

CAMELOT: A TOUR OF THE ANCIENT HILLFORT OF SOUTH CADBURY CASTLE

Official Transcript

- Eagles and Dragons Publishing presents...
- Camelot
- A tour of the ancient hillfort of South Cadbury Castle
- With author and historian, Adam Alexander Haviaras

- Hello everyone! I'm author and historian, Adam Alexander Haviaras, and today, I'd like to give you a tour of a very special archaeological site here in Somerset, England.
- Right now, I'm at the north-east entrance to the fortress of South Cadbury Castle.
- I've spent a lot of time here doing graduate research on the fort, and working as an amateur archaeologist in the fields surrounding the hill fort as part of the South Cadbury Environs Project team.
- Those of you with an interest in Celtic studies, Roman Britain, and King Arthur will, I hope, find this a fascinating tour.
- There's a lot to see, so we'd better get started...

- South Cadbury Castle is about 10 miles from Glastonbury as the raven flies
- It's best known for its strong Arthurian associations...

- This place is one of the best candidates for the power centre of the historical 'Arthur' – the place we know from legend and literature as Camelot
 - But we'll get to that shortly...
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- South Cadbury Castle is actually much older than Arthur
 - the area here has been occupied since the Neolithic age, and went through various stages of building from about the 5th century B.C. on
 - It is about 500 hundred feet high with four massive layers of ramparts, and an inner area of about 18 acres
 - This was one of the great Iron Age hill forts of the Durotriges of southern Britain
 - But it finally fell to the Romans in A.D. 43 when Vespasian stormed the southern hill forts of the island, setting the Romans firmly in what became the province of Britannia
 - it has been suggested that this hill fort was the capital, or '*oppidum*', of the local king, Arviragus, that same Celtic ruler who allowed Joseph of Arimathea and his followers to settle in Glastonbury
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- During the Roman period the site was used as a supply station
 - and in the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. there was an active Romano-Celtic temple on site (in the area just behind me!)
 - One of the finds during the major excavations led by Professor Leslie Alcock in the 1960s was a bronze letter 'A' which some say belonged to the temple, possibly a temple dedicated to the god, Mars

- My book, *Isle of the Blessed*, deals with South Cadbury during this period...
 - Now, let's move into the Arthurian period, and the reasons why this site has captured people's imaginations...
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- Was South Cadbury Castle Arthur's Camelot?
 - That's a complicated, and much debated question
 - But the archaeology of this site does provide some enticing clues...
 - During the 5th and 6th centuries, often known as the 'Arthurian Period', there was a massive refortification of this hill fort, and this was revealed by the excavations done here in the 1960s
 - This was the period after Rome pulled out of Britain for good and the Empire left the native Romano-Britons to their own defences
 - Right now, I'm standing on the roadway before the main, south-west gate of Cadbury Castle
 - now, in the 60s, archaeologists discovered evidence of a strong gatehouse that was built here – (show area) – it may have had large double gate with a walkway over it – very defensible, and big enough for cavalry to ride through
 - During this period, in addition to the gatehouse, it is believed the massive ramparts were built up again, and maybe a wooden palisade erected around the top.
 - But archaeologists discovered an even more exciting find on the plateau of the hill fort...and we're going to check that out next.

- Right now I'm standing on the high plateau of South Cadbury Castle...
 - This is the location of one of the exciting finds from the excavations in the 60s
 - among several Arthurian Period buildings that seemed to have existed on the top of the hill fort, archaeologists discovered the post holes of a much larger structure right here
 - It is believed that the structure was, in fact, a great timber hall, with a kitchen, about 63 by 34 feet
 - It might have resembled something like the Golden Hall of Meduseld, the seat of King Theoden in *The Lord of the Rings*
 - Among the finds in this area were large quantities of Mediterranean pottery dating to the Arthurian Period – and the interesting thing is that this same style of pottery was also found in large quantities at another Arthurian site – Tintagel Castle in Cornwall
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- It seems clear that South Cadbury Castle was a power base for a wealthy and powerful person who had many men at his disposal to fortify and defend this stronghold
 - After the departure of Rome, South Cadbury Castle was on the front lines of the Romano-British fight against the Saxons
 - Because of my research over the years, I've always believed in an historical Arthur – every legend has its base in fact
 - But was South Cadbury Castle Camelot? Was it the base for the army of the historical Arthur, the '*Dux Bellorum*', the Romano-British war leader who led the fight against the Saxons?
 - It's quite possible, and the archaeology seems to support this...

- This may not have been the stone, ‘many-towered Camelot’ of fairy tale and Arthurian Romance that we know and love, but it was an important place during a crucial, and magical period in British history...
- To find out more about my historical fantasy series of books, and to read about South Cadbury Castle, the Isle of Avalon and other historical sites featured in my books, visit www.eaglesanddragonspublishing.com
- While you’re there, be sure to sign-up for the Eagles and Dragons Newsletter to get a Free book and access to special offers just for subscribers
- Thanks for joining me on this tour. I hope you’ve enjoyed it...
- I’m Adam Alexander Haviaras, and I bid you farewell from the ramparts of Camelot.
- See you next time...
- Presented by Eagles and Dragons Publishing
- Visit www.eaglesanddragonspublishing.com
- To learn more, get the book: *Camelot: The Historical, Archaeological and Toponymic Considerations for South Cadbury Castle as King Arthur’s Capital*