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There was a King Arthur

WLU festival audience told

There was a King Arthur!

That's the word from an authority, Geoffrey Ashe, a British scholar and historian, who chose the Arthurian festival at Wilfrid Laurier University last week to give a lecture that summed up his years of research.

Arthur really did exist and was indeed a great king, he said, only he was known partly by his title, Riothamus, a fact that may have misled some historians. The word means "great king" or "high king." It was used in much the same fashion as another great ruler, Temujin, is now remembered as Ghengis Khan, a term meaning "very mighty ruler."

Ashe has written 19 books, nine about Arthur, and the latest is probably the most important. It is titled, *The Discovery of King Arthur*, and lays out Ashe's Arthur-Riothamus theory.

According to legend, Ashe explains, the great monarch crossed the channel to the continent, leading glorious expeditions and finally disappearing from history without dying.

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Riothamus is mentioned in some fifth-century letters and continental histories as having fought in Gaul in the years 468 to 470 A.D. Ashe says these dates coincide with the description of King Arthur by Geoffrey of Monmouth, the 15th century historian who first popularized the tales of Arthur.

Ashe's book is the book-of-the-month selection for two book clubs, one in the United States and one in Britain, and he has been asked to contribute an article on his theory to an encyclopedia.

The British historian is also giving a number of other lectures on campus and is here on the invitation of Hugh MacLachlan, chairman of the English department, and chairman for the week-long festival.

Among the events for the week were a number of Arthurian films, a medieval fair, two medieval feasts, one on campus and the other at the Seagram Museum, and four presentations of a shortened version of Lerner and Loewe's musical, Camelot.