

Last year I gave a paper at the ABS conference in Oxford (Saturday 22nd June 2019) on the subject of the pilgrimage around Glastonbury used by Alice Buckton, which formed part of her spiritual practice that she shared with likeminded friends and guests at her establishment at the foot of Glastonbury Tor. This is an updated version of the paper which includes a considerable amount of new material.

- Lil Osborn, 2020

From the Silence of Time, Time's Silence borrow

In the heart of To-day is the word of Tomorrow

The Builders of Joy are the Children of Sorrow

Fiona Mcleoad

Alice Buckton (1867 - 1944)

I have written extensively about Alice Mary Buckton (Osborn, 2014) (Osborn, Alice Buckton - Baha'i Mystic, 2014), this paper focuses specifically on one specific aspect of her spiritual practice, that of a pilgrimage around Glastonbury and examining this activity in an attempt to unravel her beliefs in particular in relation to the Baha'i Faith. Buckton came to live in Glastonbury in 1913, she had first visited the town in 1907 at the behest of Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884 - 1968), earlier that year she had been present at a meeting in Dean's Yard hosted by Basil Wilberforce (1841 - 1914) where Pole first made public the details of his finding of a bowl in a well in Glastonbury and the immense spiritual significance he attributed to it (Bentham, 1993).

In 1913 the large building recently vacated by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart in Glastonbury came up for sale, and Alice Buckton managed "by selling all she owned", to purchase it. Her intention was to set up a community of women, based on handcrafts, education, and spirituality, not dissimilar in some ways to a medieval nunnery. She renamed the building 'Chalice Well Training College for Women and Pilgrims Hostel'. It allowed for forty-nine paying guests and had an extensive library. The project was ambitious and would have required massive capital investment, very precise human resources input, extensive knowledge of education and a lot of luck. Buckton did have a strong background in education, (Mathivet, 2006) she and her lifelong partner, Annet Schepel (- 1931) had run the Sesame Child Garden and House for Home Life Training in London since 1898, prior to that Schepel had been principal of the Pestalozzi_Froebel Haus in Berlin. The college concept, however, did not flourish, and the emphasis rapidly changed towards the work of the hostel: Chalice Well Hostel: simply fitted for pilgrims and travellers, which was expanded to include males.

Board and lodging were 25-35 shillings a week for women and 27-37 shillings a week for men.
For 4 shillings a day there could be a bed, breakfast, supper and use of bathroom, refectory, parlour, and garden.

The hostel was never a great financial success, but it did host some of the most notable and influential occultists of the period. Before she purchased her own home in the town, Dion Fortune "often used to stay at the guesthouse and art and craft centre run by Alice Buckton at Chalice Well". (Knight, 2000, p. 62). Buckton was the godmother of Flinders Petrie's daughter Ann (Drower, 1995, p. 401) and in 1915

his protégé, Margaret Murray was ordered by her doctor to rest in a place where she knew nobody, she chose Glastonbury (Murray, 1963, p. 104) and Buckton's hostel.

One cannot stay in Glastonbury without becoming interested in Joseph of Arimathea and the Holy Grail. As soon as I got back to London, I did a careful piece of research, which resulted in a paper on Egyptian Elements in the Grail Romance. (Murray, 1963, p. 104)

Murray goes on to explain that most of her research for *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* was done during the war, she claims to have forgotten who it was who first piqued her interest in witches but as she had written nothing on the subject before the war, it is very possible that conversations which took place in Glastonbury were the spark which caused her to turn her attention to witches after she had explored the Grail legends in the context of Ancient Egypt. Murray's work was important in forming a foundation for Gerald Gardner's book, *Witchcraft Today*, for which she wrote the preface. Gardner's book would become the central text in the emergence of Wicca and ultimately in the revival or reconstruction of pre-Christian beliefs.

One guest who wrote about his stay in the hostel was John de Carrick Cheape (1894 - 1916), who described his visit in a book published in 1924 by John Watkins of London called 'A Pilgrim Soldier' there were letters, poems and essays he had written. The book had an introduction by Wellesley Tudor Pole and featured a poem written for Alice at Chalice Well on Midsummer, June 1914:

At Chalice Well

To Chalice Well a pilgrim came
To pray and praise his God by name,
Disquiet to destroy.
His prayer to God was all this thought,
His praise was in the work he wrought,
And, leaving, took up joy.

Writing to Alice Buckton in the year he died, 1916, he said, 'I have a clear and burning light before my face, which is written within my soul. O try to make my every thought a prayer. And Glastonbury, Chalice Well, and you yourself, Miss Buckton, are never out of my thoughts.' He called Chalice Well 'the Blood Well' and felt strongly he had work to do there. More information about him is found on his regimental website:

John de Carrick Cheape was born in Switzerland in January 1894 and lived with his mother Antoinette at Great Streele Farm, Framfield. From 1909-1913 he was at Clifton College and at war's outbreak was studying at Cambridge University.

John enlisted immediately, joining the 8th Royal Sussex as a Private in September 1914. Having served in the Officer Training Corps at Clifton and Cambridge, he was soon promoted to Corporal and then recommended for a Commission. 2nd Lieutenant Cheape stayed with 8th Royal Sussex, who were tasked as Pioneers in 18th (Eastern) Division and deployed to the Albert area of France with them in July 1915.

He was soon promoted to Lieutenant. Hard pioneering work in winter 1915-16 afflicted Lt Cheape, and he was hospitalised in Rouen and in the UK between Feb-June 1916. He returned to the Western Front in July, drafted to D Company, 13th Royal Sussex, who had been greatly

depleted at the Battle of Boar's Head. With his pioneer experience he soon became Field Works Officer. On 3rd September 1916, 13th Royal Sussex supported their sister battalion, 11th Royal Sussex's attack on Beaucourt Ridge as part of the Battle of the Somme. Casualties were heavy and John took over and led A Company when their officer fell.ⁱ

Sadly, Cheape did not fulfil his desire to work at the Chalice Well, he died in July 1916 in Beaumont-Hamel: -

22-year-old Lt John 'Jack' de Carrich Cheape of Great Streele, Framfield, was with the 13th Bn and had taken over A Coy after all their officers had become casualties. He organised the collection of wounded and was himself helping carry away a man on a stretcher when he became the victim of a sniper; at 6'1" he was taller than most around him and a prime target.ⁱⁱ

There does not seem to have been a "typical" guest, but it seems fair to assume that most would have been people interested in some sort of spiritual experience and that Buckton would have introduced them to her pilgrimage route.

Glastonbury

Glastonbury today is a small market town in the county of Somerset, it is known world over for a music festival that bears its name but takes place elsewhere, presumably the Shepton Mallet Festival does not have the same ring to it. Superficially it is apparently remarkable only for a rather niche form of tourism which is visible in the large number of shops selling crystals, incense and New Age nick-nacks, alongside vegan cafes and purveyors of witchcraft supplies which proliferate in the High Street. The skyline is dominated by a triangular hill or tor, surmounted by a church tower, without a church, that seems alien to the otherwise flat landscape of the Somerset Levels. The only other notable feature is the ruin of an enormous ecclesiastical structure that forms the centre of the town.

When Alice Buckton moved to Glastonbury in 1913 it was arguably rather more bustling than it is in the present day. There were many facilities which no longer exist, there was a police station, police courts and police housing, the Somerset Yeomanry had a TA drill hall, although agriculture and related industries would have dominated the area, there was well paid employment based on the footwear industry, with Moreland's Slippers and Clarks Shoes both having large factories in Glastonbury and Street respectively. There was a railway station, linking the town to the national network.

History

The history of Glastonbury is well documented and outside the scope of this paper, briefly to outline a few undisputed key events relevant to the subject in hand – the area has been inhabited since Neolithic times, there is archaeological evidence of a lake village dating from the Iron Age. There does seem to have been some very early Christian activity in the area.

It has been claimed that Glastonbury Abbey developed from an 'Old Church'. A fire destroyed the Old Church in 1184 but its description appears in earlier sources. Around 1130, William of Malmesbury described Glastonbury's ancient 'brushwood' church. He suggested that missionaries founded it in 166. There was a stone church on the site c700. A single large church had developed by c1000 from the series of separate churches that were aligned on the same axis The Old Church remained a separate and very sacred space. The abbey thrived under Abbot Dunstan between AD 940-56. Under his rule,

Glastonbury grew in wealth and influence and became a centre of learning. In 1086, when the Domesday Book was commissioned to provide records and a census of life in England, Glastonbury Abbey was the richest monastery in the country. But it was consumed by fire in 1184 when many of the ancient treasures were destroyed.

In 1184 the tomb of King Arthur was discovered in the Abbey, as it is generally accepted that King Arthur was a myth the discovery of his tomb is generally assumed to have been a monkish scam to drum up the pilgrim trade in the wake of losses from the disastrous fire. It was certainly effective; the Abbey grew in wealth and importance. In The tomb of Arthur and Guinevere was opened in 1278 during a visit by Edward I and Queen Eleanor. Edward had a strong interest in Arthurian legends and objects such as the 'Winchester Round Table', which he believed had belonged to Arthur. Edward built his own round table at Windsor and identified closely with the Celtic king, claiming to have "recovered Arthur's crown" with his defeat of the Welsh Prince Llewellyn. In December 1331, King Edward III and Queen Philippa visited Glastonbury Abbey. Abbot Adam of Sodbury paid the huge sum of £800 entertaining them. The ever-growing wealth of the Abbey caused another king to take a less benign interest, Henry VIII's Dissolution of Monasteries caused the destruction of the Abbey, Richard Whiting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, was executed on top of the Tor with two of his monks on 15 November 1539. With the loss of the Abbey, Glastonbury declined in importance, during the eighteenth century the town's only claim to fame was that it was the centre of the wool trade in the west of England. In 1750 a man named Matthew Chancellor, who suffered from asthma, had a dream in which an angel told him to drink the water from the spring in Glastonbury on 7 Sundays in a row. He claimed he was miraculously healed. As a result, visitors flooded into Glastonbury to drink the spring water. However, the flood of visitors did not last long, although a pump room was built and assembly rooms where balls and activities like card games were held. In 1753 there was an outbreak of smallpox, which effectively ended the flood of visitors. Glastonbury returned to its torpor, never able to rival the tourism potential of nearby Bath and Wells. Throughout the early twentieth century the interest in the antiquities and mysticism of the town grew and towards the end of the century the music festival in nearby Pilton and the arrival of the "alternative" lifestyle brought a new form of tourism, or perhaps a continuation of an ancient one, which had begun with ancient churches, graves of non-existent kings and healing wells.

Mythology

The myths and legends which surround the town and the Tor are extensive, they have been constantly retold and reshaped, Marion Bowman described it thus:

Depending on whom you talk to, or what you read, Glastonbury is considered to be: the Isle of Avalon; the site of a great Druidic centre of learning; a significant prehistoric centre of Goddess worship; the 'cradle of English Christianity' visited by Joseph of Arimathea, and perhaps even Christ himself; the 'New Jerusalem'; a communication point for alien contact; the epicentre of the New Age in England; and the 'heart chakra' of planet earth. **(Bowman 2000: 83)**

There are literally thousands of books and stories of varying historical legitimacy and literary merit, describing the roles of such diverse characters as Gynn ap Nudd, King Arthur, assorted goddesses and Christian saints in the history of the town. The sheer volume and eclecticism of these tales put them beyond the scope of this paper, except where they are represented in Buckton's work.

Buckton's History of Glastonbury

Alice Buckton's understanding of the history of Glastonbury and its ongoing importance is clearly demonstrated in her 1922 film, *Glastonbury Past and Present*. The fact that she was making films in 1922 is a testament to her foresight and understanding of the technology and media which would shape the future. She also was one of the first writers to write material specifically for the radio. That said her Glastonbury pageant was perhaps inspired by the Butleigh Revel, an even more extravagant production, staged in 1906. The Butleigh Revel was performed by the three hundred inhabitants of the village of Butleigh, a village four miles from Glastonbury, to an audience of three thousand. There is a detailed website dedicated to researching the Revel, it describes the content of the performance which was strikingly like the Glastonbury pageant some fifteen years later. Buckton's film is notable for the number of Glastonbury residents who took part, these include the Vicar of St. John's, the Rev. L S Lewis and the Ven. Archdeacon Farrar who plays Joseph of Arimathea, King Edward III and Queen Phillipa are played by Mr & Mrs Hugh Clark of Clarks Shoes, Morelands Slippers are represented by Stephen Moreland who plays the son of a noble Danish mother, the number of hunter type horses ridden by the knights and their ladies suggest the support of at least one of the local hunts and the appearance of a gun carriage and soldiers can only mean that some local military unit was involved. The film is made up of five episodes, the first episode concerns the Ancient British inhabitants of the area (64CE is the date given in the film) and it deals with the tensions between the Mendip and Quantock tribes which is resolved by the main protagonist, The Mother of the Tribe, played Miss Madge Flynn, the tribes are unified just in time for Joseph of Arimathea to arrive and baptise them all. The second episode is similar in that it deals with conflict between two rather larger tribes, the Saxons and the Danes, but the peace of the Treaty of Wedmore (878) resolves the tensions and the Viking leader Guthrum is baptised and accepts King Alfred as his adoptive father. The next episode concerns the visit of King Edward III (1312–1377), his wife Philippa of Hainault and, according to the film, two of his sons, John of Gaunt (1340–1399) and Edward of Woodstock (1330 – 1376), The Black Prince, who were lodging in Northload Street. In the excitement of the royal visit, a knight injured a Jewish child by riding over him on his horse. This provokes the comment that the victim was nothing but, "a Jew's brat" and the retort, from the Black Prince, "Know your history. Was not Joseph of Arimathea a Jew?" The Prince insures the injured child is taken off to be healed by nuns and receives a parchment with the three ostrich feathers and the motto, *ich dien* (I serve). The whole royal party then goes off to look at the Abbey and in particular the tomb of Arthur. Whilst it is true that the entire court visited the town, which would make it very possible the princes were present, I am yet to find any account of their activities, yet alone championing members of the local ethnic minority community. Quiet what this episode is about is unclear, it seems to suggest that the arms and motto are given as a reward for his commitment to multi culturalism, which is clearly not true. The three feathers were depicted on his "shield of peace", rather than the royal arms of England, with a label of three points argent, which he carried into battle, the feathers were part of the arms of his mother's House. It is possible there was some written or oral information which accompanied showings of the film, or perhaps audiences more familiar with the medium of the silent film were able to infer more. What this episode does do, is raise the issue of King Arthur and his tomb in the Abbey. The fourth episode is even more confusing, it tells of a visit to the town by William Shakespeare, which has no historical basis that I can find, much of the action takes place at a hiring fair in the grounds of the tithe barn, which sets the scene for the fifth and final episode. The final part takes place in the present (1922) and begins with shots of the most famous antiquities of the area, the Tor, St Michael's Tower, the Abbey and the King Alfred's Monument at Athelney and then introduces a story which draws together the threads of the histories presented in the earlier episodes. The main character is a young man called Jack, who is known as, "the Challenger" he is described as "a colonist" and an

“orphan”, at the start we see his adoptive parents receiving a letter saying he has made his fortune and is returning home, he will meet them at St Michael's Fair. The narrative cuts to a “road hog” driving along a country road, he knocks over a barrow laden with produce being pushed to market by two young women, Jack, arrives on the scene and thrashes the incompetent driver, comforts the women and carries on walking towards his home. The next people Jack encounters are a group of soldiers with a horse drawn gun carriage, the officer knows Jack and greets him by name, commenting he has not seen him since Vimy Ridge (a battle which took place from 9 to 12 April 1917 at the beginning of the Battle of Arras) they exchange pleasantries and Jack continues on his way. These two encounters mark Jack out as a warrior and a man keen to uphold the rights of women, in other words, a chivalrous young man. Jack finally arrives at the St Michael's Fair, which is being held by the tithe barn, to reinforce the continuity with the previous episode characters in Tudor dress are seen mingling with the modern crowd. There is an enthusiastic reunion of Jack and his parents and Jack is asked to help with the pageant. The next image is that of Jack at the market cross, surrounded by players in historical dress, the Viking Guthrum hands Jack his sword, (something which Alfred had refused to take). We then see the pageant from two cameras, one opposite St. John's church, with the war memorial prominent and another opposite the market cross; the pageant is really quiet impressive, the church, represented by the priest and numerous choir boys in surplices are followed by the pupils of the local primary school, behind them parade all the characters from the past representing the continuity of history into the present, the pageant is accompanied by numerous “knights” on horses, who bring up the rear of the parade and finally the watching crowds pour onto the road and the unity of past and present is complete. The final scene is of The Mother of the Nations, played Miss Madge Flynn, this is the only example of one actor playing two roles and indicates The Mother of the Tribe and The Mother of the Nations are one. The Mother of the Nations and her children are greeted by the “Knights of the Past”, the knights are led by King Arthur, who stops to knight Jack with Guthrum's sword, he asks Jack, “What is your quest”, Jack replies “The children”, he is presented with arms with depict a chalice, described as “The cup of great fellowship” and the film end with a child entitled “The Child of the coming day”.

The film can be viewed: <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-glastonbury-past-and-present-1922-online> <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-glastonbury-past-and-present-1922-online>

Some of the emphasis in the film does not entirely fit with Buckton's usual interests, for example when it comes to the cult of kingship it is Arthur not Alfred, who dominates Buckton's thinking. In the film Alfred has an entire episode, while Arthur is merely a device to knight Jack and only appears in a few shots. Perhaps Buckton was appealing to local interests, although the cult of Arthur is now very apparent in Glastonbury, schools roads and pubs across Somerset bear the name of Alfred, an adaptation of his golden wyvern battle standard flies over County Hall in Taunton and adorns bumper stickers, municipal vehicles and public buildings. Similarly, Buckton's other great focus St Bride is only glimpsed in the film:

In the last few minutes of the film there is a parade through Glastonbury with figures representing various personages, among whom is a nun carrying a crozier. She was a real nun of the Order of St John, two of whom were based in Glastonbury at the time. The nun carrying the crozier, was in real life an abbess of the order. It is unusual for an abbess to carry a crozier, except in the case of St Brigit who was also according to tradition a consecrated bishop, so she is almost certainly played (sic) the part of St Brigit in the film. (Wright, 2009, p. 176)

There is also a glimpse of a banner depicting a female figure with an Irish harp, this too could be St Bride but possibly in 1921/2 things Irish were a little too prominent in the news for them to be something that would be considered suitable for centre stage in a pageant of English history.

The importance of the film to the pilgrimage is that the film conceptualises Buckton's understanding of time while the pilgrimage does the same for her understanding of space. The film demonstrates Buckton perceived time as a cyclical continuum, with past, present and future merging, the figure of The Mother is one that runs like a thread through all her work, the emphasis on kingship and chivalry underpin her masculine ideal. The real star of the film is the town itself and that is a clue to her understanding of the importance of place/space.

1. The Pilgrimage of Avalon - background

The origin of the pilgrimage can be traced to the earlier pilgrimages of Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884 - 1968). Pole's interest in Glastonbury was, he claimed, sparked by a dream he had in 1902 and he believed the town was going to be the site of an important event or discovery. According to Benham:

In his journeyings around Bristol, Bath and the Glastonbury area, Wellesley began to make contact with people having similar interests – sometimes privately, other times at meetings and lectures. **On two or three occasions it is known he met Dr Goodchild. Glastonbury was discussed in a general way, but nothing was said about the Cup in the well.** (Benham, 1993)

The fullest description of this pre-Buckton version of the pilgrimage comes from Katherine Pole and is quoted by Benham:

“We used to go down by early train from Clifton, and after arriving at Glastonbury station we went along Porchestall Drove to Cradle Bridge, over the Brue stream. Leaving that on our right, we crossed over two fields until we came to Bride's Well, in which the water was quiet shallow. Offerings were put there, and ribbon was sometimes tied on the thorn tree above. The well was really a sluice for draining the field, and it and the thorn tree have since been done away with. There is now a stone marking the place.

After meditating there we continued to Bride's Hill, now called Beckery. Where St Bride and her nuns came in the fifth century from Ireland and built a chapel.

An old friend of ours, Dr Goodchild, said that this spot was called the Salmon's Back

The timing of these events is interesting, Goodchild purchased had the bowl in Italy in 1885, he placed it in St. Bride's Well in 1899, apparently visited the site to check on it annually thereafter. The Poles, Wellesley and Kitty and the Allen sisters found the bowl in 1906 and a year later it was presented to interested parties, including Alice Buckton at a meeting in Dean's Yard, Westminster, home of Basil Wilberforce. The suggestion that Goodchild never discussed the bowl with Pole or the Allens prior to them finding it seems highly unlikely. It is not believable that two well brought up middle class Edwardian women would remove their shoes, hoist up their skirts and paddle about in a random sluice in the November on a whim, they surely knew what they were looking for. This suggests that site was of importance before Pole took an interest in Glastonbury and that the pilgrimage route may predate him and the women who accompanied him. It is well known that Freemasonry has been well established in Somerset since the eighteenth century and that both Thomas Pole, Wellesley's father, and John Goodchild were Masons. It is at this stage only conjecture but it is maybe that the pilgrimage route and

the placing of the bowl were part of an esoteric Masonic rite, possibly involving a group based in nearby Weston Super Mare, however, more research is needed before anything can be stated for sure.

The pilgrimage was certainly used by one esoteric order, The Order of the Table Round (OTR). Wellesley Tudor Pole encountered the Order through Neville Meakin. Neville Gauntlett Tudor Meakin (c. 1876 - 1912), claimed to be the hereditary grand master of the Order of the Table Round. This order had, according to Meakin, been in existence since the time of King Arthur and had passed through generations of his family, admittedly with a break of three hundred years; it was then revived by Meakin's grandfather.

On 18 June 1910 Meakin met Wellesley Tudor Pole (1884 - 1968). Meakin feared he would die without an heir, for he was suffering from tuberculosis, and was actively seeking a possible replacement for the Grand Mastership of the Order of the Table Round. Finding Wellesley Tudor Pole was the fulfilment of his best hopes, for Pole not only also claimed Welsh royal blood, but also was intimately linked with the grail legends. Pole and three female friends had discovered a blue bowl in a well at Glastonbury; the bowl was of mystical significance to Pole and his circle which included the famous playwright and educator, Alice Buckton. The bowl and the well would resonate with Meakin as the cup and water motif from the Sphere group. Meakin was drawn into Pole's circle and incorporated some of his ideas about the reopening of the Celtic sites into his Arthurian scheme within his Order. Meakin visited the Oratory in September 1910 and soon after began to initiate Pole into the Order of the Table Round. (Oborn)

This means the bowl was buried and found before Pole met Meakin in 1910, but the OTR version of the pilgrimage mentions a "little well pool" but does not suggest it is particularly significant nor make any mention of the bowl. The copies of the ritual available are undated and may have been amended after Pole left the Order.

2. *The Pilgrimage of Avalon*

The text used to describe the pilgrimage is taken from Alan Royce's work published in the Chalice Well Messenger. Royce's words are italicised, and my commentary given below in each section. I also add notes which are intended to assist anyone wishing to undertake the pilgrimage.

The original papers give the starting point as Wells Cathedral, where a short time should be spent in prayer and meditation and then either walk or take the train to Glastonbury. As there is no longer a railway and it would seem that as the route is that it is circular it can be picked up anywhere as is demonstrated by the map which accompanies the article, drawn by Bernard Chandler and dated 1998, the map shows an alternative route, which appears to be for those staying at the hostel as it begins and ends at the Chalice Well. I have chosen to start and end the pilgrimage at St John's church, this was Buckton's regular place of worship, the Vicar of St John's, Rev. Lionel Smithett Lewis, appeared in her film, he officiated at her funeral and his words in the form of a memorandum of her life which was published in the church magazine, his respect and admiration are clearly expressed:

There passed away early in the morning of Sunday, Dec.13th, a great soul, a great mind, and a great heart, Alys Mary Buckton. She was a genius, a most remarkable personality. Her mind was as wide as her heart. Gifted also with musical voice, a strong will, the keenest intelligence, an

extraordinary critical judgment, and an extraordinary capacity for forgiveness, an unfailing enthusiasm. She managed to accomplish things where other people would have been daunted. Twenty years ago it would have been a waste of time to have told Glastonbury, which she loved so dearly, what she had done for Glastonbury. But men come and go, so the writer, who had the privilege of being her parish priest, for nearly the last quarter century of her life (a period to be looked back upon without one ruffled thought) would fain bear one tiny testimony. When he came here, he found Chalice Well and Miss Buckton, a centre of art, music, drama, crafts and lofty thought, to which she had attracted the most intelligent and good-living youth of the place.

That good work continued until increasing years made her give up her hostel. But her influence lives on in the hearts and minds of her pupils whom she illumined. Her whole outlook on life was great, and here was an ever-ready sympathy. It is needless to speak of her years of work for the poor in the slums under Miss Octavia Hill, and her unfailing passion for education, or of her powers as a dramatist. The authoress of 'Eager Heart' is world-famed. Being so great she had the power of attracting great minds.

L S Lewis Vicar of St. John's Glastonbury

<https://chalicewell.org.uk/words-spoken-by-the-vicar-of-st-johns-church-at-the-funeral-of-alice-buckton-2/>

There is a memorial Buckton in St John's Church, above the main door, it was clearly a place of great importance to her throughout her time in Glastonbury.

Notes:

Throughout Buckton's papers the pilgrim is referred to as "he", however it seems that a male and female pilgrim is anticipated as there are specific parts for individuals of both sexes.

Anyone arriving in the town by car can park behind the church in the St John's Square, Pay and Display car park, behind the church. The pilgrimage takes at least four hours and considerably longer if the pilgrim stops for snacks or meals. Much of the route is on paved or tarmacked surfaces, however, there are also sections on footpaths and across fields and it would be advisable to wear hiking boots and trousers resistant to thorns and nettles.

Turn right outside the church and continue down the High Street, across the Market Place and down Benedict Street, across the A39 onto Park Farm Road which leads onto a small junction. The pilgrim is now facing a large timber yard which is on the site of the old station, to the right is Porchestall Drove.

I. Porchestall Drove = The physical plane

He first resolves that throughout the day he will neither retrace his steps nor look back. Then he should read a few words out of a book such as the Bible. These words he will carry as his motto throughout the day. This path symbolises the physical plane, which all must tread ere they can reach the higher planes ...

(Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

Porchestall Drove represents the physical world, it is equivalent to Malkuth in the Kabbalistic tree of life, whilst the pilgrimage does not conform exactly to that pattern, there are enough overlaps to suggest the author had knowledge of such systems, possibly through familiarity with the Golden Dawn or similar occult methods. Theosophy also taught a system of planes of existence, the seventh being the physical. Here the pilgrim is required to prepare for the spiritual development which is promised on completion of the pilgrimage.

Notes

Porchestall Drove is typical of the droves (roads) that cross the Somerset Levels, it has drainage ditches on both sides (known locally as rhines) that it was boundaried by running water would have been on symbolic significance to its role as the earthly plane. It is an easy walk on tarmac road, the drove ends at the T junction with Back River Drove and Hulk Moor Drove a few metres beyond where it crosses the River Brue at Cradle Bridge.

II. Cradle Bridge = Renunciation earthly desires

The pilgrim picks a reed as he makes his way along Porchestall Drove, this represents a sceptre, symbol of temporal power, he throws it into the River Brue to symbolise rejection of earthly power. The pilgrim also throws a piece of lead into the Brue signifying the first stage of the pilgrimage, that of the earthly plane, has been completed.

This act symbolises renunciation of earthly desires and readiness to go forward as a little child. He leaves prayers here for all who have gone before and for all who will come after. Climbing the fence, to the left side of the road, close to the bank of the stream until he reaches a willow tree standing alone. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

Lead is the metal of redemption and transformation; it is the base degraded metal that is a carrier of both eternal life and death, it is traditionally associated with Saturn and Cronos.

Notes

There is no longer any need to climb the fence there is a stile and a signed public footpath. The accessibility of this part of the pilgrimage is thanks to the purchase of some of the land by a group called "The Friends of St Bride's Mound", their website can be found: www.friendsofbridesmound.com

The pilgrim walks along the path until he reaches a willow tree -

This is the Tree of Sorrow. Baring his head, he prays for all pilgrims who have been unable to follow the path and have failed to carry out the conditions laid out by their predecessors. Here he leaves all sorrow and with a heart full of joy approaches the thorn tree. (Royce, February 1998)

Notes

There is no longer a willow tree, indeed, most of the next section is hard to follow physically because the well, and the thorn tree are all no longer existent. It seems they were all very close together, the Well disappeared when the river was widened, and the stone which had been placed there by Tudor Pole was moved. There is a small pool which seems to be close to or part of well site. This part of the

pilgrimage would have been particularly important, because it is where Goodchild hid and Pole found, the blue bowl.

III. The Thorn Tree = the tree of joy

Once the ritual is completed at the willow tree, the pilgrim continues along the path to a thorn tree:

All prayers and ritual at 'Bride's Well' must be undertaken by the woman if present. This 'Thorn Tree' was consecrated in the name of Joy, in the service of the Bride, at the destruction of the thorn which sprang from the staff of Joseph of Arimathea by a puritan. After that the Watchers no longer met there as of yore, so a common thorn was chosen by them in an isolated spot, where seekers could come and learn the truths taught there and to carry out their instructions.

Commentary

This small section introduces several significant points, here we have the first direction that a woman should lead the prayer and ritual, then the first mention of Bride and the Bride. Bride is St Bride or Brigid, the Irish saint associated with Beckery, and the Bride refers to the neo platonic concept of *logos and Eccles* which developed into Sophia a personification of wisdom, this aspect of the Divine Feminine was central to Buckton's beliefs and is discussed at length in the conclusion. The Watchers of Avalon are another of the beliefs which permeated the occult scene in Glastonbury at the time

The pilgrim should encircle the tree clockwise three time, stopping at the North, South, East and West to offer up a prayer. At the first turn he prays for the Watchers, that workers may be found to carry out their work in the world. At the second turn he prays for the World that it may be prepared to receive a new illumination from on High. At the third turn he prays for any personal wish or ideal. (Royce, February 1998)

IV. The Well

Then at the mouth of the well, he throws into the water a piece of glass, or some fish symbol as a sign of the astral plane, through which he has been passing. He should leave at this spot also a symbol of his work as an offering to the Bride and dedicate his life to the work of the Holy Spirit. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The well represents the astral plane or Yesod in Kabbalistic terms. The imagery of fish runs throughout this part of the pilgrimage, fish symbolizes fertility, feelings, creativity, rebirth, good luck, transformation, health, abundance, serenity, intelligence, happiness, strength, and endurance. Connecting us with the water element, it represents the deeper awareness of the unconsciousness or higher self. The importance of the fish as a symbol of Christianity is described by Pole:

The vessel that has come to be known as the Cup of Peace came to light at St Bride's Well, Glastonbury in the autumn of 1906 at a spot not far from a site known from earliest times as the Salmon's Back. The fish symbol was in prevalent use in Gnostic and early Christian days and was associated, in the minds of many with the significance and purity of the pristine 'Jesus Message'. Wellesley Tudor Pole 22.5.1958 The Cross the Cup and the Aquarian Well of the Chalice chalicewell.org.uk/the-cross-the-cup-and-the-aquarian-well-of-the-chalice/

Notes

Although the well no longer exists there is a small pool which could be used to serve the same purpose within the ritual.

V. The Stone

Then he seeks inspiration upon the stone in front of the thorn. He can write any great desire upon a piece of paper and cast it upon the waters of the Brue Stream, praying that it may meet its fulfilment. Upon the thorn he ties a piece of ribbon (this can also be done at Cradle Bridge and the Willow Tree) as a sign to pilgrims he has passed that way and left his prayers. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The tying of small pieces of rag or ribbon (clotties) to trees is a traditional way of marking pilgrimage routes and places of spiritual significance. The practise is old, possibly predating Christianity and numerous trees (usually hawthorns) in the Glastonbury area are adorned, particularly around Beltane/ May Day. The modern propensity for fabric to contain synthetic materials and consequently be non-biodegradable means that these clotties often cause damage to the tree they are tied to. The use of ribbons on trees has been used to signify current preoccupations, for example blue ribbons being tied to trees outside hospitals to demonstrate support for the NHS during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Notes

The Thorn Tree is long gone but the stone is apparently still visible, although the writer has never managed to locate it.

VI. Bride's Hill, known as Beckery

Here in the far ages the Goddess of Wisdom hid her treasures and knowledge which can only be found by true seekers and pilgrims. Here the teachings of the Bride were given out and taught, first by a druid centre and then a Christian church. It was to a nunnery on Beckery that King Arthur went to be taught. There the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him and was afterward represented on his shield. When dying it was to the mystic isle of Avalon he passed. From earliest times the spot has been dedicated to the Bride, and her teachings, to whom the Pilgrim offers his life and work. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The figure of Bride is central to the Glastonbury mythos and to Buckton's beliefs. The figure of Bride operates on many different levels, she is discussed at length by Brian Wright in his book *Brigid: Goddess, Druidess and Saint* (2009) but very simply the figure of St Brigid, an Irish saint and missionary associated with St Patrick, she is conflated with the Celtic goddess Bride and in Buckton's understanding with The Bride, the Sophia or wisdom.



The Coming of Bride by John Duncan, husband of Christine Allen, one of Pole's Triad of Maidens

Modern interest in Bride predated Buckton, a play entitled, *The Story of Glastonbury and the Grail or The Light of Avalon*, it was published in Glastonbury on St Bride's Day, the 1st of Feb., 1909, by its author who adopted the pen-name of Melchior Macbride, 'Melchior' being the name of one of the gift-bringing Magi from the east, and 'Macbride' to show that he was of the clan of Bride. The author's real name was John Purcell Quinton, he and his wife, Ethel, ran the Lotus Tea Rooms at 25 High Street, a vegetarian café.

The play opens in a room in Maiden's Castle, Brides' Island with the Lake Village as a backdrop in the distance. Gladys, a clairvoyant Druidess, sister of Caractacus, and the archdruid Cymveline, is there to welcome Joseph of Arimathea and his party. Druidesses at the Women's Quarter discuss their religion with the Christian women of Joseph's party whilst – and I quote –

“putting the finishing touches to the supper table”. The menfolk meanwhile are pursuing manly matters. King Arviragus, who in medieval tradition had invited Joseph to Glastonbury, is revealed as the Fisher King, a kind of Celtic Nelson who defeats an enemy fleet in the Channel, flying beneath the Salmon Flag. Cymbeline takes Joseph to one side and tells him to “plant the Chalice deep in that sweet hill/ That riseth up beneath the frowning Tor”, and he goes on to make the gratifying prediction that “The Centre of the Christian World shall be/ Where this Cup doth abide... <https://glastonburysite.wordpress.com/talks/the-onset-of-avalon/> Adam Stout, Talk given to the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society in February 2015

John Purcell Quinton, was a Freemason, and gave talks on male esoteric mysteries to his Lodge in Bristol, a Lodge which also included Rutland Boughton. Quinton was clearly familiar with the work of Goodchild years before Buckton had visited Glastonbury. Stout goes on to argue that Buckton's college was an attempt to recreate the Women's Quarter and St Bride's community:

This was nothing less than a revival of the alleged druidess's college at Brides Mound, please note, “the chief ancient seminary for young ladies in Britain” as Dr Goodchild had rather quaintly described it, and it is no coincidence that the following year her Guild of Festival Players produced ‘A Pageant Play’ called ‘The Coming of Bride’. Dedicated “To Those who have heard in the dawn The songs of the day to be”, the play is set during the time of Abbot Patrick. A group of Chalice Hill anchorites, grumbling like the grumpy blokes they are, assemble to await the landing of Bride from Ireland; when she arrives, she asks for and is granted Magdalene's chapel on Beckery “by the Salmon's Back”. Bride is a prophet, she foretells the Grail quest and its failure, but also its eventual success:

“Bitter the waters of grief, but sweet is the Well-spring!

Stoop and be fearless! Drink, O ye Builders of Joy!”

<https://glastonburysite.wordpress.com/talks/the-onset-of-avalon/> Adam Stout, Talk given to the Glastonbury Antiquarian Society in February 2015

The importance of Brighid/Brigid/Bridget/Bride to modern day Glastonbury is outlined by Marion Bowman:

The current interest in Brighid/Brigid/Bridget/Bride, as either a pagan Celtic goddess or a Celtic Christian saint (daughter of a Druid father and a Celtic Christian mother) epitomises such concerns. The Bridget Chapel at the rear of the 'Glastonbury Experience' complex, is 'deliberately kept free of specific symbology or artifacts' (sic), in order to make it 'welcoming to all, regardless of religious or spiritual affiliation' (Bridget Chapel leaflet). The custom (based largely on the Irish Catholic vernacular tradition) of making a 'Bride doll' at Imbolc (1 February, feast day of St Bridget) has been revived recently by those involved in Goddess spirituality in the town, and Bridget crosses are now among the artefacts on sale in Glastonbury shops. Meanwhile, there is a campaign to protect Bride's Mound, a site traditionally associated with St Bridget, and turn it into a 'sanctuary'. – Bowman 88 ALTERNATIVE SPIRITUALITY IN GLASTONBURY

Notes

That Beckery was the site of an ancient Christian settlement is upheld by archaeological evidence. It is less certain if it was ever visited by St Bride/Brigid or indeed King Arthur. There is not a great deal to see, but the foundations are clearly visible. Perhaps surprisingly this site is not a popular part of the Glastonbury tourist trail. The Friends of St Bride's Mound outline some of the archaeological activity:

The first excavation on Bride's Mound was undertaken by John Morland in 1887. He discovered the remains of two chapels, a smaller Saxon timber chapel built around 700AD, which was replaced by a larger Norman stone chapel built about 1000AD and enlarged in 1290. There was another structure which he called a 'priest's house, and several burials. At least one of the burials predated the first stone chapel, which as John Morland wrote: "would show us that this was a sacred Christian spot before the older chapel was built; for this and all the more perfect skeletons were orientated with the head to the west".

In 1967-8 Philip Rahtz excavated the chapel and cemetery, where one burial from around 700 - 750, appeared quite significant as it was in a grave lined with slabs and with nearby post-holes that suggest it may have been a tomb-shrine, perhaps of the founder of the community. The first Saxon timber chapel was built around this grave. Bones from at least 63 individuals were found, all male apart from one woman and two children, and dating to the Saxon period.

John of Glastonbury wrote of a hole in the south wall of the chapel through which people would crawl for forgiveness of their sins, perhaps a purification for pilgrims en route to the Abbey. <http://www.friendsofbridesmound.com/arch.html>



Picture of the chapel ruins from Google earth

VII. **The Great Fish**

This part has been named the 'Salmon's Back' due to the belief that under the ground are remains of the greatest fish idol in the world. It was believed that in the mouth of the salmon, the 'Salmon of knowledge', treasures were to be found. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The Salmon of Knowledge is a creature figuring in the Fenian Cycle of Irish mythology. (It is sometimes identified with Fintan mac Bóchra, who was known as "The Wise" and was once transformed into a salmon.) according to Katherine Pole the mound was identified as "the Salmon's Back" by Goodchild and reflects his interest in Irish mythology.

Notes

I can find no other references to this idol, it seems to be a unique feature, presumably based on the shape of the mound, although it does not appear especially fish like. There is marked on the map another fish reference, that of "The Great Fish Doorway", in the Abbey grounds, this was a gateway made from the jaw bone of a whale, it is no longer in place and does not seem to have formed any part of Buckton's pilgrimage.

VIII. The Orchard

Passing over the hill the pilgrim reaches an orchard, through which he passes. He picks an apple and partakes of it, giving it first to the woman if she is present, thus symbolising the partaking of the apple in the Garden of Eden. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

Interestingly the apple, the Biblical symbol of forbidden knowledge is evoked after the mouth of the Salmon of Knowledge has been passed through.

Notes

There is an orchard, planted by the Friends of St Bride's Mound, it looks to be in a slightly different place from the one shown on the map but it would doubtless serve the purpose perfectly well.

IX. Northload Bridge

The pilgrim then joins the road and proceeds to Northload Bridge. Here he bears his head and feet and descending the seven steps which lead to the water, he baptises himself in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This symbolises baptism in the waters of regeneration in which he must be purified ere he ascends the Mount where Inspiration and Illumination are granted to all true pilgrims. He prays for a pure heart and clear vision and throws into the water an offering of silver, a sign of reaching the spiritual plane. He steps out of the water and, barefoot and deeply humble, ascends Wearyall Hill. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

This baptism ritual is obviously totally Christian in origin and context. Now the spiritual plane has been reached, this idea is not based in either orthodox Christian belief or a Baha'i belief but rather a reflection of contemporary occult thinking possibly based on the Four Worlds of Kabbalah, see below.

Notes

There is a bridge as shown on the map, it crosses the Mill Stream on either side of the A39, however, there are no steps down into the water. The water is just about accessible but probably inadvisable, attempting to cross the A39 and climb Wearyall Hill barefoot is not really a great idea either, it would be

possible if the weather allowed the mud on the hill to be soft enough not to cut the feet or hard enough not to be a quagmire. It would be interesting to see if there is a collection of silver items here and lead ones at Cradle Bridge. Silver is symbolic of purity, strength, clarity, focus, and the feminine energy. In alchemy, silver is one of the noble metals.

X. Wearyall Hill

On this path to the glories of the spiritual worlds. On reaching the top the pilgrim circles the oak tree, which was planted where the thorn tree once stood, with prayers. At the first turn he prays for the Watchers, that workers may be found to carry out their work in the world. At the second turn he prays for the world, that it may be prepared to receive illumination from on High. At the third turn he prays for any personal wish or ideal. Here for a time, he seeks spiritual illumination and wisdom to help him in his work then, turning to the tree, he kisses it. This is the kiss of renunciation; he is willing to renounce all knowledge and power, gained from spiritual experience, in the service of humanity and is willing to descend into the world below to help and teach his brother. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

Wearyall Hill is the place where according to legend Joseph of Arimathea plunged his staff into the ground and from it sprung a thorn tree, henceforth to be known as The Holy Thorn. The Holy Thorn was the meeting place of the Watchers of Avalon until it was chopped down during the Civil War as it was deemed idolatrous, a replacement was planted in 1951 as part of the celebration of the Festival of Britain. Presumably the lack of a suitable thorn tree is why the oak tree was used by Buckton, however, there is no oak tree on the hill at present.

Notes

The hill can be accessed from Roman Way, there is a small stairway which leads into a field on the lower slope, there is a signposted public footpath across the field, but care should be taken as there are often bulls in the field, they are the Scottish ones with the long ginger hair and long sharp horns. At the top of the hill there is a gate beyond that the path widens. There was a thorn tree until recently, replacing the 1951 version, which in turn replaced the Holy Thorn. There are several thorn trees in Glastonbury, the Abbey and St John's churchyard both have one, they are all apparently descendants of the original one brought by St Joseph. The views over the countryside from the top of the hill are stunning, the view of Avalon Industrial Estate rather less so. The ritual could be done at any of the many trees at the top of the hill. There are sometimes sheep on the hill, but they do not pose a threat.

XI. The Tithe Barn

He passes through the village, remembering that he is the bearer of a message of joy and peace until he reaches the Barn where dwells the Bride of Wisdom. He prays for spiritual healing and to remain unspotted by the world. St. Michael and St. Brigit are the guardians over this spot. At each corner is one of the four Evangelists. The pilgrim is watched and guided by Archangels near to those who visit this sacred shrine – Gabriel as watcher over the Women's Quarter, Raphael over the plains, Uriel over the hills and

Commentary

The Tithe Barn or Great Barn belonged, like most things in Glastonbury, to the Abbey. It was completed in the 1340s to store produce from the Glastonbury Abbey estates. When the Abbey was destroyed it fell into private ownership. It became part of Abbey Farm, the current Abbey Farmhouse was built in 1894 by Stanley Austin (1860–1916), a prominent local landowner. George Mapstone (1866–1938) was tenant of Abbey Farm from 1917 and lived here with his wife Louisa and their family. As well as dairy cattle he also kept sheep, pigs and chickens. When George retired in 1938 the tenancy passed to his son Harold Robert (Bob) Mapstone (1900–1969). Bob bought the farm outright in 1942 together with 160 acres of land. The Mapstones were near neighbours of Alice Buckton, a Mr A Mapstone appears in the third part of the film. The barn itself appears throughout the fourth part and again in the fifth, it is the only significant feature of the pilgrimage which appears in the film. It is indeed a fine example its excellent stonework, fine carvings and magnificent roof reflect the abbey's great wealth during the middle ages. The symbols of the four Evangelists are still clearly visible, but there is nothing which obviously suggests the Bride of Wisdom would be dwelling there, nor that the Saints Michael and Brigit would be guardians of it. The building today is usually empty and has a peaceful church like ambience, but presumably when Abbey Farm was functioning (which it did until 1972) the barn would have full of the things farmers put in barns, and consequently less suggestive of interest from angelic beings.

The term "The Bride of Wisdom", is used for the again here, Bride has previously been used to refer to the name of the Irish saint but now the concept of Sophia - wisdom is invoked.

Notes

The "village" is a road called Hillhead, there are no shops on it now but many of the buildings predate Buckton's time in Glastonbury, there may have been more and some used as shops, and consequently the term village was used to describe it. The farm and the barn are now part of the Somerset Rural Life Museum, there is a small entry fee which gives unlimited access for twelve months to the museum and its nice café. The Chalice Well Garden is only a few meters further on to the right, past a public house called the Rifleman's Arms which serves food.

XII. Chalice Well

... and reaching Chalice Well he should pray for the coming kingdom of love and the Unity of Religions. Many have come to the Chalice, or Blood, Well in times past to be healed by those waters that first flowed, it is said, when the Holy Grail vanished from the eyes of men at this spot. The pilgrim drinks of the water and bathes his eyes praying that he may be made pure and granted spiritual vision; that he may be allowed to hold out the chalice of life to other pilgrims and to help in the furtherance of the Kingdom of God upon Earth. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The Chalice Well was the epicentre of Buckton's life and work in Glastonbury. She clearly believed it to have healing properties. It is noteworthy that she qualifies its relationship to the Grail, with "it is said", suggesting she has an understanding of the Grail as a spiritual rather than physical concept. The "pray for the coming kingdom of love and the Unity of Religions" seems Baha'i inspired. Here spiritual vision is sought, this could be broadly linked to the Kabbalistic Binah or understanding.

Notes

The Chalice Well is now inside a garden which charges a small entrance fee, there is a shop on the site which sells materials about the Well and the Trust that owns it.

XIII. St Michael's Tower

From the Chalice Well he mounts the Tor, reaching the summit with his face towards the west. If possible he should reach Tor Hill at sunset, but certainly before. He now stands in the high place of St Michael, the Spiritual Mount, the last stage on the pilgrimage. All prayers and ritual must be undertaken by the man, if present. He circles the Tor three times clockwise. First with his hands uplifted in supplication to the Watchers and the Master Christ. Second with hands outstretched in a blessing over the world. Third with hands clasped in prayer for all mankind. He invites the four Archangels for their aid and protection: – Michael to the south, Raphael to the east, Uriel to the north and Gabriel to the west and calls upon the four winds, bearing the message of hope and joy to the end of the earth. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The instructions for this part of the pilgrimage are clearly ritualistic, the invocation of angels and the use of the term, the “Master Jesus” is of interest. The Master Jesus is one of the Masters of the Ancient Wisdom in Theosophy and is one of the Ascended Masters in the Ascended Master Teachings, a group of religions based on Theosophy. This “high place of St Michael, the Spiritual Mount”, is reminiscent of the Kabbalistic Kether or Crown.

Notes

The climb up the Tor from Well House Lane is fairly steep, the Tor is 500 feet high, and the decent down the eastern slope is steeper and would be advisable to do it in good light.

XIV Final Prayers and descent ...

He prays for the Unity of Religions and the Brotherhood of Man and sends out thoughts of help and guidance to others. Here he sums up all that has gone before, realising each plane of the pilgrimage of the soul; the renunciation and sacrifice on the earth plane; the gaining of clear vision and discernment on the astral plane; the attainment of spiritual gifts on the mental plane and the decent of power and illumination on the spiritual plane. He leaves here a sign, visible to other pilgrims, that he has accomplished his pilgrimage. (Royce, February 1998)

Commentary

The prayers for “Unity of Religions and the Brotherhood of Man”, are directly Baha’i influenced both in content and language, as is the concern for others. The reflection on the planes of existence owe more to the occult thinking of the period. The pilgrim descends the Tor by the eastern slope and is instructed to follow a footpath across a field until they reach Paradise Lane, this is no longer possible and instead a sharp left turn at the foot of the Tor onto Stone Down Lane leads on to the crossroads of Paradise and Maiden Croft Lanes.

At the crossroads the pilgrims separate, the women take the turn to the right which leads to Maiden Croft Lane. A little along this lane, to the left, there is a path across a field. There the woman pilgrim seeks the divine wisdom of the Mother and the Bride, praying for guidance for

her work in the world. Joining her fellow pilgrim where the path meets the road, they pass together down Wick Hollow, stopping at St John's church for a few moments to pray.

Commentary

Now The Mother and The Bride, female archetypes are invoked, this is very likely to be something added by Buckton whose interest in female spirituality is well documented.

Notes

Maiden Croft Lane and the footpath across the field are both clearly signposted, the path leads to Wick Hollow and it is a short walk through Bove Town into the High Street and back to St John's church. There is no mention of this part of the pilgrimage in Pole's version, which suggests it was Buckton's own. Some other versions include Jacob's Ladder a flight of very steep steps leading to a mound or mump on Windmill Hill and Jacoby Cottage, the former slipper chapel dedicated to St James, both of which are situated in Bove Town.

Conclusion

There are some nods to Baha'i beliefs in the process of the pilgrimage, the prayers for "Unity of Religions and the Brotherhood of Man", at the top of the Tor and the prayer for "The World, that it be ready for a new message", are indications of Buckton's interest in the Baha'i Teachings, however, there is far greater emphasis on other traditions. All the imagery is Christian, with passing references to pre-Christian ideas, such as the "Great Fish Idol", which seems to represent the Salmon of Knowledge in Celtic mythology.

So, what does the pilgrimage reveal about Buckton's spiritual practice and beliefs in relation to the Baha'i Faith?

1. Sacred Topology

Travelling with a purpose to sites considered more sacred or special than others plays a considerable part in the lives of diverse spiritual seekers. The topology of Glastonbury has been the subject of much interest in esoteric circles, perhaps the example is that of the Glastonbury Zodiac, a hypothesis put forward by Katharine Emma Maltwood (née Sapsworth) (1878 – 1961) in 1925, Maltwood was commissioned to draw a map outlining the adventures of the Knights of King Arthur and the Holy Grail, while researching, she claimed that the effigies of the zodiac were designed in a circle on the fields of Somerset—the very fields that the tales of King Arthur had transpired upon (Maltwood; 1944, p. 3). She devoted the rest of her life to researching, writing, and publicizing what she termed "Temple of the Stars." Her theory regarding the zodiac was a combination of Sumerian, theosophy, Masonry, Early Christianity, and Rosicrucianism. Maltwood lived from c1918 to 1935 at Chilton Priory, in Chilton Polden about ten miles from Glastonbury, where she produced The Grail Frieze (c1920) an inscribed bas-relief with abstract linear patterns set against the south garden wall at Chilton Priory.

Marion Bowman argues that the Glastonbury landscape is the key spiritual focus for the Community of Avalon: New Age seekers are drawn to striking natural features such as the Tor with its contoured hill, the chalybeate spring of Chalice Well and the miraculous Holy Thorn that flowers twice a year (Bowman 2009). This strong attachment to landscape and the natural environment is more broadly characteristic of Celtic and pagan spirituality (Power 2006).

There is no real interest in sacred topology in the Baha'i Tradition, whilst there is emphasis on pilgrimage, this is generally to burial places of important figures and to the Baha'i World Centre in Haifa, which is the site of a number of important burials as well as the administrative headquarters of the religion. The World Centre is built on land which where the founder of the Faith, Baha'u'llah lived and He prophesied whilst imprisoned in the barracks at 'Akká that he would pitch His tent on Mount Carmel and indeed he did. Mount Carmel was recognised as a holy place by the Prophet Isaiah, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God." Baha'u'llah's focus on the mountain would seem to be a sign of His status being a continuation of the prophesies of other monotheisms, rather than confirmation that the mountain was in some way "special". The burial place of Shoghi Effendi in New Southgate, Middlesex has become an important place of pilgrimage for many Baha'is but there is absolutely no suggestion that New Southgate was of any special importance prior to the funeral of The Guardian. Furthermore, there has been an effort to construct Baha'i House of Worship, (*Mashriqu-l-Adhká*) firstly there was one in each continent and more recently two national buildings have been erected. There is a very specific architectural style imbued with spiritual significance, but the placement of the buildings appears to have no significance beyond proximity to an urban centre and affordability of land. Thus, Buckton's concern with wells, trees and fish shaped mounds does not support a Baha'i perspective on pilgrimage.

2. Planes of Existence

It has been noted above that throughout the pilgrimage there are references to "Planes of Existence", the earthly plane is represented by Porchestal Drove, the Astral plane is encountered on Bride's Mound and so on, these were concepts common in Theosophy, western esotericism and gnostic Christianity. Some of the prayers and rituals could be argued to be self-initiations into higher levels and that completion of the pilgrimage might signify attainment of a heightened awareness, Such concepts are alien to Baha'i thought as the Baha'i revelation is based on the idea that everyone can access the Teachings and reach the highest levels of spiritual development without recourse to ritual or initiation.

3. Celtic Mythology

For a town at the centre of Wessex Glastonbury has a curiously Celtic feel, this may well be a modern reconstruction. The Celtic past may well owe a great deal to the mysterious and enigmatic John Arthur Goodchild (1851-1914) MD 1873. Despite being the individual to whom so much of the reinvention of Glastonbury and indeed the emergence of much New Age thinking can be traced back to, Goodchild has not received much scholarly interest. Goodchild was a bachelor who led a nomadic life, interesting himself in writing, influenced by the intelligentsia of Bordighera, he referred in his writings to socialism, ancient history, religion, spirituality, and the human condition.

Goodchild was also aware of theosophy and The Golden Dawn, however, his real passion was for the Western Spiritual Tradition, and he began to write his most famous book, *The Light of the West*, with his publisher by 1897, in which he details the Irish worship of Mor Rigan, who Goodchild believed was a real person, though her tales have been corrupted by Christianity. Goodchild believed that the lore surrounding Mor Rigan became attached to Bride, who in turn was corrupted by Christianity into St. Bride,

Goodchild argued that the people of Bride believed in the coming of a Christ long before Christianity, and that her mysteries were widespread across the ancient world, even as far as Palestine, one of the

main reasons why Christianity reached British shores at such an early date after the crucifixion, and the main reason why it took such an early root here. Goodchild believed that these beliefs soon conjoined with Mor Rigan and Bride to emphasise the role of women, thus the main reason why Roman Christianity acted so definitively to suppress it.

Goodchild used a chronological outline in *The Light of the West* to outline his careful researches, all impressively referenced. He placed the arrival of Mor Rigan with the Tuatha de Danann, claiming that from her cult all the Bardic and Druidic teaching of Britain arose. He details the deliberate distortion of Mor Rigan by the Roman Church over many centuries, resulting her current position as The Morrigan, the "terror" or "phantom queen", though she was originally a triple goddess, she is now seen as a black crow of war.

Goodchild's research is not supported by scholars of Irish history and it is not generally acknowledged by the "Goddess Movement" but it is probably the single most important writing behind the emergence of goddess centred belief systems and along with WB Yeats and Fiona Macleod (William Sharp) in the Celtic cultural revival. He was certainly a massively important influence on Wellesley Tudor Pole and his circle, and through them, Alice Buckton. There is no obvious overlap between his work and the Baha'i Teachings.

4. Angels

Consistently called upon throughout the pilgrimage are the four archangels. The system of archangels is a very old tradition originating in Judaism. In the science of angelology different sources disagree on the names and identities of the Three, Seven, or Ten Archangels. Various occult systems associate each archangel with one of the traditional seven luminaries — the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn — and the ten kabbalistic sephiras but there is disagreement as to which archangel corresponds to which body. The invocations throughout the pilgrimage are reminiscent of the Golden Dawn Lesser Banishing Ritual and other similar rites, they are very much not Baha'i inspired. Although angels are acknowledged in the Baha'i Teachings they are purely symbolic or simply, very good people:

Angels are also those holy souls who have severed attachment to the earthly world, who are free from the fetters of self and passion and who have attached their hearts to the divine realm and the merciful kingdom. They are of the kingdom, heavenly; they are of the merciful One, divine. They are the manifestations of the divine grace and the dawns of spiritual bounty.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 409

A similar attitude exists towards djinns, "Regarding your question as to the meaning of Jin or Genii referred to in the Qur'an, these are not beings or creatures that are actually living, but are symbolic references to the power of men of evil and may be likened to evil spirits. But the point to bear in mind is that these have no positive existence of any kind." (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 26, 1936: Bahá'í News, No. 105, p. 1, February 1937) This seems to be at odds with Buckton's approach.

5. Christianity, gnostic, alternative and mainstream

Alice Buckton may well have counted herself a Baha'i but she was also a Christian. She was baptised, confirmed and buried as an Anglican, she was a regular member of the congregation at St John's Church in Glastonbury, and a close friend of the vicar the Reverend Lionel Smithett Lewis. She was also close to the Ven. Albert Basil Orme Wilberforce, she first encountered the bowl found in the well in Beckery at

the home of Wilberforce. In 1913 she and Wilberforce collaborated in dedicating St Bride's Day (1st February) to "special meditation and intercession in Westminster Abbey, in St. Paul's and in various cathedrals, chapels and churches throughout Great Britain." (The Chalice Well Trust, 2009, p. 30) The intercession was in respect of the women's suffrage issue which was being discussed in Parliament at the time. The Church of England is often described as "a broad church", it seems to have been even broader in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A considerable proportion of clergy and laity seem to have held unorthodox beliefs and membership of occult organisations, Freemasonry and Theosophy was tolerated. The overlap between Anglo Catholicism and the Golden Dawn has been examined in Anthony Fuller's dissertation on "Anglo-Catholic Clergy and the Golden Dawn" (2009) and Richard Yoder, writing in the Church Times states:

Although the Golden Dawn and its daughter organisations had a notable contingent of clergy and Anglican laity, the Order was necessarily restrictive. It remained, primarily, a phenomenon of a very select elite. Theosophy, by contrast, was more widely diffused within the Church of England. At the turn of the 20th century, there was a popular interest in "mysticism" which took various forms. The vaguely oriental mysteries of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and her protégée, Annie Besant, exerted a powerful influence. (Yoder, 14 December 2018)

6. Baha'i

I have used elsewhere, the term "auxiliary religious belief", to describe the process by which early British Baha'is perceived their acceptance of the Baha'i Teachings as additional to, not a replacement of their primary beliefs. Such auxiliary beliefs were prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century, Buckton although she would have considered herself "a follower of Abdu'l Baha" and a Baha'i would not have immediately described herself as anything other than an Anglican Christian, she might have admitted that some of her beliefs were a bit unorthodox, but would perhaps have expected them to become more mainstream as the Church of England embraced the new spiritual forces which were surely about to be revealed to all mankind. Her religious beliefs could be defined as Christian/post Christian/pre-Neo Pagan based upon the pilgrimage, whatever she understood from the Baha'i Teachings there is no indication at least from this practise that they formed an important or integral part of her spiritual world view.

<http://www.eastsussexww1.org.uk/framfields-memorial-trees/index.html>

<https://www.greatwarforum.org/topic/242736-southdowns-battalions-royal-sussex-beaumont-hamel/>