For more than a thousand years, the adventures of King Arthur and his knights of the Round Table have been retold across Europe. They have inspired some of the most important works of European literature, particularly in the medieval period: the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and Malory’s Morte Darthur. In the nineteenth century, interest in the Arthurian legend revived with Tennyson, Wagner and Twain. The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend outlines the evolution of the legend from the earliest documentary sources to the musical Spamalot, and analyses how some of the major motifs of the legend have been passed down in both medieval and modern texts. With a map of Arthur’s Britain, a chronology of key texts and a guide to further reading, this volume will contribute to the continuing fascination with King Arthur and his many legends.
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vii
Notes on Contributors ix
Frequently Cited Sources and Abbreviations xii
A Selective Chronology xv
Map of Arthurian Britain xix

Introduction 1
AD PUTTER AND ELIZABETH ARCHIBALD

PART I Evolution 19

1 The early Arthur: history and myth 21
RONALD HUTTON

2 The twelfth-century Arthur 36
AD PUTTER

3 The thirteenth-century Arthur 53
JANE H. M. TAYLOR

4 The fourteenth-century Arthur 69
J. A. BURROW

5 The fifteenth-century Arthur 84
BARRY WINDEATT

6 The Arthur of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries 103
ROB GOSSEDGE AND STEPHEN KNIGHT
CONTENTS

7 The Arthur of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries 120
NORRIS J. LACY

PART II Themes 137

8 Questioning Arthurian ideals 139
ELIZABETH ARCHIBALD

9 Arthurian ethics 154
JANE GILBERT

10 Imperial Arthur: home and away 171
ANDREW LYNCH

11 Love and adultery: Arthur’s affairs 188
PEGGY MCCRACKEN

12 Religion and magic 201
CORINNE SAUNDERS

13 Arthurian geography 218
ROBERT ALLEN ROUSE AND CORY JAMES RUSHTON

Further Reading 235
Index 253
Our greatest debt is to our contributors, who responded admirably to our request to describe such rich material so succinctly. Norris Lacy also gave us useful editorial advice. We are grateful to Amanda Hopkins for copy-editing an advanced draft of this book, to Cory Rushton for help in compiling the further reading section, to Gareth Griffith for producing the index, and to the University of Bristol for supporting their work through awards from the Arts Faculty Research Fund and the Tucker-Cruse Fund.

We thank Linda Bree for commissioning this volume; she and Maartje Scheltens supplied much valuable advice and support, and Tom O’Reilly oversaw the production most efficiently. We are grateful to David Cox for producing the map of Arthurian Britain. Geraldine Stoneham was the ideal copy-editor, and saved us from many infelicities and inconsistencies.

We dedicate this volume to the memory of Derek and Elisabeth Brewer, both distinguished Arthurians.

ELIZABETH ARCHIBALD
AD PUTTER
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth Archibald is Professor of Medieval Literature in the English Department at the University of Bristol. Her publications include *Apollonius of Tyre* (1991), *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (2001), and *A Companion to Malory*, co-edited with A. S. G. Edwards (1996). She is currently working on macaronic literature and on bathing in the Middle Ages.

John Burrow is Fellow of the British Academy and Emeritus Professor at the University of Bristol. He is the author of many studies of medieval English literature, including *A Reading of ‘Sir Gawain and the Green Knight’* (1965), *Medieval Writers and Their Work* (1982) and most recently *The Poetry of Praise* (2008).

Jane Gilbert is Senior Lecturer in French at University College London, and a comparatist working in English, French, and modern theory. She is currently completing a monograph on the interface between life and death in medieval French and English literature.

Rob Gossedge is a Lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff University. He has recently published articles on Welsh modernism and the reception of Arthurian literature in the post-medieval period. He is currently finishing a book on British rewritings of the Matter of Britain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Ronald Hutton is Professor of History at the University of Bristol, and author of twelve books, including *Witches, Druids and King Arthur: Studies in Paganism, Myth and Magic* (2003).

Stephen Knight is Distinguished Research Professor in English Literature at Cardiff University. He has written widely on medieval and
modern themes, including King Arthur and Robin Hood; his latest book, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power*, will be published in 2009.


**Andrew Lynch** is Professor of English and Cultural Studies, and Director of the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, at the University of Western Australia. His publications include *Malory’s Book of Arms* (1997) and numerous articles and book chapters on medieval Arthurian literature and its modern afterlives.

**Peggy McCracken** is Professor of French and Women’s Studies at the University of Michigan. She is the author of *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (1998) and *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (2003).

**Ad Putter** is Professor of Medieval English Literature at the University of Bristol. He is the General Editor of the series *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, and has published widely in the area of medieval literature. His books include *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance* (1995), *An Introduction to the Gawain Poet* (1996), and (with Judith Jefferson and Myra Stokes) *Studies in the Metre of Alliterative Verse* (2007).

**Robert Allen Rouse** teaches medieval literature and culture at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (2005), and co-author with Cory Rushton of *The Medieval Quest for Arthur* (2005). He is currently working on a study of the role of geography in the romance narratives of medieval England.

**Cory James Rushton** is Assistant Professor of English at St Francis Xavier University, Canada. He co-authored *The Medieval Quest for Arthur* with Robert Rouse (2005), and has published numerous articles on the Arthurian
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Legend and romance. He co-edited (with Amanda Hopkins) *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain* (2007). Forthcoming publications include *A Companion to Middle English Romance* (co-edited with Raluca Radulescu), and *Disability and Medieval Law: History, Literature, Society*.


**Jane Taylor** is Emeritus Professor of French at Durham University. An Honorary President of the International Arthurian Society, she has worked extensively on medieval French literature, especially on Arthurian romance and lyric poetry, as well as on translation. Her latest book, *The Making of Poetry: Late Medieval Poetic Anthologies*, was published in 2007.

**Barry Windatt** is Professor of English in the University of Cambridge, and Fellow and Keeper of Rare Books at Emmanuel College. His research focuses on the imaginative literature, visual culture and contemplative traditions of medieval England in a European context. As Director of the Cambridge ‘Medieval Imaginations’ Project he has created a website for research and teaching on text and image in later medieval England (www.english.cam.ac.uk/medieval/).
FREQUENTLY CITED SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Frequently Cited Sources

The primary texts and critical studies listed below are mentioned so frequently by our contributors that they are cited in both text and footnotes only by author and/or short title, and by page/chapter/line number, as appropriate. When a contributor refers to a different edition of one of these primary texts, full details are given in a footnote. In the case of Malory, where numerous different editions are widely used by scholars and students, Caxton’s book and chapter divisions are included after the page numbers in square brackets.

Primary Texts and Translations


FREQUENTLY CITED SOURCES AND ABBREVIATIONS


Secondary Sources

The ongoing series *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages*, series editors †W. R. J. Barron and Ad Putter, is indispensable for the study of the Arthurian legend; it updates and expands Loomis’s 1957 volume of the same title (*ALMA* — see below). Some if not all of the volumes listed below are relevant to every chapter in this book, and should be consulted for information about editions of primary sources and critical studies of specific texts and topics.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Source/Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBIAS</td>
<td><em>Bibliographical Bulletin of the International Arthurian Society</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFMA</td>
<td><em>Classiques français du moyen âge</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| EETS         | *Early English Text Society*  
|              | o.s. Original Series  
|              | e.s. Extra Series |
| PMLA         | *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* |
| SATF         | *Société des anciens textes français* |
| STS          | *Scottish Text Society* |
| TLF          | *Textes littéraires français* |
This chronology of the most important landmarks in the history of Arthurian legend and literature is very selective, especially in relation to post-medieval material (art, music and drama as well as literature), where we have focused on the English tradition. Many dates, particularly in earlier periods, are approximate, and there is great uncertainty about the dating of Welsh Arthurian texts, some of which are believed to have had a long oral tradition before being committed to writing. Fuller overviews and further details about individual entries can be found in the chronological survey chapters of this Companion. Readers may also wish to consult reference works such as The New Arthurian Encyclopaedia, ed. Lacy, and The Arthurian Annals, ed. Nastali and Boardman (see Further Reading).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>455–75</td>
<td>Arthur’s reign, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>516(?518)</td>
<td>Date of battle of Mount Badon in Annales Cambriae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>537(?539)</td>
<td>Date of Arthur’s last battle in Annales Cambriae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 548</td>
<td>Gildas, De Excidio Britanniae: mentions battle of Mount Badon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th century?</td>
<td>Gododdin: mentions Arthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>830</td>
<td>Nennius, Historia Brittonum: records battles of Arthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 950</td>
<td>Annales Cambriae: mentions battle of Camlann where Arthur and Mordred fell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th century</td>
<td>Probable time of composition of the earliest Arthurian tales from The Mabinogion (Peredur, Culhwch and Olwen) and Latin saints’ lives from Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1105</td>
<td>Modena Cathedral archivolt depicting Arthurian scenes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 1135</td>
<td>Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regnum Britanniae (History of the Kings of Britain): includes account of Arthur’s life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A SELECTIVE CHRONOLOGY

C. 1150
Geoffrey of Monmouth, Vita Merlini (Life of Merlin)

1155
Wace, Roman de Brut: translates Geoffrey’s Historia; first mention of Round Table

C. 1169–81
Chrétien de Troyes, Arthurian romances: first mention of Camelot, Grail, and Lancelot’s love for Guinevere

C. 1180–1205
Hartmann von Aue translates Chrétien’s romances into German

C. 1185
Andreas Capellanus, De Amore: treatise on courtly love with Arthurian episode

C. 1190
Renaut de Beaujeu, Le Bel Inconnu: Fair Unknown romance about Gawain’s son

1191
Exhumation of Arthur and Guinevere’s tomb at Glastonbury Abbey

?later 12th century
De Ortu Waluuanii: Latin Gawain romance

Later 12th century
Béroul, Tristan: Arthur present at trial vindicating Iseut

C. 1210
Laȝamon, Brut: first English version of Arthurian history (based on Geoffrey of Monmouth and Wace)

Guillaume le Clerc, Fergus: romance parodying Chrétien, set in Scotland

Robert de Boron: first cycle of Grail romances

Wolfram von Eschenbach, Parzival: German Grail romance

C. 1215–30
Vulgate Cycle (Lancelot-Grail Cycle): vast French Arthurian prose romance-history including Lancelot, Queste del Saint Graal and Mort Artu, later supplemented by Estoire del Saint Graal and Merlin

C. 1235–40
Post-Vulgate Cycle (Roman du Graal): French prose reworking of Vulgate Cycle

C. 1250
Prose Tristan: French fusion of Tristan legend with Arthurian stories

C. 1260
Penninc and Pieter Vostaert, Roman van Walewein: Dutch Gawain romance

1290
Edward I hosts Round Table tournament at Winchester and commissions Round Table

Early 14th century
Dutch Lancelot-compilation: part of Vulgate Cycle plus interpolated Dutch romances

C. 1340
Perceforest: vast French prose romance merging legends of Alexander and Arthur

Tavola Ritonda: Italian Arthurian compilation

C. 1380
Alliterative Morte Arthure (Middle English)
A SELECTIVE CHRONOLOGY

C. 1390
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales: allusions to Arthurian characters

1430s
John Lydgate, Fall of Princes (based on Boccaccio and Laurent de Premierfait): includes rise and fall of Arthur

C. 1450
Burgundian prose adaptations of Chrétien’s Erec and Cligés

C. 1457–64
John Hardyng’s Chronicle (2 versions): includes Grail quest

1469–70
Sir Thomas Malory completes Le Morte Darthur

C. 1481–92
Ulrich Fuetrer, Buch der Abenteuer: German Arthurian compilation

1485
First printed edition of Malory by William Caxton

1486
Henry VII names eldest son Arthur

1534
First printed edition of Polydore Vergil’s Anglica Historia: questions historicity of Arthurian legend

1587
Thomas Hughes, The Misfortunes of Arthur: Senecan tragedy

1590–6
Publication of Edmund Spenser, The Faerie Queene: includes Prince Arthur

1613
Michael Drayton, Poly-Olbion: includes Arthurian ‘history’

1691
Henry Purcell and John Dryden, King Arthur: The British Worthy (opera)

1695
Richard Blackmore, Prince Arthur: verse epic

1730–1
Henry Fielding, Tom Thumb: satire set at Arthurian court

1765
Percy’s Reliques: includes Arthurian tales and ballads

1813
Sir Walter Scott, The Bridal of Triermain: Arthurian episode

1816
First reprinting of Malory since 1634

1829
Thomas Love Peacock, The Misfortunes of Elphin: satire set in sixth-century Wales

1832
Alfred Lord Tennyson, The Lady of Shalott: Tennyson’s first Arthurian poem

1836–46
Lady Charlotte Guest translates The Mabinogion

1848
Foundation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

1858
William Morris, The Defence of Guenevere

1859–85
Tennyson, Idylls of the King
### A Selective Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>Richard Wagner</td>
<td>Tristan und Isolde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881–98</td>
<td>Edward Burne-Jones</td>
<td>The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon (cover illustration and frontispiece)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Wagner</td>
<td>Parsifal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Mark Twain</td>
<td>A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of King Arthur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Edwin Porter</td>
<td>Parsifal: first Arthurian film</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Jessie Weston</td>
<td>From Ritual to Romance: anthropological study of romance motifs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>T. S. Eliot</td>
<td>The Waste Land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>Thomas Hardy</td>
<td>The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Rodgers and Hart</td>
<td>A Connecticut Yankee (musical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>T. H. White</td>
<td>The Sword in the Stone; reprinted 1958 as the first part of The Once and Future King</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>International Arthurian Society</td>
<td>founded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Lerner and Loewe</td>
<td>Camelot (musical)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Joshua Logan</td>
<td>Camelot (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970–9</td>
<td>Mary Stewart</td>
<td>The Merlin Trilogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965–77</td>
<td>Susan Cooper</td>
<td>The Dark is Rising series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>Robert Bresson</td>
<td>Lancelot du Lac (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones</td>
<td>Monty Python and the Holy Grail (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Thomas Berger</td>
<td>Arthur Rex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Eric Rohmer</td>
<td>Perceval le Gallois (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>John Boorman</td>
<td>Excalibur (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Marion Zimmer Bradley</td>
<td>The Mists of Avalon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982–5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Camelot 3000: sci-fi Arthurian comic strip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Mary Stewart</td>
<td>The Wicked Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Jerry Zucker</td>
<td>First Knight (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Antoine Fuqua</td>
<td>King Arthur (film)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Eric Idle and John Du Prez</td>
<td>Spamalot (musical)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>