



The Chalice

Journal of the Companions of the
Chalice Well

Issue No. 18 • Spring 2007



"...in the heart of the living presence..."

Chalice Well Gardens and the Tor

Editorial



As I write we have passed the mid-winter point and moved into the New Year, where we can begin to look towards the spring. Despite 2006 being recorded as the warmest year on record and the onset of climate change caused by human activity we have still experienced a period of cold weather which provided a spectacular rime frost (see photo left). This coupled with our winter solstice fire in the garden (see photo p. 4) reminded me of the recordings from 1962 made by the Waterson Family on their 'Frost and Fire' LP. This was one of the first collections of ritual and ceremonial folk songs passed down over the centuries and represented a revival of interest in the old songs wherein pagan and Christian themes and myths had become entwined. For those wishing to take a listen it is re-released on CD this month.

As we look at the photograph of the fire from the solstice we can see many images; it is interesting that the etheric world reflects back to us what is going on inside us. In the picture some see a great fire spirit or salamander, some see a Goddess figure leaning towards the human figure, while others see the face of Christ or a horned fire serpent. Here at the Well we have to accommodate these diverse realities in a spirit of unity. Thomas Vaughan, a metaphysical philosopher and alchemist from the mid 17th Century recorded that "the fire spirit hath its root in the spiritual fire-earth." From this deep source it hails the returning of the light.

Is it significant that Vaughan also relates the heart to the element of fire? He suggests that the axis of spirit-matter is experienced through our hearts. This spirit-matter axis is discussed in this issue in 'The Story of the Cover for the Chalice Well,' which includes extracts from the Bligh Bond dedication ceremony in 1919 as reported by the local paper. We also have inspiring pieces from a companion in Switzerland, from Steve Gardiner about the sound of Chalice Well, and from Natasha Wardle and Joanna Laxton about the ethos and the 'living intention' of the Trust in its current development. Alongside the staff news and some wonderfully atmospheric photographs we hope you will enjoy this issue of 'The Chalice'. Finally, may we take this opportunity to wish all companions and supporters a Happy and Peaceful 2007.

Paul Fletcher

Front Cover: Photo by Ann Cook. Quote from Philomena Houlihan's article in this issue.

Back Cover: Mist and frost come to the Holy Thorn and yew trees in the garden. Photo by Andy Scott

The Chalice Well Trust is a registered charity, founded in 1958 by Wellesley Tudor Pole and a group of friends. It is dedicated to preserving the ancient spring and surrounding gardens as a living sanctuary for everyone to visit and experience the quiet healing peace of this sacred place.

The Trust welcomes donations to maintain Chalice Well and gardens including Little St. Michaels retreat house, and to further its work. Voluntary contributions towards upkeep are therefore greatly appreciated. Any person who wishes to support the Trust's purpose by making an annual subscription may be registered as a Companion of the Well.

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Registered Charity No: 204206

Published by The Chalice Well Trust, Chilkwell Street, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8DD, UK

News from the Well



Planting the Peace Pole, Autumn Equinox 2006

Events

WORLD PEACE DAY & AUTUMN EQUINOX 2006

If you had been here at midday on a bright, blustery autumn equinox, you would have seen us gather at the well head to welcome everyone who had come to World Peace Day. We mixed and blessed the waters brought by them from many quarters of the world. Michelle Scott McCauley spoke about the meaning of the Autumn Equinox and this was followed by a procession up to the Meadow. Ark Redwood, our head gardener, carried a magnificent wooden peace pole carved with the words 'May Peace Prevail on Earth' in four languages on its sides.

As we gathered around the chosen location our special guest John Appleton explained the history and the meaning of the Peace Pole Project (see the previous issue of *The Chalice*). He told us how the poles had inspired many personal initiatives for peace around the world and how they had worked to enable communities to identify a common goal. Caroline Wyndham poured the mixed waters and Ark planted the pole in the earth. Our new pole now stands strong and proud and is a reminder to all who come that we should never give up repeating the powerful prayer 'May Peace Prevail on Earth.'

HALLOWEEN/SAMHAIN OCTOBER 31ST 2006

When we opened the gatehouse at 5pm on Halloween, we did not know what to expect. The eager crowd rushed in, dressed in fantastic costumes, clutching their carved pumpkins to add to the garden illuminations. The children (and their parents) soon spotted the refreshment stall groaning under the weight of homemade pumpkin soup and delicious cakes. It proved hard for our two judges, Trustees Sophie and Tyna, to pick winners in the fancy dress parade; it all looked so scary fantastic! Then Robert MacCall entranced us all with magical tales. He led the children to the vesica pool and invited them to light a floating candle to honour their ancestors. The moving ceremony was accompanied with lilting harp music by Companion Colin Hope; so ended the children's time and some very happy witches and warlocks made their way home to bed.

The remaining crowd gathered under the protective arms of the yew trees, to listen to more ancestral tales from Robert MacCall. We lit a warming fire and invited those in attendance to throw a herb and incense mixture into the flames. Jana Runnells and friends brought their drums and created a rhythmic beat to accompany a 'letting go and releasing of past issues' intent. Thanks to our hardy volunteers for all their help in keeping everyone warm, involved and fed on this chilly but exciting night!



Preparing Pumpkins.

Photo by Ann Cook

WINTER SOLSTICE DECEMBER 21ST 2006

Again under the protective branches of the Yew trees, if you had been among the 350 people who gathered to celebrate the Winter Solstice, you would have heard Nicholas Mann, our companionship registrar, speak about the meaning of the time of the longest night. He spoke about the potential within the darkness, the 'Great Emptiness,' and then made way for our good friend and Companion Merlin, who represented the potential in the form of light. Merlin appeared from King Arthur's Court, concealing the Solstice flame under his cloak, to light the lantern on the Yule log in our midst.

We lit our candles and torches and made our way in procession through a gateway of light, made from branches of willow and decorated with lanterns, down to the lower lawn where the Solstice fire was waiting to be lit. We formed a circle and Sophie, Natasha, Jill and Michelle



The Solstice Fire.

Photo by Andy Scott

each took a light from the Solstice flame on the Yule log and calling "All hail the returning light!" lit the solstice fire. Natasha invited everyone to join her in song while the flames leapt and danced as the fire took hold. What could have been better but to finish with carols old and new sung by the Glastonbury Carollers as we stood around enjoying hot fruit punch and mince pies from our refreshment stall!

Forthcoming Events

Before you receive the summer newsletter, we will have held the first five events in what promises to be an exciting year. At Imbolc on Thursday, 1st February, at 9am, we will meet as usual in the lane between the Red and the White Springs. After going into the White Spring we will gather at the well head, where you are invited to share a poem or a song that celebrates the quickening energies of the year. The procession for Bride's Mound will leave from Chalice Well at about 12 noon. Seven weeks later, on Wednesday 21st March we will celebrate the Spring Equinox with a meditation at noon at the well head. By then, spring and the returning sun will be advancing, and we will meet it at Easter on Sunday the 8th April with a meditation and foot washing ceremony. Bring a towel at 12 noon.

We will celebrate Beltane on Tuesday, May 1st in the Cress Field in the traditional manner with a fire. No problem if you have to work that day, the event begins at 5am! You should be away by 8am. Feel free to come as you are or in ceremonial dress to bathe in the morning dew.

Later in the month on Rogation Day, Sunday 13th May, we have invited a team of Morris dancers to come to the Well. We will have a May pole set up; so this is your chance to weave ribbons around the pole and carry on the ceremonies of the season.

Although you should receive more details of these events in the summer issue of The Chalice, Friday 1st June is our first Full Moon Evening of the year and Companion's Day is shortly after that on Saturday 9th June. We are also pleased to announce that our Healing Weekend will take place on Saturday 25th - Monday 27th August; a three day event due to the huge success of last year. We want to include a very wide range of therapies so we would be very interested to hear from any Companion who can offer their services. As before, in addition to the healing and therapy sessions, musicians will perform at various times, and refreshments will be available from the Gardeners Lodge. Please contact Jill at the Well (info@chalicewell.org.uk) if you wish to participate or help. Watch out for news of our three day outdoor concerts, 6th, 7th and 8th July. Bliss and Terry Oldfield are confirmed and details of other performers will be announced shortly. We look forward to seeing you at these events and receiving your input about them.

Book Review

THE JOURNEY TO A SACRED WELL: GRAIL HAVEN

"Grail Haven", a new book written and published by Companions Geraldine De Welles and Richard Michael De Welles, tells their journey of faith to Australia to find a sacred well. This, 'grail quest,' was initiated by a vision of Major Tudor Pole that Geraldine experienced when staying at the Chalice Well. He told Geraldine to go to Australia "when the time was right" and bring the water to the people. This inspiring book tells how the vision was fulfilled and is full of information about healing wells, their spirits and their symbolism. Signed copies will be available in the Chalice Well bookshop by March.

A New Shop Manager

Carol Ann White joined the staff team at the Chalice Well at Christmas. She brings with her a life time of experience in retail and tourism management.

Carol trained in retail management. She has three sons, and has been a foster parent and a Promise Mentor. On returning to work after raising her family she managed the Tourist Information Centres and their stores in Weymouth and Portland. In 1989 she joined English Heritage where she was responsible for the general management of ancient monuments and historic buildings in Dorset, Somerset, Wiltshire, and Oxfordshire. This included the world heritage sites of Stonehenge and Avebury.

Carol retired in 2006 as she decided to stop being a "workaholic" and devote time to her spiritual life. She then walked the Camino, the old pilgrimage route, 500 miles across Spain to Santiago de Compostella. On returning home she started training at the Interfaith Seminary. She is a Rosicrucian and teaches Kabbalah. Carol, who has been a Companion of Chalice Well for many years, could not resist the attraction of serving here, so was persuaded to give up her retirement to manage the shop.



Carol with her assistant, Melissa, in the recently refurbished shop.

News from the Garden

At the time of writing it is just past winter solstice, and I love this time of year: the seed point in the earth's annual cycle; the gradually increasing light; the first piercings of the spears of the common snowdrop heralding the promise of a new spring; the delicious scents of the winter-flowering honeysuckle, chimonanthus and viburnum; the swelling flower buds of sarcococca and daphne hinting at sensual delights to come; and the early stirrings of new life slowly gathering pace underground. Who may not feel glad that we are fortunate enough to live here in these glorious British Isles, where the seasons are so marked, giving us the opportunity to celebrate the key points of the earth's journey around the sun? Long may it be so.

Of course, I'm not unaware of the fact that global warming may well threaten this state of affairs, and Chalice Well, like everywhere else, will have to adapt to new situations and seasonal patterns. However, I am an unflinching optimist, and do not give credence to doom and gloom scenarios. I have total faith in Gaia, and believe that this crisis is an opportunity for we humans to become truly globally conscious, and assist this planet on the next stage of her journey to self-realization. So I will not be panicking and digging everything up, and planting bananas, eucalyptus, palm trees and bougainvillea, or others of that ilk, here at the Well, and I'm sure visitors and companions would not want me to either.

The warm weather this spring and summer has meant that our apple crop was the best ever, and resulted in a total of seventy-three bottles of juice; far more than we ever imagined, which certainly bodes well for the future. The fact that we now have a commercial crop has meant that more care and attention will now have to be paid to pest and disease control, and some of you may have noticed green bands being placed around all of the trees in Buckton's Orchard. These are glue bands which will hopefully help to prevent winter moth damage. In the spring we will be hanging up a number of pheromone traps which will help deter the codling moth, which is a major problem to successful fruiting. So, fingers crossed for even more juice next year!

One old dead apple tree did succumb this year when it was toppled in a storm. It was the one at the bottom of the meadow area which I had previously planted up with a rambling rose and a clematis a number of years ago. These have now been transplanted to another dead tree a few yards away, and with luck should settle into their new abode to continue their display this year.

This autumn visitors may well have spotted me perched precariously on a stepladder slowly cutting down the height of the large beech hedge at the bottom of the meadow. I felt this was necessary, because it is good horticultural practice to renew and reshape an established hedge and allow for its regrowth. Also, I wanted to bring it in line with the other beech hedge which marks the perimeter of the meadow to unify the hedges and create the effect of a visual circle. It means the vista is broadened and that visitors walking along the chakra border path can now take in the sight of Chalice Hill.

Two new additions to the garden are a Persian Ironwood (*Parrotia persica*), which has been planted on the bank behind the big beech tree near the end of the pathway which runs past the lower swing seat. This is a magnificent small tree/large shrub for its autumn colour, so do watch out for it! The other tree is a *Sorbus vilmorinii*, a variety of rowan, which has been planted in Berry Corner to add to the colour scheme there, to which it should prove a winning display. It may already be familiar to visitors as we have had one situated in the rowan grove in the meadow for a number of years. It's the one with long-lasting berries which fade from red, through pink to rose-flushed white. Beautiful!

The initial stage in the revamping of the herb garden has begun with the digging-out of almost all of the herbs in the right-hand, triangular area. This will be thoroughly weeded and



The beech hedge in the upper garden with one of the new oak handrails in the foreground.

then replanted with mostly medicinal, magical and dye plants. I wanted to reflect the fact that as Glastonbury is renowned for its healing qualities and practitioners, any herbal theme ought to illustrate the types of plants used. It's good for people to know what echinacea, calendula, St. John's wort, evening primrose, aconitum, arnica etc actually look like; plus 'magical' herbs like mandrake, henbane and vervain; and dye plants like woad, weld and madder. It will include the apothecary's rose, paeony, heartsease, foxglove, horehound, angelica, pulsatilla, balm of Gilead, and maybe even the Tea Tree plant (which would have to be in a pot, to be housed under glass through the winter). The plan is to continue the renewal of this area over the next couple of years, so that the change is gradual rather than wholesale. I hope you approve!

Over at the shop area it was decided to dispense with the hanging baskets because the watering of them often dirtied the windows with soil splash, plus it was felt they blocked natural light. So we purchased three blue/grey containers and have simply planted them up with rosemary and thyme. This arrangement will not therefore detract from the window displays which have been redesigned for greater effect. The small triangular bed immediately outside the exit gate has also been replanted, as it had been neglected for several years. In has come a pink jasmine to clamber up the trellis, a purple/pink cistus, and two blue caryopteris. I will probably underplant with crocus and dwarf iris for the spring.

Lastly, David - ably assisted by the wonderful Steve, on a New Deal placement scheme - have been creating oak (locally-sourced, untreated, F.S.C. certified) handrails up into the Meadow. We were required to do this work because of Health and Safety regulations. They have also re-built (with locally quarried stone) the dangerous steps down into the Glade. It's surprising how many folk passing did not know this area above King Arthur's Court even existed. If you're not acquainted with it, then next time you're around try out the log-seat meditation circle - a real heaven within a haven.

Ark Redwood

Towards a Working Ethos

These past few weeks have been a time for reflection in which the staff team have sat in circle together to determine what we have called our 'Working Ethos': the core values and principles which inform the work that we do at the Well. These are values that we, as a team, have agreed to uphold and demonstrate that will provide a point of reference for our day to day activities. Webster's Dictionary defines an ethos as "The guiding beliefs, standards or ideals that characterise or pervade a group, a community, a people... The spirit that motivates the ideas, customs, or practices of a people."

Discussions are ongoing in what is very much an organic process. Crystallizing thoughts and ideas into words that resonate, feel true and sound the right note needs care and consideration. This has required a deeper level of listening, dialogue and enquiry and although it may feel at times that we have been going round in circles, I am heartened by the wisdom that has emerged from this circle of people. In January we will be meeting with the Trustees and contributing our Working Ethos towards the wider discussions on the 'Living Intention' for Chalice Well. In due course we will be sharing the outcome of this process with the community of Chalice Well for your response and feedback.

Within the staff team, there are a number of changes to report. We say goodbye to Chris Marshall with much thanks and appreciation for all that he has contributed to the Well during his time here. Sabine Fruehling-Fehr who has been our head housekeeper has taken a six month spiritual sabbatical to India. She will become the Weekend Manager upon her return in July. We have a new Shop Manager, Carol White, who has introduced herself in this issue. She has lots of exciting ideas for the shop so we can look forward to forthcoming developments. Jenny White, our resident caretaker, will take on the restored role of 'House Mother'. Some of you longstanding Companions may recall, that it was the House Mother's duty to not only take care of the retreat house but also its retreatants. There is a wonderful notice from the Archives which lists a number of polite requests to Chalice Well Guests:

"Guests are requested:

1. To retire in time to have lights extinguished by 11pm.
2. Not to leave gas burning in the bedrooms.
3. To report all breakages to the Warden or House Mother.
4. To place hot water bottles (labelled) for filling in the lobby by 7.30pm.
5. To tell the House Mother before 9am when they require sandwiches.
6. To be punctual for meals."

She's not promising hot water bottles but certainly a cup of tea and a chat from time to time.

As for 2007, we have a full calendar of events including three midsummer fundraising concerts, a three day healing event as well as our community ceremonies and celebrations.

I wish you all a wonderful and joyous New Year and look forward to seeing many of you in the weeks to come.



A late visitor to the Garden. In October 2006 a swarm of Red Admiral butterflies descended on the ivy flowers in the garden.

Natasha Wardle

Living Intention

Over the past eighteen months here at Chalice Well we have begun to alter our ways of working. At the heart of this change is a move towards greater teamwork and greater self-management within individual areas of responsibility. From the beginning of the process of development and integration a key question has presented itself - 'What is our living intention here at the Well?' This vital issue is now being explored in circle.

Overall, the living intention of Chalice Well is, of course, informed by the expressed purposes and activities of the Trust as set down in our founding mandate. But the question also addresses and brings into deeper focus other, more fundamental issues. At the centre of this question is right relationship: with ourselves, with each other, with the Well, with the wider community and environment, and with those who are drawn to visit and support this extraordinary place.

Because of its special qualities, and the unceasing flow of its ancient chalybeate waters, the Well – and its surrounds – upholds the virtues of gentleness, stillness, compassion, and a quiet radiance, which on occasion can stir dramatic transformation and change. Each of us can be cherished and nurtured by letting the Well and gardens speak to us. We may arrive at Chalice Well in various roles: as visitors, volunteers, staff, supporters and pilgrims, all drawn by the indefinable atmosphere that resides here in this valley. For the majority of us, what we most have to offer the Well in return lies in our latent qualities: virtues that we have yet to bring out, and which only the inner journey towards an authentic 'living' will unfold. A testing dynamic is often experienced by those who spend time working at the Well, since it is primarily a place of being rather than doing. To balance these two aspects is a challenge for all concerned.

The phrase living intention implies 'life with purpose.' Intentional living requires inner preparation through reflection on the purpose and activities of each day (and/or longer term plans), and an attitude of constant recollection to maintain that focus.

It means being fully 'present,' and operating from a calm inspirational centre where mind and emotions are stilled and head and heart are united in deep purpose. This is the place where spiritual energy is found.

For those of us working at the Well our living intention must be to create the opportunities and atmosphere that can support individual and collective growth, through the practice of loving kindness, goodwill, and directed purpose in all our actions and interactions. The process of exploring such questions is moving us towards a greater unity, and a deeper understanding of our common purpose, which is to serve all those who visit and support this wonderful place. The experience is reshaping our actions and attitudes, both in the day-to-day running of the well and in our longer-term objectives.

Joanna Laxton, Co-Chair

The Story of the Cover for the Chalice Well

When Wellesley Tudor Pole was first inspired by Glastonbury in the early 1900s it was unlikely that even he could have foreseen how the symbols surrounding the Chalice Well would develop in complexity and meaning over the course of the century. The primary symbol was, of course, the chalice, that found real physical manifestation in his recovery of the Blue Bowl, but there was the earlier adoption of the vesica piscis symbol on the well lid. Tudor Pole was naturally



The lid of Chalice Well. The ironwork was made in 1919.

highly attuned to these profound symbols of the place and after the trust was formed in 1959 they became fully part of its story. This article briefly describes the story of the cover of the Well.

As far as is known, the vesica piscis was first introduced into the gardens in 1919, when peace had been declared across Europe, and Frederick Bligh Bond was asked to design a new cover for the Well to mark the event. Bligh Bond drew upon motifs from his background both as a church architect and as the archaeologist in charge of the excavations of Glastonbury Abbey. He was convinced that the vesica piscis formed the basis for the design of the key building of the Abbey, the Mary Chapel, which stood on what was said to have been the site of the first Christian church in Britain.

The vesica piscis is made from two circles of the same radius, intersecting so that the centre of each circle lies on the circumference of the other. The name means ‘fish bladder’ in Latin. The central vesica is known as a mandorla meaning

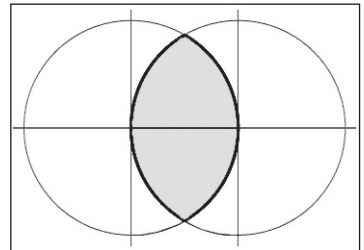
‘almond;’ in the Christian tradition it is known as the ichthys. Christ is shown in paintings and in sculpture within or emerging from the ichthys. The Pythagoreans, who believed that everything could be described in terms of pure geometry and number, held the vesica piscis as the divine figure representing the first dyad or first emanation from the womb of the cosmos. The geometrical properties of the figure were well known in the early Mesopotamia, African and Asian civilizations.

In summary, the intersection of the two circles creates not only the succession of regular polygons, the triangle, square, pentagon, hexagon and so on, but also the ratios employed by architects in their three-dimensional constructions: root 2, root 3 and root 5. The figure also produces the ratio known as the Golden Section or phi. The vesica piscis is therefore a simple, yet supremely generative figure; while the vesica at its centre, when seen vertically, is considered to be representative of the female genitals; with, perhaps, waxing and waning moons on either side.

We are fortunate that the speech made by Bligh Bond at the dedication ceremony on all Saints Day 1919 was recorded in the local newspaper. “An impressive ceremony took place at Chalice Well, Glastonbury, on Saturday, November 1st,” ran the story on November 14th, “when a new cover to the Holy Well was dedicated. Mr. Bligh Bond then gave an address on the form and the orientation of the Well and we are able this week to give the notes of this very interesting address.”

It was a learned and lengthy speech, with strong Pythagorean tendencies, that addressed many esoteric ideas such as the transition to the Age of Aquarius; but Bligh Bond eventually concluded with the following pertinent remarks.

“It is interesting to know that, through the last two centuries, the waters were visited for



The Geometry of the Vesica Piscis. The mandorla or ‘ichthys’ is the shaded area in the centre.

healing purposes, a pump room being also provided in Magdalene Street for invalids. Within the last ten years baptisms took place, according to the memory of inhabitants of Glastonbury, and water from the Jordan was sometimes mixed with that in the Well.

“As regards the symbolism of the new Well-Cover: In the beautiful hammered iron work we now see attached to the new oak lid of the Well, may be discerned a geometrical diagram, which, according to an old Greek Christian method of representation, symbolised the piercing of our Lord’s side by the spear. This is typical of many early diagrams, all having the same object – the rendering of spiritual truth by means of the purest, most intellectual system of imagery conceived by the mind, namely, truth which is ‘aeonial’ or eternal, of which geometry is the best interpreter, since it can figure for us with remarkable suggestiveness those formative principles upon which the Father has built his Creation, principles which shall endure when heaven and earth have passed away.

“Among the many esoteric interpretations of this symbol, one only needs engage our attention. It is figured in the striking of the rock by Moses, and the striking of Jesus under the law which crucified him, causing the issue from his side of blood mingled with water. The rock or stone, as Prebendary Bennett in his address today reminded us, is a symbol of the spiritual Man: when that rock is smitten the waters of healing come forth.

“The intersection of the two circles, corresponding to the North and the invisible worlds, produces the ‘Vesica’ at the overlapping, and this form is constantly seen in early Christian art as the shape of the ‘aura’ or radiance around the figure of Christ. It is also portrayed as the outline of the wound in the side of Jesus. One of the oldest crucifixes (that of Lucca) shews the Chalice at the foot of the Cross, into which flows the blood and water, and Rome has retained the symbol of the mixed chalice to this day. Turning to Glastonbury, we find this sacred Well, known as the ‘Blood Spring,’ its water containing that strange organic compound of iron which imparts a red stain to its channels and receptacles, providing us here with a natural symbol of a deeply mystic teaching, and thus serving as a type of the Holy Grail.”

We know little about how others viewed the vesica piscis. Alice Buckton was owner/resident at Chalice Well at the time and makes no mention of it in her letters. However we can be certain that feelings ran strong about the symbol and it is possible that the multifaith group present at the dedication ceremony saw it in very much the same way as Bligh Bond.

Bligh Bond introduced some other elements into the design. The five-pointed leaves and clusters of berries derive from the Glastonbury Holy Thorn, the hawthorn associated with Joseph of Arimathea, the traditional founder of the ‘Old Church’. The central line or axis running through the two circles, as described above, represents a spear. Later however, it also became identified with the sword of St Michael, one of Glastonbury’s patron saints. The sword appears in the vesica piscis over the entrance into King Arthur’s Court.

Over the years the iron has held up well but the wood of the lid has tended to rot, being so close to water. The wood has been replaced several times, including an unfortunate occasion in the 1970s when it was, albeit briefly, replaced by Perspex! English oak, the obvious choice, proved unsuitable. The blacksmith and author Hamish Miller was approached in 2004 and he offered to renovate the lid and replace the wood with a sustainably resourced hardwood that he felt would be up to the task. One of the challenges Hamish was asked to meet was that when the lid was up, the design could not be seen; could he make a replica of it on the bottom?

Hamish set about duplicating the original iron work so it could be affixed to the underside of the lid and the design become visible no matter whether the lid was open or closed. As there was some concern about the line through the centre of the design being intrusive and not part of the original geometric symbol it was proposed that it be left out altogether. Some felt it represented a masculine overlay intruding into what was, after all, a feminine symbol.



The lid of Chalice Well restored with the ironwork pattern repeated on the underside, 2004. The work was carried out by Hamish Miller, shown here. Photo by Ann Cook

Hamish got down to work and found that the central line was fundamental to the design; it could not be omitted. He also ran into a technical difficulty. He found that due to the thickness of the lid, the head of the line, the spear or arrow point, could not be represented on the underside in the same manner as it could on the top. It would prevent the lid from closing. He bent the head of the replica around upon itself to allow the lid to close and discovered that where there had been a point there was now a heart. At this stage, near to completion, Hamish called the Chalice Well and explained that he had been forced to make a change. If Chalice Well did not like the change, he would be happy to adjust it, or leave it out altogether.

The lid arrived and was installed. The general consensus was that Hamish had done the right thing in leaving the central line, axis, or spear, on the underside of the lid. Although there have been comments about the heart as a sentimental symbol, not a deeply meaningful one, they have been outweighed by the comments in favour of it. Chalice Well is extremely fortunate to have this powerful and ancient symbol set like a jewel in its midst.

Nicholas Mann and Paul Fletcher

The Chalice Well is Sound

Much has been written about the spiritual, legendary and historical significance of the Chalice Well. Many photographs have been taken of the Well, and many works of visual art have been created using the Well as the central theme of inspiration. I have observed how people may come into the Sanctuary singly or in groups, how they may look around and inside the Well, and how they may sit with the Well and meditate in silence. However, I have never read anything focusing upon the sound of the Well, I have never known anybody other than myself talk of their aural experiences at the Well, and I have never observed anyone else resting their head against the grille and listening to the notes of the constantly bubbling water. By failing to use our ears I believe we are closing ourselves to many riches, and it is with the hope of stimulating awareness of the importance of sound that I write this article.

I often wonder whether our aural sense is dulled by the frequent barrage of noise we are subjected to in the 21st century: mobile phones, piped music, TV, hi-fi, electric drills and lawnmowers, and above all the thundering and screeching of road and air traffic. We live in an age of high speed, busy-ness and quick fixes. How often do we allow ourselves to stop and listen, literally to tune in to a place, rather than pausing for as long as it takes to click the camera button? Many people have told me that they find silence scary or daunting, and that they need to generate noise and activity to avoid encountering these uncomfortable feelings. Yet to listen to somebody or something it is essential to remain still and silent; to achieve this quiet state takes regular practice. And where better to begin or enhance the regular practice of cultivating stillness (or, as the Dalai Lama calls it 'calm-abiding') than at the Chalice Well?

Whenever I sit quietly with the Well (I write 'sit with' because I regard the Well as a living being akin to a friend) I am aware of a galaxy of sound. Some sound originates from outside the garden, e.g. a passing lorry or plane, a slamming car door, a barking dog, a crying child, a ringing mobile phone, and so on. While I recognise these sounds have a right to exist, I do not wish to focus upon them, so I let them merge into the background of my awareness. Inside the garden other sounds arise, such as a bird-call or snatch of song, a rustling of leaves blown by a breeze in the treetops, a murmur of bees, a dripping of a rain droplet or berry from an overhead branch, a beating of wings, a soft footfall of a visitor ... These sounds I find more pleasurable to focus upon, but again, I let them recede to the back of my mind. There remains one more sound source, constant but ever changing: the sound of the Chalice Well itself.

My initial assumption when listening to the Well for the first time was that the sounds were forever changing. This is a true assessment with regard to the rhythm and volume of the gurgling, but as far as the pitches or frequencies of the notes are concerned I quickly realised that my premise was quite mistaken. After a few minutes of careful attunement I noticed that various pitches remained constant, allowing for any temporary disruption due to a berry or twig falling into the water, and that together these pitches formed a harmonious chord. Whenever I return to the Well I find that the overall chord remains the same, although different notes within it may be more or less prominent at any given time. The notes forming this chord are not random; they are overtones above a scarcely audible fundamental tone which lies between E flat and D. (I should state that I have not as yet checked my observations scientifically; I am relying upon an innate gift of near-perfect pitch.)

To explain overtones more fully, we need to look at a law of physics. Every note consists of a fundamental frequency, numbered 1, above which are an infinite number of overtones or harmonics, numbered from 2 upwards. Although most of these overtones lie beyond the range of human hearing we have the potential to hear a large number of overtones if the frequency of the fundamental is low. In reality, however, we can usually only detect a small minority of overtones because the shape, dimensions and material of an instrument dictates which overtones can be heard, and how prominently. The pattern of audible overtones (commonly called timbre or tone quality) therefore varies from instrument to instrument, which is why a saxophone sounds different from a guitar. Whenever I listen to the Well I notice that overtones 7 and 9, and other odd-numbered ones, stand out especially prominently. The pitches of these overtones have remained constant from visit to visit, but when I last sat with the Well in November I realised I could not detect the fundamental tone at all. However, the pattern of audible overtones showed me that the fundamental was still resonating to the same frequency. The very fact that I could not actually hear the note seemed to emphasise it all the more in my imagination.

I sense that the fundamental tone of the Well is closer to E flat than D. The note E flat has great outdoor significance for me. It suggests a landscape of ancient forests, of wild and dark (though not sinister) mystery. I shall never forget toning a low E flat in my garden with my local Sound Meditation group. We had never before toned to this note, and we all found that it stirred up something 'rich and strange' within the garden; it was as if we were communing with deep nature. The note D conjures up for me a feeling of home, of structures built upon firm foundations, and of limitless space and serenity. I therefore consider the fundamental tone of the Well to be a meeting point between inner and outer, between the home and the garden, between the wild and the tranquil. I will emphasise, however, that these experiences are purely subjective; I would be fascinated to hear how others are inspired by these sounds.

Ultimately it is of little relevance what the fundamental and overtones of the Well are. How we listen and respond to the sounds is surely the crux of the matter. Do we stand just long enough to register that the Well is gurgling and then move onto the next experience



The waterfall in King Arthur's Court. Picture taken at a full moon evening in 2006.

or source, or do we sit down, allowing the sound to wash into our ears, imagination, thoughts, feelings and spirit, being satisfied with and grateful for what is here with us? In other words are we forever going to search desperately for that something which is already with us here and now?

The Chalice Well gardens are surely a sensory paradise. There is so much to enjoy through seeing, touching,

smelling, and even the water's taste can be agreeable. However, it is the listening sense which contains the deepest joy for me. This joy remains with me constantly; I can hear the sound of the Well as I write this nearly two hundred miles away. It acts as a gateway to the stillness of my inner self, and I am very grateful that this calming sound is ever with me.

I hope that this short article has provided encouragement to take more time out to listen, not just at the Well, but within the home environment. I also hope that we will put a greater value upon silence, and respect all those who wish to visit and live in peace and quiet.

Finally, let us remember that the word 'sound' has at least three strands of meaning, aural, health and water (as in the Sound of Iona). The Chalice Well is therefore well and truly Sound!

Steve Gardiner is a professional composer and performer living in West Cornwall. He has recently released a CD ('STILL') of his music which links music, meditation and creativity in an original way. He loves exploring sound with others, and is especially inspired by Rumi's poetry. He can be contacted on any sound issue on 01736 810183.

Steve Gardiner

From a Companion

REMEMBERED IMPRESSIONS *by Philomena Houlihan*

When I visited Chalice Well for the first time several years ago, I pretty much thought I knew what to expect. I had heard reports from friends about the Well and I had read much of what has been written. However, nothing could have prepared me for the abiding impact it was to have on my life. As soon as I walked past the gatehouse that very first time and stepped into the gardens I was immediately drawn into the enveloping presence of sacredness which abides

there. As I stood between the two great guardian yews all thoughts and expectations fell away as I responded to the living Presence all around me. Dropping down deep into my own soul's presence, a profound sense of reverence flooded my heart. I was standing on sacred ground and all I had to do was to simply allow myself to be drawn forth by the stream of the living energy calling me onwards.

Within Arthur's courtyard I very easily and naturally allowed myself to go deeper into the mystery of this Presence. I sat for a long time, my whole being still and receptive, awake, alert and responsive to energetic soul impressions. I was reminded of Christ's invitation "Abide with me". Within the deep silence that is the gift of the Chalice Well, I accepted that invitation and its benefits have expanded into my life ever since. The essence of The Well is life giving, it has always been and will remain so. As I made my way up the steps from Arthur's courtyard, it was clear that I was making a pilgrimage, connecting with the sources of light and love and peace that give true meanings to our lives. Whenever I walk on sacred ground I need to obey that inner command to slow down, redirect my gaze from the outer world to the inner landscape of the heart, and to come into harmony with the unseen forces all around me.

I drank the waters from the Lion's Head and felt blessed beyond measure and connected to all those before me who had bowed their heads with reverence at this spot. As I sprinkled the waters over my head, I prayed for the flowering of peace in the hearts of all beings throughout our planet.

While walking down the path between the Chakra Borders, the energetic Presence translated into a silent chorus of hosannas. Drawn by the structure and form, colour and light, I was left in no doubt that I was being accompanied by the Devic forces who dwell in the Chalice Well Gardens. The borders are a reflection of the tone, the note, the hidden music of the Chalice Well. This silent leitmotif is available to be experienced in every tree, flower and shrub, in every summer shower or winter frost. This wondrous Presence offers itself up to us whenever we allow the stream of life to flow freely into and outwards from our hearts. It is healing beyond measure.

As I reached the end of the path and opened the gate which leads into the Well Head itself, I was aware of that liminal space which is energetically felt - simply by having to stop, open the gate and enter. This allowed me to pause for an instant on the threshold and to ready myself, as it were. Once again the luminous and unmistakable invitation to rest awhile in the heart of the living Presence. As I sat in quiet meditation by the Well, I felt as if I had come home, home to my true self. I experienced a velvet spaciousness within which I came to rest. I felt bathed in peace and tranquillity. I was touching the heartland of the Mystery, where the exultation of the spirit is made manifest, where the veil between the realm of the Divine and the world of form is drawn back for a little while. Once again I was reminded of the promise of the Christ "My Peace I Give You" as the radiant qualities of the living Presence washed over me. In that moment I felt truly blessed. I have been to Chalice Well many times since that initial visit, and on each occasion I have felt the same soul nourishment and deep communion with the living Mystery.

At present I am living in Switzerland, far removed from the Chalice Well in miles but remaining ever close to it in my heart and mind. This Companions' Journal keeps me up to date with news of the Well and so I continue to feel connected. However, there are times when I need to make that deeper connection which brings me into communion with the Well. These are the times when I experience an urgent up-swelling of longing to be in Chalice Well Gardens. As this is not physically possible, I go into the silence of meditation. I simply close my eyes, focus my mind, and I find myself once again walking through the gardens. I am transported into that numinous Presence where I am flooded with the peace and love that dwell therein. No amount of absence or distance can dull that great luminosity which is the living essence of Chalice Well. It continues to infuse my heart.

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