

***Stonehenge en romanz :  
texts and translations***

Ian Short



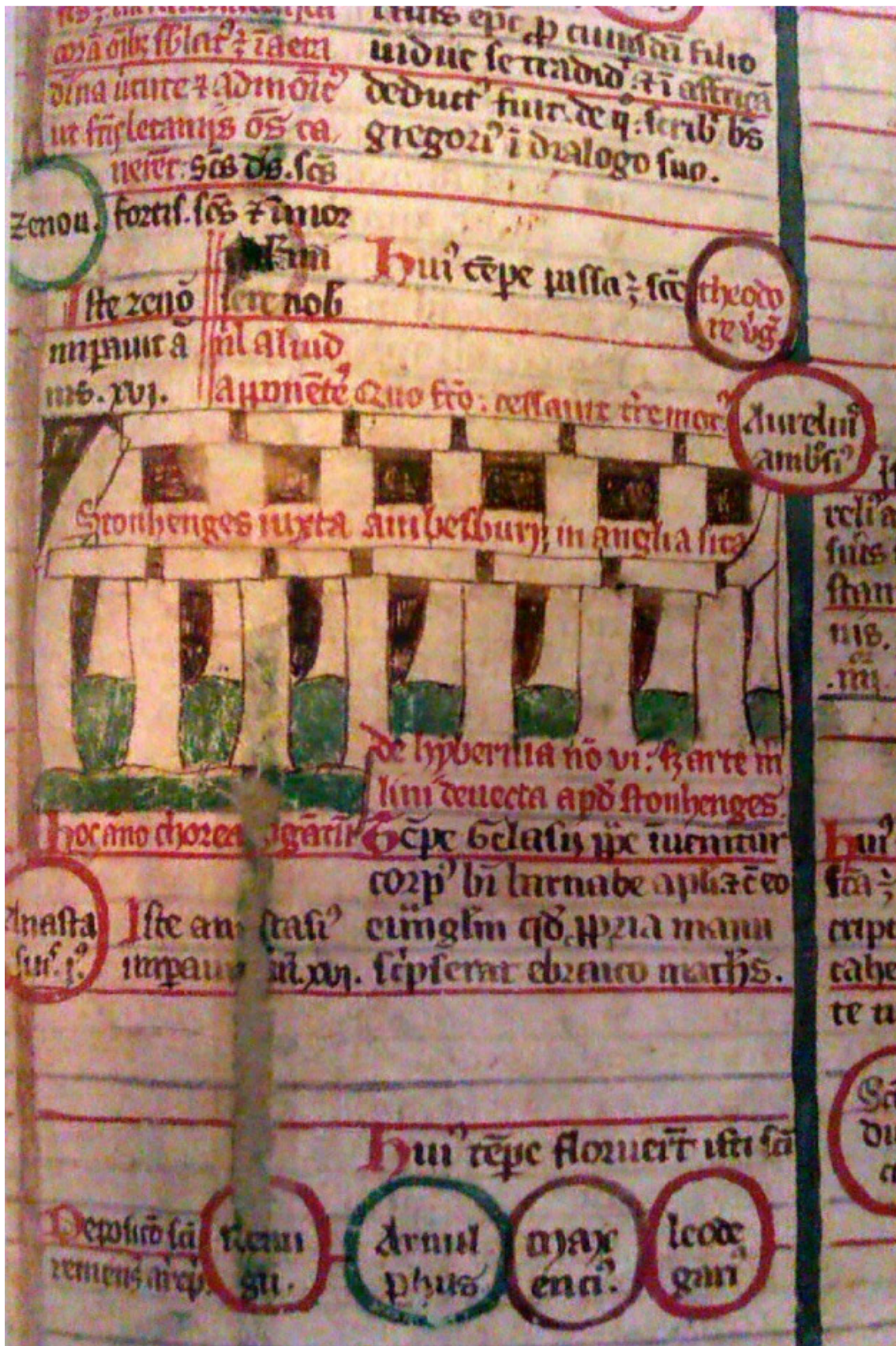
Sarah Peverly

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 e rei denant et de ti aners  
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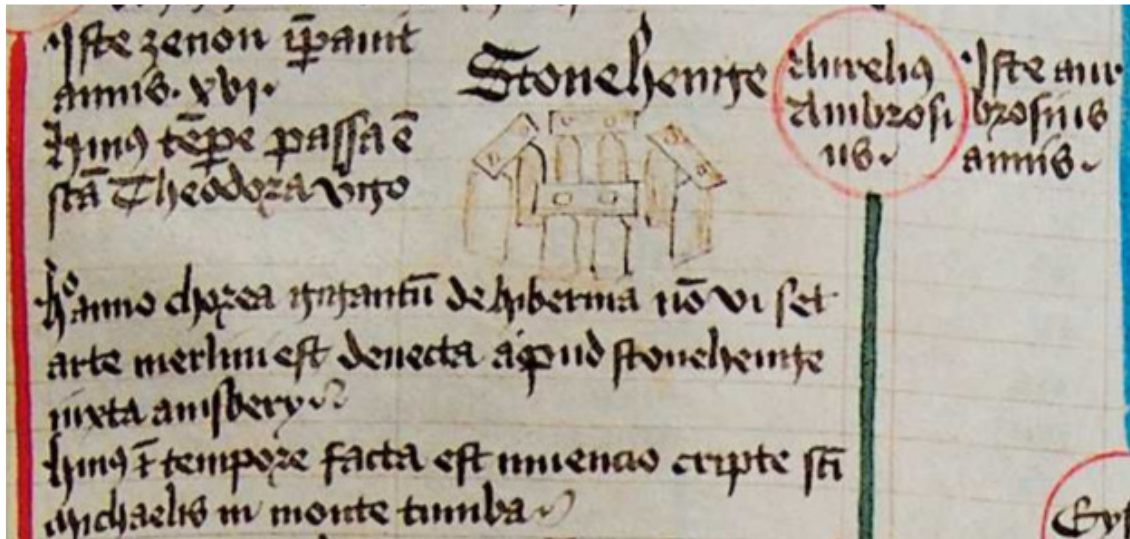
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 me alait auant si se fuet



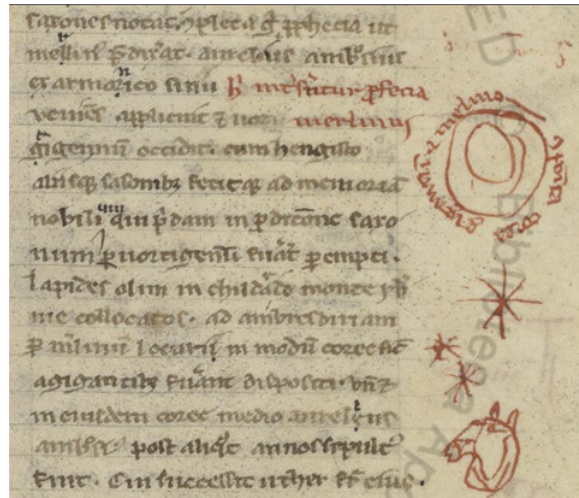


MS Corpus Christ College Cambridge 194, f. 57 (1338-1342)





MS Douai Bibliothèque Municipale 803, f. 55r (1441-1467)



MS Vatican Vat. Lat. 933, f. 41rb (1210-1215)

Among the marginalia of the autograph manuscript of Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia*, Vatican lat. 933, there are what Caldwell (*Scriptorium* 11, 1957, 91) calls 'primitive looking pictures', one of which, on f. 41rb, illustrates the Giants' Ring with the inscription *Conposita corea gigantum a Merlino*.

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In recent years archaeologists have suggested that Stonehenge was first built, more than five thousand years ago, as a bluestone circle in the Preseli Hills of South-West Wales during the late Neolithic period. The theory is that it was subsequently dismantled and transported two hundred or so kilometres to where it now stands, aligned to the winter solstice, on Salisbury Plain. There its ring of some eighty bluestones was later to be enlarged and reconfigured by the addition of a similar number of huge sarsen megaliths cut from local quarries. It is thought that the monument may have been used as a centre for ancestral cults and as a burial ground.

Legend offers a different account of Stonehenge's origins. According to 12<sup>th</sup>-century sources, the first known location of the stone circle was in Ireland, on an indeterminate mountain called Killaraus. It had originally been built there, aeons before, by giants from Africa who used it for therapeutic purposes. It was dismantled by the magician Merlin and transported to the vicinity of Amesbury on Salisbury Plain. Here it served as a memorial commemorating hundreds of British victims of Saxon treachery under the 5<sup>th</sup>-century king Aurelius Ambrosius.

The areas of overlap between these two perspectives are particularly intriguing, none more so than the notion of a two-tier evolutionary process involving a spacial displacement from east to west. From regions characterised by their wildness and Celtic otherness to the perceived hub of political and social power, from the provinces, as it were, towards the seat of empire, from the primitive periphery to the civilised centre ground. At the time of the *fons et origo* of Stonehenge historiography, namely the publication in the 1130s of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*, both Wales and Ireland were countries still not integrated into Anglo-Norman hegemony, still awaiting not only the domination and conquest but also the colonisation that was to threaten their native cultures for centuries to come.

The mechanism of Stonehenge's demolition, transportation and reconstruction is another shared area of concern between archaeology and literature. An interesting feature of the medieval accounts is how explanations of its origins and subsequent history teeter on the brink of magic without ever falling definitively over the edge. The use in both the Latin and French texts of the ambiguous term *ars / art*, covering on the one hand artistry and skill and on the other the black arts of magic, is instrumental in fostering what looks, at first sight, very much like deliberately cultivated ambiguity.

When, in the 1130s, Geoffrey of Monmouth resurrected Merlin from the obscure depths of Celtic folklore, he launched him on a long literary career as a prophet walking among men. This is a continuation of the role originally given him in 1130-1135 in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Prophetiae Merlini*. Merlin's role in the creation of Stonehenge was, however, but one aspect of the wide range of different activities he mastered. 'Everyone was amazed at his knowledge,' writes Geoffrey, 'and everyone realised that there was something supernatural about him' (*ammirabantur etiam cuncti ... tantam in eo sapientiam, existimantes numen esse in eo*: 108.576).

Merlin, in fact, comes to the task of moving Stonehenge with a double qualification, one semi-supernatural, the other technological. He is initially recommended to Aurelius by no less a figure than an archbishop, in whose opinion 'no one is more skilled either in foretelling the future or

in feats of engineering' (*clarius ingenium sive in futuris dicendis sive in operationibus machinandis*; 128. 219). The role that Merlin fulfils in the various Stonehenge episodes under review here combines both of these accomplishments. He takes centre stage not only as a successful Welsh building contractor and civil engineer, but also as someone endowed with rare and mysterious gifts of foresight. He had already, in the immediately preceding narrative, proved his worth with another engineering triumph, this time as an architect capable of seeing underground and discovering the insecure foundations on which king Aurelius was attempting to construct a tower (106.499 – 108.577). Merlin, in other words, has both the experience and the wizardry necessary to meet the challenges of stealing Stonehenge.

Being the son of an incubus and a nun – a potent mixture, by any standards – Merlin straddles the human and the superhuman worlds. The literary baggage he comes with is a multi-layered and contradictory one, that of a royal advisor and mentor, a prophet, a mage, a seer, a wizard, a magician, an enchanter, a shape changer – a sort of hybrid progeny, in short, with one foot in the reality of the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Christian world and the other in the distant memory of the nebulous regions of paganism. That a larger-than-life figure should come to be associated with an awe-inspiring structure such as Stonehenge might seem entirely appropriate. What must have been less evident, in popular imagination, was how far the monument on Salisbury Plain could be attributed to human ingenuity, and what role magic might have played in its history.

In an age of superstition when the metaphysical can live in comfortable coexistence with the physical, it is inevitable that the supernatural should find a place even in the most sober historiography. It comes as no surprise, therefore, to see medieval accounts of phenomena that belong to the natural world attracting what we today consider irrational explanations. The existence, in England's historical landscape, of such a unique monument as Stonehenge earns it a place in a widely popular work of imaginative literature in which we can see reflected issues of debate in 12th-century intellectual and social life in Britain.

Nigromancy (black magic) remains sufficiently current throughout the 12<sup>th</sup> century for it to be considered on occasion as an informal eighth liberal art. Clerical writers such as John of Salisbury, on the other hand, can be found denouncing it not only because it is sacrilegious, but also in terms of its irrationality (*Policraticus* II: 27). By the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century a dividing line was being drawn between the supernatural and phenomena in the natural world so extraordinary as to inspire awe and wonder. The marvellous emerges, as it were, from the embrace of the magic to form a separate category of experience for the rational observer.

The distinction is clearly articulated by Gervase of Tilbury, writing in his *Otia Imperialia* during the first decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and it is to reappear some years later in Thomas Aquinas. It shifts the focus away from the phenomenon itself onto the observer's inability to understand how and why it came into being. Its existence, in other words, must defy rational understanding if it is to qualify as a wonder:

Miracula dicimus usitatus que preter naturam divine virtuti ascribimus ... Mirabilia vero dicimus que nostre cognitioni non subiacent, etiam cum sunt naturalia; sed et mirabilia constituit ignorantia reddende rationis quare sic sit. (Banks 2002: 558)

*It is customary for us to call 'miracles' [miracula] those phenomena that are preternatural, and these we attribute to divine power ... Phenomena that lie beyond our comprehension even though they belong to the natural world, these we call 'wonders' [mirabilia]. Ignorance of the reason why something is as it is constitutes a wonder.*

What is interesting in the different interpretations of the history of Stonehenge in the texts we are presenting here is the relative emphasis given to the natural and the supernatural powers of Merlin the magician. Fabry-Tehranchi (2015) has already drawn attention to what she terms the 'mise en sourdine' of the role of the supernatural in the vernacular texts, a progressive muting or toning down which minimises, sometimes even eliminates, the more visible traces of magic. The less readily the wonders of the natural world are accepted as manifestations of some incomprehensible and ineffable power, the more they can be seen simply as unexplained marvels in their own right.

Merlin's greatest claim to fame was, of course, as a prophet, which immediately places him in the realm of the extraordinary, someone on the fringes of society set apart from mere mortals – in every way closer to the paranormal than to the normal. In the various roles he is allotted in the *Historia Regum Britannie*, he is consistently portrayed in superlative terms as a individual endowed with unique superhuman powers: he is a human of supernatural birth, engendered without a human father (106. 519), his mother is a king's daughter living as a nun (106. 522), he is a child destined for human sacrifice (108. 555), someone capable of humiliating all the king's magicians (108. 571), whose wisdom is unrivalled (108. 577), a prophet infallibly predicting the future and without equal anywhere (128. 229), a magician able to more or less move mountains, to make concoctions of medicinal herbs designed to change his own shape at will as well as that of others (137. 494) – someone, in short, who at every turn embodies the supernatural.

It comes as something of a surprise, therefore, to find that Geoffrey's Vulgate (i.e. standard) version of the *Historia* makes no reference to Merlin's much vaunted magical powers when describing the actual method he employs to dismantle the Giants' Ring. We see him, on the contrary, using mechanical means (*suas machinationes*, 'his equipment, contrivances, machinery'; 130.277) to move the immovable – the same category of tools, presumably, as the *machinationes* used earlier (130.273) by the military engineers who had already failed in their efforts to move the stones.

The Variant (i.e. alternative) text of the *Historia*, however, tells a different story. Here the explanation put forward in the Vulgate text is immediately followed by a counter-suggestion: Merlin might after all have been dabbling in magic because, as he set to work, 'he briefly moved his lips as if murmuring a prayer' (*paulisper insusurrans motu labiorum tamquam ad oracionem*; Wright 1988: 125). The ambivalence created here resurfaces in Wace's *Roman de Brut*. But Wace proceeds to further embroider his French text at this point by adding 'but I have no idea whether or not it was a prayer he was saying' (*ne sai s'il dist preiere u nun*). This personal protestation of ignorance is one of Wace's favourite rhetorical devices that he exploits in order to emphasise just how scholarly and scrupulous a historian he is. Here, however, it serves the additional purpose of diluting still further the suggestion that Merlin needed magic rather than human ingenuity to bring the Giants' Ring to Britain.

The allusion to magic also survives in Lazamon's Middle English version of Wace's *Brut*, where we are shown Merlin, on the point of demolishing the ring, 'moving his lips as if he was telling his beads' (*sturedde his tunge al-se he bede sunge*; l. 8730 of the EETS edition). The implication in both Wace and Lazamon that Merlin was discreetly casting a spell would immediately place him in the category of 'those who practice their art by means of words', which is how John of Salisbury (*Policraticus* II: 12) categorises enchanter. As we shall see below, the various translators and adapters of Geoffrey's text found different ways of negotiating this tension between the rational and the irrational. On the one hand, for example, we will find the Royal and Harley *Brut* poems soberly limiting Merlin's resources to his *engin* in the sense of 'equipment, tools'. On the other hand, in Robert de Boron's prose text we will be told that no one but God can do what Merlin does,



and that his exploit is achieved *par force d'art*, meaning, to quote Micha's translation (p. 113), that 'il eut recours aux ressources de son art magique.'

None of the various attempts at explaining the origins of the Stonehenge legend carries conviction, and they must, for the present, remain a mystery. To postulate, for example, a 5<sup>th</sup>-century legend originating in remote pre-historic times and somehow preserved in Welsh oral literature to then be discovered and exploited by Geoffrey of Monmouth is a highly dubious proposition (Piggott 1941: 317). There is simply no evidence that this sort of folk memory could have existed. This is not to deny, of course, that the legend contains obvious folklore features. The curative powers of the megaliths, for instance, echoes of which apparently survived locally into the 1690s (Grinsell 1976: 7), recall the elemental interaction between water and stone. The medicinal herbs as a by-product of this process belongs to the same category. Ancestor worship at burial sites could be seen as another link between the historical and the legendary, but unsurprisingly the alignment of the stones with the solstice along naturally occurring glacial striations is nowhere articulated in the medieval accounts.

The role attributed to giants in the genesis of Stonehenge is, on the other hand, a feature that resonates with the foundation myth of Britain. This tells of how Albine, daughter of the king of Greece, was seduced by giants native to the island, whose descendants were subsequently killed off by Brutus and his fellow Trojans (Brereton 1937). Given his superhuman demolition of the giants' handiwork, Merlin himself could even perhaps qualify as a latter-day British giant. It is tempting, finally, to see the giants' alleged African origin in the context of the thousand and more megalithic stone circles surviving today in the Gambia and Senegal (Laport 2012), though the mind boggles at the thought.

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Geoffrey of Monmouth's history is an imaginative re-creation of the story of Britain from the Trojan Brutus down to the 7<sup>th</sup> century when the country falls victim to Saxon hegemony. The precise narrative context that concerns us here is that of the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. A period of particular turmoil, it stands at the threshold of a new Arthurian era. The king is Aurelius Ambrosius, a direct ancestor of king Arthur, and his struggles against the Saxon invader Hengist come to a head in the treacherous massacre of hundreds of British chieftains at Salisbury. To commemorate the fallen heroes, Aurelius resolves to construct a national memorial. His initial attempts fail, so he calls for the assistance of Merlin 'prophet of Britain'. Merlin's inspired suggestion (*Si perpetuo opere sepulturam virorum decorare volueris ...*; (130.233)) is to forcibly re-locate from Ireland to Salisbury a stone monument 'destined to stand for ever and ever.'

Viewed in the perspective of Geoffrey of Monmouth's historiographic enterprise, the Stonehenge episode can be seen as marking a pivotal moment in British national self-assertion in the face of Saxon aggression. A wonder of the natural world, appropriated by superhuman means, is transformed into a permanent monument-cum-memorial to those Britons who gave their lives to ensure the ultimate defeat of the treacherous invader. The superiority of Merlin's ingenuity over the brute force of the barbarian is the victory of the intellectual present over the physical past. The fact that the Britons' commandeering of the stone circle involves the conquest of Ireland could even be a nod towards the imperial ambitions of Geoffrey's 12<sup>th</sup>-century Anglo-Norman contemporaries.

From a narrative point of view, the seizure of Stonehenge by Merlin signals the end of foreign domination, and stands as a fitting prelude to a new age of Arthurian glory. Is it too far-fetched to see the Giants' Ring as in some way prefiguring the Round Table?

### ***Stonehenge en romanz : texts and translations***

The earliest medieval mention of the toponym Stonehenge is conventionally credited to Henry of Huntingdon who lists it among the four wonders (*mirabilia*) of England in the first version of his *Historia Anglorum* written in 1130:

- (I) Quatuor autem sunt que mira videntur in Anglia. [ ... ] Secundum est apud Stanenges ubi lapides mire magnitudinis in modum portarum elevati sunt, ita ut porte portis superposite videantur. Nec potest aliquis excogitare qua arte tanti lapides adeo in altum elevati sunt, vel quare ibi constructi sunt. (Greenway 1996: 22)

*There are in fact four wonders to be seen in England. [ ... ] The second of these is at Stonehenge where some extraordinarily large stones rise up into the air as if they were doorways, so arranged that they look like one doorway superimposed on another. And no one can puzzle out the sort of skill that was needed to lift so many stones up to such a height, or for what purpose they were located where they are today.*

When Henry, much to his surprise (*stupens*), discovered a self-styled *Historia Regum Britannie* at Le Bec early in 1139, he was able to find some sort of answer to what was puzzling him and others. He was also provided with the historical context into which the new information fitted. He cautiously, therefore, added a few supplementary details to his account (marginalising Merlin in the process), and these he then incorporated into the third version of his *Historia Anglorum*:

- (II) Interea Uter Pendragon, id est Caput Draconis, juvenis prestantissimus filius scilicet Aurelii, coream gigantum attulit ab Hibernia, que nunc vocatur Stanhenges. (Greenway 1996: 576)

*Meanwhile Uther Pendragon, in other words Dragon's Head, a most outstanding young man and son of Aurelius, brought a giants' ring, now called Stonehenge, over from Ireland.*

Some years earlier, in 1125-1127, stories about this period of British history, and more specifically about king Arthur, had already reached the ears of the monastic historiographer William of Malmesbury. Though evidently conceding, in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, that Arthur was indeed an historical figure worthy of respect, William expressed deep scepticism as to the historical value of the popular tales he was inspiring at the time:

- (III) Hic est Artur de quo Britonum nugae hodieque delirant, dignus plane quem non fallaces somniarent fabulae sed veraces predicarent historiae ... (Mynors 1998: 8)

*Even down to the present day, the Britons rave about nonsensical tales of Arthur. He is, however, a figure eminently worthy of being celebrated in authentic history rather than dreamt about in fairytales.*

It was not, however, until the end of the century that the author of this *Historia Regum Britannie* was to find the critic that his fanciful rewriting of the British past deserved. The criticisms levelled at him by William of Newburgh (1136-1198), an Augustinian canon from Bridlington, in his *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, were direct, detailed and, above all, trenchant. Here is a sample of what he had to say, in 1198, about what he considered to be these 'ridiculous fictions' (*ridicula figmenta*):

**William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum***

- (IV) At contra quidam nostris temporibus, pro expiandis his Britonum maculis, scriptor emersit, ridicula de eisdem figmenta contexens, eosque longe supra virtutem Macedonum et Romanorum impudenti vanitate attollens.

Gaufridus hic dictus est, agnomen habens Arturi, pro eo quod fabulas de Arturo, ex priscis Britonum figmentis sumptas et ex proprio auctas, per superductum Latini sermonis colorem honesto historiae nomine palliavit: qui etiam majori ausu cujusdam Merlini divinationes fallacissimas, quibus utique de proprio plurimum adjecit, dum eas in Latinum transfunderet, tanquam authenticas et immobili veritate subnixas prophetias, vulgavit ...

Haec cum juxta historicam veritatem a venerabili Beda expositam constet esse rata; cuncta, quae homo ille de Arturo et ejus vel successoribus vel post Vortigirnum praesedecessoribus scribere curavit, partim ab ipso, partim et ab aliis constat esse conficta; sive effrenata mentiendi libidine, sive etiam gratia placendi Britonibus, quorum plurimi tam bruti esse feruntur, ut adhuc Arturum tanquam venturum exspectare dicantur, eumque mortuum nec audire patiantur ... (Howlett 1884, I: 11-14).

*In our own days, on the other hand, a writer has emerged who, in an attempt to expiate the sins of the Britons, weaves ridiculous fictions around them, and with vacuous effrontery endows them with a power that far outstrips that of both the Macedonians and the Romans.*

*This writer's first name is Geoffrey and his second Arthur, the result of his adopting the ancient British legends surrounding Arthur, to which he then added some of his own invention. He dressed these up and embellished them by the use of Latin, enabling him to bring them out under the guise of respectable history. Even more brazenly, he published the totally spurious prophecies of a certain Merlin, adding a number of others of his own devising. By translating these into Latin, he could present them to the public as authentic prophecies underpinned by immutable truth ...*

*Seen in the light of the events established as historically true by the Venerable Bede, everything that this Geoffrey took such pains to write concerning Arthur, including those who succeeded him or those who preceded him following Vortigern, is to be seen as having been fabricated either by himself or by others. This he did either because he had an uncontrollable lust for lying, or in order to find favour with the Britons / Welsh. Most of these are said to be so primitive that, according to reports, they cannot bear the thought of Arthur being dead, and are still today expecting him to return ...*



But this was a view not widely shared. Writing between 1183 and 1185, the historian and polemicist Gerald de Barri (aka Giraldus Cambrensis) found the supposed Irish origins of Stonehenge of sufficient interest for him to allot it a place in his *History and Topography of Ireland*. I quote here from James F. Dimock's edition in *Giraldus Cambrensis Opera* for the Rolls Series, vol. 5, *Topographia Hibernica* ..., dist. II, ch. 18 (A more recent edition is that by John J. O'Meara for the Royal Irish Academy in 1949). Here is how Gerald introduces his readers to Stonehenge:

**Gerald de Barri, *Topographia Hibernica***

- (V) Fuit antiquis temporibus in Hibernia lapidum congeries admiranda; quae et Chorea Gigantum dicta fuit, quia gigantes eam ab ultimis Affricae finibus in Hiberniam attulerant, et in Kildarensi planitie, non procul a castro Nasensi, tam ingenii quam virium ope mirabiliter erexerant. Unde et ibidem lapides quidam, aliis simillimi, similique modo erecti, usque in hodiernum conspiciuntur.

Mirum qualiter tanti lapides et tot magni unquam unum in locum vel congesti fuerint, vel erecti; quantoque artificio lapidibus tam magnis et altis alii superpositi sint non minores. Qui sic in pendulo, et tanquam in inani suspendi videntur, ut potius artificum studio quam suppositorum podio inniti videantur.

Juxta Britannicam historiam, lapides istos rex Britonum Aurelius Ambrosius, divina Merlini diligentia, de Hibernia in Britanniam advehi procuravit. Et ut tanti facinoris egregium aliquod memoriale relinqueret, eodem ordine et arte qua prius in loco constituit, ubi occultis Saxonum cultris Britanniae flos cecidit, et sub pacis obtentu nequitiae telis male tuta regni juvenus occubuit. (Dimmock 1867, V: 100-1)

*In ancient times in Ireland there was a truly remarkable collection of stones called the Giants' Ring. Giants had brought it from the furthest shores of Africa to Ireland where, with extraordinary skill and workmanship, they had erected it on high ground in Kildare not far from the castle at Naas. Some stones similar to these and laid out in the same pattern are still to be seen to the present day.*

*It is amazing how so many stones of such great size were ever brought together and then set upright in one place. Just as amazing is the skill with which equally massive stones were placed on top of such tall and solid uprights. These lintels seemed to be hanging in mid air, as it were, and suspended in space. It was almost as if they were resting on the skill of those who had engineered them rather than on the uprights that were actually supporting them.*

*According to British history, the king of the Britons, Aurelius Ambrosius, arranged for these stones to be transported from Ireland to Britain with the supernatural aid of Merlin. He had them erected here in exactly the same order and with the same skill as before. This he did in order to leave behind some memorial of the terrible crime that had been committed when the flower of Britain's fighting force was cut down by the Saxons. These had concealed their daggers about their persons and, under the pretext of making peace, used their treacherous weapons to slaughter the defenceless warriors of the kingdom in their prime.*

When he quotes 'British History' as his authority, Gerald is, of course, referring to the *Historia Regum Britannie*, that Geoffrey of Monmouth (whom he does not name, incidentally) had finished writing by 1136-1138. Over 300 extant manuscripts of this newly 'discovered' account of British 'Dark-Age' history are testimony to the wide popularity it enjoyed at the time and in the following centuries. As many as eighty of these manuscripts could be attributable to the 12<sup>th</sup> century alone, indicating that the *Historia's* success was immediate as well as long-lasting. The rise of Stonehenge to some sort of literary prominence and to a place in 12<sup>th</sup>-century historiography was due exclusively to the influence of Geoffrey's visionary best seller.

### **Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia Regum Britannie***

(VI) De [loco memorabili] allocutus est Aurelius. Cui Merlinus: 'Si perpetuo opere sepulturam virorum decorare volueris, mitte pro Choreia Gigantum, quae est in Killarao monte Hiberniae. Est etenim ibi structura lapidum quam nemo huius aetatis construeret nisi ingenium artem subvectaret. Grandes sunt, nec est aliquis cuius virtuti cedant. Qui si eo modo quo ibidem positi sunt circa plateam locabuntur, stabunt in aeternum.'

Ad verba ipsius solutus est Aurelius in risum, dicens qualiter id fieri posset ut tanti lapides ex tam longinquo regno adveherentur ac si Britannia lapidibus careret qui ad operationem sufficerent. Ad haec Merlinus: 'Ne moveas, rex, vanum risum, quia haec absque vanitate profero. Mistici sunt lapides et ad diversa medicamenta salubres. Gigantes olim asportaverunt eos ex ultimis finibus Affricae et posuerunt in Hibernia dum eam inhabitarent. Erat autem causa ut balnea infra ipsos conficerent cum infirmitate gravarentur. Lavabant namque lapides et infra balnea diffundebant, unde aegroti curabantur. Miscebant etiam cum herbarum confectionibus, unde vulnerati sanabantur. Non est ibi lapis qui medicamento careat.'

Cumque haec audissent Britones, consuluerunt pro lapidibus mittere populumque Hiberniae proelio infestare, si ipsos detinere niterentur. Postremo eligitur Uther Pendragon, frater regis et quidecim milia armatorum ut huic negotio pareant. Eligitur et ipse Merlinus, ut ipsius ingenio et consilio agenda tractentur. Paratis deinde navibus, mare ingrediuntur et prosperis ventis Hiberniam adeunt.

Ea tempestate regnabat in Hibernia Gillomanius, iuvenis mirae probitatis. Hic cum audisset quia in Hibernia applicuissent Britones, collegit exercitum grandem et eis obviam perrexit. Cumque didicisset causam adventus eorum, astantibus arrisit et ait: 'Non miror si ignava Saxonum gens insulam Britonum devastare potuit, cum Britones bruti sint et stulti. Quis etenim huiusmodi umquam stultitiam audivit? Numquid meliora sunt saxa Hiberniae quam Britanniae, ut regnum nostrum pro ipsis ad proeliandum provocetur? Armate vos, viri, et defendite patriam vestram, quia, dum mihi vita inerit, non auferent nobis etiam minimum lapidem choreae.'

Uther igitur, ut vidit ipsos ad proeliandum paratos, festinante agmine in eos irruit. Nec mora, praevaluerunt Britones, Hiberniensibusque laceratis ac interfectis Gillomanius in fugam propulerunt. Potiti autem victoria exegerunt Kyllarium montem lapidumque structuram adepti, gavisii sunt et admirati. Circumstantibus itaque cunctis, accessit Merlinus et ait: 'Utimini viribus vestris, iuvenes, ut in deponendo lapides istos appareat utrum ingenium virtuti an virtus ingenio cedat.'

Ad imperium igitur eius indulserunt unanimiter multimodis machinationibus et aggressi sunt choream deponere. Alii funes, alii restes, alii scalas paraverunt, ut quod affectabant perficerent, nec ullatenus perficere valuerunt. Deficientibus itaque cunctis solutus est Merlinus in risum suasque machinationes confecit. Denique cum quaeque necessaria apposuisset, levius quam credi potest lapides deposuit, depositos autem fecit deferri ad naves et interponi et sic cum gaudio in Britanniam reverti coeperunt, necnon prosperantibus ventis applicant sepulturasque virorum cum lapidibus petunt.

Quod cum indicatum fuisset Aurelio, diversos nuntios per diversas partes direxit iussitque clerum ac populum submonere, submonitos vero in monte Ambrii convenire ut cum gaudio et honore sepulturam praedictam repararent. Ad edictum vero illius venerunt pontifices et abbates et ex unoquoque ordine qui ei subditi fuerant. Et cum omnes convenissent, instante die quae praedestinata fuerat, imposuit Aurelius diadema capiti suo festumque Pentecostes regaliter celebravit tribusque sequentibus diebus continuae celebrationi vacavit. Interea honores qui possessoribus carebant domesticis suis largitur ut eis laborem obsequii sui remuneraret. [ ... ]

Cumque haec et cetera in regno suo statuisset, praecepit Merlino lapides circa sepulturas erigere, quos ex Hibernia asportaverat. At ille, praeceptis eius oboediens, eo modo quo in Killario monte Hiberniae positi fuerant, erexit illos circa sepulturas ingeniumque virtuti praevalere comprobavit. (Reeve 2007: 128.232 – 130.298).

*King Aurelius then brought up the subject of the memorial, and to this Merlin replied: 'If your wish is to crown these men's resting-place with a monument that will last for ever, send for the Giants' Ring which is on Mount Killaraus in Ireland. There, there is a stone construction that no man living today could possibly erect unless he were able to combine know-how with skill. The stones are enormous, and no one alive would have the strength to lift them. If you set them up around the burial site in the same pattern as they were previously in, then they will stand for ever and ever.'*

*On hearing this, Aurelius burst out laughing. How could such enormous stones, he asked, be brought over here from so far away. It was not as if Britain did not have enough stones of its own for the task in hand. Merlin replied: 'There is no need for you to laugh, your Majesty, for there is nothing absurd in what I am saying. These are magic stones and they have various curative properties. Many years ago some giants brought them from the furthest ends of Africa, and they erected them in Ireland where they were living at the time. This is what the purpose they served was: whenever any of the giants fell ill, water used to be poured over the stones and collected in baths installed at their bases, and here the sick were cured. Herbal concoctions were also mixed with the water, and any wounds were healed. There is not a single stone among them all that does not have some medicinal value.'*

*When the Britons heard this, they decided to send for the stones, and to engage the Irish people in combat if they attempted to hold on to them. Uther Pendragon, the king's brother, was selected for this operation together with fifteen thousand armed troops. Merlin also was conscripted so that his skill and advice could be brought to bear on the operation. Once the boats were made ready, they set sail, and under favourable winds reached Ireland.*

*The king of the Irish at that time was Guillemar, a young man of outstanding bravery. When he heard that the Britons had landed in Ireland, he raised a large army and set off to confront them. On learning what the aim of their expedition was, he smiled and said to those around him: 'It is little wonder that such a race of cowards has been able to devastate Britain*



*that was already inhabited by such boorish and stupid people. Whoever heard of such stupidity? Surely the stones of Ireland are not so superior to those of Britain that they think it worth challenging us to fight for them. Take up your arms, my men, and defend your fatherland, for as long as there is breath in my body, they will not carry off so much as the smallest of the stones in our ring!’*

*When Uther saw that the Irish were ready to fight, he immediately went on the attack. It did not take long for the Britons to win. The Irish were either torn to pieces or killed outright, and Guilemar was forced to flee. Triumphant, the Britons made their way to Mount Killaraus. When they reached the stone circle, they were overcome first with happiness and then with wonder. As they all stood there staring, Merlin came up to them and said: ‘Put your strength to the test, you young men, and dismantle these stones, and we will see whether ingenuity is more effective than brute force, or whether the opposite is true.’*

*Leaping to obey, they all deployed every imaginable contrivance in their frantic efforts to dismantle the stone circle. Some of them used cables, others pulleys and yet others ladders to do what they had to, but none of these methods met with any success. The failure of each and every one of them made Merlin laugh, and he set about using his own equipment to do the job. Once everything necessary was in place, he dismantled the stones with an ease that was difficult to believe. He then had them carried down to the boats, and they were stowed aboard. The men began their journey home to Britain in high spirits.*

*The winds being in their favour, they soon reached land, and from there they set off with the stones to the place where the fallen warriors had been buried. When news of their arrival reached Aurelius, he dispatched messengers throughout the whole country ordering the clergy and other people to convene on Mount Amesbury for the dedication of the cemetery with all due ceremony and rejoicing. Following his instructions, bishops, abbots and servants of the king from every social class gathered together. With everyone assembled, Aurelius, on the appointed day, celebrated the feast of Whitsun in truly royal splendour with a crown-wearing ceremony. Uninterrupted festivities filled the three days that followed. During this time he bestowed any lands still without tenants on his followers as recompense for all they had done in his service. [ ... ]*

*Once the king had settled the affairs of his kingdom in this and other ways, he gave Merlin orders to erect the stones he had brought from Ireland around the burial ground. Merlin carried out the king’s command by setting up and arranging the stones around the cemetery in precisely the same way as they had been laid out on Mount Killaraus in Ireland. In this way he was able to demonstrate how superior ingenuity was to brute force.*

Subsequently, according to Geoffrey, Stonehenge becomes the resting place of British kings: of Aurelius: *sepultum fore prope coenobium Ambrii infra choream gigantum* (134.385); of Uther Pendragon: *tuleruntque corpus eius ad coenobium Ambrii et infra choream gigantum ... humaverunt* (142.610); and of Constantine III: *infra lapidum structuram sepultus fuit quae haud longe a Salesberia mira arte composita Anglorum lingua Stanheng nuncupatur* (180.102) – ‘buried in the stone circle called Stonehenge in the English language, which had been built with wonderful skill not far from Salisbury.’

The scathing strictures with which William of Newburgh demolished the credibility of the *Historia Regum Britannie* proved to have little effect on the book's popularity. Geoffrey's dramatic account of the legend of Stonehenge in particular continued to find a wide readership among contemporary intellectuals. Someone like Gervase of Tilbury, for instance, who had a specialist interest in marvels of all sorts and sizes, would naturally find himself attracted to the figure of Merlin. Gervase must have eagerly welcomed the story of the prophet's superhuman engineering exploits into the encyclopaedic *Otia Imperialia* that he was writing for the entertainment of emperor Otto IV between 1210 and 1214. So much so, in fact, that he ended up giving three different accounts of it:

### **Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia***

- (VII) Legitur etiam in *Hystoria Britonum* quod Aurelius Ambrosius ... volens consules ac principes Romanos in Britanniam secum advectos, ab Hengisto duce Saxonum per prodicionem enecatos, condigna tantis viris sepultura honorare, fecit a Merlino propheta Britonum afferri lapides misticos ad diversa medicamenta salubres, a gigantibus olim in Childardum montem Ybernie ab ultimis terre finibus advectos, ut inter eos balnea construerent suis infirmitatibus profutura. Lavabant namque lapides et intra balnea diffundebant, sicque egroti sanabantur. Miscebant etiam cum herbarum sucis, et sic vulneratos sanabant. Nec est in eis lapis sine medicamento. Hos ergo lapides ad montem Ambrii iuxta Salesberiam in maiore Britannia miro Merlinus artificio composuit, ingenii sui effectum ad perpetuam relinquens hominum admirationem. Nam usque in hodiernum diem Corea dicitur illic esse Gigantum ... (Banks 2002: 150-52).

*Readers of the History of the Britons also learn that Aurelius Ambrosius ... wished to honour the Roman commanders he had brought with him to Britain and who had been treacherously murdered by the Saxon Hengist. He wished to do this by building a memorial that would be worthy of so many great men. To achieve this, he had Merlin, the prophet of Britain, go and fetch certain stones related to the realm of the occult and which had various therapeutic properties. They had been brought, many years previously, to Mount Killaraus in Ireland from the furthest ends of the earth by giants. It was the custom of these giants to construct baths in-between the stones, and these were designed to cure any illnesses from which they might be suffering. They did this by pouring water over the stones and then filling the baths with it. In this way, anyone who was ill was cured. The giants also used the water to concoct herbal drinks, and in this way were able to heal wounds. There was not a single stone among them that did not have some medicinal properties. These are the stones which Merlin reassembled with amazing ingenuity at Amesbury near Salisbury in Greater Britain. By virtue of his practical skill he was able to bequeath an everlasting object of wonder to mankind. From then until the present day this place has been called the Giants' Ring.*

- (VIII a) Fecitque [Aurelius] ad memoriam nobilium qui pridem in prodicione Saxonum per Vortigernum fuerant perempti, lapides olim in Childardo monte Ybernie collocatos ad Ambresbiriam per Merlinum locari in modum coree, sicut gigantibus fuerant dispositi, unde et in eiusdem coree medio Aurelius Ambrosius post aliquot annos sepultus fuit. (Banks 2002: 418-20)

*Aurelius had a memorial constructed to the nobles who had recently been killed under Vortigern by the treacherous Saxons. He had certain stones that had been brought together in the distant past on Mount Killaraus in Ireland relocated by Merlin to Amesbury in the shape of a ring, in the same way as they had originally been arranged by the giants. It was in the middle of this ring that, some years later, Aurelius Ambrosius was buried.*

- (VIII b) Sed et Merlinum scimus in Anglia, iuxta montem Ambrii, Coream Gygantum collocatam transtulisse a Childardo monte Hybernicae, et cum incantationibus lapides ad perpetuam admirationem sub divo suspendisse ... (Banks 2002: 610-11).

*We also know that Merlin transported the Giants' Ring from Mount Killaraus in Ireland and set it up in England near Mount Amesbury. By means of magic spells he raised the stones up into the sky to be an everlasting source of wonder ...*

Another contemporary intellectual, this time a poet as well as a theologian and natural scientist, Alexander Neckam (1157-1217), found room for a short verse account of the Giants' Ring which he inserted into his *De Laudibus Divinae Sapientiae*. A light-touch reference to 'the gossip of hearsay' is sufficient to articulate his incredulity as a student of the natural world.

**Alexander Neckam, *De Laudibus Divinae Sapientiae***

- (IX) Nobilis est lapidum structura Chorea Gigantum,  
Ars experta suum posse peregit opus,  
Quod ne prodiret in lucem segnius artem,  
Se viresque suas consuluisse reor.  
Hoc opus ascribit Merlino garrula fama,  
Filia figmenti fabula vana refert.  
Dicta congerie fertur decorata fuisse  
Tellus quæ nutrit tot Palamedis aves.  
Dehinc tantum munus suscepit Hibernia gaudens,  
Nam virtus lapidum cuilibet ampla subest. 10  
Nam respersus aquis magnam transfundit in illas  
Vim, qua curari sæpius æger eget.  
Uterpendragon hanc molem tranvexit ad Ambri  
Fines, devicto victor ab hoste means.  
O quot nobilium, quot corpora sancta virorum,  
Illic Hengisti prodicione jacent? ... (Wright 1863: 457, 728-42)

*The stones of the Giants' Ring make for a noble structure; in them the black arts have proved their power and have done their work. This handiwork ought not to have brought such magic skill into the light of day any more slowly than it did. It is my opinion that the ring must have had recourse to its own energy (?). The gossip of hearsay attributes the work to Merlin, and here fiction's spiritual daughter has a hollow tale to tell. It is rumoured that this stone structure used once to be held in high esteem, and the land on which it stood was food to so many of Palamedes' cranes (?). Thereafter Ireland was truly delighted to accept such a great*



*gift, for the power of the stones then became widely accessible. When water is poured over them, great potency is transferred to it, and it proves in many instances to be exactly what the sick need in order for them to be cured. Uther Pendragon, victor of a conquered army, transported this massive structure to the vicinity of Amesbury. How many nobles, how many men's blessed corpses lie here as a result of Hengist's treason? ...*

Matthew Paris (d. 1259) was an English monk of St Albans, best known as a historian and as the author of the *Chronica Maiora* (1240-53). Among his many other accomplishments he was also a much admired scribe and illustrator, and the author of three religious poems in Anglo-Norman French. His section on Stonehenge (anno 490) is one that he took over from his predecessor Roger of Wendover whose *Flores Historiarum* came to an end in 1235. Our text here follows that edited by H.R. Luard in his edition of the *Chronica Maiora* for the Rolls Series (1872-83). For further reading, see Vaughan 1958 and 1993.

#### **Matthew Paris, *Chronica Maiora***

(X) Tunc Merlinus, aliquantulum in extasi mentis positus, tandem respondit, dicens: 'Si volueris, domine mi rex, opere perpetuo sepulturam decorare, mitte pro chorea gigantum, quae est in Killarao, monte Hyberniae, ubi talis est lapidum structura qualem nemo hujus aetatis oculis perspexit. Grandes sunt lapides et mirabiliter collocati, qui, si eo modo hic quo ibi sunt positi locati fuerint, stabunt in aeternum, et memorabilem facient sepulturam.'

Ad haec Aurelius in risum solutus Merlino respondit: 'Numquid lapides Hyberniae meliores sunt lapidibus istius regionis, ut ex tam longinquo ad Britanniam veherentur?' Ad quem Merlinus: 'Ne vanum, rex, moveas risum, nam mystici sunt lapides, et ad diversa medicamenta salubres. Gigantes eos olim asportaverunt ex ultimis finibus Affricae regionis illuc, ut balnea infra ipsos conficerent, cum variis infirmitatibus gravarentur. Lavabant namque lapides cum variis herbarum confectionibus et fundebant in balnea, unde curabantur aegroti; nec est ibi lapis qui careat medicina.'

Cumque haec audissent Britones, pro lapidibus mittere decreverunt. Eligitur ergo Uther frater regis, cum quindecim milibus armatorum, qui, si ab aliquo impedirentur, praelio lapides asportarent. Eligitur et Merlinus, ut ipsius ingenio omnia agerentur. Paratis igitur navibus mare ingrediuntur, et velis prosperis ad Hyberniam pervenerunt.

Cumque Gillomannius rex Hyberniae adventus eorum causam cognovisset, astantibus dixit: 'Armate vos, viri, armate, quia, dum mihi vita inerit, non auferent a nobis minimum choreae lapillum.' Nec mora, congregiuntur partes, sed victoria Britonibus cessit.

Deinde Killaraum montem adeuntes, structuram lapidum in vanum deponere laborabant. Deficientibus autem cunctis subrisit Merlinus, suasque machinationes conficiens, levius quam credi potest lapides deposuit, navibusque imposuit, et cum gaudio ad Britanniam perduxit.

Quod cum Aurelio indicatum fuisset, venit cum episcopis et abbatibus et aliis regni magnatibus in montem Ambrii, ubi in die Pentecoste coronam portavit [ ... ] Cumque haec et alia ibidem peregisset, praecepit Merlino lapides circa sepulturam nobilium erigere. Qui praeceptis ejus obediens, eodem modo quo in Killarao monte positi fuerant, mirabiliter collocavit. (Luard 1872, I: 222-23)

*Then, a few moments later, Merlin finally came out of his trance and replied: 'If, my lord king, you wish to grace this burial place with a monument that will last for ever, send for the Giants' Ring which is on Mount Killaraus in Ireland. There is a stone construction there the likes of which no man living has ever set his eyes on. The stones are enormous and so wonderfully arranged that, if they were to be re-erected here in the same pattern as they were previously in, then they will stand for ever and ever as a memorial to those who lie buried here.'*

*When he heard this, Aurelius burst out laughing and said to Merlin: 'So, are these Irish stones so much better than those we have over here that they need to be brought to Britain from so far away?' Merlin replied: 'There is no need for you to laugh, your Majesty. These are magical stones and have various therapeutic properties. Many years ago some giants brought them from the furthest ends of Africa. This is the purpose they served: whenever the giants were struck down with different sorts of illness, they constructed baths in-between the stones. They poured water over them and filled the baths with it, adding different herbal concoctions, and in this way the sick were cured. There is not a single stone among them that does not have some medicinal value.'*

*When the Britons heard this, they resolved to have the stones sent for. Uther Pendragon, the king's brother, was selected for the operation together with fifteen thousand armed troops. If they were to encounter any resistance, they were to seize the stones by force. Merlin was also designated to go so that the operation could be carried out on his advice and with the benefit of his skill. As soon as the boats were made ready, they set out to sea, and favourable winds brought them to Ireland.*

*When Gillomanius, the king of Ireland, learnt of their arrival and the reason why they had come, he said to the men around him: 'Take up your arms, men! To arms! As long as there is life left in me, they will not carry off even the smallest little stone from our ring.' Without more ado, the two sides joined battle, and the Britons ended up victorious.*

*They then made their way to Mount Killaraus where they set to work trying to dismantle the stone circle. They failed to do so, however, and when Merlin saw that they were having no success, he smiled. He proceeded to install his own equipment and, more easily than you could possibly believe, took down down the stones, loaded them onto the boats and jubilantly transported them to Britain.*

*When news of this was brought to Aurelius, he came to Mount Amesbury in the company of his bishops, abbots and other members of the kingdom's nobility. Here, on the feast of Pentecost, he ceremoniously wore his crown [ ... ]. Once he had completed his business, he instructed Merlin to set up the stones around the burial site. Merlin did so and, amazingly, arranged them in exactly the same way as they had been laid out on Mount Killaraus.*

Long before Matthew Paris's time, however, the story of Stonehenge had broken free of its clerical origins in Latin prose, and made its entry into secular poetry written in the vernacular of Britain's Norman colonisers and of their aristocratic descendants. This was part of a wider process of vernacularisation of culture whose origins lay in what is known as the renaissance of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The years following the 1150s saw the emergence into French literature of a new genre of *translationes*, adaptations of Latin texts into French verse under the patronage of an increasingly literate nobility. One of the major pioneers in this literary renewal was a secular priest from Normandy called Wace, who wrote for the English court. His poetic adaptation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britannie*, consisting of little short of 15000 lines of rhyming couplets, was completed, he tells us, in 1155. Its popularity is reflected in the survival today of thirty or so medieval manuscripts of it.

The text I have translated here is taken from the standard edition of MS BL Addit. 45103 by Ivor Arnold (1938-40). For his French version Wace actually used the so-called First Variant text in addition to its Vulgate version of the *Historia Regum Britannie*. In the Stonehenge episode, however, there are very few significant differences between the two Latin texts (Wright 1988). The whole text has been translated into English by Judith Weiss (2002), and a bibliography of Wace's works was compiled by Jean Blacker (2008). For further reading see Le Saux (2005). Dean 1999: # 2.

### **Wace, *Roman de Brut***

(XI) 'Se tu vuelz faire ovre durable  
 Ki mult seit bele e covenable  
 E dunt tuz tens seit mais parole,  
 Fai ci aporter la carole  
 Que gaiant firent en Irlande,  
 Une merveilluse ovre e grande  
 De pieres en un cerne assises,  
 Les unes sur les autres mises.  
 Les pieres sunt teles e tantes,  
 Tant ahuges e tant pesantes, 10  
 Que force d'ome k'ore seit  
 Nule d'eles ne portereit.'

'Merlin,' dist li reis en riant,  
 'Des que les pieres peisent tant  
 Que huem nes purreit remuer,  
 Ki mes purreit ci aporter?  
 Cume se nus en cest regné  
 Avium de pieres chierté.'  
 'Reis,' dist Merlin, 'dune ne sez tu  
 Que engin surmunte vertu? 20  
 Bone est force e engin mienz valt.  
 La valt engin u force fait.  
 Engin e art funt mainte chose  
 Que force comencer nen ose.  
 Engin puet les pieres muveir,  
 E par engin les poez avoir.

D'Aufrice furent aportees,  
 La furent primes compassees.  
 Gaiant, ki de la les porterent,  
 En Irlande les aloerent. 30  
 Mult suelent estre saluables  
 E a malades profitables.  
 Les genz les soleient laver  
 E de l'eve lur bainz temprer.  
 Cil ki esteient engroté  
 E d'alcune enferté grevé,  
 Des laveüres bainz feseient,  
 Bainoent sei si guarisseient.  
 Ja pur enferté qu'il sentissent  
 Altre mecine ne quesissent. 40

Quant li reis e li Bretun surent  
 Que les pieres tel valur ourent,  
 Mult furent tuit entalenté  
 E tuit orent grant volenté  
 D'aler apporter la carole  
 Dunt Merlin faiseit tel parole.  
 Uther unt ensemble choisi –  
 Il meïsmes s'en purofri –  
 Que en Irlande passereit  
 E quinze mil armez merreit 50  
 Ki as Irreis se combatreient  
 S'il les pieres lur defendeient.  
 Merlin ensemble od els irreit  
 Ki les pieres enginnereit.  
 Quant Uther ot sa gent mandee,  
 En Irlande ad la mer passee.

Gillomanius, ki ert reis,  
 Manda sa gent e ses Irreis,  
 Les Bretuns prist a manacier  
 E del pais les volt chacier. 60  
 E quant il sout que il quereient,  
 Que pur pieres venu esteient,  
 Assez s'est alez d'els gabant:  
 La folie aloent querant  
 Ki aveient pur pieres querre  
 Trespassé mer en altre terre.  
 Ja une, ço dist, nen avrunt  
 Ne ja une n'enporterunt.  
 Legierement les pout despire,  
 Mais grief furent a desconfire. 70  
 Tant despist e tant maneça  
 E tant les quist qu'il les trova.

Sempres se sunt entrevenu

E bien se sunt entreferu.  
 Ireis n'erent pas bien armé,  
 Ne de combatre acostumé.  
 Les Bretuns aveient despiz,  
 Mais Bretun les unt desconfiz.  
 Li reis s'en est alez fuiant,  
 De vile en vile trestumant. 80

Quant Bretun furent desarmé  
 E bien se furent reposé,  
 Merlin, ki ert en la compaignie,  
 Les mena en une muntaine  
 U la carole esteit assise  
 As gaianz, qu'il aveient quise.  
 Killomar li munz aveit nun  
 U la carole esteit en sun.  
 Cil unt les pieres esgardees,  
 Assez les unt environnees. 90  
 E li uns ad a l'autre dit  
 Ke unches mais tel ovre vit:  
 'Cument sunt ces pieres levees  
 E cument serunt remuees?'  
 'Seinurs,' dist Merlin, 'assaiez  
 Se par vertu ke vus aiez  
 Purrez ces pieres remuer,  
 E si vus les purrez porter.'

Cil se sunt as pieres aërs  
 Detriés, devant e de travers. 100  
 Bien unt enpeint e bien buté,  
 E bien retrait e bien crollé:  
 Unches par force a la menur  
 Ne porent faire prendre un tur.  
 'Traiez vus,' dist Merlin, 'ensus,  
 Ja par force nen ferez plus.  
 Or verrez engin e saveir  
 Mielz que vertu de cors valeir.'

Dunc ala avant si s'estut,  
 Entur guarda, les levres mut 110  
 Come huem ki dit oreisun;  
 Ne sai s'il dist preiere u nun.  
 Dunc ad les Bretuns rapelez:  
 'Venez avant', dist il, 'venez!  
 Or poëz les pieres baillier,  
 A voz neufs porter e chargier.'  
 Sicome Merlin enseigna,  
 Sicum il dist e enginna,  
 Unt li Bretun les pieres prises,  
 As nes portees e enz mises. 120

En Engleterre les menerent,  
 A Ambresbire les porterent  
 En la champaine illuec dejuste.  
 Li reis i vint a Pentecuste.  
 Ses evesques e ses abez  
 E ses baruns ad tuz mandez;  
 Altre gent mult i assembla,  
 Feste tint si se coruna.  
 Treis jurs tint grant feste [ ... ]  
 E Merlin les pieres dreça,  
 En lur ordre les raloa.  
 Bretun les suelent en bretanz  
 Apeler Carole as Gaianz,  
 Stanhenges unt nun en engleis,  
 Pieres Pendues en franceis.

130

Quant la grant feste fu finie,  
 La curt le rei s'est departie. (Arnold 1938: 8039-8180)

*'If your wish is to construct a lasting monument,' said Merlin, 'one that is both impressive and appropriate, and will be spoken of for evermore, have the ring that the giants made in Ireland brought over here. It is an enormous, wondrous structure of stones set one upon the other and laid out in a circle. There are so many of them and they are so huge and heavy that no one today could possibly be strong enough to move them.'*

*King Aurelius laughed and said to Merlin: 'Seeing that these stones are so heavy that no one could move them, who could bring them over here? It's not as if we had a shortage of stones here in our own kingdom.' 'Your majesty,' said Merlin, 'are you not aware that ingenuity is superior to brute force? Strength is all well and good, but ingenuity is even better. When strength fails, ingenuity prevails. A combination of ingenuity and art often leads to success in ventures which strength alone does not even dare undertake. Ingenuity can move these stones, and they can become yours through the use of ingenuity. They were brought from Africa where they were originally designed. From there giants carried them to Ireland where they were relocated. The stones had a wide range of curative properties and were beneficial to anyone who fell ill. People poured water over the stones, and then used this to bathe in. The sick and people suffering from any sort of disease took baths in the water that had come into contact with the stones, and in this way they were cured. Whatever illness they might have been suffering from, they would have needed no other remedy than this.'*

*When the king and the Britons understood all the benefits that the stones would bring, they were extremely enthusiastic and highly motivated to go and fetch the stone circle that Merlin had spoken so highly of. Uther Pendragon was selected by common assent to lead this operation, and he duly offered his services. He would sail over to Ireland at the head of fifteen thousand troops, and would engage the Irish in combat in the event of their withholding the stones. Merlin was to accompany the army so that he could deal with the stones. When Uther Pendragon had assembled his troops, he crossed the sea to Ireland.*

*King Guillemar called up his army of Irishmen. He prepared to take a stand against the Britons, his intention being to drive them back out of the country. On learning the reason for their coming to Ireland, namely to carry off the stones, he took to mocking them mercilessly:*



people who cross the sea to a foreign land with the sole purpose of looking for stones are on a fool's errand. They will not get their hands on any of them, he declared, and will not take a single one of them away with them. It was easy for him to insult the Britons, but they proved to be extremely hard to defeat. The Irish spent a great deal of time mocking and threatening them before finally discovering where the Britons were.

Thereupon the two armies engaged combat, and a fierce fight ensued. The Irish had little experience of armed combat, and were not well equipped with weapons. Having treated the Britons with contempt, they ended up suffering a heavy defeat. King Guillemar took flight and went scuttling off from one town to the next. After the Britons had disarmed and taken a good rest, Merlin, who had accompanied the army, led them off to where the stone circle that the giants had acquired was situated. The circle was on top of a mountain called Mount Killaraus. The men stood there staring at the stones, then walked round carefully inspecting them. They said to each other that they had never before seen any structure like it. 'How were these stones ever erected', they asked, 'and how are they to be moved?' 'My lords,' said Merlin, 'try and see whether you are able to move them using your physical strength alone, and whether it will be possible for you to transport them.'

The men grabbed hold of the stones, first from the front, then from the rear, then from each side. They shook them, gave them a good push and a good pull, but, however much force they exerted, they could not even manage to budge the smallest of the stones. 'Come back here!' shouted Merlin, 'That's as far as you'll get by using strength alone. Now you're going to see how much more effective know-how and ingenuity are than physical force.' He then stepped forward and stood there without moving. He looked round and then began to move his lips, as people do when they are praying, but I have no idea whether or not it was a prayer he was saying. Merlin then beckoned to the Britons: 'Come on, ' he said, 'now you can manoeuvre the stones, take them to the boats and load them on.' They did exactly as Merlin instructed, lifted them up, carried them to the boats and stowed them on board.

They brought them to England. They transported them as far as the outskirts of Amesbury. The king came there at Pentecost where he summoned all his bishops, abbots and barons. Very many other people also gathered there, and a crown-wearing ceremony took place. The festivities lasted for three days. [ ... ] Merlin then had the stones set up again and arranged them in exactly the same pattern as they had originally been in. The Britons used to call them the Giants' Ring in their own language, while in English they are called Stonehenge, and in French the Hanging Stones.

When the main festivities were over, the royal court dispersed.

Wace was not, in fact, the first to translate Geoffrey's *Historia*. That honour goes to Geffrei Gaimar whose *Estoire des Engleis* of the late 1130s had opened with a *Brut* epitome that has since been lost. It was, however, Wace's 1155 text that signalled the start of a long line of vernacular French translations and adaptations, in both verse and prose, of the *Historia Regum Britannie*. The nine passages translated below, the majority of which are Insular, in the sense of Anglo-Norman, illustrate the place that Geoffrey's boldly theatrical history of Stonehenge had come to occupy in the literary culture of the 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In one of the 30 or so manuscripts and fragments in which Wace's *Brut* has come down to us today, there is one, MS BL Royal 13.A.xxi, in which a large section of Wace's text has been replaced by another, anonymous version. In this, the Stonehenge episode proves to be entirely independent of Wace's, and to warrant therefore a literary identity of its own. Its language belongs to the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as does, in all probability, that of the next three of the *Brut* versions edited below. So many different verse translations in circulation at the same time point to a popularity in secular circles prior to the appearance of the earliest prose *Brut* in the second decade of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. I follow Alexander Bell's 1969 ANTS text. See also Bell 1963, and Dean 1999: # 3.

### Royal *Brut*

- (XII) Mais sa busoigne lui ad mustré  
Pur quei il l'aveit mandé.  
Quant Merlins iço oit,  
Sagement lui respondit:  
'Quant vus iço faire volez,  
En Hirlande enveiez.  
Ilokes ad desur un mont  
Peres que mult beles sunt,  
Grande sunt a desmesure  
E de mult bele faiture. 10  
Ensom un mont sunt aluees,  
De geanz i furent posees.  
Si il isci furent asis,  
Le liu serreit plus bel tut dis. '
- Li reis forment commencet a rire  
Com a Merlin iço oit dire  
K'en Hirlande deit enveier  
Pur pere faire acharrer.  
Li reis fet: 'Ne me gabbez  
Pur parole que vus oiez 20  
[ ...        ...        ...  
...        ...        ... ]  
Kar icil kis i apporterent  
Grant seinté i quiderent,  
E quant il acun mal aveint  
U il d'arme naferé esteint,  
Iceles peres si laveint,  
Dedenz cele ewe se baigneint.  
Iteles sunt cum vus oeiz.  
Enveiez i, si vus volez.'
- Son frere lui reis apelat,  
Dan Huter, si lui comandat 30  
K'il mult tost i alast,  
E Merlin od sei menast,  
E si livrat chevalers  
Ben armez quinze millers.  
Atant del rei pernent congé,

Lur eire si ont comencé;  
 Cum vent orent a talent,  
 Es nefes entrent deliverement.  
 Tant ont puis par mer alé  
 K'en Hirlande sunt arivé. 40

Dan Guillemans, uns juvencels —  
 Icist esteit e pruz e bels —  
 Sitost cum lui fust conté  
 Ke Breton furent arivé,  
 Tute s'ost tost asemlat,  
 Encontre els si chivalchat  
 Encontre els si chivalchat  
 E puis si lur demandat  
 Par icels qu'il i enveiat  
 Qu'il esteint venu quere 50  
 Od tant grant gent dedenz sa terre.

Cil lui ont ben remandé  
 K'il ont quis en son régné,  
 Mais Gilleman quant il l'oït,  
 Pur fols les tint, si escharnit,  
 Puis dist a[s] sons: 'Ore vus armez,  
 Vostre pais si defendez,  
 Kar ja tant cum nus viverum,  
 Les peres porter ne larrom.'  
 Cum Uter les vist armer 60  
 E lur escheles aprester,  
 Od les Bretons les assailit,  
 En petit hure les venquist.  
 Mult i out morz des Ireis,  
 Meis vifs enfuit li reis  
 E fust mult lé que par fuir  
 Pout sa vie guarentir.

Donc s'en turnent li Breton  
 Tresque al mont Gillaraun.  
 Peres i trovent com Merlins 70  
 Lur ad dit qui fust divins.  
 Forment se sunt purpensé  
 Com il i furent aporté.  
 Merlin lur dist: 'Ne demorez!  
 Hastivement les abatez!  
 Ore verrai qui pruz serrat  
 E ki bons engins saverat.'

Avant saillent cil bachelier  
 Pur lur pruesce eshaucer.  
 Une tant ne se seurent pener 80  
 Par nul engin ne par penser  
 Ke une pere remuassent  
 De son liu ne tant ne quant.  
 Cum les vit si travailler

Danz Merlins e nent espleiter,  
 Forment en rist e dit lur ad,  
 Des ore ses engins frat.  
 Idonc mult legerement  
 E asez od poi de gent  
 Tutes les peres remuat. 90  
 As nefs porter les comandat.  
 Cum as nefs furent portees,  
 E les nefs suef luees,  
 A grant joie sunt returné  
 En Bretaigne lur regné,  
 Od els les peres ont porté  
 A Salesbire la cité.  
 En cel liu donc les unt mis  
 U li Breton furent occis.

Quant ço oit Aurelius, 100  
 De la joie si saillit sus.  
 Hastivement si ad mandé  
 Tuz les meuz de son regné  
 E manda qu'il venissent  
 En cel liu hastivement  
 U furent occis li Breton  
 Par Henges, icel mal felon.  
 A cel jurn qui fust nommé  
 Trestuz i sunt ben asemblé  
 E li evesque e li abbé 110  
 E tut li baron del regné.  
 Festivalment li reis i vint,  
 A Pentecoste sa curt i tint,  
 De corune d'or se corunat,  
 Treis jurs pur la feste la portat.  
 Puis donat mult riche dons  
 A ses duxs, a ses barons,  
 E lur servise ben merit  
 A cels qui l'aveint servit.  
 [ ...      ...      ...]

Puis que quarte jur fust passé, 120  
 Dan Merlin si ad rové  
 Les peres iloc aluer  
 En ordre cum durent ester.  
 Merlins le fist mult ducement,  
 Les peres dresce hastivement.  
 Com tutes les peres out drescé,  
 Sachez que mult en fust lez. (Bell 1969: 5682-5811)

*When Merlin heard this, the answer he gave was a wise one: 'Since this is what you want to do, send men over to Ireland. There are some stones of great beauty on a mountain there – extraordinarily large stones of extremely fine workmanship. They are located on top of a mountain, and were placed there by giants. If these stones were to be installed over here, the burial place would become an object of beauty and would remain so for evermore.'*

*On hearing Merlin tell him to send people to Ireland to have the stones transported back here, the king burst out in peals of laughter. 'Don't make fun of me,' he said ... [There follows an omission in which Merlin denies being facetious and explains how the stones have curative properties] ... 'whatever you may hear, because the giants who brought the stones to Ireland believed that they were extremely beneficial for their health. Whenever they had any illness, or had been wounded by a weapon, they would pour water over these stones, and then bathe in this water. These stones are exactly as I have described them to you, and if you are willing, I advise you to send men to Ireland to fetch them.'*

*The king summoned his brother, lord Uther Pendragon, ordering him to go with immediate effect and to take Merlin with him. He placed fifteen thousand fully armed knights under his command. Having taken leave of the king, they set out on their journey. As the wind was in their favour, they embarked without delay. They sailed across the sea until they made landfall in Ireland.*

*King Guilemar was a handsome young man of great courage, and when it was announced to him that a number of Britons had landed, he immediately raised an entire army and rode out to confront them. He demanded to know, through messengers that he sent ahead, what such a large number of troops were seeking to achieve by entering his country. The Britons responded by telling him exactly what it was they had come in search of. On hearing this, Guilemar decided that he was dealing with a bunch of fools and felt nothing but contempt for them. He said to his men: 'Take up your arms and defend our country! As long as we live, we will never allow them to take our stones from us.' On seeing the Irish taking hold of their arms and drawing up their battle lines, Uther Pendragon and the Britons launched their attack, and in no time at all defeated them. Many of the Irish were killed, but the king survived. He was happy enough to save his life by running away from the battlefield. The Britons then made their way to Mount Killaraus, and there they found the stone circle, just as Merlin the magician had predicted. They racked their brains trying to work out how the stones had been brought to where they now were. 'Don't waste your time,' said Merlin to them. 'Make haste and pull the stones down!' Now is the time for me to see who is going to be champion, and who will design the best equipment.'*

*Up jumped the youngsters, keen to see if they could accomplish still greater feats. But, however much they laboured, not one of them, either by his powers of invention or by any of the equipment he used, succeeded in moving a single stone a single inch from where it stood. Seeing how strenuously they were struggling without making the slightest progress, Merlin began mocking them mercilessly, and declared that he would now take over and deploy his own equipment. Then, with the greatest of ease and with very little assistance, he pulled out each and every one of the stones. He gave orders for them to be taken to the boats. Once they were smoothly stowed on board, the men joyfully began their return journey to the kingdom of Britain. They took the stones with them to the city of Salisbury and left them at the spot where the warriors of Britain had fallen.*

*When news of this reached king Aurelius, he literally jumped with joy, and immediately gave orders for the leading figures of the realm to come with all due haste to where the warriors of Britain had been killed by that evil criminal Hengist. On the appointed day everyone, bishops, abbots and the kingdom's barons, assembled. Then the king arrived in all his festive splendour. He held court at Pentecost when a crown-wearing ceremony took place, and he continued wearing his golden crown for three whole days as part of the festivities. He then distributed valuable gifts to his magnates and barons, richly rewarding those who had served him. [ ... ]*

*After the fourth day the king summoned Merlin and requested him to set up the stones in exactly the position they should be in. Merlin was very happy to do so, and made short work of erecting the stone circle. When he had finished, I can tell you that he was extremely content.*

Copied in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, MS BL Harley 1605 preserves five fragments, totalling 3361 verses, of an anonymous Anglo-Norman *Brut* in Alexandrine laisses. The text I print here is from a transcription kindly provided by Peter Damian-Grint (1994). There is a recent edition by Beatrice Barbieri (2015). A detailed description and analysis of the manuscript were published by Brian Blakey in 1961. Dean 1999: # 15.

### Harley Brut

(XIII) Dunc a primes li ad descovert sun pensé  
De l'ovre que il volt faire, coment l'at devisé.  
'Sire rei,' dist Merlins, 'ore vos ai escolté.  
Se ovre volez faire dunt toz tens seit parlé,  
Enveieiz en Irlande par une grant poesté.

Al munt de Cillarau, sicom trovom lisant,  
La ad une karole que firent li geant;  
Cele est faite de perres, nuls ne vit si vaillant,  
Tel ne serreit ore faite por nul home vivant  
Se par engin ne fust de un altre si sachant. 10  
Il n'i ad pierre mise ki ne seit de tel grant  
Que ja par force de home ne por quant  
Ne serreit une muee se ele iert en estant,  
Ne ne serreit leveie se ele iert en gisant.  
Ki ci l'avreit refaite par altretel semblant  
E alsı bien jointe e alsı bien seant,  
Jamais cele nen ert en fable ne en chant.  
Tele ne fud unches veue nen ert a en avant.'  
Quant li reis le entendit, si respont en riant:  
'Merlins, or sai jo bien que tu me tiens a enfant! 20  
Quant si grant sunt les perres com tu vas ci disant,  
Coment vendreient a mult me vois porpensant.



Alsi paroles tu come um ne peust trover  
 Pieres en ceste terre dunt hom ne peust ovrer!  
 E Merlin respondit: 'Se volez escolter,  
 Rei, ne devez pas rire ne me devez gaber.  
 Mescinals sunt les perres por santé doner.  
 Li geiant ki soleient en Iberne habiter,  
 Cil se penerent molt des pieres apporter,  
 De l'une joindre a l'autre e del bien ordener. 30  
 Laenz firent les bainz por malades saner,  
 E planterent les herbes por naffrez meciner.  
 N'i ad piere neisune, bien le puis affermer,  
 Contre quel mal que seit ne poissed hom mesciner.'  
 Quant l'oient Breton, comencerent a crier:  
 'Sire rei, por ces pieres deit l'um bien aler;  
 E sis pernum par force, s'om les nos volt neier.'  
 Dunc fud eslit Uther pur le bosoin haster —  
 Cil ert frere le rei, e fist bien a loer —  
 E quinze mil armé porrat od lui mener. 40  
 E mesme Merlin i covendrat a aler;  
 Kar ja ne ferunt el que voldrat deviser.  
 Quant les nefz furent prestes, si sunt entré en mer,  
 E li venz les ad fait en Iberne ariver.

Seinor, en icel tens que Uther fud esliz  
 D'aler por la carole, sicom dit li escriz,  
 Esteit en Irlande un jovencel hardiz:  
 Gillomanies out nom, del regne esteit saisiz.  
 Quant oit la novele, ne fud pas esmarriz;  
 Grant gent ad auné e bien se est aatiz 50  
 Que ja nel sofferat, volentiers ne enviz,  
 Que li suens regnes seit des pierres desguarniz:  
 Jamais n'avreit honor, einz en serreit honiz.  
 Quant sa gent fud venue si criat a halt criz:  
 'Baron, or tieng Bretons por fols e esbaiz!  
 Se unc malvaise gent les ad si amatiz  
 E lor terre guastee e sovent descomfiz,  
 Ço fud par la folie dunt les vei raenpliz.  
 Fud unches tel orgoil ne veuz ne oiz?'

A halte voiz escrie: 'Baron, or vos armez, 60  
 A vos e vostre terre vivement defendez!  
 Kar jo serreie anceis u mort u affolez  
 Que ja de la carole seie desheritez!  
 Uther est fors eissu quant il fud arivez;  
 Quant il vit les Ireis del combatre aprester,  
 Sa bataille est rengee, encontre eals est alez.  
 L'estur fud mult fort, mais mult fud tost finez:  
 Mult i out des Ireis e occis e naffrez;  
 Gillomanies meismes est en fuie tornez.

El munt de Killarau en est Uther muntez 70  
 E vint a la carole, iluec se est arestet.  
 Atant est vos Merlin ki si esteit appelez,  
 E ad dit as Bretons: 'Baron, avant venez!  
 Vos, li fort jovencel, voz forces esprovez,  
 S'en vos ne remaint! Uncore hui veer porrez  
 U forze u engin quel vos melz preisez!  
 Lores de moltes maneres i out enginz trovez:  
 Unkes par nul engein ki i fust trovez  
 Tote la menore pierre ne fust unkes remuez.  
 E dunc en rist Merlin quant tot les vit lassez. 80

Merlin ad ses enginz apresté e esdreccez.  
 Desque l'engin fud fait e bien apparaillez,  
 Mult plus legierement que vos ne quideriez  
 Ad les pieres jus mis e a la terre colchiez,  
 E portez a la nef e trestot arengiez.  
 Uter est en Bretagne venuz e repairez.

Quant Aurelies le sout, mult par fu il liez  
 De ço que li bosoin ert si bien espleitez.  
 Par trestote Bretagne ad ses mes enveiez  
 E le pople e les clers e somons e preiez 90  
 Qu'al jor de Pentecoste ki ja ert aprestez  
 Venissent al Munt de Ambre: ja ne estreit respeitez  
 Que en icel jor ne fust cel liu eshalcez  
 En talent en ert li reis, e en halt amenez.  
 Unc le comanz le rei ne fud pas esloignez:  
 Venuz est li pueples e trestot li clergez.

Li abbé e li evesque, li duc e li contor  
 Sunt venuz a la feste e toz le vavassor.  
 Li reis porta corone a joie e a baldor  
 E celebrad la feste desi que al tierz jor. 100  
 A cels ki chef nen orent ne terre ne honor,  
 Ki soffert unt pur le rei le mal e la dolor,  
 Les batailles soffertes e esté en estor,  
 Li reis lor en donat a lei de bon seignor:  
 Bien guerredunat a cascun sun labor.  
 Puis appelat Merlin, le bon devineor,  
 Si li ad comandé e preié par amor:  
 'Ci en cest cimetiere gisent nostre anceisor  
 Que li Seisne murdriront come mal traitor.  
 Ces pieres sunt conquises par force e par valor 110  
 E par le vostre engin; unkes ne vi meillor.  
 Ore pri vos, pur Deu le Creator,  
 Que vos les ordenez environ e entor.'

Merlins fist volenters ço que li reis deprie:  
 La carole ordenat, que il ne en targat mie,  
 Tot sicome ele fud en Iberne establee. (Damian-Grint 1994: 2193-2308)

*So before anything else king Aurelius let Merlin know what he had in mind and how he envisaged the monument he wished to construct. 'Your majesty,' replied Merlin, 'I hear what you are saying. If you wish to construct a monument that will be spoken about for evermore, then you should send a large number of armed men to Ireland, to a place called Mount Killaraus, as we find it called in our written source. There there is a stone circle made by giants. No one ever saw such a splendid construction. No one living today could possibly build something similar unless he were more knowledgeable and more skilled than anyone else alive. Each and every one of the stones that make it up is so huge that not a single one standing could be moved by any individual or group of men, however physically strong they might be. The same is true of any stone that has fallen: it cannot be set upright again. It would be unheard of, even in fable or in poetry, for anyone to construct anything of similar appearance, with stones so solidly positioned and so attractively arranged. Nothing like it has ever been seen in the past, or ever will be in the future.'*

*The king's response to what he heard was to laugh outright: 'Merlin, I'm convinced now that you take me to be some sort of simpleton! If the stones are as enormous as you keep saying they are, I'm wondering just how they can be brought to this country. What's more, you talk as if no one could find the sort of stones needed for the job here in this country.'*

*To this Merlin replied: 'Pray hear me out, your majesty. This is no laughing matter, and you are wrong to mock me. These stones have medicinal properties and can cure illnesses. When the giants lived in Ireland, they spent a great deal of energy finding and bringing these stones together, positioning them and placing them in the correct order. Within them they built baths to treat those who had fallen ill, and cultivated herbs designed to cure wounds. I can assure you that there is not a single one of these stones that cannot be used to cure whatever illness people may have.'* When the Britons present heard Merlin say this, they began to shout out: *'Sire, your majesty, stones of this sort should absolutely be sent for, and we should even take them by force if anyone were to prevent us from having them!'*

*Uther Pendragon, the king's brother and an altogether admirable person, was selected to lead the expedition and expedite matters. He was given permission to take fifteen thousand armed men with him. Merlin himself was to accompany the army to ensure that nothing was done other than what he himself instructed. They embarked as soon as the boats were ready, and the wind brought them to the shores of Ireland.*

*My lords, at the time when Uther was designated to go and fetch the stone circle, the written source tells us that the overlord of Ireland was a courageous young man called Guillemar. The news of the arrival of the Britons did not trouble him unduly: he raised a huge army in a gesture of defiance to show that he would be absolutely unwilling to tolerate his kingdom being stripped of its stones: he would never again be respected and would live on in shame.*

*He addressed his assembled troops in a loud voice: 'Now is the time to take up your arms, my barons, and to robustly defend yourselves and your country. I would be maimed or dead before I would lose possession of the ring that is part of my heritage!' Uther leapt ashore when he landed, and seeing the Irish ready to engage combat, he drew up his own battle lines and launched an attack against them. The fighting was fierce but short-lived: many an Irishman was wounded or killed, and king Guillemar himself fled the battlefield.*

*From there Uther climbed Mount Killaraus and came right up to the ring before stopping. See what happened next! Merlin was immediately called forward, and he addressed the Britons saying: 'Step up, you barons, and let the brawny young men among you put their strength to*

*the test! It's up to you now! Today's the day when you will see whether or not brute force is of more value to you than ingenuity.' Despite a wide range of different contrivances being improvised, not a single one succeeded in moving even the smallest of the stones. When Merlin saw the young men lying down completely exhausted, he burst out laughing.*

*Merlin then prepared his own equipment and set it in place. No sooner was it ready to be deployed than, with much greater ease than you would ever imagine, he had pulled out all the stones, laid them flat on the ground and then had them transported to the boats and stowed aboard.*

*To the great joy of king Aurelius on finding that the mission had been successful, Uther Pendragon returned to Britain. The king sent his messengers out over the whole of the country, summoning and inviting the people and the clergy to come to Mount Amesbury to celebrate Pentecost that was due to fall shortly. The king's wish was that there be no delay in consecrating and revering the burial ground there. The king's orders were carried out without reservation, and the people and the whole of the clergy duly attended.*

*Bishops, abbots, dukes, earls and all the minor nobility came to celebrate the festival. The king held a crown-wearing ceremony amid great joy and rejoicing, and the celebrations lasted for three days. In recompense for all that they had suffered in his service, and the military aid that they had provided him with, the king did what every good lord should do: he gave bounteous rewards those who had no land or estates or who lived in the absence of an overlord, making generous awards to each individual according to the hardship he had suffered.*

*He then called for that admirable soothsayer Merlin and cordially issued the following instructions to him: 'This is the cemetery where our ancestors, so treacherously killed by the evil Saxons, lie buried. These stones, bravely obtained by force of arms, are here thanks to your unrivalled ingenuity. I now request you, in the name of God our Creator, to arrange them all around this place in their correct order.'*

*Merlin was all too happy to comply with the king's request, and he lost no time in reconstructing the stone circle exactly as it had been laid out in Ireland.*

A single sheet, dating from the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, now MS Cracow Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Berol. MS. gall. fol. 176, is all that survives of this Continental French *Brut* translation. It was edited and studied by Sylvie Lefèvre 1988. The text is damaged, and I have taken the liberty of incorporating corrections and conjectures into Lefèvre's transcription, which I reproduce here.

#### **Bekker *Brut* Fragment**

- (XIV) Merlins ait respondu molt avena[blement]:  
'Se vos la sepouture hono[rer volez],  
En Yberne ait .i. mont, bien le s[achez],  
Killaraus ait non, par le mien es[cient].  
Lai ait une estruture de pier[res molt ancien],

Carole des Jeans, se l'ystoire n[e ment]  
 Nus hons de ceste eaige ne le ...  
 S'il ne savoit l'enging qui ait l...  
 ...  
 ...  
 ...  
 Environ ceste pierre c'estoie ...  
 Com eles sont illuec si ordenees ..., 10  
 Donques poroit durer sens fin du ...'

Cant li rois oi[t c]eu, s'en rit molt ...  
 Enaprés li ait dit: 'Je me merv[eil forment]  
 [Qu']on poroit aemplir ices dero[bement].  
 La grandesse des pieres a faire ...  
 Et li lontains regnez que paz nel nos ...  
 Beaus amis, tu parolles assi fai...  
 Com il n'ait en Bretangne pierre a ton [gré]  
 Dont on poist ouvrir teil edifi[ce] ...'

Et Merlins respondi a[l] roi cortois[ement]: 20  
 'Rois, n'i riés en vain, nel di paz [par] v[antance].  
 Le[s] perres ont en soi grant signifie[ance]:  
 Contre les enfertez grant medicine ...  
 Jeans les i porterent cant il iluec ...  
 Savez vos po[rquoi]? ...  
 S ... les prenoit illuec se bag[ner] ...  
 Et por itant les perres durement ...  
 Li enfers que s'i baignent que lors gr...  
 Les confections d'herbes avoic ceu ...  
 Kant lé boivent, santei i resevoient, 30  
 ... s les pieres lor mecine portoient.  
 ... li Breton sempres s'i laiv[er]oient  
 ...r les pieres et qu'il garrieroient.'

... des Irois c'il le contredisoient  
 ... roi cil i fut envoiés  
 ... armez tres bien aparilliez.  
 ... lait que bien en fut priez  
 ... de lui fut cil consaus traitiez.  
 ... es nez que sont de l'aleir haitiez.

... Yberne ne... 40  
 ... qui molt estoit ...  
 ... et fut molt resou...  
 ...er molt s'en est corressiés.  
 ... illuec ses barons envoiez.  
 ... a ses hommes, ses ait toz leessiez  
 ... combatre durement afichiés.  
 [Il lor dist] en riant: 'Or entendez, baron:  
 ... de vertei que fol sont li Breton  
 ...aise gens gastent lor region

... mais si folle entencion 50  
 ... il en Bretagne de perres grant foison  
 ... por les noz par grant invasion.  
 ... [p]uis que il quierent de bataille [a]quison,  
 ... vos armez contre lor devison.  
 ...ez vos pais, car je vos don .i. don:  
 [Tant] com je serai vis et je chase esperon,  
 ...e la menor perre n'en avront sens tenson'.

... [en]tendez merveille de celle caitison!  
 ...s en ont portees, ou il vuellent ou non  
 ... tres cant les vit a bataille venir, 60  
 ... dit a ses barons: 'Or pansez del ferir!'  
 ... il l'ot dit, si les vont envehir;  
 [Irois n]e se porent onques vers ous tenir.  
 Assez en ont ocis, les atres font foïr:  
 Onques lor rois n'osait ne torner ne gainchir.  
 Breton ont la victoire trestout a lor plaisir.  
 Amont en sont alei la carolle veïr.  
 Cant la furent venu, Merlins ne pot taisir:  
 'Or vignent cil avant que soleient caitir,  
 De lor force prover a corre et a saillir. 70  
 Ci les poiez prover, n'i poiez nient faillir.  
 A pierres metre jus or poez esprover  
 Ou la force ou l'engins ques fait mues aloer'.  
 Qui or veist Bretons lor engins aprester,  
 Li uns vont as eschieles ou as cordes noer  
 Qu'il cuderent les perres contrevail deposer,  
 Mais onques la minor ne porent remuer.  
 Dont prist Merlins a rire cant les vit si pener.  
 Après ait fait les siens, n'i vot plus demorer  
 Et plus ligierement c'ains oissiés parler, 80  
 Ait mis les perres jus et fist a[s] neis porter.  
 Et cant furent es nez, ses fist entremeller.  
 Cant orent propre vent, present a retorner;  
 Dessi que en Bretagne ne vorent il cesser.

Cant Aurelies le sot, nes vot asseurer:  
 Par trestoute Bretagne fait semondre et mander  
 Et les clers et le puple a cel mont assembler,  
 Car il voloit cel liu a grant joie honorer.  
 A ban que li rois fist, molt en i aunait  
 Et eveque et abbeis, sicom il les mandait. 90  
 Cant tut furent venu, et li jors aprosmait,  
 Aurelies la coronne desor son chief posait.  
 Feste de Pentecoste realment celebrait;  
 Toz les .iii. jors après richement les festait.  
 Les honors son signor a ses privez donait,  
 Et selonc lor servize gueredon rendu ait.  
 .ii. sieges d'erseveques toz esvudiés trovait ... (Lefèvre 1988: 37-135)



*Merlin's answer was entirely appropriate: 'If it is your wish to commemorate this burial place, you should know that in Ireland there is a mountain called, I believe, Mount Killaraus, on which there is a structure [of great antiquity]. It is called the Giants' Ring, if the historical record is correct. No one in the present era [could possibly move it] unless he had knowledge of the ingenuity with which [it was originally erected]. ... around this stone ... in the same arrangement as they are at present [in Ireland]. In that way the monument could last indefinitely [as long as the world itself]'*

*On hearing this, the king gave a [hearty] laugh and then said to him: 'I would be extremely surprised if this [demolition] were to succeed. The enormous size of these stones [would create difficulties], as would the fact that Ireland is a far distant kingdom that is [hostile] to us. My friend, you are talking ... as if there are no stones in Britain that you would find suitable to build this structure with.'*

*Politely Merlin replied to the king: 'You have no reason to laugh, and I am not in any way [boasting] when I tell you this. These stones had significant properties in themselves: they had important medicinal powers for curing illnesses. The giants would carry [the sick] there when [they fell ill]. Do you know [why]? ... they would give them baths there, and this is why they [attached such importance] to the stones. With this same water they would make herbal infusions, and when the sick drank these, they recovered and were well again. ... The Britons would always be able to bathe between the stones and would be cured.'*

*... if the Irish were to put up any resistance ... the king's [brother] was sent there together with ... armed and well equipped men. [Merlin] was also invited to go ... with the responsibility of giving the necessary advice. They then all embarked, happy to be setting out on their voyage.*

*... [Guillemar], a very [brave and ... young man, was king of] Ireland ... He became extremely angry and ordered his barons to proceed there ... to his men with words of encouragement to stand firm and fight bravely. He laughed and said to them: 'These Britons are truly mad, coming over here and laying waste the land ... What they intend to do makes no sense at all. There is an abundance of stones in Britain, and yet they are mounting a full-scale invasion to carry off ours ... Seeing that they are looking for a reason to fight us, take up your arms and attack their battle lines! Defend your lands, and one promise I can make you is that, as long as I live and have the strength to pull on my spurs, they will not get their hands on the smallest of the stones without our putting up a fight.' Willing or not, the Irish launched their attack, and just hear what a tremendous combat was to ensue! When Uther saw them coming to do battle, he said to his barons: 'Now is the time to strike!', on hearing which the Britons began their charge. The Irish proved incapable of putting up any resistance, and a large number of them were killed, while the rest were forced to flee. Even their king could not avoid defeat or recover. The Britons won the day with the greatest of ease.*

*They then pressed on, marching up to where they could see the Giants' Ring. Once they were there, Merlin could keep silent no longer: 'Let the seasoned warriors among you step forward and test their strength and their endurance, and show how fit they are! This is the place to put your strength to the test; there's no escaping it. You can try your hand at pulling down these stones, and find out whether brute force is preferable to ingenuity.' You should have seen the Britons preparing their different devices: some set up scaling ladders, others attached cables in the belief that they could pull the stones down to the ground. They failed, however, to budge even the smallest of them. Merlin laughed when he saw them struggling*

*so much. He lost no time in setting up his own apparatus, and, with greater ease than you have ever heard tell, he had laid the stones down flat on the ground before then having them carried down to the boats. Merlin arranged for the stones to be loaded aboard without their being put in any particular order.*

*As soon as the winds were favourable, the Britons started out on their journey home, and took the most direct route to reach Britain. When news of their return reached Aurelius, he was unwilling to wait any longer. From across the whole kingdom he summoned all the clergy as well as all the people to meet together on Mount Amesbury, for he wished to see the place consecrated amid great rejoicing. In response to the king's proclamation, a large number of bishops and abbots assembled there as he had requested. As the appointed day drew closer, Aurelius took to wearing his crown. He was celebrating the feat of Pentecost as befitted royalty, and the sumptuous festivities lasted all of three days. He bestowed on those close to him lands he had inherited from his lord, and rewarded each one in accordance with the service he had given him. He discovered that there were two archbishoprics who had no incumbents ...*

MS London College of Arms 12/45 A takes the form of an illustrated genealogical scroll, copied between 1284 and 1290. It is one of forty or so such distinctively Anglo-Norman rolls described and analysed by Olivier de Laborderie (2002 and 2013). It consists of some 2500 verses of an anonymous *Brut* in octosyllabic couplets copied as prose. It was edited in *Romania* 126 (2008), 273-95.

### College of Arms *Brut*

- (XV) Merlins respont: 'Si volez faire  
chose que altre ne puisse defaire,  
mais od le siecle puist durer  
si que rien ne la puist anuier,  
efforce de gent cuvent que aiez  
e en Irlande l'enveiez.  
En Kyllarao la muntaigne  
cuvient aler cels de Bretayne  
por la Karole des Gians  
qu'el mund ad esté mil anz. 10  
N'est home que tant pensast  
que une des pieres remuast:  
les pieres sunt de teu grandur  
que par engyn ne par vigur  
nuls ke vive nes muvereit  
ne aillurs nes asserreit.  
E si vous celes oussez  
... ..  
e entur la place fuissent mises  
sicum il sunt iloec asises,  
ceo serreit ovre permanable 20  
e od le mund tuzjours durable.'

Quant le rois oit Merlyn ceo dire,  
 si comence forment a rire:  
 'Merlyn, ceo semble gaberie  
 ...      ...      ...  
 que nous ruvez ceo apporter  
 que altres ne poet ja remuer.  
 De grant manere nous gabez  
 quant tele merveille nous ruvez;  
 n'ad suz cel home ke le oist  
 ke a merveille nel tenist!'      30  
 Ceo dist Merlyns: 'Por nient riez,  
 car bien faire le poez.  
 Ne movez de moi veyn ris,  
 car ne sui pas de gas appris:  
 itels porreit de moi gaber  
 ke por fol se porreit trouver!  
 En Irlande les apporterent  
 dementiers k'il i habiterent,  
 el Munt Kyllarao les mistrent  
 e par engyn les asistrent.      40  
 Lur baynz soleient dedenz faire  
 por les dolurs de lur cors atraire.'

Quant Merlins out dit sa reson,  
 si en parlerent li Bretun:  
 delivrement loent al rei  
 qu'il aprest un grant conrei  
 si face les pieres requere  
 en Yrlande, le estrange terre.

Aurelie Ambrosie l'otrie  
 ...      ...      ...  
 sun frere Uther iloec comande      50  
 que od sa gent alt en Irlande,  
 commande li bons chivaliers  
 e bien armez quinze millers.  
 'Merlyn Ambrosie,' dist li rois,  
 'vous irrez vers les Ireis.  
 A vous livrai jeo mun frere  
 si vous pri ke en seez gardere.'  
 Ceo dist Merlyns: 'E jeo l'otrei.  
 Nous le feruns, tres bien le crei.'

Li rois qui en Irlande esteit      60  
 Gilleman nun aveit;  
 quant oi de la gent armee  
 que en sa terre iert arivee,  
 de grant manere s'en gabat  
 e dist ...      ...      ...  
 'kar il est veirs e si vous di

ke unkes plus fole gent ne vi.  
 De grant saver se sunt turnees  
 quant i amenant gens armees,  
 si sunt venu lur chivaler 70  
 por nostre regne guerreier.  
 Mais ore vous pri que vous armez  
 e vostre regne defendez!  
 Einz en averunt bataille fiere  
 k'il enportent une pierre:  
 ja de la Karole as Gyanz  
 n'averunt pleyn un de lur ganz!'

Uther li proz sache sun brant  
 si point sur els tuit devant;  
 ainz k'yl returt, en ad .xx. mors 80  
 des plus preisez de lur efforz.  
 Vencuz les unt cil de Bretagne,  
 pus sunt alez a la muntayne.  
 Al Munt Kyllaraun alerent  
 e la karole i troverent.  
 Sicum tut entur estoient  
 e a merveille les aguardouent,  
 Merlyns est devant tuz alez  
 si ad les jefnes apelez:  
 'Venez,' fait il, 'ça, juvencel 90  
 ke estes proz, forz e ignel,  
 vous ke soliez les clers blamer  
 que ne funt fors que reposer,  
 que ne preisez plus un sage home  
 ke ne feriez une porrie pome,  
 ore voil ke ci vous provez  
 e ces pierres jus deposez.  
 Quant vous vendrez devant le roi,  
 trestut le los, vous en otrei.'

Quant ceo oient li bachiler 100  
 qu'il volt lur forces esprover,  
 a la karole tut en vunt  
 e quanque il sevent de engynz funt.  
 Li un i unt cordes liees,  
 e li autres chaines lacies;  
 groz ras li altre aparilerent  
 e forz escheles i drescerent.  
 Unkes engyn ne sourent faire  
 ke alochast une pierre.  
 Idunc comença Merlyns a rire, 110  
 e en gabeis lur prist a dire:  
 'Bien l'avez fait! Alez vous seier!  
 De cest devez grant los aver!  
 Quant nostre reis dire l'orra,  
 a grant pris le vous turnera!  
 Volez le vous aitant laisser,

ou vous me lerrez essayer  
 saver si rien espleitereie  
 e par engyn force veyntereie?’  
 Il dient tuit : ‘Alez vous avant,  
 car nous le vous lessum atant!’ 120

Dunc ad Merlins ses engynz faiz,  
 si met les pieres jus senz plaiz,  
 pus fist sun aparaillement,  
 s’enporte as nefs legierement.  
 Ja nel porreit achuns home crere  
 cum fist legierement cel afaire:  
 tutes les pieres as nefs meyne  
 si qu’il n’i met gueres de peine.  
 Dedenz les nefs les pieres mettent 130  
 si que dolur ne mal ne sentent.  
 A joie arivent en Bretagne,  
 pus sunt venuz a la champaine  
 defors la ville de Salesbires  
 la ou esteit li cimiteries.

Quant la nuvele fud venue  
 au rei de la gent ke fu avenue,  
 tuit sun regne mande Aurelie  
 qu’il assemblent al Munt Ambrie  
 por la sepulture adrecier 140  
 e a honur aparailer.

Li jours de la Pentecuste esteit,  
 e li rois mult grant joie aveit,  
 pus commanda Merlyn aler  
 e la karole sus lever:  
 ‘Faites,’ dist il, ‘Merlyn, amis,  
 ceo ke a faire avez enpris:  
 aparaillez la sepulture,  
 car mise en est sur vous la cure!  
 Par vous est ele ci portee, 150  
 e par vous estut estre relevee.’

Merlins respunt: ‘Beau sire chiers,  
 jeo le adrescerai volentiers.’  
 Dunc vait avant si l’aparaille  
 si que a tuz semble merveille:  
 sicum furent en la muntayne  
 resunt assises en Bretagne. (Short 2008: 362-521)

*Merlin replies: 'If your wish is to construct something that no one could possibly pull down or in any way damage, and which is capable of lasting for as long as the world itself lasts, then here is what you do: you raise an army of Britons that you send to Mount Killaraus in Ireland with the task of removing the Giants' Ring from there. It has stood in that spot for at least a thousand years, and there is no one, however much thought they might give to it, who is capable of moving a single one of its stones. These are of such a size that no person alive today could move them, whether by brute force or by using some sort of contraption, still less relocate them somewhere else. If you were to come into possession of these stones [ ... ], and if they were installed around the burial place in the same arrangement as they are in at present, you would then have a permanent structure as ever-lasting as the world itself.'*

*When the king heard what Merlin had to say, he began to laugh out loud. 'Merlin, your asking us to bring over here something that no one else can move sounds very much like a joke [ ... ]. In fact you really must be joking if you are asking us to do something so extraordinary. There can't be a man on earth who would not consider that there is something supernatural in this.' To this Merlin replied: 'There's no need for you to laugh, because this is something that lies well within your power. Don't waste your time laughing at me, because joking is not something I'm familiar with. Anyone who treats me as a joke could well end up finding himself looking very foolish.'*

*The giants brought these stones to Ireland when they were living there, and they erected them on Mount Killaraus where they set them in position with great skill. They were in the habit of taking baths among them in order to draw any pains they had out of their bodies.'*

*When Merlin finished speaking, the Britons discussed among themselves, and their immediate decision was to advise the king to prepare a large body of armed men, and have them go abroad to Ireland to seek out the stones. King Aurelius Ambrosius agreed [ ... ] and placed his brother, Uther Pendragon, in command of his troops, commending to his care a fine body of knights together with fifteen thousand fully armed men to make the journey to Ireland. 'Merlin Ambrosius,' added the king, 'you yourself will accompany the expedition against the Irish. I place my brother in your hands, and ask you to act as his protector.' To this Merlin replied: 'I agree, and it is my firm belief that together we will see to it that everything goes according to plan.'*

*The king of Ireland at that time was Guillemar. When he learnt that some armed troops had landed in his country, he treated the news as a ridiculous joke. He declared: '[ ... ] it is true, and I tell you that I have never seen such stupid people. Bringing knights and an army over here to wage war on our kingdom is a sure sign that they have taken leave of their senses. Now take up your arms, men, I urge you, and come to the defence of your realm! There will be one almighty battle before they can get their hands on a single stone. As for carrying off the whole of the Giants' Ring, they won't get as much as a handful of dust from it!' With great daring Uther unsheathes his sword and goes charging headlong into the enemy lines: before he withdraws, he kills twenty of the most highly esteemed warriors in the Irish army. The Britons won the day, then set out for the mountain.*

*They reached Mount Killaraus and found the ring. With everyone standing around and staring at it in wonder, Merlin came forward and made this appeal to the fittest young men*



*in the army: 'Step up, you youngsters, the paladins among you, the able-bodied, the strongmen, you whose habit it is to criticise clerics for sitting around doing nothing, you who respect a man of learning as little as you do a rotten apple. I want to see you now putting your strength to the test by pulling down these stones. I shall give you full credit for it and will vouch for you before the king when you are brought into his presence.'*

*When the young men understood that Merlin wanted to put their strength to the test, they all came up to the ring and set to making every contraption they could think of. Some of them tied cables to the stones, others attached chains, yet others prepared thick hawsers and set up sturdy scaling ladders. But none of the contrivances they came up with proved capable of dislodging a single stone.*

*Merlin began laughing and mocking them: 'You've done really well!' he said. 'Sit down and have a rest! This will have done wonders for your reputation. It will certainly boost your standing in our king's eyes when he gets to hear of it. Perhaps you would like to hand over to me now, and see whether I might do better using my ingenuity than you have done using force.' 'Go ahead,' they all agreed, 'over to you now!'*

*Merlin then put his own equipment in place, and without further ado pulled all the stones down. Using his own equipment he then carried them down to the boats with the greatest of ease. No one could believe how easily he managed the whole business, and took every one of the stones down to the boats with the least possible effort. They loaded the stones onto the boats painlessly and without mishap.*

*They landed back in Britain to great rejoicing, and then proceeded to the outskirts of the town of Salisbury where the cemetery was situated. When news reached the king that the army had returned, Aurelius summoned everyone in his kingdom to assemble at Mount Amesbury where the burial place of the fallen was to be completed and commemorated with all due honour.*

*It was Pentecost, and the jubilant king gave Merlin the order to go and erect the ring of stones. 'Merlin, my friend,' he said, 'finish the task you have undertaken and make the burial place complete; the responsibility is yours. It is thanks to you that the ring has been brought here, and it is only right that you are the one who re-erects it.' 'Sire,' replies Merlin, 'dearly beloved king, this I shall do with great pleasure.' He steps forward, and to everyone's amazement reconstructs the ring. The stones are now relocated in Britain in exactly the same arrangement as they had been in on Mount Killaraus.*

On the pretext of not being able to interpret it, Wace had declined, in his *Roman de Brut*, to translate the version of Merlin's prophecies incorporated into Geoffrey's *Historia*. This lacuna was filled by three different Anglo-Norman translators, one of whom was named Helias and wrote in old-style decasyllabic couplets. In a 172-line historical preamble to his version, he finds room for the following brief mention of Stonehenge. It must date from at least the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when MS Durham Cathedral C.IV.27 was copied. Dean 1999: # 19.

### Helias, *Prophesies of Merlin*

(XVI) Al tens d'un rei qui ot nun Vortigerne  
Pert encore el quadreduble cerne  
De la Charole que fud as jaianz  
Des bis rochers e merveillus e granz.  
Sur les estanz gisent plusur enclin;  
D'Irelande vindrent par l'engin Merlin.

Reis Aurelies ad memorie tut dis  
De ces baruns que la furent ocis:  
Bel cimenterie d'un fossé enclos  
Faire i fist e dedenz mettre les os. 10  
Tut dreit enmi les pieres fist drescier:  
Si cors i gist, tant par out le liu chier.

La, lez Ambreshire a un parlement  
Les Bretuns occist Hengist e sa gent  
Od lur cuteals qu'il orent a muzuns ... (Blacker 2005: 27-41)

*From the time of a king by the name of Vortigern, the Giants' Ring of extraordinarily huge, dark-coloured stones is still visible today. The stones are set in a four-tier circle, and several of them are lying on their side in standing water. They originally came over from Ireland as a result of Merlin's ingenuity.*

*King Aurelius established an everlasting commemoration for those of his barons who had been killed there. He constructed a splendid cemetery with a boundary fence around it, and it was here that he laid their bones to rest. He so revered the site that he had his own body buried there in a monument at the very centre of the stones.*

*It was here, at a meeting in the region of Amesbury, that Hengist and his men had killed the Britons with their daggers that they had concealed about their persons ...*

Robert de Boron's original *Merlin* is generally thought to have been composed in verse towards 1200 and to have then been rapidly recast into the prose version that survives today in more than fifty manuscripts and fragments. Its destiny was to find its way, in the company of the *Queste del saint Graal* and other romance versions, into the so-called Post-Vulgate Cycle, one of the major prose texts of medieval Arthurian literature. In addition to his edition of the prose *Merlin* (1979), based on MS Paris BnF fr. 747, Alexandre Micha also published a Modern French translation (1994). Further details in Gowens 2004.

### Robert de Boron, *Roman de Merlin*

(XVII) Si parla Merlins a lui e li dist: 'Coment? Ne feras tu plus de Pendragon ton frere qui gist en Salebires?' Et Uitiers Pendragons respont: 'Que veuls tu que je en face? Je en ferai quanque

tu voudras et tu me loeras.’ Et Merlins dit: ‘Tu li juras et je li creantai que nos i feroions tel chose qui parroît tant cum Crestientez durroit. Aquite ton sairement, quar j’aquiterai bien ma parole.’ Et Uitiers respont: ‘Di moi que je puisse faire et jel ferai molt volentiers.’ Et il li dist: ‘Enprenons a faire tel chose qui i paire touz jorz ne jamés ne soit usee.’ Et Uitiers dit: ‘Jel ferai volentiers.’

‘Or envoieez donc por grosses pierres querre qui sont en Yrlande, si i envoieés vaisaus, si les en fai venir, ne il nes savront ja si granz aporter que je nes dresce, et je lor irai mostrer celes que je voil que il aportent.’ Et Uitiers dit que il i envoiera molt volentiers; si i envia genz et vaissias a molt grant planté.

Et quant il vint la, si lor mostra Merlins unes molt granz pierres longues et grosses, et lor dist: ‘Vez ci lesa pierres que vos emporteroiz et que vos estes venuz querre.’ Quant cil les virent, si le tindrent a folie, et distrent que trestoz li monz en torneroit a poines une; ne tiex pierres, se Dieu plaist, ne metront il ja es vaissiaus sor mer. Et Merlins dist, se ce ne vouloient faire, que por noiant estoient donc venu. Einsic s’en retournerent et vindrent au roi, si li conterent ces merveilles que Merlins lor avoit comandeés a faire, qu’il ne cuident mie que nus hom dou monde le poist faire. Et li rois respondi: ‘Or souffrez tant que il veigne.’

Quant Merlins fu venuz, si li dit le roi ce que ses genz li avoient dit, et Merlins respont: ‘Des que il me sont tuit failli, j’aquiterai mon covenant.’

Lors fist Merlins par force d’art apporter d’Irlande les pierres qui sont au cimentire a Salesbires, et quant eles furent venues, si ala veoir Uitier Pandragon et i mena molt de son peuple pour veoir la merveille des pierres. Quant il furent la et il les virent, si distrent que toz li mondes n’en deust pas une lever, ne que tiels pierres n’ossast en pas mestre sor mer en vaissiaus. Molt se merveillent coment il les avoit faites venir, que nus ne l’avoit veu ne seu. Et Merlins lor dist que il les feissent drecier, car eles seroient molt plus beles que gisanz. Et Uitiers respont: ‘Ce ne porroit pas hom faire fors Dieu, se tu nou faisoies.’

Et Merlins dist: ‘Or vos en alez, quar je les ferai drecier, si avré mon covent aquité vers Pandragon, quar j’avrai por li comenciee tel chose qui ne porra estre acomplie.’ Einsic fist Merlins les pierres drecier qui encor sont au cimentire de Salebires et i seront tant com Crestientez durra. Einsic remest cele oevre. (Micha 1979: 47.26-76)

*‘What!’ said Merlin to Uther, ‘is that all you intend doing for your brother Pendragon who now lies buried at Salisbury?’ Uther Pendragon replied: ‘What would you have me do? I will do whatever you want me to do, whatever you advise.’ ‘You had sworn an oath to him and I also had promised to construct a memorial for him that would last as long as Christendom. You should do what you swore to do, and I will not fail to keep my word.’ To this Uther replied: ‘Tell me what I can do, and I will be more than happy to do it.’ ‘Undertake to build a memorial that will last for ever and will never wear out.’ ‘I shall be happy to do so.’*

*‘Send to Ireland to fetch some enormous stones they have there; send boats to have some of them brought back. However huge the stones they come back with are, I will know how to set them up again. I myself will go and show your men which stones they are to bring.’ Uther declared himself to be very eager to undertake such an expedition, and dispatched a large number of men and boats.*

*When they arrived in Ireland, Merlin pointed out a set of huge, tall stones, and told them: 'Here are the stones you have come for and are to carry off.' When the men saw them, they thought it was an absolutely mad idea. They declared that even if every available man were to pull together, they would not be able to move a single one of them. And they would never, please God, set to sea in boats loaded with stones like these. Merlin told them that if they refused, that would mean that the expedition had been a complete waste of time. So the men returned home and went to the king and explained to him just what a superhuman task it was that they had been given by Merlin. It was, in their view, well beyond the capacities of any human being. 'Wait until Merlin comes back,' the king replied. When Merlin finally did arrive, Uther told him what the men had said to him. 'Even though they have all let me down,' replied Merlin, 'I still intend to keep my promise.'*

*Using his powers of wizardry, Merlin then had the same stones that are still to this day to be seen in the cemetery at Salisbury, brought over from Ireland. Uther Pendragon, accompanied by a large number of his people, came to view the wondrous stones once they were installed. On seeing the stones standing there, they declared that there was no one in the whole world strong enough to lift a single one of them. Nor was there anyone rash enough, they said, to try loading any such huge stones on boats and sailing off. They were truly amazed at how Merlin could have brought them over here without anyone witnessing it or knowing how he had done it. Merlin gave orders for the stones to be set upright, as they would be much more beautiful to look at, he said, than if they were left lying on the ground. Uther replied: 'Unless you do it for us, no one else, except God, could possibly do it.'*

*'Step back, then!' said Merlin, 'I'll see to erecting the stones. I'll then be able to say that I've kept the promise I made Pendragon to construct something for him that no one else alive could have done.' This is how Merlin set up the stones that had come from Ireland and are now still in the cemetery at Salisbury – and here they will remain for as long as Christendom endures. That is how this monument survives to this day.*

MS BL Egerton 3028 was copied in the 1330s, perhaps in Ireland. It contains an illustrated 2914-line epitome of Wace's *Brut*, followed by a rhymed continuation which brings the narrative down to the reign of Edward III. It contains, on f. 30r, one of the oldest known pictorial representations of Stonehenge. I reproduce the text as edited by Vernon Underwood (1937), verified on the original. Dean 1999: # 50.

### **Egerton Brut**

(XVIII) 'Beau reis, creez a ma parole,  
Fai ci aportier la carole  
Qe geanz firent en Irlande,  
Un merveilouse ovre et grant  
Des peres en un cerne assis,  
Les uns sur les altres mis.'

'Merlin,' dit li rois en riant,  
'Desqe les peres peisent tant  
Ke hom nes pout remuer,  
Ki mei purreit ci portier?'

10

'Reis', dit Merlin, 'dunt ne seez tu  
 Ke engine surmunte vertu ?  
 Engine poet les peres mover,  
 Et par engine poet l'em aver.'  
 Li rois ad Uther ordeiné  
 Od .xv. mil Bretuns armé  
 Ki as Irreis se cumbatierent  
 Si les peres sei diffendient.  
 Merlin ensemble od els irreit  
 Ki les peres enginereit. 20  
 Qant Uther fu tot apresté,  
 En Irlande ad la mer passé.

Gillamorus qi esteit reis  
 Mandast ses genz et ces Irreis.  
 Les Bretuns prist a manacier  
 Et del pais les volt chacier.  
 Qant il solt qe queroient  
 Et pur peres venud estoient,  
 'Ja un,' dit il, 'n'en averunt  
 Ne ja un n'enporterunt!' 30  
 Sempres sei sunt entrevenud  
 Et bien sei sunt entreferud.  
 Irreis n'erent pas bien armé,  
 De cumbatre n'erent acostumé.  
 Des Bretuns urent despitz,  
 Mes Bretuns les ont descunfitz.  
 Li reis Gillamorus alout fuiant,  
 De vile en vile trestournant.  
 Kant Bretun sei furent desarmé  
 Et bien sei furent reposé, 40  
 Merlin, qi ert en la cumpaigne,  
 Les menast en une muntaigne  
 Ou la carole esteit assis  
 As geanz qi l'aveient cunquis.  
 Cils ont les peres esgardés,  
 Assez les ont avironés.  
 'Seignurs,' dit Merlin, 'asaiez  
 Si par vertu qe vous avez  
 Purrez ces peres remuer  
 Et si vous les purrez portier.' 50  
 Cils sunt as peres aiers  
 Derere, devant et de travers.  
 Bien ont empeint et bun boté  
 Et bien retrait et bun crolé :  
 Unc par force a la menour  
 Ne purreint faire peindre un tour.  
 'Trahez vous,' dit Merlin, 'ensus:  
 Ja par force ne ferez plus.  
 Ore verrez engine et savoir  
 Meulz qe vertu de corps valer.' 60

Dunc alast avant si s'estuet,  
 Entour gardast, les levres mut  
 Cum home qe fist oreisun –  
 Ne sai s'il fist cunjurisoun.  
 Dunc ad les Bretuns rapelez :  
 'Venez', dit il, 'Avant venez !  
 Ore poez les peres bailier,  
 A vos nefs portier et chargier.'  
 Sicum Merlin enseignast,  
 Sicum il dit et comandast, 70  
 Ont li Bretun les peres pris,  
 As nefs portez et einz mis.  
 En Engleterre les amenerent,  
 A Ambesbirie les portierent  
 En la champaingne d'iloec enjouste.  
 Le roi i vint a Pentecouste.  
 Ses evesques et ses abbez  
 Et ces barons ad touz mandez.  
 Autre gent mult i aseblast,  
 Feste tint si se coronast. 80  
 Et Merlin les peres dreceast,  
 En lour ordre les raloiaist.  
 Bretun les soleient en bretance  
 Apeler la Carole as Geanz:  
 Ston Henges ad noun en engleis,  
 Pere Pendues en franceis.

Qant la grant feste fu finé,  
 La curte al rei s'est departé. (Underwood 1937: 1525-1612)

*'Your gracious majesty, have confidence in what I am about to suggest. Have the circle that the giants made in Ireland brought over here. It is an enormous, wondrous structure of stones set one upon the other and laid out in a circle.'* The king laughed and replied: *'Merlin, seeing that these stones are so heavy that no one could move them, who could possibly bring them over for me?'* *'Your majesty,' said Merlin, 'are you not aware that ingenuity is superior to brute force? Ingenuity can move these stones, and they can become yours through the use of ingenuity.'*

*Uther Pendragon commanded fifteen thousand armed Britons to cross over to Ireland with orders that, in the event of the stones being withheld from them, they should engage the Irish in combat. Merlin was to accompany the army so that he could work his magic on the stones. When Uther Pendragon had completed his preparations, he crossed the sea to Ireland.*

*King Guillemar called up his army of Irishmen. He prepared to take a stand against the Britons, his intention being to drive them back out of the country. On learning the reason for their coming to Ireland, namely to carry off the stones, he declared: 'They will not get their hands on any of them, and will not take a single one of them away with them.'*

*Thereupon the two armies engaged combat, and a fierce fight ensued. The Irish had little experience of armed combat, and were not well equipped with weapons. Having treated the Britons with contempt, they ended up suffering a heavy defeat. King Guillemar took flight and went scuttling off from one town to the next.*

*After the Britons had disarmed and taken a good rest, Merlin, who had accompanied the army, led them off to a mountain where the stone circle that the giants had acquired was situated. They stood there staring at the stones, then walked round carefully inspecting them. 'My lords,' said Merlin, 'try and see whether you are able to move them using your physical strength alone, and whether it will be possible for you to transport them.'*

*The men grabbed hold of the stones, first from the front, then from the rear, then from each side. They shook them, gave them a good push and a good pull, but, strong as they were, they could find no way of even budging the smallest of the stones. 'Come back here!' shouted Merlin. 'That's as far as you'll get by using strength alone. Now you're going to see how much more effective know-how and ingenuity are than physical force.'*

*He then stepped forward and stood there without moving. He looked round and then began to move his lips, as people do when they are praying, but I have no idea whether or not it was a spell that he was casting. Merlin then beckoned to the Britons: 'Come on, ' he said, 'now you can manoeuvre the stones, take them to the boats and load them on.' They did exactly as Merlin instructed, lifted them up, carried them to the boats and stowed them on board.*

*They brought them to England. They transported them as far as the outskirts of Amesbury. The king came there at Pentecost where he summoned all his bishops, abbots and barons. Very many other people also gathered there, and a crown-wearing ceremony took place. Merlin had the stones set up again, and he arranged them in exactly the same pattern as they had originally been in. The Britons used to call them the Giants' Ring in their own language, while in English they are called Stonehenge, and in French the Hanging Stones.*

*When the main festivities were over, the royal court dispersed.*

Peter de Langtoft, a canon of Bridlington in Yorkshire, was a historiographer who wrote a chronicle in monorhymed Alexandrine laisses which opens with a *Brut* and closes with an account of the reign of Edward I, begun in 1294 and completed in 1307. The latter contains a number of satirical songs written in English. For more details, see Thiolier 1989. Dean 1999: # 66.

#### **Peter de Langtoft, *Chronicle***

(XIX) Merlyn dist: 'Sir rays, te covent enveer  
Message en Irlaunde, e de iloke porter  
La Carole des Geanz, les peres descoupler.  
N'i ad home en ce mounde ke purra mover  
La maindre de totes, si noun par mester  
De grant enchauntement.' Li reis fet autre cher,  
Comence en riaunt sa parole escoter.  
'Sir,' ce dist Merlin, 'nul home pur dener

Purra la value des peres achater,  
 Lour vertu est tele, e tel est lour poer, 10  
 Pur maladie garrir, pur playe ben saner.'  
 Li Brettoun escoutent, comencent a crier:  
 'Sir rays, pur teles peres day tro ben aler!'  
 Of countes e barons le ray va counsayler,  
 S'en vount pur elire of Merlyn messenger.

Uther, frer le rays, of Merlyn est eluz,  
 Of .xv. mil as armes; en Irlande sunt venus.  
 Li sire de la terre encountre est coruz,  
 Gilleman out a noun, ke vout aver rescuz  
 Countre Uther e Merlyn, mes il fu la vencuz. 20  
 Tost a la carole est Uther descenduz.  
 La grandure de peres kant il ad aparceuz,  
 Dist a daun Merlin: 'Nos travayls sount perduz:  
 Poer n'ad nul homme la carole mover suz.'  
 'Sir,' fet Merlyn, 'homme ad graunz vertuz.  
 Les peres par aide de Deu en Brettayne erent veuz.'

Kant cils ne pount abbatre la karole par engyn,  
 Of rise grande as peres s'en ala daun Merlin:  
 Abati la karole plus tost ke nul devyn.  
 Chargees sunt les nefs Uther al matyn, 30  
 Returnez devers Brettayne pur honurer son lyn  
 Ke Hengist trahist, li faus Saxonyn.

Le rays maunda ses countes e sa chevalerye,  
 Les seynurs de la terre e tut la clergie.  
 Merlyn devaunt els tuz les perres prent e gwie,  
 E la karole asset cum ele fust establye  
 Par geanz en Irelaunde en auncesserye.

Ly rays regarde les gens, devotement les prie  
 A la Pentecouste porter ly compaygnye.  
 A Salesbire s'en vount, li ray s'en esjoye: 40  
 Quinz jours tint feste, sulum l'estory wus dye. (Wright 18??, l: 124-28)

*Merlin said: 'Your majesty, what you need to do is to send an envoy to Ireland and have the Giants' Ring removed from there by dismantling the stones. No one in the world could possibly move the smallest of all these stones unless it were by the judicious use of high-level sorcery.' The king's mood changed, and he began laughing as he listened to what Merlin was saying.*

*'Sire,' said Merlin, 'no one, whatever price he were willing to pay, could purchase these stones at their true value. They have the power and the capacity to cure illnesses and successfully to heal wounds.' The Britons who were listening began shouting out: 'Your majesty, you must absolutely go and fetch stones like these!' The king consulted with his*



*earls and his barons, and they proceeded to choose an ambassador to go with Merlin to Ireland.*

*Uther Pendragon, the king's brother, was the one selected to go with Merlin. He made the journey to Ireland at the head of fifteen thousand armed men. King Guillemar, overlord of Ireland, lost no time in confronting them. He sought to gain the upper hand over Uther and Merlin, but he was defeated. Uther immediately made his way to the ring where he dismounted. When he saw how enormous the stones were, he said to master Merlin: 'We have wasted all our hard work: no one is powerful enough to transport the ring to somewhere else.' 'Sire,' replied Merlin, 'great is the might of man. With God's help, the stones will some day be on display in Britain.'*

*When the men failed to demolish the ring with the equipment they used, master Merlin was highly amused. He strode up to the stones and demolished the ring more quickly than any magician would have done. The following morning the stones were loaded onto Uther's boats, and he set sail for Britain. There he would pay his respects to his ancestors whom that perfidious Saxon Hengist had betrayed.*

*The king sent word to his earls and barons, the country's nobility and all its clergy. In front of everyone Merlin assumed direction of the stones and re-assembled the ring exactly as it had been laid out originally by the giants in Ireland all that time ago.*

*The king turned to his people and did them the honour of inviting them to celebrate Pentecost in his company. They all assembled at Salisbury, and the king with great rejoicing held a festival that lasted fifteen days – so my written source informs me.*

The *Prose Brut* was one of the most widely read and copied Anglo-Norman texts from the 1270s onwards and throughout the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and there are over fifty manuscripts of its French texts still in existence today. It was also frequently translated into both Latin and English, with the result that over one hundred copies of it in all its various forms attest to its wide popularity and influence. I reproduce the text as edited from MS BL Harley 200 by Heather Pagan for ANTS in 2011. Dean 1999: # 45.

### **Prose Brut**

(XX) Le roy luy moustra sa volunté del monument q'il voudra aver feat. Donqe dist Merlyn a roy: 'Sire,' feat il, 'il i ount en Irland grossez peeres et hautes qe estoient sur le Mount de Kilian, qe homme appelle la Carole dez Geauntz, et si eles sont mises la, eaux duroient a toutz jours en remembrance dez chivalers qe cy gisent enterrez.'

'Par foy,' fet le roy, 'auxi dure peerez sont en ma terre come en Irlaund.' 'Veir,' fet Merlyn, 'meas en tut votre terre ne ount tiels, qar geauntz lez assistrent pur graunt bien de eux mesmes, car a chescun foith q'ils fusrent naufrez ou blessez en ascune manere, ils laverent celes peerez de chaud eawe et le beurent et tauntost fusrent garriz.'

Quaunt lez Brutouns avoient ceste chose oye, ils jurerent entre eux q'ils lez irroient aquere a force, et pristrent Uter frere a roy lour chiventein et .xv. mil hommez bien combatauntz, et Merlin lour conseiller, et se mistrent en chemin et vindrent en Irland.

Le roy de la terre, Guillomar out a noun, avoit bien oy qe multz estraungez gentz fusrent arivetz en sa terre saunz soun congé, et assembla graunt poar et combatist od eux. Meas il et sez gentz fusrent desconfitz.

Lez Brutouns alerent avaunt tank'ils viendrent a Mount Kylian et mouterent la mountaigne. Meas qaunt ils virent lez peeres et la manere coment eles esturent, ils avoient tres graunt merveille et disoient entre eux qe nul homme ne lez remuerait par force ne par engin, taunt fusrent hugez et grauntz.

Mes Merlyn par soun sen et par sa cointise lez remua et lez fist venir en lour niefs, et revindrent en ceste terre. Et Merlyn fist venir lez peerez en le lieu mesmes ou le roi lez voleit aver, et lez assist en mesme la manere come eles fusrent assis en Irlaund.

Et quant le roy vist ceo feat, il mercia mult Merlin et lui guerdona richement a sa volonté; et fist appeller le lieu Stonhenge, et unqore est issint appellé et tutz jours serra.  
(Pagan 2011: 1826-61).

*King Aurelius told Merlin about the sort of monument he wished to see erected. Merlin replied: 'Sire,' he said, 'in Ireland on Mount Killaraus there are some huge, tall standing stones called the Giants' Ring. If these were to be set up over here, they would be an everlasting commemoration of the knights who lie buried here.'*

*'Upon my word,' said the king, 'here in my own country there are stones every bit as hard-wearing as those in Ireland.' 'That is true,' said Merlin, 'but in the whole of your country there is nothing remotely like these particular ones. They were placed where they are by giants for the great benefit they brought them: whenever they were wounded or in whatever way injured, they would pour warm water over these stones, and as soon as they drank it, they were cured.'*

*When the Britons heard this, they swore to one another that they would go and take these stones by force of arms. They designated the king's brother Uther Pendragon as their leader, and set out with an army of fifteen thousand heavily armed men. Merlin joined them as their counsellor, and they crossed over to Ireland.*

*Word reached the king of that country, one Guillomar, that a large army of foreigners had landed on his territory without his permission, so he raised a powerful body of troops and engaged them in combat. But he and his men were defeated.*

*The Britons advanced as far as Mount Killaraus and marched up to the summit. But when they caught sight of the standing stones and saw how they were arranged, they were absolutely amazed. They said to each other that the stones were so huge and so massive that no one could possibly move them either by brute force or by the use of equipment.*

*But Merlin, by using his intelligence and his ingenuity, did succeed in moving them and in transporting them to their boats. They returned to Britain, and Merlin had the stones taken*

*to the place where the king wished them to be brought. Merlin had them erected in exactly the same pattern as they had been arranged in Ireland.*

*When the king saw that the work had been completed, he thanked Merlin profusely and rewarded him with great generosity, granting him whatever he asked for. He had the burial place named Stonehenge, and this is the name it still has today, and will have for evermore.*

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