



LOST KINGDOMS

By Emily Hawkins



Camelot
Many-Towered
Castle of King Arthur



Camelot:

Many-Towered Castle of King Arthur

If you have ever heard tales of the legendary British hero, King Arthur, his glittering sword, Excalibur and his Knights of the Round Table, his queen, Guinevere and his magical friend Merlin, then you will also have heard tales of Camelot.



This mythical fortress, with its gleaming towers and fluttering pennants, was King Arthur's palace. But, did king Arthur really exist? And where – if anywhere – was Camelot?



Was King Arthur real?

An early mention of Arthur has been found in a ninth-century Welsh manuscript that described a fifth-century leader. But no one is sure whether he actually existed, and it wasn't until several hundred years later, in medieval times, that other writers embellished the stories.



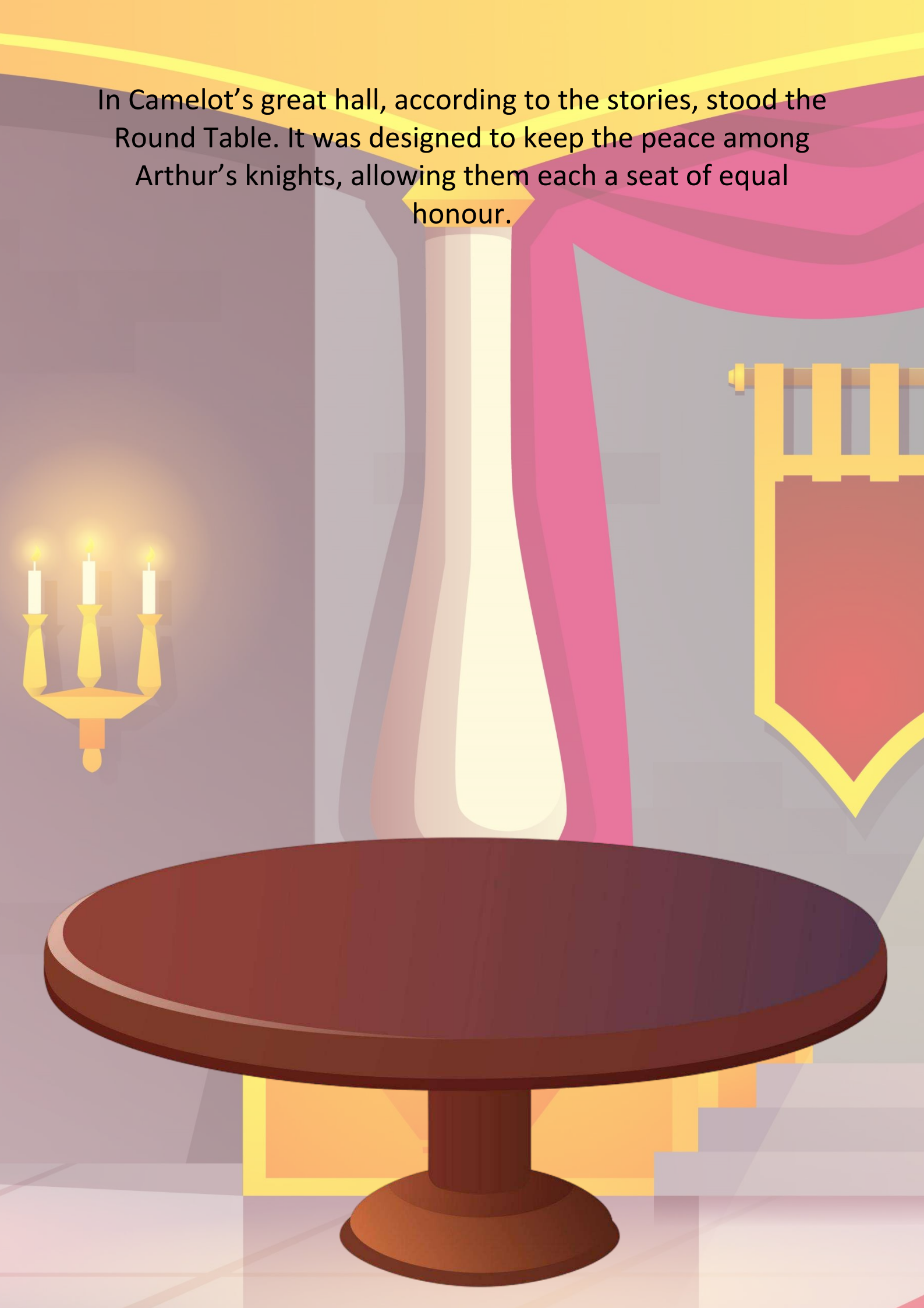
This is when we meet Arthur's knights, Lancelot and Galahad, and his father, Uther Pendragon. So, although the character of Arthur might possibly have been based on a real person, the legends surrounding him are just stories.



Cornwall's Tintagel castle has inspired many tales of King Arthur. Its spectacular clifftop fortress has built in the twelfth century, but it may have been an important stronghold many centuries before.



In Camelot's great hall, according to the stories, stood the Round Table. It was designed to keep the peace among Arthur's knights, allowing them each a seat of equal honour.



The Sword in the Stone

Long ago, so the story goes, Britain was ruled by Uther Pendragon. His queen had a baby boy, Prince Arthur.



But these were dangerous times, and Uther's adviser, the wizard, Merlin, warned the king that the baby was not safe in the castle. Arthur was sent away to be brought up in the countryside. No one, not even Arthur himself, knew his true identity.



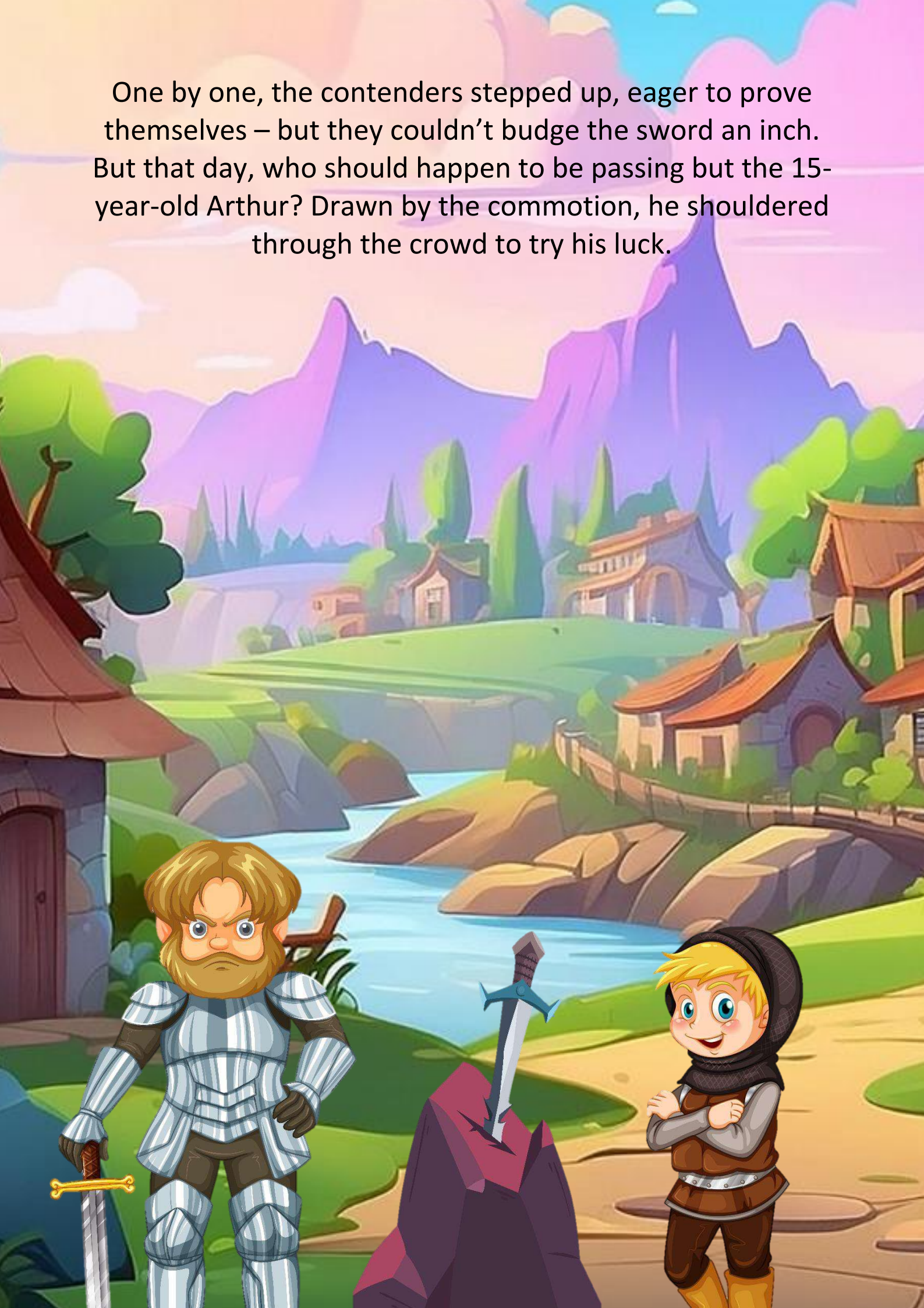
Years later, the king and queen died and the land was plunged into chaos. The nobles argued about who should rule, trouble-makers went unpunished and people lived in fear. Nobody remembered the king's son ... except Merlin



Merlin used his magic to embed a beautiful sword in a stone outside the palace. The weapon was engraved with these words: “Whosoever shall pull this sword from the stone is the one true king.”



One by one, the contenders stepped up, eager to prove themselves – but they couldn't budge the sword an inch. But that day, who should happen to be passing but the 15-year-old Arthur? Drawn by the commotion, he shouldered through the crowd to try his luck.



On his first attempt, to the amazement of all watching, he
slid out the sword as if it were easiest thing in the world.
And so, the young prince became a king, and tales of his
adventures are still told to this day.



In the English county of Somerset, local tales claim that an Iron Age Hill fort – Cadbury Hill – was once Camelot.

People talk of Arthur and his knights lying burned inside the Hill, their spirits appearing in a ghostly procession every Midsummer's eve!



Finding Camelot

Most people believe Camelot is fictional. But, if Arthur was a real historical figure, he would have had a base somewhere. This map shows sites in Wales and England that have been suggested as possible locations for Camelot.





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