

Yuri Leitch, GWYN: Ancient god of Glastonbury and key to the Glastonbury Zodiac (The Temple Publications, 2007).

It was eighty years ago that British born artist and sculpter Katherine Maltwood decided that made up from the hills, roads, rivers and field boundaries around Glastonbury is a gigantic terrestrial zodiac, created by visiting Sumerian priests around 2800 BC. Its existence was confirmed, she said, by local folklore and legends, reflected within the rich symbolism of 'Perlesvaus', the 'The High History of the Grail', written by either a Knights Templar or monk at Glastonbury abbey sometime around AD 1210. Not unnaturally, other than die hard earth mysteries enthusiasts and Glastonbury's Avalonian residents, academics have never taken Maltwood's terrestrial zodiac seriously, its importance becoming even more watered down as each generation new examples are proposed in every corner of Britain. Yuri's GWYN redresses the balance by demonstrating that Katherine Maltwood was on to something with her representations of landscape giants, but that they were not necessarily part of a terrestrial zodiac. Figures such as the Dundon giant (which I myself was led to originally through psychic questing in 1983) and the Girt Dog of Langport reflect legendary characters in a localised myth cycle fixed upon the rising and setting of star constellations as viewed within the Glastonbury landscape in ancient times.

The key to unravelling this mystery is the figure of Gwyn up Nudd (pronounced 'nuth', or something similar), Glastonbury's resident hunter god and leader of the Wild Hunt before the Anglo-Saxons overran Wessex and ousted the remaining Britons to Wales, where they became Welsh, a word meaning 'foreigners'. Thus Glastonbury's role as a star temple and island of the dead was lost in the mists of Avalon, although this itself is a topic Yuri bravely challenges, showing that there is no verifiable historical evidence, literary or otherwise, to adequately show that Glastonbury was ever Avalon. A Celtic otherworld named Ynys Wittrim, meaning the Isle of Glass, yes, but not Avalon, as in the resting place of Arthur. Indeed, Yuri also tackles head on Joseph of Arimathea's place in Glastonbury's long history, demonstrating - as I did in a lost chapter for TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY GRAIL (2004, click [here](#) to read) - that Christianity did not arrive at Glastonbury until the fifth century, and that claims by the abbey that Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury are simply

medieval confabulations.

To pour salt on the wounds of all Avalonians, Yuri additionally shows that King Arthur's body was never discovered at Glastonbury, again something I realized when writing TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY GRAIL. I think that trouncing Glastonbury's super legends, as Yuri calls them, is dangerous but vital if we are to move forward with our understanding of Glastonbury's prehistory, for at present no academic takes the town's claims seriously (other than England's great maverick historian extraordinaire Professor Ronald Hutton, but he's not in a position to do anything about it). GWYN is an example of a new breed of books on Glastonbury, which is kicking out the long-held sacred cows and paving the way forward for a new era of interest in Glastonbury's real past times.

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