

DAN DARE IN SOMERSET

A DISCOVERY RE ANGLO-SAXON TIMES

by A.Appleyard

Author's Note: This story is fiction set in the well-known Dan Dare fictional world which was invented originally in the 1950's, where the planet Venus under its cloud layer is described as being Earth-type and inhabited. Readers who know from space probe findings that the real Venus and some other Solar System bodies are otherwise should bear with this. The places in Somerset named here are mostly fictional. The unusual language and names are mostly Anglo-Saxon (Old English). '~' after a vowel means 'long vowel'.

After an unusually long and tiring tour of space duty I and my assistant Digby left a Spacefleet base at Formby in Lancashire for a badly-needed month's leave. Digby was born in Wigan, where his aunt Anastasia still lived; she never married, but her brother Peter moved away from the cold rocky north and raised a family in the village of Raudicket in Somerset. I and Digby had been there before, and the odd look of the name had prompted me to study the history of English placenames, and teach myself Anglo-Saxon to help understand them, as a change from space matters when bad weather or being on standby prevented outdoor activities.

I had contacted the Somerset branch of the Place Name Society; Mr.Jackson, one of its members who lived in the area, offered us a double room. We drove there along the familiar M6 and M5, turned off after Bridgwater, followed the tourist signs for Sanget Abbey ruins, and turned off to Barlompston. The comfortably English village name promised a month of rest and total relief from alien worlds, alien place and personal names, endless emptiness and remote stars, space kit, space weapons, and work in general. We arrived and found the address. Mrs.Jackson cooked dinner for us as we unpacked.

"We are honoured to have you staying here, Colonel Dare. I know it's your leave, so I won't talk space. The milk and the eggs haven't been to town bulk wholesalers and back, they're straight from Cubzet farm over the fields back of us. As I said, there are many unanswered questions and doubts about the placenames in Raudicket hundred." Mr.Jackson said. A hundred is a part of a county, originally about a hundred households, from Anglo-Saxon times. They are not used administratively now, but they are a convenient size for placename researchers. "Some of us say that patch is an old Celtic survival area: for example some say that 'Raudicket' is Celtic, like Welsh 'Rhyddcoed'; but 13th and 14th century manorial rolls spell it 'Raldekette' and the like: I suppose the 'l' could be intrusive like in 'Kirkwall' and 'Bristol' and 'Falkirk' - perhaps. The best they can manage with 'Sanget' is that it referred to the monks singing hymns: seems a bit strained."

"What do you think 'Lont' comes from?" I said. We were planning to visit Lont Hall some time that week.

"There's a 1347 form 'ad Lawmettum', Latinizing messing the ending up. If there was a good-sized natural watercourse meeting there or near, it could be from Anglo-Saxon 'lagu-geme~te', 'water-meeting', if there was one near the place; but there isn't. The village name 'Skimming' turns up in 1323 in a manorial roll as 'Skindeming', but I can't make much out of that either."

"What's the latest stage of that bad subsidence at Raudicket church?" I asked.

"Getting worse again, and it got the village busybody in a panic trying all sorts of 'vigorous means' to round up money and things to sell to try to scratch together amounts. Latest thing is that two men ram-raided the church hall to get their scuba gear back after a sale organizer got it by persuading someone. All sorts of fancy plans, that with the scuba gear turned into church repair funds that'd free for village activities all the time and money those two spend scuba diving at Trimborough and away west in Cornwall. That got other people to grab stuff back, and caused a hell of a row. On top of that time when someone listed and promised the two to take a village outing out without asking them first 'because they'd only have said 'no' and they went scuba diving anyway. No wonder the two objected: a lot of people don't like being roped into things."

"And people had to get 5 injunctions out before church event organizers there stopped raiding private gardens for altar flowers, 'the Lord hath need of it' and all that. Someone there's riding to a fall." said Mrs. Jackson, "Some people have their own lives to lead and don't want ordering to be local-minded like in those Anglo-Saxon times that my husband goes on about, when most people hardly ever went outside their parishes and couldn't lock stuff up safe. It'll end up like last time, patching up the cracks and building makeshift extra buttresses and in the end making it worse; they aren't allowed to dig down to see properly what's causing it because there's so many people buried there, or so they say."

"We'll have a look in the morning." I said. We talked about nothing much. They kept strictly and thankfully away from space. He mentioned Trimborough, a nearby small inshore fishing port with an old fort containing obvious Anglo-Saxon type stonework but astonishingly bulky and strong for an Anglo-Saxon period defensive work. Venus shone brightly in the west, following the sun down. "<Emacron>;E~ala E~arendel engla beorhtast, ofer middangeard monnum sended." I remembered, 'Hail E~arendel, brightest of angels sent over the middle enclosure (= Earth) to men'. The same name as the Old Norse frost giant Orvandill who they said is the constellation Orion. Whatever the Anglo-Saxon author of those lines may have meant, Tolkien treated E~arendel as Venus, which he thought of as a sailor sailing into the West on a mission. That, plus needing fictional speakers for his hobby of inventing languages, started his well-known fictional world. But it also reminded us of too many scares and scrapes with the Treens, who are one of the alien races who live under its cloud layer. 'Middle Enclosure': perhaps, as C.S.Lewis once wrote, Earth *is* Men's appointed enclosure which we should not have broken out of to interfere with life elsewhere. But we did, and made spacecraft, and did not seek to get involved in Venusian native politics but got drawn in, when an expedition to search for previous Earth expeditions lost there landed and made a long-term Venusian international confrontation stalemate flare into a war which Earth interfered in force as the only way to rescue its men; the details are well described elsewhere. We went to bed.

I tried to sleep, wondering what the local place names would turn out to come from. What would they tell of how people lived at Maslet and Lont and Langton and in the old abbey on Sanget Hill and the rest, long ago when the meanings of the names were clear in the original Anglo-Saxon and not distorted by a thousand years of oral transmission? After Vikings, wearying of piratical wanderings, settled and named Askettlesby and Skelby and Skimming, how long was it before they and their descendants were accepted as belonging to the area? The village's early mediaeval church's dedication to the apostle St. Bartholomew made at least Barlompston's name's origin clear - perhaps, for guessing from modern forms is risky, but local tradition was well set on that derivation. A gusty wind against the window from the emptiness

of Raudicket Heath set me dreaming oddly; some of the local names echoed in my sleeping mind, strangely distorted, but not to Anglo-Saxon. As next door's cockerel woke me soon after dawn, they still echoed in my brain: Raldikita, Maselita, Lagamita, Sangita, Xindamanga,

Waking and daylight drove them back to the shadows. I looked briefly for my spacesuit and sleepily cursed the noisy bird; my first thoughts led via my Spacefleet stun pistol to chicken soup, but I decided not to. Then, coming fully awake, I realized where I was and irritatedly shook my head to rid it of whatever had set me thinking of space and work kit when I was on leave. I tried to go to sleep again, then dressed. We had breakfast. One of their children started a discussion about Raudicket garage's new blowtorch, thinking that I was somehow relevant to it, and was shooed off to school. The Jacksons got in the back of the car, and we went to Raudicket.

Among the village's straggle of houses of various ages and four shops the church, built in a 1300's Gothic style, was grossly cracked and leaning different ways, and propped up by assorted steel props and heavy wood beams and cut tree trunks. It obviously needed far more spending on it than the village could raise by selling itself to bare walls and floorboards, and I said so.

"Oh, that's all that the might of Spacefleet can come out with when I'd hoped you'd back me up: 'it can't be done', like a smith telling a poor farmer that his only plough can't be mended and he can't afford a new one!" said a Mr. Norton who had come to meet me. The busybody who the Jacksons had told me about.

"That's it." I said, "For a start you must ...".

"OK, OK, 'et tu Brute', even you telling me to dig down to see what's causing it, disturbing sacred ground. Let what's below sleep below, never mind archaeologists sticking their noses in raking up the dead past."

"Jumping jets!" I exclaimed, "If they can't dig down, and you won't ask for outside help like from a government body, do you want the job doing or not!?"

"Or do you just like taking stuff off people and giving them orders?! My dogs have had to see you off my farm several times." said Mr. Peterson, the farmer at nearby Callot farm, who had heard that I was there, and then to me: "Never mind that: I've got a JCB on my farm, I'll get it and we can start now."

"And God rest the souls of the disturbed dead. On top of all this, having to get a new church hall door has set the funds back badly. OK. OK." said Norton.

To shorten a complicated story, the job had to be done. With pressure from me via Spacefleet, the Archaeology Commission gave a grant at once, and the bishop gave permission for the digging, which started two days later. The vicar, glad for a proper go at the job at last and surprised where the help had come from, showed us various old documents that evening.

"There's several entries like this:" he said showing a 14th century accounts book, "Item: ad Petrum de Langton', etc: that's Latin for 'to Peter Langton, sexton, and him and him, who were at hard labour digging through the 'saxum ferratum' which is under the church'. There's several entries like that. 'Stone with iron in': keep it quiet *please*, we don't want a great iron ore quarry here and factories round it like at Corby in Northamptonshire.". But his guessed meaning was wrong.

"I've got a photocopy of an Anglo-Saxon charter. I never learned the language much." he continued. That was more to my interest. I read it.

"'I E~adweard king of', etc," I translated, " ... 'the boundary of the land runs from here to here to here,' etc, it's all in the Watchet area, not right here. Witnessed by Cynemasel the

abbot of Sangita Monastery. His name means 'Kingly whatever a masel is'. What's a 'masel', anyone?". I knew a word 'masel' well enough, but not from anywhere relevant to the case. 'Sangita' had always been Sanget Monastery's usual name for itself when writing in Latin, but the word made no sense in any likely language.

"I don't know." said a local historian who had come, "But soon after 1066 a document says that a man called Maselulf owned land around here. Same unusual name element. And, talking about unexplained words, there's an early Norman will made out near here that says in Latin '... et equum nigrum nominatum uabau id est equus celer ...' [= 'and a black horse named 'vabau' that is 'fast horse']". Anglo-Saxon personal names run much on a track of weapons and warriors and predatory animals; something undefinable stirred at the back of my mind, and I found myself thinking of space. I went to bed and dreamed of one of my narrow scrapes in the Treen part of Venus. I woke and forgot about it.

A safety barrier round the site was needed. They got a lorryload of parts; the garage man said he would help to make it. He brought his new blowtorch, which had an underslung attachment and heavy backpack gas cylinders. I knew the type: it was a BOC Type 2F blowtorch-flamethrower, a copy of a Treen army issue model which had been brought to Earth. I had seen them before. Sparks flew as he cut and welded to make the barrier.

Work started two days later. Church business was moved to the church hall as over the next days below the ominous shored-up leaning walls the archaeologists dug down. After finding much not relevant here, below the 1300's walls they found wall stumps of Saxon period work. The land outside the church had over the centuries built up as land tends to over centuries of human occupation, plus earth washed down off a nearby hill, plus flood silt from the nearby river Sloy (Sla~w-e~a, Slow River) which had changed course for a while during a period of neglect of its banks perhaps caused by Viking raids. Under the church floor was a deep layer of un-reusable rubble from demolished Saxon work, and earth tipped in to raise the floor level; this they started to clear away. Of the Raudicket Church archaeological sensation, all Britain now knows, but I summarize it here.

"More and more of these older Saxon walls." said one of the archaeologists, "They don't look much like a church to me, at least not a church and nothing else. Not much like a monastery either. They just found another Ethelred the Unready sceatt coin here."

"If it's a noble or royal hall, whose? It must have been someone important, a Saxon hall in stone. Even Hro~thga~r's big place Heorot in Beowulf was wooden."

"It's not much like any usual noble hall either. What in Woden's name *was* this place, before someone built a church over it? Here's some Alfred the Great period pottery - there's a big flat stone below here - I can't find an edge to it - how big *is* it!?"

"There's another here. I can't find an edge either. It must be bedrock. It isn't the sort of rock the geologist said'd be round here."

I grabbed pick and shovel and started to shift the overburden navvy fashion. Digby followed suit. They called us off, but not before I found in whatever it was a large and shifted crack which they followed to a grave that had been cut in it. They dug down there, and found that the hard stuff was not bedrock but a layer over waterlogged soft earth. One of them poked at something in the edge of the hole and made an astonished noise and called for a metal detector. One of the team searched about with it. As digging continued over the next days, the truth became clear.

Under the mediaeval church, under the Saxon church, under the earlier Saxon unexplained buildings, was a reinforced concrete raft.

After the astonishment, work had to continue, at least to make the site safe.

"When the gravediggers were at labour to dig through the 'saxum ferratum'."

Mr. Eastham, one of the archaeologists, said, "I can imagine what a 14th century sexton thought running into reinforced concrete! No wonder he needed two helpers to dig through it, and likely cold-chisels from the smith to cut the ironwork."

"With picks and hand hammers down a hole against that stuff. And leaving cut reinforcing rods open to the wet." said a builder's man who was there, "No good. Water tracks along and makes rust which starts cracks so more water gets in, etc, p'tic'ly over as long as this stuff's been there. No wonder it cracked so bad and you've got all this subsidence, the weight of the church put on what they thought was bedrock but wasn't. Ye gods. Ye gods. Anglo-Saxon reinforced concrete, and I'm seeing it."

"The Romans had concrete, I've read about it." said Digby.

"So did the Anglo-Saxons, but they used quicklime like in old-type lime mortar." said an archaeologist, "The Romans in Italy sometimes used fresh volcanic ash, but there's none of that here. The cement in this is the modern sort, and smithing at the time could never have made all that metal rod to put in it. What the @\$% is it doing HERE!?"

The church could clearly no longer be patched up where it was. As the long job began of cataloguing and removing and storing all fittings and squared wall stones, we looked elsewhere in the area for clues as the days passed and the dig continued and nearly every night I dreamed of space and work for some reason. The vicar's copy of the Domesday Book entries for the area showed as expected an ordinary farming area and no new clues in the spellings of the names. It said that 'in the time of King Edward' Maseulf held some of the villages including 'Bernlawmeston' and was a free man; but also others before had theorized that the church dedication was inspired by the village name and not vice versa.

Searching for living and written local legends showed plenty but irrelevant. We waded through fairies, witches, the Devil, Anglo-Saxon goblins called 'scuccan', a record that the wide flat low hill of Sanget was put there by fire-demons who held a fort there for a while until exorcised by a bishop called Wulfgar, creepy walking dead stories from churchyards, a report in an early Norman homily that a century or two before one Alfberht of Langton slew many Vikings with a magic fire-weapon, everything and all sorts from a time when men had such a limited environment that many believed in fairies through adult life and many saw such things during drug-type hallucinosis due to having to eat mouldy stored food when supplies got low and in some areas non-alcoholic delirium tremens caused by magnesium deficiency.

The homily, in church Latin, also advised men against false visions sent by the Devil. It quoted from an older report by bishop Wulfgar of a confession by one Wulfhelm of Barlompston who later had 4 hides of land in Langton but in the end became a Sanget Abbey monk: "As often, they took me into their work places to help them with their work; but this time in the time a fast horse gallops a mile by the power of their magic they took me and the building that I was in to a wondrous city, all circular, built on a lake with many bridges, shining like silver, beneath a sky ever overcast ... in the same short time I was brought back home ... I was looking through no device that might deceive my senses, but straight out of windows ... I understood more of their talk than they thought I did: in my hearing one of them gave their transvective demon the name 'Cubsath' ... This perhaps would have deceived me, that I was seeing the Heavenly City; but a little later, in a day's journey they seemed to take me to a place in emptiness where the stars in the sky were in different patterns from those that God had placed them in on the eternal celestial sphere, and thus I knew they were deceiving me and

sending me false visions and that the building had not moved from where it was when I entered it ... I report this to you to be passed on as a warning not to trust those who have dark powers or claim to have them." I had too much to do to waste time with demonology and the occult, and found something more relevant to read.

We sent a sample of the concrete to a lab to identify the source; the lab's reply next afternoon was sea beach sand, ground-up stone of a type that could have come from Sanget Hill, and cement from a source that we all agreed was obviously impossible and I asked them to analyse again. A local man said that when he was a child big patches of unexplained thick concrete had been found during digging foundations for an aircraft navigation radar on Sanget Hill near the old windmill; he had blamed an 1939-1945 anti-aircraft site, but the RAF had denied it and said that Sanget had been observation and radar only and nothing needing heavy concrete footings. After a drive and an uphill walk he took us to the place and we got a sample after some deep digging. The Anglo-Saxon period form 'Sangita' put placename scholars nowhere nearer agreeing what the name meant or came from. I knew a word 'sangita', but like 'mase' it was not Anglo-Saxon and irrelevant here, and I did not follow up the ideas that came from it.

On the way back we stopped at the village school in Sandringham. The Norfolk Sandringham's name has a clear Anglo-Saxon origin, and I expected similar for this one. My spaceman celebrity status went ahead of me, and the expected crowd and space-type street decorations. During the ceremony a teacher called a school choir to sing a local traditional song. It ran thus:-

"I'll go fetch some sheep down said the lodge-house on Blackdown.
And my men can shear them said St.Mary's at Deerham.
For th' spinning I'm banked on said St.Andrew's at Langton.
My curse on that Crompton said the church at Barlompston.
For the loom I've the timber said the dock-tower at Trimborough.
To weave I'm stocked well by said St.Edmund's at Skelby.
And I'll do the trimming said the old church at Skimming.
And a jumper? I'll knit it said St.John's at Raudicket.
And I will then teazle it said St.Stephen's at Maslet.
And a meal? They'll all thank it said the bell-tower on Sanget.
And I'll put the kettles by said St.Paul's at Askettlesby.
But work first: I call it said St.Joseph's at Allert.
There must be no defaulting said th' works siren at Skalton.
'Twill be worn to the font said St.Peter's at Lont."

Thus 'Oranges and Lemons' adapted to the area inspired by bells of village churches built on proceeds of trade in cloth handmade from wool from sheep bred on the nearby Quantock Hills. A childish thing, but describing part of English rural life as it was then, from Anglo-Saxon times and before until the trade and local employment were devastated by coal-powered cloth-making starting with Crompton's power spinning machine. A thousand years ago, when men spoke of De~orha~m and A~sketilsby~ and Langtu~n, and Sangita (whatever that meant), and the rest, people were doing the same. Farmers could do every stage of making clothes from the sheep's backs to their own backs. The reference to Trimborough meant wreck driftwood as likely as importing. Garments made for a special occasion and worn to a christening. So they sang, and did not know that some of their words spoke of a technology far more advanced than Crompton's. In the evening we phoned the lab from

Jackson's; the lab said that the cement in the Sanget concrete had come from the same source as in the Raudicket samples.

After the 1300's church was finally removed and stacked in a nearby field for rebuilding on a new site, the archaeologists now had full safe access to all earlier remains. The strange concrete raft where no concrete should have been stretched under all the church site and well into the churchyard and an adjacent field. At one end they found what seemed to be a main entrance, and the start of a wide stone-hardened road running straight towards Callot farm a mile away. Before the later Saxon church, a room of the older structure seemed to have been used as a church, for we found the legs and folded wingtips of two angels, and between them the base of a throne, probably the remains of a Christ in Majesty, roughly carved bas-relief into a wall with a pickaxe, for many Anglo-Saxons did not know the stonemason's chisel and mallet. The archaeologists' peace of mind was not helped by repeatedly finding heavy steel bolts and footplates in the concrete floor, in at least one case straight below a fire ash accumulation containing undoubted broken Saxon pottery. And a ground magnetometer reading led to a slab that we lifted to reveal a sealed watertight cavity.

In the cavity was nothing exotic but a quantity of parchment manuscripts and Church valuables. Whether that was what the cavity was originally intended for, or a re-use, we could not tell at the time. We took everything out and handed it to the conservation team. At Mr. Jackson's next morning Prof. Ashdene handed round colour photocopies of the manuscripts; as the weather was fine we drove through the Somerset countryside back to the dig site with them in case anything new was discovered there.

"This about 'Sangitamynstre' at the top: looks like this lot was Sanget Monastery's stuff, likely they hid it down here in Raudicket for safety when Vikings started to come." Prof. Ashdene said, "This one's a list of land holdings, and all sorts of odd notes squeezed into blank spaces. It's in Anglo-Saxon, not Latin.

'At Langtu~n [= Langton] Cynerae~d [= 'Kingly-advice'] has 3 hides of land and E~admund son of E~adrae~d has 4 and he is the man in charge of the hundred but they call him the 'calag', whatever that is.

'At Beornlagamestu~n Aethelrae~d [= 'Noble-advice'] has 4 hides and E~admase has 2'. 'E~ad-' means 'fortunate', and there's that 'mase' again. I thought so: it's nothing like 'Bartholomew's 'tu~n'.

'The church that Wulfmae~r [= Wolf-famous] built in the -strange men's?- Raldikita - that 'l' in it finally puts the 'Rhyddcoed' theory down the drain, then - 'Raudicket has 9 hides'. Anyone with 5 or more hides could be a thane, I saw somewhere, but if it's a church? - 'and Lagamwulf has 3 there'. 'Lagam' again? What?!- it won't be that, it'll be from 'lagu' meaning a big body of water; it was too early for the Old Norse word 'log' meaning "law" to have got in.

'At the Lagamita ...', that'll be Lont - and more of the like. That '-ita' suffix is no sort of Anglo-Saxon either."

Hearing the strange names, something alien but to me familiar in some of the places I have been woke and demanded attention at the back of my mind, but I restored commonsense and suppressed it.

Prof. Ashdene read out: "'At Langton Aethelmae~r who was a -diver!?!- for the 'elmen' (that'll be something like 'strange men'), had 1 hide but when some 'strange men' came back briefly in one ship and went to Tri~naburh to - work under the sea!? - he and his relatives went away with them, and that hide now belongs to Wulfhelm who thus has 4 hides there'. He'd have been a very unusual find in our cold waters. In the days before diving gear, skilled

breath-holding diving natives have too often been pressganged by ships wanting work divers.

'At Cedric's Port which is now Triinaburh' - that's 'Fort of the -who!?!-', he doubled the 'i' for long, happens from time to time, that's Trimborough - 'Sae~beorht leader of the fishermen has the harbour and 4 hides, but the strange men's fort belongs to the king'. Trimborough? That's well outside the area: everything else mentioned is in Raudicket hundred.

'Sangitamynstre has all of Sangita and Xindamanga and Xaltetu~n': what!?' 'Sanget Abbey has all of Sanget and -er- Skimming and Skalton': I've seen 'sc' to and from 'x' metathesis enough times, but never initially! Not Old Norse 'ska~li' = 'hut' then. What *is* this stuff?

'At Sondaringaha~m [= Sandringham] Aelflagam has 3 hides and Aelfmae~r has 2'. Different origin from the Norfolk Sandringham.

This scribble down the side: 'When the strange men came they slew at a ford of the River Sloy with -masels?- a troop of 34 thieves and neither thief nor wolf could come into their land until the strange men left and for that we thank God, and thus that place is called in the strange men's language Maselita - whatever that word means: Maslet'. Forest outlaws at the time and later were a thorough pest, even without Vikings added to it, as King Ine of Wessex's laws show, and hard remedies were necessary, as his law 56 says. The Robin Hood stories are an absurd glorification."

I again began to feel that when the manuscripts and buildings were made there was something around that could not have arisen naturally on earth at the time.

"And this at the bottom: 'I ealdorman Beornheard had myself to stay there to order and write who had which land, for the people were lordless and uncommanded after the 'elmen' went away, and they speak strangely'."

"Do they describe the 'elmen' anywhere?" I said.

"No. Likely no reason to. At the time and for some time after likely everybody knew about them so no need to describe them, and parchment room was valuable. Only necessary things were routinely written down. It doesn't sound like they were anything that the people knew of living about. But that doesn't help anyone now to find what they were. Same reason as why the Battle of Bru~nanburh entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle doesn't say where Bru~nanburh is; I've seen a guess that that was Burneswark in Dumfriesshire in Scotland."

"Look! He's got Raudicket garage's new blowtorch on!" said a small boy behind me looking at a picture on the next sheet. A security man shooed him off and went to help warn a pack of reporters to come one at a time and not get in the way. The garage man strapped his blowtorch cylinders on his back and went to cut down part of the security barrier which was now in the way of extending the dig.

"This one's a poem in Anglo-Saxon." Mr. Jackson continued, "It's about the 'Harrowing of Hell'. There's strange words in it, including that 'masel' and 'lagam' that you noticed: I've marked them. It's too early for them to be from Old Norse. Some of them seem to mean magical fire-weapons and gods' lightning-makers like in many mythologies. It's got an ink drawing on it: He's got a big pack on and He's holding the author's idea of a magic fire-spear or thunderbolt."

What's the Harrowing of Hell? Sounds a bit scary." said someone.

"Belief had it that after Jesus died on the cross, His soul went down to Hell and broke the door in and overpowered the Devil and let all the righteous among the inmates out." said Ashdene, "In mediaeval mystery play versions of it, Satan backs off after merely a confrontation, but this version makes a big fight of it. Looks like it wasn't a Church man wrote this: mostly action and not much sermon-type moralizing and spiritual stuff. Not like in the

poems 'Judith' or 'Elena'. Nor a professional poet: it's a bit clumsy, and an alliteration fault. I suppose that where the fight happens is why thankfully for once the eagle and the raven and the wolf don't turn up to scavenge like they do in most Anglo-Saxon battle poems." he said. I looked at it. Thus it read; as Anglo-Saxon language would make little sense to most readers I have put here instead a translation into modern English in the original meter:-

"Our Lord thus did after His lifeless body / was borne away and buried by men. / <From the cross His soul not to His kingdom at once / to abide went back, but to battle He went / in ways where went no one who lives. / Then got Himself ready God Almighty / in other war-gear than He wore before. / His long *masel*, lightning-maker, / He held in His hand, had it from storeroom; / and helmet on head with hard *basog*, / not the crown of thorns that had caused Him pain. / The back that had borne the bloody torture / of swift-lashed whips swung by enemies / now got was ready for grim war-strife. / Into peril to go, the *palgars* heavy / full of fire-air which feed a *lagam* / He strapped to Himself, to set forth ready / with woven straps on His wounded body, / painful on His journey, but He was compelled to travel, / to Hell to go heavily laden / with the world's folk's sins away downwards, / though He was sinless Himself, on that Saturday famed, / as his dead body lay in darkness in tomb / owned by Joseph of Aramitheia.

Before Hell's portal the horrible dark / before the light of the *lagam* in that loved one's hand / fled fast away. To that foul doorway / of ancient iron through which outwards none / had found a way, His fire He set. / Then sparks sprung forth, spoke the *valgon* / a command to war. The mighty hinge / buckled when He *bortag*'ed before the abode of dark. / The strong-hard steel withstand could not / but like water flowed before Woe's fortress. / Down fell to the floor the Infernal door. / Then entered He, Almighty God / to free from there those confined by the might / of dark evil. He downwards went, / and from his shoulder his *masel* He in His sure hand took. / Satan against him then stood full-armed, / and many with him and were minded to fight, / but the flame of the *lagam* long forth shot out / from the hand nail-pierced of Heaven's lord's son, / burnt through the corselet bitter and painful / to those who with torture-pain retained in Hell / the souls of men; the Saviour advanced, / glory in that grim place. Great host of souls / now freed and saved from fiend-torments / followed Him full many. His fire-*valgon* / clove all chains through: before Christ in channels / ran away molten like river the iron / of Lucifer's lockups: loud sang the flame / a fierce fight-song as the fetters He hewed.

Satan's criminals withstand could not. / Belial back fled when burnt by the *masel* / as he tried to drive to mistreatment back / the hosts of freed who from the hardship fled; / and the boastful one, Baal the false god, / head horned like bull, of hosts a deceiver, / until the Hero shot his horns away; / of the evil ones none else withstood Him.

To Satan said the son of Mary: / "Do you hear, you sinner, harmful serpent? / You have felt the power that comes forth from these weapons, / the *masel* and *lagam*, in your might's deepest / secret places which to be safe you had thought. / If you hold again behind your doors / a righteous man in what you rule down here, / you *gabdok* of guilt of what God has made, / I will bring again what I brought here now."

Then out he went, up from Hell led / to the height of heaven the host of saved. / With arms before eyes to Him angels bowed. / There he laid down his *lagam* after His labours beneath, / his *masel* from His hand, and to men He went / unarmed to be seen by the eyes of the world, / again going to Gethsemane / to where lay His body, so that He should live again / forty days more among the folk of the world / before to Heaven again the Healer went."

As we read it, he translated it aloud, and concluded: "Very dramatic, and any excuse to work in an exciting description of battle. All that fire stuff, 'lagam' can't come from 'lagu'! I'd say that 'lagam' is 'li~g~ha~m', 'home of flame', but I can't explain the vowel change, and the word's here too many times for the 'a' to be a scribal error for 'i'."

"No, it isn't." I said with the dull inevitability of finally having to accept something that my mind had been steadily and steadfastly pushing away, until the poem all too clearly described what the words meant. Something that I had come here to get right away from for a while. The dike broke; realization flooded in. I well knew the language that the words were that had puzzled us. A language whose speakers had come from many thousand times farther away than the Vikings who later on sea-ships brought looting and fire and gory axe and Old Norse placenames. No wonder some of the placenames had set me dreaming of space and I couldn't make out why. I myself had seen what *lagam* and *masel* can do in fights - on Venus and elsewhere, and I saw no reason not to say what I now knew - that one of Spacefleet's old enemies in many fights in space and on planets and space-bases had been here already, a thousand years too soon for us to do anything about it. I looked again at the now totally undeniable alien Treen words in Anglo-Saxon handwriting looking up at me among Anglo-Saxon language text written over a thousand years ago on parchment in a time when mechanized industry was totally unknown among Men.

"The words you marked are all Treen from Venus." I said, and waited for the sensation to pass, "*Masel* is 'raygun', *basog* is 'transparent visor', *palgar* is 'compressed gas cylinder', *lagam* is 'oxy-gas blowtorch', *falgon* should be *valgon*, that's 'nozzle' (so his 'fy~rfalgon' in a second half-line isn't bad scansion after all, the limitations of Anglo-Saxon spelling), *bortag* is 'trigger' and he put an Anglo-Saxon verb ending on it, 'pulled the trigger', *gabdok* is 'anything that makes machinery go wrong'. That 'uabau' in the Norman will sounds like *vabag*, that's Treen for 'spaceship': by then no memory left except placenames, and a word 'vabaw' of forgotten meaning sometimes used as a name for a fast horse. While it lasted it was a technical vocabulary as useful as ours, with Anglo-Saxon instead of English as the base language, and Treen instead of Latin and Greek as a source of necessary new words." We read the poem again.

"With the needs of meter he called God the Son by names more appropriate to God the Father, same as in the Poem of the Rood. Thus he sang of a sacred event as he could in his alien-ruled workshop jargon." I said, "'The flame shot out long': yes, I dare say so. Some makes of those things are designed to do that: nasty things to have to face close up."

I looked at the drawing. Now that the mental block of totally unexpected time and place had been broken, even through the limitations of Anglo-Saxon art style it was clearly a Treen army engineer issue *lagam* with the underslung flamethrower attachment that makes it such a handy piece of work in a close-up fight. The author had seen one or a good picture of one, perhaps even used one. The nozzle angle can be changed during use, including to straight ahead. Even some ordinary hand-held oxy-gas torches can be set to make a flame a foot long. No wonder that, in the long-ago times that the land-holdings list spoke of when the Anglo-Saxon natives of the area had been ruled by alien masters who had come out of the sky, 'lagam' as well as 'masel' had soon become popular in the area in the list of weapon names used to form personal names. Shouting and scuffling interrupted me as security men arrested the reporters for pestering and mobbing and obstructing official work.

"In marches a big warrior with a lagam and a raygun, or a squad of them, to sort out troublemakers." I summarized curtly to try to work the shock off, "I've seen and heard of so

much of this sort of thing for real in space now that I didn't really need to come to Somerset just to read about it in Anglo-Saxon.

'Bowed to them with their arms in front of their eyes': yes, that fits also, that's how Treens bow to superiors, and they'd have made their native base workmen here do the same. But it's still a shock seeing it described here."

"But if that's what happened, what was he thinking of, putting that obviously alien gear and way of bowing into a story set long before your Treens were supposed to have come, and a long way away?" he said very doubtfully.

"OK, I also've heard of lagams." said another, "The garage man here got one a year ago when his old cutter blowtorch head gave up the ghost. So far he's used the long-flame for paint burning, heat-treating metal, thawing frozen pipes, etc like a blowlamp; overhead to burn up rook and bullfinch nests that he couldn't reach; once he used it to scare thieves off, and the thieves dumped stuff in the pond as they ran off, so he even used it as an aqualung to get the stuff back out: nozzle in his mouth, only the oxygen turned on, looked very odd."

"Very lucky he didn't blow his lungs out, risky makeshift, high-pressure oxygen into his mouth without a pressure reducer. In space and spacesuits we have to know about breathing gear." I said, "In Treen the word means any oxy-gas blowtorch, not just those special models." I said, and thought again. People were bringing up points, and I had to answer them; but faced with the final undeniable evidence I felt a mixture of inevitability and considerable shock; the width of space seemed to be no more a defensive moat but a ship-road for enemies, as the sea did for Anglo-Saxons when the Viking raids started. Hearing what had been found, a Spacefleet security squad came overnight to guard in case anything dangerous was found. The dig continued next day. Showmen had come and set up overnight; they were ordered off, refused, and were summarily arrested.

In the 1930's the Raudicket village smith who was gradually turning his smithy into a car service and repair station brought the first oxyacetylene torch into the area, and it was a sensation; later he bought a power metalworking lathe. Before that he had only had hammer and anvil and forge like from the beginning. But now I knew that over a thousand years before, before the Middle Ages, before the Normans, before the Vikings, for a time in this small area there were power tools and modern-type weapons, and those who brought them from Venus and landed on Sanget Hill occupied the area and ordered local Men to serve them and learn skill with those tools. I felt sympathy for an ancient workshop man ordered to do the same sort of work as the village garage man or the engineering works men at Skalton were doing now, when people knew far less about other times and places than now, when the English language was so different from now, with travel so limited that the area that the landing Treens controlled was most of his known world; except to a small educated minority the older past and remoter areas telescoped into a vague 'old times' and 'foreign parts' as a brief preface and narrow frame to familiar recent and present events.

Unlike natives outside the fenced base area he had likely been taught to read and write, to understand workshop instructions, but had no full education such as Church men had. Native books were scarce and well guarded; the parchment in a whole Bible used the skins of up to 400 sheep. Paper was made no nearer than India; Gutenberg and Caxton were far in the future. Trying to understand the tales of the religious beyond and hereafter that priests spoke of in sermons when a church service was fitted into a work slack period, he showed his respect for his hero by equipping Him for battle in the best kit then known of locally. Only recently have Biblical events routinely been portrayed with clothes and kit and landscape accurate.

Even in the Renaissance paintings of Biblical events routinely showed the armour and scenery and architecture of the painter's own time and area. For a while long ago mechanical skill had been kept up in this area, getting where it could the many new industrial words needed, and some of those words started to be used metaphorically.

What was the life of Beornlagam, who Barlompston was named after? Perhaps he was born during the occupation, was given his mixed-language industrialese name, and when old enough brought by his father into a base workshop and there brought up to a workshop life among metals and power-tools away from farming and the ways of nature, and rose to foreman, or as high as a native was allowed to rise. But that brief industrialization of part of Somerset long before its time, supplied out of the sky across space and not yet having got enough if any local roots, was withdrawn to where it came from, and he and those under him were thrown back to the land and left alone without his relied-on alien superiors in the desolate end of the technological time to lead his work subordinates back to subsistence farming with no powered help in guarding the place or transporting or storing produce or in anything at all, and so the abandoned Treen base building they were living in, when they had re-roofed it, was named after him and did not keep its Treen official name.

A hot hissing and a shower of sparks interrupted my thought. I looked from the garage man to the man depicted by an Anglo-Saxon on the poem manuscript over a thousand years before, and back. Both wore the same tool / weapon with the same controls and parts in the same places, the same as remembered in the ancient names Beornlagamestu~n and Lagamita which are now Barlompston and Lont. As he worked, I suddenly felt the depth of time and the remoteness of long ago when the Anglo-Saxon manuscript was written, and the changes, and what had not changed, and what had returned, on Earth and elsewhere. After over a thousand years a *lagam* was again being used above the stripped concrete floor of what had once been the base's Raldikita - the Treen word for 'repair shop'.

Workmen were digging out foundations of an ugly heavy flying buttress built in 1872 to try to help prop the church up. One of them was wearing an overall that made me look again: it was a Treen type with a badge familiar to me on Venus and elsewhere, that raised more gunpoint-type memories than I cared for just then. Likeliest an Earth-made copy: every man to his taste.

We returned to the manuscripts. "At Alorta E~admasel has a watermill but it is *gabdal*." I read out. There's been a watermill there ever since. *Gabdal* is Treen; someone had had to write in Anglo-Saxon 'cannot work' above it. That sort of thing happens several times. No wonder Beornheard complained that 'the people here speak strangely'. He would have known Anglo-Saxon and book-Latin, and coped when necessary with the Celtic that was still likely spoken by the lower classes in some areas, but not a factory jargon full of Treenisms. I wonder how long it took to finally fade away back to normal West Saxon after all the alien gadgets that the words referred to were taken away into the sky where they came from?

I guess 'Alorta' is 'place of alder trees', a mixed-language name: either some occupier had found what the native trees were called, or some native had worked out what '-ta' means."

"And more of it, all written after you claim the occupation ended. I wonder if there's any records here that were written during your claimed occupation? Life was so hard anyway and no idea of democracy except locally if at all that likely your 'elmenn' wouldn't have made it much worse. But, if what you say is true, why did they build their Rald-whatever here on waterlogged ground anyway?"

"Perhaps it wasn't then and the drainage pattern changed afterwards, what with people

draining wet land and letting the drain water go where it would. Loose water can have a mind of its own at times. By the look of it they occupied the area of the later Raudicket Hundred, plus a road to a sea harbour which they fortified: Trimborough, Tri-naburh, the one name that includes the invaders' name for themselves. They set up a remote exploration base here, held it for a while, fifty years, perhaps more, then abandoned it and took all they could away home with them. Out here at the end of a long transport route across space they used local stuff and local labour when they could, which is why what remains of their buildings here under the church is often not that much different from ordinary native buildings, except they probably used plastic roofing which they brought with them, and (if I know anything at all about Treens) took it all away with them when they left. Outside the base area totally unmechanized Anglo-Saxon farming life continued under native rulers as it always had.

I wonder how many natives they took away with them? For the rest, after that factory life, it must have been hard getting back to the usual life of the time. Full of the wrong skills: what use was it 'sure knowing their way round with a wrench' when there may have been nothing mechanical made of metal with a screw thread in the county any more? Or that Aethelmaer in the Langtun entry being a good scuba diver working for the occupiers, when his diving gear and the means of refilling it had been taken away with all other powered kit millions of miles out of reach across space and he had no way or skill to make his own here? No wonder he went away with them when they came back, to get back to his diving. And the smiths would have got blowtorch and power-tool and furnace minded and drifted away from anvil and forge skills: that happens nowadays the same. And native guards who had got accustomed to the *masel*, that means raygun, that the alien occupiers had brought, with an infrared nightsight, had to relearn skills with old-type native unpowered hand-weapons and unaided eyesight at night. And they'd miss the sky-foreigners' powered ground vehicles, and much else.

The occupiers would have fenced and guarded their area and tightly controlled who went where; this would greatly hinder news spreading to the rest of Wessex. This was a tiny and temporary island of technology; outside there was no mass communication audience but only forest and bog and moor and ox-drawn subsistence farming stretching to the shore of the distant hostile cold sea, and beyond the sea more of the same. The population per area was much less than now. The king would have got no gafol or any other income from the occupied area all the time they were here, but that may have been offset by the amount of outlaw gangs that would have tried to attack the area and were tracelessly disposed of. This was a rather out-of-the-way corner, and what was happening here didn't affect the rest of the country; it was early, before there was anything like as much literacy as later. Uneducated peasant traditional memory of events can degenerate and telescope in a few generations to ordinary magic-tale."

"That, plus memories and written records being lost during the Viking havoc. I can believe it. I read [and so did I: Author] that some French peasants used to say that 'the old times when magic and fairies worked openly and commonly among men, ended at the French Revolution.'" said the historian, "Yes, that, believed by sane adult men less than 100 years after the French Revolution!"

"Why isn't it in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle?"

"That wasn't started till about Alfred the Great's time. Its entries before that were taken from old records. No records from here about all this, because Sanget Abbey was keeping them and hid them here when the Vikings started. And opinion at Alfred's Winchester at the

time would likely have been much against including what by then would already have mostly been old oral tales of green sky-bogwarts from an out-of-the-way part of Somerset. There's such a lot of the Dark Ages without written records that all sorts of things could have happened, even a Tunguska-style comet fragment impact in the English midlands nuking out the heart of Celtic resistance against the Saxons, like there's been theories about, and Gildas seems to hint of."

"Gildas: that 6th century British monk. What else does he say?"

"Many words and very few to the point. Nearly all of it's sermonizing and telling people to obey God's word and the like."

"What about the rest of the placenames round here?"

"Some are likely base workman slang names, some'll be the official names." I said resignedly and routinely, "Skimming < Xindamanga = Stores No.3 (Treen). Sanget < Sangita = spaceport (Tr.), no wonder that farmer ran into old heavy concrete footings there, the archaeologists'll be there next likely: yes, the lab said the cement in both it and the concrete here was a Treen type, no wonder I doubted them. Maslet < Maselita = place of shooting (Tr.), as that margin note said. Lont < Lagamita = place where blowtorches are used, probably welding shop (Tr.). Some are mixed language: Skalton < Xaltetu~n: Xalto = Rising Sun (Tr.), probably a personal name, tu~n = enclosure (AS), could be a farming enclosure to help feed the base, or a works security enclosure. Sandringham < Sondaringaha~m = the home of the people of Sondar: Tr. name and the rest is AS; not him, just the same name; likeliest the one who ran some base facility there. And so on."

"Not necessarily." said Ashdene, "OK, I must now accept that the improbable is true. This other sheet of land holdings says that Cynesondar son of E~adwulf and Wulfga~r son of Xalto had three hides each at a place called Xelbin: where's it on that map?: oh, it's Skelby. And next below it: Cynesafboc and Safbanbeorn fishermen at Tri~naburh on Fridays and each day in Lent must let Raudicket Church have first offer of *x* amount of their fish for the priest there to send it on to Sanget Abbey."

"The Treen parts are *zavbok*, that's 'scuba diver', 'frogman', and *zavban*, that's 'underwater breathing set'." I said, "Two men at Trimborough, had to go back to fishing by old methods when the Treens left. Then some bunch one weekend in the late 1950's with those crude homemade aqualungs, were far from the first scuba divers here. Like Aethelmae~r those two'd likely have missed their diving. Mixed language personal names, and a Man with a Treen name: I should've expected it. No wonder Beornheard complained. Any unusual personal name tradition persisting round here would have died out after the Norman Conquest when the new Norman church rules made everybody use Biblical and saint names for first names, and that was the end of it until now, and Spacefleet finds itself clearing up after Treens yet again. The occupiers here seem to have nearly always been called 'elmenn', meaning 'strange men', rarely by their own name for themselves as 'Tri~nas'. I wonder why they did leave, in the end?"

Lucky they did. Perhaps in those times too much of Earth was too wild, forested, roadless, undeveloped, thinly populated, for the Treens to want to develop it from scratch just then across millions of miles of space without an unusually good reason. Treens long ago became too mechanical and organized to be the best at individual initiative pioneering in the wild away from chains of command. Earth was lucky. If Treens got here, where else could they have got? When the McHoo clan gave us the faster-than-light Halley spaceship drive, on the first inhabited planet we reached, Epsilon Ophiuchi III (Terra Nova), to rescue one of my

men we had to aid a native rebellion against a militaristic authoritarian native empire called Gaz which had reached the tank and early jet fighter stage of technology and was overrunning neighbouring nations. I thought of Treen-aided Gazians given space technology and helping Treens to enforce a space empire, and shivered, and was thankful that the Treens have never discovered faster-than-light travel. The Therons of South Venus have always had through the centuries to hold back from developing it in case the Treens stole it from them, all that time shut up in the inner solar system except a few hibernation flights when they wanted to go beyond. This made me think of Cubzet farm where we got our milk and eggs, but I could not imagine what the connection was. What *was* this Treen remote on-planet base for, anyway? What space effort was it helping to support, for what purpose? I had an undefined uncomfortable feeling. I remembered that about two centuries after this, in 978 AD in a hard and ruthless attack regardless of their own men's lives a Theron space force destroyed many Treen ships and at least one Treen space base in a running spaceship fight about 40 million miles almost due galactic north of the Sun. What had driven Therons to such an untypically hard action?

"You! Brown overall with the fancy lagam, bring it here and run it over this lot! It's getting in the way!". The order from the Spacefleet security squad's sergeant brought me back to the present day from my assorted speculations. Spacefleet men pick up off-planet words easily, I know, I am one. The garage man obeyed, operated a switch, and played a hot twelve-foot-long gas flame over the showmen's stalls which had been thrown into the adjoining cattle market area in a heap. The heap burnt; trashy wares and dishonest games perished, as native workmen's time-wasting game or ceremony kit likely often did over a thousand years ago when the word 'lagam' was current locally before. The word seemed to me to echo down the centuries. Meanwhile the security squad's destructor swallowed and ground up the reporters' cameras and recorders and notebooks and flushed the bits into a small combustion chamber; their owners had been bailed out. Sometimes hard remedies, now as in King Ine's time, when action men accustomed to risks meet petty mercenary nuisances. The sun reflected off lagam cylinders as it had long ago when the steel footplates in the Raldikita's stripped cracked floor still carried machines that had long ago been carried away across space leaving the Anglo-Saxon Sumersae~tan to live as they had before; but this time the cylinders had been made not beyond space but nearby in Bristol, and the mechanization was native and here to stay.

In the event nothing still dangerous and no abandoned nuclear materials were found there, although the farm name 'Boarlet' near Lont seemed to tell me of such a power source long gone, if the name was original: the name was first recorded in 1158. We turned to the next manuscript: it was another Anglo-Saxon poem. Prof.Ashdene had marked the un-Anglo-Saxon words:-

"After the aliens from our Earth have gone, / with no purpose name you as 'Spaceship' / even the fastest steed who fares with a man / him bearing to battle, or the big animal, / ox before axles, the all-day-plougher, / naming that strong one 'Nuclear Reactor': / that will fetch not back to any field of the world / the vanished thing named, the device alien, / that mighty aid, and you make neither / any stronger the ox nor the steed faster. / They with us once were: now from the world they have gone.

With no purpose before a noble lord / with arms before eyes in the aliens' fashion, / (as to the ealdormann you out now go / overalls wearing by the aliens supplied / and work helmets that were for work of old, / bearing badges which now backup have none, / but you save them

in store for ceremony days) / you low to him bow as if on our land were still / the green-skinned ones who gave you these, / but took back all, no trace leaving, / not a house's roof or a hardy tool. / They with us once were: now from the world they have gone.

With no purpose you name a thing / in the aliens' tongue to English men / when for all things of use in our language / a word there is after away They went / and their knowledge and skills where no-one can follow. / They with us once were: now from the world they have gone.

With no purpose your names for your children / often '*masel*' include, that mighty slayer, / the fire-shooter, the afar-burner, / or '*lagam*' either, which has gone long afar / and eats no iron on Earth any more: / they went up away, and not in the world any smith / now has them in hand but with hammer now works, / with fire charcoal as before ever was; / and by no power-tool now on our peopled earth / any iron is carved, that alien skill / as if wood it were in wondrous manner. / Elsewhere in England those alien men / have not come or dwelt, and our craftsmen there / their hand-work skills have held onto: / it would better have been if it had been so here.

They with us once were: now from the world they have gone, / and give them no praise but to God the Lord, / who sent His Christ for our souls to us; / for those alien beings the angels are not, / and they came not from God, from His kingdom on high.

From the ground indeed in a great sky-ship / I with the aliens have upward flown. / Down the Sangita [= landing field] sank. The Somerset land, / the woods and the hills and the whales' highways, / that wide country at once I saw. / The sky became black although bright was the sun; / the world fell away as we went outwards. / The Earth like an apple to my eyes there shown / I saw as a sphere. Into Space's width, / which is '*Radob*' in their speech, I readily forth / had keenly gone; the craft leaving, / out in a spacesuit ordered by their captain, / I to follow them had, afraid in heart / to work for them in weightlessness; / stars around me stood on all sides. / None of the dear-loved air was in that death-nothingness / except what my helmet and suit held around me, / those works of no man of the world of Men, / nor was there ground for my feet to go on to work, / but with propulsor on back its push to ride / I had to quickly learn from their craft out far / to go through the sky to get to the ship / after toiling long towing a blowtorch, / and hard haulings of heavy ironwork. / With all on it the earth's vastness / was dread-distant, in the dark a star: / so small in the sky I saw my world. / Fond-yearned shelter where was food and air / that craft in the void was coming from dread-ride, / although those who with me were from my world were not, / and I had feared it before when among the fields of my home / it stood above trees, strong alien work.

And on the waterless Moon, weary with labour, / I in airlessness stood on an exile-path, / wide sandy plains, a wilderness, / and dead dry hills and deep craters, / to help them at work: I beheld that all. / In my body alive I left the earth: / in the heavens I was - but not in the home of God, / which no powerful craft with propulsor through space / by far flying can find ever; / for our souls only that space-road is / when from our bodies they go, if we obey the Lord. / There I Aelfmasel was (I was Aelfmae~r's son), / of the Raldikita [= repair shop] on ride in the sky, / a fear-journey, and to my fellows speaking / the aliens' speech while I was a spacefarer, / until the craft back came to my kinsfolk's earth / and sank through the air to the Saxons' land / and on the Sangita settled. From the sky-stallion, / from a ride returned back to the Raldikita / I from the hill was carried, from hidden places, / to the dwelling of my folk, to my daily work. / And four more times they fetched me away / from my working place so I from the world upwards / could fly through the sky forth to space-work / from homeland far with my heart fearful / and out of the craft in emptiness; / and returning I told the tale to my kin. / Much

more than that about those mighty works / I could witness bear that out of the world I saw, / but in these later days when little avails / the space-language I will spare myself that.

They with us once were: now from the world they have gone, / and bereft are men of the road to space. / Although often my dreams up there in rest go; / and a spacesuit's shadow to my sleep then comes; / but from waking it flees on the world of men. / I to the Sangita went, and sought it again. / Of all there of old it was empty now / and of sounds of machines which had served on the hill / and of the green-skinned ones after God sent them thence; / on unguarded road I could go freely. / We placed on the hill in praise to God / the monastery there with mighty labour / of oxen and us with our own body-might / that God gave us when the great wide world / he turned to make, the eternal Lord, / and his son Jesus for our salvation / so our souls to him unassisted by craft / all the way going where no alien can / through high heaven to His home can fare."

Uneducated people tend to guess that the sky is a solid lid over a flat earth, sometimes also the underside of an upper storey where gods live, or the like. He probably had no idea of outer space until he found about it the hard way (as a total shock to his Germanic native cosmology), and then no word to call it by except the Treen word 'radob'. 'Spatium' is Latin for 'space'; he'd have learned it from astronomy directly or via another monk after he helped to found Sanget monastery; it at first meant a space or gap between two planet-bearing spheres in the Ptolemaic universe theory which was current then. The other marked words are Treen, a few of the many that he had likely got used to using in his daily language as a base worker: they are: *borlath* (nuclear reactor), *galdak* (machine-tool), *lagam* (oxy-gas blowtorch), *masel* (raygun), *radob* (Space), *vabag* (spaceship), *valgon* (nozzle). Sometimes for 'spaceship' he used native Anglo-Saxon words that usually mean a sea ship. The poem continued with a quantity of moral teaching and Bible quotations irrelevant to space or technology or local history, except once a metaphor 'Godes *masel*' (= 'God's raygun') for lightning and thunderbolt such whatever destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Again faults can be found, but the author was a workman and later a monk, and not a professional poet.

"Well!" said Ashdene after a long pause, trying to break the stasis of awed shock, "That upstages Gagarin and Armstrong and Aldrin by a few years! And every fictional spaceman from H.G.Wells on! So long ago! I wonder if he was buried near the abbey, or did he have to flee from Vikings and only God knows where his bones lie? Five missions. He'd be famous in the base area as long as living memory lasted, but there'd be too much security and restricted access round the base for important outsiders such as the king to easily hear of it and chronicle it, or else they didn't believe it. If we only had more record of him!"

"And where on all the Moon are his footprints? They should still be there." I said, "That Aethelmae~r of Langton went the furthest: he successfully 'elmannæ eard u~t geso~hte' ['sought out-away the Elmen's land', adapted from 'The Seafarer' line 38] and perhaps again got scuba gear, and dived again, although not on Earth. Aelfmasel likely not. Ye gods what he went through, 'thrown in at the deep end' untrained, when I think of what we have to put into Spacefleet space workman training courses. They'll have had a radio-controlled overrider in his suit propulsor in case. I may know what he was helping to build: we had trouble once with rogue Treens raiding, and it led to a secret space base of theirs, that was built about 1200 years ago judging by the amount of micrometeorite pitting on it. He was clearly trying to forget the Treen time and Treenisms and everything of theirs that had become unattainable, and to get other people to, and to concentrate on just God and Jesus and what the natives had known before all that technology came out of the sky, but he had a hard job."

"Likely. I've read about Pacific island native 'cargo cults' after USA forces left after the 1939-1945 war: wood and bamboo imitation base-facilities, natives re-enacting USA naval base ceremonial for donkey's years afterwards. Aelfmasel and the other monks, and that bishop Wulfga~r that it mentions at the bottom, likely had their hands full for a long time."

"This one's a map. Making a map at this period itself shows there's something unusual about. It was likeliest made soon after the base was abandoned. Lots of placenames on it, including some that have been lost from use since; the area round Lont's no more Anglo-Saxon than the Mekon is. Looking at that lot's like being back on Venus, and I came here to get away from space. 'Hablagkapudta which is Beornlagamestu~n', the first word's Treen for 'fuel reprocessing place'; no wonder the natives renamed it when they had the base to themselves. Now we know what Beornlagam and his men's work was; of all the jobs for Anglo-Saxons, likeliest young men chosen at the best age to learn new work, to be made to learn how to do, by alien masters who came from the sky. That place 'Cubsathta' near it'll be Cubzet farm. Treen, but not a word that I recognize easily.

Not the only place that Anglo-Saxons renamed: when the Anglo-Saxons came they wiped nearly every Celtic placename in England except some rivers and big towns and in Cornwall. About the only Celtic names we know from Roman times are on a Roman map that names towns and main road junctions and the forts on Hadrian's Wall. An Anglo-Saxon source that I [and also I: Author] read about records Celtic 'Coitmaur' and Latin 'Silva Magna' for the Selwood forest in Wessex.

This name near Lont certainly shows that the farm name 'Boarlet' isn't from Anglo-Saxon 'Ba~r-gelae~t' ('Boar - artificial stream course') like they used to say; it obsoletes rather the farmer's signboard painting of a wild boar drinking from a watermill leat. Looks like 'Askettlesby' was a Viking settler rename for 'Xindavargin', that's Treen for 'Stores #2'. Lets see what the bit round here looks like: there's Raldikita; I wonder how much the way it shows each place is like the buildings that were there then. That farmer Peterson'll be pleased to know that his place Callot near here was once the top place in the whole base area before the abbey or Lont Hall was: it comes from 'Kalagta', that's Treen for 'commander's headquarters'."

"Oh, so it's not Irish named by Irishmen that Vikings recruited, like I once saw guessed. Earliest for Callot is 1253 'Callawte'."

"Irishmen now??" someone queried.

"There's a place in north England somewhere called Beckery, from 'Bec Eriu', that's Old Irish for 'Little Ireland', but, as he said, 'Callot' isn't Irish. What does that map give for Langton and Deerham?"

"Only Anglo-Saxon 'Langtu~n' and 'De~orha~m'. They were bigger than single farms, if the symbols mean anything. Perhaps they were Anglo-Saxon villages from before and they were let stay there and kept their old names all the time the base was here around them, to help feed the people in the base.

After the Treens left, the Kalagta was the obvious place for their native workers to meet to try to work out how to live on their own again, but there'd be so many of them they'd soon move to the Raldikita which was bigger, for their meetings, and so Raudicket became the name-village for the hundred. By the sound of the Langtu~n entry they'd got so used to the alien occupation organization that when they chose a man to keep track of affairs they called him the *Kalag*, that's Treen for 'base commander', instead of a native word like 'hundredgere~fa'. While they were there they'd catch up with any trading they could do; people stopped having hundred-moots ages ago, but they still have a cattle market here."

As we read the next sheet, a wrongness struck me, a reminder of traps that people can be left in when they forsake local self-sufficiency and become part of something supplied and controlled from afar. It was headed in Anglo-Saxon 'This is for a priest who goes to the local people of Sanget and he must know the Elmen's language', but Prof. Ashdene could not understand the rest except the headings. It was Church matter: a catechism, a creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in Treen in Anglo-Saxon writing, written after the base was abandoned. I said what it was. During the occupation the Sangita was a restricted area, 'de~agolstedum' (= 'hidden places') in the poem. The native workers there, seeing no end to the occupation that came from the sky, isolated from other natives, learned Treen quickly and spoke it among themselves until many of their children grew up knowing it only and not Anglo-Saxon, and were left thus when the Treens stripped their base and vanished into the sky.

Next was a sheaf of photocopies, of a bound book; Ashdene passed it to me at once. It was St. John's Gospel, with the Nativity from St. Luke and various short religious matter in an appendix, all in Treen except for headings, and this time in the Treen writing system, but no Treen could have written it. The monks had done what they could with the alien sky-language so that natives of Sangita who spoke it only could read of Jesus's life; first words of important parts were very large, and their letters were adorned with typical Anglo-Saxon animal-headed interlace and acanthus leafage and small religious pictures. Someone had added an Anglo-Saxon interlinear gloss. At the end was written small in Treen "I Aelfmasel son of Aelfmae~r translated and wrote; E~adga~r son of E~adwulf made the pictures.": these are all Anglo-Saxon names.

On Sangita Hill, now called Sanget, which for a thousand years has been remote quiet Somerset farmland, and the Abbey until Henry VIII's time, for a while was a remote-base space landing field as well equipped as many human and alien that I have seen; afterwards expert native landing-field technicians and crane and vehicle drivers and so on, the usual personnel at such places, were suddenly left to return to ox-drawn subsistence farming which many of them had no skill or aptitude at. The abbey on top of other work had to teach them their ancestral language, and meanwhile to attend to their spiritual needs in the language they knew; monks who had been base personnel struggled to express eternal spiritual truths and farming skills in an alien language not intended for it and which they had thought they would not need to hear or write or speak again.

For funerals and refuse disposal Treens for a very long time have used those fuel-cell-type devices which recover all useful chemical elements and oxidation energy; they call it a *kapudan*, a word increasingly being used for them on Earth instead of assorted official codenames and sets of initials. They would have used them here, plus routine metal detector sweeps and the like. As a result we found next to no occupation period burials or rubbish in the hundred, a serious lack of vital archaeological evidence. But we found a burial. As the workman with the Treen-type overall drove a dumper past me, something caught my eye. I jumped as if electric prodded, for on the overall's identity badge, as well as a Treen serial number, was 'Raldikita' in Treen - and in machine-printed Anglo-Saxon writing, and, smaller, in both writing systems the name 'Aethelgils E~adgilses'. I began to feel that it was no living man that I was seeing, after we had disturbed sacred ground; but I asked him where he had got it.

"I dug it up, when we were working over there." he said in a rough local accent, "#%\$ knows 'ow long it'd been there, but it came out sound as new, when I 'osed it out and took it 'ome and laundered it. It's lovely strong stuff, and the muck 'ardly sticks to it at all."

"What did you do with it!?" an archaeologist asked him sharply.

"Got the worst off with an 'ose 'ere." the oversized rough-looking character said, "Got more of it off with an 'ose in my yard. Then washing machine. That was about two weeks ago. I've been wearing it since. 'Ow am I expected to find 'oos it was after all this time? It looked like it'd been there @#% years."

"Longer than 'years! Show me where you found it!"

He showed us. We dug down there. Under a mess of soil and subsoil dug about and trampled by a mini long-reach digger we found bones which led to a skeleton, which pick and shovel and digger scoop had incredibly largely just missed. The skeleton, an old man, was in the foetal position, normal for prehistoric burials but not for Saxon times; but washing four dumperfuls of disturbed earth through graded riddles found a Saxon silver penny and recently broken pieces of a pottery jug, both 8th century AD. And a base-issue Treen-made exchange token.

"What else was there with the overall?"

Probably reflecting that he would be found out some time, he admitted "There was a work 'elmet with a visor, a modern one, with a funny badge on, not like old knight in armour and warrior 'elmets. I took it 'ome as a spare."

"When you dig about near an archaeology site, always have an archaeologist watching, the law says. We better see it." I said in a hard voice.

As he led us to his home in the village, we looked at the overall, which he refused to take off. Since being found it had been thoroughly washed, re-dirtied at work, and washed again twice. The archaeologist regretted yet more evidence destroyed by the thoughtless: the ancient work dirt might have given clues. Our decay organisms did not know the synthetic fabric, and sunlight had not reached it, so it did not rot, and unlike any other archaeological textile known before on Earth stayed strong and fit for use. As expected, the helmet was Treen type. Back at the site, the modern workman, who had worked in a repair shop in the works at Skalton (from 'Xalto's enclosure': how different that name sounds to us Spacefleet men, now we know its origin!), looked at the bones of an ancient repair shop workman, perhaps an ancestor of his, who did the same work wearing the same overall and helmet 35 or 40 generations ago when the base was manned and active and spacecraft routinely came and went from the landing pads on the flat top of Sangita hill as they do now from our modern base at Formby in Lancashire.

Under the skeleton were marks of an excavator scoop a different shape from the one those workmen had. Perhaps after working many years for his alien masters he was found dead in bed in the morning in the Raldikita's sleeping area, stiffened as he had curled up to sleep; in the dark before a winter late sunrise his mates took a risk to use a thankfully silent small Treen excavator to bury him hastily unauthorizedly before the rigor mortis relaxed, and with him his work clothes and a few other grave gifts they could spare, rather than see a Treen *kapudan* consume him tracelessly leaving no place where he could be said to lie asleep, in that small time and area when there was powered technology here long ago. The silver penny told us that some native trade was probably allowed across the base perimeter; also the jug, unless the *Kalag* (= Treen base commander) allowed a native potter to operate in the base.

Of course all this became national big news, and the inevitable sceptics tried to disprove it all. As I and Digby returned to the Jacksons' in Barlompston to pack ready to return to Spacefleet in the morning, I was called on to arbitrate in a local dispute that had arisen: a village banner had been called for, and what came bore not St. Bartholomew as one group had automatically expected but a grizzly bear ('beorn') standing erect wearing a 'lagam', and below

it the village's name in Anglo-Saxon and in modern spelling. I let the argument carry on while we packed, and told them to vote on it as we went for lunch at Les Vaux d'Ho[^]te restaurant at Vaudot farm 3 miles NE of Lont. The food was good, including fish and lobster landed at Trimborough that morning; but the restaurant's guess at the name's origin was far from the mark: twelve centuries before, Treens serviced spaceship engines there and named it 'Valdagta', 'Impulse-engine place'. In the morning we left. As we passed the village school, the first lesson had started. In a music class children were singing the clothmaking song:-

"... To weave I'm stocked well by said St.Edmund's at Skelby.

And I'll do the trimming said the old church at Skimming. ...".

Again, an essence of traditional self-reliant rural life; but with an overtone of the beyond now we knew where some of the village names mentioned came from. We got onto the M5 and away from the area but not from the sensation; helping the Somerset branch of the Place Name Society to publish an extra-ordinary 'Raudicket Hundred and Trimborough' supplement was the least of it.

I took a dozen eggs with me. The box was marked 'laid at Cubzet Farm, near Barlompston, Somerset'. Over a thousand years ago, the Raudicket Manuscripts Map called whatever was then on the site 'Cubsathta'. I remembered the name 'Cubsath' in the Norman homily against demonism, and said so, remarking casually on a coincidence.

"In Mekonta [the capital of the Treen part of Venus] once I read of an old Treen secret project called Kubzath." Digby said, "It started about our 700AD and trailed on; they had to keep moving it to stop spies from finding it. That kept delaying it, and according to the record an unprovoked Theron space attack in 978AD destroyed everything and that was the end of it and the Mekon and the Last Three vowed vengeance for all time."

I felt cold. I remembered suddenly that some time ago I had read what was known about Project Kubzath among much other old and recent Treen scientific work. I had a shivery feeling that what Wulfhelm long ago saw was no deceit or hallucination. I can recognise a description of Mekonta when I see one. But there from Earth in say 20 minutes? And to far enough away for the stars to be different in a day? Now I knew. The Treens were using their base in Anglo-Saxon Somerset as on-planet backup to more than merely building the raiding-base that Aelfmasel worked on. Ye gods. So a chain of luck that Earth has been so thankful for, *was* broken, and - Treens got a faster-than-light craft to at least a working prototype. In and around a farm near Barlompston, with a name that was thought to refer prosaically to fox cubs, a thousand years of Somerset farmers have unknowingly said a Treen codeword for something that would have let Treens spread themselves and their technological population control devices and their mass breeding methods to Earth and many planets among the distant stars, an ever-spreading wave of hard enforcement and gunpoint and cold-blooded experimentation, Darkness Inescapable? Under that familiar farm was likely buried the foundations of a top-security Treens-only building where the Kubzath drive and its fearsome possibilities were being developed. If the Therons had not found about this work in time - perhaps the merest chance of seeing the same Treen ship in close succession in two places far apart, perhaps a strange force-field detector reading; at great risk the Therons chased it up and in a savage running space-fight in 978AD finally at great loss of men and craft managed to destroy all parts and personnel and records of the Treen faster-than-light drive work. How narrowly did Kubzath-powered ships miss carrying Treens and their guns and the Mekon's power routinely swiftly across thousands of light years? No wonder after that the war between Treens and Therons was so bitter for so long.

How successful had the work been? Over 200 years was a long time for development to take before getting any of it into active service, even with delays from repeated forced evacuations of all personnel and work. No point searching and digging now at the place which was once called Kubzathta: the Treens would have evacuated or destroyed everything all too thoroughly when they left. If it was a hyperspace jumper project, they likely ran into the same liability to random destination errors and unwanted uncontrollable time-travelling that we ran into and likewise all alien races who we have contacted who have tried such a drive: Spacefleet men nickname it the 'Crazy Eddie Drive'. If the Treens had got or would at last have got a hyperspace jumper reliable and safe as well as adequately fast, something valuable beyond estimate had had to perish in the 978AD Theron attack to save freedom for thousands of light years about.

In those days long before public media and mass education the Anglo-Saxon natives of the base area knew nothing of that, but worked as ordered for whoever ruled them, as most men had to; there is no guilt on Aelfmasel who looked wondering at the Outer Void through the faceplate of a Treen spacesuit as he laboured in the emptiness, or on Wulfhelm of Hablagkapudta who as a ship passenger on a brief out and back test flight saw alien stars far from our Sun long before my father and the McHoo's did.

Later archaeology started at Sanget. People had much robbed the above-ground buildings of stone to build Lont Hall and other places, but they had not looked underground. As I expected, the archaeologists found heavy reinforced concrete footings made from Treen cement and local other ingredients, for what could have been a space landing site; a bit of embedded twig carbon-14 dated to about the 8th century. Much of it had been later used as a hard footing to build monastery buildings on, which complicated the digging. For many centuries the monks had worshipped and worked not knowing what their church and quarters rested on. It was a big site, but modern instruments quickly found all disturbed earth, including a graveyard near the bell-tower. They started to examine the graves, as archaeologists do, with due respect for the bones, looking as usual for such things as grave-goods and evidence of the state of health of the population.

In the third grave examined, which a well-used cattle and tractor path had gone right above, they found the bones of a man in his 70's and the usual slight traces of a rough woollen monk's habit, and beads from a rosary. But what else they found set the headlines alight again. Over the chest, very unusually, was a split stone slab about a foot square, with engraved on it in Latin: 'Aelfmasel Aelfmaeri fil[ius] Raldikitensis qui iit a terra in spatium et stetit in luna'. This was carefully engraved, probably with a large nail or the like over a long time, followed by a date scratched hastily and shallowly. Fortunately a fellow monk had decided that Aelfmasel's deeds were worthy of commemoration by inscription despite monastic rules, and carved the slab ready. When the slab was removed, it revealed a Treen spaceman uniform badge that he had likely kept a secret from all others including the abbot all his life there after the brief locally confined long-ago space technologization evaporated like a ghost into the sky whence it came. Earth's lost first spaceman had come to light again.

In the conservation lab we looked with reverence and awe at the grave's contents, still intact after countless heavily laden hooves and wheels had passed close above them. The flesh that once clothed those ancient bones had worn an alien spacesuit and gone far from the earth which bred him. A Treen on site likely casually ordered him into space as an experiment (I well know what they are like), to see how an untrained Earthman repair shop hand would manage in space, and needing another pair of hands for things, and as he knew their language

well; but by luck his record reached us, his feelings in a totally alien place and ship and kit, a shock of alienness far greater than it would have been for a man living in the area today, for in his time there was no long tradition of popular space fiction to prepare people for the real thing. Now, well over a thousand years later when Men had found their own way into space, he at last got the lasting fame merited by his ordeal and hardihood with much too little space training and education beforehand. We have not found Wulfhelm yet, and I fear we will not: at the time no Man except one church man on confession duty knew what he had been through, and like most men of his time his grave would be unmarked although in sacred ground.

Aelfmasel was reburied with full Spacefleet ceremonial near Sanget Abbey ruins. <From copies of his skull and bones his face and appearance were reconstructed. A statue of him was made. The person who had raised argument over Barlompston's banner wanted him to be in a monk's habit preaching from a holy book, since he was long a monk; but that was not what he was famous for. So he was carved in a Treen work spacesuit of the time with the backpack propulsor that Spacefleet found in Venus standard use and copied and made Earth standard; his face shows. Its plinth bears his name and such details as we knew, in his own Anglo-Saxon language and in English. He stands near where he took off five times so long ago that his speech was far different from mine, looking out over Raldikita and Borlathta and Langtu~n and E~admaselesle~ah and the rest which are now Raudicket and Boarlet and Langton and Emsley and so on. We got his death date from the stone slab, and later his birth date and flight dates and other information when we finally found on Venus a Treen record of the occupation. And a building being built at Spacefleet's England headquarters was named the Aelfmasel Building, and a statue of him stands in front of it.