period re-enactment event.

Groups of enthusiasts dressed in period costume, accurate down to the tiniest detail, descend on Old Sarum on the holiday weekend. As a visitor to this year's gathering, it was quite disconcerting to be met at the entrance by fully tooled up Vikings! However, it was reassuring to find within that there were pitched camps of whole families of not only Vikings, but Saxons, Celts, Royalists, Parliamentarians, French and English from the Napoleonic period and Germans and English from the 2nd World War. The re-enacted battles were very dramatic (and loud!), but meeting the people is the real fun. Everyone is extremely friendly and very ready to show you how people lived in the past. We were treated to a dispute between camp followers and even some surgery in the field. And if you want to take home a memento of your visit, how about a genuine cow horn to blow or some period jewellery or a hat woven and dyed in a traditional manner.

This event is on every year. It is the only way to really experience history and makes a great day out.



BRITISH HISTORY CLUB UPDATE



Lots of new information is available online for British History Club Members this month:

New! *Royal Genealogies Database*

Over 3000 royals listed in database, from noble to notorious, from family favorites to black sheep.

New! *Sources & Texts section*

Important historical documents, analysis of their meaning, literary texts online & pdf, profiles of the writers.

New! *Monarchs images section*

See pictures of all your favourite monarchs

New! *Church Architecture section*

Gothic architecture: Layout of a Cathedral, Structural Elements, Architectural Periods and Styles, Cathedrals of England & Wales, Glossary of Terms

New! *King Arthur Content Index*

All available King Arthur content on one convenient page

New! *"King Arthur through the Eyes of the Historians"*

What over 80 historians and writers have been saying about the historical Arthur for 1500 years

New! *"Origins of the Arthurian Legend"* by Geoffrey Ashe

Geoffrey Ashe's lengthy and authoritative discussion of this fascinating topic

New! *Analysis: 4 Important Arthurian Sources*

Geoffrey of Monmouth:

"Historia Regum Britanniae"

Gildas: "De Excidio Britanniae"

Nennius: "Historia Brittonum"

The Annals of Wales "Annales Cambriae"

PALLADIAN MANSION FOR SALE



The Grade II* listed Buckland House, near Faringdon in Oxfordshire (historically in Berkshire), is back on the real estate market, after failing to find a buyer three years ago. Hopefully, the current property climate in Britain will now favour a quick sale for one of the most splendid Georgian stately homes in the country. And if you have \$7 million to spare, it could all be yours: including fine marble fireplaces, painted ceilings, six reception rooms, nineteen bedrooms, nineteen bathrooms, secondary accommodation, tennis court, gardens, lake and deer park!

During the 18th century, a whole new class of landed gentry and wealthy merchants joined the throng of ancient families vying to outdo one another in the building of ostentatious country houses. This led to the rise of the flamboyant Palladian style of architecture, based on the ideas of the late 16th century Italian architect, Andrea Palladio, who, through his buildings, had tried to recreate the style and proportions of ancient Rome. It was Sir Robert Throckmorton, bart. who had such a fashionable house erected at Buckland in 1757 and he chose as his architect, John Wood, the man responsible for the Royal Crescent in Bath. There is nothing like it for miles around.

Sir Robert's parents had inherited the Buckland estate from his maternal uncle, Sir John Yate, bart. in 1690, about ten years before he was born. The Yates had lived in the area for at least four hundred years, but the Throckmortons were a Warwickshire family. They came from Coughton (pronounced Koo-tun) Court – a fine Tudor mansion now opened to the public by the National Trust – and are best known for their key involvement in the Gunpowder Plot to blow up King James I. Unusually for the time, Sir Robert must have been rather fond of his antiquated Warwickshire home, for he did not tear it down and build anew. He erected Buckland House on his secondary estate instead. Even here, the old Yate manor house was retained and turned into stables. It later became a residence once more and if the \$7 million for the big house is too rich for your blood, you could fork out a mere \$4.5 million for the Grade II* old manor instead. It still has four reception rooms, seven bedrooms, four bathrooms and its own grounds including stabling.

In 1811, the Buckland House became nationally celebrated when Sir John Throckmorton bet a local cloth manufacturer that he could not make him a coat by sunset that had been wool on a sheep's back at sunrise. He lost and the result was the famous 'Newbury Coat'. The place seems to have been particularly popular with the Throckmortons during this century. It was somewhat closer to London society than their other estates and was ideally suited for entertaining. After they sold the house in 1908, it is even rumoured that King Edward VII was keen to be invited to stay and the architect, Romaine Walker, added the northern wings to accommodate the Royal Court. The place became an Oxford University hall in 1963 but, being now again a private residence, is obviously suitable for a number of uses.

Check out BHC Online for more information on the [Newbury Coat](#), [Buckland House](#) and [Coughton Court](#).

CHURCH OF THE MONTH

As well as being an active place of worship, the parish church reflects the history of every village in Britain. This month, we take a look at:

NEWARK CHURCH



This “most notable parish church in the county of Nottingham” displays almost all the features that a church explorer would hope to find in such a centre of Civic pride. Immediately striking is the superb architecture with fine and quirky carvings. The 252 ft spire is of the Early English period (1230). Then the Black Death devastated the area and the main building was rebuilt in the perpendicular after 1390. It was originally a Norman building – as shown by the relic crypt – and King John, who died at Newark Castle, would have worshipped here on occasion.

Internal fittings include a vicar’s library over the porch; a 1508 rood screen and loft for musical entertainment; and a series of carved misericords (ledges to perch on during services). The old stained glass is magnificent, despite being a mere hotchpotch of what survived the English Civil War Siege of Newark.

Monuments to local gentry are also well in evidence. One was killed by lightning! There were once 21 chantries. Two excellent Tudor versions in stone survive; and you cannot miss Alan Fleming (d.1361)’s brass. At over 9ft long, it is the fourth largest in the country!

For architectural periods see [BHC’s Architectural Guide](#).

LABOUR OF LOVE

On the 19th of this month, the ‘Love Collection’ of Regency and Napoleonic Silver-Gilt and Gold tableware goes under the hammer at Christie’s in New York. Ruxton Love was the US Ambassador to China and Audrey, his wife, the niece of Solomon Guggenheim. From the 1920s, with expert taste, they collected some of the most spectacular works of art to be found anywhere in the World. Chief amongst the English metalwork are some superb candelabra created by the exemplary London silversmith, Edward Farrell, in 1818 & 1824. The great centrepiece, estimated at over \$1m, features Hercules in his labour over the Hydra, an ideal subject for the original owner, Prince Frederick Augustus, the ‘Grand Old Duke of York’ of Nursery Rhyme fame.

The Duke of York was the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army throughout the Napoleonic Wars. Though his position had quickened his rise through the ranks, he was a true soldier, as well as being an exceptional administrator. He instigated a proper system of military transport some eight years before Napoleon and founded the institution that was to become the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. Though it was the unsuccessful campaigns of his early career which are forever remembered in children’s verse.

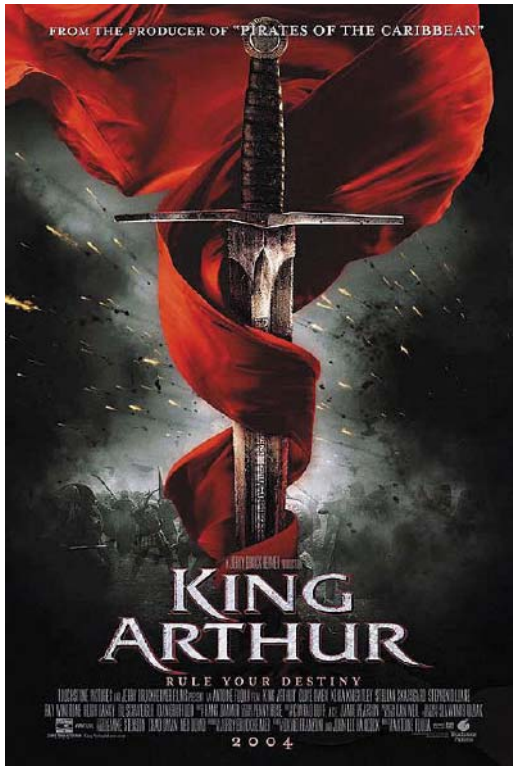


Through much of his life, the Duke of York resided at Oatlands Park, near Weybridge, in Surrey. It is now an hotel. He entertained the Tsar of Russia there as well as his brother-in-law, the King of Prussia. His wife,

the Duchess, lived there alone while the Duke was abroad or in London. She was more interested in her personal menagerie than her husband, however, and, after her death in 1820, Prince Frederick sold up. He then purchased what is now Lancaster House, the State Banqueting House in the Mall. Its interior is said to outshine Buckingham Palace, but the Duke’s profligacy – including the purchase of furnishings like the Love candelabra – prevented the fulfilment of his plans to rebuild it. Though next in line to the Throne, he died deeply in debt in 1827. Like a diminutive Nelson, he has a ‘column’ surmounted by his statue not far from his old home.

Read more about the [Duke of York](#) on [BHC Online](#)

KING ARTHUR MOVIE: ACCURATE OR ATROCIOUS?



My wife and I went to see the movie 'King Arthur' on its opening night in the UK. I had no particular expectations of the film and had avoided reading too much of the media hype prior to its release. However, I was well aware that this was supposed to be the most historically accurate of all King Arthur movies; and I knew that, as an historian, I would not be able to help myself from criticising any little inaccuracy that appeared, no matter how much I enjoyed the movie.

Of course, from the start, the introduction told me the direction this movie was taking. The appearance of Russian warriors, from around the Caspian Sea, showed immediately that the story was going to be centred around the old theory of 'Arthur the Sarmatian Commander'. This hypothesis is based partly on the fact that the Sword in the Stone and return of Excalibur elements of the Arthurian story may possibly stem from Sarmatian mythology. The major component, however, is the known existence of a Roman soldier named Lucius Artorius Castus. He was a 2nd century commander of the Sarmatian cavalry who served at the very edge of the Empire on Hadrian's Wall in Britain. The name Artorius is generally supposed to be the original form of Arthur. Hence the old legends could either have been based on the exploits of Lucius himself or of a similarly named descendant. Although there is some merit to this theory, it is not one to which I personally subscribe. Still, the Sarmatians were certainly on Hadrian's Wall. So far so good.

It was very pleasing to see Arthur roughly in his proper setting. The costumes were good and it was great to have, presumably computer generated, reconstructions displaying Hadrian's Wall in all its original glory. The Sarmatian connection necessitated such a location and what better dramatic backdrop for a movie. No one really knows which area of Britain Arthur came from and each claims him for their own. Some of his supposed battles may possibly be located in Northumberland, so why not put him on the Wall.

I was a little surprised by the rather late date which flashed up on the screen though, particularly as this made the portrayal of a very Romanized way of life even more unlikely to be correct. By the Arthurian period, the Roman administration had not been running Britain for about a hundred years and central government was a thing of the past. Self-appointed lords or kings were already in control of localized areas. Roman society was breaking down and life had largely reverted to something more recognisably Celtic. This is well illustrated by the high-status timber halls excavated on the Wall itself, in the old fort at Birdoswald.

So if the Romans had long gone, who was this Bishop Germanus who turned up to give Arthur his last orders? Well, of course, this is St. Germanus of Auxerre (in modern day France). He was, indeed, the nearest thing to a central authority that Britain had when he visited the country. That was about fifty years before Arthur's time, but I suppose he was the best man to fit the story. The height of the Pelagian heresy was certainly contemporary with this holyman, although it's not at all clear how widespread it became. It didn't really play much of a part in the movie and seems to have been thrown in for a taste of historicity.

In the end, if I had known nothing about King Arthur, I would probably have really enjoyed this latest attempt to tell his story; but, for me, the central storyline just completely let the whole thing down. I was deeply disappointed that, though the filmmakers had been roughly true to the period, they had completely dumped almost all aspects of the traditional legends. Moving north of the Wall on a rescue mission to a very Roman-looking estate in 'enemy' territory is just not a credible proposition. Roman villas are not really found anywhere north of Yorkshire and, if you were godson to the Emperor of Rome, it is highly unlikely that you would be living in a backwater like Britain, let alone in what is now Scotland. And, by the end of the Roman period, the British just north of the Wall appear to have been as Romanized as those to the south. Though Guinevere and her woad-covered barbarians did make a great spectacle.

PAENULA BACK IN FASHION AFTER 1500 YEARS!



After thirty years, the Mexican-style poncho is back in fashion, a very serviceable piece of clothing that is actually a lot older than one might initially think. The name may have changed, but such garments have their origins in what the Romans called the 'paenula'. And with the onslaught of the fall, this is what all sensible Romans would have been wearing in Britain at this time of year.

The paenula was a circular or oval brown cloak, usually with a hood, that could vary in length from down to the hip to down to the ankle. The Romans preferred to make it from a type of thick wool called 'gausapa' because this had natural oils that made it almost totally waterproof; but it could also be of leather. The paenula was used, throughout the Roman Empire, when travelling, but was particularly popular in the colder regions. Togas may have been de rigueur in Rome, but they weren't exactly practical for British winters. The native Celts had a much more practical way of dressing. Woollen tunics, and even baggy pants, were the name of the game and, to this, the newcomers added this ever-practical cloak.

The personification of 'winter' is shown wearing a paenula on a mosaic uncovered at Chedworth in Gloucestershire. He catches rabbits to eat in the cold evenings. Remember him next time you see a poncho.



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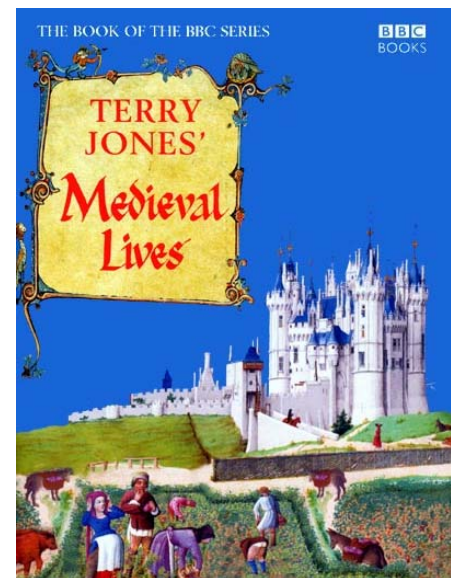
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BEST BOOKS

Terry Jones' 'Medieval Lives' BBC Books £18.99

Having presented to his 'Medieval Lives' on the UK's small screen, Terry Jones now takes this very individual examination of British Medieval society into print. With a rather tongue in cheek approach that you would expect from a former member of Monty Python, Jones is joined by Alan Ereira in asking such questions as: Was Medieval England full of knights on horseback rescuing fainting damsels in distress? Were the Middle Ages mired in superstition and ignorance? As well as the more important: Why does nobody ever mention King Louis the First and did outlaws never wear pants?



Did you know that it was a 19th century US journalist who persuaded us all that medieval people thought the World was flat? This is an example of the kind of misrepresented, misunderstood and even suppressed aspects of the period about which the authors reveal the truth. If you know a lot about the Middle Ages, such revelations will both surprise and provoke discussion. If you've not read much about these far off days of old, then this is an ideal and highly entertaining introduction.

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