

KATHY JONES

The Goddess in Glastonbury

Finding Her in the landscape and legends of the Isle of Avalon

With drawings by Diana Griffiths

GLASTONBURY GODDESS TEMPLE

The Goddess in Glastonbury

Kathy Jones

In celebration of our two unborn Ancestors

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Introduction

From time immemorial, the Isle of Avalon, in the Summerland (Somerset, England), has been home to the Goddess. This ancient sacred place is the legendary Western Isle of the Dead. Dedicated to an awesome and powerful Goddess, this Island lay far to the west in a shining sea. People were called here to die, to be transformed and to be reborn.

By tradition, a group of nine, thirteen or nineteen Maidens or Faerie Queens live, some say even today, upon this mysterious Western Isle. Skilled in healing and the magical arts of creation and death, they are the Keepers of the Mysteries of the Goddess. Their names come to us as those of Goddesses Anu, Danu, Mab, Morrigu, Madron, Mary, Arianrhod, Cerridwen, Rhiannon, Epona, Rigantona, Bride, Brigit, Hecate, Magdalena, Morgana, Gwenhwyfar, Vivien, Nimue.



The Isle of Avalon surrounded by winter flood waters is the mysterious Western Isle of the Dead. It is the gateway to Annwn, the Underworld of the Goddess. Photo by Simant Bostock

The Isle of the Dead is the gateway to Annwn, the Underworld of the Goddess, where the souls of the deceased await rebirth. The guardian of its entrance is Arawn or Gwyn ap Nudd – Gwyn son of Nudd or Ludd, the annual year king sacrifice now united with His Goddess. Gwyn is also Heme the Hunter, the Oak King and Cernunnos the Stag God. It is said that on Midsummer Night's Eve Gwyn rides out across Glastonbury Tor with the red-eared white dogs of the Wild Hunt of Annwn, sweeping in the souls of the dead to the Cauldron of the Dark Mother.

Today the sea and tidal lakes which once surrounded the Western Isle have been drained away. The seashore now lies 18 miles away to the west across the flat Summerland meadows, which are criss-crossed with rivers and small drainage canals, known as rhynes.

But when it rains heavily, the water in the rivers and rhynes rises quickly, spilling over the low banks and flooding out into the pastureland. The sea returns once more and again this Western Isle of the Dead rises out from the water and is visible for all to see.

The Goddess in the Landscape

Glastonbury is one of those places where the very shape of the landscape speaks to the people who visit or live upon Her slopes. For it is here that the Body of the Goddess can be seen outlined in the contours of the small group of hills which rise out of the flat Summerland meadows.

The Goddess appears in different forms to different people and as Her Nature changes with the seasons, She presents Her many faces to those with eyes to see.

For some people the whole Island is Her spread and Birth-giving body.



Viewed from the direction of Baltonsborough the island looks like a giant Goddess lying down on Her back on and in the earth. The Tor is Her left breast and ribcage. Wearyall Hill is Her left leg. Stonedown is Her head sinking into the earth at Wick.

The Birth Goddess



Approaching Glastonbury from the southeast and the direction of Baltonsborough and Butleigh, many people have noticed that the side-view of the Isle of Avalon presents the profile of a giant Goddess lying down lengthways before them across the moors.

Stonedown is the head of the Goddess, sinking back into the landscape. The Tor rises up as Her left breast and Her rib-cage. Chalice Hill is Her pregnant belly. Bere Lane marks Her hips and Wearyall Hill is Her left thigh and leg, Her foot sinking into the ground towards the nearby town of Street.

The Great Mother is the primordial aspect of the Divine, celebrated and revered throughout the ancient world. As all human life is born from a woman's body, so the Goddess was known to be the Source of all life. The earliest known sculptures are of the Birth-giving

Goddess. The squat all-seeing Venus of Willendorf, which is 30,000 years old, is one example out of many.

As the Earth Mother She is Gaia. For the Celts and those who came before She is Anu-Danaa, the Good Mother, Goddess of Plenty. She is Madron, Mother of All. As a Moon Goddess, She is the Full Moon, shining radiantly to lighten the darkness of the night-time landscape. She is experienced by women when they are pregnant and during the fertile phase of the menstruation cycle.

To the Welsh She is Arianrhod, High Fruitful Mother. Ariadne, our Kretan inspiration, means High Fruitful Mother of the Barley, derived from the same root as Demeter, Barley Mother – De meaning barley.

Moving round to the West of the Island in the direction of Meare, the spread body of the Goddess can be seen from the banks of the River Brue. The pregnant womb of Chalice Hill is in the centre, with the breast of the Tor rising behind. Her right breast is flattened falling down to the side of Paradise Lane. Her right leg is tucked beneath itself as St Edmund's or Windmill Hill. The left leg of Wearyall stretches down to the right. From here the head of Stonedown is not visible. From above Her whole body is visible.

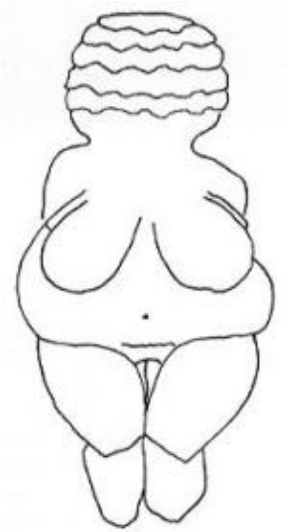
In the landscape of Glastonbury, below Her womb lie the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, site of the first Christian Church in Britain, prominently situated in the Vagina of the Birth-Giving Goddess. The remains of the Mary Chapel in the crypt of the Abbey, lie in this potent and creative part of the Goddess's body.

Within Christianity, the Virgin Mary, the pure and spotless Mother of God, is the only nearly-acceptable face of the Goddess to be found. She is as yet unrecognised as the Virgin (One unto Herself) Mother Goddess. It would seem however that the first Christian builders

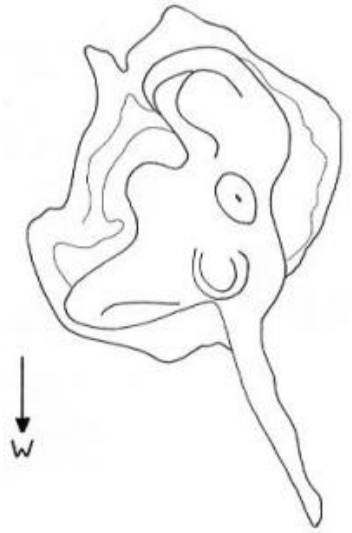
must have been aware of the significance of this sacred spot when they planned their sanctuary. The Virgin Mary was often honoured in sites which are sacred to the Goddess.



Gaia or Gaea is the Universal Mother Goddess of the Greeks. She is Mother Earth, our home. To the Kretan matriarchy She was Rhea. Her European names include Erda, Eortha, Urtha, Urd, Artha and Hretha.



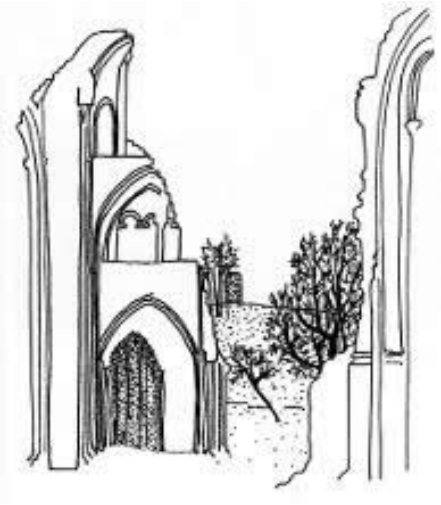
The 30,000 year old Venus of Willendorf in Austria is one of the earliest examples of the Birth-giving Goddess. The shape of Her body is that of the Goddess who has just given birth, with Her belly still swollen and Her breasts full of milk for Her new child.



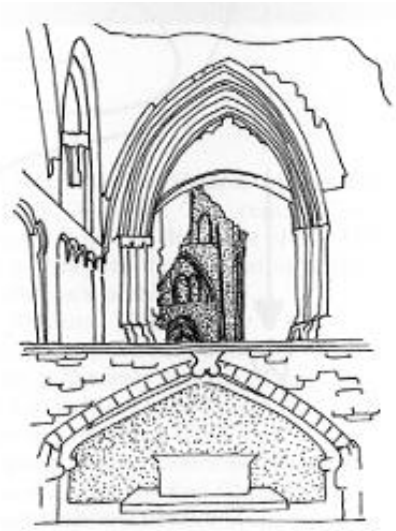
The Birth Goddess as seen from above in the contours of the Island.



On the banks of the River Brue to the west of the island we can stand between the spread legs of the Goddess. In the centre is Her womb, behind and above is Her left breast. On the right is Her left leg. Her right leg is tucked under as Windmill Hill.



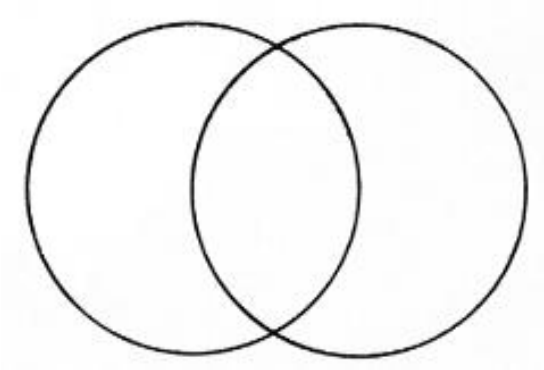
The ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, which are open daily to visitors, lie in the Vaginal area of the Birth Goddess.



The Mary Chapel in the Abbey lies in the Vulva of the Birth-Giving Goddess of Glastonbury. This is one of the most potent places on the Island.



The ancient Omphalos of Glastonbury now lies forgotten behind the Abbot's Kitchen. The Omphalos is a universal representation of the Goddess as the Egg of Life, as Womb and Tomb. It should now be restored to its proper place in the Mary Chapel.



The Vesica Piscis. Two interlocking circles form the Yoni or Vulva of the Goddess. The proportions of the Mary Chapel are based on the geometry of the Vesica Piscis.

Glastonbury Abbey

The ruins of Glastonbury Abbey lie in the Vagina of the Birth Goddess in the heart of the town of Glastonbury. Volumes have been written on the Abbey and its place in Christianity and there are many guide books available which describe its history. For the lover of the Goddess there are a few interesting details in this takeover of one of the main Goddess sites in Britain. For as with all places where the patriarchal religion of the one male God sought supremacy, it built its phallic extravagances in the Vulva of the Goddess, thinking thereby to crush Her.

Glastonbury Abbey was erected upon the site of the first Christian church in Britain, built by Joseph of Arimathea in 63AD. According to William of Malmesbury's De Antiquitate Glastoniensis, Joseph and his friends were told by a vision of the Angel Gabriel to build a church in honour of the Holy Mother of God – the Mother Goddess, and the Virgin Mary – the Goddess Mary, in a place shown them from heaven. This they did, building a small circular wattle church, which they dedicated to the Mother of God. For the early inhabitants of the Summerland the Virgin Mary was the Triple Goddess Brigit, who was the Goddess of Childbirth. At a later time St. Bridget was said to have been the midwife to Mary and wet-nurse to Jesus.

One of the most potent places in Glastonbury is the ruined Mary Chapel or St Joseph's Chapel as it is sometimes known, in the Abbey. The proportions of the existing Mary Chapel are based on the gematria or sacred proportions of the Vesica Piscis, in which two interlocking circles overlap to form the Yoni or Vulva of the

Goddess. It is from Her Vulva that we are born into the world and it is through union with Her, spiritually, emotionally and sexually that we shall return to Her.

These proportions were re-discovered by Frederick Bligh Bond, the architect and clairvoyant, when he excavated the ruins of the Abbey, beginning in 1908. The study of the sacred geometry of the Abbey has since been developed by John Michell and Keith Critchlow.

Bligh Bond also found an Omphalos or egg stone during his excavations. This beautiful Omphalos now lies behind the Abbot's Kitchen in the Abbey grounds, its significance forgotten. The Omphalos is a universal representation of the Goddess as Egg of Life, Womb and Tomb. Shaped like an egg it has a depression in one surface. Here the menstruating Oracle of the Goddess would sit, Her holy blood collecting as she gave voice to the Word of the Goddess. This was the blood of the Goddess Charis, Aphrodite, Venus, Goddess of sexual love, from which the word Eucharist, meaning communion, comes. This blood was used in healing.

There are many descriptions of famous Oracles dedicated to the Word of the Goddess in the ancient world, and no important decision would be taken without listening to Her Voice. Many choices today could benefit from time spent sitting upon Her Stone.

There is another depression in the Glastonbury Omphalos where the monks tried to christianise the egg stone by mounting it with a cross of sacrifice. This stone still gives off powerful vibrations and is a wonderful spot for a menstruating woman to sit.

The grounds of Glastonbury Abbey are now a green and peaceful parkland with many unusual species of trees, including a small cider

apple orchard. It is as if the Mons Veneris of the Birth Goddess were once again being allowed to sprout Her pubic hair.



Demeter or earlier Ge-Meter was the Earth Mother particularly connected with the vegetation cycle of the Corn. She was celebrated as the threefold Grain Goddess – Persephone, Demeter, Hecate in the Eleusinian Mysteries.



A Sumerian Ancestor figurine made of stone, with particular emphasis on the eyes. She is the Mound, the squatting, all-seeing Eye Goddess.



The Deae Matrones, the Celtic Triple Mother Goddess, carry cornucopiae, filled with the fruits of Her body the Earth. Several sculptures of the Celtic Triple Mother Goddess have been found in Britain, often near to sacred wells.

Festival of the Mother Goddess

LAMMAS

Lammas is one of the four ancient Fire Festivals of the year, which come at the cross-quarter points between the Winter and Summer Solstices and the Spring and Autumn Equinoxes. These festivals mark turning points in the relationship between the Earth and Her fiery Mother, the Sun, revealing the different aspects of the Goddess. Lammas marks the midway point between the Summer Solstice and Autumn Equinox and is celebrated on July 31st, Aug 1st and 2nd, between the hay and corn harvests.

Lammas is the time of celebration for the fertility of the Mother Goddess and the fruits of Her body, the Earth. For the Celts, it was the feast of Anu Danaa, the Mother Goddess, of Madron and of Arianrhod, the Birth Goddess. The first sheaves of ripened corn or other appropriate cereal are still made into a Corn Doll, or Barley Doll, in the image of the Mother Goddess, who is also Ceres, Demeter, Goddess of the Grain, the Barley Mother, Mistress of Earth and Sea. The Corn Doll is blessed and kept beside the hearth through the autumn.

At Eleusis an ear of corn symbolising the inherent life lying dormant in the fruit of all plants, played a central part in the Mysteries of Demeter. At Lammas Her special drink of barley, water and mint is drunk. This is the Kykeon, the sacramental cup of the Eleusinian Initiates.

Cornucopiae are goat's horns of plenty overflowing with flowers and fruit, which are brought to the Goddess's shrine in thanksgiving. It was the horns of the Goat Goddess Amalthea, which suckled the young God Zeus, saving his life, in the cave on Dicte on Krete. In Britain several sculptures have been found of the Deae Matrones, the Celtic Triple Mother Goddess, depicted as three robed figures, each carrying a cornucopia. Lammas is their festival, a celebration of human fecundity and the fruits of the Earth.

The name Lammas come from Lugh nasadh – 'Commemoration of Lugh' or Llew, who was annually sacrificed as the Corn King to ensure the fertility of the crops. In mediaeval times Lammas was a Festival of mourning for Lugh and for all dead kinsfolk.

These are known in the north of Britain as Wakes weeks, some of which are still celebrated at Lammas, as summer holidays. It was a time to visit the home of your Ancestors to give them due respect

and honour. Glastonbury has long been a place of pilgrimage for people of all faiths. Many people visit Avalon, the Isle of the Dead, in the summer.

The dried ears of corn from the Corn Doll are planted in the earth at the following Imbolc in February, returning the Daughter seed to Mother Earth. The dried stems are burned and the ashes spread on the earth, the fire releasing the life of the previous year's harvest back into the Earth. So the cycle of the Goddess is renewed.

The last sheaf of corn from the end of the harvest is hung above the fire through the autumn, containing the life inherent in all fruit. This sheaf will be made into a Bridie Doll at the following Imbolc.

Echoes of the Lammas festival come down to us in the Christian harvest festival when the fruits of the harvest are brought into the church in thanksgiving.



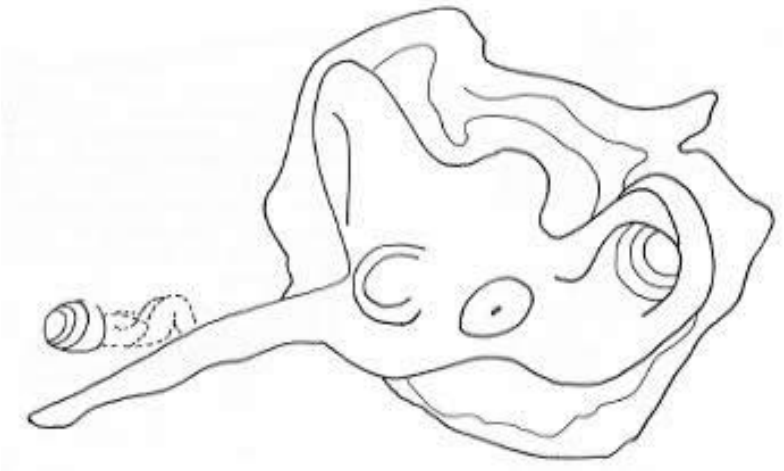
Bride's Mound with the Tor and Chalice Hill beyond.

The Child of the Goddess: The Maiden

BRIDE'S MOUND

All Great Mothers must have a child and the Goddess in Glastonbury is no exception. To the southwest of the Island at Beckery, in a forgotten, derelict, industrialised area of Glastonbury, covered in part by the town's sewage works, lies Bride's Mound. This large mound can be seen as the emerging head of Her Child being born from between the spread legs of the Goddess. To stand or sit on Bride's Mound is to feel embraced by the landscape of the Birth-Giving Goddess.

From archaeology, from The High History of the Holy Graal, written in the 13th century, and from legend, we know that a community of women lived on Bride's Mound. Even today Bride's Mound is a large mound which would easily have supported a group of women with their own vegetable and herb gardens and chickens, even a cow. This was the women's sacred space with its own now lost Bride's Well.



The Mother Goddess in Glastonbury gives birth to Brigit the Maiden Goddess, whose head appears out of the earth as Bride's Mound at Beckery or 'Little Ireland'



A Romano-British image from SW Scotland of Brigit, Goddess of the ancient realm of Brigantia. She carries the white rod of power that regenerates the forces of nature at the end of winter.



The emblem of St Bridget as Milkmaid can be seen on side of St Michael's tower on the Tor. St Bridget was the christianised version of Brigit the Celtic Triple Goddess of Poetry and Inspiration, of Healing and Smithcraft.

Until quite recently the Mound was surrounded by the tidal waters of the River Brue, which could be crossed at Pomparles Bridge or the Pons Perilous in the Grail legends. Visitors to the sacred land would cross this dangerous bridge to spend a twenty-four hour vigil with the women, before being allowed to enter the island. During this time they would have a vision or a dream of spiritual significance to take with them unto her Body.

Excavations on the Mound have revealed the remains of an early chapel dedicated to Mary Magdalene, the unrecognised Dark aspect of the Triple Mary Goddess. This chapel was part of a Mary Magdalene hermitage. It was here that St Bridget lived when she came to Glastonbury.

According to legend King Arthur came to the Magdalene Chapel at dawn one Ash Wednesday, to find the door guarded by fiery swords, so no-one unworthy could enter. Within, an aged priest begins to say mass. The Virgin Goddess Mary appears with the baby Jesus in Her arms. The child is taken as the sacrament and his flesh is eaten, but afterwards he reappears whole and unharmed. At the end of the ceremony, the Mother Goddess gave Arthur an equal-armed cross of crystal, which was reputedly kept in the Abbey for many centuries and may still lie buried there. In memory of this vision Arthur changed his standard from that of a dragon to a silver cross on a green field, with the Mother Goddess and Her Son in one quarter and three crowns in the others. These later became the arms of Glastonbury Abbey.

Bride's Mound takes its name from Bride, Brigit, Brighde – the Triple Goddess of the Celts. A chapel dedicated to St. Bridget was built on Beckery or Little Ireland, in the fifth century. The nuns who lived here were said to celebrate Easter at the Aries full moon, no matter what day of the week it was. They lived in tune with the cycles of the Moon Goddess. St Bridget's emblem as the nurturing Goddess, of a woman milking a cow, is still visible on St Michael's Tower on the Tor and around the doorway to St Mary's Chapel in the Abbey.

The Goddess Brigit is the Triple Goddess of Brigantia, the ancient Celtic nation which included the British Isles, Brittany and parts of Spain. She is the Brigit of Poetry and Inspiration; the Brigit of Healing through the reciting of poetry at sacred Wells and Springs, and She is Brigit of the Flame, Hearth and Smithcraft. She is Goddess of the New Moon, experienced by women as a wave of renewed creativity and wellbeing after menstruation. Her symbol is a White Swan. Her flower is the snowdrop.

The perpetual flame at Her shrine at Kildare in Ireland was said to have been tended by nineteen Virgins (One unto Themselves), symbolising the approximately nineteen-year (metonic) cycle of relationship between the moon and the sun. Brigit is also known as Bride of the Golden Hair and Bride of the White Hills. For the Irish She is popularly known as Mary of the Gael, equated with the Virgin Goddess Mary as Muse and inspiration.



The Isle of Avalon pregnant with life, possibility and change. Photo by Simant Bostock.

Festival of the Maiden Goddess

IMBOLC

The Festival of Imbolc takes place half way between the Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox and is celebrated on January 31st, Feb 1st and February 2nd. It lies opposite to Lammas, the festival of the Mother Goddess, and can be seen as the Festival of the Daughters of the Goddess. Where Demeter is the Mother Goddess, it is a festival of Kore, the Maiden.

In Glastonbury Imbolc is the Maiden Brigit's Festival in which the Light of Illumination from Her perpetual flame is brought into a darkened room, heralding the coming of spring. Small honey and barley cakes are eaten and milk drunk in Her honour. On the first day, the ears of corn from the Lammas Corn Doll are planted in the ground and the dried stalks are burned, the flame releasing the life back into the earth. The ashes are spread upon the ground.

In the evening a Bridie Doll is made from the last sheaves of corn harvested in the previous summer, which have hung by the hearth through the autumn. The Doll is made in the image of Brigit. Like the Corn Doll of Lammas She is decorated with love and good wishes for the coming year. Through the night the Bridle Doll is laid in a manger next to the fecundating flame.

On the following day, the Maiden Bridie Doll is taken with Her Mother and Grandmother Dolls from previous years to the Sacred Well to receive Brigit's Blessing. Brigit's Healing aspect is celebrated through Poetry spoken beside the Sacred Spring. Unlike the Lammas Corn Doll, who returns Her life force and seeds back into the earth each

year, the Bridie Dolls symbolise the nature of the Triple Goddess as She moves from Maiden to Mother to Grandmother.

A new Bridle Doll is made each Imbolc, who then becomes part of the larger group of Mother and Grandmother Bridle Dolls. She brings knowledge of the present and future to them and learns from them their ancient wisdom. She represents the circle of the Ancestors who we will one day all join.

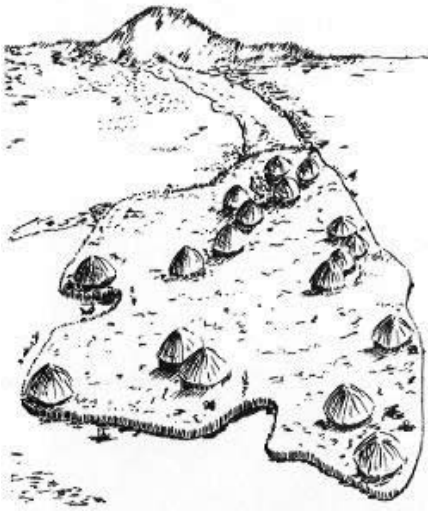
Glastonbury as Birth Goddess

Glastonbury is a small eccentric country town where many people come to live an internalised womb-like life for a time. It may be nine or eighteen months or more, before they are reborn, sometimes spewed out from the body of the Great Mother. As the Goddess in the landscape is ever-pregnant and continuously giving Birth, this process is repeated in the many different areas of life for those who live here. Visitors too are catalysed into new ways of living by the touch of Her Life-Giving Body.

The Birth Goddess is ever-pregnant and like Her, Glastonbury is a place of gestation, where new ideas, feelings and ways of being are glimpsed and anchored into consciousness and physical expression. It is here that dreams are nurtured and brought to birth, sometimes with great ease and at others with great difficulty, just like physical birth.



The ancient Triple Goddess with baskets of fruit and rising snakes of inspiration, found near a spring at Cirencester.



Artistic impression of the Lake Village near Glastonbury where our Ancestors lived during the summer months. Here the Lady of the Lake protected them. In winter they moved onto Avalon's isle and up into the caves and woods on the Mendip Hills.



The well at the Tribunal and Lake Village Museum, Glastonbury.

The Holy Waters of Glastonbury

Springs, wells and flowing water have long been associated with the Goddess as Water of Life. A woman's pregnant womb is filled with water and water passages are considered to be the way into the underground Womb of the Goddess.

Water is often a metaphor for love held too tightly in the hand – it flows away. Water, like love, is essential for fertility and creativity, without which the psychic world as well as the physical world becomes a desert.

Goddess shrines are nearly always found near to wells, springs, lakes or the sea. In Christian times churches, hermitages and anchorages, especially those dedicated to women saints, were to be found near to a sacred well or spring.

The Lady of the Lake was revered in Avalon in Arthurian times, but was worshipped here as the Goddess in much earlier days when

Glastonbury was surrounded by tidal lakes. A large lake village has been found near Glastonbury dating from 300BCE, with the earliest wooden trackway in the British Isles, dating from 3,500BCE.

Within Glastonbury Tor itself is a huge volume of water, rising at great pressure from beneath the earth. On the northeastern side of the Tor is a Water Board manhole cover where the force of water can be heard roaring under the earth. The breast of the Mother is full of the White Milk of Life.

In Glastonbury there are still many wells to be found, but sadly some of them lie forgotten and in a state of disrepair. Chalice Well is the only well which is truly honoured on the island. Here the healing properties of water and the peaceful atmosphere of the surrounding gardens are recognised.

The White Spring which flows from beneath the Tor is once more being cared for and is dressed with flowers and candles at the eight fire festivals. The White Spring flows from beneath the Tor and has a high limestone content. It is probably from this Chalk Well that the name of Chilkwell Street comes. Brigit's healing water can be collected from inside the converted Wellhouse or from a small spout outside. Likewise the red Chalice Well water can be freely collected on the opposite side of Wellhouse Lane as well as from within the gardens, when open. These are the red and white waters of Annwn. Cerridwen, the Keltic Crone Mother can be translated as White Water Goddess.

The Holy Well on the Old Wells Road has become a fishpond. Paradise Well, which is near to Gog and Magog, two ancient Druid oaks remaining from a grove which once led up to the Tor, sits in the middle of a field covered in brambles with crumbling brickwork. St Edmund's Well also crumbles in an orchard with trees growing up

around its edges. The site of St Bride's Well is marked by a beautifully carved stone beside the River Brue near to Bride's Mound.

There is a lovely well at the rear of the Tribunal in the High Street. The Tribunal is a fifteenth century building which was once the Glastonbury courthouse. It now houses the Tourist Information office and the Lake Village Museum, where there is a photograph of two nuns who lived here in the earlier part of this century – holy women living by a well.

St Joseph's Well in Glastonbury Abbey can be found beneath the Mary Chapel. It was neglected for years and has recently been covered over, so the waters cannot now be touched or drunk. This Well is the earliest structure on the Abbey site and is probably the reason why the First Church was built here. Mary's holy waters should be available to honour.

It is time for the honouring, opening up and caring for the sacred Wells and Springs. It is important for our psyches and souls as well as our bodies to honour the Goddess of the Waters. It is important that we recognise and welcome her fluid emotion and feeling once again as part of our life.



The symbol of the Vesica Piscis pierced by a sword, on the Chalice Well cover, was given by Frederick Bligh Bond, who first excavated the Abbey in the 1910s.



The Chalice Well (1980s)



The Blood Spring rises in the beautiful Chalice Well Gardens which lie between Chalice Hill and the Tor. These gardens are open daily (afternoons only in winter) for peaceful contemplation

Chalice Well

Chalice Well is to be found at the foot of Chalice Hill where the Red Waters of Birth and Menstruation flow from Her body at a constant rate of 25,000 gallons an hour and at a temperature of 52 degrees F. Full of the iron of Her blood these are healing waters, which in the 18th century brought people in their thousands to drink and bathe in search of miracle cures. For a time there was a deep and cold healing pool in which the sick could immerse themselves. It is now covered over.

Chalice Well lies in a beautiful garden cared for by the Chalice Well Trust and founded in 1958 by Wellesley Tudor Pole. The Red Spring fills a five-sided chamber and flows underground to the Lion's head, where its water can be drunk. The waters flow down through the gardens splashing into a large Vesica Piscis shaped basin, near the gate, before flowing out beneath the town, along Chilkwell Street, and to the Abbey.

The Blood Spring rises in the beautiful Chalice Well Gardens which lie between Chalice Hill and the Tor. These gardens are open daily (afternoons only in winter) for peaceful contemplation

In the lower part of the Chalice Well Gardens the red Blood waters of Birth and Menstruation flow through the Yoni of the Goddess, symbolised by the Vesica Piscis.

The Vesica Piscis is the symbol of the Chalice Well, which decorated the wrought iron well-cover given by Frederick Bligh Bond, who first excavated the Abbey. The Vesica Piscis symbol is composed of two interlocking circles, whose overlapping arcs form the Yoni or Vulva of the Goddess. This symbol represents both our birthplace into earthly existence from the Womb of the Goddess and the gateway to spiritual knowledge through Her Yoni, through sexual union with Her.

On the Well cover this Vulva is pierced by a sword, a violent metaphor for the Phallus of the God. It is time that such swords were turned into ploughshares.

"Plough my Vulva, man of my heart, plough my Vulva"

sang the Sumerian Goddess Inanna, Queen of Heaven, Earth and the Underworld.

In the lower Chalice Garden it is the Red Blood water of birth and of menstruation, which as we all know, flows through the Vulva.

Yew trees have long been associated with the Red Spring. The remains of ancient yew trees at least 2,500 years old were found around the well and today large yew trees still grow in the gardens. The yew tree is sacred to the Triple Death Goddess, Hecate. Its bark, sap and berries are red. Its place in the Celtic Tree Calendar is the

day before the Winter Solstice, the most deathly day of the year.

In women the red blood of menstruation marks another cyclic death. The monthly sloughing off of the red blood cells of the womb is death to the egg or any new life that may be hidden there. Menstruation is a time of dying, at the same time releasing the creative energy of the life that has been lost. Menstruation also indicates fertility. The menarche, the onset of menstruation in young women, indicates the beginning of the physically fertile phase of life as the menopause indicates its ending. So the blood of menstruation signals both physical and psychic fertility and death.

The Red Water which flows continuously from the Womb of Mother Earth symbolises birth, fertility and death. The Blood Spring is dedicated to the Death Goddess in three aspects, as the Maiden, Mother and Crone.

Chalice Well is the Well of the Grail, the Chalice and the Cauldron, the three kinds of Feminine Knowing – the Grail of the Maiden, the Chalice of the Mother and the Cauldron of the Crone. It is the perfect place to let things die, to give them away to the water and to the earth, to experience Her fertile Nature in the beautiful elemental gardens and to be reborn.

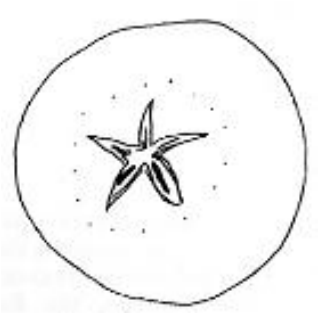
The Isle of Apples

Avalon means the Isle of Apples, a fruit sacred to the Dark Goddess. Celtic Kings received the Goddess's magical apples of immortality and went away to live with Her in the Hollow Hills. An apple was given to the Kings of Britain to signify their sacred marriage to the Goddess of the land. The apple which Eve gave to Adam was the maligned Goddess's sacred fruit of eternal life.

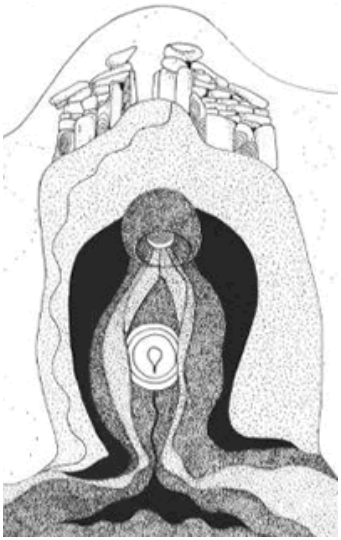
Cutting an apple across reveals the magical pentacle of the core, the Virgin Kore, Morgana, the underworld Goddess hidden within Demeter, the Earth Mother. This five-pointed star in a circle was the Egyptian hieroglyph for the underworld womb of transformation. Avalon is such a place of transformation.

Apple games are played on Hallowe'en at the end of October, during the Samhain Festival, which is sacred to the Crone Goddess. In patriarchal folklore apples were dangerous fruit, the Old Woman's apple was often poisonous.

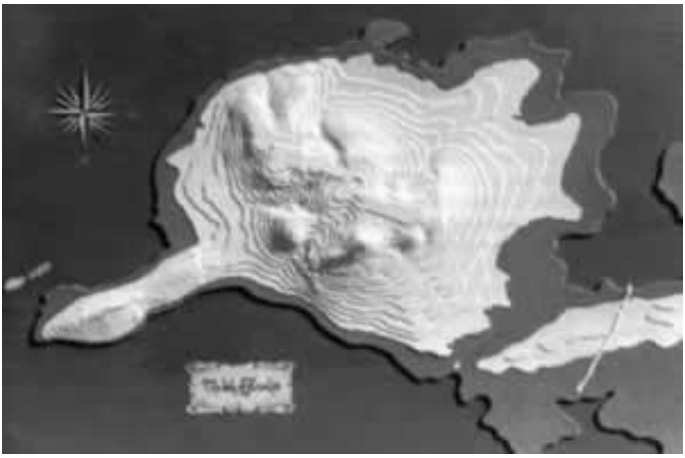
Today many small apple orchards are still to be found covering the lower slopes of the Isle of Avalon.



Cutting an apple across reveals the fivefold pips which form a pentacle, the symbol of Kore, the Dark Virgin Goddess. Apples were thereby thought to be dangerous fruit.



The Crone Goddess



This model of the contours of the Isle of Avalon by Simant Bostock reveals the outline of an old Crone, riding on the back of a Swan. Photo by Simant.

The Crone Goddess

The Goddess appears in many forms in Avalon. From the flat Summerland meadows She is the Mother giving birth to her daughter the Maiden. But looking down from above at the contours of the island, She is the ancient Crone Goddess riding on the back of a Swan, bringing with Her death and regeneration into the future.

In the landscape of the Crone, the Tor with its ancient terracing is Her ever-pregnant womb. Chalice Hill is Her soft nourishing breast. The Red waters of Chalice Well are the constant bloodflow from Her womb. The White Spring is Her fertile essence. Her head with its crown and pointed nose is Windmill Hill where many people live and there is a good view in all directions. Her crooked body is formed by the undulations of Stonedown.

The Crone is the Death aspect of the Goddess, full of the wisdom of age and the nearness of death. Goddess of the Waning and Dark Moon She is the Hag, experienced by women as heightened psychic sensitivity during menstruation and after the menopause. Sometimes beautiful, often ugly, She is frightening to many. She rules over Annwn the Underworld. She is known by various names, such as Morgana, the Grandmother Goddess Ana, the Invincible Queen Death. She is the Triple Goddess Hecate and the black screaming hag Cerridwen. She is the Morrigu, the Death Goddess appearing in battle in the form of a raven.

In the legends of Glastonbury She is Morgan le Fey or Morgan the Fate, sister to King Arthur and Queen of the Dead. She was one of three Faerie Queens, who ferried the mortally wounded King Arthur in their Moonboat, to the enchanted Isle of the Dead. Sometimes She is a Ninefold Goddess. Nine Sisters called Morgen who rule the Western Isles of the Dead.

Morgana as Mother Death cast the destroying curse on all mortals, though Her favoured lovers were promised immortality in Her paradise. Morgan sat at the head of the table of the Green Knight presiding over the death and resurrection of the year Gods as they beheaded each other in due season. Gawain's shield bore the pentacle of Morgan, the underworld Kore on a blood-red background.

As Hecate She is the darkness before the New Moon appears. She is the Moon Goddess of the Witches and Queen of all Hags. Statues of the Triple Goddess have three heads of a dog, a serpent and a horse. She has six arms carrying Her sacred symbols – three Torches to illuminate the Way in the Underworld, Her Athame of Ritual, Her Key to the secret passageways, and the Scourge with

which She whips souls into Her Underworld realm. When souls arrive at the triple cross-roads of the Underworld it is Hecate who decides which realm they are fit for – the Asphodel Meadows of the Grey Annwn, the dark waters of the Black Annwn or the Apple orchards of the Middle Light. As an archetype She is vital to the understanding of our unconscious natures.

The Crone is also Mary Magdalena in Her role as the Death Goddess. It is She who anoints the Chosen One with oil, signifying the Sacrifice to be made. In paintings and sculptures the Magdalena often appears with a skull at Her feet. For many She is the main incarnation of the Black Goddess, the Sophia or wisdom of the Gnostics.



Morgana, Queen of Faerie, ferries the dying in Her Moonboat across the water to the Isle of the Dead. Famed and frightening She rules the Isle of Avalon.



The sun shines over the soft breast of the Crone Goddess of Glastonbury. A place to lie upon and dream beside Her Womb Tor, a place of gestation from which souls are reborn. Photo by Simant Bostock.



Hecate is the Triple Death Goddess, who lives on an island guarded by Willow trees. In the ancient calendar Her day is the one before the Winter Solstice. She holds the keys to safe passage through the Underworld.

Festival of the Death Goddess

Samhain is the autumn Feast of the Dead coming at the midway point between the Autumn Equinox and the Winter Solstice. It is celebrated on Oct 31st, Nov 1st and 2nd. Echoes of this ancient festival come down to us in Hallowe'en and Bonfire Night. Samhain is the Celtic New Year when the shortening days and dying vegetation mark the end of the old year and the beginning of the new and a time of dormancy and hidden changes.

On Hallowe'en children dress as witches, crones, warlocks and demons. Pumpkins, shaped like cauldrons are hollowed out and given Her face to ward off evil spirits. We bob beneath the water for Her magical apples of immortality. This is the night when the veil

separating the visible and invisible worlds becomes thinner and the whole supernatural force is attracted to this seam between two years. It is now that we must face our demons and our fears. It is a time when anything can happen.

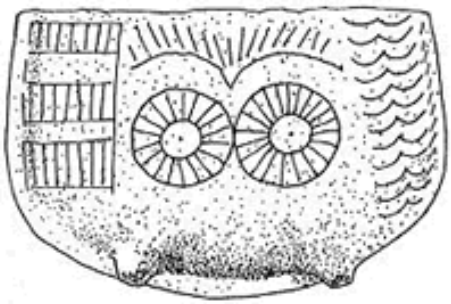
The ancient feast of the Death Goddess still includes the ritual burning of the annual Year King sacrifice, now known as Guy Fawkes, but continuing an ancient tradition. We throw apple halves marked with the Dark Goddess's magical pentacle, to our loved ones across the Bonfire – Her good fire. It is in our relationships that the Dark Goddess often shows Her power confronting us with our hidden darkness.

As Cerridwen, the Death Goddess is the fearsome corpse-eating Sow, which is the waning Moon. It was into Her Cauldron of Regeneration that the Celts believed all souls must pass before re birth. This Cauldron was also a Cauldron of Inspiration. One of Her sons, Gwion received his inspiration through drinking three drops of the mead of wisdom, brewed in Her Cauldron. He became the poet Taliesin.

The Cauldron of the Crone – a Cauldron of Death. Regeneration and Inspiration

Glastonbury is the Cauldron of the Crone, a great melting pot of regeneration and inspiration for the people who come here.

This is the time of year when the clouds roll in across the flat Summerland and the mists thicken, shrouding the magical island and its secrets, concealing the landscape. Winter is approaching with its short cold days, bare landscape and darkness.



Cauldron



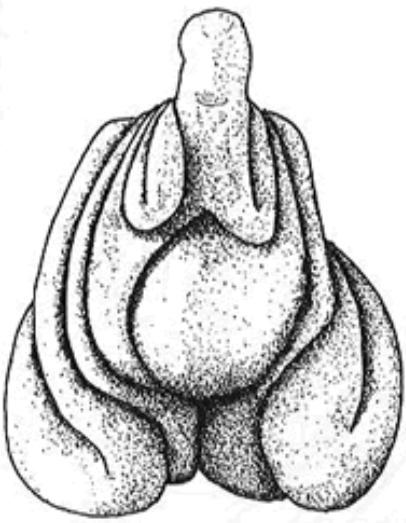
In Glastonbury the old Crone Goddess rides upon the back of the Swan, who is Brigit. They fly to the Southwest where the Kachinas who are the Keepers of the Sacred Dream, live.

The Crone and the Swan

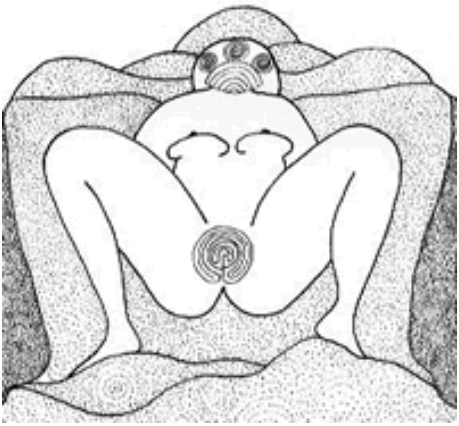
In the landscape of Glastonbury the Crone Goddess rides on the back of a Swan flying to the South West. Wearyall Hill is the Swan's outstretched neck and head, while the town and the lower slopes of the island form Her Body. The South West is the direction of the Dream, where the Kachinas, who are the Keepers of the Sacred Dream, live. To fly in this direction is to touch the Future.

The Swan is the ancient Bird and Snake Goddess in one form, with Her bird's body and Her snake-like neck. Her presence is felt everywhere – on earth, in the skies and beyond the clouds, beyond the upper waters where the primordial Waters of Life lie. She rules over the Life-giving force of water. Swans have always lived in the rivers and rhynes of the Summerland marshes. For human beings they symbolise a life-long devotion that continues through the years.

Brigit is known as the White Swan. She shows by example the entrance into the Future. By following the Swan, we descend to the Dark Goddess whom She carries on her Back, to be reborn with inspiration and renewed creativity. As the Crone governs Samhain and the White Swan governs Imbolc, we meet this powerful combination of Goddesses during the winter months in Avalon.



The Tor Goddess – a sculpture by Phillipa Bowers, a well-known local sculptor, who has created many beautiful images of the Goddess.



Tor Goddess



Rhiannon of the Birds, the White Mare from the Sea is the Virgin Goddess of sexual love. She is Virgin, meaning She is Complete within Herself. She is not chaste but a fully sexual being

The Tor Goddess

From a distance the most noticeable feature on the Isle of Avalon is the Tor as She rises out of the flat Summerlands. She sits like a Great Goddess, a huge bounteous female figure in the middle of a landscape bowl or Cauldron. To see Her is to love Her. To the north the Mendip Hills form the rim of the Cauldron while smaller hills lie to the south and east. Stretching out towards the west the land is below sea level.

Her Body is bounteous, fleshy, full of dips and folds. Her large belly, hips and thighs emphasise Her full sexual nature. She is the fecund Goddess of Love, Rhiannon, Aphrodite, Venus, the Morning and the Evening Star. She is Kundalini, rising Serpent Goddess of sexual energy and wisdom. She calls all to union, at-onement with Her. She

is Goddess of the waxing Moon. Experienced by women during ovulation, She is full of desire, wisdom and creative potential.

There are many legends surrounding the Tor. It is one of the Hollow Hills where the Faerie Folk now live with their Queen, forced into exile when human beings forgot to acknowledge them. It was around such a Hollow hill at Beltane, that Pwyll, King of the Summerland adoringly followed the Goddess Rhiannon, as She rode on Her white horse. No matter how fast Pwyll rode, Rhiannon always remained the same distance away from him, until he said the right words – "Rhiannon, stop for me". Rhiannon was then happy to stop for him. Their love for each other became legendary.

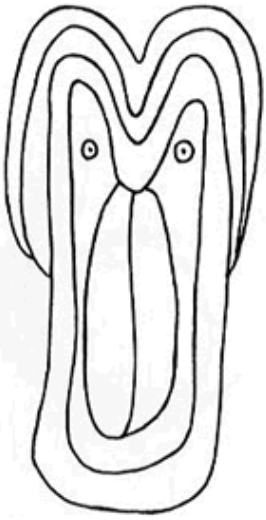
Rhiannon of the Birds is the Virgin (meaning complete within Herself) Goddess of sexual love, tied to no man, free to love whom She chooses.

Veiled in white She rides a white horse. She is the original powerful sexual image for all brides, now degraded in the patriarchy to symbolising a non-sexual virgin bride who loses her right to sexual freedom when she marries. She belongs to her husband. Rhiannon is also the archetype for Lady Godiva, the shameless woman who rides naked beneath a veil upon a white horse.

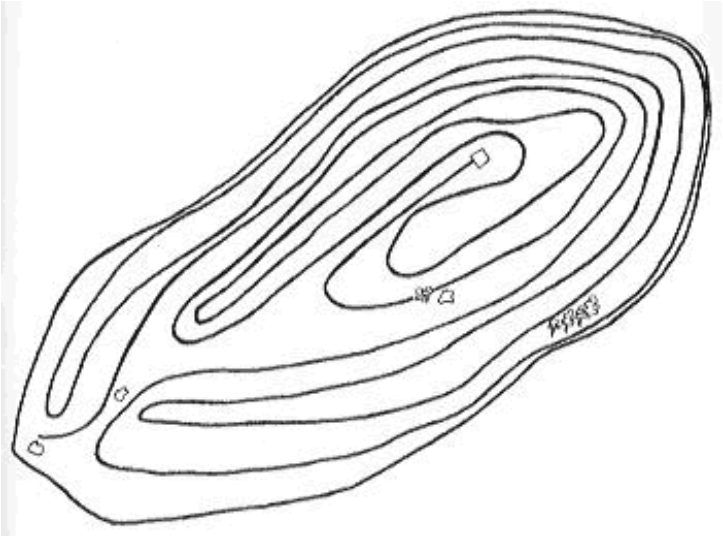
"Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross
To see a fine Lady ride on a white horse
With birds as Her halo
and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever She goes"

Somewhere upon the slopes of the Tor lies the entrance to the Underworld of Annwn and the Cauldron of the Dark Goddess. It may be near Her heart or through Her Yoni. There are tales of

subterranean tunnels and caves where strange apparitions lurk, of people who went into the Tor through the hidden entrances, only to return years later old and white-haired or mad. On the north side of the Tor is a manhole cover, where the sound of continuously roaring water can be heard. Beneath this cover is a room belonging to the Water Authority, full of dials and wheels which control the water flow in the reservoir beneath the Tor. Seeing this room makes the idea of underground tunnels seem real.



The Goddess as Vulva. A large engraving of the sexual Goddess found in the dolmen of Luffang-en-Crach at Carnac in France



The Tor Maze. The pattern of a great three-dimensional maze is marked by terraces on the slopes of the Tor. This maze is based on the Kretan Labrynth or Moon-maze of the Goddess.



Snake Goddess by Phillipa Bower

It is not only the underground world of the Tor which holds a mystery. Upon the surface of the Tor there are seven levels of terracing, some easy to see and some lost in part by erosion. These are the present remains of a great three-dimensional maze based upon the same pattern as the ancient Kretan Labrynth of the Goddess. This pattern appears on coins from Krete, one of the major civilisations of the Goddess in the ancient world, on rocks at Tintagel and is found among the Hopi Indians as a symbol for Mother Earth.

The maze is a single pathway which winds back and forth seven times around the steep slopes of the Tor to the centre. The path must be retraced on the way out. There is no choice to be made in the pattern of this maze only to follow, the path and to continue when the going gets tough.

The entrance to the labrynth lies at the western end of the Tor near the bottom of Wellhouse Lane, and is marked by large fallen standing stones. The first turning of the maze is on the third level counting up from the bottom of the Tor and marked by a stone. The labrynth follows a pattern of 3 2 1 4 7 6 5, ending on the fifth outer circuit. It is here that psychically or in the past physically the journeyer in the maze, enters Her Body, near to Her heart. This maze pattern lures the lover of the Goddess to their psychic death within Her depths.

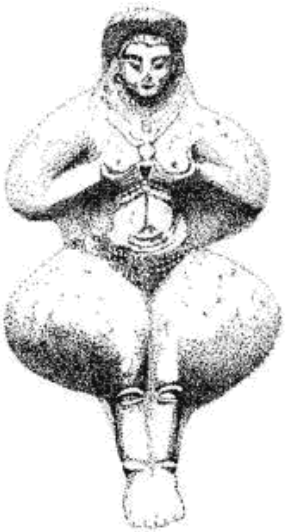
On Krete the pattern of this maze was received by the priestess in ritual communion with Ariadne as the Snake Goddess, source of inspiration and creative sexual energy. The Labrynth was laid out as a ritual dance floor and was sacred to the Moon Goddess in Her three aspects. The sacred Bull horns shaped like the Moon and symbol of the Taurean epoch were to be found at the centre. The ancient Crane dance which uses combinations of nine steps,

representing the Ninefold Goddess, was danced into and out of this maze.

The labrynth took on a much more sinister meaning when the Minotaur the dangerous god/man/animal was imprisoned at the centre of a three dimensional Labrynth. The whole story symbolises the takeover of the major peaceful Goddess civilisation by the invading brutalising forces of patriarchy.

Like all mazes the journey to the centre is a journey into the Self to face the divine Goddess and/or the dangerous Minotaur. The seven levels can be viewed as the seven chakras with their associated qualities. They can also be seen as different physical, emotional, mental, psychological and spiritual states which alter as we change direction within the maze and as we climb up and down the slopes of Her Body. The Labrynth represents the fixed pattern of our destiny in Herworld. We cannot change its direction only how we live it.

The course of the Tor Labrynth is described in Geoffrey Ashe's booklet, The Glastonbury Tor Maze. It takes approximately two and a half hours to walk into the centre of the maze and an hour and a half to walk out. Wear supportive shoes as the walking is all at an angle. It is a ritual maze and needs to be walked with awareness and reverence. It is a sacred rite of passage.



Ishtar was the Great Whore of Babylon, the Mother of Harlots. Men communed with Her through the sexual rites of Her harlot-priestesses. Like the Sumerian Goddess Inanna, She too descended to the Underworld to rescue Her son-lover Tammuz. Her Underworld counterpart is Ereshkigal, the Death Goddess.



Sheela-na-gig figures are found in many parts of Ireland and in a few churches in England, such as St Mary and St David's at Kilpeck, Herefordshire. The Goddess displays Her Yoni, the place of power. They resemble statues of Kali in Hindu temples where visitors lick a finger and touch the Yoni 'for luck'.

Festival of the Virgin Goddess

BELTANE

Beltane is the fourth Fire Festival which lies at the midway point between the Spring Equinox and the Summer Solstice. It is celebrated on April 30th, May 1st and 2nd. In Britain it marks the fullness of Springtime and the season of sexual love for plants, animals and humans.

Beltane is a time of celebration of the May Queen, the Virgin Goddess of sexual love, Maia. She is Virgin meaning unmarried and sexual. Holy Virgin was a title given to the harlot-priestesses of

Ishtar, Asherah and Aphrodite, who dispensed the Mother's Grace through sexual worship. They were healers, prophets, dancers, Brides of God. The May Queen is Rhiannon, Blodeuwedd or Olwen, the Flower Goddess. Under Christianity the Virgin Goddess was split into two – the non-sexual Virgin Mary Mother of God and Mary Magdalene the Whore. It was a case of divide and rule.

The Whore, who has been much maligned, is also known as the Black Goddess and the Black Virgin. She is the Sophia of the Gnostics, the Shekina of the Jews. She is the hidden, sexual, despised because She is too powerful, aspect of the Mary Goddess. It was the Magdalena who was the Lover and Companion to Jesus. The Whore is the Other face of the Crone Goddess, Her polar opposite in the yearly cycle. She is the Goddess who leads us through sexual passion to spiritual transformation. She shows the way to union with the Goddess through sexual union between women and men.

By tradition in Avalon women meet in the daylight beside the Blood Spring of Chalice Well to welcome the Goddess of Springtime. on April 30th. May Eve is Walpurgisnacht, the night when the witches fly around the Hollow Hills. It is a splendid time to walk into the centre of Her Maze upon the Tor, walking out of the Maze either with the dawn on Mayday or later at the end of Beltane. It is the night when a fire burns on the Tor and lovers jump over the fire together, pledging their faithful love for a year and a day to be renewed or abandoned on the next Beltane. It is the time for the Sacred Marriage, a union in the Sight of the Goddess.

For a few years, each Beltane, a branch of the Druid order laid out a ribbon Maze on the slopes of the Tor. The new May Queen danced Her way into the centre of the Maze, changing places with the May Queen of the old year, who danced out of the maze. The May Queen

brings with Her flowering sprigs of hawthorn. Hawthorn blossoms were reputed to smell of women's sexual emanations and were used in the orgiastic cult of the Goddess Cardea.

The Holy Thorn of Glastonbury which flowers in May and at Christmas, when a sprig is sent to the Queen, was reputedly brought to Glastonbury by Joseph of Arimethea. It is probably another patriarchal story built upon an earlier celebration of the union between the sacred King and the Goddess of the land. The royal sprig is a reminder in the depths of winter of the promises made in the Sacred Marriage between King and Goddess and of the fertile springtime sexuality of the Goddess.

Beltane was the time when the Sacred Marriage took place between the Goddess and Her Chosen Consort, who would rule with Her for a day or a week or a year. In memory of this, small oat cakes are given out to the people. One is marked beneath with a cross or a coin is hidden inside. The person who bites into this cake is the Chosen One, who will carry the divine energy for the coming time. In times past this person would be sacrificed at the end of their royal reign. Nowadays to be Chosen signifies a special time of inspiration and duty to the Goddess.

On Mayday, there is dancing round the Maypole, symbol of the fertilising Lingam plunged into the Body of Mother Earth. It is a day when many lovers walk upon the Tor.



The Holy Thorn of Glastonbury on Wearyall Hill which blooms at the Winter Solstice and in May. The thorn blossom is sacred to the orgiastic Goddess Cardea. Its flowers are a reminder in the darkest days of winter of the sexual promise of the May Queen. Photo Simant Bostock.



The serpent of creative energy issues forth from the Yoni of the Goddess. A 19th century sculpture from Southern India.

Festivals of the Moon Goddess

The Moon Goddess is usually seen as a Triple Goddess, whose qualities correspond to the phases of the moon as we see Her in the sky. She is Artemis, the Virgin Huntress, Goddess of the New Moon. She is Anu, Isis, Cybele, Mother Goddess of the Full Moon. And She is Hecate or Hel, Crone Goddess of the Waning or Dark Moon.

The Moon Goddess could more accurately be described as a fivefold Goddess. She is Goddess of the New Moon, the Waxing Moon, the Full Moon, the Waning Moon and the Dark or Hidden Moon. In each lunar cycle of 28-29 days She presents Her five faces to the earth. The Festivals of the Moon Goddess take place at each of the thirteen New and Full Moons in every year.

The cycle of the Moon Goddess is potent because She symbolises the journey of all forms of Life, from birth to fruition and death, and then regeneration. Her lunar cycle forms the basis of all rites of passage and initiatory experiences. The Moon Goddess is a powerful teacher who has long been part of the Avalonian experience. She is easily visible from all parts of the Island.

She is particularly connected to women through the inter- weaving of the Moon and menstruation cycles. She is connected to men through the unconscious experiences of their ovulating and menstruating anima or soul.

The New Moon Festivals of the year are usually celebrated at the Sacred Springs of the Goddess. There are ceremonies in which Holy Water is drunk and the Goddess's blessing is received. At New Moon the moon and sun are to be found in the same Zodiacal sign in the

heavens. The energy of the New Moon is qualified by sign of the Zodiac into which falls. The New Moon festival is a three day experience with one day of preparation, one day of communion and one day of expression.

The Festivals of the Full Moon are often celebrated around a fire, with feasting, dancing and singing. There is communion with the Full Moon Goddess and transmission of Her energy through the group into the world. Full Moon is also Full Sun and the sun and moon are to be found in opposite signs of the Zodiac. The energy of the Full Moon is qualified by both its own sign and that through which the sun is passing.

In a more meditative phase, Full Moon festivals are five day events with two days leading up to the day of Full Moon for preparation, cleansing of the temple, meditation and prayer; the day of the Full Moon as a day of communion with Her; and the two following days for creative expression and manifestation of the energy received.



Black Kali is the Crone Moon Goddess, an eater of the dead. She sits impaled upon Shiva in his corpse aspect. Frightening and fearsome She haunts the Dreamworld, but holds the key to transformation. Bengal 18th Century.



The Amazons worshipped Artemis as the Virgin Goddess of the New Moon, She was also Goddess of the Wild Animals and of the Hunt. To the Romans She was Diana and was worshipped at Ephesus in the form of Many-breasted Artemis, a figure covered in breasts.

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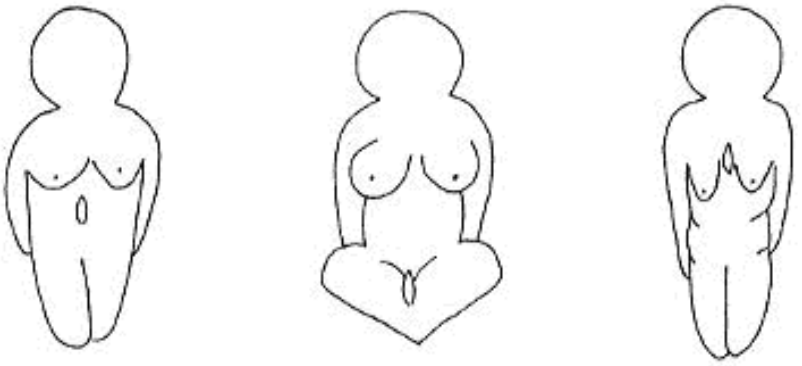
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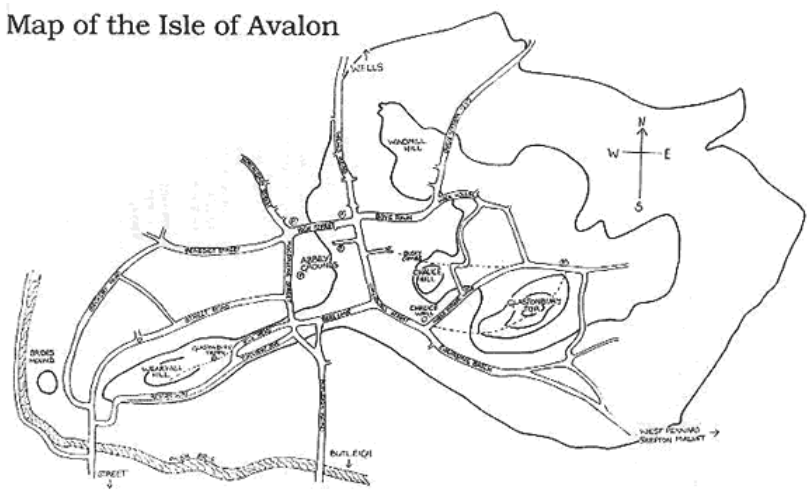
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I would like to acknowledge my gratitude for all that Glastonbury has brought to me so far in my life. My love and thanks to my children, Iona and Torquil, to my lovely partner Mike Jones, to my Hag sisters, Diana Griffiths and Pauline Watson, and to all those wonderful people who have been a part of Ariadne Productions, without whom life would have been dull.

I am aware in writing this book that the emphasis is almost completely upon the Goddess and upon women. This is not to deny the inherent equality between the Goddess and the God, between women and men, but to redress an imbalance of perspective several thousand years old.


Map of the Isle of Avalon
WELLS
WINDMILL HILL
N
W
E
S
ABBEY GROUNDS
CHALICE HILL
GLASTONBURY TOR
BRIDGE HOUSE
BUTLEIGH
STREET