

In the footsteps of Arthur – June 2011



The story of Arthur and The Knights of the Round Table is a legend which really dates from the time of the troubadours and chivalry in the 13th century. The truth behind the legend belongs to the 5th century, after the departure from Britain of the Romans. During the Roman occupation, the tribes north of Hadrian's wall benefited from their trade with the Empire and the training of recruits for the Roman cavalry which was largely Celtic., They also had their own cavalry who kept the peace north of the wall and as mercenaries, created a zone with the Picts and Scots to the north. When the Romans withdrew their forces in 410, the only defence force left in Britain were these native British cavalry cohorts north of the Wall. With the excellent road system they could quickly deploy to wherever they were needed. A year after Arthur was born, in 466, their Commander, Cuneda, responded to a call to expel the Irish who

had invaded and settled the west coast of Wales. This he duly did and remained with two of his sons to found a dynasty which lasted until Wales was finally conquered by the English in 1284. By 1485 Arthur had taken over command of the cavalry of The men of the North.. During the following eleven years he fought 12 battles, gaining a fierce reputation for invincibility and halting the Anglo Saxon advance for a generation. His exploits were recorded in his native language(Welsh) which prior to Anglo Saxon times was the language of most of Britain. During the 7th and 8th centuries the Celtic tribes of the North were eventually conquered by the Angles and the Vikings. Many of the old documents were lost or destroyed. But some survived and retreated with the language into the last heartland of the language Wales. Any records which survived in Scotland were burned with the monasteries that housed them during the English wars in the middle ages. The stories continued to be told in Wales but the tribes who has once rules the south of Scotland disappeared and were forgotten. So references to « the men of the north » were interpreted to mean the men of North Wales and the events were relocated to well known well landmarks. In due course the stories were exported with Welsh emigration first to Cornwall and then to Brittany. In the Middle Ages they were modified to make a better yarn and Europeanised by being made fashionable by being adapted to the ideals of chivalry. German and Italian knights joined the Round Table and Arthur became a fantasy figure travelling across Europe and the Near East, Our challenge is to rediscover the real Arthur. We will follow the clues, visit little-known places and discover (inevitably with a certain element of conjecture), a period of history which has been forgotten

Provisional Programme– 7 days

- Jour 1. **Travel to Newcastle** . Easyjet. Dep Barcelona 14.00. Arr Newcastle 15,45. *Hotel in Northumberland*
- Jour 2. **After the Romans** –Hadrian's Wall, Arthur's final battle, Carlisle (Camelot ?).& Avalon *Hotel at Melrose*
- Jour 3 **The Knights, their fort, Arthur's first battle** Bamburgh, Lancelot et Holy Island. *Hotel at Dunbar*
- Jour 4 **The Gedoddin** – Arthur's tribe –its capitals at Traprain Law and Edinburgh (Arthur's Seat) National Museum to see the Traprain treasure and other artefacts *Hotel at Stirling or St Andrews*
- Jour 5 **St Kentigern** -Boat trip to the Isle of May in the Firth of Forth. *Hotel in Fife or Angus*
- Jour 6 **The Picts** - Brechin – Pictavia, Stirling castle Antonine Wall *Dinner at Traquair. Hotel at Peebles*
- Jour 7 **Merlin** –, His mountain cave, the battle where he went mad, his grave, the place he was converted
Return journey Dep Ryanair Edinburgh 19,00 Arr Gerona 22.50.



Hadrian's Wall



Bamburgh Castle

Camelot

20/11/2009