
The Ancient Britons

Artwork by John Riordan

Introduction by Sarah Jones

*T*HE *Ancient Britons* is not hiding in my attic—I've checked—and it may not be in anyone else's attic either, which leaves us with Blake's descriptions, contemporary reactions, and the canvas of our imaginations. As Sibylle discusses in her review essay in this issue, Morris wrote about how the *Blake Archive* might handle this lost work in the editorial sense. Some time ago I wondered how Blake would have handled the painting in the literal sense, as it was very large and must have been unwieldy.

From my speculation came the idea for a cartoon that John Riordan has brilliantly brought to life. It was originally destined for the cover, but Morris passed away and another image seemed more appropriate there. I can't remember if I told him that I was planning a cartoon for the issue, but in a way that's the point: if you worked with him, he let you run with your ideas and trusted you not to burn the house down. I know I was looking forward to his reaction; he would undoubtedly have had something pithy to say. Now, I can only let my imagination fill in the blanks.



Right a bit..
left a bit...
no, too far!

It turns out the review wasn't the worst thing about Blake's 1809 exhibition...