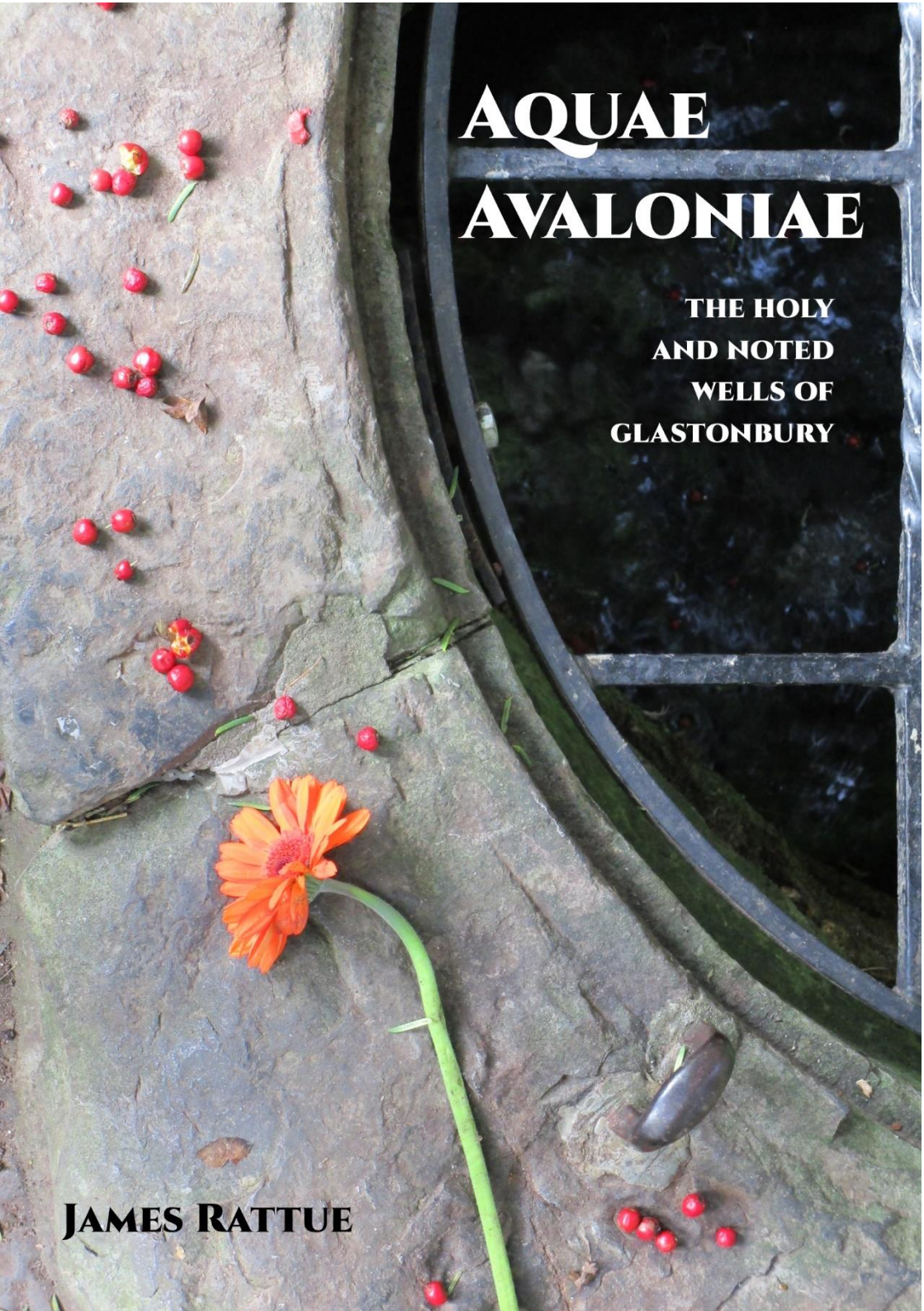
AQUAE AVALONIAE
THE HOLY AND NOTED WELLS OF GLASTONBURY
JAMES RATTUE

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Introduction: When Did Glastonbury Become Avalon?

The truth is, you can chase through the thickets of folklore and legend surrounding Glastonbury, and never hunt down the axial moment when became what it is – when particular stories joined the dense layering of tradition that created the mystic town we're familiar with. For centuries those tales have sunk into its soil, coiled round the Tor – and fed into the very springs. 'The hot-bed of Glastonbury, where fact and myth had become inextricably tangled', said the great archaeologist Philip Rahtz with, we might imagine, something approaching weariness.[1]

The chroniclers of Glastonbury Abbey – William of Malmesbury in the 1120s and 30s, Giraldus Cambrensis in the 1190s, John the monk about 1340 – wrote with varying degrees of care, but others added to, amended, and embroidered their accounts, 'growing more fantastic', says Roberta Gilchrist, 'as successive generations pushed the origins story [of the Abbey] further back in time, until it was connected directly with the life of Christ'.[2] The process did not stop when the Abbey itself was destroyed: Glastonbury's later investigators, the psychic Bligh Bond and the Anglo-Catholic Ralegh Radford, added to the mythology at the same time as they thought they were trying to uncover the truth.

But legends don't come out of the blue: they're usually generated from what people already believe is true. As far as Glastonbury was concerned, the two crucial, original ingredients in the heady mixture were the Old Church, and King Arthur. The Old Church was first mentioned in an anonymous *Life of St Dunstan*, tenth-century Abbot of Glastonbury and later Archbishop of Canterbury: that described it as a wattle-and-daub building by then shored up with wooden boards and roofed in lead, a structure of such antiquity that nobody could quite account for its existence. By that time the monks had concluded that it was 'not built with human hands', but that the earliest Christian missionaries to Roman Britain had found it already standing when they arrived. The original Old Church was burned down in the disastrous fire of 1184 that devastated the Abbey, and was replaced by the Lady Chapel at the west end of the now-ruined Abbey church.

As for Arthur, the hints and fragments that recalled a Dark Age warlord with that name, part-sub-Roman chieftain, part folk-hero foe of giants and fairies, had been building over some centuries and in the 1100s coalesced into the

figure we now think we know. His first connection with Glastonbury comes in Caradoc of Llancafarn's *Life of St Gildas* which mentions that Maelgwn, King of Somerset, had kidnapped Arthur's wife Gwenhyfar and was holding her captive at the town until the mediation of the Abbot and of holy Gildas secured her release.[3] In Geoffrey of Monmouth's 1130s *History of the Kings of Britain*, Avalon, the island where Arthur is taken after his final battle, is still reached by a sea voyage; but when the monks of Glastonbury uncovered what they believed, or said they believed, was the grave of Arthur and Guinevere in 1191, that mythical 'Isle of Apples' had turned into *Glastonbury*, the near-island rising from the Somerset marshes. There were other place-names in the corpus of Arthur stories that mentioned *glass* – the Glass Fortress, the Glass Island – and that fostered Glastonbury's linkage with the half-mythical king. Even though its name is, actually, nothing to do with *glass* at all.

From here, we move forward apace in the development of the core of the Glastonbury identity, as hints of explanations are turned into fact and then expanded on with more hints. It's Joseph of Arimathea who comes to Britain and builds the Old Church. Joseph is the uncle of Jesus, and brings him on a tin-trading voyage, and it's *Christ* who builds the Old Church: 'and did those feet in ancient time'. Joseph returns after the Crucifixion, bringing with him the Holy Grail, the cup Christ handed round at the Last Supper. The Holy Grail is the *Graal* quested after by Arthur's knights. The Grail is secreted in the red-stained waters of Chalice Well. All these things, these stories and motifs successively piling on each other, are symbols and signs of deeper spiritual realities which have always been imprinted in the unique landscape of Glastonbury. And so, finally, we end with Glastonbury the mystic capital of the Island of Britain, where a pagan funeral can take place in an Anglican parish church.[4]

We continue to join in with the myth-generating that makes Avalon. There's such a thing as Jerusalem Syndrome, when visitors to the world's most headily religious city, where creeds collide and do battle – sometimes literally – become delirious, turn prophet, are overcome by the atmosphere of the place. Glastonbury has its own, quieter version: here, even the cautious expert, the painstaking archaeologist and the diligent historian, go a little wild. Heaven, then, help the rest of us. Former custodian of the White Spring, Lisa Goodwin, comments rather brilliantly,

> *This place, this Isle of Glass, has a tendency to amplify and warp. Like a hall of mirrors, the kind of mirrors you see in fairgrounds, the wobble of the glass*

> *creates an illusion. It often reflects a distorted perception of what is real; making some people appear bigger, some smaller. Hubris and false humility are common themes here. Similarly, issues and dramas are amplified or underestimated.*[5]

Perhaps the best explanation comes in the initial superb lines of Geoffrey Ashe's first book on Glastonbury and its legends, written in 1957, *King Arthur's Avalon*. That 'unique landscape' is indeed the mystery's key*:*

> *The Glastonbury landscape is weird. Yet the essence of that weirdness is difficult to catch … Optically speaking, the landscape does not make sense. It is a monstrous refraction. The Tor, so obvious for so many miles, vanishes in the town and hides behind objects far too small to conceal it … the perspective is inside out. The small hills in the foreground contrive to look big ones a long way off, while the remoter Mendips press in toward the heart of the panorama. … The irrational scene loosens the grip of the Ordinary and gives scope to the Fantastic. Just by a matter of an inch, it jars open the magic casements.*[6]

As I've suggested, the mythic identity of Glastonbury has sunk into its soil and emerges in its springs like minerals filtering into the water. There are other towns with as many significant springs per head of population, perhaps, but none where the sheer variety of its named and noted wells runs alongside the history of hydrolatry generally. Glastonbury's holy wells encapsulate the whole history of water-reverence in the British Isles. And yet they have never been described together, until now – a story within the story that epitomises the whole.

To arrange the waters of Avalon in alphabetical order would be dull: I would rather begin with the oldest, and thus tell a story by means of a series of stories. But just as the monkish chroniclers of the Abbey continually reached back into the past, reinterpreting and extending their stories and imaginings, so it's hard to know where the antecedents of a particular well begin. So, much of what we have to say is necessarily speculative: the mists of the Glastonbury marshes obscure the springs as they do so much else. But we will try.

Just like Jerusalem, Glastonbury is a contested site: an important place to both Christians and pagans, and also battled for by locals who subscribe to neither religious belief system, but who sometimes feel as though they struggle to maintain a foothold in their own town. In what follows, I don't intend to question anyone's beliefs, though I focus on what we actually

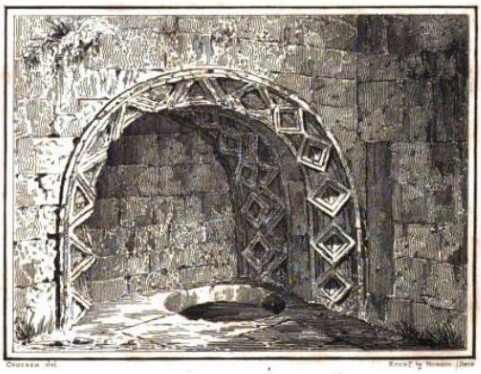
know, or might reasonably guess, on the basis of historical evidence. Beyond all that lies the religious imagination, which can work marvels on the human soul regardless of what History might say. I recognise that they are not quite the same realm. Let us embark on our journey into both.

St Joseph's Well

Pay your entrance fee to the Abbey grounds, find your way to the Lady Chapel, and then take the steps to what was the crypt beneath it, now open to the skies as are the upper parts of the chapel itself. In the corner you will find, beneath a whitewashed and algae-spotted archway carved with a Norman zigzag, a well. The reason I include St Joseph's Well this early in the story is that it *might* be Roman, but matters are not at all clear.

The well was found in 1825 when, as the Revd Richard Warner put it in a letter to the *Bath Chronicle* that May, 'a party of gentlemen … engaged in searching after the hidden antiquities of the consecrated inclosure' dug in search of a reported buried staircase. The owner of the Abbey site, John Fry Reeves[7], 'with a creditable zeal for the preservation of the memorials of former ages, and with a liberal attention to the gratification of the curiosity of the public, has directed the subterraneous chamber, with its staircase, arch,

well, and pavement, to be cleansed, repaired, covered in, and restored, as nearly as possible, to its primitive state and appearance'. Revd Warner immediately concluded this must be a holy well dedicated to St Joseph of Arimathea, and that its discovery would 'explain the cause of [the Abbey's] attracting such flocks of devotees and pilgrims to its hallowed walls; and occasion, probably, for an age to come, its renewed visitation, by many an antiquary, virtuoso, and pious member of the Romish church'. The *actual* Roman clergy he consulted, however, turned out to be disappointingly sceptical, deciding instead that the well was an ordinary water supply tapped for the mundane purposes any large church might find necessary.



HOLY WELL at GLASTON Y

From Richard Warner's History, *1826*

Revd Warner, it's worth mentioning, was an extraordinary character,[8] whose father had kept a delicatessen in Marylebone, and who might have had a Naval career before becoming curate to the travel writer William Gilpin and eventually attracting controversy for preaching pacifist sermons during the Napoleonic wars, and finishing as the pluralist incumbent of Great Chalfield in Wiltshire and Timberscombe in Somerset. He wrote a Gothic novel inspired by the ruins of Netley Abbey and published historical cookbooks, but his major passion seems to have been antiquarian research. What led him to be quite so invested in St Joseph's Well isn't clear, but he seems to have been so irked by his Catholic consultants' rejection of it that he devoted several pages of his *History of the Abbey of Glaston and of the Town of Glastonbury* to arguing they were wrong, including a short general history of well-worship. He insisted that a folk-memory of the well was embedded in Matthew Chancellor's dream about the Chaingate Spout in 1751, and span an imaginary account of a pilgrim's experience:

He would soon find himself at the northern portal of St. Joseph's chapel, and pause, perchance, to gaze, with wonder and delight … A grand perspective, of six hundred feet , would suddenly open upon him … its area filled with altars, shrines, and images, illuminated by streams of richly-coloured light … With "trembling step and slow" he could cross the sacred pavement, and descend the stairs that led to the "darkness visible" of the chamber of the well. The next moment would find him on his knees before the wonder-working spring, applying its waters in the manner required by his malady.[9]

By the time another clerical gentleman, Dom Ethelbert Horne (Roman Catholic monk, expert in church sundials, member of the Board of Trustees of Glastonbury Abbey and, late in life, no less than its titular Abbot) came to write about the well a century later, everyone had come to recognise that the extant structure at the west end of the Abbey Great Church wasn't St Joseph's Chapel at all but the Lady Chapel, and so he refers to the well as 'St Mary's in the Crypt'. Reluctantly he concurred with the sceptics and pronounced that it was 'in all probability nothing more than the ordinary water supply'.[10] And that was where opinion rested for a couple of generations.

Later interpretations, though, have complicated the picture yet again. We now realise that although the upper chapel wasn't dedicated to St Joseph, the last great builder at Glastonbury, Abbot Richard Beere, had indeed developed a crypt beneath the Lady Chapel as a Chapel of St Joseph in about 1500 – a considerable feat of engineering. The Joseph in question was not the foster-father of the Lord, but his supposed great-uncle, Joseph of Arimathea. By this time Joseph's connection with Glastonbury and his interweaving with Arthurian legend was complete, and Abbot Beere was topping the process off by making him a patron saint of the Abbey and incorporating him into its physical fabric. To judge by the Norman style of the well-arch, it belonged not to Abbot Beere's work but the earlier 1184 rebuilding, so it was already there. A new staircase seems to have been opened to allow access to the well, exactly as we would expect if it was part of a pilgrim route, allowing visitors to come and go without congestion. Philip Rahtz excavated the well in 1971 and concluded that its lower courses might well be Roman. As yet there's no other evidence that proves the presence of Roman buildings within the Abbey site, but if the monks could see it was demonstrably 'old' in the way the Old Church was, it would add to the belief that it might indeed have some direct connection with Joseph of Arimathea. Professor Roberta Gilchrist, in summarising the chronology of the Abbey and its carefully-

curated sense of identity, and her Reading University colleagues now refer to 'St Joseph's Well' as a matter of course.[11]

Yet, although St Joseph's Well is in the right *form* for a medieval holy well and the right *place* for a very old sacred site indeed, the fact remains that nobody *calls* it that before Richard Warner in 1825. The Reading University website states

> *Medieval pilgrims prayed before the miraculous statue of the Virgin Mary and before a statue of St Joseph in the crypt for healing and other miracles. Pilgrims also visited St Joseph's well which was accessed via a stone passage in the crypt. The well's water was believed to have healing properties. … Many miracles and cures were recorded here in the early 16th century. We know people left their crutches at the altar as gifts of thanks, but they would also have left little models called 'votives'. The holes in the chapel vaults would have held hooks from which these models or carvings hung.*[12]

I am not at all sure we 'know' much of this. There was certainly a miracle-working statue of Our Lady at Glastonbury – the only artefact from the Old Church that survived the fire, William of Malmesbury tells us – but one of St Joseph? Who says the well water was curative? How do we know about the holes in the vaults when no stones of the vaults survive, or the votives when we don't have examples? This is what happened at other medieval shrines, but we aren't *sure* the well at Glastonbury was that. It's a plausible story, but it's not *definite*.

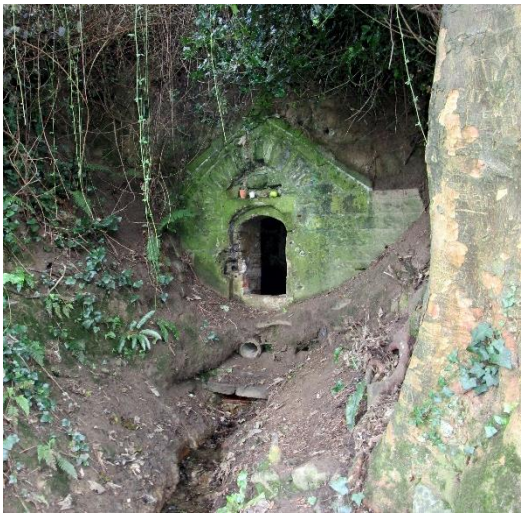
St Edmund's Well

In the year 946 the King of England was murdered in a brawl at Pucklechurch in Gloucestershire. Edmund had only been on the throne for seven years; his unexpected death prompted one of the main royal counsellors, St Dunstan, to recover the body and bring it to Glastonbury Abbey, where he was Abbot, and to which Edmund had been a generous patron during his short reign. The royal body would have been brought down from the north along the Old Wells Road, and it's not far away from that we find St Edmund's Well, on the northwest slope of Edmund Hill, commemorating, apparently, that journey. At some stage one of the abbots tapped the spring, covered it, and conveyed its water into the town conduit at

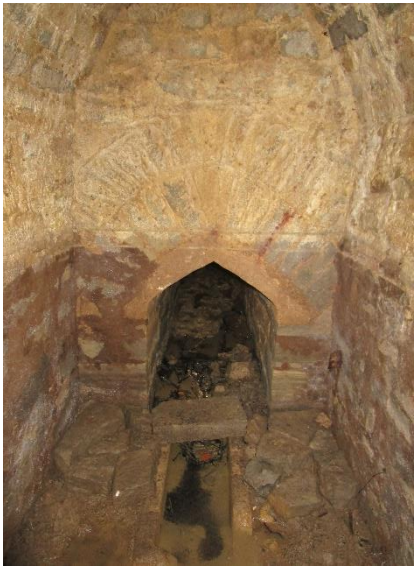
the top of the High Street; the flow was disrupted by a small earthquake in the 1870s and was much reduced afterwards. The great geologist Lindsall Richardson mentions it in the *Wells and Springs of Somerset* volume of the English Geological Survey, and also gives it its alternative name of Elder Well. By the time he wrote, 1928, its flow was limited and dropped to a measly 4000 gallons per day in dry weather.[13]

I'd known that St Edmund's Well existed for many years, but as there's nothing marked on the Ordnance Survey map I'd assumed it was long gone. Then in the summer of 2023 contributors to the 'Holy Wells, Healing Wells & Sacred Springs of Britain' page on Facebook began to post pictures of it and directions how to get to it. This was astonishing: it was clearly an old structure (how old remains unclear) near a location whose wells and springs were very famous, and yet had never been photographed or discussed before.

The way to the well isn't obvious, and gets muddy and overgrown, but you should be all right provided you've got the time to look around, and the footwear to cope. Go up Leg of Mutton Road to the top and turn left into Folliott Road. To the left of the garages is a stile. Cross it to a footpath that leads downhill to some ash trees and then turn left, along a barely distinguishable path through long grass. This goes towards trees above the top corner of the cemetery; after just a few yards it leads to the well head, set into the bank. Flowers are now sometimes left here – unfortunately that occasionally means plastic ones in pots, but at least it does mean that residents are looking after the site.



And what we see today is really very impressive, one of the better holy wells in the south of England outside Cornwall. In 1826 Richard Warner described it as 'a small stone chamber of squared masonry, somewhat in the form of a large oven, having a strong entrance oak door. The structure is handsome, but of unknown antiquity'.[14] This fits so closely with the well as we now see it that there's no reason to think the fabric has



Inside the well – the inner chamber and the channel into the hillside

been significantly changed since then, apart from losing its door, the fixings for which are still visible. The whole structure is of stone; an outer archway beneath a pitched roof leads over a lip into an inner chamber a few feet square covering a water channel. Inside, there's a smaller arch beyond which is a stone channel leading into the hillside. The well-made stone roof is arched. There's a large pipe just below the well-head through which water must once have emerged, but it now comes out a bit further down. The outer front has clearly been repaired at some time as there is modern mortar visible, but the whole thing looks like it was built in one go. When that might have been is another matter: nothing dates it stylistically to any period, though 'post-medieval' is probably a good guess.

This dating indeterminacy is the whole problem with St Edmund's Well. Richard Warner doesn't mention its name, which is peculiar considering his strong advocacy of St Joseph's Well down in the Abbey (though he doesn't name the Holy Well either, and that definitely existed in his time). Although King Edmund was a firm supporter of the Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury Abbey, he was never regarded as an especially holy individual, and was only treated as a saint later in the Middle Ages. The well's name isn't *written down* until Richardson's book as late as 1928. It isn't clear whether 'Elder Well' was an earlier title for the site, or one that arose when 'St Edmund's Well' fell into disuse.

Back in the early 1990s when I wrote my book *The Living Stream* I picked up on the name 'Elder Well', the Ashwell Spring, and the legend of the Holy Thorn, and decided that Glastonbury had originally been a sanctuary of holy springs associated with trees. I thought this was rather a neat idea, mainly because nobody else had had it, and it drew a bit of attention away from the overmighty Chalice Well. Nobody picked up on it,[15] I now think absolutely rightly. Although I think the name of Ashwell *is* probably old, we don't absolutely know that Elder Well is, and the Thorn story is definitely a later element in the picture. So, particular examples notwithstanding, forget about trees. Instead I wonder whether the name 'St Edmund's Well' arose at the time the monks adopted the spring for the town water supply, whenever that was. We know that this happened elsewhere: at Farnham in Surrey, for instance, where the humble Ludwell became St Mary's Well when the monks of Waverley Abbey conduited it to the town.[16]

Ash Well

Again, we owe any details of this spring to Lindsall Richardson's monograph of 1928. Ashwell Spring was used for the public water supply, but was unreliable, responding quickly to rainfall and yielding as much as 100,000 gallons a day in winter, but drying up completely in the summer months.[17] The site is a bit uncertain. Richardson maintains it was 'northward of the Edgarley Reservoir', but there's nothing visible unless he's referring to the stream head at SY 516383, and even the old OS maps from before the reservoir was built show us little.

Springs named after trees begin to appear in the placename record from at least the tenth century, and continue to be coined for several centuries, so it's quite likely that Ashwell is old, even if we have no record of the name before it appears on relatively modern maps. It's probably just a topographical name with no religious significance; but, just as King Edmund's body perhaps rested on its journey to burial by the Wells Road north of Glastonbury, so the traditional explanation of the name *Edgarley* was that, thirty years later, the remains of his grandson King Edgar stopped there before being admitted to the Abbey. You could make something of that, if you wished. The name certainly existed in 1421 and there was a chapel dedicated to St Dunstan there.[18]

Holy Well

In *English Holy Wells* Jeremy Harte argued that 'Holy Wells' so-called generally preceded wells dedicated to saints; I'm not convinced that's always so, but if it applies in this case, Glastonbury's Holy Well is the oldest in the area, although it doesn't appear in the documentary record until 1727.[19] 'Holy Wells' are also more likely to be on the periphery of settlements, rather than in their centre, and that's certainly true of this one. Holywell Lane, leading east from Old Wells Road, preserves the name.

I was directed by the landowners along an obscured path over bits of concrete and fencing that runs to a stream-head in a thicket of trees and bushes; along the side of this rough path is what seems to be the well. Some twenty years ago it was uncovered by a group organised by Peter Hillhead. They located a spring emerging from the blue clay soil and a quantity of cut stone that might have formed a basin some three or four feet wide by five feet long; some of the stones bore hand-drilled holes that might have supported a pump mechanism. The team has dug out the well several times since then, but the surrounding earth continually collapses onto it. Peter points out that there seems to be a Mendip tradition of building over subterranean water sources in isolated settings with an above-ground trough; sometimes these wells have developed into cattle troughs or sheep dips. There is one with a very large chamber fairly high up the flanks of the Tor.

Pagan writer Kathy Jones is the only person I can find who names the Holywell Farm spring as 'Paradise Well' after the Paradise Lane and Paradise Valley nearby. Yet she also mentions that it lies 'near Gog and Magog', the two ancient oaks – one dead and one nearing death – that are supposedly all that remains of an avenue of trees leading towards the Tor, and the Holy Well isn't very near the oaks at all. However, in a field just west of Gog and Magog there is indeed another well, currently swallowed in a clump of brambles, and that may be what she means. It only appears on relatively recent OS maps, next to a now-vanished pond which was extant as far back as the 1880s.[20]

Chaingate Spout

There were almshouses to the north of the parish church of Glastonbury, St John the Baptist's, until the middle of the 13th century when it seems they were converted into a leper hospital and moved out of the town; they were replaced by a new location in Magdalen Street. This new site was variously known as the hospital of St Mary Magdalene and then St Margaret, and is open to visitors today – a rather moving place with its tiny single-room cottages opening off a central courtyard, and a chapel at the end. On the opposite side of the road is a spout set into the wall, very firmly marked as not drinking water, which has sometimes been identified as a holy well of some kind. The pipe is relatively modern. The Almshouses don't seem to have had a separate water supply, so if this spring was associated with the small religious community it might indeed have become regarded as a holy well, even if no details have come down to us. This is why I include it in this list, at this point.[21]

On the west side of the road, however, and just to the south of the almshouses, we find Glastonbury's Old Pump Room; and it's here that we have to deal with the confusion which has arisen (in my mind, as much as anyone's) between this site, and the famous Chalice Well, rising from the Dream of Matthew Chancellor, and the attempt in the 1750s to turn Glastonbury into a spa.[22]

Beginning with the development of the waters at Epsom in 1618 and rapidly increasing in numbers in the mid-1700s, British spas fell into two groups. First were those medicinal springs that were said to have been 'discovered' as a result of some accident or observation, ranging from a simple noticing of a mineral property of the water to a cure worked by its random ingestion (or, in the case of the purgative powers of Jessop's Well at Oxshott in Surrey, merely standing in it.[23] The second group consisted of those springs which everyone admitted had been known for many years but which were newly publicised as sites of healing.

The Chaingate 'spring', if that's what it is, was an oddity in this respect. If it had ever had any reputation, it had long dissipated by the 1750s; and yet we have to ask what it was – other than a weird visionary dream – that led Matthew Chancellor, a modest yeoman farmer in his late 50s from the village of North Wootton a few miles away from Glastonbury, to identify this water as the one that might improve his asthmatic condition, and in turn persuaded thousands of others to concur as quickly as they did. By his own report it was October 1750 that his cure was effected, and he seems to have sworn affidavits to the effect, reporting the event in slightly different words, in April 1751, at the end of May, and again in June. To repeat the well-known tale again, this is the earliest version, contained in a printed bill:

> *This is to certify all whom it may concern, that I, Matthew Chancelor, of the parish of North Wotton, in the county of Somerset, yeoman, hath been afflicted with an asthma or phthisic almost 30 years, and about the middle of October last, when I had a violent fit in the night, and afterwards fell asleep, and dreamed I was at Glastonbury, some way above Chain-gate, and I saw in the horse-track some of the finest water I ever saw in my life. I kneeled on my knees, and drank of it. - I could perceive the splashing of the horses on both sides, and as soon as I stood up, I saw a person stood by and pointed with his finger, and said, 'If you go to the shoot, and take a clean glass in your hand, fasting, and drink it seven Sunday mornings following, I should find a perfect cure. I asked him, Why seven Sunday mornings? He said, 'The world was made in six day; and on the seventh day, God rested from his labour, and blessed it above other days.' He likewise said to me, 'where this water comes from is out of the holy ground, where a great many saints and martyrs have been buried.' He told me something concerning our Saviour's baptism in the river Jordan; but I could not remember it. When I waked this was my dream. The Sunday after I went and found it exactly, accordingly, it was a very dry time, I could not scarce perceive it run in the shoot, so I dipt the glass three times into the hole where the shoot run into, the value of a draft, and drank it, returning God thanks; and so continued to do seven Sundays, and, by the blessing of God, recovered me of my disorder.*[24]

The sequence of events isn't completely clear: although Matthew Chancellor swore his statement before the Mayor of Glastonbury, William White, and a future Mayor Richard Blake, at the end of April, reports of the crowds suddenly resorting to the spring first appeared in the *Bath Journal* on April 1st. On April 16th the *Gloucester Journal* claimed that 800 people had appeared the previous Sunday; the *Penny London Post* conveyed the news to the capital the following day, predating the publication of Chancellor's account (though not

his claimed experience). By July the London papers were claiming that 20,000 souls had come to Glastonbury and spas at Bath and Bristol were deserted as a result. Pamphlets penned by reliable figures such as clergymen and doctors were published reporting cures, mostly (if the details can be trusted) of local people, one of whom was Alderman Blake himself, relieved of rheumatic pains by bathing in the water.

Already by June 1751 there was some kind of arrangement for bathing – probably the 'great stone trough for washing and bathing' reported by the Yorkshire pilgrim John Jackson in 1755 – and a coffee house adjoining, which sold some of the pamphlets retelling accounts of cures and, for good measure, also had in its garden 'the oldest and largest' graft of the ancient Holy Thorn. In 1752 Anne Galloway, who claimed an origin in Bath and had been a shopkeeper in another spa town, Cheltenham, announced her intention to build a Pump Room in Glastonbury. As eventually opened – and reported in the *Gentleman's Magazine* – the following year, it wasn't as ambitious as she'd hoped, but its handsome Classical façade bolted onto three pre-existing cottages provided a home for the nascent Spa, as well as for Matthew Chancellor himself, who become 'Pumper', helping visitors and relating his story, until his death in 1765.

None of this has anything to do with the Chalice Well at all; Matthew Chancellor's night-time interlocutor was clear that he should drink not there, but at the Chaingate spout. But there was great confusion, even at the time, of the best place for visitors to take the waters – where the dream directed, or at the springhead. This presumed the water from the Spout in some way originated a mile away at Chalice Well (first named in print, it seems, in a pamphlet promoting the Spout itself). That isn't completely clear: certainly all mineral qualities have departed from whatever it is that comes out of the wall by Magdalen Street, whether diluted by its journey from the Tor or because they were never there in the first place. Already by June 1751 one

John Brooks was selling Chalice Well water at Blue Boar Court, Friday Street, in the City of London – not an unusual development for an 18th-century spa – and he maintained that the Spout was disgorging nothing but 'waste water taken up a mile distant from the spring'. Very soon after that, Mr Brooks's trade was undercut by the 'Proprietors of the Glastonbury Waters' – namely, Mayor White and three other members of the Corporation – who concluded an exclusive agreement to sell the liquid, drawn from the Chalice Well. (Adam Stout speculates that the mysterious inner chamber of the Well, suggested as a sediment tank by Philip Rahtz, might in fact have been a bottling plant).

But Matthew Chancellor's dream had stressed that the healing abilities of the Spout water originated not from any mineral properties but from the fact that it had passed through the sanctified grounds of the Abbey and past its long-departed holy residents. Harking back to a despised medieval and Catholic past, this was a hazardous suggestion to make in the mid-1700s, as was the suggested ritual of drinking the water for seven successive Sundays. On June 10th the *Bath Journal*, which had a vested interest in attacking a new spa just a few miles away, printed on its front page a satirical poem, 'Superstition: a Tale' which turned out to be written by Samuel Bowden, a physician from Frome. 'Superstition' mocked and ridiculed the Glastonbury waters as basically a Popish plot, playing on the needs and desires of an ignorant populace with the customary Romish techniques of mysticism and ceremony. There may be something to the suggestion that Roman Catholics had a special role in promoting the Glastonbury legends: William Eyston, the town's first historian, who in 1712 mentioned the stories of the Avalon Oaks and of Joseph of Arimathea, was a Catholic; and the first formulator of the tale of the Holy Thorn, Richard Broughton, was no less than a recusant priest. But as we've seen, Anglican clergy were also among the promoters of the spa. Adam Stout suggests this may have reflected a certain degree of High-Church opposition to both Methodism and Roman Catholicism, and political Jacobitism: according to the published reports, the malady cured second most often by the waters was scrofula, King's-Evil, the disease supposedly amenable to the touch of a monarch, which the Stuarts had placed great stress on 'touching' for, but the Hanoverians had scorned.

Within just a few years the spa at the Chaingate Spout was declining. The novelist Henry Fielding had been one of its early patrons, claiming to the London newspapers that his liver cirrhosis had benefited from visiting the spring, and he even put a cure by 'Glastonbury Waters' into his 1751 novel

Amelia. But the disease overcame him late in 1754, and when the book was reprinted in 1772 the awkward reference to Glastonbury was removed. It was also clear, as many pointed out, that there was nothing particularly remarkable about the water itself. The Pump Room had been converted into a shop by 1780. As Adam Stout puts it, the problem was essentially that 'there really wasn't very much for [patrons] to *do* in Glastonbury' and its cattle market and mucky streets made it 'a far cry from the Palladian terraces of Bath'. The crowds who followed Matthew Chancellor to seek a cure were mainly, like him, local, and not very well-off, and they were not the stuff of which fashionable watering-places were made. The spa disappeared from public memory, except to be confused with the Chalice Well; and that, of course, very much survived.

The George & Pilgrims Spring

Richard Warner records that in the cellar of the former pilgrims' hospice of the Abbey – now the George & Pilgrims Inn – 'is a large recess furnished with a stone seat, and watered by a perennial spring'.[25] The tale he had heard was that penitent pilgrims were compelled to sit in the cold water to exculpate the sins of 'too ardent passions'. This sounds a likely story, and even Revd Warner, as favourable as he is to St Joseph's Well in the Abbey, can't take it seriously: 'every cellar, and crypt, and passage, connected with our ancient religious houses, has its peculiar tradition', he admits. The same might apply to the account of an ancient tunnel linking the Inn with the Abbey, as virtually any two historic buildings in Britain are supposed to be connected by a secret underground passageway. Whatever the water feature was, the Inn tells me it's now gone – while the supposed tunnel entrance is definitely there!

Chalice Well

Outside Glastonbury, the most active sacred springs in Britain are almost certainly St Winifred's Well at Holywell and the Holy Well at Walsingham; those both operate within very Christian contexts, but the spirituality of

Chalice Well, just as popular as those, is more mixed. And then there's the name: we know it was *Chalcwell* in 1256, the first actual record we have, but much depends on who coined it. If it was a generally-known local name which the monks of the Abbey merely wrote down, it probably means 'the chalk spring', referring to the stone it rises from; but if the literate monks themselves were responsible, as they say at Chalice Well itself, it could have arisen from the Greek *chalkos*, 'copper', or *chalybeis*, 'iron', the Latin word *calx* meaning 'lime' – or maybe even *calix* itself. The first time that 'chalice' name occurs, though, is in 1716, when it refers not to the well, but 'a ground called Challice'; it isn't until 1751 that 'Chalice Well' itself appears, used interchangeably with 'the Bloody Well'.[26]

And yet it's not all *that* bloody. Contrary to what's often said, the water of Chalice Well isn't very strongly *chalybeate*, or iron-bearing: the spring at Tunbridge Wells in Kent is no less than 25 times richer in iron than its Glastonbury cousin. What makes Chalice Well more remarkable, at least locally, is that unlike most of the springs around the Tor its waters spend much longer in the aquifer before being forced to the surface by a fault in the rock. This allows them time to acquire their mineral properties, and also makes them relatively warm, and consistent in flow, whereas the other

springs vary considerably with rainfall. One of the sources of the White Spring is also a weak chalybeate.[27]

Notwithstanding the Mesolithic flint fragments indicating passing activity rather than settlement, or the Roman yew tree stump, both discovered in Philip Rahtz's excavation of the Well in 1961, there is no clear evidence that Chalice Well came to any general attention until it was piped to the Abbey in the aftermath of the great fire of 1184. Professor Rahtz concluded that the well-shaft was made from blocks of local stone probably salvaged after the fire and set in place in the early 1200s, and originally stood above the surface of the ground; but enclosing the spring also stopped it washing away deposits being swept down the hillside by rain and thus had led over time to the ground rising to its current level. Opening off the shaft was an oddly-shaped pentagonal chamber which seemed to be 18th-century, and Professor Rahtz could only guess at its purpose (politely he made no comment on Dion Fortune's suggestion that it was a Druidic initiation chamber).[28]

In fact that strange structure was almost certainly related to the flurry of activity around the spring during the Glastonbury spa enthusiasms of the 1750s: it was most likely a reservoir to make bottling the water easier. As we've seen already, there was some confusion over where it was best to drink the medicinal water, with some favouring the Chalice Well springhead over the spout at Chaingate in the town; had it had any reputation before then, we would have expected local historians such as William Eyston or travellers like Celia Fiennes, who visited Glastonbury in 1698, to have mentioned it. Baths were opened on the opposite side of the lane, but by the 1830s they were little used.[29]

The spa craze died down, but people seem to have kept visiting the Chalice Well; the house in whose garden it lay became the Anchor Inn, which must have helped serve its patrons. In 1872 – by which time the pub was known as the Tor Inn, a mildly folly-type building with castellations along the roof – the daughter of the last owner sold it to the family of her father's predecessor, and in moved Mary Wright and her husband, progressive schoolmaster George.

George Wright wanted to make something more of the well, and he and Mary wrote round the medical journals calling attention to the 'curative powers' and 'extensive baths' of the 'Blood Spring', but nobody was biting this time round. Instead the local authorities wanted to purchase the well for the more prosaic purpose of channelling it into the public water supply.

George Wright was arguing that Chalice Well was 'certainly … the finest drinking water in the country', and resolutely spurned the money the Town Council was offering him, much to the scorn of many inhabitants. In the end the new reservoir was built out at Edgarley (as well as the one over the road, of course).[30]

So far the tangled Glastonbury legendarium hadn't included the detail that the Chalice Well was the site where Joseph of Arimathea finally secreted the Holy Grail; in fact, Alfred Lord Tennyson had imagined the Grail being assumed into Heaven in the *Holy Grail and Other Poems* instalment of *Idylls of the King* published in 1869. But in 1886 George Wright's niece Alice Meadows had a poem of her own published in the *Somerset County Gazette*, imagining Christ meeting Joseph at Glastonbury after the Resurrection, taking the Grail from his hands and letting it fall into the earth where it gives rise to a spring 'like liquid silver o'er the mossy grass'. Within a couple of months, Mr Wright was telling the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society blankly that 'Joseph brought with him the chalice of the Last Supper, and hid it, or in some way located it in, or on, the hill which henceforth was to be sacred to its memory, and to be known as Chalice Hill'. We will probably never know whether he was confecting this idea from Alice's metaphorical and poetic notion, whether she got hers from him, or both derived it from some other source. But this is the first time the Chalice Well or its environs are explicitly described as the resting-place of the Grail. George Wright further averred that the name of the Anchor Inn suggested that anchorites – hermits – had been resident there once.

By then the Wrights had arranged the sale of Chalice Well to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, a Roman Catholic order based in France. Until this time, the Roman Catholic church had evinced little interest in Glastonbury, though individual Catholics played a role in developing its legends; but William Clifford, Catholic Bishop of Clifton since 1857, was very keen to stake a claim in the ancient religious centre, and promoted the case for canonising Richard Whiting, the last medieval abbot executed in 1539. Perhaps the crucial shift was the re-establishment of the Catholic hierarchy in England in 1850, encouraging the Roman Catholic Church to break away from its reliance on Irish immigrant communities and the recusant congregations based around the houses of the old Catholic aristocracy. Bishop Clifford persuaded the Missionaries to consider Chalice Well as their British home. Fr Jules Chevalier, the order's founder, was captivated, writing that Joseph of Arimathea, 'the first apostle of Great Britain', had *himself*

caused the spring to rise from the earth to serve his thirsty companions, striking the earth with his staff. He was probably conflating the stories of the Glastonbury Thorn with tales of St Augustine of Canterbury, who, legend related, had struck water out of the ground at Pegwell Bay in Kent and Cerne Abbas in Dorset.[31] Once installed, however, the clergy showed little interest in the history of the place: though the Well site was supposedly accessible to 'friendly antiquarians' visitors were often turned away.[32]

The school was never a success and eventually the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart were anxious to get rid of the property, finally managing to offload it in 1912 to Alice Buckton, poet, educator and mystic. With Ms Buckton's purchase of the Chalice Well, the group of enthusiasts for Glastonbury's spiritual importance who've become known as the Avalonians had a focus and a home: they included archaeologist Frederick Bligh Bond, composer Rutland Boughton, occultist Dion Fortune, and mystic thinker Wellesley Tudor Pole who would one day succeed Ms Buckton as the Well's proprietor. Dion Fortune certainly saw her acquisition of the site as providential, not least because, she claimed, one of her rivals, 'a wealthy American', never got to the auction after his train broke down on the way.[33]

One of Alice Buckton's early ventures was to set up in the old school buildings the Tor House Training College for Women, which offered subjects ranging from bee-keeping to heraldry, and 'legendary drama', something the founder was very interested in having made quite a bit of money from her mystery play *Eager Heart*. The College never thrived and within a few years Ms Buckton and her partner Annet Schepel were concentrating on providing facilities for the Well's visitors. Over the years she would also acquire May Cottage along the lane, two houses in Chilkwell Street, a tea room at the foot of the Tor, and a shop at the Market Cross. In 1919 she commissioned Frederick Bligh Bond to design a cover for the Well; he came up with the evocative symbol of the *Vesica Piscis*, two interlocking circles linked with an arrow-line, which he believed was the key to the sacred geometry of Glastonbury Abbey. The symbol, he said, combined spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, pagan and Christian, the arrow recalling the lance that pierced the side of Christ, and the decoration of leaves and berries, the Holy Thorn.[34]

The spiritual atmosphere at the Chalice Well was emerging as an amalgam of Christian and pagan elements - the Avalonians assumed that both essentially derived from a single source. All the early figures thought of themselves as Christians, and Frederick Bligh Bond was eventually ordained a priest in a

fringe Church in the USA.[35] The Vicar of Glastonbury from 1921 to 1953, Lionel Smithett Lewis, an ardent vegetarian and anti-vivisection campaigner, was deeply committed to the whole Glastonbury phenomenon and was a firm supporter of the Avalonians, conducting funeral services for both Alice Buckton and Dion Fortune. It's perhaps Dion Fortune's own 1934 book, *Glastonbury – the Avalon of the Heart* that best captures the climate of the time. 'We have two Avalons', she wrote, 'the *holiest erthe in Englande* down among the water-meadows; and upon the green heights the fiery pagan forces that make the heart leap and burn. And some love one, and some the other'. Chalice Well, where Alice Buckton explained the symbolism of the *vesica piscis* to visitors clad in 'a cloak of blue Welsh linen with silver clasps', stood partway between the two, while her amateur theatrical performances 'made of the little West Country town an English Ober-Ammergau'. Although, Fortune believed, Chalice Well was 'no fountain hallowed by miracle and vision, but an ancient Druid place of sacrifice … its blood-stained waters flowing through reddened channels, holy to the Old Gods and their dark powers', she also insisted that 'the gracious Christian legend twined about the grim stones of the old faith, the invocation of elemental nature was forgotten, and the beautiful tale of the Graal began'. She believed that the Grail was, in truth, an inward mystical experience, and pagan and Christian elements were mutually dependent in it: 'the Cross is only valid for us as we crucify the lower self and its lusts. The Chalice is only valid for us insofar as Christ is risen in our hearts'.[36]

Sadly in her latter years Alice Buckton was a hard-up, isolated figure wearing 'a black cloak green with age that was said to have belonged to Tennyson', the great visionary living largely on the support of friends. She had always wanted a Trust to take over the management of the Well, but there was no prospect of this on her death in 1944, and the buildings again were occupied by a small independent boys' school, Tor House. The Chalice Well entered its greatest period of neglect for two centuries; when Dorothy Maclean of the ecologically-orientated spiritual community at Findhorn came to visit in the late 1940s she found it 'hard to find as it was covered with vegetation which we had to pull aside'.[37]

When Tor House School began to dispose of some of its property in 1959, however, the Avalonians were, this time, ready to step in. The galvanising force was Major Wellesley Tudor Pole, the visionary and activist who formed a link between the original generation and the new enthusiasts, and who we'll discuss in greater depth when we think about Bride's Well at Beckery. A Mr

and Mrs Higgs moved into the house known as Little St Michaels as caretakers and gardeners, and began to clear the wilderness around the Well and make it somewhat more accessible for visitors. In due course Tor House School gave way to Millfield School, whose request in 1961 to use the spring to supply a swimming pool (did they market the healing waters to potential parents?) prompted the excavation by Philip Rahtz. Eventually they too moved out, and the Chalice Well Trust acquired the ruinous school buildings – having outbid the rival Glastonbury Foundation – and demolished them after a public enquiry in 1975.[38]

This meant the whole site was now in the Trust's direct control. Arthur's Courtyard and a fountain with a lion's head allowing the water to be drunk safely had already been installed in 1966; a new lower pool in the form of the *vesica piscis* was created in 1976-7, a flowform cascade set up in 1993, and in 1996 the area around the well-head itself was reshaped with new stonework and planting to create a more intimate enclosure for meditation. In 2003 an entirely unsuspected well was uncovered just to the west of the Chalice Well itself, and a sculpture-shrine of a Mother and Child created, which visitors could interpret in a Christian or pagan way as they chose.[39] The landscape around the Well continues to be added to and developed.

Today Chalice Well hosts lectures and retreats, houses guests, stages concerts, celebrations and events, and welcomes thousands of ordinary visitors of all brands of spiritual opinion and none in particular (and sells them books, crystals, scents and CDs). It is probably the most active and best-supported centre of nature-based spirituality in Britain. And it has achieved this by being consciously eclectic and syncretic in its philosophy; as Felicity Hardcastle, author of the first guide to the Well, wrote: 'Chalice Well combines in itself ideas from which all men can draw deep spiritual wisdom'.[40]

That approach was put to the test in 2024 in a dispute which was only obliquely to do with the well itself, but illuminating. The statue of the Mother & Child at the secondary well known as The Sanctuary had been donated to Chalice Well by the Indian sculptor Ganesh Bhat, who originally made it for his own garden; he based it on a photograph a friend had sent him of the Madonna & Child by Eric Gill. Gill's sculpture was housed in Glastonbury's Roman Catholic church, then found its way to the town cemetery, and since 2011 has been at Glastonbury Abbey Museum. At the time, Eric Gill's abusive sexual life was not common knowledge; now, his work is extremely controversial (even the Gill Sans typeface he designed).

In the Spring of 2024 the Chalice Well Trustees removed the statue and, when visitors asked what had happened to it and the questions moved online,

stated that it had been taken away to avoid retraumatising sexual abuse survivors due to the Gill connection. While the move had some support, many more people found it an extreme decision given that Gill had never been anywhere near the statue and, as the outcry grew, the Trustees repositioned it as part of a wider policy to take away all 'specific iconography' from the gardens on the grounds that 'the garden is neutral, not multi-faith … There are no longer statues in the Chalice Well gardens because our beautiful garden is enough'. Even pagan commentators pointed out that the *vesica piscis* is a Christian symbol, and 'neutrality' in the sense of the absence of any and all religious imagery was not a policy the Chalice Well had ever adopted before. Eventually, and after the expression of much heated feeling, the statue was removed to the Meadow area (not the best place for it), and finally restored to its niche in the Sanctuary.[41]

Across the road at the White Spring, a different style of syncretism holds sway; but we will have to wait to examine that.

Slipper Well

Apart from the Abbey, the places of worship in medieval Glastonbury included the oratory of St Michael on the Tor, the ancient parish churches of St John the Baptist and St Benignus, and three chapels – those of St James or Jacob on Bovetown, St Dunstan at Edgarley, and St Bridget's Beckery. Of these latter three, remains survive only of the Bovetown chapel, now converted into a dwelling, Jacoby Cottage: in fact, it's a guest house, so you can book a room and get the experience for yourself. It's Listed Grade 2*, and if you look up the reference on Historic England's website you will find the description 'sole survivor of Glastonbury's 3 slipper chapels'.[42]

The idea is that, approaching the 'holiest erthe in Englande', pilgrims would halt at one of these three chapels on their way into the town and wash their feet, walking the last stage of the journey to the Abbey and its shrines (and holy well) barefoot. People seem a little uncertain about the chapels' location – 'near the Drapers' factory in Chilkwell Street', claims one website, while another suggestion is that there was a chapel of St Catherine somewhere. Pam Crabtree's *Medieval Archaeology: an Encyclopaedia* only names two. Everyone agrees on the Bovetown example though, where in the 1970s the

original medieval water conduit was uncovered, running beneath the cottage floor.[43]

The curious thing is that no early writer on Glastonbury's history – Eyston, Warner, Collinson, Phelps, and the rest – mentions this custom, even though the history and locations of the chapels themselves were well known. My suspicion is that it's a motif transferred from the reasonably well-attested tradition at Walsingham in Norfolk, where the final mile to the Abbey there from the 'Slipper Chapel' in Barsham was (and still is) often walked barefoot. The Anglican pilgrimages to Glastonbury and Walsingham were both established in the 1920s and, although it was the Roman Catholic Church that was eventually able to acquire Walsingham's pilgrim chapel in 1897, it may have been the desire to have something similar at Glastonbury that gave rise to the idea that Jacoby Cottage had also been a 'slipper chapel'.[44] There is some possibility that the Bovetown chapel's original dedication was to St Catherine[45], which is perhaps where the commenter on the NormalForGlastonbury Facebook post got that idea.


THE HOLY WELL.

Which brings us, finally, to the strange artefact we find on Chilkwell Street set into the wall outside what is now the Somerset Rural Life Museum. A piece of Gothic canopy, apparently medieval, covers a small alcove over a trough, now sealed with a sheet of steel; it was open when I first noticed it in the 1980s and may even have had water in it, but, if it did, it almost certainly wasn't the water it had in it before the road was widened in the 1960s. In September 1888 the *Illustrated London News* sent artist Louis Wain to Glastonbury to draw some of the antiquities of the

town, and he included among them a charming image of this well, with a step in front, water coming through an aperture at the back, and ducks disporting themselves around it. At that point it was clearly built up to human height. Wain calls it 'The Holy Well'. But for sacred sites investigator Cam Longmuir, writing on the 'Holy Wells, Healing Wells and Sacred Springs of Britain' page on Facebook, it's 'The Slipper Well, fed by conduit from Chalice Well (aka Blood Well) or the Chilk Well (The White Spring) … Used by pilgrims to clean their feet before entering the Abbey'. It's not completely clear how widely this name might be used – it seems pretty certain that it comes from the suggestion of 'slipper chapels' around Glastonbury more generally - but it's very striking that the site was thought of as a fully-fledged Holy Well in the late 1800s. The well is very close to the site of a medieval cross which stood at the junction of Chilkwell Street and Bere Lane until at least the mid-1600s and which was known as Stickers Cross after a local family.[46] Well-researcher Andy Norfolk wonders whether the 'Slipper Well' title is a mishearing of 'Stickers Well'.

Bride's Well

Next to the embankment alongside the River Brue at Beckery, west of Glastonbury town centre, and often so overgrown it's difficult to find, is Bride's Stone. 'This stone', it reads, inscribed beneath a cross in Celtic knotwork, 'marks the traditional site of St Bride's Well'. It used to be some yards away: a marker that's not where it once was, recording something that's no longer there, and that may not have been what it's claimed to be in the first place. To me that all seems very Glastonbury.

We've known about the monastic settlement at Beckery for a long while. William of Malmesbury claimed that Irish monks had come here in the 10th

century fleeing the Danes, and the area's alternative medieval name of 'Little Ireland' suggests this may not be just speculation. There was a Late Saxon chapel built around a stone-lined grave – presumably of some important individual, though we don't know who – which was replaced by a larger one in the 13th century. By that time the monastery seems to have come to an end, and the chapel was being served by a single priest. In 1967 the historical data were confirmed by a dig led by Philip Rahtz, uncovering over sixty burials at the site all but three of which were adult males.[47]

But William had made a more extraordinary claim: that, five centuries before her compatriots, the great St Brigid of Kildare had visited Beckery in 488, leaving behind 'certain of her ornaments, namely a bag, necklace, a small bell and weaving implements' which became the object of veneration. No one took that very seriously, obviously. At least not until 2016, when a re-examination of the burials excavated by Philip Rahtz dated them, by radio-carbon methods, from the *late fifth century onwards*.[48] Beckery was thus catapulted back to the age of Brigid herself, and became recognised as almost certainly the oldest known monastic settlement in Britain, predating the Abbey. Furthermore, the new information corroborated not only medieval monkish stories, but more eerily a chunk of later Avalonian romancing – to a degree.

That tale begins with Dr John Arthur Goodchild, working in the winter of 1885 among English tourists in the north Italian seaside town of Bordighera. Following a friend's lead, he visited a tailor's shop near the Marina, and bought there a small dish and an associated bowl made of glass in an intricate inlaid design, supposed to be antique. Consultations about it with the British Museum were inconclusive.

Dr Goodchild was no ordinary physician, but also a poet, playwright, and scholar of religious and spiritual history. In 1897 he finished his treatise dealing with early Christianity, the Celtic Church, and the Divine Feminine, called *The Light of the West*, and while in Paris had a strange visionary experience (not his first) at his hotel. He heard a voice telling him the blue bowl or cup, which he had left with his father, had belonged to Jesus, and would shape the spiritual thought of humankind in the years to come; Dr Goodchild was to take it to Bride's Hill at Glastonbury and hide it, as soon as possible after his father's death. It would then be found by a young woman who 'will make a pure offering of herself at the spot where you lay down the Cup, and this shall be a sign unto you'. A little while later, the elder Dr

Goodchild did indeed die and John had the glass artefacts sent on to him; he gave away the dish and kept the 'cup' until he had more instructions.

In August of 1898 John Goodchild made the journey to Beckery, prompted, again, by the voice. He deposited the cup in a well in a field, wedging it in a hollow under a stone. Every year thereafter, apart from 1905, he made a summer journey to the site, sometimes taking a female companion who he thought might be a likely candidate for the cup's guardian to see whether they might pick up on its presence. None ever did. The problem was that the 'well' was really just a muddy pool filled not by a spring but by run-off water from the fields, controlled by a sluice, and often Dr Goodchild worried that the cup had been discovered and taken away. At least once he groped around in the water and couldn't find it. And so the situation remained until Tuesday 26th September 1906 when Christine and Janet Allen came to see him at his hotel in Bath, to tell him they had discovered, and replaced, the mystic object.

The Allen sisters were friends of Wellesley Tudor Pole, who Dr Goodchild knew slightly, a manager at his family's grain business in Bristol but a man of more mystical bent than that might suggest. The three of them had long been fascinated by the Glastonbury traditions. Tudor Pole had received a psychic impression that the sisters should go to Glastonbury and search the waters of St Bride's Well for an artefact of great spiritual significance. It was then agreed that Tudor Pole's sister Kitty should retrieve the bowl, fulfilling, as far as Goodchild was concerned, the prophecy revealed to him. The artefact was taken to Tudor Pole's house in Bristol and became the focal point of their spiritual work, being used in communion services led by the women.

The Allens and the Tudor Poles – if not Dr Goodchild – became half-convinced that the blue bowl was the Holy Grail, or at least talked rather as if they were. This all slightly blew up in their faces when the *Daily Express* managed to get wind of a meeting they'd organised in 1907 at the Westminster residence of the liberal Churchman Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce. It was attended by some forty people including the American Ambassador and Lord Halifax (and Alice Buckton, later owner of the Chalice Well): 'Mystery of a Relic, Finder believes it to be the Holy Grail', went the *Express* headline. Archdeacon Wilberforce quickly got very cold feet, especially when a representative from the British Museum reported that the bowl was 'fairly modern', and the whole Avalonian group found themselves backtracking a bit. Still, no matter the 'cup''s origins, they remained convinced that it had a role to play in the spiritual development of the West.

From 1916 Kitty Tudor Pole looked after it, visiting a variety of religious sites with it, a focus for prayer for peace and unity. Finally, in 1968, her brother passed it to the Chalice Well Trust to look after, and there it remains.[49]

To understand the significance of 'Bride's Well', then, you need to know the story of the 'Sapphire Blue Bowl', as the Chalice Well now refers to it. But what weight should we put on the well's name?

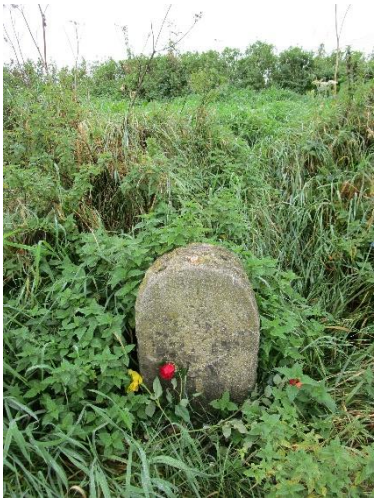
Beckery, as we've seen, was indeed, it seems, a site of ancient sanctity, with its post-Roman monastery and medieval chapel. Names for this part of Glastonbury incorporating the word *Bride* or something like it occur from the mid-16th century, probably reflecting the late-medieval decision to rededicate the chapel from St Mary Magdalene to St Brigid.[50] The early Avalonians were convinced of the identification between the historical St Brigid and the ancient Irish goddess Brigid, an idea taken from folklore studies and from anti-Catholic polemicists who wanted to discredit the veneration of saints by suggesting it was just paganism with a Christian veneer. *Bride* was the figure which epitomised the Avalonians' project of rebalancing the spirituality of the world by re-emphasising the feminine principle the Judaic religions had neglected – Dr Goodchild's *The Light of the West* was about just that.[51] Any placenames with a 'Bride' element were likely to attract their attention, and at Beckery, in the midst of the occult landscape of Glastonbury, there was a medieval legend linking the site with the Bride-figure St Brigid: the combination was irresistible. The Avalonians came to assume that St Brigid had founded a nunnery at Beckery, a kind of forerunner of Alice Buckton's Training College for Women at Chalice Well. Of course while the recent archaeological revelations make a connection between Beckery and the historical St Brigid possible, they also show that there was a religious house for men there, not a nunnery; at least, not one anyone has yet found.[52]

There was also a thorn tree nearby which local people were accustomed to deck with ribbons and written prayers. At least, that's what the Allen sisters, Wellesley Tudor Pole, and others said. How old that tradition might have been is open to question: there are quite a number of Holy Thorns in Glastonbury, and they come and go, meaning this one, if that's what it was, might not have been of any great antiquity. In the 1920s, Alice Buckton incorporated it in her pilgrim trails around the town, and encouraged visitors to add their own offerings.[53]

But Bride's *Well*? We have no reason to think anyone ever called the pond near Bride's Hill that until this small group of people began to think of it *as* Bride's Well in the early 1900s. There are quite detailed maps of the vicinity dating from the 1600s onwards and none of them records the name. It isn't clear when the marker stone was put up: although the Friends of Bride's Mound give a rough date of 'the early 1900s', there's a photo showing Thomas Tudor Pole (Wellesley and Kitty's father) looking at what is described as the sluice above the pond, dated to the 1920s, and if that's accurate what was left of the Well must have vanished afterwards. You don't memorialise something which is still there, after all.[54] Strangely, it doesn't look like a sluice for a field-drain at all to me, but like a stone well-head.

Dr Goodchild and Kitty Tudor-Pole both drew maps of Bride's Mound showing the well – in different places. A culvert similar to whatever it is Thomas Tudor-Pole is looking at in the photograph still survives, but it's nowhere near the position shown on either drawing, while Bride's Stone was moved in the 1960s when the road and the embankment along the river were constructed. Geophysical surveys carried out for the Friends of Bride's Mound in 2018 revealed some suggestive features, a stream along a ditch flowing towards the river, and a possible collapsed culvert, but it will take an x-ray survey to find out more.[55]

Finally, you will find, should you search, quite a number of online references to Glastonbury's 'Blue Spring' – an alternative name for Bride's Well. This name seems to have arisen because of the connection with Dr Goodchild's blue bowl, and by analogy with the Red Spring (Chalice Well) and the White Spring over the road from it – there's even a suggestion that there was a Black Spring in the Abbey grounds, but I can't think where that was, unless it's St Joseph's Well. I wonder how far this interesting tendency to assimilate Glastonbury's notable springs to colours may go: blue is the obvious one for Bride's Well. [56]



Bride's Stone

Methodist Church Fountain

The Methodist Church in Lambrook Street dates from about 1843, but nobody – including Historic England – seems sure exactly how old the drinking fountain in the wall outside the church is, only hazarding a guess of 'late 19th century'. It's made of limestone with pink marble columns, its now-dry spout and basin surmounted by a double arch in Norman style beneath a pointed canopy. Dragons and other animals cavort around the column capitals, while beneath the top arch a hand points rightwards next to the legend 'To the Tor', so whoever designed the fountain had an eye on the town's tourists. It tapped a reservoir developed in 1821 from a pool used for washing carts,[57] and which is still there, holding some thirty thousand gallons or so of water. I was told that five springs fed into the reservoir; it's a detail I can't confirm, but clearly some feel this to be more than just a quotidian water supply.[58]

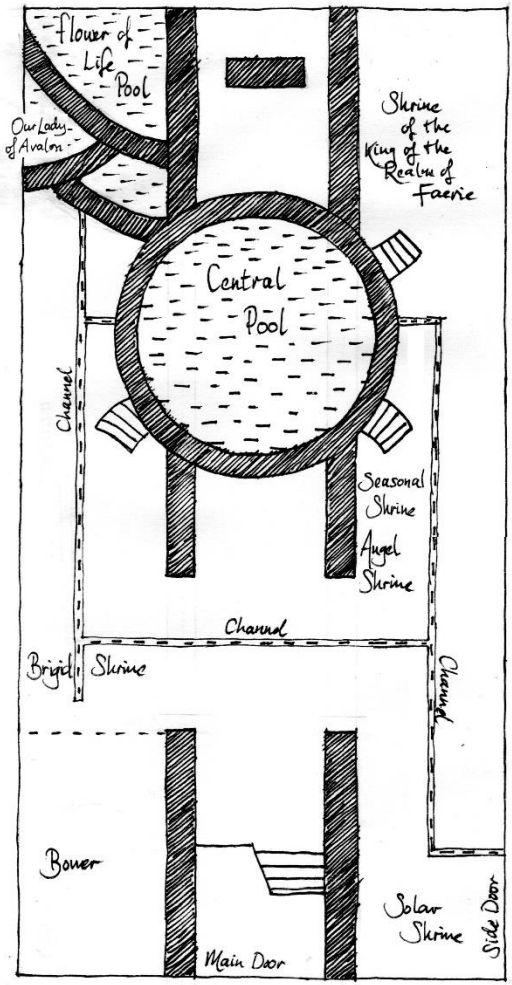
White Spring

On the opposite side of Wellhouse Lane from the Chalice Well, you will find the White Spring. Apart from a tiny enclosure just beside it, it opens directly from the road, so there are often people waiting outside to go in, or just extending the ambience of the site into the world beyond the doorway. The little courtyard includes a cascade of stone bowls filling two shallow pools in which monoliths sit, while moss covers the walls and harts-tongue fern drapes over a spiral carving. *The White Spring*, a wooden sign with vaguely Celtic lettering over the door informs us, but above that is an older, stone carving, which is now rather incongruous. The mitre of the medieval Abbots

graces the Glastonbury Town coat of arms, the date 1872, and the information that 'This reservoir containing 137700 gallons was built during the Mayoralty of WT Swayne' (his first term of the six he served as Mayor, as it turned out). And this all presides over something we can safely say is not what you might expect to find in a Victorian reservoir.

Beyond the portal, steps lead down to a stone-flagged floor damp with water, splashed from the channels that run across the room and out to the right-hand side. Over our heads great round-headed arches of rough brick disappear into the dark, illuminated by candles which also highlight a walled pool a few feet high set into the centre of the space. Behind it is darkness with small cascading pools to the left. Visitors may bathe in the water and you should be prepared for the fact that some exercise the option to do so naked (hence no photographs). However else you might describe the White Spring, it is a remarkable and unique space.

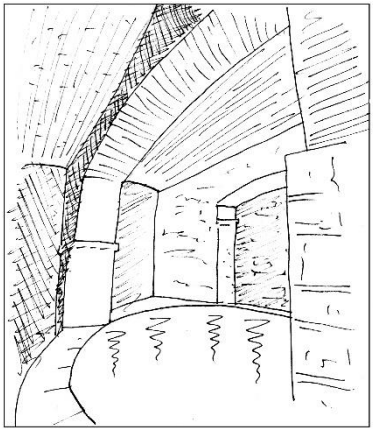
How did this happen? Within a few years of opening, the Town Council's grand Wellhouse Lane reservoir was proving less than ideal as the calcium-rich spring water furred up the pipes, and better supplies were brought in from elsewhere: the building, more a white elephant than a white spring, sat redundant for decades until it was sold off in 1982. A café was opened in the space and the spring water was also available to buy; 'It was furnished in opulent cushions and curtains and resembled something out of a middle east story book' with a hot tub for bathing and a healing ministry of its own



utilising a variety of spiritual traditions. Unfortunately the time came when coffee, cakes and spring water were not all you could purchase there, and a drugs bust closed it down early in 2001.[59]

When the Spring reopened a few years later under the aegis of the new White Spring Trust, the atmosphere was very different. Now, the old reservoir was to be a water temple; an original focus on the figure of St Brigid broadened into a more eclectic spiritual mixture. Photographs from the early 2000s show that the timber-and-board partitions inside the chamber had been retained, and shrines developed using lots of fabric hangings, arrangements of stones and vegetation, and paintings; the outlet of the spring itself was made to look a bit like the Roman spring of Sulis at Bath.[60] After the original custodian Gill Atkinson handed over to Lisa Goodwin in 2009 ('the reluctant priestess', she called herself, having led a 'conventional life' before she and her family moved to Glastonbury in 2006 and never expecting to become the public face of a water sanctuary), the Trust decided completely to reorganise the building, clearing out the interior and the old electric lighting and creating a main pool in the centre with a series of smaller pools to one side. The series of cascade bowls in the courtyard recalled George Wright's 1896 description of Wellhouse Lane before the reservoir was ever built: 'the whole bank was a series of fairy

dropping wells – little caverns clothed with moss and verdure'.[61] The refurbishment emphasised a single, charismatic space, even if there were a range of small shrines around the building.



On one visit to the White Spring in 2024 I was able to speak to Annwyn Avalon, one of the current keepers who was drawn to Glastonbury all the way from the USA: the fundamental purpose of the temple, she said, was 'to honour the local spirit of water', but picking apart the layers of spiritual tradition there, and in Glastonbury as a whole, would be 'like separating baklava'. Bride is still present at the Spring alongside St Michael the Archangel (reflecting belief in the Michael Line connecting Michael-related sites across southern England, which is held to run through the Tor) and the King of the Realm of Faerie. In the Shrine of Our Lady of Avalon – a figure regarded as including the Christian Virgin Mary but not limited to her – are two Black Madonnas brought by pilgrims from Switzerland and Brazil. Linking them all is the healing power of water, vehicle of what Annwyn describes as 'so many different transformational experiences' from dealing with grief to coping with illness.

But, as anyone responsible for a spiritual site can attest, that very potential for transformation means disturbance has sometimes been drawn to the White Spring as well. On St Valentine's Day 2014 the doors were broken down and a stone dragon statue smashed; the current wrought-iron doors were designed and made by Phil Raynor of Millstream Forge to replace them. A few years later fires lit in the courtyard damaged the stonework, and difficult personalities caused problems. I can't put it better than to quote at some length from Lisa Goodwin, because it seems to me she makes an important spiritual point as much as anything else:

> *In so many places, wildness is discouraged. No wonder – it can be frightening and threatening when it appears unbound ... At The White Spring there is no discrimination between scruffy or smart, hedge monkey or healer, loud or quiet … All who come in peace are welcome. But remember, peace is not all about silence and meditation. Peace is an intention. You can hit a drum and come from a place of peace, gently feeling the place out and working with the atmosphere rather than*

> *blasting it with your noise. Or you can bash away with a war drum vibe with no regard to the impact it is having on the locality. There are times when people arrive at the White Spring grieving, feeling angry, shouting or otherwise expressing anything but peace. Yet, in some way the intention is peace. … The atmosphere of The White Spring sanctuary changes dramatically as the flow of visitors come and go. Often it is quiet, serene and gentle. Sometimes it is noisy, wild, and apparently limitless. It appears (though it is not) unbounded.*[62]

My initial impression of the White Spring on my first visit, indeed, was of *noise* – of humming, chanting, singing, and clattering rebounding from the stone walls. It felt anything but serene though in the clamour there was still a kind of deep respect and restfulness. To balance this, the sanctuary insists on a Quiet Hour each day during opening times.

It's remarkable that two water-sources of such different character as the Chalice Well spring and the White Spring now flow out directly opposite one another. The difference derives from geology: in contrast to the 'Red Spring', its White counterpart rises relatively high in the aquifer, and is seasonal rather than deep-seated and constant through the year. The juxtaposition lends itself to symbolic understandings, another layer in the Glastonbury baklava. When the White Spring was closed in 2001, some who earnestly wanted it reopened championed its more chaotic spirituality, in contrast to the orderly calm of the Red Spring opposite:

> *We will not have any other wells to enjoy or study, and no cultural context in which to study them, because our culture will die very soon without our sacred White Well... It is not a threat to the Red (blood/royal/ordered). It is her/his consort. The White (spirit/mystical/chaotic) validates and empowers the Red, restoring the King and healing the wasteland...*[63]

In 2010 Nicholas Mann and Philippa Glasson wrote *The Red and White Springs of Avalon* relating the twin springs to the themes and spiritual understandings of alchemy: 'the Tor functions as an alchemical retort', they argue, regarding the entire town as a psychic laboratory in which souls are unmade and reformed, the processes symbolised by the coloured springs.

Finally (for now), there are the Dragons. Who came up with the idea of the Glastonbury Red and White Dragons seems unclear; but each year since 2009 they have paraded through the town and then done battle in the Fairfield at the foot of the Tor for control of the forthcoming season at the start of May, when Red always wins, and the end of October, when it's White's turn. The two events add to Avalon's already impressive stock of weird and wonderful calendar customs.[64] There are stories of warring red and white dragons in British folklore – the *Historia Brittanorum* and the *Mabinogion* – but seasonal identities are not among their meanings, so this is something new. The Dragons pass by the Red and White Springs, and it's only natural that the waters have been assimilated to the Red and White Dragons and their multifarious meanings, even if winter might not be the ideal time to go bathing in the White Spring's chilly waters.

Epilogue

I think Nicholas Mann and Philippa Glasson were on to something real by comparing Glastonbury to an alchemical retort. This small town has accreted sediments of tradition and story over the course of many centuries which provide something for absolutely everyone to tap into, and thereby discover

more about themselves. If the very Christian holy well-shrine of Walsingham in Norfolk is 'England's Nazareth', then Glastonbury is – a comparison we've already made – its Jerusalem. You can find yourself, or lose yourself, among its legends: you can gaze into the wells, and discover – what?

This story is almost certainly incomplete. Glastonbury is adept at legend-making, and there is no reason at all why the early 21st century would have brought this process to a stop. There are wells and springs in abundance around the town and landscape of Avalon: who knows which may be named and told stories about in years to come? We have a Red, a White, a Blue, maybe a Black; will future pilgrims and spiritual speculators add a Green, a Gold? The human soul, as it mirrors the divine, is inexhaustible: it will always need more wells to reflect itself.

Notes

1. Quoted R Gilchrist & C Green, *Glastonbury Abbey, archaeological investigations 1904-79*, Society of Antiquaries of London: London 2015, ii).
2. *Ibid,* 1.
3. maryjones.us/ctexts/gildas06.html. Ironically this episode linking Arthur with Glastonbury disappeared from the standard Arthurian narrative once he was pulled out of the context of folktale and inserted into that of chivalric romance.
4. facebook.com/watch/live/?ref=watch_permalink&v=913109963653661
5. reallywannago.com/bardic-journal/glastonbury-trouble-at-white-spring/
6. G Ashe, *King Arthur's Avalon*, HarperCollins: London 1973, 12.

7. John Fry Reeves had only just bought the Abbey site. He was one of the partners of the Glastonbury & Shepton Mallett Bank, which used the Tor tower as its trademark. It became, eventually, one of the constituent banks of NatWest.
8. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Warner_(antiquary)
9. R Warner, *An History of the Abbey of Glaston: and of the Town of Glastonbury*, Cruttwell: Bath 1826: lxxix-lxxxiv
10. E Horne, *Somerset Holy Wells*, Somerset Folk Press: London, 1923: 39
11. R Gilchrist, *Sacred Heritage: Monastic Archaeology, Identities, Beliefs*, CUP: Cambridge 2020, 164-6; Gilchrist & Green 2015, 384)
12. research.reading.ac.uk/glastonburyabbeyarchaeology/digital/the-lady-chapel-c-1185-1539/pilgrimage/
13. LR Richardson, *Wells and Springs of Somerset*, Geological Survey: London, 1928, 184; P Ashdown, 'A Certain Royal Island: Glastonbury, Abbey & Throne Before the Normans', *Glastonbury Review* 126, Feb 2015
14. Warner 1826, 112
15. The fairy artist Elizabeth Andrews does claim on her website that Elder Well was once 'surrounded by a sacred grove of trees'. I hope I'm not to blame for that. (magic-myth-legend.co.uk/FolkloreLegends4). Nevertheless, there are the oaks named Gog and Magog; Richard Warner also tells the story – taken from Gibson's edition of Camden's *Britannia* - of the walnut tree next to the Lady Chapel of the Abbey that always bloomed on St Barnabas's Day in June (Warner 1826, appendix xxxvii; R Camden, *Britannia* 1695 ed., i 79); and the 1961 excavations at Chalice Well uncovered a yew tree stump dating to about 300 AD, possibly the ancestor of the yews around it now (P Rahtz, 'Excavations at Chalice Well', *Procs of the Somerset Natural History & Archaeological Society* 108 (1963), 157). So you could easily talk yourself into believing in an entire forest of Glastonbury holy trees.
16. J Rattue, *The Living Spring*, Boydell & Brewer: Woodbridge 1995, 38; *Holy Wells of Surrey,* Umbra: Weybridge 2008, 19)
17. Richardson 1928, 183)
18. Warner 1826, appendix xcix, 247). P Ashdown *op cit*.
19. J Harte, *English Holy Wells*, Heart of Albion: Wymeswold 2008, 316). Jeremy also assumes that the Holy Well is the same as St Edmund's, but they seem quite distinct.
20. kathyjones.co.uk/the-goddess-in-glastonbury/
21. C Gathercole, *An Archaeological Assessment of Glastonbury*, Somerset County Council: Taunton 2003, 54)

22. There is no better or fuller account of what happened than Dr Adam Stout's 2015 paper 'The Thorn and the Waters: Miraculous Glastonbury in the 18th century', which appears on the Glastonbury Antiquarians website, and which puts the story of the Glastonbury Spa into the context of 18th-century ideological and social conflicts and dreams.
23. Rattue 2008, 31.
24. collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/people/cp119937/matthew-chancellor
25. Warner 1826, lix.
26. Chalice Well Press, *Chalice Well: the Story of a Living Sanctuary,* Glastonbury 2023, 16 (hence 'CWP'); Stout 2015, 16.
27. JD Mather, 'Wonder-Working Water: the history and hydrogeology of the Chalice Well …', *Procs. of the Ussher Society* 2009, 121, 123)
28. Rahtz 1963; CWP, 19.
29. Mather 2009, 118.
30. Stout 2015.
31. *Ibid*. The 1890s marked the beginning of Glastonbury becoming a contested site between religious traditions, initially between Roman Catholic and Anglican brands of Christianity. The beatification of Abbot Richard Whiting in 1895 occasioned a celebratory pilgrimage which took at least 1500 people to the summit of the Tor where the Catholic Bishop Brownlow of Clifton gave a blessing at a temporary altar. Two years later, in what Marion Bowman goes so far as to call 'retaliation', the Anglicans marked the 1300th anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine's mission in Kent by massing, 150 bishops from across the Empire and a thousand other clergy, in Glastonbury, where St Augustine had never been. And that was the point: as the Bishop of Stepney told the crowds in the Abbey ruins, the history of Glastonbury proved that England had been Christian before the Pope of Rome ever turned his attention to it. 'There are persons foolish enough', he announced, 'to declare that the Church of England before the Reformation was a Roman Catholic Church. It never was. It was always the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, *Anglorum Ecclesia'.* (M Bowman, 'Railways, Rivalry and the Revival of Pilgrimage in Glastonbury', in G Barna & O Gyongyossy ed., *Religion, Culture, Society 2*, MTA-SZTE Research Group: Szeged, 2015). This round of religious rivalry came to an end with a victory for the Anglicans when the Diocese of Bath and Wells bought the Abbey site in 1908. Marion Bowman has also written very interestingly on the way Glastonbury's pagan rituals have developed through being modelled on Christian ones:

M Bowman, 'Power Play: Ritual Rivalry and Targeted Tradition in Glastonbury', *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis 19*, 26–37.

32. Mather 2009, 118.
33. D Fortune, *Avalon of the Heart*, Frederick Muller: London 1934, 63. Annwyn Avalon of the White Spring told me she'd looked into this story 'and I can state that no train was involved'!
34. CWP 24-6, 41-7.
35. P Benham, *The Avalonians*, Gothic Image: Glastonbury 2006, 229-238.
36. Fortune 1934, 9, 52, 64, 92.
37. CWP 62.
38. CWP 68-9. The Glastonbury Foundation was set up by Ronald Heaver, another mystic concerned with the nature and position of Glastonbury within the spirituality of the British Isles and who had founded the Sanctuary of Avalon in his house in Keinton Mandeville as an expression of his beliefs. The Foundation included some of Mr Heaver's associates from the Findhorn Community in Scotland, and it intended to use the old School as a hostel and centre for pilgrims and enquirers. Unfortunately Mr Heaver and Major Tudor Pole fell into a decided rivalry, reaching the point that they would only deal with each other through intermediaries. The eventual demolition of the school buildings remained controversial in the Glastonbury area, but seems to have been justified by their dreadful state of repair ('internal metal supports were coming loose as the traffic thundered by and boys were shaken in their beds as they slept') quite apart from sticking out like a sore thumb in Wellhouse Lane. (unique-publications.co.uk/demolition-of-the-old-school/).
39. CWP 105, 88, 110, 93.
40. CWP 115.
41. wildhunt.org/2024/07/chalice-well-the-removal-of-the-mother-and-child-statue.html; artuk.org/discover/artworks/madonna-and-child-248766; glastonbury.nub.news/news/local-news/removal-of-mother-child-statue-at-glastonburys-chalice-well-sparks-outcry-232398; bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cv225rzyd9ko
42. historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1345431?section=official-list-entry
43. blog.junglecottages.co.uk/?p=1502; facebook.com/NormalForGlastonbury/posts/jacoby-cottage-bove-town-glastonbury-once-a-slipper-chapel-for-pilgrims-visiting/1177751485743854/; P Crabtree, *Medieval Archaeology, an*

Encyclopaedia, Routledge: Cambridge 2001, 214; isleofalbion.co.uk/sites/69/glastonbury_town.php.

44. Did Revd Lionel Smithett Lewis at Glastonbury have any connection with Fr Alfred Hope Patten at Walsingham? They were very different characters, and saw the Church of England rather differently too, but were involved in substantially the same sort of project. We find yet another 'Slipper Chapel' near the holy well of St Walstan at Bawburgh in Norfolk, but that seems to be a folly in the grounds of a 17th-century mansion – albeit constructed from old materials. heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF9301-Post-medieval-%27Slipper-Chapel%27-garden-house&Index=20&RecordCount=150&SessionID=ff30f299-047e-4bff-827e-fa103cb042c1.
45. Gathercole 2003, 54.
46. glastonburyantiquarians.org/site/index.php?page_id=224.
47. Gathercole 2003, 33-36.
48. archives.swheritage.org.uk/earliest-monastery-discovered.
49. Benham 2006, 7-9, 18-19, 21-22, 45-53, 61-83; CWP 44-8.
50. friendsofbridesmound.com/legends/.
51. Benham 2006, 19-21.
52. John of Glastonbury states there was a 'monastery of holy virgins' at Wearyall Hill: King Arthur stayed there, and had a dream that caused him to visit the hermit's chapel at Beckery where the Virgin Mary gave him a crystal cross that he made his emblem in place of the pagan dragon. So maybe that's where St Brigid's convent was. However there was an earlier version of this story which placed the king's dream at a chamber belonging to his sister, Morgan la Faye, on top of 'the mount right next to Wearyall'. Dr Mary Bateman assumes this means the Tor; but could it be Beckery? The mists are so impenetrable at this point it's hard to work out what the legends mean, let alone where the historical truth might lie – and yet the authors of these texts lived locally, so they must have intended *something* definite. (M Bateman 2020 Univ of Bristol thesis, 'Localising Arthur in England and Wales 1400-1610', https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/ws/portalfiles/portal/245697386/Final_Copy_2020_06_23_Bateman_M_PhD.pdf.
53. friendsofbridesmound.com/legends/
54. CWP 46.
55. Info from Dr Serena Roney-Dougal.

56. For an example of the use of the 'Blue Spring' name, check wells.naiads.org/the-blue-spring-of-glastonbury-or-lost-brides-well-sluice/. For the name 'Black Spring', see megalithic.co.uk/modules.php?op=modload&name=Forum&file=viewtopic&topic=9229&forum=4&start=0. Another new Bride site is the Bridey Bell on the north side of the Tor. In 1999 sculptor Barry Cooper and musician Laurence Parnell worked together on a commission from Sustrans, funded by the National Lottery, to produce artworks to mark a footpath from Wells to Glastonbury, the Syrens Walk, itself part of a vast network of paths linking Inverness to Santiago in Spain. Each of the nine waymarkers is a standing stone inset with a bronze design incorporating a bell tuned to a different note, forming an eight-mile-long musical instrument (barrycooper.org.uk/about.asp?ref=2). Walkers are encouraged to ring the bells with a pebble. The artists didn't name the Bell or intend it as a commemoration of St Brigid or Bride the goddess, but that hasn't stopped it being named for her, or some pagan believers treating it as a sacred site in its own right, like Bride's Stone at Beckery. (crystalhealingbysarahjane.co.uk/2019/02/07/imbolc-and-goddess-brighde/)
57. Thus JGL Bulleid, 'The Streets, Highways and Byways of Glastonbury (1904)': 'At the top of High Street there was formerly a large horse-pool, where cattle and horses were watered and carts and other vehicles washed. This pond was very unsightly and dangerous, and was filled up and levelled over nearly 70 years since. One of the chief causes of its removal was the ducking in it of Rebecca Brook, a notorious scold, and otherwise a woman of bad fame, who was nearly drowned there by the populace.': glastonburyantiquarians.org/site/index.php?page_id=224.
58. historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1057898?section=official-list-entry; wells.naiads.org/glastonbury-methodist-church-drinking-fountain/; geocaching.com/geocache/GC54JC0.
59. jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa-jisc.exe?A2=ind0108&L=WELLS-AND-SPAS&P=R2; jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa-jisc.exe?A2=ind0108&L=WELLS-AND-SPAS&P=R1947; jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa-jisc.exe?A2=ind0108&L=WELLS-AND-SPAS&P=R855
60. Youtube.com/watch?v=IOq1NS_5F3g.
61. N Mann & P Glasson, *The Red and White Springs of Avalon*, Green Magic Publishing: Glastonbury 2010, 18;

patheos.com/blogs/waterwitch/2017/03/interview-caretakers-white-spring-glastonbury.html.

62. wizardnews.wordpress.com/2014/03/27/the-blacksmith-the-white-spring-and-a-gift-of-silver/; reallywannago.com/bardic-journal/glastonbury-trouble-at-white-spring/.
63. jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/wa-jisc.exe?A2=WELLS-AND-SPAS;d2564ca.0108.
64. Glastonbury artist Steve Madog is credited with making the dragons which currently feature in the ceremony in 2015 (somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/glastonbury-dragons-need-new-home-9188919), but there were earlier and less robust versions being used a few years before: (wizardnews.wordpress.com/2012/05/16/the-white-spring-glastonbury-beltane-energy-rises/). Also see badwitch.co.uk/2018/05/dragons-of-summer-winter-battle-in.html.

The Glastonbury landscape is weird. Yet the essence of that weirdness is difficult to catch … The irrational scene loosens the grip of the Ordinary and gives scope to the Fantastic. Just by a matter of an inch, it jars open the magic casements.

- Geoffrey Ashe