

Glastonbury – sacred landscape

Scoping study2

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A discussion paper for the World Heritage Status Advisory Committee of Glastonbury Town Council at its meeting on the 15th of October 2025. Revised here in the light of comments that have been received.

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Section 1.1 - Introduction

This commission seeks to advise Glastonbury Town Council on the merits of Glastonbury as a possible inscription on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites. Potential for success has been found to be encouraging; accordingly, the study sets out the route the Council must take to secure this objective. ^A

The findings of this study are described below and summarised in the Executive Summary and the Conclusions in Chapter 4.1. This contains recommendations for further work, collaboration and development.

This study will focus on the values of Glastonbury which meet one or more of the UNESCO criteria as established under the World Heritage Convention. The town and its setting is testimony to:

- ❑ A landscape that has been sacred from earliest times;
- ❑ a flat landscape formed by periods of marine inundation with deposition of clay followed by freshwater floods encouraging the formation of layers of peat;
- ❑ evidence of neolithic society managing the fen wood, exploiting the marshes and meres leaving evidence of sophisticated carpentry;
- ❑ an astronomical observatory associated with the Tor and surrounding hills and distant high ground;
- ❑ the Lady Chapel is testimony to the early Celtic Christian Church;
- ❑ the earliest Celtic Christian monastic cemetery in Britain dating from the 5th Century
- ❑ the role of the Lady Chapel as a reliquary;
- ❑ seasonal festivals and astronomical events culminating with celebrations on the Tor;
- ❑ chapels and eremitic settlements on the holy islands;

- ❑ management of the Abbey estate highlighted in the twelve hides;
- ❑ management of pilgrims;
- ❑ the legacy of the Reformation in Henrician England and the founding of the Church of England;
- ❑ testimony to the savagery of the Dissolution of The Monasteries;
- ❑ new Liturgy and Book of Common Prayer, the erosion of Celtic beliefs and folklore;
- ❑ sustaining Celtic beliefs in stories and myths associated with Glastonbury, in particular Arthurian legends that have promoted chivalry and courtly love across Western Europe.

A sacred landscape

'Glastonbury is rare in the English religious tradition in representing a sacred landscape of multiple components, principally the abbey, the Tor and Chalice Well. It embodies the cult of 'topophilia' a term... to describe how people experience a strong sense of place and how locations become integral to identity and belonging...'

Roberta Gilchrist, 2020, ¹

The Isle of Avalon is a starting point for this study. Up to the medieval period, the area around the Tor was surrounded by water and meres, moors, marshes and fenland. Accordingly, the surrounding area is an essential part of this scoping study.

Assessment of how places, buildings, structures, archaeological treasures, rhynes (rhines) ^B and rivers contribute to the significance of the area has been undertaken. These are *'tangible attributes'*. Taken together their cumulative significance can contribute to a potential Statement of Outstanding Universal

A This commission has been a two-year study that starting in January 2024. This is Phase 1 of a proposed five phase programme taking the project up to a submission of a World Heritage nomination to UNESCO (1). This development is subject

to further phases being approved and commissioned by Glastonbury Town Council in the future.

B Note spelling of Blackwater Rhine in the 1854 OS map of 1854

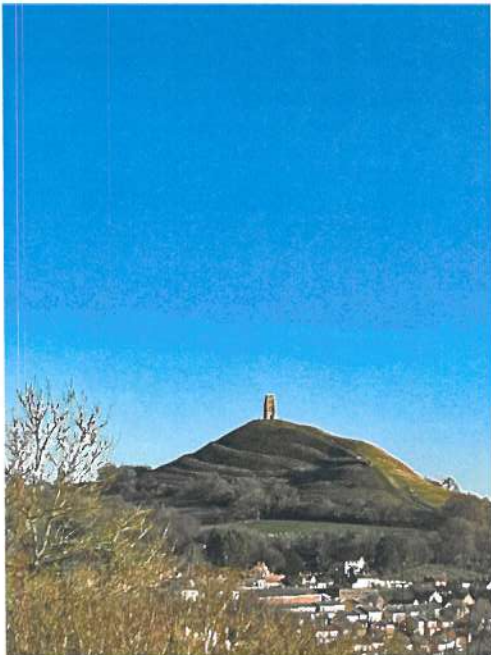


Fig. 01 The Tor dominates the Isle of Avalon

Value (OUV) as set out in the UNESCO World Heritage Operational Guidelines. (See page 7)

Myths and legends

Many of the places and features are associated with myths and legends. These are essential values of Glastonbury. Those 'intangible values' that have a clear link to the principal places and buildings in our study area have been identified. We recognise some stories are readily accepted by some people and robustly contested by others. Most legends and stories contribute to the special character and reputation of Glastonbury and its immediate area. Whilst it is likely that UNESCO may not put a great deal of weight on these myths and legends, some are of international importance and reinforce the significance of the place. They are part of the heritage of the nation.

An important intangible value that is not a legend is the testimony of Glastonbury Abbey to the Reformation in Henrician Britain and the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The Reformation had a very significant impact on the English-speaking world. From the sixteenth century the structure, liturgy and management of the Church in England and Wales was reformed and the Anglican Church took root and subsequently spread beyond Britain to the newly established colonies.

Management plan

Our recommendations stress that the Glastonbury and Somerset Councils and stakeholders in the area must bring forward a management plan or demonstrate a management regime that will respond to extraordinary pressures and change. We have highlighted the urgent need to reconcile governance and stewardship matters with respecting and sustaining the special and diverse 'spiritual world' of Glastonbury. Many of the current



Fig. 02 Profound challenges face the future of the Levels and Moors as climate changes.

and future issues facing Glastonbury, most of which have been aired during recent discussion concerning the draft Neighbourhood Plan, would exist with or without the implications of preparing a World Heritage nomination. These broader management issues are referred to in Annex C with the Town Council's Vision Statement.

The challenge that faces the future of the levels and moors of Somerset as climate changes will be profound. The paradox is that some significant archaeological remains, particularly the neolithic tracks and iron age lake villages, are drying out and will disintegrate. Remaining wooden artifacts could soon be lost forever. ^c In other areas, groundwater levels will rise impacting on agricultural produce, yields and husbandry. We are aware that some members of the many faiths, paths and beliefs in

C See footnote V in p.39

Glastonbury are 'Climate Change deniers.' That wider debate is beyond the scope of this study.

On UNESCO

The scoping study sets out the significance of the place and its heritage. We have set out the steps the Council will have to take to prepare a nomination for Glastonbury if it is to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has set out requirements to bring forward a nomination. These are outlined below in section 2.1 and in the table in the Conclusion (Section 4.1). How the UK Government is likely to respond to an assessment of Glastonbury as a potential World Heritage Site will depend on making a compelling case and satisfying UNESCO's recently introduced technical reviews and Preliminary Assessments at national and international levels.

Identifying a boundary for a potential World Heritage Site is likely to be done after a draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value has been prepared. This is an important milestone as it validates the integrity of a potential World Heritage Site.

Consultation

The study has the benefit of responses from the public following a series of open meetings where we have had conversations with individuals, stakeholders and members of the many local groups. We have given lectures and presentations to the public and several of the principal stakeholders including trusts and other bodies managing some of the attributes referred to in this document. PowerPoint presentations, displays, questionnaires, flipcharts and multi-coloured sticky notes, reports and papers have all been prepared and presented to the Glastonbury Town Council World Heritage Status Advisory Committee during the preparation of this study. Meetings have been held with the sub-committee every quarter.

In response to the amount of feedback from public meetings and requests for wider, more regular consultation, it was decided, as

a result of public demand, to establish a World Heritage Working Group. This is made up of a majority of volunteers from the local community with support from some town councillors. They are investigating independently the potential benefits and disadvantages of World Heritage Status. Members of the Working Group are undertaking their own research, consultations and visits without reference to the consultants and will present their own report for public circulation and debate towards the end of 2025. This group will then consider its role and lifespan and whether to continue with its work going forward (see Conclusions in section 4.2 and the Recommendations in section 4.3.)

It is not the role of this study to rewrite the history of Glastonbury or to advance new theories or to challenge sincerely held beliefs. The consultants have sought to understand the significance of places and features in Glastonbury, and where we can, we have related them to associated myths and legends. All these are a significant part of our national heritage and identity.

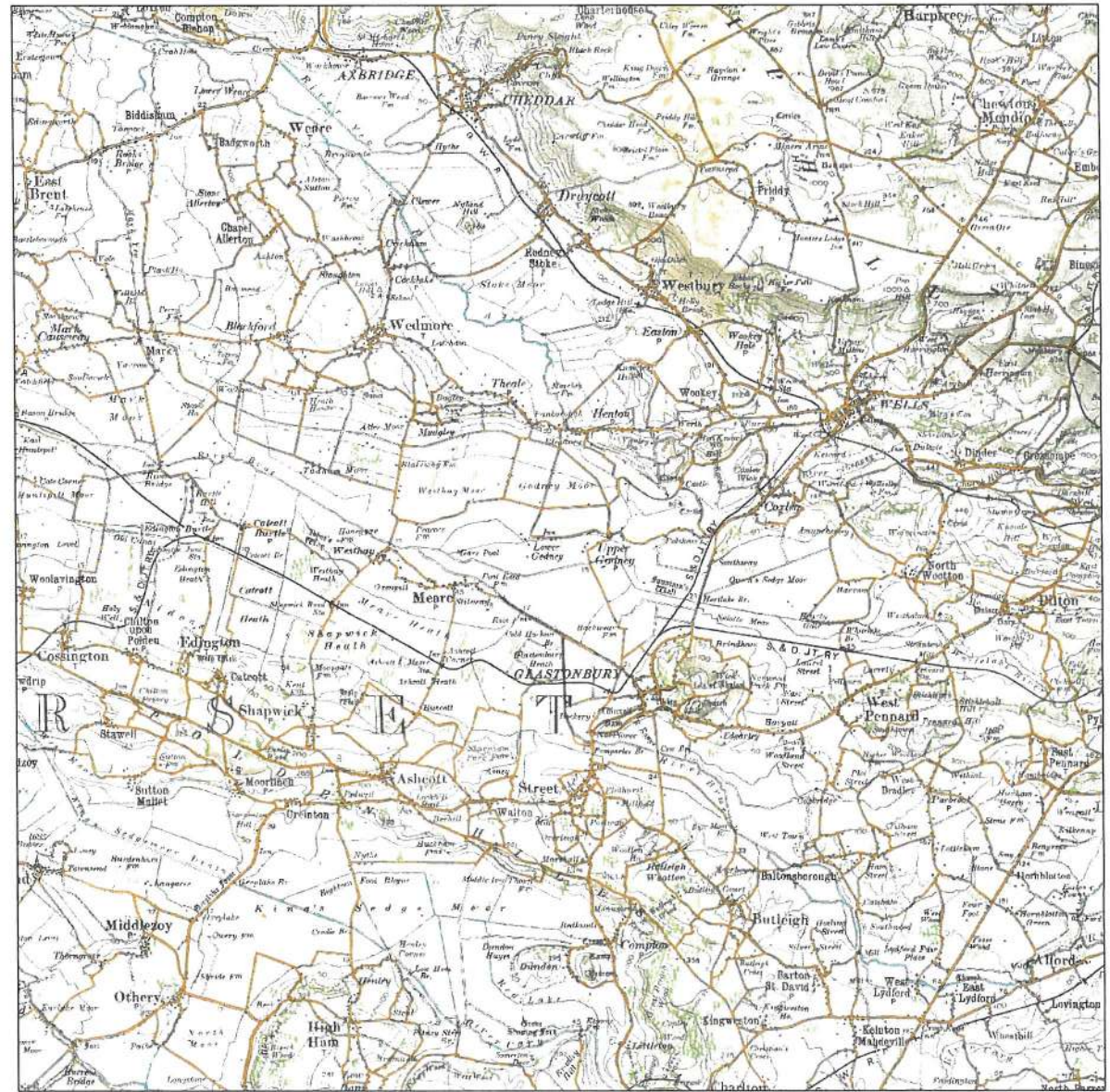


Fig. 03 The study area from an 1908 Ordnance Survey Map of 1/2 inch to a mile

Section 2.1 – On UNESCO

States party to the 1972 World Heritage Convention are bound by obligations set out in the Convention. These are to identify sites of world significance, to protect the properties, to conserve the properties, to present the values of the property and pass those values on to future generations (education). These obligations on the States Party are set out by the World Heritage Committees' *Operational Guidelines*.

The World Heritage Committee meets once a year and consists of representatives of 196 States Party. The committee is advised by its officers from the World Heritage Centre. The United Kingdom is represented by its ambassador to UNESCO and officers in The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This department represents the interests of the devolved administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as well as interests of dependent territories in the Commonwealth.

Protection of a World Heritage Site is a duty on the State Party. This is achieved through appropriate policies in the development plan of a local authority and those parts of a Management Plan for the property that are material considerations. A Management Plan is prepared by representatives of local authorities and stakeholders in the property.

The World Heritage Committee inscribes properties on its List of World Heritage Sites at its annual meeting after receiving advice on cultural properties from ICOMOS (International Council for Monuments and Sites) and for Natural Sites from IUCN (The International Union for Conservation of Nature). Before a nomination is submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the property must have been on the Tentative List of each State Party for at least a year. This list indicates those properties a State Party intends to bring forward as a potential nomination. The UK Government has decided it will select five properties for

its Tentative List every ten years and the last selection was prepared in 2023. Generally the selection process will look for properties in the Commonwealth and the devolved administrations as well as sites in England.

For a property to be considered for inclusion on UNESCO's List, the sponsoring State Party must satisfy a selection panel that the property will meet the selection criteria (outlined below) set out in the UNESCO Operational Guidelines. These require a potential World Heritage Site to meet at least one criterion. Examples of cultural sites inscribed against one criterion are identified below. The State Party must demonstrate also that the property meets the tests of authenticity and integrity and that a credible management regime is in place. This is achieved usually through a Management Plan that has been or is being prepared by the relevant local authorities and stakeholders in the property.

UNESCO's World Heritage Criteria

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has set out ten criteria by which a property can be judged to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These are discussed here and set out in Annex B. With these in mind, the attributes of the sacred landscape outlined above can be considered to meet at least two of UNESCO's Criteria.

Our recommended criteria

Criterion iii): to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared.

Glastonbury bears exceptional testimony as one of the World's sacred places reflecting a 5,000 year span of worship and

UNESCO's World Heritage Centre has published advice on what should be included in a nomination. This guidance suggests:-

- ❑ A brief synthesis of the property - Summary of factual information, property, geographical and historical context, (150 words).
- ❑ A summary of qualities, values and attributes, (150 words).
- ❑ A justification of the chosen criteria, (200 words for each criterion).
- ❑ A Statement of Integrity on the attributes at time of drafting, (200 words.)
- ❑ A Statement of Authenticity – do the attributes reflect the values, (200 words.)
- ❑ Protection and Management, set out a robust systems and plans, (200 words). An overall framework, (200 words) and specific long-term expectations, (150 words).
- ❑ The whole nomination (1450 words)

reverence to a landscape of remarkable significance to early beliefs, paganism, Druids, the Celtic Church and the wealth and power of the Catholic Church up to the Dissolution of the Monasteries which had a far-reaching global impact.

Criterion vi): to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).

Glastonbury is directly associated with events and living traditions reflecting a spiritual response to a unique landscape housing numerous beliefs, creeds and paths that remain vibrant and thriving today as in medieval and earlier times.

Criterion (iv) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;

This would only be applicable to Glastonbury if it is developed to be a nomination as a Cultural Landscape.



Fig. 04 Glastonbury from an extract from Harcourt Masters 1795 'MAP of 24 Miles round the CITY of BATH'

Section 2.2 - Reformation and Dissolution

Legacy

The ruins of the Abbey ensemble and the church of St Michael on the summit of the Tor are testimony, firstly, to the Tudor Reformation in Henrician Britain, and secondly, to the savagery of the Dissolution of the Monasteries. ^{D E}

After the refusal of Henry VIII to acknowledge the Pope as the head of the church in England, Christian worship in the then Catholic Henrician Britain changed for ever. The faithful people in Britain were no longer worshipping in common with much of Catholic Europe. James Clark has noted the week before Easter 1540, saw the end of almost a millennium of monastic life in mainland England.' ²

From the end of the fourteenth century, the culture of Europe had been changing into a world in which money and property meant everything. In this monasteries and religious orders in general receded more and more from the forefront of society. ³ Other places in Europe changed religious policies, but during the sixteenth century, England was unique in having a sequence of dramatic swings in official policy taking place over the course of a relatively short space of time. ⁴

MacCulloch writes *'It is impossible to understand Modern Europe without understanding sixteenth century upheavals in Latin Christianity.'* ⁵ He continues *'The story of the sixteenth century Reformation is not only relevant to the little continent of Europe. At the same time as Latin Christian Europe's common culture was falling apart, Europeans were establishing their power in the Americas and on the coast of Asia and Africa; so all their*

- D The brutal murder of Abbot Whiting shocked the nation and the Church in Europe**
E There are four English monastic sites inscribed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage Site. Namely (i) Canterbury Cathedral, St



GLASTONBURY ABBEY, /// SOMERSETSHIRE. ^{1786 engr.}

Published according to Act of Parliament, by Alex^r. Hogg, N^o 10, Paternoster Row.

Fig. 05 Ruins of Glastonbury Abbey in a print of 1786 by Alexander Hogg

religious divisions were reproduced there.' MacCulloch continues *'Both the division and the original inheritance continue to shape Europe's effect on the rest of the modern world.'* ⁶

'England's astonishing eruption of religious creativity in the 1640s and 1650s left behind a kaleidoscope of identities, many of which have persisted and spread across the globe.'

Alec Ryrie, 2017, p.13 ⁷

Augustine's Abbey and St. Martin's Church; (ii) The Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey, including St Margaret's Church; (iii) Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey; and Durham Castle and Cathedral

With the Counter Reformation, European countries turned on Britain and sought to return the country back into the Catholic fold. At the same time in Britain, there was no longer a uniform and common faith and creed, and Henry's new-found Protestant 'Trumpian' religious reforms, did not ensure a common faith across his realm. The fragile religious climate of the sixteenth century introduced a great number of independent Christian faiths including Anabaptists and Sacramentalists. This broad range of 'Christian faiths' has persisted to the present day. ^F

The ruined structures of the abbey are testimony to the change of sixteenth century Britain from looking towards Europe, to looking west across the Atlantic and further afield to colonies and trading partners in Africa, the Indian subcontinent and then Australia and New Zealand. British trade and influence brought with it the Anglican church and introduced this to new cultures. ⁸ The Dissolution of the Monasteries meant the end of an art form in England. '*Gothic Art ... came to an end overnight if only because churches were not being built any longer.*' ⁹ The Reformation brought to an end the Gothic tradition of church building and with it the decorative arts that adorned the medieval church and abbey.

The Reformation and Dissolution of the Monasteries are exceptional testimony to the introduction of the Anglican Church tradition. This had a profound influence on worship and governance in the English speaking world, that is its structure, administration and liturgy.

F Continuing legends of Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Thorn have preserved the tradition of the origin of an apostolic Church surviving in Glastonbury.

'...the Reformation took a great deal of magic out of religion, leaving the astrologers and cunning men to fill much of the vacuum. But the sectarians brought back much of the magic which their earlier Tudor predecessors had energetically cast out.

Keith Thomas, 1971 ¹⁰

'The legacy of the Reformation resulted in the loss of folklore, old beliefs and a reliance on magic and superstition although wells and spring retained reputations for healing.'

Alexandra Walsham 2011 ¹¹

A political casualty of the Abbey's demise was the cult of kings. In Glastonbury, the graves and monuments to the Saxon Kings, Edmund I, ⁶ Edmund Ironside and Edgar (and perhaps Arthur) were all lost. ¹² The ruins are testimony also to the Reformation in Britain and the creation of the Anglican Church, the Book of Common Prayer and a Bible translated into English. Hayman notes through the period of the Reformation there was a 'cultural shift' when '*...the image and the object gave way to the word. And the word in English at that.*' ¹³ Hayman could have added the word was a printed word, when more of the population were literate relying no longer on the Latin words of monks or friars. ¹⁴

'... the Middle Ages did not come to a grinding halt either in 1536-38, 1550 or indeed 1480 - 1580. Like the Dissolution which formed part of it, the Reformation was the expression of beliefs and attitudes that had been changing for some time – and would, moreover, continue to change.'

Francis Prior, 2006, ¹⁵

G St Edmund was a Saxon King who died in Norfolk in 869. After he had been canonised he became a cult figure and important for successive Saxon kings. He was for time the patron saint of England. (See Mann & Glason, 2007, pp.9-10)

Section 2.3 - On sacred

'The abbey was renowned as the holiest and most numinous place in Britain...'

Geoffrey Ashe, 1957, ¹⁶

On sacred.

In 2024 there were thirty properties inscribed on the World Heritage List that had an association with sacred when explaining the Outstanding Universal Value of the site. (Appendix A sets out a few examples of these properties). It is most likely that site managers of the 190 religious, holy and spiritual properties that have been inscribed on the list, if asked, would agree that their sites are also 'sacred'.

Of the many definitions of sacred, the Oxford English Dictionary states; *sacred is connected to God (or gods) or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserving veneration*'. For example Richard Hayman noted the 'ealde chirche' in Glastonbury was considered from the very beginning to have '*... possessed a mysterious fragrance of divine sanctity so that despite its mean appearance great reverence for it wafted throughout the whole country...*' ¹⁷

Throughout history many people, texts, relics, animals, places and buildings, landscapes including mountains, rivers, lakes and trees have been revered as being sacred. '*Over and over again these sacred places are connected with, or are what the western world classes as 'natural' features of a 'landscape' such as mountain peaks, springs, rivers, woods and caves.*' ¹⁸ Roger Sherman Loomis noted a pattern of powerful beliefs so that '*... islands not far from the British Coast were regarded as homes of the various gods of the sun*' ¹⁹

H Words linked with sacredness include numinous, divine, hallowed, cherished, religious, revered, solemn, spiritual and consecrated.

Faith

Sacred can also describe a feeling in the way individuals respond to people, places and objects and wish to worship or declare as spiritual or holy. ^H There are many places that are held to be sacred. They are sacred to different faiths, creeds or persuasions for different reasons. They are intangible attributes or values of the place. These values call for respect and understanding from the local community, pilgrims, visitors and managers. Together their cumulative significance can contribute to a Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) when considering the preparation of a World Heritage nomination.

The recognition of sacredness appears to be a very personal response to a place or thing. For Desmond Hawkins '*The Tor is an island of the uplifted spirit*', ²⁰ Fay Weldon felt the Tor was a certain *nexus of spiritual power*. ²¹ Kathy Jones describes the Isle of Avalon '*... a magical land lying far to the west across the waters veiled in a mystery*'. ²² What is sacred to one person is not necessarily sacred to the next although highly organised religions influence and manage these expectations in their congregations through liturgy, teaching and preaching.

Ronald Hutton has observed '*Every human society until the eighteenth century believed that it was surrounded and permeated by a spirit world with which it had to deal.*' ²³ From neolithic times, as long ago as 3,800 BCE, many votive offerings have been discovered beneath or adjacent to the Sweet Track located close to Glastonbury. This is evidence of a recognition and need to acknowledge a mystical or sacred response to a place, a landscape or a route of travel. This reverence developed through the ages from nature worship, paganism, and Druidism. They influenced Celtic Christianity. The sacred nature of the site

of Glastonbury Abbey and the first Christian Church in Britain, be it from the 1st, 5th or 7th century CE, is held by many residents and pilgrims today to be sacred. These other sites in the town include Brides Mound, the Tor, Wearyall Hill, the Chalice Well and White Spring.

Continuity

'At Glastonbury, and there alone, there was continuity with the original British Church. At Glastonbury, and there alone, Anglo-Saxon Kings recognised a dignity overriding all distinctions of race and language. They treated the British sanctuary with reverence, enriched it themselves, and used it to bring the peoples together for the first Time.'

Geoffrey Ashe, 1957 ²⁴

'Glastonbury has experienced rebirth as a Christian Centre. ... It has also witnessed spirit communications, pop-mystical festivals, UFO sightings, proclamations of an Aquarian New Age by latter day prophets. A resurgent mystique had made it for many, an alternative spiritual capital claimed not only by Christians but by a medley of neo mystics ...'

Geoffrey Ashe, 1982 ²⁵

Ronald Hutton has observed an important qualification when he noted

'The Twentieth Century, indeed, restored Glastonbury to a position of spiritual power as great as that which it occupied in the middle ages, but with a significant difference. At that period it represented a single religion, and a simple denomination within that. Now there is the greatest diversity of faiths to be visibly expressed in any comparatively small area of Britain...'

Ronald Hutton, 2003 (2013) ²⁶

New Age

Sacred is a value embraced today by New Age groups, and those groups identified with the alternative society or counterculture. Back in 1971, Patrick Benham was the first (in the modern era) to express in print the idea that people were arriving in Glastonbury in response to a spiritual call. ^{27 28}



Fig. 06 Bride's Mound is a special place for Celtic Saints and present-day followers of St Brigid

Spirituality often relates to a range of values and beliefs including mysticism, alternative healing and well-being, the occult, mythology, spiritual energy and many other elements. ²⁹

In 1988 the poet, Jo Waterworth, wrote *'We were all called to Glastonbury for a great task, a function we can perform. We have been prepared for this all our lives. We have been here, waiting, for many years, we cannot leave until we are done. We are something nameless, big and important, beyond our understanding, vital to Earth and Humanity. We were called to Glastonbury because we are an ancient power, what we do here can affect the rest of the world. We are very powerful...'* ³⁰

'The reader is left in little doubt as to Glastonbury's unique spiritual status in England...'

Tim Hopkinson Ball, 2012, p.35 ³¹

Section 2.4 - On pilgrimage

'When April brings its buds and showers', said Chaucer,
thane longen folk to goon on pilgrimages...'
Simon Jenkins, 2021, 'Britain's Pilgrim Places,'³²



Fig. 07 The ford close to Beckery and shown on Emanuel Bowen's map of c.1750



Fig. 08 Katherine Maltwood's Pilgrim's Path

On pilgrims and pilgrimage

A hotel in the High Street reminds passers-by that the business of the medieval town of Glastonbury was attracting pilgrims to the abbey. This was not only a function of meeting the spiritual needs of pilgrims but it was good business for the abbey and the town. The hotel is the George and Pilgrim Hotel, built about 1475, formerly a pilgrim's inn or *hospitium* of the abbey. It is 'among the most sumptuous pre-Reformation English inns'³³ and is linked to the abbey precinct by an underground tunnel.

A pilgrimage is a journey to a place associated with something or someone well known and respected. Simon Jenkins notes the Pilgrimage Trust defines pilgrimage as 'a form of cultural heritage that promotes holistic well-being for the public benefit.'³⁴ James Carley suggests 'Theologians envisaged it (pilgrimage) as a form of penance and self-mortification ... Through pilgrimage one could transform the linear human progress onwards to death and distinguish it into a circular journey where the heavenly New Jerusalem was the ultimate goal.'³⁵

Jonathon Sumption has discussed reasons for undertaking a pilgrimage to be in five groups:

- i) journeys of peregrination (i.e. wandering and particularly those undertaken by Irish saints);³⁶
- ii) journeys intended to venerate a relic at the destination;
- iii) those associated with a journey to secure healing;
- iv) journeys required as penance ('pilgrimages were not imposed on penitents until the sixth century when the whole notion of penance was transformed by Irish missionaries);³⁷
- v) and journeys associated with a cult for instance the Marial (Marian) Cult; and

vi) journeys associated with a cult³⁸

Victor and Edith Turner distinguish prototypical pilgrimages. Those pilgrimages to ancient pilgrimage sites are 'dramatically manifest in their symbolism' such as The Holy Land, Jerusalem and Rome for Christianity and Mecca for Islam.³⁹ They distinguish pilgrimages to destinations where there are 'traces of syncretism with older religious beliefs and symbols ... with its continuing Celtic pagan overtones.'⁴⁰ This is likely to be the case for pilgrimages to Glastonbury where the early Church had retained its Celtic roots in legends associated with the place.

Roger Sherman Loomis notes that sick people flocked to the shrine of St Joseph from 'Wells, Yeovil and Ilchester, and were miraculously cured...'⁴¹ Other pilgrims reached Glastonbury from greater distances. When promoting pilgrimages to Glastonbury, the Abbey used their distant estates and land holdings to support a network of chapels and hostels to provide rest and refuge overnight. This is similar to where peregrinos stay in *albergue* or *refugios* on the Camino of St. James in Galicia.

Many pilgrims coming from Ireland and the west are likely to have come by boat. A less expensive route from Ireland will have been after landing at a port (say Bridgwater) walking along the Polden Hills to reach a ford across the River Brue close to Beckery. Here the chapel is likely to have acted as a 'slipper chapel' for pilgrims to stay overnight before they proceeded on slippers to shrines in the Abbey or the Tor. On a pilgrimage route from the north through Malmesbury, a cluster of pilgrim's hostels and chapels can be found at Chapel Plaister near Corsham. Around 1460 a chapel, dormitory and priest's room had been built here. Two miles south of this is a former medieval hospice dedicated to St. Auden,⁴² adjacent to South Wraxall Manor House. This belonged

to Glastonbury Abbey. Three miles south of South Wraxall, in Bradford-on-Avon, is the hospice of St. Mary. This provided hospitality and accommodation for Glastonbury pilgrims. The hospice is on a hill called Tory. Aubrey described it as “*the finest hermitage I have seen in England, several rooms and a very neat chapel in freestone.*”⁴³ The district is called Ladywell probably because a spring issues from a cave below St. Mary’s chapel.

In her analysis of the Glastonbury Zodiac, Katherine Maltwood presents a rectangular circuit of paths and roads she called the ‘Pilgrims Bath’ the west and east sides of the rectangular circuit are likely to be pilgrims routes to Glastonbury from the south. However Maltwood suggests signs of the zodiac are allocated to section of the ‘Pilgrims Path’ so that the whole circuit may present a processional route for pilgrims passing significant shrines or chapels at Baltonsborough and Lantokay (Street).⁴⁴

The early Church

Pilgrims had been coming to Glastonbury before the Normans conquered Britain. A monk known only as ‘B’ writing in about 1000 on his ‘*Life of Dunstan*’ noted ‘*The Irish peregrini, as well as other flocks of the faithful sought the aforementioned place called Glastonbury with great veneration,*’⁴⁵ A hall-mark of Irish monastic life was ‘*Peregrino*’, a pilgrimage and ceaseless earthly wandering.’⁴⁶

The chapel on the hallowed ground of Beckery attracted pilgrims from South Wales and Ireland and they arrived by boat.^{1 47} Archaeological investigations on the low hill have shown through radiometric dating, that monastic life began here in the fifth century and was in place before the Saxon kings conquered Somerset. This is the earliest monastic Celtic Christian cemetery

in Britain dating from the fifth century. The archaeologist, Bannerjee writes that the Beckery was a significant place of pilgrimage and claims ‘*Beckery plays a pivotal role in understanding the Christianisation process in the British Isles and the medieval pilgrim economy ...*’⁴⁸

Holy Springs

Before visiting a Christian chapel, Celtic people would have travelled to venerate or celebrate events at ‘holy springs’. These were very likely to be mineral springs or more rarely a warm spring. These were associated with Celtic beliefs and tradition. Three springs that rise in Glastonbury would have been treated with especial reverence. The spring that rises alongside the Lady Chapel and its predecessors would have predated the first church here and is likely to have been the reason for building the ‘*ealde chirche*’ alongside the spring. Masonry has been found here that could be Roman.

The Red Spring or ‘Bloody Spring’ rises in Chalice Well Garden. The spring had been known as the Bloody Spring but is known now as the Chalice Well. This is a chalybeate spring, saturated with iron salts. In the eighteenth century, the spring was the focus of a mineral spa. A shallow pool below the spring was known as Pilgrims Pool (or Pilgrims Bath) and this was constructed first as an immersion pool as part of the spa.⁴⁹ Along with many other chalybeate springs across Europe, these mineral springs were held to be special on account of the



Fig. 09 A reason for a pilgrimage is likely to venerate a relic. This is a German reliquary monstrance from Braunschweig made in 1484 in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Note the form of the receptacle for a relic or the consecrated host on the top of the stand. Compare this with the form of the Lady Chapel as a reliquary and illustrated on page 40 below.

¹ The Irish connection led to the place being called ‘Little Ireland’ or Beccu-eeriu and then Beckery.



Fig. 10 The Karoussos Icons near the Shrine of Our Lady of Glastonbury in the Church of Our Lady of St. Mary of Glastonbury.

therapeutic properties of the water. Not far from the chalybeate spring, the White Spring rises with water saturated with lime salts.

'All pilgrimages appealed to a universal desire to wash away sin by simple ritual act, but more so than a pilgrimage to the Virgin ... its appeal was to a popular audience.' ... 'Marian shrines were almost exclusively patronised by ordinary people, and although they were joined in the late middle ages by more august pilgrims, the shrines never lost their popular character.'

Sumption, 1975, p.276 ⁵⁰

Cults

The popularising the cult of the Virgin during the eleventh and twelfth centuries resulted in such a 'cult' becoming associated with the place. Secondly, the shrine then became the principal means by which devotion was expressed by many people in the area. So that to them, the Virgin was venerated with local identity. In the case of Glastonbury, the shrine became dedicated to *Our Lady of Glastonbury*. ⁵¹ This is the case in the catholic church in Magdalen Street.



Fig. 11 King Arthur's grave in the abbey grounds

Abbot Bere sought to encourage the veneration of St. Joseph of Arimathea by commissioning extensive building works to the Lady Chapel. This involved excavating a crypt where there was none before, and then, building a new and a higher floor to create two chapels. St. Joseph was celebrated in the crypt alongside the holy well – now called Joseph's Well. Above was the chapel dedicated to the Virgin – *Our Lady of Glastonbury*. Both chapels housed many relics 'close packed'.

'In visiting Glastonbury, its ground seeded with saints and heroes, the pilgrim must have felt that he stood near the very soul of England.'

John Adair, 1978, ⁵²

Legends and pilgrimage

Victor and Edith Turner have noted that major pilgrimage centres became the focus and sources of devotional literature. At the same time, the source of and sustenance of associated myths and legends arise quite late in the history of the pilgrimage centre. ⁵³ They have written:- '*Legends cluster around a pilgrimage's ending*' for example Canterbury and Walsingham. ⁵⁴

The status of Glastonbury rested on two legends. The first concerns Joseph of Arimathea who is held to have arrived in Glastonbury and founded the first church in Christendom. The second legend concerns King Arthur who was buried in Glastonbury and this defines the town. The two legends are connected and it is likely that they may have been invented by the monks but the legends proved to be useful and were promoted by the abbey. ⁵⁵ The remains of King Arthur and his queen, Guinevere were discovered and then Arthur was interred near the High Altar. This was likely to have been stage-managed as a political act but the newly buried King attracted new pilgrims.

The Turners wrote '*... modest major pilgrimage centres have become the foci and sources of popular devotional literature ... Often we have good historical records as well as events relating to shrines ... these records can be compared with legends, myths and products of both 'folk' and' high culture ... legends and myths account for a pilgrimage that sometimes arise quite late in its history.*' ⁵⁶

'... till once again, in the cycle of time, Avalon is revered as a holy place and pilgrims once more visit her shrine with prayers.'

Dion Fortune, 1934 ⁵⁷

After the Dissolution

Alexandra Washam has recognized that there is '*plentiful evidence that people of all social ranks continue to frequent hallowed places that have been vandalised or abandoned in the course of the long Reformation.*' ⁵⁸ This has continued into the present time. Similarly Roberta Gilchrist has noted a continuing interest in Glastonbury from New Age pilgrims she calls '*spiritual seekers – Avalonians.*' ⁵⁹

The Glaston Centre has recognised that a new form of pilgrimage to Glastonbury and the town is an interesting example of this form of pilgrimage. In the medieval period the abbey and associated sacred places were a great centre of Christian pilgrimage. This ended in 1539 with the suppression of the Abbey. Now there are annual pilgrimages of the Anglican and Catholic churches. Alongside these Christian pilgrimages, individuals from a wide variety of faiths and beliefs are drawn to the town for a pilgrimage of their own. ⁴

J These include processions to celebrate Imbolc from the Chalice Well and the White Spring to Brides Moun d. At Beltaine there is a procession to and from the Tor. At Lugnasadh, the goddesses

have a procession through the town and at Samhain there is a Zombie Walk. Close to the Celtic quarter days two dragons process through the town.

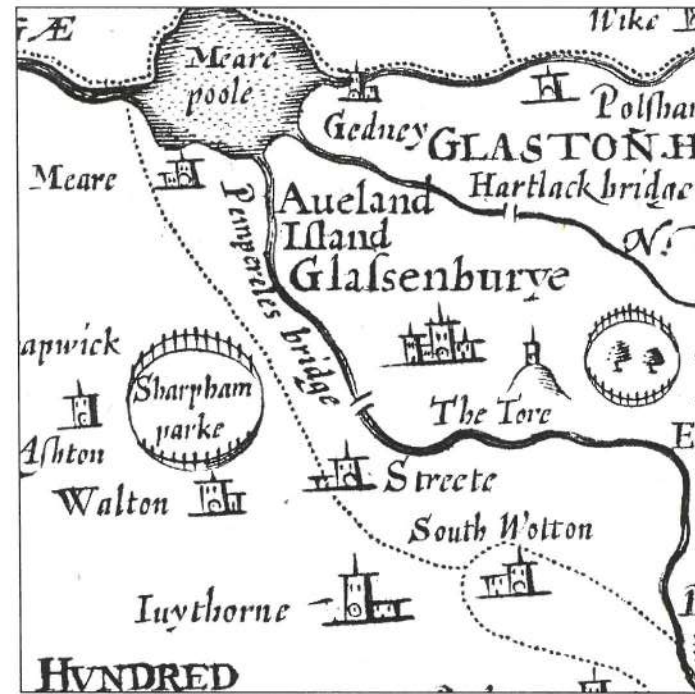


Fig. 12 Pomparles Bridge from which the Excalibur was thrown to the Lady of the Lake from John Speed's map of Somerset of 1610

Unlike sacred places devoted to a single special religion Glastonbury is a place where many spiritual paths are represented. In 2007, the Glastonbury Pilgrim Reception Centre was established to provide help and support for pilgrims and visitors. They take the view that there is no one way for a pilgrim to complete their visit, it may be on the Tor or in the Abbey grounds or walking in the surrounding landscape setting to the town.^{60 61}

Kathryn Rowntree discusses neo-pagan pilgrimages and their association with sacred sites. She notes a similar relationship of Australian Aborigine with the earth. She has observed that

pilgrims became attuned to nature and communed with nature in sacred dialogue'.⁶²



Fig. 13 The Glastonbury area from John Speed's 1610 map of Somerset

Section 2.5 - Myths and legends

'They (legends) were magnificent in themselves and part of the heritage of the nation...'

Hutton, 2003 (2013), ⁶³

On myths and legends

Celia Fiennes visited Glastonbury in 1698. She saw what was left of the abbey and threw stones into the cellar in the ruins and heard a 'great echo'. A Glastonbury resident, told her the echo **had come** from the devil who was guarding his treasure. This account was a local story told to visitors at the end of the seventeenth century. Now the devil is an anecdote and a footnote in local history. However, there are legends concerning King Arthur and the Quest for the Grail that have more currency and are significant. These legends are part of the heritage of the nation. **They** are a caul that binds the Glastonbury community together and sustains the reputation and economy of the town.

A myth is a traditional story and especially the early history of a people. It explains some natural phenomena, typically involving supernatural beings or events. A myth is inextricably interwoven with history. ⁶⁴ G.K. Chesterton believed that in Glastonbury the myth is more important than the history. ⁶⁵ A legend is a traditional story, sometimes popularly regarded as historical but not authenticated (for instance the legend of King Arthur). A legend has power and a capacity to ignite passion and desire. ⁶⁶ Both concepts are different from 'sacred'. Sacred is connected to God (or gods) or dedicated to a religious purpose and so deserves veneration. The visit of St Brigid may be more than a myth or legend, because this account can be supported with testimony and the fabric of a church albeit in ruins below ground. ⁶⁷

Four legends have established the reputation of Glastonbury. ⁶⁸ The first concerns stories of a British warlord with associations

with Glastonbury and these may have been handed down from post-Roman times. ⁶⁹ The second concerns a series of romances emerging by the twelfth century. These relate to the '*Quest for The Grail*' and the first was written by a courtier in the Court in Poitiers. The author was a troubadour, Chrétien de Troyes, who was writing in 1174. By the thirteenth century, accounts of Joseph of Arimathea emerged in France and were written first by Robert de Boron by 1200. In England, an account of the history of Glastonbury was written by William of Malmesbury from c.1129 and finished in c.1133. ⁷⁰ The first published account of the Holy Thorn emerged much later in the seventeenth century. These legends may have been created or elaborated on by monks in the Abbey, but are likely to have been enriched by misunderstandings or poor translations by Breton troubadours who were wandering across Europe spreading these romances.

For this scoping study we have looked at these four legends and believe they may be regarded to be of universal significance and could inform a draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV). These legends are particularly significant and are an essential part of England's heritage. They continue to act as a magnet to Glastonbury for a range of religions and faiths.

- i. Arthurian legends include:-
 - a) vision by Arthur of Mary and Christ;
 - b) death of Arthur; (the Lady of the Lake);
 - c) the messianic hope that Arthur will return;
- ii. The Quest for the Grail (Knights of the Round Table);
- iii. Founding legends (Joseph of Arimathea);
- iv. The Holy Thorn.

'King Arthur is the most celebrated of British Literary heroes. For over a thousand years he has been immortalised in poetry and art..'

Andrew Beattie, 2020, p.1 ⁷¹



Fig. 14 The Round Table in Winchester Castle

Legendary King Arthur

The stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table are one of the most well known in the English language. There are several fifth century British warlords recorded with names similar to Arthur. Arthur can be thought of as a real person but with a mythological reputation. This reputation was created first by

Welsh and Breton bards drawing from the Celtic tradition including the concept of the Otherworld. This pagan reputation survived the arrival of Christianity. In history, Arthur was held to be a Christian. The Plantagenet Kings of England annexed him and claimed an Arthurian succession. Then romancers on both sides of the Channel transformed him into legend.⁷² The legend drew from Celtic tradition of an afterlife creating a messianic figure who would return and restore Britain's Golden Age.⁷³

Arthurian legends raised the profile and reputation of Glastonbury in medieval times and again in the twentieth century. Accounts from post-Roman England and Wales tell of a British warlord associated with Glastonbury. Legends in themselves do not establish conclusively there was a King Arthur. Nevertheless, myths and legends have established a putative link between a British legendary king and Glastonbury. There can be no doubt that a powerful British war-lord occupied a camp at Cadbury Castle at the time the beleaguered British were resisting the incoming pagan Saxons.⁷⁴

In 1191 the skeleton of a tall man was reputedly excavated from a deep grave in the Monks' Cemetery close to the holiest part of the Abbey ensemble. This orchestrated discovery of this possible grave of Arthur may have been political theatre intended to consolidate the primacy of the Angevin throne at a time when Welsh militants were expecting Arthur to return. The certain burial of Arthur would quell Welsh and Celtic suspicions who saw Arthur as 'the once and only king'.⁷⁵

Alongside was a skeleton of a woman reputedly with fair hair. The monks claimed these to be the remains of King Arthur and his Queen, Guinivere. The King and his Queen Guinivere were

K Subsequent veneration of the grave of (King) Arthur has reinforced the dissemination of and form of Arthurian legends.



Fig. 15 Local tradition holds that on certain nights the phantom riders of Wild Hunt fly along *Arthur's Hunting Path*.

reinterred in the Abbey, in a specially built black marble tomb, near the altar.

Two other legends make a close connection between King Arthur and Glastonbury. The first tells of Arthur reaching a chapel in a forest. He sleeps in the chapel and experiences a vision of Saint Mary holding the infant Christ.⁷⁶ This chapel of the legend is held to be the chapel at Beckery and this is thought to be the first Christian chapel in Britain.⁷⁷ Another version of the story tells of King Arthur sleeping in a slipper chapel at or near the foot of Wearyall Hill.

The second legend concerns the death of Arthur after the battle of Baden. The mortally wounded king is taken to Avalon where he is cared for by several maidens. The dying Arthur instructs Sir Bedivere to return his sword *The Excalibur* to the Lady of the Lake. First, Sir Bedivere fails in the task but eventually throws the sword to the hand of the Lady of the Lake that rises from the water. The 'lake' is held to have to be the River Brue where it passes under the bridge, Pomparles Bridge (or the Pons Perilous.)⁷⁸ Archaeological evidence from sites in the Levels and fens elsewhere, has identified symbolic deposition into meres and rivers of precious artifacts (swords and bowls) by Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures.⁷⁹ Later historical evidence records King Richard I giving the sword *Excalibur* to Tancred, the King of Sicily in part exchange for a fleet of ships.⁸⁰

The grave of Arthur was 'discovered' by monks in 1191 the Monks' Cemetery and then in the presence of King Edward I and his Queen were reinterred in front of the altar in the Great Church. This is likely to have been a politically inspired event, stage managed to demonstrate to those who believed that Arthur was sleeping still and would one day return.^L These believers subscribed to local tradition or were Celtic sympathisers in

L The grave of Arthur may have been discovered to raise money for the rebuilding of the Abbey church the fire of 1184.

Wales. An essential part of Celtic tradition accepted the rebirth of a god or hero who would return to restore the glory of an earlier time.⁸¹ Arthur is the sleeping king who will awaken to restore the true Spirit of Britain.⁸²

Wild Hunt

Local tradition tells of a demonic '*Wild Hunt*' of phantom riders and their pack of hounds sometimes led by King Arthur riding along a straight path between Cadbury Castle and the Tor. Local legends hold the Tor is hollow and home to fairies and other underworld life. Part of this route is a path known as *King Arthur's Path*, and known also as *Arthur's Hunting Path* or *Arthur's Causeway*. The phantom phenomenon takes place every seven years when the full moon rises at midwinter. The supernatural horsemen collect the souls of the recent dead. Significance of this phenomenon is that the story reappears in folklore across many parts of Europe. In France, the Hunt has been known from the twelfth century as '*La Chase Artu*'. Welsh tradition identifies the Hunt with Gwynn ap Nudd, King of the Otherworld. Elsewhere in Europe, the Hunt may be known as Oden's Hunt.⁸³

'It is an outstanding phenomenon that belief in Arthur's survival was still living 1,300 years after his death.'

Roger Loomis 1959⁸⁴

Springs and the geology below the Tor have created natural hollows and caves. This has given some credibility to beliefs that the Tor is a gateway to the Otherworld (or Underworld). Some believe that this is the refuge of faeries and underworld life. For some Gwynn ap Nudd, the King of the Otherworld lives in the Tor. In the medieval account of St. Collen, the Glastonbury monk climbed the hill to live an eremitic life on the Tor. He is reputed to

have had a vision of the king of the underworld, Gwynn ap Nudd. The monk banished him with a sprinkle of holy water. ^{M 85}

Another legend is supported with archaeology found on the summit of the hill. Rahtz excavated remains on the Tor in 1964. He concluded from the evidence that the top of the hill had been occupied in the fifth and sixth centuries. He found evidence of an early Christian foundation and concluded this could have been a very early Christian monastery. Other evidence pointed also to a secular settlement defended by the inaccessible steep slopes. Arthurian legend tells of the King of Somerset, King Melwas had kidnapped Arthur's wife Guinivere (Gwenhwyfar) holding her hostage on the summit, whilst Arthur laid siege at the bottom of the hill.⁸⁶ Legend tells us that the real-life monk from Glastonbury abbey (or Lantokay), Saint Gildas, negotiated a peace settlement to free the hostage, Guinivere.

'In its long history ... it has succeeded in establishing itself both as a reality touched by the miraculous and as a miracle based on reality...'

John Cowper Powis, 1933 (1975) ⁸⁷

Quest for the Grail

The concept of the Grail is a legacy of Celtic tradition. Celtic legends describe a 'caldron of plenty' found in the Otherworld. ⁸⁸ The Grail is considered to be the key to understanding Glastonbury. The quest romances are a medley of Celtic themes adapted to the ideas of Medieval France. ⁸⁹ Legends of the Grail are semi pagan but one is semi-Christian. ⁹⁰ Arthur does not embark on the quest. There is no Christian legend or account of Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail and this is the creation of

romance and not of genuine tradition. Accordingly, the theory of a Christian origin of the story of the Grail breaks down. ⁹¹

In Celtic tradition the Grail (or Graal) was a wide spacious platter capable of holding a boar's head or a salmon and later held to be a cup or chalice or krater. Then by the thirteenth century, Joseph of Arimathea is associated with two cruets that contained the blood and sweat of Christ.⁹² The earliest datable Grail story is from 1174 and ten years before the Great Fire in the Abbey. It features in a romance by Chrétien de Troyes entitled '*Contes del Graal*' or '*Perceval*'. There is no Christian symbolism here. After this the most widely read and influential group of Arthurian prose romances is called the '*Vulgate Cycle*'. Here there are several versions of the quest and these were written by Breton and French authors although other versions were prepared in Italy, Spain and Malta. The German version '*Parzifal*' was written late in the series and has a structure of its own. There is little consistency between them and there are plenty of contradictions.

The monks in Glastonbury Abbey were capable of fabricating stories of the Grail in order to further sanctify the abbey, but stories of the *Quest* were primarily the work of French and other European romancers. In England the quest for the grail is marginal. The French versions generally describe the journeys of Knights of the Round Table in search of the Grail and this is held to be in Corbenic Castle and guarded by the Fisher King. This is Celtic tradition passed down. In some respects the *Quest* reflects the travels of the peregrini, the monks traveling across medieval Europe before monasteries became established. King Arthur does not take part in any of the journeys. Only Sir Galahad

M Gwynn-ap Nudd (Lord Annwn) is the Lord of the Otherworld. He is held to ride out on Samhain (Halloween) to collect the souls of recent dead. Some accounts state Arthur leads the Wild Hunt along a straight path between Cadbury Castle to the Tor. The

Hunt is accompanied by a pack of white hounds. Access to the underworld is across red and White Streams. These are found at Chalice Well and the White Spring thereby indicating an entrance to the Otherworld and Gwynn ap Nudd.

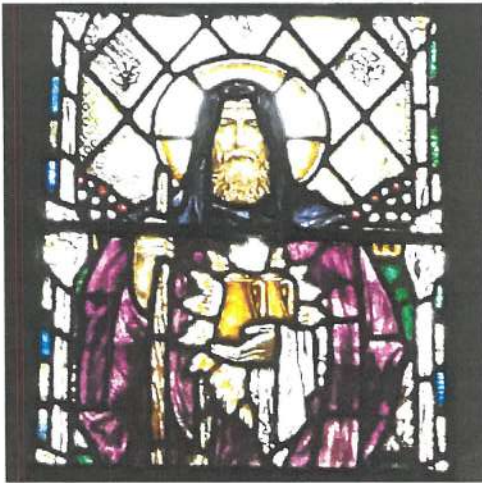


Fig. 16 Two cruets held by St Joseph as portrayed in a glass window in the Church of St John The Baptist.

overcame the trials of the quest and reached the Grail. The quest romances promoted chivalry, manners and courtly love. The French version of *Perlesvaus* alludes to a visit to Glastonbury by the Knight Sir Lancelot.

Robert de Boron established a Christian connection with the Grail in his book, '*Joseph of Arimathea*'; written in the early twelfth or thirteenth century. The theory of sanctification of the story is possibly through the influence of Glastonbury Abbey.⁹³ Boron could have had contact with the monks of Glastonbury or with the abbey.⁹⁴

The stories or romances are not a sequence. They are presented as branches around a central theme. John Cowper Powis considered they have come to be part of '*... the poetry of our race, stained, died and impregnated the atmosphere of this particular spot but has associated itself with every detail of its local history.*'⁹⁵

*'It was Christmas at Camelot – King Arthur's Court
Where the great and good of the land had gathered
All the righteous lords of the ranks of the Round Table
From 'Gawain and the Green Knight'
Simon Armitage(trans). 2007 (2009)*

An early prose version of *Morte D' Arthur* written by an unknown author in 1400 is held in the library of Lincoln Cathedral. In this '*Alliterative Morte D'Arthur*', the author describes the gory military campaigns of the Knights of the Round Table across Europe and is not a quest for the Grail.⁹⁶ A separate and anonymous poem written about the same time, is a story of one of the knights, Sir Gawain. He encounters the Green Knight. When the loyalty and chivalry of Gawain is tested. The first English printed version of '*Morte d'Arthur*' was published in 1485 by Sir Thomas Mallory.

N Deposits of galena were found in the Mendip Hills. Roman occupation administration exploited lead and silver mines near Charterhouse. These were operating from at least 49AD {see: Foyle and Pevsner, 2011, '*Buildings of England, Somerset: North*

He relied on the French '*Quest del Saint Graal*' as one of his sources.⁹⁷ This version has been associated with Glastonbury as well as being the basis of versions in contemporary literature and films.

In his poems and the twelve narrative poems, '*The Idylls of the King*', the then poet laureate, Alfred Lord Tennyson, published from 1859 to 1885, followed a similar path by celebrating Arthur and, after the endorsement of Queen Victoria, this became part of the national heritage.

Arthurian themes were made popular by artists through the second half of the nineteenth century and in particular with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. They had a major influence on many other romantic artists who produced works with an Arthurian theme such as illustrations of Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur*.⁹⁸ Some hold that a (or the) Chalice is buried in the eponymous Chalice Well Garden. However, this remains not proven. '*Everybody talks about it and no one has seen it ...*'^{99 100}

'There is no Christian Legend concerning Joseph of Arimathea and the Grail ... it is the creation of romance and no genuine tradition ...'

Jessie Weston, 1993,¹⁰¹

Joseph of Arimathea was a kinsman of Christ and he sheltered Christ's body after the deposition. He is held to have travelled to England and arrived in Glastonbury where he founded the first church in Christendom. There may be a kernel of truth in the story because traders from the Mediterranean had been reaching the Isle of Avalon area to trade for lead and silver.^N Legend holds that Joseph founded the '*ealde chirche*' in about AD63. Another variation of this legend holds *that he was accompanied

and Bristol', p.13). On galena see:- Dorothy Lapidus, et al, 1987 (2006), *Collins Internet Linked Dictionary of Geology*, Harper Collins Publishers, p196.



Fig. 17 The Holy Thorn celebrated at Christmas 1986

by a young Christ who built, or blessed, the first church in Glastonbury. Other stories claim that the saint brought the 'Chalice' to Glastonbury.

Holy Thorn

Joseph of Arimathea is held to have arrived by boat at the foot of the west end of Wearyall Hill. Legend holds that he landed and stated he was weary and then he planted his staff into the ground. The staff then grew to be a thorn tree. The tree has been revered ever since. Records of this holy tree have been handed down from the seventeenth century and so we are not able to establish how the tree was regarded then. There are several thorn trees in the town, in gardens, the abbey precinct and St John's Churchyard. From this tree, sprigs of flowers are cut every Christmas and sent to adorn the monarch's table. The thorn trees are considered to be holy. They have aroused passions and particularly from the seventeenth century when a



Fig. 18 The Holy Thorn celebrated at Christmas 2024

thorn tree in Glastonbury was cut down by a puritan who believed the tree to represent remaining Catholic sympathies. A new thorn tree has replaced the tree on Wearyall Hill that was cut down in 2010 by an unknown vandal. Adam Stout when writing on the cult of Mary and the association with the Holy Thorn, wrote the '*Thorn trees were stations on the way to Beckery.*'¹⁰²

It is not possible to measure from when or how the thorn tree has been revered. The first record of a 'holy tree' is in an anonymous verse of 1520. The first mention of Joseph of Arimathea together

with the thorn tree, comes from an entertainment organised by the then Bishop of Bath and Wells (1608 -1616).

The tree is *Cratageus Monogyna Bitfora* and is a Levantine variation of a hawthorn tree. The tree is unusual because it flowers around Christmastide and again in the summer on or close St Barnabas' Day on the 11th of June. ^o The tree is special also because it is short-lived and cannot be grown from seed and must be grafted onto other stock. The thorn tree is a matter of sixteenth century legend. Whether its origins are true or even can be proved, its significance and importance ensure it holds a particular place in the present life of Glastonbury and the nation.

¹⁰³

The scoping study has identified that the legends are significant and an essential part of the nation's heritage. They continue to act as a magnet to Glastonbury and attract a wide range of religions and faiths.

^o On the old calendar, this was close to the summer solstice. [See Stout, 2020 (2023), p.13][Loomis,1963 (1991), p.265]

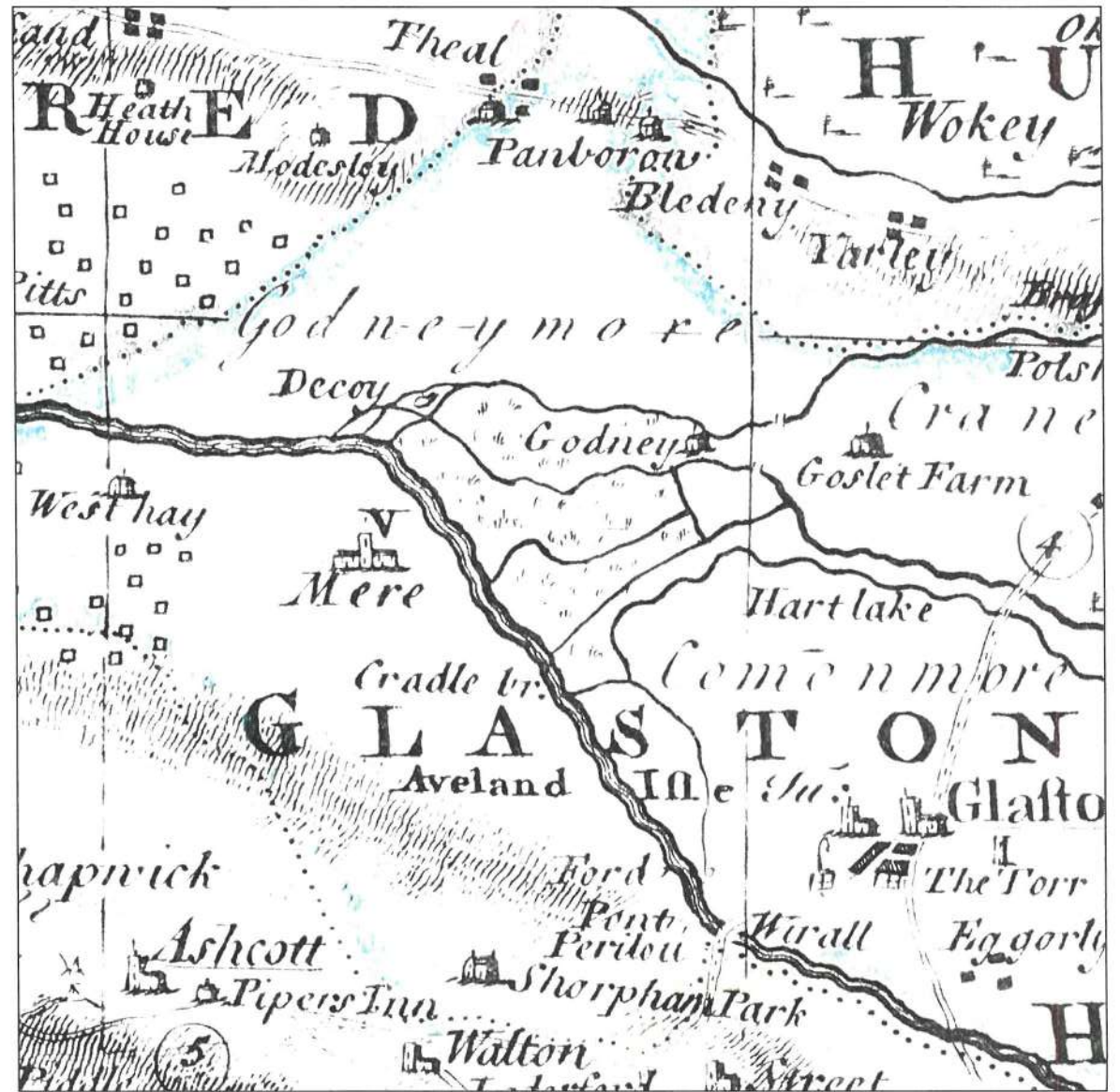


Fig. 19 The Mere Pool from Emanuel Bowen's 1750 map of Somerset

Section 2.6 – New Age

'I believe that I am the last of the Avalonians, of those who were drawn to Glastonbury as a centre of ever renewed spiritual artistic inspiration.'

Dion Fortune 1954 (2000), quoted by Geoffrey Ashe, 1982



Fig.20 Nineteenth century enthusiasm for romanticism in Arthurian legends is demonstrated here by Aubrey Beardsley's illustration of 'King Arthur and the Strange Mantle' in Mallory's 1893 edition of 'La Morte D'Arthur'.

Albion rising

In 1539, the suppression of the sainted stones of the Great Church and the abbey ensemble left silent a void and ruins with no purpose. Life in Glastonbury had changed forever. The abbey precinct was sold. The abbey and remaining lands were transferred to Edward, Lord Somerset. He brought a colony of Walloon weavers to live and work in the town. They left as the Catholic Queen Mary came to the throne in 1553. After this lead was stripped from the roofs of the abbey buildings. Stone was quarried to refurbish many buildings in the town and to pave the way to Wells. The last of the ruins were left for nature to reclaim. Notably much of the Lady Chapel survived although the roof and windows were lost as well as the precious floor above the crypt. Clearly this hallowed building retained a special significance for the people of Glastonbury and its pilgrims. Here is consecrated land still.

Occasional visitors and antiquarians explored and marvelled at the wrecked church. Following a resurgence of interest in Celtic mythology, visitors associated the ruins with a vision of a romantic and fabled past.¹⁰⁴ This centred on exploring Arthurian legends and stories of knights of old, of chivalry and of romance. Local folklore holds that Arthur was held to be the sleeping king in Camelot (the nearby Cadbury Castle) and that he will rise up and restore Britain.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, poets including, William Blake and Alfred Lord Tennyson were writing about spiritual awareness. The spiritual revival of Glastonbury can be traced back to the founding of the Theosophical Society in London in the 1880s.¹⁰⁵ In 1804, William Blake set out his vision for a reinvigorated Albion but without mentioning Jesus. In the 'Prelude' to his long and challenging poem, 'Milton: a poem', Blake imagined '... (Christ's) feet in ancient time, walk upon England's mountains green: ...'. Subsequently, and after being set to music in 1916 by Sir Hubert Parry followed by orchestration by Sir Edward Elgar, this poem has become an unofficial national anthem for the English '... till we have built Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land.'¹⁰⁶

A widely held local oral tradition is sure that Christ came to Priddy on the Mendip.

After the First War, in 1929, John Cowper Powis began writing his great Glastonbury novel and he wrote of a promise of the emergence of a New Jerusalem. His enormous novel 'A Glastonbury Romance' was published first in 1932. The novel deals with the supernatural influence of the Grail on the town and outlines the tensions between advocates of a religious revival and the commercial interest of some of the principal characters. All this was overlain with the 'sacred and sexual loves' of the town's inhabitants.¹⁰⁷ He wrote:-

*'As a power within human drama the Grail is divisive ...
The challenge of the Grail as a unifying symbol...'*

Benham, 1993, (2006),¹⁰⁸

The New Avalonians

Powis' long novel has been embraced by the next generation of visionaries who settled in Glastonbury. These incomers brought a fresh approach and a wish to live an innocent and healthy life. One incomer was **Dion Fortune**. She was an author and occultist sometime president of the Christian Mystic Lodge (or Society) of the Theosophical Society. She established a chapter of the Society of Inner Light in Glastonbury and also in London. From 1922, Fortune returned to Glastonbury and carried out acts of trance. Fortune and her followers obtained an old orchard at the foot of the Tor in 1926. In the 1930s, she published several occult novels and had a significant influence on modern Western esotericism and played a key role in the cult of Glastonbury in the interwar years. She wrote books on occultism and philosophy and in 1934 the engaging account, '*Glastonbury: Avalon of the Heart*'. She had a 'mystical experience' on the Tor and from then she claimed she was preparing for the forthcoming '*Age of Aquarius*'.¹⁰⁹

Katherine Maltwood was another incomer who lived near to Glastonbury. She was an artist with an interest in the occult. In 1935, she suggested there appeared to be a zodiac of star constellations set out in the landscape around Glastonbury. Her thesis had followed ten years of research working from a translation of the Norman-French '*The High History of the Holy Graal*'.^P This text was written in Norman-French from c.1220-c.1230 and the original manuscript could have been written by a monk in Glastonbury Abbey. Maltwood thought the zodiac arrangement had been devised by Sumerians in prehistory at

^P **Sebastian Evans**, 1910, '*The High History Of the Holy Graal*', J.M. Dent & Sons, London



Fig. 21 Katherine Maltwood's interpretation of a zodiac she suggested had been laid out in the countryside around Butleigh and shown in her 1935 book, '*A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars etc. etc.*'

about 2,700 BC and it was the largest and oldest of all Britain's antiquities.

Her theory was published in 1935 in, '*A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars.*'¹¹⁰ In this, giant effigies of the signs of the zodiac can be found described in landscape features such as streams and boundaries. The Zodiac is described as a circle

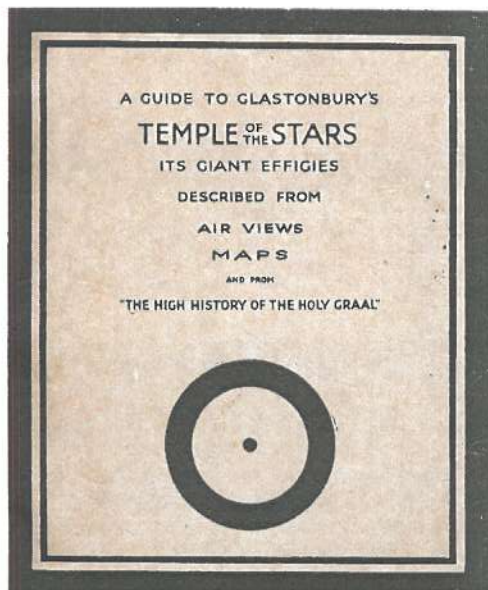


Fig. 22 The front cover of Katherine Maltwood's book of 1935, 'A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars etc. etc.'

some 16.00 kilometres (ten miles) across with its centre on Butleigh, some 7 kilometres (6 miles) from Glastonbury. Maltwood correlated the twelve signs of the zodiac laid out in a circle with the Arthurian Round Table. The four seasons were represented by four knights of the Arthurian Round Table: Sir Gawain, Sir Lancelet, Arthur and Sir Percival. She suggested the twelve signs of the zodiac represented a table of measurements charting the movement of the earth and heavens.

Maltwood published her theory in 1935 in her, 'A Guide to Glastonbury's Temple of the Stars.'¹¹¹ In this book, giant effigies of the signs of the zodiac can be found described in the landscape.. These she derived from air photographs and maps and related names of the astrological features to names of places in the landscape. Earlier accounts have referred to a field of stars. These include work of the Elizabethan magus, Dr Dee.¹¹² and twelfth century references by William of Malmesbury.

'... all the more mysterious for being invisible...'
Mary Caine 1978 (1983),¹¹³

Maltwood's thesis attracted followers. Amongst these is Mary Caine. A generation later she published a paper in 1969 on the zodiac in the journal, 'Gandalf's Garden'. Later in 1977, in 'Glastonbury Giants or Zodiac' she offered her own adjustments to some of Maltwood's zodiac signs.¹¹⁴ This is likely to weaken the strength of any case put forward by Maltwood. At the same time, Caine celebrated the invisibility of the zodiac as mysterious.

Maltwood's theory has been discounted by reputable archaeologists. They rely on several sets of reasoning. Amongst

Q The Tor House College for Women offered courses in '....home management, gardening, bee keeping, book binding, weaving,

these, much of the area in question was under water 5000 years ago and some of the boundaries or lines that form the figures are man-made rhynes (rhines) or roads made after medieval times.

'... the existence of the Glastonbury Zodiac must for the present be accepted as a poetic rather than a scientific truth...'

John Michell, 1969, (1973), p.17¹¹⁵

Rutland Boughton was an accomplished composer and sometime music teacher and wrote a series of dramas based on Arthurian legends.¹¹⁶ He was the director of the Glastonbury Festival from 1914 to 1925 intending to rival Wagner's corresponding festival in Bayreuth. The first festival included the premiere performance of Boughton's opera, 'The Immortal Hour' based on a poem by Fiona Macleod. The festivals ended after Boughton's backers withdrew funds following a production of his 'Nativity' opera in London. The demise of the Glastonbury Festival followed public knowledge that Boughton had joined the Communist Party of Great Britain.

Alice Buckton, came to Glastonbury in 1912 when she bought land around the Chalice Well (The Bloody Spring).and owned this up to her death in 1945.¹¹⁷ Amongst her activities she established the basis for the present role of the garden and buildings around the spring. She opened a training college for women in 1913 and then a School of Pageantry, the Headquarters of the Glastonbury Arts and Crafts Guild and the Folk-Play and Festival Association. In 1914, she hosted the first Glastonbury Festival¹¹⁸ including her pageant, 'Coming of The Bride' and built and ran an open-air theatre. ^q¹¹⁹

needle-work and embroidery, missal painting and banner-making combined with the study of heraldry, elocution and legendry

Through the leadership of Wellesley Tudor Pole, the Chalice Well Trust was established in 1958 (or 1959) to administer and maintain the gardens around the Chalice Well Spring as a place of sanctity.¹²⁰ The Trust now safeguards the garden and well ensemble for posterity.¹²¹ The goal of the Trust is: - *'preserving the well and surrounding land so that it will continue as a sacred shrine for all to visit and receive nourishment.'*¹²²

Some hold the Holy Chalice is buried in the Chalice Garden *'...it was now claimed that he (Joseph of Arimathea) had buried the chalice used at the Last Supper commonly identified with the Holy Grail in the Isle. As he did so a spring of water had sprung from the spot staining all that it flowed over red in memory of the blood of Christ and this became the Chalice Well...'*¹²³ Buckton was a friend of the architect, Bligh Bond and was instrumental in getting him to design the wellhead cover featuring a vesica piscis.¹²⁴

Frederick Bligh Bond was an architect and antiquarian, as well as being interested in psychic phenomena. Soon after the Abbey ruins had been bought by the Church of England in 1907, Bond secured a licence to excavate in the standing ruins. Following excavations at the east end of the Great Church, Bond established evidence of the lost Edgar Chapel as well as uncovering remains of structures on the north side of the Lady Chapel. Bond was the first modern writer to note that the plan of the Lady Chapel was laid out based on the *vesica piscis*, the

most sacred and cherished mystery of Christian Temple builders.¹²⁵

Bond's interest in psychic phenomena involved the cooperation of a medium who was in touch with spirits of long dead monks. Automatic scripts and drawings recorded voices from the past. The Church appears to have had some difficulty with Bond's psychic activities and his licence to excavate in the ruins was withdrawn by 1926. As well as revealing lost structures, Bond established his theory that the abbey ensemble was laid out according to a grid and proportions based on the kabbala and gematria. Others have used these theoretical concepts since Bond published his work on his geometric research, as a departure for their own numerical theorising.¹²⁶ Tim Hopkinson-Ball notes that Bligh Bond's greatest achievement was to set the idea of Glastonbury firmly in the nation's psyche for the first time since the Reformation. His impact on the town was far reaching, yet subtle, and its consequences are still being played out today.

'...The Transformation of Glastonbury into the New Age capital of Britain was complete by 1980 and has been sustained...'

Ronald Hutton, 2003 (2013)¹²⁷

Rising of a New Age

After the Abbey had been suppressed, Glastonbury remained a small market town. Later it was sustained and supported by two principal leather industries as well as a brick and tile works. The leather industries closed down gradually from 1982 to 1992. John Cowper Powis was a local lad describing his Glastonbury of

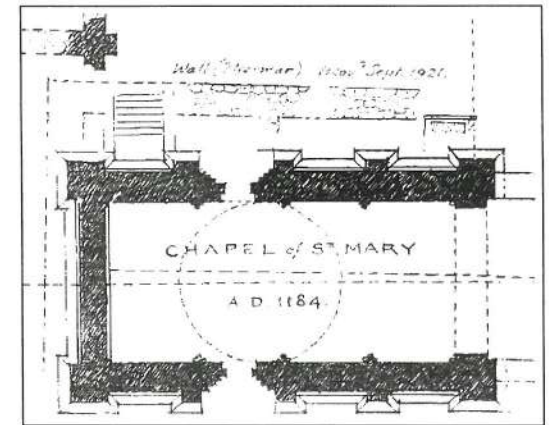


Fig. 23 Bligh Bond's drawing of the Lady Chapel showing the wall he revealed on the north side of the chapel. His excavations were believed by him to have been indicated by automatic scripts from discarnate monks. Note the circle shown within the chapel walls was developed later by John Michell. See Fig. 24 below. [From Bond's 1924 book *The Company of Avalon*]

drama.' By 1929, the college offered additional courses and a summer school and these included ballet and Esperanto. [Chalice Well Trust, 2009 (2023), p.32]

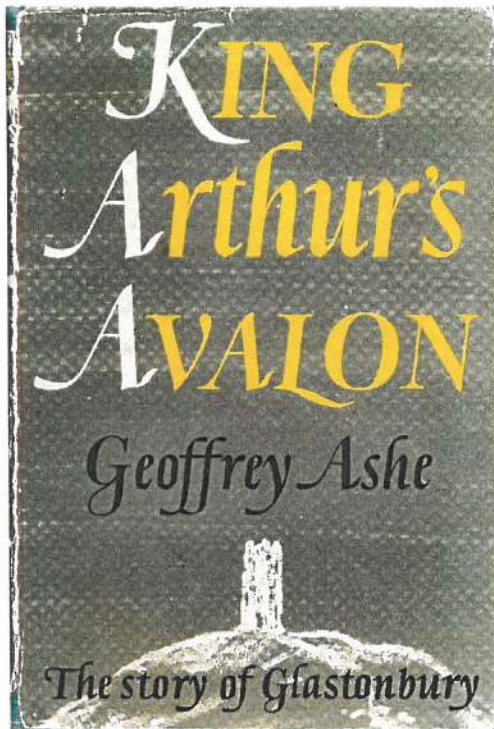


Fig. 24 The front cover of Geoffrey Ashe's influential book of 1957

the 1920s, but others that followed him were incomers. In their way they brought a fresh celebration of renewal in a period following the horrors of the First World War. Later incomers continued to arrive in the twenty years from the 1960s.

After a period of post-war austerity before the 1950s, cultural change was occurring in most capital cities across the western world. A liberal life style encouraged a young generation to move away from cities to find a new life not trammelled by convention. By the early 1960s pilgrims arrived in Glastonbury seeking a spiritual awakening in the landscape around the Tor and springs. In the 1970s, the first blues and jazz music festival was held in fields near Pilton. This attracted many thousands of people to hear music and listen to prayers, sermons and speeches advocating an alternative life style that would lead to a spiritual wakening.

Some visitors to these festivals remained and settled in Glastonbury. The small town is home now to some seventy-nine beliefs, creeds and paths as well as a lively community supporting a range of well-being activities and healing services and specialist shops. Many of those seeking spiritual awakening also became the entrepreneurs and business leaders of the town ensuring a lively and prospering High Street.

A would-be gathering on the summer solstice at Stonehenge in 1985 was violently suppressed by Wiltshire police and the area around the henge was closed off by the then English Heritage. Refugees from this event dispersed with many finding a refuge at Greenland's farm (now Paddington Farm). The newly established community of free-thinking young families stayed and have contributed to a resurgence of vitality and prosperity of the town as well as nurturing a commonwealth of faiths and beliefs.

Ronald Hutton notes the role of outsiders arriving in Glastonbury throughout the twentieth century and they have contributed to 'twentieth century traditions'.

'...The New Age came alive in Glastonbury.'

Adam Stout, 2023, ¹²⁸

Age of Aquarius

The spiritual awakening for many new people in Glastonbury drew on the many myths, legends and pre-Christian beliefs. Druids, pagans, goddesses and other faiths have established a respected presence in Glastonbury. Dion Fortune laid the groundwork that has followed with neo-pagans and goddess-centred practitioners who want to find a faith (rather than religion) that is not patriarchal. One of these is Kathy Jones and she is a Priestess of Avalon. She is an author, leader, ceremonialist teacher and initiator. She organises the International Goddess conference and is a co-founder of the Glastonbury Goddess Temple. She leads the goddesses in promoting the significance of the sacred landscape of the Isle of Avalon from where she organises pilgrimages and tours to the sacred springs and wells and around the Tor.

'...The whole area around Glastonbury is laid out to a sacred plan...'

Michell, 1969 ¹²⁹

New Jerusalem

A visitor to Glastonbury in the 1960s was the scholarly John Michell. He became an influential witness of the emerging New Age culture. He saw fresh meanings in the landscape and history of the town. Michell observed the remains of the church on the Tor were aligned to other churches dedicated to the dragon-slaying saint, St Michael. He built his ideas on those put forward first in 1925 by Alfred Watkins in his book, *'The Old*

Straight Track'.¹³⁰ In this, he set out his observations that alignments of prehistoric monuments appeared to be along straight lines. He called the lines, 'ley' lines. Michell went further than Watkins and postulated that these were lines of energy.¹³¹ Now-a-days some hold that these paths are routes along which dragons fly at certain times of the year.¹³²

Michell studied the geography, plans and layout of the Abbey and associated buildings. He established that the alignment of the axis of the abbey extended to Stonehenge along a line called the '*Michael Line*'.¹³³ He sought to fit the grand plan of Glastonbury Abbey into a scheme of sacred geometry and then numerology. He built on the thesis advanced by Bligh Bond that the layout of the abbey was established along a precise grid. After taking on board geomancy and the kabbala, Michell brought forward an explanation of the design of the Abbey to the effect that Glastonbury was built to be a New Jerusalem. The architect and 'sacred geometer', Keith Critchlow set out the geometry of the abbey in an essay introducing a book exploring the esoteric dimensions of Glastonbury abbey. The collection of essays was published by the Research into Lost Knowledge Organisation in 1969 as '*Glastonbury: A study in Patterns*'.

The author and cultural historian **Geoffrey Ashe** came to Glastonbury in the 1960s. He wrote extensively on Arthurian subjects and with C.A. Raleigh Radford in 1966 -1970 co-founded the Camelot Research Committee and demonstrated through the findings of archaeological excavation that Cadbury Castle had been refortified in the latter part of the fifth century. This hill was identified by Leland as 'Camelot'. The dig captured the imagination of many people thereby establishing a renewed interest in Arthurian subjects. From 1957, when he published

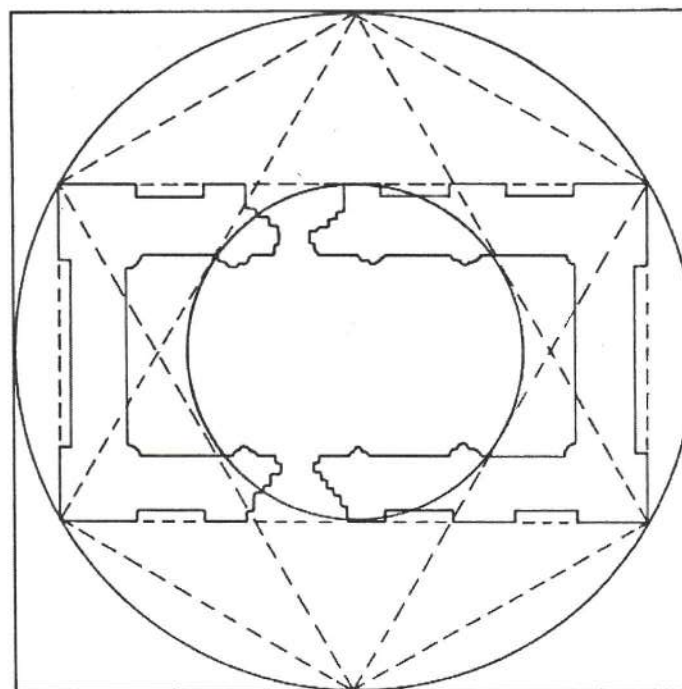


Fig. 25 Plan of St Mary's Chapel illustrating the sacred geometry that informed the dimensions of the chapel. This drawing is based on John Michell's drawing in Michell, 1972 (1973), '*City of Revelation*', p.46.

'*King Arthur's Avalon: The Story of Glastonbury*', he then published several other books on Arthur's Britain.

'The Twentieth Century has restored Glastonbury to a position of spiritual power as great as that which it occupied in the Middle Ages, but with a significant difference. At that period, it represented a single religion and a single denomination at that. Now the monuments and the shops which flank them, and the people who frequent and serve both, embody between them the greatest diversity of faiths to be found visibly expressed in



Fig.26 The principal Celtic festivals are celebrated with enthusiasm in the streets of Glastonbury

any contemporary small area of Britain. In part this is simply an aspect of the new age movement, that it depends upon the notion that participants develop their own spiritualities from many different sources of inspiration.'

Hutton, 2003 (2023), ¹³⁴

Glastonbury is testimony to continuity, but also the resurrection of a belief in a sacred landscape. This had been witnessed first by Neolithic and Iron Age communities and who established a pagan or Druid religious centre. An early Celtic Christian community grew over the existing hallowed ground and this was reorganised by the great Norman Benedictine reformers in the Middle Ages. Their management skills produced the building of a great abbey church and an estate of great wealth. The suppression of the abbey in the sixteenth century and the redistribution of its lands resulted in a spiritual void leading eventually to a New Age.

'Other great Christian centres do not inspire such attraction and do not have such a deep and complex history...'

Geoffrey Ashe 1982 ¹³⁵

The Celts

The Celts had a strong sense of place. The sacred landscape of the Isle of Avalon has been, and still is, the stage for 'Celtic' beliefs. The hills, springs and water have a religious significance and are places of gods or spirits. Mann suggests that the intention of the Druids was to maintain this in its pristine state. ¹³⁶ At the same time, the very special landscape around Glastonbury has been saturated with meanings for Celts, before them, their Neolithic predecessors and now for their successors in the town today.

Up to the Synod of Whitby in 664, the Celtic Church in Britain had identified itself with the older ways and these were different from the approach advocated by and then practised in Rome. In the absence of towns, in the Celtic Church, there was no archbishop in authority and an absence of a central organisation. ^{137 138} The Celtic Church '*passed like a dream in the night ...*' ¹³⁹ While it lasted, the Celtic Church produced '*a brilliant flowering of highest and purest spirituality and there is much men of a materialist age can learn from it, but, besides that, it had a charm and freshness of its own.*' ¹⁴⁰

Nevertheless, we can be certain the mediaeval church in the west country is likely to have retained custom and allegiances to its old ways. At the same time, old legends such as the Grail or St Joseph were developed to give them a clear Christian focus. ¹⁴¹ Geoffrey Ashe has neatly observed '*... the Celtic Myth could hover in its Christian Air ...*' ¹⁴² The enmeshing of the Grail legend with Arthurian material links directly with the more recent revival of interest in Celtic Christianity. ¹⁴³

Glastonbury has remained an important focus for less orthodox English Gothic Revivalists. ¹⁴⁴ The New Age movement emerged from the 1960s and this depended upon the notion that participants effectively develop their own spiritualities. ¹⁴⁵ The 'new' 'Celtic Twilight' movement emerged in the late twentieth century and in common with paganism, with an emphasis on personal development. ¹⁴⁶

Ian Bradley has observed that to some extent '*Celtic Christianity was incorporated into the alternative agenda with its syncretistic and pantheistic elements being stressed at the expense of its more orthodox Christian aspects.*' ¹⁴⁷ Bradley has noted also that there are some challenges to the concept of Celtic Christianity from participants of a more authentic eremitic faith than may be practised by others.

Rosemary Power has identified the principal characteristics of Celtic Christianity and these emphasise:- a focus on the sense of place and interest in nature and or environment; a connection with folk practices and the lives of early saints; belief that Celtic worship was spontaneous, incorporating dance, music and self-expression; belief in the equality of women in both the early church and today; a sense of liminality and a distrust of ecclesiastical structure and rigid liturgy.¹⁴⁸

Roberta Gilchrist has claimed that Glastonbury is 'a beacon of spirituality'.¹⁴⁹ There are some seventy-nine faiths^R and creeds practising now in the town and many of these can relate to a Celtic tradition or its legacy. Tim Hopkinson Ball has observed 'The sanctity of Glastonbury, therefore is not restricted to its foundation although this is important, but in its continuing role as a centre of evangelisation of Christian Culture.'¹⁵⁰

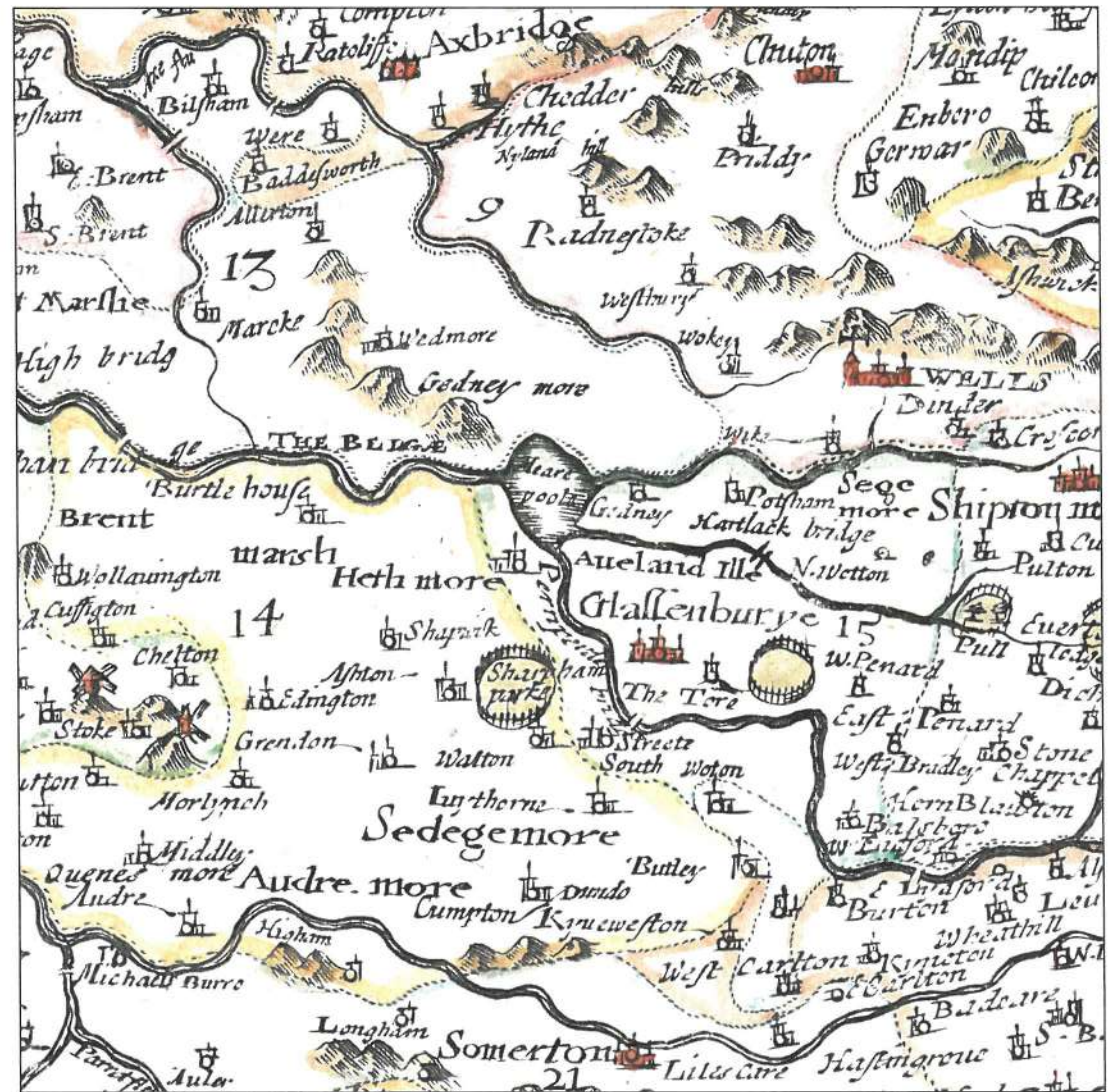


Fig. 27 Extract from R. Blome's map of c.1673 showing some of the Somerset Hundreds. The Glaston Hundred is marked 15.

^R Or eighty one beliefs, creeds or paths.

Section 3 - A gazetteer

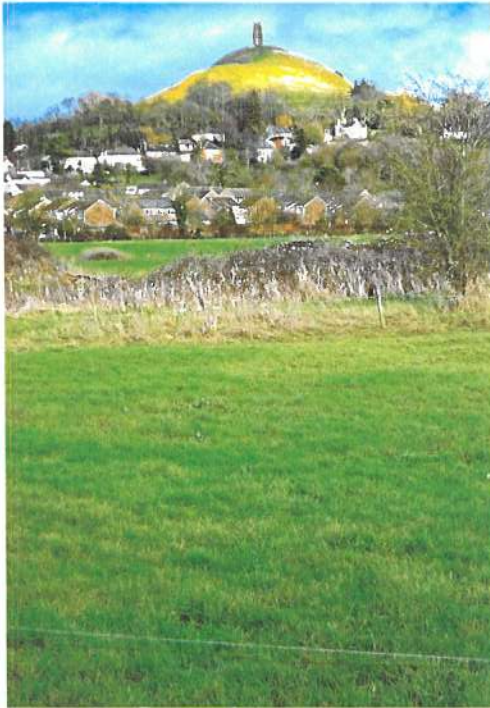


Fig. 28 The Tor seen from the south.

'No other landscape in all England carried so great a weight of legend...'

Dom David Knowles, 1959 ¹⁵¹

Landscape

The landscape between the ridge of the Mendip Hills and the ridge of the Polden Hills has a character of its own. It is generally flat and drained by rhynes (or rhines) and rivers. ¹⁵² Successive inundations from the sea introduced layers of marine mud over layers of vegetation and these eventually became peat. On the Levels, peat is covered by a layer of clay but on the nearby moors, peat is at the surface. The national significance of this landscape is recognised by the designation of the Levels and moors has been designated to be a Ramsar Site and the Somerset Wetlands National Nature Reserve. ¹⁵³

This is an 'archipelago' of interconnected nature reserves and is the second largest area of lowland peat soils in the country. Here is a range of wetland habitats that are home to nationally and internationally important populations of wildfowl and wading birds. ¹⁵⁴ Together these are outstanding examples of ongoing ecological and biological process forming a wetland habitat. ¹⁵⁵ Rising from the flat land are outcrops of hard stone. The most dramatic are Brean Down, Burrow Mump and Glastonbury Tor.

The Isle of Avalon is a notable feature in this landscape and is dominated by the Tor. These outcrops have archaeoastronomy significance and are likely to have been used as observatories. From these sacred sites people of Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures could establish the precise dates and time of solstices and equinoxes.

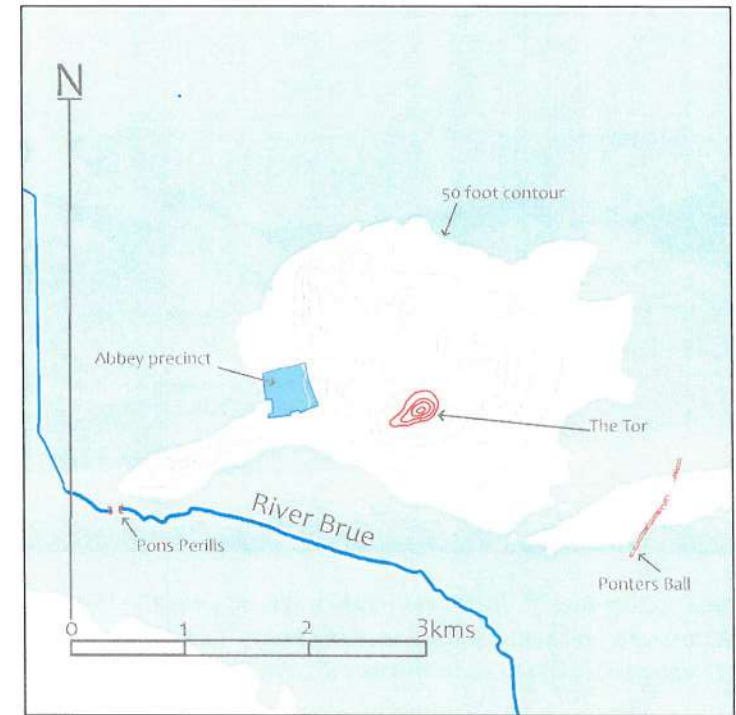


Fig. 29 The Isle of Avalon is dominated by the Tor.

'An unforgettable image, the single battlemented tower on its 520 ft (158 metre) conical hill visible across much of Somerset. The terraces on the hillside appear not to be natural or caused by ploughing. They may represent Neolithic activity but they are not, as also suggested, a maze, as they do not join up.'

Orbach / Pevsner, 2014, ¹⁵⁶

The Tor

The Tor is a steep natural hill with terraced sides rising some 158m above sea level. The hill is iron impregnated sandstone underlain by levels of limestone, marl and impervious clay. The Tor is a major landmark in the sub-region and visible for up to 32

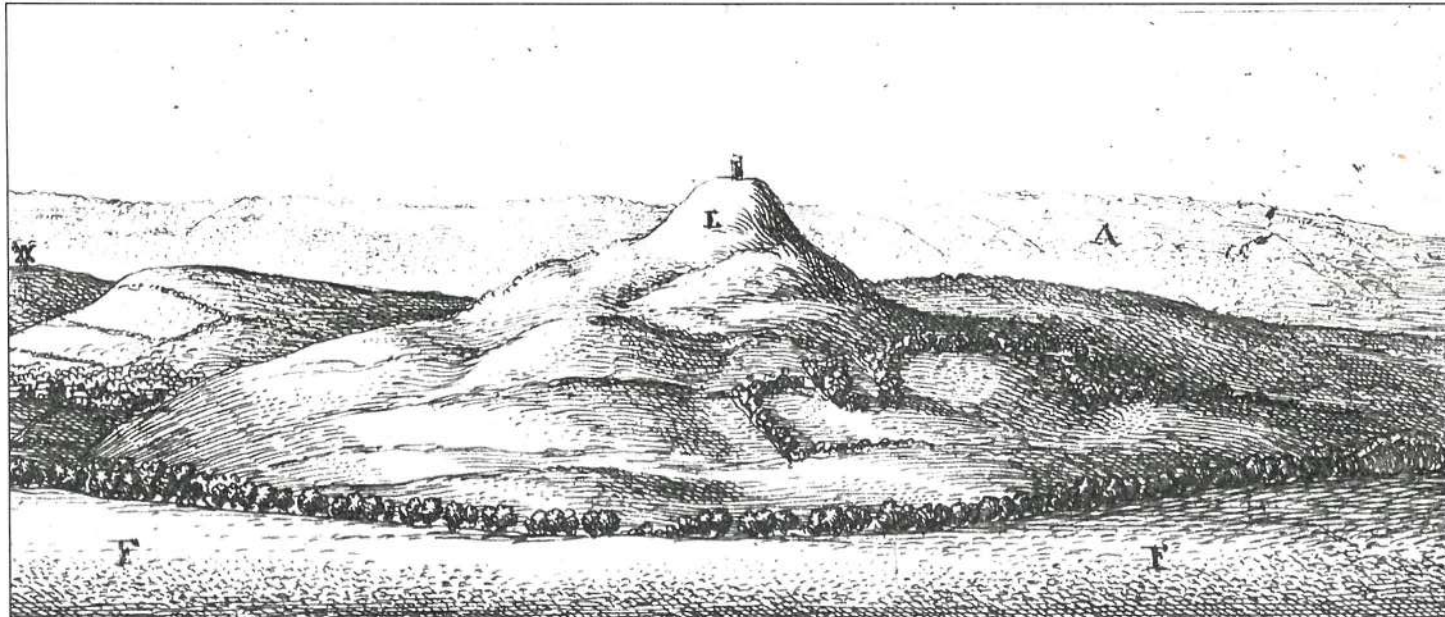


Fig. 30 The Tor looking north in an extract of a print by Hollar of 1670. NOTE the windmill on the left of the image. This is on the eponymous Windmill Hill known now as St Edmund's Hill

kms or 20 miles.¹⁵⁷ Desmond Hawkins has observed *'in this excessively horizontal landscape it still exerts itself like the one standing exception to an otherwise inflexible rule.'*¹⁵⁸

Monastic and church remains have been found on a relatively flat summit and also on the south west shoulder of the platform. The archaeological excavation on top of the hill suggests an early Christian use. There was evidence of pre-Roman activity on the site and a fifth to seventh century settlement and hermitage. Archaeological excavations in 1964 led by Philip Rahtz uncovered evidence of an Anglo Saxon monastery as a daughter settlement to the Abbey and the remains of at least two subsequent medieval churches. Rahtz concluded that, in the later fifth century or early sixth century, the Tor was an early monastic site *'... and if so one of the earliest in Britain.'*¹⁵⁹ He noted the settlement may also have been a Saxon stronghold

because the very steep sides made fortifications unnecessary. This is consistent with legends that tell of King Melwas holding Queen Guinevere hostage in an impregnable stronghold that Arthur had not been able to scale.

A Norman church dedicated to St Michael had been destroyed by an earthquake in 1275 and a replacement church was built in about 1325 some 50 years later.¹⁶⁰ By the eighteenth century, only its tower had survived *'... and only just, the North East stair turret having collapsed.'*¹⁶¹

The Tor was certainly a sacred place to pre-Christian societies and Hutton suggests after the Ealde Chirche and then the Lady Chapel the Tor is the second sacred focus of Glastonbury.¹⁶² It was protected by water, meres and marshes and the Ponter's

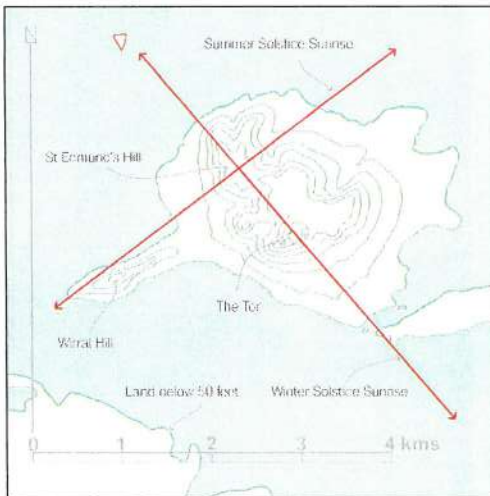


Fig. 31 An indicative drawing showing St Edmund's Hill as a likely site of an observatory from which principal solar and lunar events can be observed and calibrated.



Fig. 32 Terraces on the Tor seen from near Chalice Hill.



Fig. 33 View of the Tor seen from the summit of St. Edmund's Hill.

Ball was a 'temenos' established across the isthmus to the east of the Tor.

There are remains of terraces on the slopes. The conventional explanation is that these terraces may be the result of natural erosion. Alternatively, they may have been the result of agriculture where strip lynchets had been dug into the sides of the hill.¹⁶³ The terraces may have had a sacred or ceremonial function but their purpose remains a mystery. One approach has been that the terraces are a processional route. They are a winding spiritual exercise. Another theory is the terraces are the remains of a three-dimensional maze or labyrinth. 'If this was true it would be of the greatest importance in any religious aspects of Glastonbury...' ¹⁶⁴ and 'If the maze theory is true it might explain the Christian interest in the area.'

Rahtz and Watts, 1993 ¹⁶⁵

The Tor was associated with a major cultural and religious neolithic force especially if the terraced sides were used or adapted to be a labyrinth or a processional way.^s It has been suggested these were connected with veneration of the *Earth Mother Goddess*.¹⁶⁶ The Tor has always been special. It rises above Glastonbury and the flat land of the Levels and Moors.

From here early occupants of the place had been able to observe the rhythm of the seasons against markers on the Tor. Sun worship and later the Christian cult of St. Michael are derived from worship of a sky god.¹⁶⁷ From St Edmund's Hill a pre-Christian society was able to calibrate time and dates of celestial events. Markers were either notches cut into slopes of the Tor or alternatively posts planted into the ridges of the hill. Over these

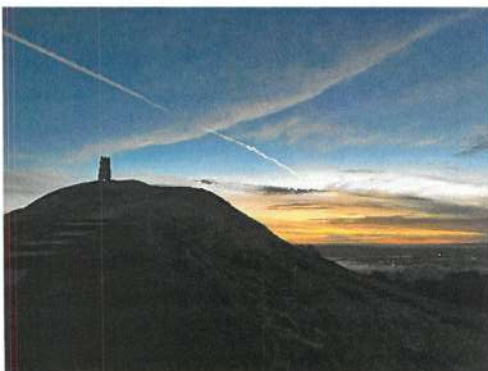


Fig. 34 Celestial events could be monitored from the area around the Tor.

S Experience has shown that a processional way can be walked easily following a 'Celtic double spiral.' For example see the spirals etched in stone at New Grange (Brú Na Bóine) in Ireland. [see Michael J.

O'Kelly, 1982, 'New Grange: Archaeology', *Art and Legend*, pp.154-155,158.]

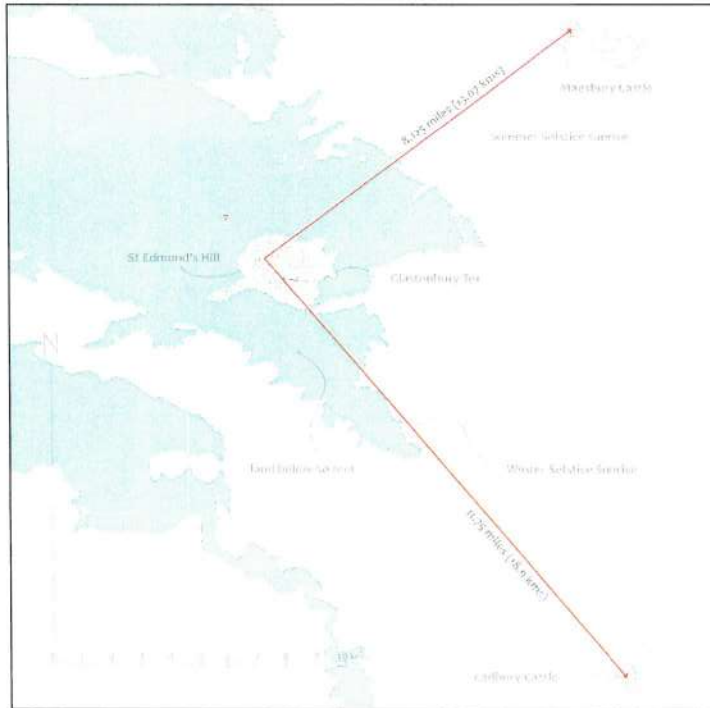


Fig. 35 An indicative drawing showing sight lines from St Edmunds Hill to observe mid-summer and mid-winter sunrises.

notches or posts, the sun or moon would align with the marker at the expected time related to their solar or lunar calendar. Especially important observations were necessary to report or predict the precise dates of the summer and winter solstices. For the winter solstice a marker placed on the horizon of the ridge at Cadbury Castle. This would indicate the precise time of sunrise at mid-winter. ^T For the summer solstice, a marker can be

T Reliance on latitude 52° is misleading. Moreton in Marsh lies on coordinate and is some 130kms north of Glastonbury. The latitude of Glastonbury is similar to that of Stonehenge from which precise observations of the equinoxes could be made. The

placed on the north east horizon at Maesbury Castle. On quarter days celebrated as Beltane (May 1st) and Lughnasadh (August 1st) sunrise and sunset are in alignment between the Tor and the Burrow Mump. Some hold the Tor was sculpted to emphasise its cardinal nature. ¹⁶⁸

Some people are certain the Tor is a nexus of ley lines linking the Tor with nearby churches. ¹⁶⁹ The area on the summit of the Tor occupied by St Michael's Church, monastic remains and other settlement remains is a scheduled monument and is of national importance. St Michael's Tower is a grade I Listed Building and is of national importance. It is likely that much of the area was once occupied by monastic buildings and a church which remain still as consecrated ground.

Neolithic tracks and Lake Villages

Below the layers of peat, and generally lying north of the ridge of the Polden Hills, wooden tracks have been found well preserved below peat deposits. These are exceptional structures and are testimony to the ability of a Neolithic community to manage the fenwood, develop sophisticated carpentry skills and manage a community to build complex structure. ¹⁷⁰ Deposition of some artifacts below the peat and alongside the tracks provides evidence of ritual deposition. ^{171 172 173 174} The wooden tracks are considered to be the world's oldest roads. These are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and are of national importance and international importance. They are exceptional evidence of a cultural tradition that has disappeared.

coordinates for the Tor at Glastonbury are 51° 08' 21.60"N 2° 41' 34.19"W and the coordinates for the Altar Stone at Stonehenge are 51° 10' 26.30" N 1° 49' 20.56"W.



Fig. 36 The twentieth century reconstruction of the Neolithic Sweet Track

The sight lines shown on the indicative drawing in fig. 34 have been projected to assumed middle positions on Maesbury Castle and Cadbury Castle from an assumed foresight on Windmill Hill. With a precise positions of the backsight on the horizon over Maesbury Castle and Cadbury Castle and with a precise position of the foresight on Windmill Hill, the two alignments will be a right angle. Similar projections can be calibrated for positions of the setting sun and moon over Brean Down and the Welsh Hills.



Fig. 39 Aubrey Beardsley's illustration of the Lady of the Lake catching the sword 'Excalibur' from the 1972 edition of Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le Morte Darthur' J.M. Dent, London, p.524



Fig. 37 The site of the Glastonbury Lake Village alongside the now straightened River Brue.

Lake Villages

The remains of two Iron Age Lake Villages are near Meare and the 'Godney Village' or the 'Glastonbury Lake Village' close to the town of Glastonbury. These are built on structures known as crannogs and they differ from lake villages found in Europe and particularly in the European Alps where the structures are raised on piles above the lake. ^{U 175 176} The two lake villages are testimony to two communities. The two villages are on the conjunction of the boundaries of three Iron age tribes or cultures and so the Meare Lake Village may have been a 'market' or a seasonal meeting place or festival. ^{V 177} Both the villages are Scheduled Ancient Monuments and so are nationally significant but they are also of outstanding examples of an architectural ensemble and an Iron Age culture and are therefore internationally significant. ¹⁷⁸

U In 2011, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed the property 'Prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps' on the World Heritage List consisting 111 individual sites in six European Alpine countries.



Fig. 38 The Brides Mound is the site of two chapels at Beckery with Wearyall Hill behind and the Tor on the horizon.

Ponter's Ball and Pomparles Bridge

Glastonbury Abbey and Tor are at the P34 west end of a peninsular surrounded by water, meres and marshes, but these are connected to the high ground lying to its east by a narrow strip of ground above water level on which is an access road. ¹⁷⁹ Ponter's Ball is an earthwork built across this isthmus thereby ensuring control over the access road or, as some archaeologists maintain, defining a temenos or boundary to a sacred place. ¹⁸⁰ The earthwork is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is of national significance. The earthwork contributed to protecting the sanctity of the Glastonbury Tor and the Isle of Avalon and reinforces the significance of an important sacred property.

V 'New water control structures were installed by the Somerset Drainage Boards on one side of the site, helping to retain water in the summer months.' See Richard Brunning, 25 November 2022, in: Historic England Research, Issue 22 online

The River Brue defines the southern edge of the sacred landscape dominated by **Wearyall Hill**. The principal bridge that crosses the river at the west end of the hill is **Pomparles Bridge**. Here the river was managed to create a landing place, a wharf and a harbour for small craft reaching Glastonbury Abbey from the sea. The bridge provided access to the Abbey and its shrines. A structure had been built by Romans, but recent excavations suggest a medieval date for the remains below the present road.¹⁸¹ Associated with the bridge is a nearby causeway extending south across the meres and marsh and this led to high ground at Lantokay (now part of Street) where the early Christian saint, Saint Gildas, established a very early Christian community.¹⁸² Pomparles Bridge is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and so is nationally important.

The bridge is associated also with Arthurian legend. From this bridge Sir Bedivere threw King Arthur's sword, the *Excalibur*, into the river for it to be caught by the Lady of the Lake.¹⁸³ Arthurian legends are of European significance. Deposition of precious objects such as swords or bowls is a well-known practice of Celtic late Bronze Age and Iron Age cultures.^{184 185}

Beckery

Beckery is the site of the earliest known Christian burials in the British Isles.¹⁸⁶ The first fifth century monastic chapel was built on a low mound at Beckery.¹⁸⁷ Access to and from high ground to its west was across a ford. [See fig. 07]. Alongside the chapel are the first Christian burials in the British Isles.^{W 188 189} These predate Iona Abbey by some 100 years and Glastonbury Abbey by some 200 years. Two successive chapels have been built on the site and they in turn became daughter-houses to the Glastonbury monastery.¹⁹⁰ The chapel is closely associated with



Fig. 40 The south elevation of the Lady Chapel

the visits (or stay) of St Brigid and St Patrick. Beckery is held to be a special place and especially sacred to women.¹⁹¹

The chapel at Beckery was one of three 'slipper chapels' in which pilgrims slept before continuing their pilgrimage to shrines in the monastery, or on the Tor, after leaving their slippers in the chapel.¹⁹² The chapel is associated also with Arthurian legend. King Arthur is held to have slept in or near the chapel at Wearyall hill and for three nights he had a dream or vision telling him to go to the chapel in Beckery. On the third night he did so and had a vision of Mary with the Christ child.^{X 193} Arthurian legends are of European significance. The remains of the building lie below ground now, but the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is nationally important. It is likely that much of the area is still consecrated ground.

X The image of Mary and the Christ child was included subsequently on King Arthur's shield.

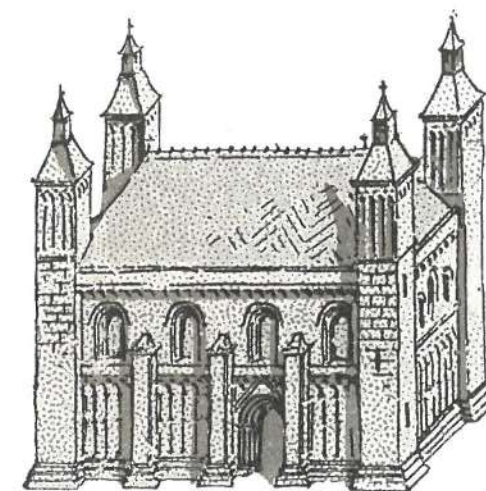


Fig. 41 The Lady Chapel taken from Frederick Bligh Bond's drawing of a reconstructed Abbey ensemble showing the chapel representing a reliquary. [From: Bond's 1925 'An Architectural Handbook to Glastonbury Abbey'1.



Fig. 42 Interlaced chevron mouldings in the Lady Chapel. The chapel shows evidence of the transition from Norman decoration to early English Gothic.

W It is the earliest monastic Christian cemetery in Britain

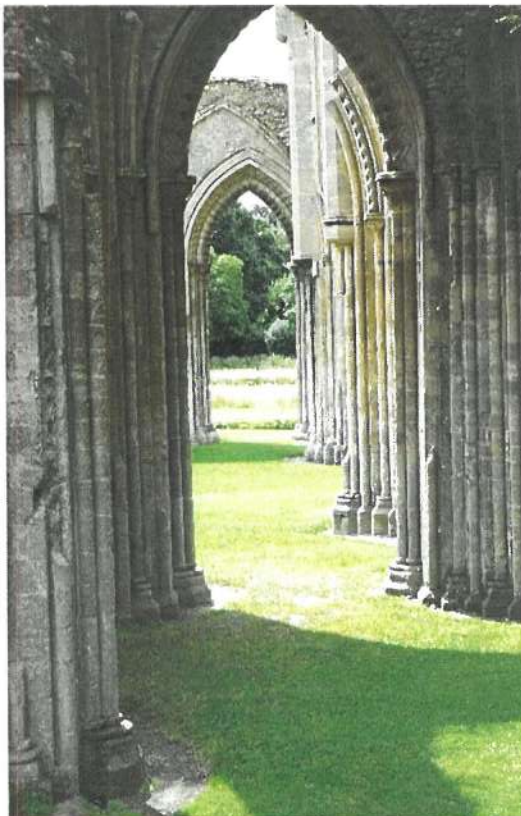


Fig. 43 The ruins are exceptional testimony to the Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries

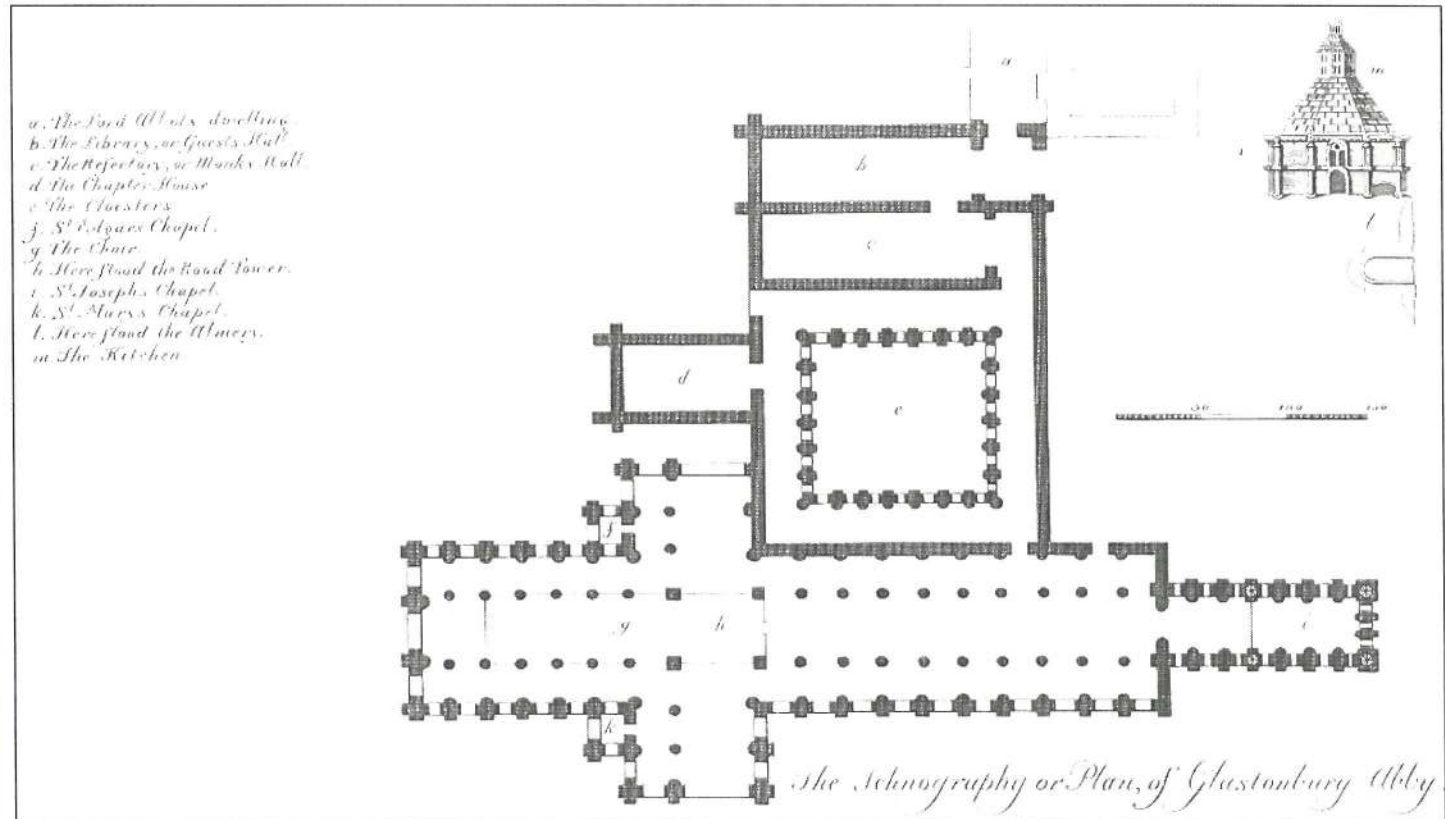


Fig. 44 The plan of the abbey from the Reverend Collinson's 1791 "The History and Antiquities of the County of Somerset".

The Lady Chapel and Abbey ruins

Tradition holds that the first Christian church was built in Glastonbury in AD 63 by Joseph of Arimathea.^{194 195} This is thought to have been a circular building built from wattle panels and surrounded by twelve cells, one for each of Joseph's followers. The first record of an early church here was shown on brass plates erected on a post in the abbey precinct.¹⁹⁶ This record is of a rectangular building built from wattle panels and covered with reeds for a roof. This is the *ealde chirche*. It stood

from early Saxon times until it was burnt down in the Great Fire of 1184.¹⁹⁷ The Normans quickly rebuilt the chapel in stone. The Norman building retained the footprint and dimensions of its predecessor suggesting the Norman administration respected the sanctity and hallowed ground of the earlier Saxon church. This hallowed ground is held to be '*the holiest ert in England*'.¹⁹⁸

Even in its ruined state, the Norman chapel is an outstanding building. It demonstrates the transition from the late Norman Romanesque style of architecture to the Early English Gothic style.¹⁹⁹ In the sixteenth century, considerable investment and ingenuity was spent on introducing a crypt into the length of the existing chapel building and at the same time, raising a new floor above the crypt.²⁰⁰ The new space in the crypt was dedicated to St Joseph, whilst above was the upper chapel and this was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.²⁰¹ Both chapels were generously decorated and contained many relics so that the cult of the Virgin Mary and the cult of St. Joseph were celebrated in the same building. The shape of this outstanding building is significant because it contained relics and resembles a reliquary.^Y

Dimensions of the rebuilt Lady Chapel are the same as the Celtic-Saxon *ealde chirche*. The archaeologist and architect, Frederick Bligh Bond examined the dimensions of the chapel and the neighbouring ruined abbey. He brought forward the theory that these buildings were built to a discipline of sacred geometry. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the adjacent Great Church, was one of the longest ecclesiastical building in Britain and second only to the first St. Paul's Cathedral in London which was destroyed in 1666.

The standing structure is an outstanding statement of continuity. It was an exceptional building built in stages from the first Saxon building to the Gothic Great Church in the middle of the sixteenth century. The Lady Chapel and the ruined great church lie within the Abbey precinct. This is a Scheduled Monument and so is of national interest. It is likely that the Lady Chapel and the abbey

Y The Reverend C. L. Marson in his 1925 book *'Glastonbury or The English Jerusalem'* (pp.98-101) includes a note on the relics that are known to have been in the Abbey before the suppression of the Abbey. Of these 'The Spine' from the Saviours Crown of Thorns was (in 1925) at Stanbrook near Worcester. See James Carley, 1988, p.130

ruins are on consecrated ground. St Patrick's Chapel is on consecrated ground and is a grade II Listed Building. The ruins of the abbey still stand and are testimony to the zenith of church building in England and also testimony to the Dissolution of the Monasteries in Britain. The legacy of the Anglican church and its influence throughout the English-speaking world is of universal value. The legacy of the Dissolution of the Monasteries is discussed below.

'In the four years from March 1536, each of the kingdom's 850 religious houses and mendicant convents for men and women – representing as many as nineteen different customary traditions, congregations and 'order' had been closed.'

James Clark, 2021²⁰²

The Ruins

The abbey is not without merit although little can be said of the buildings that were occupied formerly in the abbey precinct and are now lost. The ruins are testimony to the trauma and changes wrought on the wealthiest monastery in England during the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The ruins of the abbey are of an exceptional building ensemble in itself and was the largest abbey ensemble in the country with some 140,000 acres (56,656 hectares) of land in its vast estate.^Z At the time of the suppression of the monastery, building work had been underway on the Great Church building with for example the construction of the (now lost) Edgar Chapel at its east end.

Z An estimate of the estate at the Dissolution from Peter Clery, [Clery, 2003, p.2] but for the Saxon estate see also Lesley Abrams, 1996, *'Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury Church and Endowment'*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge



Fig. 45 Bligh Bond's conjectural drawing of the elevation of the north wall of the Galilea Chapel. From Bligh Bond's 1925, *'An Architectural Handbook to Glastonbury Abbey'*, Plate 10



Fig. 46 A romantic fascination with ruins

The Abbey ensemble includes the still standing walls of the Lady Chapel. This chapel had been founded on the site of a very early Christian Church and retained the sacred geometry of its walls. These are testimony to beliefs handed down from the Celtic Christian tradition. This was thriving in Glastonbury before the arrival of St. Augustine in Kent. After the suppression of the monastery, the above ground chapel at nearby Beckery was removed leaving only 'below-ground' remains of the first Christian church and the first Christian Cemetery in Britain.

From the seventeenth century, the Romantic movement enhanced the appeal of the more specifically Christian aspect of Britain's Celtic past which included a fascination with ruins. The Reformation played its part in creating this particular phenomenon with the suppression of the monasteries. This '*inspired a wistful nostalgia for a lost golden age of simple piety and devotion.*'²⁰³ There is plenty of evidence that people of all social ranks continued to frequent hallowed places that had been vandalised in the course of the Long Reformation.²⁰⁴ The Abbey continued to attract Catholic recusants well into the eighteenth century.²⁰⁵ In 1622, the poet Michael Drayton gazed on the ruins of '*Great Arthur's tomb and Holy Joseph's grave*' at Glastonbury and asked '*did so many Kings do honour in that place, for Avarice at last so vilely to deface.*'²⁰⁶

AA We note the United Reform Church of 1814 is in the High Street. The Methodist Church of 1866 is in Lambrook Street

251007 Scoping Study V8 © Christopher Pound Paul Simons 2025



Fig. 47 the parish church of St John The Baptist

Churches and Chapels

Three churches and two chapels are special places to which people in the town, pilgrims and visitors may go to worship. These buildings make an essential contribution to the spiritual health of the town. ^{AA}

The Parish church is St John the Baptist in the High Street. Remains of an earlier small chapel at the West end of the of the Lady Chapel was known also as St. John's chapel. Little is known of the Anglo Saxon beginning of the parish church. This was one of seven local churches over which the Abbots of Glastonbury claimed complete ecclesiastic jurisdiction. Of the Norman building little remains after the collapse of a central tower in 1465. Most of the present building was built after this and between 1488 and 1514. After the suppression of the abbey the church was placed into the hands of the Crown. The present tower is the second tallest in Somerset and, in the absence of the

The 14th century remains of St Michael can be a place of worship and stand alone on the summit of the Tor



Fig. 48 The distant tower of St Benedict's Church is aligned with the axis along the nave of the Great Church of the Abbey

tower over the abbey, the parish church indicates the centre of the town. Its furnishings are mostly from the nineteenth century except for the Royal arms that are of Charles II and a screen of 1913 by the architect, Bligh Bond.²⁰⁷ The Church safeguards the pall and gremial of Abbot Whiting of 1539. Outside in the churchyard is a Holy Thorn from which cuttings are taken every Christmas to decorate the monarch's table.²⁰⁸

West of the abbey and lying precisely on the axis of the great church of the abbey is St Benedict's church in Benedict Street. It was dedicated first to St Beon (aka St Benigus of Meare). An earlier church here was rebuilt in 1500 by Abbot Bere. Evidence of his commission can be found in his initials and emblems that are carved over the north porch. The building was 'over tied' in the 19th century when a south aisle was added.²⁰⁹

Fig. 49 The extent of the Twelve Hides Hundred from the 1750 map by Emanuel Bowen.



St Mary in Magdalen Street was built between 1939 and 1940. It has a stone façade built on a concrete structure. Inside is the reredos of *Our Lady of Glastonbury* and a tapestry celebrating the Saints of Glastonbury.²¹⁰

Nearby is **St Margaret's Chapel** in Magdalen Street. This is a quiet and secluded retreat set back from the road. The small chapel is a place for contemplation by any visitor. The chapel once provided for the spiritual needs of occupants of two parallel rows of alms-houses. Of these, the north row survives after the south row was taken down in 1958. The alms-houses and the chapel are now cared for by a Trust.²¹¹

St Patrick's Chapel in the Abbey precinct is an early 16th century chapel likely to have been associated with the Patrick Almshouses now gone. Inside is the original altar but the restored bellcote and east window are Victorian.²¹²

The Twelve Hides

Tradition holds that twelve parcels of land had been granted to the followers of Joseph of Arimathea.²¹³ Each of the hides were 'hermitages' for the twelve disciples and may have been on islands. The first documentary record was the gift of six hides from the Celtic/British King of Wessex, Centwine.²¹⁴ This was followed by a similar grant of six hides from his contemporary, King Baldred. Other gifts of land to the abbey followed, but were given through charters made at different times and they are not contiguous. The abbey's estate expanded far beyond its original limit eventually to extend up to 24,616 acres [9,962. ha].

The Twelve Hides are the most important land holding recorded in the Domesday Book of 1084. Here tax was never paid, and the Abbey enjoyed particular fiscal and jurisdictional privileges. The King's writ was not valid within the boundary of the Twelve Hides.²¹⁵ Glastonbury Abbey and its estate in the Twelve Hides benefitted also from exemption of the powers and rights of the

Bishop of Wells. In the early twelfth century, the ecclesiastical exemption from subordination to the bishop was defined for Glastonbury Abbey itself and for seven of its churches.²¹⁶

After the Dissolution, jurisdiction of the estate passed to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and he acquired the hundred (court), rights and liberties of the Twelve Hides that had belonged to the Abbey. After Seymour's attainder in 1552, the Twelve Hides Hundred reverted to the Crown. The management of the Twelve Hides are an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition and contributed to the considerable wealth of the Abbey.

Holy Islands

Stone outcrops and low hills rise above level land around Glastonbury. When the area is flooded these places are islands. On most of these hills were hermitages or 'daughter chapels' to Glastonbury Abbey and so these hallowed grounds are known as holy islands.²¹⁷ Some commentators have included Glastonbury as a holy island. **Beckery** is one of the holy islands and is discussed below. Where there is known to have been a church, chapel or hermitage then this building is likely to have been on consecrated ground..

Bleadney is one of the 'Holy Islands' following a grant of land to Glastonbury Abbey but later it became part of the diocesan estate.²¹⁸ It is not a true island, but is the west end of a promontory that extends from Wells in the east. Here was the upper limit for sea going ships and the former harbour for Wells.²¹⁹ Its position indicates the strategic importance of the active port when the Axe Valley was used by sea going vessels.

Burrow Mump is a conspicuous steep natural hill and²²⁰ similar to the Tor and it rises twenty-four metres above the Levels. On the summit are the remains of a Norman motte and an early mid-

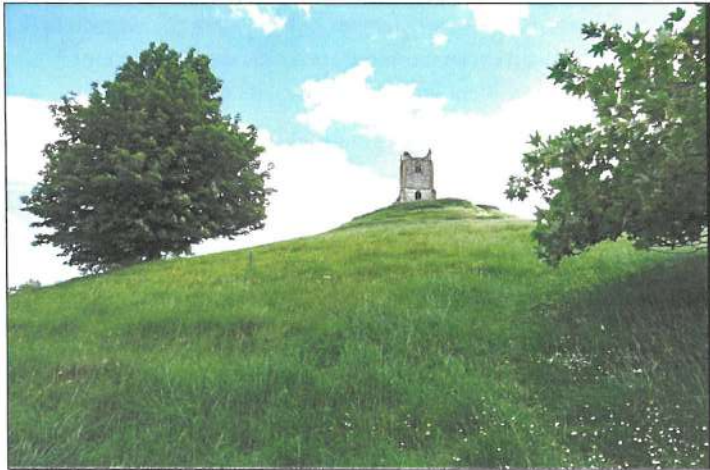


Fig. 50 The unfinished eighteenth century church of St Michael on the summit of the Burrow Mump

fourteenth century church dedicated to St Michael. Remains of this church lie below the present unfinished church of 1793-6 dedicated also to S Michael.²²¹ It stands at a strategic point where two rivers conjoin. The strategic position of the hill makes it likely that it was used from earliest times.²²²

From the summit of the Mump there are clear views of the distant Glastonbury Tor. This has a particular significance on important festival events in the Celtic year on the quarter days.²²³ Then the sun rises and sets aligned with the Tor and the Mump. Michell opined the hill had been artificially shaped in a fashion similar to the Tor so that their respective axes align with each other.²²⁴

The remains of the first church and other associated earthworks on Burrow Mump are within a Scheduled Ancient Monument and

Fig. 51 The Holy Islands with the Glastonbury Lake Village shown

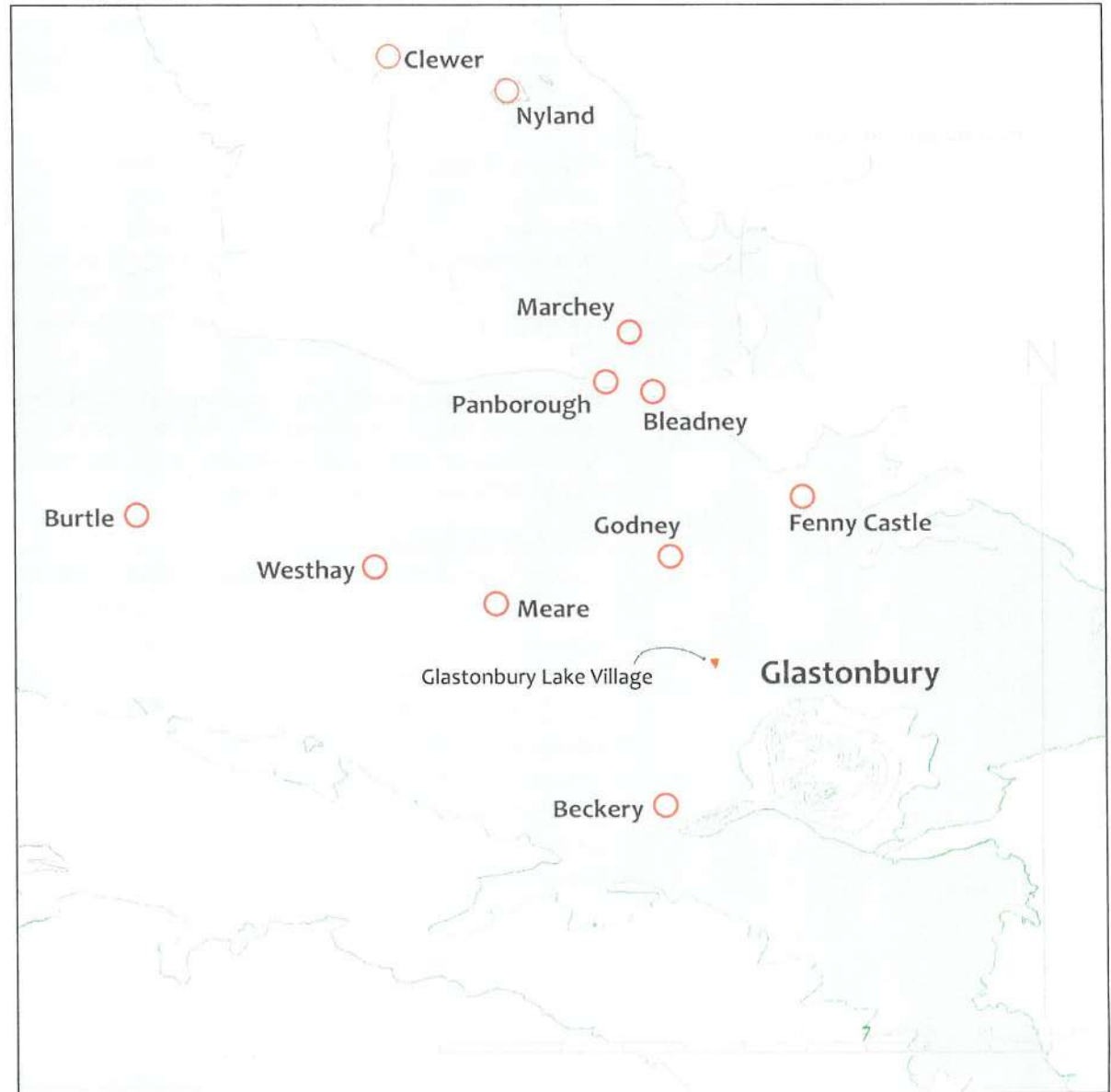




Fig. 52 The motte and bailey of Fenny Castle

these are of national importance. The unfinished church of St. Michael is a Grade II Listed Building.

When flooded, **Burtle** becomes a small island rising above the Levels and it was favoured by Mesolithic hunter gatherers.²²⁵ In the Neolithic period it was linked to the Polden Hills by a series of wooden tracks. There is evidence of Roman industrial activity here with remains of salterns surviving.²²⁶ A hermitage had been established here by 1199 and this was known later as St Stephen's chapel but now nothing visible remains.²²⁷ By 1312, it was a house of the Augustinian Canons Regular and a possession of the Abbot of Glastonbury but it lies outside of the boundary of the Twelve Hides.

Clewer is a village some thirteen and half kilometres north of Glastonbury and this is a possible early ecclesiastical site of St Cuthlac's Chapel.²²⁸ This is mentioned in the early sixteenth century account of the boundary of the Twelve Hides,



Fig. 53 The Long Run between Godney and the Godney Lake Village

The natural outcrop of **Fenny Castle** rises above the Levels and Moors.²²⁹ During the Civil War in the thirteenth century the mound was engineered into a motte and bailey. It is possible this was an early ecclesiastical site but it lies just outside the boundary of the Twelve Hides. No evidence of an ecclesiastical use here survives.²³⁰

Godney is one of the seven holy islands and where there was a daughter church of the abbey which was exempt from episcopal interference.²³¹ A chapel dedicated to The Holy Trinity was repaired in the thirteenth century but this was demolished in 1839 and replaced by the present church.²³² The road called the Long Run between Glastonbury and Godney is sufficiently different from other causeways and eighteenth-century roads that it may be considered as an earlier link between the Glastonbury Lake Village and the hill at Godney.²³³

Three kilometres south of Glastonbury and south of the flood plain of the River Brue was an early settlement on the north edge of **Street** but known earlier as **Lantokay**. Finds from here indicate a likely Roman presence in this small area of slightly higher ground.²³⁴ The property is associated with the Celtic saint, Gildas, by the fifth century and certainly by the seventh century, when an early church or monastic community had been established here.²³⁵ Here is the only church in Britain known with some certainty from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles to have been founded by St Gildas in mid-sixth century.²³⁶ There is an association of St Gildas and King Arthur.²³⁷

The churchyard is a large oval enclosure and was surrounded by an earthwork and a ditch and is the earliest recorded British 'llan' site, predating Cornish and Welsh records by some 200 years.²³⁸ It was likely to contain dwellings for a small Christian community of monks, craftsmen and labourers. The settlement was on the border of the Twelve Hides and the church was referred to in charters to be exempt from episcopal interference.²³⁹ The present church is mostly early thirteenth century with nineteenth century additions and is dedicated to The Holy Trinity.²⁴⁰ The church is a Grade I Listed Building.

A former farm on an island in the Levels, **Martinsey** was one of the seven holy islands.²⁴¹ Until the Levels and Moors were drained, this was an island, with Godney and Westhay, standing at the then confluence of Rivers Axe and Brue. It is thought to have been occupied in the Iron Age and so is contemporary with the Glastonbury Lake Village. It is the smallest of the holy islands with a monastic site as a daughter house to the Abbey. It is a rare example of an early Christian enclosure and contains evidence of earlier Roman and early medieval periods. Here is a series of earthworks defined by a substantial ditch and bank



Fig. 54 The Holy Trinity Church at Lantokay (Street)

which²⁴² is a pre-tenth century enclosure. **Marchey Farm** is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and is nationally significant.

Meare is one of the holy islands with a daughter house to the Abbey. Because of its proximity to two Iron Age platforms, the settlement is thought to have Iron Age origins. It had been a site of a Roman villa and is an early Christian place.²⁴³ It is likely to have been the site of a Celtic Christian Chapel or hermitage. The Domesday book records fisheries, vineyard and arable and pastoral land. This is likely to be a site of a Celtic Christian Church. The church was rebuilt in 1470.²⁴⁴ Adjacent to the church is the Manor House and this is associated now with a farm. The Manor House was a summer palace of the Abbots of Glastonbury. East of the Manor House is a medieval fourteenth century Fish House and remains of fish ponds close to the River Brue. The special significance of Meare is its association with St



Fig. 55 Location of the Holy Trinity Church at Lantokay (Street) and associated medieval bridge and causeway

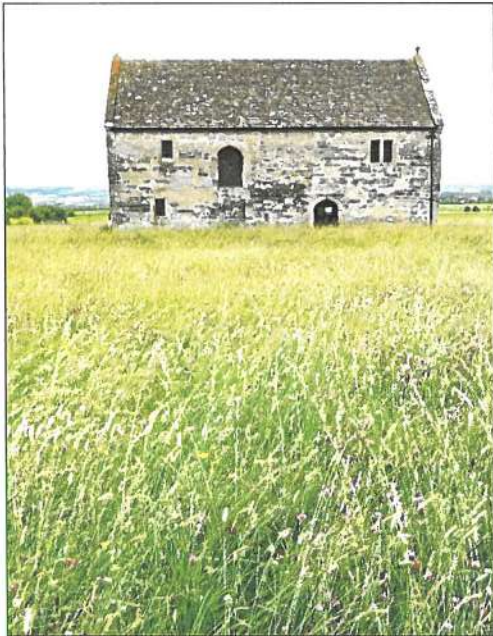


Fig. 56 The Fish House and fish ponds at Meare

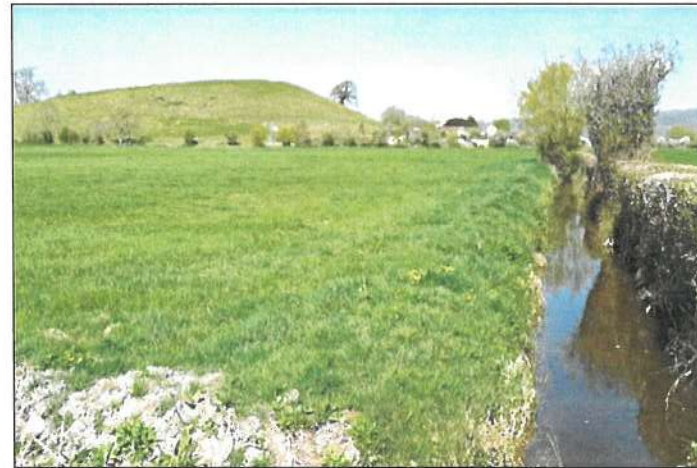


Fig. 57 Barrow Hill at the east end of the Panborough ridge

Benigus who established a hermitage here. He is held to have been a disciple of St Patrick.²⁴⁵

Present day Nyland was known formerly as Andreyesie. The hill at Nyland is not found in pre-Conquest sources. It is a substantial and conspicuous hill that rises 76m above low lying land in an area that may be flooded frequently. It is one of the holy islands on the northern limit of the Twelve Hides.²⁴⁶ There is evidence of a Romano British camp here and it is likely to have been also the site of a later hermitage. The land was given to Glastonbury Abbey by King Cenwealh. Any chapel building that had been there is now incorporated into a farm. The present church is dedicated to St Andrew. From Saxon times, a fishery for the Abbey was in place alongside, but by the thirteenth century the land had become an agricultural holding.²⁴⁷

The village of Panborough clings to the sides of a ridge of high ground aligned east and west with Barrow Hill that rises at the

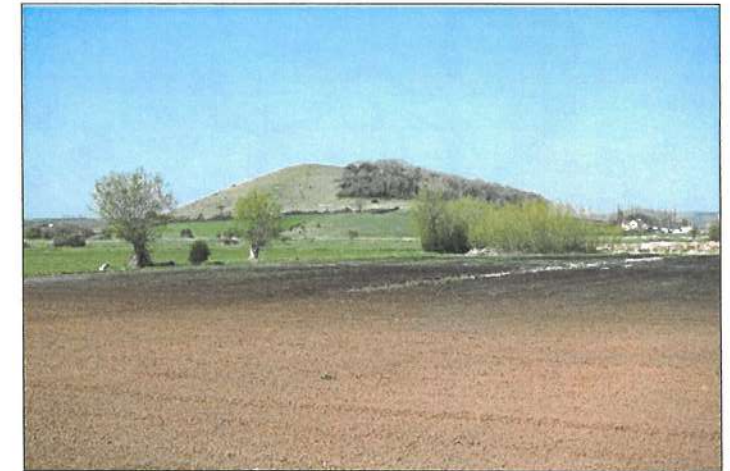


Fig. 58 The Holy Island of Nyland

east end of the ridge.²⁴⁸ A former chapel here may have been dedicated to St Padarn, and legend holds he had associations with King Arthur. The church here was granted special exemptions from episcopal interference.

The village of Westhay is contiguous with the west side of Meare and is a possible early ecclesiastical site. It lies inside the boundary of the Twelve Hides. A ruined chapel stood here still in the eighteenth century

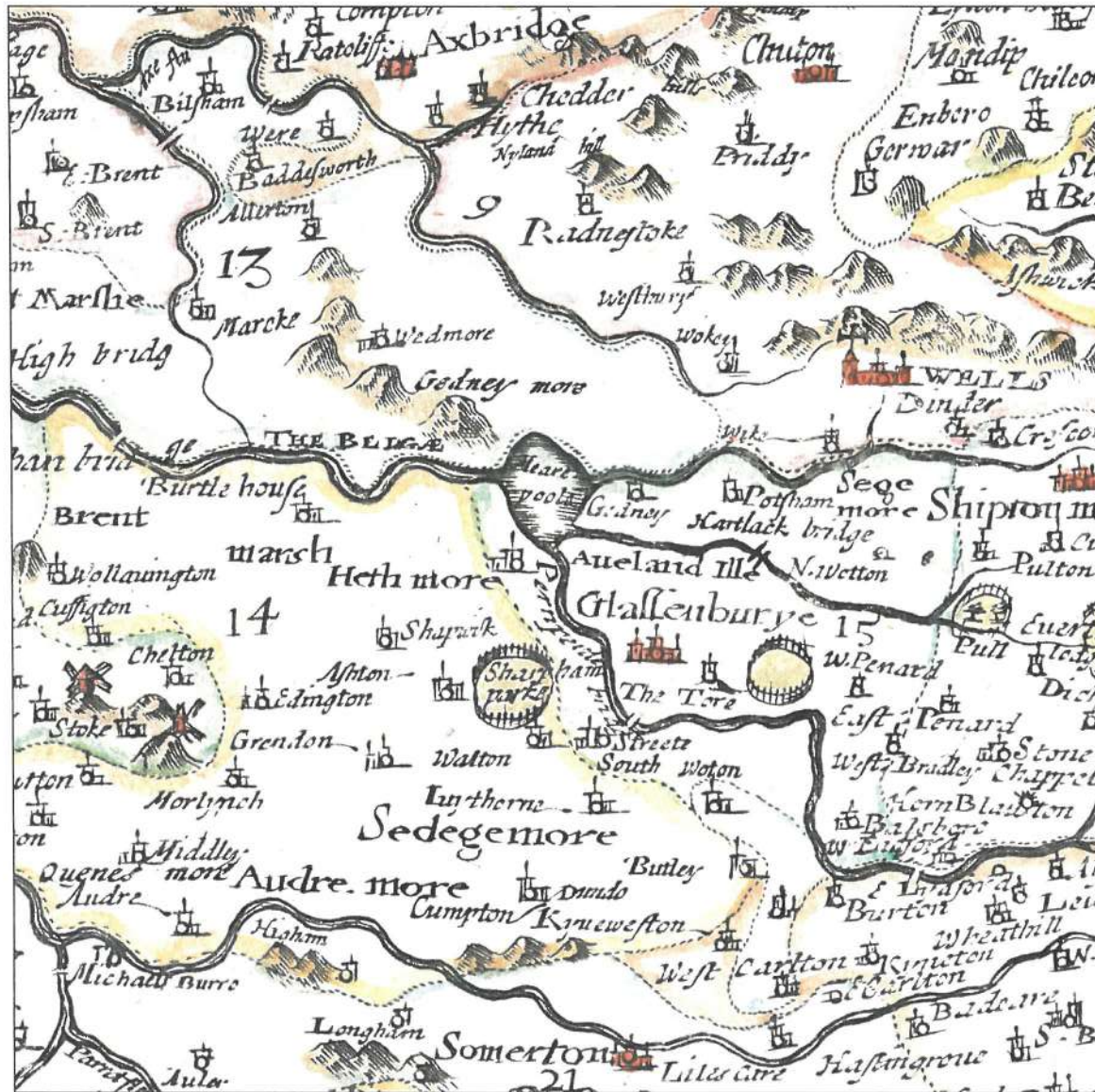


Fig. 59 The Glastonbury area from Blome's map of Somerset of c.1673

Section 4.1 – Statement of Significance

'... Certain locations are believed to be inherently powerful and to have special qualities: the light, air, water and landscape of Glastonbury are believed to promote healing and creativity... Glastonbury is a 'thin place' where the boundary between the material and spiritual is permeable.'

Roberta Gilchrist 2020 ²⁴⁹

Glastonbury, the Isle of Avalon and the Somerset Levels and Moors are held to be a sacred landscape from the earliest times. The Levels, containing lakes, meres, rivers, peat bogs, salt marches and fenland contained within a tidal landscape with Glastonbury, acting as a safe harbour, seventeen kilometres from the open sea of the Bristol Channel. Neolithic settlers managed this landscape over 5,800 years ago with trackways, the earliest found in Britain, to access hunting grounds, trading posts and sacred gathering places. These trackways received ritual offerings suggesting the earliest religious activity known in the United Kingdom.

Glastonbury Lake Village is the largest found in Britain and contained forty roundhouses. It was built on the edge of a swamp; the only access was by dugout canoe. Here Druid and pagan worship evolved and the early Celtic church grew being patronised by Celtic saints including St Patrick, St David and St Brigid.

Isle of Avalon

The Isle of Avalon surrounds the Glastonbury Tor; believed by some to be a gateway to the underworld; it was part of an astronomical site; the site of an early post-Roman pagan settlement and this was followed by a monastic site of early Christian evangelists of the fifth and sixth centuries which continued into the post-Conquest period; it was the place of Abbot Whiting's execution; and is the most recognised national landmark in Britain. Chalice Hill is reputed to be the burial site of the Holy Grail. Wearyall Hill is where Joseph of Arimathea is

reputed to have landed in England and planted his staff in the earth which grew into the Holy Thorn. St Edmunds Hill is likely to be an observatory from which the winter solstice can be observed and Beckery is the site of St Brigid's chapel which was a daughter-house to the Abbey and this is one of the earliest monastic sites in Britain and is the earliest Celtic Christian monastic burial site in Britain

The Abbey

Glastonbury has hosted a church since the fifth century with earlier Christian activity reputed to have been established from the first and second centuries CE. The established monastery became known throughout Christendom and is of indisputable significance, containing the "holiest earth in England". It is the site of the first Christian church in Britain, the 'ealde chirche' or 'vetusta ecclesia' being testimony to its international acclaim.

In a small and isolated part of the south-west of England Glastonbury Abbey became the wealthiest monastic foundation in the land for over 250 years. In doing so, it managed a wide landscape of the Twelve Hides and Holy Islands. The Abbey managed reclamation of large areas of land from the sea including innovative and extensive drainage schemes, water management systems and diverting rivers for navigation and trade.

The significance of Glastonbury was recognised by Kings from the Anglo-Saxon period until the Dissolution and had one of the most remarkable and significant collection of relics, treasures and manuscripts found anywhere in Britain which resulted in large scale visitation by waves of pilgrims. The sites of Beckery, Lantokay and the 'ealde chirche', that is the predecessor to the surviving Lady Chapel, are evidence of an early Celtic Christian church which predates Augustine's mission to Canterbury. The Norman Lady Chapel built after the Great Fire of 1184 took the

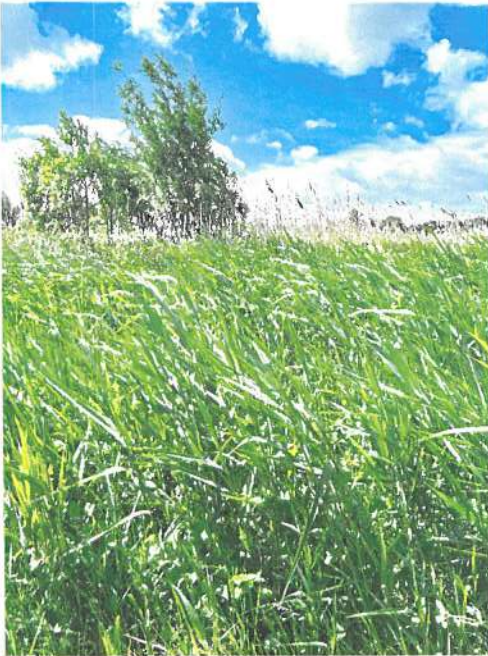


Fig. 60 The Isle of Avalon was surrounded by meres and marshes

form of a unique reliquary housing the remarkable collection of relics.

The drowned landscape of the Somerset Levels is testimony to a human struggle to shape and manage this watery environment, a struggle that has lasted from neolithic times to the present. The earliest recording of land granted to the Abbot's is by King Cenwalh in 670 CE, and known as the Twelve Hides with many more gifts of land, privileges and grants received throughout the Saxon and early medieval period.

Twelve Hides

The Twelve Hides included the Holy Islands of Bleadney, Bride's Mound, Clewer, Godney, Marchey, Meare, Nyland, Panborough and Westhay. These islands were holy places with churches, hermitages and chapels and, prior to extensive drainage of the surrounding land, had been connected by ancient wooden trackways and causeways across the fenland or accessed by canoes originally dug out of whole tree trunks.

Water characterises the land more than any other element. It ensured security and isolation for the Isle of Avalon much to the benefit of monastic life. The Levels, meres and moors are formed of clay and peat and provided a constant source of food. The early church learnt how to harvest eels and fish in dykes, rhynes (rhines) and ponds and cultivated ever expanding areas of land for arable use once drained. The monastic estate at Meare, with its unique Fish House and Abbot's lodgings is evidence of the management of land, water and extensive estates.

Reformation

At the Dissolution of the Monasteries between 1536 and 1540, 850 religious houses, monasteries and mendicant convents for men and women were closed by King Henry VIII. Glastonbury had latterly remained second only to Westminster in wealth and land holdings by the end of the medieval period. The impact of the Dissolution and Reformation, with the consequent creation of

the Anglican Church, after a stuttering start this became a movement of international importance. Glastonbury remains testament to the destruction of the Roman Catholic church in Britain. This seismic change in religion, land ownership, governance and national outlook had a global impact, with the transmission of the Anglican Church and its new liturgy throughout the growing English-speaking world. Consequential changes to the ownership and management of the previously controlled monastic estates were to change how the English monarchy and aristocracy were subsequently able to govern the kingdom and control wealth.

Myths and Legends

In Glastonbury and the Isle of Avalon are many places and features associated with myths and legends which are an essential part of the values of the place. The most significant of these intangible values are discussed here when they have a direct link to the principal places identified as attributes. These include the association of Joseph of Arimathea with Glastonbury and the Arthurian legends made famous across Europe from the 12th century and now of global significance. A full annual calendar of celebrations of traditional events, nature, astronomy and festivities continue to this day.

UNESCO's World Heritage Criteria

This description of the merits of the sacred landscape of Glastonbury includes a wide and varied range of attributes. UNESCO defines an attribute to be those elements of a heritage place which conveys its heritage and conservation values. These can be physical qualities, material fabric and other tangible features but can also contain intangible qualities.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has set out ten criteria by which a property can be judged to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These are discussed below in the section on UNESCO [Section 2.1] and are set out in Annex B. With these in mind the attributes of the sacred landscape of Glastonbury as

An attribute has been defined by UNESCO as :

'Attributes are aspects of a property which are associated with or express the Outstanding Universal Value. Attributes can be tangible or intangible.'

From UNESCO's

[The World Heritage Resource Manual Preparing World Heritage Nominations \(2nd edition, UNESCO 2011\)](#)

outlined above can be considered to meet at least two of UNESCO's Criteria.

Recommended criteria

Criterion iii): to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living, or which has disappeared.

Glastonbury bears exceptional testimony as one of the World's sacred places reflecting a 5,000 year span of worship and reverence to a landscape of remarkable significance to early beliefs; paganism, Druids, the Celtic Church and the wealth and power of the Catholic Church up to the Dissolution of the Monasteries which had a far-reaching global impact. Annual religious ceremonies, celebrations and festivities mark these associations to this day as Glastonbury remains an exceptional example of a traditional pilgrimage centre of outstanding importance.

Criterion vi): to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The UNESCO Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria).

Glastonbury is directly associated with events and living traditions reflecting a spiritual response to a unique landscape housing numerous beliefs, creeds and paths that remain vibrant and thriving today as in medieval and earlier times. The original function of the site as a place of pilgrimage is maintained and so provides evidence of the continuity of social practises.

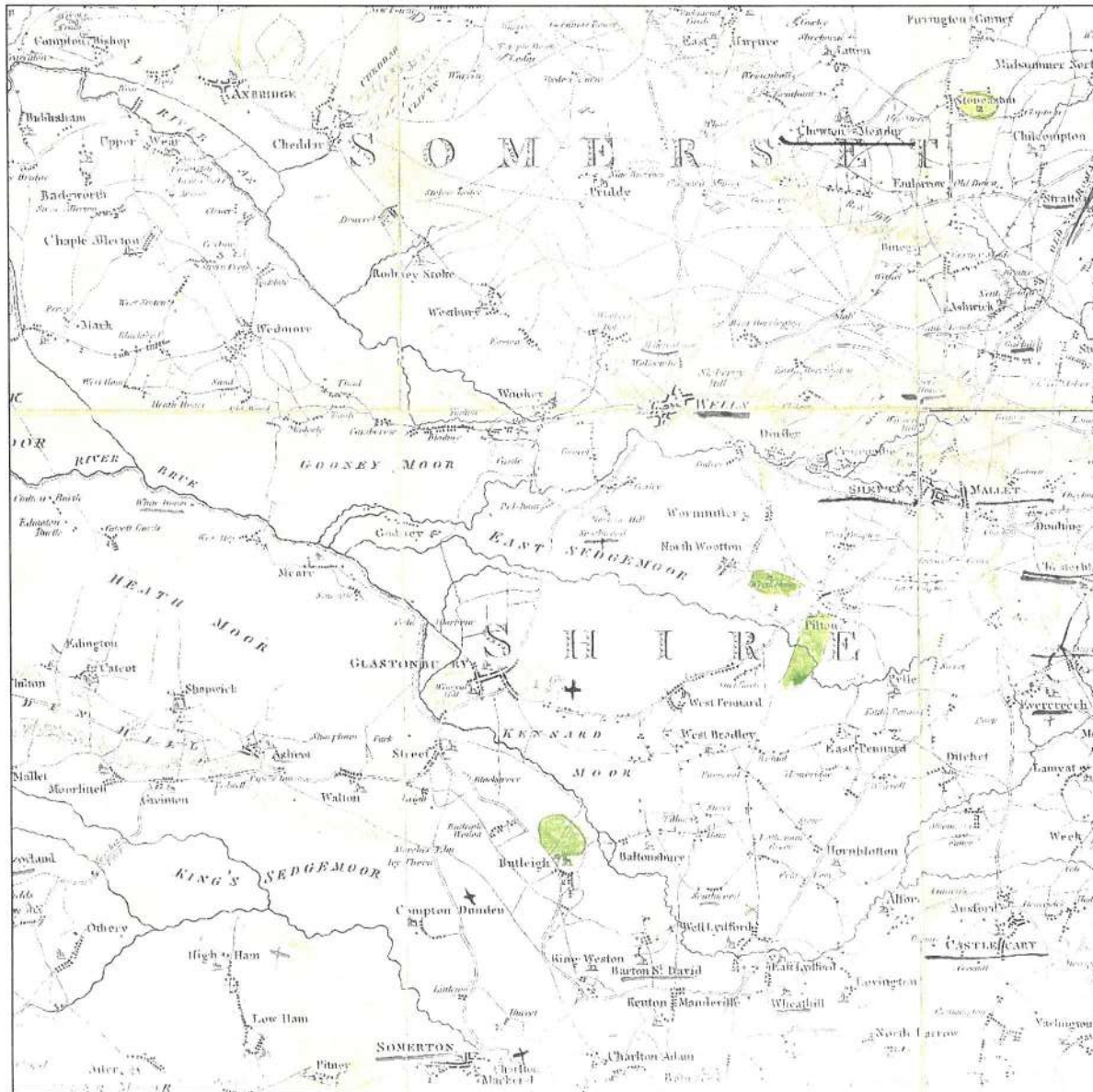


Fig. 61 From Harcourt Masters' map of '24 Miles round Bath' of 1795

Section 4.2 – Conclusions

Abbreviations: used in the Table One on page 56

LAs =	Local Authority.
DCMS =	Department of Culture, Media and Sport.
HE =	Historic England as technical advisor on international affairs to DCMS
Nom Team =	nomination drafting team
Advisory Body =	one of three international independent advisory bodies to the World Heritage Committee.
WHC =	World Heritage Centre secretariat at UNESCO headquarters in Paris.
ICOMOS =	the International Council on Monuments and Sites, the Advisory Body to UNESCO on cultural sites, this body would apply on the case of Glastonbury.

With the evidence set out above in mind, this scoping study has concluded that there is merit in continuing with this work and to developing the second phase of the proposal. This will test a draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value against the programme and priorities of the UK State Party. The objective of the next phase is to open a dialogue with the international team at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and their international advisory body, Historic England, to impress upon them the value of including “Glastonbury – a sacred landscape” in the next review of the UK’s Tentative List of sites to be considered for inclusion on the World Heritage List.

The consultants recommend Glastonbury Town Council and its partners to generate further support through debate and presentation, to enable this work to proceed to a point where a fully developed proposition can be tested again within the wider Glastonbury community.

The process can be lengthy, time consuming and at times requiring significant resources. It will involve a panel of experts to contribute and draft specialist papers to develop the significance of the attributes of Glastonbury that may be included in a forthcoming Nomination for World Heritage status.

Further extensive community consultation will be needed to look at what the Glastonbury community agrees is its international profile and how best to manage, protect and conserve the town to meet the values and expectations of all residents and pilgrims.

The evidence and discussion presented above is known by many. It has been written about extensively by many scholars, historians, archaeologists, academics, enthusiasts, theorists and those of beliefs of every persuasion and none. All these views are relevant and the enormous canon of work related to Glastonbury can at times appear as overwhelming. The consultants have not attempted to study every available document or to become experts on all aspects of the subject of Glastonbury, but to carefully select what informs the requirements of the UNESCO process.

The consultants believe that this nomination merits serious consideration and in due course, further steps can be taken to develop the idea. A great deal of mis-informed criticism of this initiative, its instigation and those behind it have received the oxygen of derogatory publicity on social media and elsewhere. However, informed discussion must take place in future if this work is to continue in an effective and efficient way. These debates will explain to the critics the purpose behind the initiative.

Glastonbury Town Council can then demonstrate the deep foundation and longevity of its significance in a world of ever-changing values. It deserves to be recognised on the World Heritage List of the world’s most important places.

Table One: The World Heritage process.

Item	Year	Subject: in the case of Glastonbury – a sacred landscape.	Who + see note below		
1	0	*Tentative Listing: get on the shortlist for the next UK national review administered by the State Party (UK government)	LAs, Project lead, Partners, DCMS, HE		
2	1	Preparatory work: set up nomination team and management structure, appoint external experts, research and data collection, initial boundary studies, OUV development, refine Comparative analysis, develop engagement and community involvement	Nom Team, Partners, LAs		
3	2	**Preliminary Assessment: prepare request, maintain development of data collection, illustrations and mapping	Nom Team, Partners, HE, DCMS		
4	2 May	Technical Evaluation: peer review of Preliminary Assessment Request at national level if necessary	Expert Group		
5	2 Sept	Preliminary Assessment Request: this is a desk-top review by the Advisory Bodies; the site must be on the Tentative List for this to proceed	DCMS, Advisory Bodies		
6	2 Oct	Assessment of Completeness of PAR: if complete submit to Advisory Body (ICOMOS), for evaluation, only 35 PARs are accepted per annum Note: work on the nomination dossier and management system to continue throughout Year 3. Ending outcome of PAR.	HE, DCMS, LAs, Nom Team		
7	3 Oct	Preliminary Assessment Results: conveyed to State Party Note: a minimum of 12 months must pass before the Nomination Dossier can be submitted	HE, DCMS, Advisory Body		
8	4	Complete initial draft of Nomination Dossier: preparation of Management Plan, ongoing stakeholder consultation	Nom Team, Partners, Critical friends		
9	4 May	Technical Evaluation: review of nomination by expert group		DCMS Evaluation Panel	
10	4 Sept	Submission of Draft Nomination Dossier: to the World Heritage Centre		DCMS	
11	4 Nov	World Heritage Centre: completeness check		WHC	
12	5 Feb	Submission of Nomination Dossier.		DCMS	
13	5 Mar	Transmission to Advisory Bodies: if pass final completeness check passed to ICOMOS for evaluation if within limit of 35 nominations per annum		WHC	
14	5 to May 6	Evaluation by Advisory Body		ICOMOS	
15	6 Jan	Advisory Body's interim report: received by State Party		ICOMOS DCMS	
16	6 Feb	Deadline: for additional information request to be answered		Nom Team DCMS	
17	6 July	***WHC considers recommendations: WHC votes for either Inscription, Referral, Deferral, Not to Inscribe.		World Heritage Committee	
		*The earliest that a Glastonbury proposed nomination could get onto the UK Tentative list is currently anticipated as 2033. Any current Tentative Listed nominations dropping out might create an opportunity for earlier consideration if sufficient progress has been made of drafting a nomination with the requisite consultations. If not, then Year 1 = 2033			
		**The Preliminary Assessment Request (PAR) procedure will be mandatory from 2028 prior to any consideration by the World Heritage Committee. A maximum limit of 35 PARs per annum will be considered from 2028 onwards			
		*** Based on information at 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee July 2025			

Section 4.3 Recommendations

Your consultants recommend that:

1. Glastonbury Town Council (GTC) World Heritage Status Advisory Committee (WHSAC) consider this Scoping Study report at its meeting in December 2025 and to provide the full Council meeting, in early 2026, with its considered opinion of the study's results and recommendations.

Action: GTC and WHSAC

2. Glastonbury Town Council determines to proceed with Phase Two. In order to prepare a document on the subject of "Glastonbury - A World Heritage proposal" (working title) to submit to the State Party as represented in government by DCMS and advised by Historic England.

Action: GTC to approve Phase2 and prepare tender documents to appoint consultants to develop a proposal to DCMS.

3. To secure Somerset Council support for the document "Glastonbury - A World Heritage proposal" and endorse its submission to DCMS.

Action: GTC WHSAC and consultants with Somerset Council.

4. Submit the document "Glastonbury – A World Heritage proposal" to DCMS and Historic England for preliminary discussions concerning the next revision of the UK's Tentative List of potential World Heritage Site nominations.

Action: The consultants.

5. Identify a group of expert specialists representing all aspects of the proposed attributes, as listed in the Scoping Study and prepare a series of discussion papers concerning the cultural heritage values of "Glastonbury – a sacred landscape".

Action: The consultants, partner organisations, critical friends and a panel of independent experts.

6. To prepare a proposal for community-wide consultation once "Glastonbury – A World Heritage proposal" has been approved by the GTC and submitted to DCMS.

Action: WHSAC and an independent community engagement specialist.

In addition, the consultants propose the following recommendations beyond the remit of the Phase Two brief.

7. That, following the successful visit to Glastonbury of H.I.H. Princess Esther Selassie Antohin of Ethiopia, the Town Council explores the likely benefits of revitalising the town twinning arrangements with Lalibela in Ethiopia and Pátmos in Greece and re-opens a regular dialogue with these two World Heritage Sites.

Action: GTC.

8. That, once the work of the World Heritage Working Group is complete, the Town Council should bring forward a new partnership body to be representative of the local community. This body will be a quasi-World Heritage Steering Group or Advisory Board.

This group would be formally constituted and consulted during the development of the World Heritage project. This Steering Group could include for example Somerset Council, the National Trust, Visit Somerset/Visit West, South West Heritage Trust, Glastonbury Abbey Trust and other bodies such as independent trusts, community organisations, visitor attractions and representatives of local business.

Action: GTC WHSAG and GTC.

The brief for such a Steering Group could include the development of an informal Glastonbury Management Plan with Somerset Council expressing the desires and aspirations of the community. This would be outside the constraints of the Neighbourhood Plan process and be based on the template of a World Heritage Management Plan. By way of illustration, this initiative could include projects such as:

1. A Community Partnership model for World Heritage to ensure community involvement and good governance.
2. A community information and communication strategy.
3. To address the key issues facing Glastonbury such as climate change and risk management.
4. A tourism benchmarking exercise – to develop an understanding of Glastonbury’s current visitor economy; to include tourism markets, numbers, visitor patterns and future trends, national, regional and local management issues, and capacity management.
5. Fund raising and grant applications to support local World Heritage initiatives.
6. To prepare a submission to the Intangible Cultural Heritage initiative (now renamed as “Living Heritage”) managed by DCMS and establish a process to identify what Glastonbury values as its living heritage and how to safeguard this.

Annex A – some sacred sites

In 2024, there were 1248 properties inscribed on UNESCO's List of World Heritage Sites. Some 255 examples from this list have been inscribed for attributes associated with sacred or a similar concept. The analysis looked at ten groups of sites drawn from the UNESCO List. Each of these groups included sites and these had been inscribed for different reasons and against different Criteria.

- i) Using the word 'sacred' (12 properties)
- ii) Using the concept of 'New Jerusalem' (3 properties)
- iii) Using the concept 'religious' (5 properties)
- iv) Buddhist sites (46 properties)
- v) Catholic Christian properties (61 properties)
- vi) Orthodox Christian properties (7 properties)
- vii) Protestant Christian properties (8 properties)
- viii) Hindu properties (12 properties)
- ix) Muslim properties (34 properties)
- x) Properties linked with astronomy (30 examples)

The examples are intended to be illustrations and not an exhaustive selection. The examples shown here illustrate the variety of properties that have sanctity or sacred qualities.

Some are related to a sacred mountain or a sacred landscape. Other properties embrace a group or a number of temples, churches or sacred groves spread over a wide area. A few of the properties such as St Katherine's Monastery or the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem are sacred to one or two faiths or persuasions. Some buildings are ruins for example the ShUM sites in Germany. These illustrate how the range of criteria may be met with sacred sites.

Sacred Properties

Uluru-Kata Rjuta National Park (Australia)

Formerly called Uluru (Ayers Rock – Mount Olga) A geological formation that is part of traditional belief systems of one of the oldest human societies in the World. The traditional owners of Uluru-Kata Tjuta are the Abangu Aboriginal people. [Criteria v, vi, vii, viii]

Mahabodhi Temple complex at Bodh Gaya (India)

The Mahabodhi Temple complex is one of the four holy sites related to the life of the Lord Buddha, and particularly to the attainment of Enlightenment. The first temple was built by Emperor Asoka in the third century BC, and the present temple dates from the 5th or 6th centuries. It is One of the earliest Buddhist temples built entirely in brick, still standing in India [Criteria i, ii, iii, iv, vi]

Fujisan, sacred place and source of artistic inspiration (Japan)

The beauty of the solitary, often snow-capped, stratovolcano, known around the world as Mount Fuji, rising above villages and tree-fringed sea and lakes has long been the object of pilgrimages and inspired artists and poets. The inscribed property consists of 25 sites which reflect the essence of Fujisan's sacred and artistic landscape. In the 12th century, Fujisan became the centre of training for ascetic Buddhism, which included Shinto elements. In the upper 1,500- metres tier of the 3,776 mountain, pilgrim route and crater shrines have been inscribed alongside sites around the base of the mountain and natural volcanic features such as lava tree mounds, lakes, springs and waterfalls, which are revered as sacred. [Criteria iii, vi]

Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests, (Kenya)

The Mijikenda Kaya Forests consist of 10 separate forest sites spread over some 200km along the coast containing the remains of numerous fortified villages, known as kayas, of the Mijikenda people. The Kayas are now regarded as the abodes of ancestors and are revered as sacred sites and. As such are maintained by councils of elders. The site is inscribed as bearing unique testimony to a cultural tradition and for its direct link to a living tradition. [Criteria iii, v, vi]

New Jerusalem

Rock-hewn Churches of Lalibela (Ethiopia)

The 11 medieval monolithic cave churches of this 13th-century 'New Jerusalem' are situated in a mountainous region in the heart of Ethiopia near a traditional village with circular-shaped dwellings. Lalibela is a high place of Ethiopian Christianity, still today a place of pilgrimage and devotion. [Criteria i, ii, iii] This property is twinned with Glastonbury

Sacri Monti of Piedmont & Lombardy. (Italy)

The nine *Sacri Monti* (Sacred Mountains) of northern Italy are groups of chapels and other architectural features created in the late 16th and 17th centuries and dedicated to different aspects of the Christian faith. A "New Jerusalem" following the Council of Trent a Catholic response to the spread of Protestantism. [Criteria ii, iv]

Religious properties

Saint Catherine Area. (Egypt)

Ascetic monasticism, uninterrupted from the 6th century Founded in the site of Mt. Sinai where Moses received the tablets of the law of God sacred to 3 Monotheistic religions; Christianity, Muslim and Judaism. [Criteria i, iii, iv, vi]

ShUM Sites of Speyer, Worms and Mainz Germany

ShUM sites of Spayer, Worms and Mainz are located in the State of Rhineland – Palatinate. A serial property in the Upper Rhine cathedral cities of Speyer, Worms and Mainz. The Property is exceptional testimony of Jewish communal Diasporic life from the 10th century onwards. The fundamentals of Ashkenazic Judaism were established between the 10th and 13th centuries. The Scholars of Speyer, Worms and Mainz played a prominent role in this process. [Criteria ii, iii, vi]

Buddhist properties

Ajanta Caves (India)

The first Buddhist cave monuments at Ajanta date from the 2nd and 1st centuries BC. During the Gupta period between the 5th and 6th centuries AD., many more richly decorated caves were added to the original group. The paintings and sculptures of the Ajanta, considered masterpieces of Buddhist religious art, have had a considerable artistic influence. [Criteria i, ii, iii, vi]

Angkor Wat (Cambodia)

Angkor is one of the most important archaeological sites in South East Asia. Stretching over some 4000km² including forested area, Angkor Archeological Park contains the magnificent remains of the different capitals of the Khmer Empire, from the 9th to the 15th century. They include the famous Temple of Angkor Wat and, at Angkor Thom, the Bayon Temple with its countless sculptural decorations. [Criteria i, ii, iii, iv]

Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley (Afghanistan) The cultural landscape and archaeological remains of the Bamiyan Valley represent the artistic and religious developments which from the 1st to the 13th centuries characterized ancient Bakhtria, integrating various cultural influences into the Gandhara school of Buddhist art. The area contains numerous Buddhist monastic ensembles and sanctuaries, as well as fortified edifices from the Islamic period. [Criteria i, ii, iii, iv, vi]

Mogao Caves (China)

Situated at a strategic point along the Silk Route, at the crossroads of trade as well as religious, cultural and intellectual influences, the 492 cells and cave sanctuaries in Mogao are famous for their statues and wall paintings, spanning 1,000 years of Buddhist art. [Criteria i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi]

Buddhist Monuments in the Hōryū-ji Area (Japan)

There are around 48 Buddhist monuments in the Horyu-ji area, in Nara Prefecture. Several date from the late 7th or early 8th century, making them some of the oldest surviving wooden buildings in the world. These masterpieces of wooden architecture are important not only for the history of art, since they illustrate the adaptation of Chinese Buddhist architecture and layout to Japanese culture, but also for the history of religion,

since their construction coincided with the introduction of Buddhism to Japan from China by way of the Korean peninsula. [Criteria i, ii, iv, vi]

Mount Emei Scenic Area, including Leshan Giant Buddha Scenic Area China

The first Buddhist temple in China was built here in Sichuan Province in the 1st century A.D. The addition of other temples turned the site into one of Buddhism's holiest sites. The most remarkable is the Giant Buddha of Leshan, carved out of a hillside in the 8th century and looking down on the confluence of three rivers. At 71 m high, it is the largest Buddha in the world. Mount Emei is also notable for its exceptionally diverse vegetation, some of the trees there are more than 1,000 years old. [Criteria iv, vi, x]

Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range (Japan)

Three sacred sites – Yoshino and Omine, Kumano Sanzan, Koyasan – linked by pilgrimage routes to the ancient capital cities of Nara and Kyoto, reflect the fusion of Shinto, rooted in the ancient tradition of nature worship in Japan, and Buddhism. The sites (506.4 ha) and their surrounding forest landscape reflect a persistent and extraordinarily well-documented tradition of sacred mountains over 1,200 years. The area is still part of the living culture of Japan and is much visited for ritual purposes and hiking, with up to 15 million visitors annually. [Criteria ii, iii, iv, vi]

Christian Properties

Aachen Cathedral (Germany)

Construction of this palatine chapel, with its octagonal basilica and cupola, began c. 790–800 under the Emperor Charlemagne. Originally inspired by the churches of the Eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire, it was splendidly enlarged in the Middle Ages. [Criteria i, ii, iv, vi]

Amiens Cathedral (France)

Amiens Cathedral, in the heart of Picardy, is one of the largest 'classic' Gothic churches of the 13th century. It is notable for the coherence of its plan, the beauty of its three-tier interior elevation and the particularly fine display of sculptures on the principal facade and in the south transept. [Criteria i, ii]

Assisi, the Basilica of San Francesco and Other Franciscan Sites (Italy) Assisi, a medieval city built on a hill, is the birthplace of Saint Francis, closely associated with the work of the Franciscan Order. Its medieval art masterpieces have made Assisi a fundamental reference point for the development of Italian and European art and architecture. [Criteria i, ii, iii, iv, vi]

Baroque Churches of the Philippines (Philippines)

These four churches, the first of which was built by the Spanish in the late 16th century, are located in Manila, Santa Maria, Paoay and Miag-ao. Their unique architectural style is a reinterpretation of European Baroque by Chinese and Philippine craftsmen. [Criteria ii, iv]

Chartres Cathedral (France)

Started in 1145, and then reconstructed over a 26-year period after the fire of 1194, Chartres Cathedral marks the high point of French Gothic art. The vast nave, in pure ogival style, the porches adorned with fine sculptures from the middle of the 12th century, and the magnificent 12th- and 13th-century stained-glass windows combine to make it a masterpiece. [Criteria i, ii, iv]

Early Christian Monuments of Ravenna (Italy)

Ravenna was the seat of the Roman Empire in the 5th century and then of Byzantine Italy until the 8th century. It has a unique collection of early Christian mosaics and monuments. All eight buildings were constructed in the 5th and 6th centuries. They show great artistic skill, including a wonderful blend of Graeco-Roman tradition, Christian iconography and oriental and Western styles. [Criteria i, ii, iii, iv]

Old Town of Ávila with its Extra-Muros Churches (Spain)

Founded in the 11th century to protect the Spanish territories from the Moors, this 'City of Saints and Stones', the birthplace of St Teresa, has kept its medieval austerity. This purity of form can still be seen in the Gothic cathedral and the fortifications which are the most complete in Spain. [Criteria iii, iv]

Routes of Santiago de Compostela: Camino Francés and Routes of Northern Spain (Spain)

A network of four Christian pilgrimage routes in northern Spain, the site is an extension of the Route of Santiago de Compostela, a serial site inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993. It includes a built heritage of historical importance created to meet

the needs of pilgrims, including cathedrals, churches, hospitals, hostels and even bridges. It encompasses some of the earliest pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela, following the discovery in the 9th century of a tomb believed to be that of St. James the Greater. [Criteria ii, iv, vi]

Historic Centre of Cordoba (Spain)

Cordoba's greatest glory began in the 8th century after the Moorish Conquest, when some 300 mosques and innumerable palaces and public buildings were built to rival the splendours of Constantinople, Damascus and Bagdad. In the 13th Century, Cordoba's Greta Mosque was turned into a cathedral and new defensive structures, particularly the Alcazar de los Reyes Cristianos and the Torre Fortaleza de la Calahorra, were erected [Criteria I, ii, iii, iv]

Historic Centre (Chorá) with the Monastery of Saint John The Theologian and the cave of the Apocalypse on the island of Pátmos (Greece)

The small island of Patmos in the Dodecanese is reputed to be where St John the Theologian wrote both his Gospel and the Apocalypse. The Monastery dedicated to the 'Beloved disciple' was founded there in the late 10th century and it has been a place of pilgrimage and Greek Orthodox learning ever since. The Fine Monastic complex dominates the island. The old settlement of Chora, associated with it, contains many religious and secular buildings. [Criteria iii, iv, vi] [This property is twinned with Glastonbury]

Monastic Island of Reichenau (Germany)

The island of Reichenau on Lake Constance preserves the traces of the Benedictine monastery, founded in 724, which exercised remarkable spiritual, intellectual and artistic influence. The churches of St Mary and Marcus, St Peter and St Paul, and St George, mainly built between the 9th and 11th centuries, provide a panorama of early medieval monastic architecture in central Europe. [Criteria iii, iv, vi]

Mount Athos (Greece)

An orthodox spiritual centre since 1054, Mount Athos has enjoyed an autonomous statute since byzantine times. The 'Holy Mountain', which is forbidden to women and children and children, is also recognized as an artistic site. The layout of the monasteries (about 20 of which are presently inhabited by some

1,400 monks) had an influence as far afield as Russia, and its school of painting influenced the history of Orthodox art. [Criteria i, iii, iv, v, vi, vii]

Speyer Cathedral (Germany)

Speyer Cathedral, a basilica with four towers and two domes, was founded by Conrad II in 1030 and remodeled at the end of the 11th century. It is one of the most important Romanesque monuments from the time of the Holy Roman Empire. The cathedral was the burial place of the German Emperors for almost 300 years. [Criterion ii]

Studenica Monastery (Serbia) The Studenica Monastery was established in the late 12th century by Stevan Nemanja, founder of the medieval Serb State, shortly after his abdication. It is the largest and richest of Serbia's Orthodox Monasteries. Its Two Principal monuments, the church of the Virgin and the Church of the King, both built of white marble, enshrine priceless collections of 13th and 14th century Byzantine painting. [Criteria iii, iv, vi]

Muslim properties

Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam (Afghanistan)

The 65 m Minaret of Jam is a graceful, soaring structure, dating back to the 12th century. Covered in elaborate brick work with a blue tile inscription at the top, it is noteworthy for the quality of its architecture and decoration, which represent the culmination of an architectural and artistic tradition in the region. Its impact is heightened by its dramatic towering mountains of the Ghur province. [Criteria (ii), (iii), (iv)]

Harar Jugol (Ethiopia)

The fortified historic town of Harar is located in the eastern part of the country on a plateau with deep gorges surrounded by deserts and savannah. The walls surrounding this sacred Muslim City were built between the 13th and 16th centuries. Harar Jugol, is said to be the fourth holiest city in Islam and includes 82 mosques, three of which date from the 10th century, and 102 shrines, but the town houses with their exceptional interior design constitute the most spectacular part of Harar's cultural heritage. The Impact of African and Islamic Traditions on the development of the town's building types and urban layout make for its particular character and uniqueness. [Criteria (ii), (iii), (iv), (v)]

Lamu Old Town (Kenya)

Lamu Old Town is the oldest and best preserved Swahili settlement in East Africa, retaining its traditional functions. Built in coral stone and mangrove timber, the town is characterised by the simplicity of its structural forms enriched by such features as inner courtyards, verandas, and elaborately carved wooden doors. Lamu hosted major Muslim festivals since the 19th century, and has become a significant centre for the study of Islamic and Swahili cultures. [Criteria ii, iv, vi]

Medina of Fez Morocco

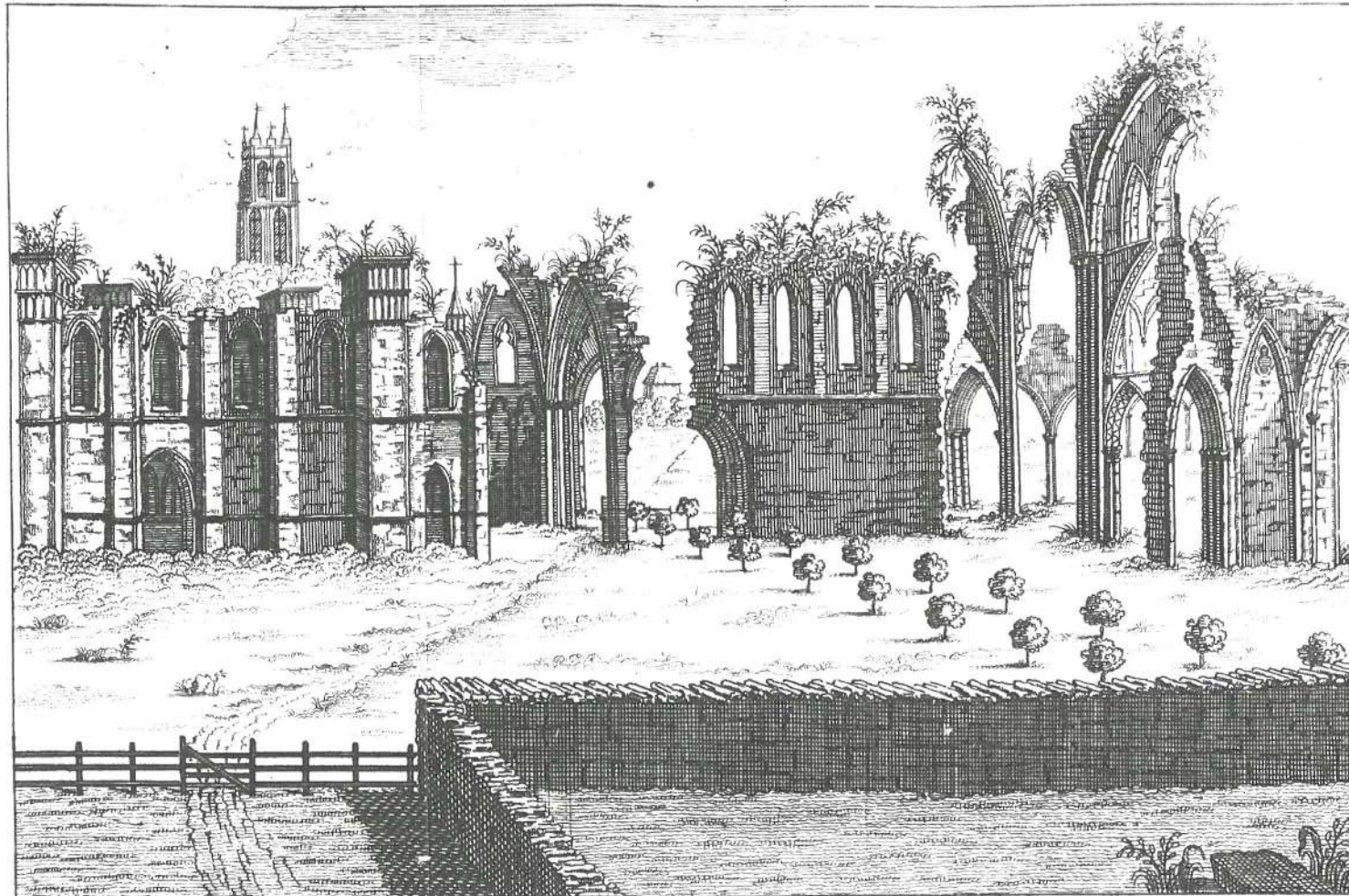
Founded in the 9th century, Fez reached its height in the 13th – 14th centuries under the Marinids, when it replaced Marrakesh as the capital of the Kingdom. The urban fabric and the principal monuments in the medina – the madrassas, fondouks, palaces, residences, mosques and fountains – date from this period. Fez has retained its status as the country's cultural and spiritual centre. [Criteria ii, v]

Astronomy

Chankillo Archaeoastronomical Complex Peru

The Chankillo Archaeoastronomical Complex is a prehistoric site (250 -200 BC), located on the north-central coast of Peru in the Casma valley, comprising a set of constructions in a desert landscape that, together with natural features, functioned as a calendrical instrument, using the sun to define dates throughout the year. The site includes a triple walled hilltop complex, known as the Fortified Temple, two building complexes called Observatory and Administrative centre, a line of 13 cuboidal towers stretching along the ridge of a hill, and Cerro Mucho Malo that complements the Thirteen Towers as a natural marker. The ceremonial centre was probably dedicated to a solar cult, and the presence of an observation point on either side of the northeast side of the north-south line of the thirteen towers allows the observation of the solar rising and setting points throughout the whole year. It is thus a testimony to the culmination of a long historical evolution of astronomical practices in the Casma valley. [Criteria i, iv]

Engraved for the Royal Magazine.



A View of Glastonbury Abbey, in the County of Somerset.

Fig. 62 A 1760 print of the ruined abbey and published in the 'Royal Magazine'

Annex B - UNESCO criteria

The Criteria

Nominations for a potential World Heritage Site must meet at least one of the criteria agreed by the World Heritage Committee and these are set out in the Committee's *'Operational Guidelines'*.

Most inscribed sites meet more than one criterion and examples of those with one cultural criterion are shown below. However, some sites have been considered to be Mixed Sites where the property meets at least a cultural criterion as well as a natural criterion. Were a property is demonstrating an elision between cultural world and the natural world then such a property is inscribed as a Cultural Landscape for example the Tongariro National Park in New Zealand.

The criteria agreed by the World Heritage Committee are:

- (i) to represent a masterpiece of human creative genius; [e.g. Taj Mahal, India]
- (ii) to exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design; [e.g. Speyer Cathedral, Germany]
- (iii) to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared; [e.g. Rock Art Alta, Norway]
- (iv) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history; [e.g. Lubeck, Germany]
- (v) to be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change; [e.g. Hollókő, Hungary]
- (vi) to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria); [e.g. Auschwitz Birkenau, Poland]
- (vii) to contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- (viii) to be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- (ix) to be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals;
- (x) to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Annex C - The Town Council's draft commitments

Glastonbury is a unique and diverse community, comprising a wealth of different people, opinions, beliefs, and values – residents, visitors, local businesses and retailers, faith groups, pilgrims and tourists, charitable and civic organisations – all connected to and by this special place and its heritage.

1. **Glastonbury** entrusts its statutory bodies and Town Council to bring forward policies and action to protect and sustain the town and the health, well-being, and prosperity of residents and local businesses.
2. **Glastonbury Town Council**, as part of its commitment to protect and sustain the town, is developing a Neighbourhood Plan with local stakeholders and based on years of consultation and listening to local people – to be adopted up and until 2040, for the town.
3. **Glastonbury Neighbourhood Plan** enables local people to have a say in the future of Glastonbury; the place where we live and work. It gives us the power to produce a plan with real legal weight that directs development in our local area, helps to protect/safeguard matters of acknowledged importance, and to direct investment to where it is needed.
4. **Glastonbury** is a sustainable community, focused on reducing pollution and waste; encouraging conservation and preserving natural environment.
5. **Glastonbury Town Council** will continue to bring forward policies and action to build resilience and address environmental issues – including the climate and ecological emergencies – and has pledged to be carbon neutral by 2030.
6. **Glastonbury Town Council** acknowledges the town and the surrounding area are part of a culturally significant sacred landscape.
7. **Glastonbury Town Council** acknowledges the importance of Glastonbury's myths and legends because they help inform our civic, cultural, and spiritual identity and heritage.
8. **Glastonbury** has always been a place of spiritual and religious importance.
9. **Glastonbury Town Council** acknowledges that World Heritage status can only be achieved in partnership with other key stakeholders (i.e. Glastonbury's community, Glastonbury Abbey Trust, the National Trust, the other visitor attractions, our businesses and retailers, and statutory bodies) representative of all interests in the town.
10. A newly inscribed **World Heritage Site** requires a Management Plan (a non-statutory document) which does not take precedence over other existing legislation, but provides a framework where all stakeholders can work in partnership to enhance the preservation, protection, and presentation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the site

Glastonbury Town Council – a Vision for the community of Glastonbury in 2040 Taken from the draft Neighbourhood Plan, January 2024.where:

1. People and pilgrims of all ages and backgrounds feel welcome to live, work and visit.
2. The community has preserved and improved the unique legendary character and historic qualities of the town resulting in a strong economy and a widely recognised local culture.
3. The distinctive landscape, both physical and social, has been maintained through planned and structured growth.
4. New housing development has been delivered which is proportionate to the needs of the residents, both in terms of volume, size and design.
5. The Parish has become an exemplar for other market towns by creating an environmentally sustainable place, which is close to achieving net-zero carbon and having increased local resilience to the impacts of a changing climate through sustainable design.
6. the unique "local" culture of art has been incorporated into new development in a sympathetic and considerate way.

Annex D - Sources

- Lesley Abrams, 1996, *'Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and endowment'*, Boydell Press, Woodbridge
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