

6. 'DID MOULTON HAVE ITS OWN KING ARTHUR?'

by Mr C. A. Ward for Moulton Civic Trust

No other legend stirs the imagination more deeply than that of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. With a little imagination and ingenuity and some historical facts, it is possible to substantiate a claim that 'even' South Lincolnshire was Arthur's ancient Kingdom.

In Anglo Saxon days, regional meetings were held all over Britain to carry out local business. These were the real 'courts' of the day. If Arthur existed, then he

simply met with his Court at the local meeting place of the time. In search of Arthur, one must first look for factual evidence of Anglo-Saxon Courts and evidence of actual Court names of that period.

One must also remember that it was, in fact, the Normans who introduced the impressive stone castles to Britain. If Arthur did exist before the Norman Conquest, he certainly did not have a glamorous stone castle, or an immense Round Table.

Archaeologists have sought long and yet fruitlessly in Britain to prove that Arthur and his Court really did exist. In Lincolnshire, it is possible to trace some historical facts. But, added with a little imagination, can easily make one think that garbages (Arthur's last meeting place) was in this region; and that follows the Normans and changed the face of Britain over the centuries.

For a whole century, South Lincolnshire was subjected to repeated invasions by the Danes, which added to the population. This is probably the time that King Arthur and his Court existed.

The area was part of the 'Danelaw' where Danish settlements grew side by side with the native English (more than 200 place names in Lincolnshire can be traced to Danish intervention, and names with Danish origin are still common today).

'Wapentakes' were the effective units of local government in this period, and the Danish and English courts which governed them would probably meet every four or five weeks. Few meeting places are known, but in the small village of Moulton, near Spalding, some archaeological evidence has been found.

The evidence, in the form of the 'Elbow Stone' is probably Lincolnshire's last native 'judicial site'. The Elbow Stone was found by Mr. F. Drey and presented to Moulton Parish Council in 1871. Undamaged, the Elbow Stone is



The Elbow Stone

perhaps the only true historical monument that exists from the Wapentake Danish and Anglo Saxon ancestry. The Elloe Stone now stands alongside the field in which it was found and marked the exact area where the Hundred Courts of Elloe would meet. Visitors can find the Elloe Stone situated just off the A151 in 'Spalding Gate' lane, less than half a mile from the village.

Streathfield, in his book "Lincolnshire and the Danes", writes, "It is remarkable that the Wapentake of 'Elloe' takes its name from a large stone where former generations met in Council. The word 'Elloe' preserves to us the old Norse word of 'Hella', meaning, 'a rock'".

He continues to say, "The tradition that has come down to us in respect of 'Elloe' is also associated with the Wapentake of 'Aveland'. This name was likewise attached; it would appear to be a place of meeting and to quote the words of Sir Charles Anderson - the spot is surrounded by what was a moat, where the sessions were probably held under an oak tree, possibly the remnant of Danish or Saxon times."

On ancient maps the Wapentake Courts of 'Elloe' and 'Aveland' lay side by side in South Lincolnshire. These were the two main meeting places for the Courts of that period. Avalon is supposed to come from the Celtic word 'Aval', meaning 'apples', but the old Norse name of Aveland is much closer. In the legend, Arthur is mortally wounded and born away to the Isle of Avalon. Remember, the whole of South Lincolnshire was full of islands in that period.

Evidence proves that the Courts definitely existed with these Danish and Norse names. Was the adjoining Court of Aveland Arthur's Avalon? The words look and sound remarkably similar! Try visiting the Elloe Stone on a balmy Lincolnshire sunny evening, stand where those Courts stood, look at the deep red sunset and make your own decision