



The British Landscape Zodiac

Description of the zodiacal pattern laid out across Britain by the Celts, invested with myth and used by subsequent cultures.

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Diagram 1

The British Landscape Zodiac is an archetypal energy pattern that underlies the landscape of Britain—a pattern that appears to have been originally laid out by the Celtic people (the Britons or Brythonic race) and which the Romans and subsequent rulers and wisdom-holders seem to have recognised and used, right up to the time of the Tudors and even into the 18th century.

This archetypal pattern is that of the Zodiac or Wheel of Life, divided into various geometric patterns, such as twelve equal sections or 'signs' (as shown in diag. 1). This equal sign arrangement ties in with the overall geometry of the 'Three Lands' of the British Isles (Scotland, Ireland and Britain), in which

each land has its own landscape zodiac, the centres of which form between them an equilateral triangle, thus making a British Isles 'Trinity'.



Diagram 2

The division into twelve unequal signs was also used, the width of each sign or section matching the width of its zodiacal constellation. This unequal sign division, and thus the creation of constellations of different widths when the pattern is projected onto the sky, appears to have been for the purposes of marrying twelve-fold geometry with ten-fold geometry, for a division of the Zodiac into ten sections was also used.

The ten-fold division of the British Landscape Zodiac appears to have been done in two ways, one where the ten divisions are based on an alignment with the main 'AA' axis of the Zodiac (i.e. the diameter forming the cusps of Gemini-Taurus and Sagittarius-Scorpio, where the Milky Way galactic equator crosses the ecliptic), and the other where the ten divisions are based on an alignment with the north-south line through High Cross from St Catherine's Point on the southern coast of the Isle of Wight. The former produces the dividing lines which the Fosse Way and southern part of Watling Street follow (see diag. 3). The latter produces the dividing line that the northern part of Watling Street follows, which also corresponds with the line joining High Cross with Uishneach, the centre of Ireland and the Irish Zodiac, and which extended eastwards from High Cross passes through the Gog Magog Hills near Cambridge (see diag. 4).

The resulting twelve-fold unequal sign British landscape zodiac, which ties all these together and appears to have been used by the Celts and later cultures, is as shown in diagram 5.

(N.B. The diagrams, based on maps, are approximations because of map distortion and other factors, but nevertheless give a reasonable indication of how the land lies.)



Diagram 3



Diagram 4



Diagram 5

The Zodiac, subdivided into twelve or ten divisions, was a pattern habitually used by the Celtic people and other races, by means of which they laid out and 'mapped' their local and national landscapes in a recognisable way, and at the same time 'married' the wisdom of the sky (heavens) with the land (earth). In this way both history and myth were joined together in a way that expressed the wisdom, and people could relate to each other and find each other according to where they lived within the organised and mythologised landscape.

The wisdom lying behind the use of ten-fold and twelve-fold geometry relates to the idea of the rose blooming upon the cross. The twelve-fold geometry is based upon that of the cross, a symbol of light and the immortal or divine self. The ten-fold geometry is based upon that of the pentagram and pentalfa, representative of the mortal human being and symbolised by the five-petalled rose. Marrying heaven and earth, and of immortal with mortal, in love, is the essence of all wisdom. They represent the Double Truth, expressed as immortal and mortal, spiritual and natural, heaven and earth, ideal and real, perfect and imperfect—and, in terms of the zodiacal signs, equal and unequal. The truth of being and the truth of knowing is another expression of the Double Truth.

The zodiacal patterns, large and small, exist as energy forms underlying the landscape, just as such geometric forms and mathematical laws underlie and govern all natural forms; which means that their discovery and harmonious use has the best chance of leading to a beneficial partnership between man and nature. However, such patterns can also be imposed upon the landscape by using the imagination, but when this was done by the ancient cultures they normally selected a natural and suitable geomantic

or magnetic power-point in the landscape for the centre of the pattern, with other appropriate power points coinciding with other key positions in the pattern.

In speaking of the British Landscape Zodiac, by 'Britain' is meant Roman Britain (Britannia), as distinct from the British Isles which subsequently became divided in nomenclature into Little Britain (Iouernia) and Great Britain (Albion), and then into the three lands of Britain (Britannia), Ireland (Hibernia) and Scotland (Caledonia). Nowadays Britain is separated into England and Wales, but this division in no way diminishes the integrity of Britain as a sacred landscape in its own right, just as Ireland and Scotland are integral sacred landscapes each with their own national landscape zodiac. The Brythonic-speaking Celts seem to have been the first to recognise the zodiac pattern in the landscape of Britain and to mark it with certain key places and roads. This landscape zodiac then came to be utilised and enhanced by various subsequent cultures and their leaders, and incorporated into British mythology in various ways.

The centre of the British Zodiac is located at High Cross, so named because the two principal axial Romano-Celtic roads, Watling Street and Fosse Way, cross on the summit of a broad, high hill that is not far from the present-day geographic centre of Britain. The Romans established a fort there known as Venonis. The north-south meridian of Britain, as mentioned by the Romans, passes through High Cross, stretching from St Catharine's Point on the Isle of Wight in the south to the mouth of the River Tyne in the north, from where the Romans set out the northern border of Roman Britain with the construction of Hadrian's Wall. The overall layout and orientation of these roads and north-south meridian follows the underlying geometry that divides the Zodiac into ten-fold and twelve-fold sectors. This essay will deal primarily with the twelve-fold pattern and its equal and unequal signs.

Watling Street and Fosse Way were paved by the Romans but were not initially created by them. The roads already existed when the Romans came into Britain. They were Celtic roads which, according to British tradition, were laid out in the 5th century BC by the famous high kings, Molmutius and Belinus. Molmutius was the great lawgiver who was referred to in later centuries as the British Solomon because of his wisdom. His laws gave the British people such basic freedoms as the right to free speech and to be deemed innocent unless proven guilty, which are still largely enjoyed today. Belinus was the son of Molmutius and renowned as the second founder of Caer Troia (Celtic London). They are recorded as building the original national road system. These were causeways or raised roads, not just trackways, and included Sarn Wydellin ('Irish Way'), later transformed into Watling Street, and Sarn Fosse (Fosse Way). Watling Street was later turned into the A5 trunk road.

Sarn Wydellin, the ancient sacred way through Britain that links London with Ireland via Snowdonia and ferry from Holyhead in Anglesey, is associated with the Celtic myth of Brân, the demigod and Grail King. Although winding like a serpent through the British landscape, this Grail route nevertheless follows two radii of the British Zodiac that are important axes in the twelve-fold pattern of the Zodiac, used in both the equal and unequal sign versions. The south-easterly axis of this Grail route, from High Cross to London, forms the cusp of Sagittarius-Scorpio. The north-westerly axis of the Grail route, from High Cross to Snowdonia, forms the cusp of Taurus-Aries.

This latter axis then continues across the Irish Sea to Dublin, and from thence across Ireland to Uishnagh, the centre of the Irish Zodiac, and on to Croagh Patrick, Ireland's most sacred mountain in the west, thereby forming a primary east-west axis of the landscape zodiac of Ireland. In the other direction this particular axis tracks east of High Cross to form the cusp of Scorpio-Libra in the British Zodiac, passing through the Gog Magog hills near Cambridge. These hills, dotted with hill forts, are named after the giant, Gog, of the race, Magog, who according to legend ruled Britain (then known as Albion) before Brutus and the British race took over. (See diagram 2.)

This great axis, which links the centre of the British Zodiac with the centre of the Irish Zodiac, passes through the hillfort of Dinas Dinlle ('the city of the fort of Lleu')¹ on the coast of Carmarthen Bay, a few miles south of Caernarfon in North Wales. Then, crossing the bay on the way to Ireland, the axis passes over a particular rock formation (part of which is visible from the coast at low tide) that is linked in Celtic

myth with the Palace of Caer Arianrhod. It is here that the outer circle of the British Zodiac touches the similar-sized outer circle of the Irish Zodiac. Arianrhod is the name of a high-ranking Celtic goddess. Her name means 'Silver Wheel' and is a perfect reference to the outer circle of the Zodiac and all that that means.

The extension of the London to High Cross axis, carried on north-westerly beyond High Cross, forms the cusp of Gemini-Taurus. This cusp and its opposite ecliptic cusp of Sagittarius-Scorpio form the two Alpha-Omega points (referenced symbolically as the sigil 'AA') on the ecliptic circle. These two places are where, in the sky, the Galactic Equator crosses the ecliptic of the Celestial Zodiac and provide the only two fixed points on the ecliptic circle by means of which time can be calculated reasonably accurately from the movement of the Sun around the ecliptic as seen from the Earth. The diameter between these two fixed points provides the principal axis of the Zodiac, from which the twelve signs are set out. In the sky the Gemini-Taurus ecliptic cusp is pointed at by Orion's Finger, whilst the Sagittarius-Scorpio ecliptic cusp approximately marks the location of the centre of the Milky Way Galaxy. (This Galactic Centre is pointed at by the imaginary tail of Scorpio and arrow of Sagittarius.)

When the Sun is on the cusp of Gemini-Taurus at midsummer (i.e. aligned with Orion's Finger), and correspondingly on the cusp of Sagittarius-Scorpio at midwinter (i.e. aligned closely to the Galactic Centre), it is said that a Great Age of approximately 26,000 years ends and a new Great Age begins—hence the 'AA' (Alpha-Omega) sigil. It is equivalent to the birth of a new year at Christmas in terms of the original pre-Christian meaning of the Christ Mass—the new birth (or rebirth) of light and life out of the primal darkness and the dissolution of the old year. Such a birth is associated with the beginning of a Golden Age—the period of childhood or paradise—the condition of innocence we were in before the "fall", or into which we can enter for all eternity when we become "like little children" (Matthew 18:3) in an initiatic way.

Seeing as this positioning of the Sun at midsummer and midwinter on the AA points is occurring right now (c.1980-2016), the remarkable thing is that a modern sculpture called 'The Dream', designed by the Spanish artist Jaume Plensa, was erected in 2009 in the locality of the Gemini-Taurus 'AA' point of the British Zodiac. Standing 20 metres high on top of a hill in the now defunct Sutton Manor Colliery, near the M62 and adjacent to St Helens, Merseyside, 'The Dream' soars high into the sky like a gigantic white pillar.² The sculpture is coated in sparkling white Spanish dolomite as a deliberate contrast to the coal which used to be mined there, and has the face of a nine-year-old girl whose eyes are closed in meditation, dreaming the future. The sculpture is intended to be surrounded by a landscaped park, converting the old colliery hill and waste tip into something beautiful and open to all to enjoy. The whole concept represents a new era being born—of light (the white sculpture) emerging from the dark (the coal mine), and of darkness transmuting into light, ugliness into beauty, conflict into peace, and polluted land into a garden of Eden.



In the Hindu tradition, a Kali Yuga or Dark Age is symbolised by a black lingam, whilst a Satya Yuga or Golden Age is signified by a white lingam. A lingam is a stone that represents the Central Pillar or Axis Mundi that equates symbolically with Shiva. In the Western or Classical tradition Atlas is the equivalent of Shiva. Both Atlas and Shiva mean 'Pillar'.

Although a little premature in colour symbolism and slightly displaced in terms of the ecliptic cusp, it is possible that the Norman 'White Tower' (the original Tower of London) built by William the Conqueror on the Celtic Gwynfryn ('White Mount') in London, and even the White Mount itself, was intended to mark the Sagittarius-Scorpio cusp of the British Zodiac and its associated 'Galactic Centre'. The White

Mount and Tower are traditionally connected with the sovereignty of the land; as also is Westminster, the place of coronation, which is a better contender for the actual Sagittarius-Scorpio cusp.

The White Mount, which is now totally obscured by the infilling, terracing and laying out of lawns that have taken place in succeeding centuries, was once a burial mound of great importance, and in it the head of the British god Brân is reputed to be interred, along with that of Brit or Brutus, the legendary founder of Caer Troia (London) from whom Britain derives its name. Ravens, the symbol of Brân (whose name means 'Raven') are kept in the Tower of London for this reason, signifying the continued presence of the god (or of his mystique). According to legend, if the ravens ever leave, not only will the White Tower fall but also the monarchy and the entire kingdom. Originally the story referred to the head of Brân rather than its raven synonym. The ravens are traditionally born and bred in Anglesey, which lies at the other end of the Celtic Sarn Wydellin (Watling Street), down which the oracular head of Brân was brought—a story that lies at the root of the Grail legends and has profound meaning.

The most direct route of the Sarn Wydellin or Irish Way to reach Anglesey from High Cross, through what is now Wales, is via the valley of the River Dee and thence to Snowdonia, wherein lies the grail-shaped mountain, Snowdon. The entrance to the Dee valley from the English lowlands is guarded by the castle of Dinas Brân that towers on its lofty hill above the town of Llangollen. Originally a Celtic hillfort and a stronghold of the Princes of Powys, it was once the home of Bron (Brân), the second Keeper of the Grail, and his wife Enygeus, the sister of Joseph of Arimathea, the first Keeper of the Grail—the ancestors of the historical King Arthur. As a king, Bron was the first human Grail King, in terms of the Grail legend associated with the cup used at the Last Supper by Jesus and his apostles. The ecliptic of the British Zodiac passes across this great gateway, with the locality corresponding approximately to the position of the Pleiades in the Zodiac.

One of the fascinating features of this British Zodiac is that the focus of Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon is in the Cygnus or Swan area of the British Zodiac. It would seem that Ben Jonson's reference to Shakespeare as "the Sweet Swan of Avon" has more meaning than one might at first suppose! Moreover, Stratford-upon-Avon corresponds fairly closely to the position of the bright star Deneb in Cygnus, which star marks the apex of what is known as the Celestial Compass or Masonic Compass, the other two points of which are marked by the star Regulus (the heart of Leo) and the star Spica (Virgo's ear of corn). (See diagram 6.) It is said that from here the Creator, as Great Architect of the Universe, with the compass lays out the cosmos in order, harmony and proportion. It parallels the other teaching that Cygnus, the Swan, is the vehicle of the Creator, who creates by means of the Word. This is matched in Hindu tradition wherein the Hamsa Swan is the vehicle of Brahma and Saraswati, by means of which Brahma creates the universe through sound and Saraswati gives it form by means of language and the arts.

The axis of the Compass follows the division (cusp) between the signs Leo and Virgo in the unequal-sign zodiac. In the British Zodiac the Fosse Way is laid along this axis. This axis or division is known as the Sphinx Line, the sphinx having the body of a lion (Leo) and the head of a woman (Virgo), thus marrying the two. The line passes through Lincoln, Leicester, High Cross, Stratford-upon-Avon (approximately) and continues south-westwards to Bath on the ecliptic. The fascinating thing is that, whilst the Watling Street (A5) route is allied with the myths of Bran, the Holy Grail and the sovereignty of the land, the Fosse Way is directly associated with the other great myths of Britain: Robin Hood and Maid Marion, whose men were dressed in Lincoln green; King Lear, associated with Leicester; Guy of Warwick; Shakespeare, associated with Stratford-upon-Avon; and King Bladdud, son of Lear, who founded the spa town of Bath.



Diagram 6

The greatest myth of all—the primary myth of Britain—is that of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, which ‘table’ is the Zodiac. Arthur (Celtic Hu, meaning ‘Light’) is the Sun-king. He travels the ecliptic in his sun-chariot but his throne is equated with the centre (the Occult Pole) of the Zodiac. He is the divine guardian of the Holy Grail, the divine Grail King.

The twelve knights and ladies of the Round Table are associated with the twelve signs, which are their ‘seats’; but there is also a thirteenth sign represented by the constellation of Ophiuchus, the ‘Serpent Master’ or ‘Serpent Bearer’. As the thirteenth sign, it signifies the thirteenth seat at the Round Table, wherein can sit only the heir to the throne. The heir is the Grail Knight, the one who has achieved the Holy Grail and thereby become a guardian of the Grail.

Another fascinating feature of the British Zodiac, therefore, is that St Albans, the home of the British martyr St Alban and of the English poet-philosopher-lawyer Francis Bacon, who was given the title Viscount St Alban—both of whom are associated with the mythic founding of Freemasonry—lies in the Ophiuchus area of the British Zodiac. To be precise, St Albans relates to the right hand of Ophiuchus, which grasps the serpent of which Ophiuchus is the master.

Ophiuchus is equivalent to St George, the Red (or Rose) Cross Knight. He is the Spearshaker, who metaphorically “shakes his lance” of light at the dragon of ignorance, thereby lifting or transmuting the dragon into a state of enlightened knowledge and virtue. It was the appearance of two new bright stars in the sky—a nova in Cygnus (first seen in 1600) and a supernova in Ophiuchus in 1604—that the

Rosicrucians took as the sign of a new era beginning, in which the whole world would be gradually reformed via the arts and sciences, and a paradisiacal Golden Age established on Earth, as heralded, begun and guided by the light of Elias the Artist,³ the Rosicrucian's Fra. C.R.C.

The heart of Ophiuchus in the British Zodiac would appear to be marked by Royston, where the famous bottle-shaped Royston Cave, with its Knights Templar cave paintings, lies beneath the intersection of Icknield Way and Ermine Street. After the Templar Order was suppressed and its Grand Master burned in Paris in 1314, some Knights Templar carried on a secret 33-year ritual or series of rituals in this cave and then sealed its entrance with a millstone in 1347. All evidence points to this cave as having been a grain store, similar to the one reputed to have existed beneath the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite upon which the Temple of Solomon was built—a temple that stood for 33 years. The Jebusite cave was made into the subterranean vault used by King David, King Solomon and Grand Master Hiram Abif, and later other eminent Jews, as a secret meeting room and treasure-house, wherein the Ark of the Covenant containing the sacred scroll of the Torah was eventually hidden. It is the story of this vault and its rediscovery that forms the background to the resurrection ceremony of the Holy Royal Arch Degree in Freemasonry (2 Chronicles 3:1).

In tune with the esoteric significance of Ophiuchus as 'the Resurrected One', Royston is the original home in England of the Hot Cross Buns custom, which were made by the Saxons in honour of the goddess Eostre, whose festival was celebrated at the Spring Equinox. Eostre is the dawn goddess, the light-bringer, the goddess of spring. At the natural level she symbolizes springtime, new growth and the re-birth of life and nature after the harsh weather of the winter months. At the soul level she signifies initiatic rebirth or resurrection. Her name, Eostre, is the origin of the name 'Easter', and the Easter egg signifies her egg from which new life is born—a symbolism paralleling that of Eros (Divine Love) who is born from an egg laid by Nox (Night). Christianity adopted this festival and name in order to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, who acted out in reality the allegorical meaning of Ophiuchus.

Another very important point in the Celestial Zodiac which has its counterpart on earth in the British Zodiac is the present North Pole Star (Polaris), the brightest of the seven bright stars of Ursa Minor (the Little Bear) which marks the end of the Bear's tail. Its modern astronomical name is Alpha Ursae Minoris, but an older mythological name for this star is Arcas, as it represents the shepherd-king of Arcadia, a Christ figure who stands as the divine shepherd at the gate of the sheepfold, ready to open it for his sheep at the end of time (i.e. the end of a Great Age). The sheepfold refers to the seven bright stars of Ursa Minor, which were once known as the Sheepfold, a synonym for Arcadia, the land of the Rosicrucians.

The primary axis of the Zodiac, stretching between the two AA points on the ecliptic, passes not only through the Occult Pole (the centre of the Zodiac) but also through Arcas. When Arcas is our North Pole Star (which happens once every 26,000 years approximately), then the Sun is passing over the Gemini-Taurus AA cusp at midsummer and the Sagittarius-Scorpio AA cusp at midwinter. This alignment is the celestial marker for the end of one Great Age of 26,000 years and the beginning of a new Great Age.

In the British Zodiac, Lichfield seems to be the closest marker of the star Arcas. Lichfield has an important 'head' story connected with its saint and founder, St Chad—the head being associated with Brân in British tradition and the Holy Grail in the Grail tradition. Lichfield replaced the Celtic and Roman centre of Wall on Watling Street (Brân's Way), being built c. 700 AD one mile due north of Wall. Lichfield quickly became a prime religious centre and contains one of the most beautiful cathedrals in England.

A few miles west of Lichfield is Shugborough Hall. There, in the gardens of Shugborough, is an 18th century wall sculpture or relief of the 'Shepherds in Arcadia', echoing a 'Shepherds in Arcadia' picture painted by Poussin in the 17th century. Both painting and sculpture bear the enigmatic "Et in Arcadia ego" inscription. At first glance the relief looks as if it is a mirror image of Poussin's painting; but, when looked at more closely, a large number of differences between it and the painting can be seen. Besides all the underlying sacred geometry and symbolic meanings, the relief appears to cryptically identify the

cusps of Gemini-Taurus and the start of the new Great Age. Being so near Lichfield, the subject of the relief is highly appropriate.



'Shepherds in Arcadia' – Relief: Shugborough Hall

Far more could be said about the British Zodiac, but this is sufficient for the purpose of this essay. A further description of the British Zodiac that includes how it was discovered as well as notes about the Masonic Compass, the Gypsy Switches, the AA Points, the Boar of Britain and The Most Holy Way of Brân, can be found in "The British Zodiac" study paper.

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Endnotes

¹ According to the medieval Mabinogi tale of 'Math fab Mathonwy', Dinas Dinlle is the childhood home of Lleu Llaw Gyffes ('Lleu of the skilful hand'). Lleu is another name for, or an incarnation of, the Celtic deity Lugus, whom the Romans associated with Mercury.

² Photograph taken by Christian Keenan.

³ The appearance of Elias the Artist was foretold by Paracelsus.