

## Background information to *Merlin: The Return*

### How and why the book came to be written

It was December 2017. My wife, Soleira, and I returned to the UK from a 3-month visit to Melbourne where we had co-led several workshops and renewed our friendship with a host of people that we have known for many years. This was the finale of an eighteen-month journey that started when we left our rented accommodation in West Sussex, our wonderful home for eleven years, to become temporary nomads.

We had stayed with friends in various parts of the UK, toured Cornwall, holidayed in Southern Spain, visited Melbourne, and, finally, took a two-week cruise around New Zealand. Although we had intended to include Cambodia, Bali, and Fiji on our itinerary, nevertheless we felt the call to change our plans and fly back to the UK.

At the beginning of our adventure we had already sold, given away, or taken to a recycle centre almost all of our possessions accumulated during the twenty years that we had been together. It had been a herculean task, but a necessary one, as it meant that when we arrived in Glastonbury that December to stay with friends who ran a B&B, we had only a car-full of belongings to our name. Nothing in storage. Just a have-car will-travel outlook!

It was fitting that we returned to Glastonbury, not just because we had met and married there back in 1996, but because we both have a strong connection to the place. It is a source of magical richness for us and certainly epitomises the fabled Avalon.

This, then, has been a home-coming of sorts for us both and it parallels in a way the return of Merlin to his old haunts; walking the land and revisiting the sacred sites to see what is new.

My novella (only 15,000 words) seemed to write itself. I remembered the last episode of the TV series “Merlin”, where the final shot shows a youthful Merlin foregrounded against Glastonbury Tor. But my Merlin has a different characterisation than the TV series depiction; he possesses and displays a greater depth of wisdom and a keen knowing of the right actions to take in any situation. Characterisation is particularly important to me because it lays the groundwork for how your character will grow and determines what words will fit them best.

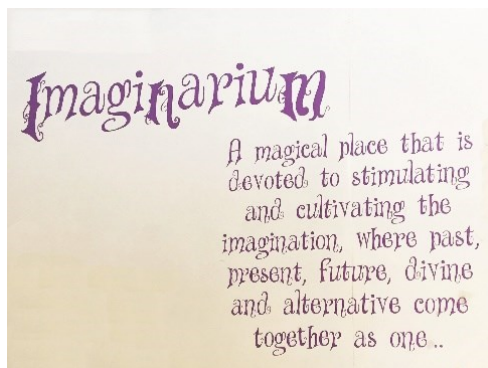
Throughout the book, I have sought to showcase different aspects of Merlin ... or perhaps this is really Merlin’s story, and he is directing me to write about his thoughts and actions in a particular light. I see him as having great wisdom coupled with great humility, showing compassion and understanding, having wit and humour yet not laughing at people’s expense.

I wanted to give people a sense that Merlin is not a figment of imagination that relies on trickery and sleight of hand deception. Merlin’s magic seems familiar and within reach – at its heart it’s about telepathy, about talking with the consciousness of nature, of knowing what people need without having to ask them, and always coming from a place of assuredness. Merlin does not dither; he is quick-witted and direct; and he’s always seeking to encourage the best to surface in people. And I write about him with a great fondness, perhaps because he is also me!

## Notes of interest

I have been to Glastonbury and the surrounding area many times. In fact, I lived in Glastonbury in 1993/94 and again in 1996, and lived in nearby Street during 1997 and 1998. So anything that I write about the physical reality of Glastonbury and the experiences that I gained from living there is authentic and forms the basis of the book.

As the Author's Note in the book makes clear, certain of my personal experiences pepper the writing. On my first walk up the Tor I faced a strong wind which deterred me from reaching the summit: I include the mention of winds in the story because that is part of the nature of the Tor, you can not only be buffeted by winds but on occasion you can venture to the edge of the summit, hands outstretched to either side, and let the wind support you in an "I'm flying" iconic moment.



Another real-life incident recorded in the book is the mention of a fairy tree in one of the high street shops. There was such a tree (albeit artificial) in an upstairs room in a gift shop that's now known as the "Imaginarium". Although access to the upper level is closed to the public, nevertheless, when I was up there sometime in the 1990's, admiring the many trinkets that hung from its branches, I could feel a soft, subtle energy surrounding it, which I describe in the book as likened to a 'gentle buzzing of bees'. Details like this are important as they attest to the magical aura of Glastonbury, give the story a context for our imagination to connect with it, and show us

that the border between fantasy and 'reality' is really paper thin.

Similarly, each of the sacred sites mentioned in the book have their own endearing qualities that I've sought to emphasise. For example, the White Springs (once a pump house) is presented inside as a pagan temple: there are altars to pagan deities, such as Brigid and The Green Man, and a roughness/rawness to the place that helps the observer feel into the atmosphere to appreciate the silence, reverence, and mysticism that is there. There is a large stone pool in the centre where anyone can strip naked and immerse themselves in the cold water for a purifying experience. Atmosphere and a permission to be publicly naked is, for some, an incredibly freeing experience, and so cannot be overlooked or downplayed. Such an experience can be like a rebirth, allowing you to go beyond the surface veneer of reality to engage with a deeper and powerful ecstatic feeling for life.

This feeling for life is exhibited by many Glastonbury residents, especially at festival events. They take great pleasure in dyeing their hair in outrageous colours, wear beautiful flowing fabrics, and take every opportunity to display their wonderful weirdness/uniqueness – whether as fairy, priest(ess), goddess, shaman, pagan witch, etcetera. I, myself, have my Merlin robe and purple hat!

Glastonbury truly is a place where magic abounds, but it is important, as Merlin will no doubt tell you, that you must come to it with eyes of wonder and allow your own magic to awaken and stir itself deep within you.



<https://www.unitythroughdiversity.org/white-spring.html>

<https://www.mythicalireland.com/myths-and-legends/brigid-bright-goddess-of-the-gael/>

<https://www.tor.com/2019/06/11/the-green-man-when-is-a-myth-not-a-myth/>

## Symbolism

*Merlin: The Return* contains both logos and mythos. **Logos**, being the observable, the tangible, the visible, and arguably the seeming external reality of things – a factual and literal truth. Whilst **Mythos** is the invisible and intangible, representing an inner world reality – an enduring knowingness.

With this book, then, we are not dealing completely with literal history, but a combination of personal experiences sprinkled with mythology, and using the medium of a well-established literary perspective concerning Merlin and King Arthur, to arrive at a twist on the cannon lore relating to those characters. Merlin and King Arthur are legendary figures, although there is some evidence that suggests they did exist in some form. And their appearance in my story is not time dependent, as I'm not trying to establish their likely identities for that would be difficult to prove beyond doubt. They appear because they represent an essential set of truths that require to be communicated. And those truths are bound up with those characters in the story, for they have information to share with you – as reader or listener – that may change the ways in which you view your inner and outer world realities.

For example, when Merlin learns from Arthur that good and evil no longer exist on Earth save in memory and habitual thinking, then Merlin doesn't seek proof of that from Arthur. Neither does he look for proof of that from anyone on Earth. Merlin knows that here is a truth that feels so right, bound as he has been to his own nemesis, that he has only to declare that there is no separation in human consciousness for the concept/story/knowledge of good and evil to be completely erased. Good and evil had been set up as polar opposites, as had many other forms of separation for humans. With this act of magic, Heaven and Earth can become realised; Camelot and Avalon unified; and the logos and mythos embraced.

Essentially, the book is about reality creation. You are given certain snatches of dialogue and monologue, presented with verifiable facts (such as actual places), asked to witness seemingly magical acts (such as visiting the etheric Camelot), and requested to align with the spirit of the book – as if it is a guidebook into a fantasy realm. YOU bring something to the reading or listening experience, to suspend any disbelief of what is logically possible so that the fantastical has a place to rest within you.

And when you have finished the book, what then? Hopefully the book has worked its magic with you. So instead of just looking at the stone structure that is St. Michael's tower, your hands touch the stonework and feel a connection with its energy, for it is a symbol of something and has been held in esteem and reverence by generations of pilgrims who have travelled from all over the world to that spot because Glastonbury Tor has become iconic: a place where magic may be experienced.

If you want to experience magic in your life then you need to give it space; you need to trust that "There are more things in heaven and Earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy" [Hamlet]

You need mythos to communicate meaning beyond the literal (logos). For when you do so then your life takes on a magical quality such as you never thought was possible.

"Sometimes, in order to communicate our deepest feelings and intuitions, we need to use a song, a poem ... or a story."

[ *Biblical Chronology | Understood as Literature, Not Literal History* ]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FplUZhZTlug> (first 90 secs outlines the logos and mythos)

# Prologue

## Mythological history

We learn in the first few sentences that Merlin has returned to Avalon after a fifteen-hundred year absence. We don't know what he has been doing during those years, it's a mystery to him as well as to us, but we do know that there has been a purpose for his sudden reappearance. Perhaps he had a higher guidance that he was following or he was transported back to his old haunts through some unknown agency. That's a question mark that, hopefully, will be answered later in the book.

The timeline seems right. Amidst the possibilities of there being a mythological folkloric King Arthur, I have chosen to follow the reference to "a legendary British leader who, according to medieval histories and romances, led the defence of Britain against Saxon invaders in the late 5th and early 6th centuries." [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King\\_Arthur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Arthur)

Interestingly, I recently (17<sup>th</sup> Oct 2020) came across a website that purports to reference the historical battlefield where Arthur met his death - <https://www.visitcornwall.com/things-to-do/arts-and-heritage/north-coast/tintagel/vale-avalon-and-arthurian-centre>.

Since the legendary stories about Merlin and Arthur are interlinked, we should also look at the references for Merlin's origin. Of the Welsh character, Myrddin, Geoffrey Ashe, author of *Mythology of the British Isles and King Arthur's Avalon*, said: "There are lots of stories, but you can get back to a real Merlin in the 6th century, and he is the most plausible one. It is quite possible that he was a warrior - all chiefs and nobles at that time were expected to be fighting men." <https://bit.ly/355TXSa>

Likewise, *The True History of Merlin the Magician* talks about Merlin in this way – "a learned figure from the cutting edge of medieval science and adept in astrology, cosmology, prophecy, and natural magic, as well as being a seer and a proto-alchemist" – giving credence that he is a historical figure and a person of fact rather than a dubious legendary fiction. <https://yalebooks.yale.edu/book/9780300144895/true-history-merlin-magician>

Even with some wisps of legend to refer to, I chose to write fresh and not try to tie in my record of events to any canon lore surrounding Arthur and Merlin. Nor did I give thought to add references to the knights of the round table, though you will come across a mention of Excalibur later in the book.

## Placement

The closing moments of the last episode of the BBC Tv fantasy drama *Merlin* shows Merlin in the vicinity of Glastonbury Tor in a modern-day setting. That could well have led to a further series of shows for the successful drama but the decision was made to end the show without a tantalising modern-day sequel.

However, that is where my book starts – with a modern youthful Merlin appearing in Glastonbury in the present day. Why Glastonbury? Well, Glastonbury has many associations with legend – it is the claimed resting place of Arthur and Guinevere, the site of the Holy Thorn tree that tradition says was planted by Joseph of Arimathea, and, also, it hosts the other-worldly mystic isle of Avalon where priestesses that served the goddess (known as The Lady of Avalon) were said to have had their dwellings.



There are many other places that claim the right to be called Avalon, but Arthurian romance has clearly designated the area surrounding Glastonbury, known as the Somerset Levels, to be The Vale of Avalon.

*The view from Glastonbury Tor looking down to Glastonbury town and Wearyall Hill beyond that.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avalon#Connection\\_to\\_Glastonbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avalon#Connection_to_Glastonbury).

Furthermore, the significance of Glastonbury Tor cannot be overstated. It has a definite energy feel to it, whether you plod up the path from Well House lane or survey the panoramic views of the countryside from its summit. It is a place of pilgrimage; it has an iconic profile to rival that of Stonehenge; and “is said to be the entrance to Annwfn, the Celtic Otherworld”.

<http://www.earlybritishkingdoms.com/arthur/avalon.html>

Glastonbury, then, is where the main action takes place. You will find scattered throughout the book references to the many sacred sites in the area – the Chalice Well gardens, Glastonbury Abbey, the White Springs, Wearyall Hill, and the Tor itself – places where something can be palpably felt by those who are attuned to the magic!

## Chapter One

Merlin does not make an entrance in this opening chapter – or does he? Clearly there is some magical agency at work. There is an unknown figure at the summit of Glastonbury Tor controlling the winds, there are fairies inside a shop on the high street, and then there is a young boy who seems to have the power to teleport.

Like the prologue, this chapter raises many questions, although it does seem clear that the proclamation “he is coming” must surely refer to Merlin’s return. There seems to be much jubilation among the wildlife, too: someone, somewhere, has been spreading good news. Could that be the figure on the Tor?



Already the Tor is gaining in significance. It is a notable landmark in the area and can be seen from miles around. St. Michael’s tower is all that remains of a stone church built here in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

A Wikipedia entry says this, “The Tor is mentioned in Celtic mythology, particularly in myths linked to King Arthur, and has several other enduring mythological and spiritual associations.”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glastonbury\\_Tor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glastonbury_Tor)

The Tor then is special to Glastonbury, because of the reverence with which it is held locally and its historical and spiritual significance. Will we learn about its mythology, and its possible connection to Merlin and Arthur? Will we discover that the tower is a portal to another world? Will the young boy who has seen shadowy figures in the tower overcome his fright and revisit it? What further part will he play in this story? Will he get to meet Merlin?

All that we can really say at this point in the book is that Glastonbury is a magical place.

## Chapter Two

Yes, Merlin is ageless. He might have appeared in his cavern after a 1500 year absence with an unchanged personality, but he swiftly decides that he can change his appearance to suit himself – reinventing himself, as various celebrities have done for themselves in recent decades. You may notice that the narration of his voice has likewise changed to fit with his declaration that he is the “embodiment of youthfulness and fun”.

But then we have a surprise and a further change in characterisation, as the young girl that he meets in the high street undergoes two transformations in voice and mannerisms within the space of a few minutes. We feel that the first transformation is a channelling: the voice hinting at a previous lifetime when the girl was a seer. The other transformation, though, is more sinister, and we learn that Merlin’s adversary can possess people.

Luckily, this dark threat quickly passes.

We get a hint from the girl that the legend of King Arthur is still very much in Glastonbury’s thoughts, but it’s not his return that is anticipated – “it’s the new magic that we’re all waiting for.” Just what will be the form of the new magic though? Will the book revolve around this new magic?

In this chapter you find scatterings of notable sayings, such as “what is worth waiting for is never lost to us, neither through time nor space”. They characterise the book: you may even say that these are Merlin’s teachings being spoken by other characters; if that is so, you may wonder if they are cryptic clues that may prove useful later.

From the high street we move to the Chalice Well gardens, a stopping point on Merlin’s and our journey around the notable and sacred sites of Glastonbury: each place having a unique energy that the narrative and dialogue seek to convey.

Now we get evidence of Merlin’s magic – he can teleport himself and others! He is also displaying a sense of humour, as he tells the young girl (maybe 10 years old?) that “I might have to engage you as an apprentice for a few hundred years” in order to teach her how to teleport! Just what else can Merlin do?



*The wellhead in the Chalice Well gardens showing the vesica piscis design.*

Apparently, visions come easy to him, though we learn that he doesn’t always know what they portend. Is there a limit to his abilities then, or perhaps his vision is another clue that he (and we) will use to solve his riddles? You start to realise (if you haven’t already known this) that there are questions and riddles that Merlin must answer in order to further his knowledge about modern-day Avalon and uncover the reason for his recall to this Avalon. And what agency has the power to summon him in the first place?

We need to pay attention to every piece of writing that we encounter, as if we are provided with a source of reliable and authentic wisdom that’s waiting for Merlin to understand it’s symbolism.

As a special treat there is a further clue in this chapter when Merlin meets Alyssia, a priestess. As an aside, there are priestesses in modern-day Glastonbury. You will find details of the 3-year Priest(ess) of Avalon trainings on this website - <https://goddess temple teachings.co.uk/priestessofavalon/>.

Alyssia, we learn, is an exceptionally bright character and provides Merlin with important information about the significance of the red and white springs that flow nearby. The website <https://www.whitespring.org.uk/> will add to the atmosphere generated in the book and confirm that the White Spring is another sacred site – one that Merlin must connect with on his tour of Glastonbury.



*The colourful entrance to StoneAge crystal shop. There are gemstones embedded in the walkway leading to the shop. <https://www.stoneage.co.uk/>*



*One of Glastonbury's amazing murals. <https://glastonbury.gov.uk/glastonbury-mural-trail/>*

## Chapter Three

The first two chapters were instrumental in setting the scene for the book and introducing the main characters. Now we are really going to see Merlin in action and uncover a lot of missing information.

Merlin takes advantage of the lack of people on the Tor to attune to Arthur, who he knows is in the Everlasting Realms: an afterlife place in the etheric. It's no surprise that Merlin can travel there (though not physically) and converse with him.

What Merlin says is quite a surprise, he has "felt the calling for many things to come together, to be reunited again". This tells us that he is becoming aware of what essentially is the main thrust of the book – that there is a reunion about to take place. Would that be, we wonder, the union of Arthur's Camelot with earthly Avalon? Too early to say yet.

But what follows are perhaps the most poetic passages in the book – Merlin's Invocations. Through reading them you realise that he has a great love for the Earth and its peoples. He is akin to Moses in the breadth of his vision and the strength of his faith to do that which he is called to do.

It is that vision and wisdom that sets Merlin apart from anyone else. He is an enigma and a mystery, but one of great talent who has seemingly mastered Time and Space. And we see that he has great insight and mastery of language. Addressing Earth, he says, "are you that place of Paradise for us? That Holy Grail which we have sought many a long year, little realising that it was not a place nor yet a person nor yet a holy relic – but a state of wholeness within ourselves that was sought?" A hint that Earth and its people are becoming one: that humanity had forgotten its greatness and glory, but that it is being restored to them!

Merlin's second invocation is unexpected; in this one he speaks to "the forces that had set him forth on his journey through time and space". In other words, he is conversing with his origin. What does he say and what, in turn, is said to him? You will need to listen to the recording to find out!

And finally, the boy who teleported to the Tor and then found himself dunked in the River Brue mysteriously appears in front of Merlin. It's been an adventuresome day for Merlin but, even so, he's not fazed by this sudden interruption. He recognises something special about this boy, this aspiring young wizard. Will he become Merlin's apprentice?

## Chapter Four

Here we are again at King Arthur's etheric Camelot - a construction made from light! We are here because Merlin knows that the boy who saw the wraith-like beings in St. Michael's tower needs to meet Arthur for some special purpose. It's likely that Merlin has taken him under his wing and will guide him in controlling and developing his new-found abilities.

Arthur has become more philosophical since leaving Earth and we learn that he never lost his desire to help others less fortunate than himself.

As he explains, "Our plan was to help people realise that the concept of opposites and the choosing of sides has imprisoned them." He had devised a plan that involved drawing the darkness and the illusion of darkness away from Earth, so that people didn't have to deal with debilitating energy-forms which had entrapped them through their polarised thinking.

"For, in truth, the darkness has only ever been that which we seek to resist. And so, the Light and the Dark, Good and Evil, whatever those opposing sides may be called – no longer exist ... save in memory or habitual thinking."

Extract taken from Merlin: The Return

Arthur points out that "in truth, the darkness has only ever been that which we seek to resist." Therefore, if there is no resistance then there can be no entrapment, and one's energy can then be turned to other things – such as the actualising of one's dreams.

We see that Arthur is no longer a kingly warrior because, as Merlin found for himself, there is no earthly identity that needs to be sustained and no roles to follow. Arthur is free to be himself, and he concludes by offering his wisdom to the boy – "I have no need to seek out foes and do battle with them. No more wars to justify honour and champion justice. I am done with it completely. And when your world decides that they no longer want that also, then humanity will have the peace that it seeks."

The boy has already indicated that he would love to live in a place like Camelot; so, when Arthur rests his hand on the boy's arm it has great significance. Is it a coming together of heaven and earth? We might call it a transfer of power, but perhaps a truer interpretation is that Arthur has given the boy a taste of what a harmonious earthly world looks like. The vision of that, the feeling of that, the knowing of that, and the desire for that is now part of this boy's future.

## Chapter Five

The action has now shifted to Wearyall Hill. There Merlin discovers a group of people congregated around one of the Holy Thorn trees, made famous through a legendary association with Joseph of Arimathea. This particular tree has had its branches lopped off but that has not stopped people from still treating it with reverence as a holy site. <https://spckpublishing.co.uk/blog/natural-holy-places-britains-top-10.html>. Of special note - this book was written during the period February to May 2018, and so predates the complete removal of the Holy Thorn tree in May of 2019.



It's interesting to consider Merlin's thoughts and feelings towards the Holy Thorn. It's typical of Merlin to be thoughtful and not swayed by people's actions. He knows that it's important "to put things into context and get an understanding of what's really taking place before delivering any judgement." But there is something that calls to him about his experience here – something lingering at the edge of his consciousness that seems important.

From here we move to the Abbey Ruins – from a vandalised tree to the destruction of an impressive architectural gem. The dismantling of the Great Church of Glastonbury Abbey followed its acquisition and subsequent sacking by Henry VIII, as part of the infamous *Dissolution of the Monasteries*. You can read the history of this site at <https://cromwell-intl.com/travel/uk/glastonbury/abbey-church.html>.

More information, including details about the archaeology of the area, can be found at <https://www.glastonburyabbey.com>.

But back with Merlin. As he walks around the ruins, he meets an old man who expresses his sorrow at the lost opportunities in his life, which seems to mirror the current state of the Abbey – a *seeming* desolation. Merlin is touched. Somehow, we know that he will do more of his magic here. But just how can he reconcile the man's condition with what Arthur had previously declared as "the radiant universe" that is all around us?

Merlin plants a seed in human consciousness. Of course, many do this but Merlin has perfected it to a fine art; he isn't bound by people's thoughts and beliefs; his focus is on how to enrich their lives. Perhaps this was what was niggling at him earlier; that his presence in modern-day Glastonbury is not by accident – he is required to do certain things and not just be an observer. It is a good thing that he met with Arthur and learned that Good and Evil no longer exist "save in memory or habitual thinking", for that prompts him to reconcile a split in human consciousness.

This is one of Merlin's main acts of magic in the book – the bringing together of heaven and earth: making available "A space of infinite possibility where all things co-exist in their pure form". And when Merlin says something is done ... then it is done!

## Chapter Six

In this short section we learn that Merlin is close to solving a riddle. Whilst watching a couple walking down Glastonbury high street, he has a flashback to his meeting with Alyssia (see chapter two) in which she made a reference to the importance of the red and white springs in the area – that “Maybe the waters intertwine somewhere in their flow, and then again maybe they really come from the same source”.

Is this an analogy to male and female energies, that if you trace them back to their source they could be considered to be as one? It’s an interesting claim, but that’s not the whole picture. For also in chapter two, Merlin had a vision when sitting by the well head in the Chalice Well gardens. He saw a male and a female figure, with the male presenting the female with what seemed to be a blade. But the vision gave him no clear interpretation.

Merlin feels (perhaps because of what has happened in the intervening chapters) that he can now understand the significance of that scene. And so, he has another interesting vision which prompts him to visit Arthur again.

Arthur clarifies Merlin’s supposition about the female figure by saying that there are actually two female figures that have a claim upon Arthur. One is the personification of Camelot – his dream that he has now fulfilled. The other is The Lady of Avalon – the personification of all that is sacred, holy and divine – and who rests in Glastonbury Tor awaiting the unification with his Camelot and, by extension, the union of the male and female, and the union of their two worlds.

It is touching to hear or read Arthur’s dedication to The Lady of Avalon. Here is a sample – “I draw a heart upon you and ask you to feel the tracing of my fingers on your flesh. That you will know this as a token, a physical representation of my love for you.”

You may wonder now at what Arthur represents. He has relinquished his kingly presence but something greater and more magnificent is showing itself as the storyline unfolds.

So, it is not just Merlin then who still has an earthly connection. Arthur may have given his heart to his beloved Camelot but it is his honour that he has pledged to The Lady, and that will only be redeemed when his final quest – that of the unification – is complete.

## Chapter Seven

Merlin tells his young protégé to be curious about his gifts, for he may have others that have yet to be revealed. That people “are largely unaware of [their gifts] until they actually need to use them”. Merlin’s strategy is to encourage the boy to ask questions, to be curious, and not be afraid of what he can do. The boy has only just found out that he can do seemingly impossible things, but he needs to know that the impossible can become normal, and that other people can also do the seemingly impossible.

The boy likes the idea “of being a super-hero with super powers”, and Merlin ingeniously tells a story about how the flame of life is a magical force that people carry inside them. That this force can pass from person and awaken people to their magic.

Merlin asks him to “imagine that you have eyes like mine. Eyes that can see the magical world inside you”. This is a veiled invitation to the reader/listener to do the same – to find the flame of life, the source of their power, the unique qualities of their magic – and to claim that they can use their giftedness to be on a par with Merlin.

Alas, the boy has to go before Merlin can tell him about dragons (surely the boy could have stayed longer to hear about that!). And we get a forewarning that Merlin will be absent for the next three months in the story, as he will be setting of a quest that will take him to the towns and villages of the neighbouring countryside. Just what will he be doing we wonder?

## Chapter Eight

In the previous chapter, Merlin talked to the young boy about how everyone is gifted in some way and that their gifts may take time to emerge, sometimes only showing themselves in times of need.

Well his talk encouraged the boy – who has become curious and a great listener and may even be a telepath. He can hear voices. In chapter one he was sure that the wind taught him an odd little rhyme; and now it appears that someone or “they” are warning him about the imminent arrival of the dragon people.

Clearly, he isn’t scared; he appears excited, but also bewildered. He doesn’t know who the dragon people are, but we recollect, from chapter seven, that he thought he saw a dragon flying around the Tor. Was that coincidence?

Meanwhile, Merlin is on his way back to Glastonbury, having been prompted to go on a pilgrimage of sorts around the surrounding area. Just what has he been doing? We learn that he has communicated with elemental spirits, raised the vibration of the land (in his inimitable way), and “gifting people with the consciousness that he had discovered in Arthur’s own realm – a unity consciousness”.

Merlin always knows what to do. We wonder just how he knows these things. Is it intuition? Is he a telepath? Can he foretell the future? What we do know is that he is incredibly resourceful. People have treated him as a beggar and generously given him money which, he in turn, now passes to Alyssia.

What is this for? she asks him. Well Merlin has seen her potential as a teacher of young children. But what will she teach them?

“Talk to them about magic. Inspire them to ask questions. Encourage them to think for themselves. But above all, remind them to love this world and all that it can be.”

## Chapter Nine

Merlin reflects on his recent travels, particularly his visit to Chew Valley Lake due North of Glastonbury. That body of water had an attraction for him that he still puzzles over. (This is a reservoir created in the 1950s; see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chew\\_Valley\\_Lake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chew_Valley_Lake) for a view of the lake).

He seems to have had some sort of mystical experience from gazing at the water. But it's not until he's back in Glastonbury that he has a vision pertaining to the Lady of the Lake – the one who gave Excalibur to King Arthur. And yet it's also possible that the vision alludes to the Lady of Avalon! Ah, haven't we been here before, back in Chapter Six, when there was ambiguity about the identity of the female figure in that previous vision?

The identity, though, doesn't seem to matter, for Merlin is clear that his vision is about "the giving and receiving of power". Not the old forms of power invested in physical prowess and a 'power over' authority. He senses that this is "a new power, celestial in origin ... A new Excalibur, forged from wisdom and understanding, born in the undying fires of one's own commitment to life".

It is a power of the people, of all people, for all people. We have a foreknowing that there will be more of Merlin's magic coming up – as if he is the standard bearer for humanity, taking the first steps towards a new way of life that just waits to be embodied.

He finds himself "at the centre of a universe with countless worlds around him... Everything seemed to be waiting. As if these worlds were waiting to be dreamt into physical reality. Held in suspension for a new beginning time."

Suddenly, everything shifts. Back at Glastonbury Tor, Merlin is guided to touch the stones of St. Michael's tower. He receives a surprise – he becomes aware of the presence of a white dragon, gatekeeper to the magical realms, that rests inside the hill.

Merlin clarifies the story for us, that it is this dragon that had called him to Glastonbury to complete several pieces of magical work. (Do you remember what they were?). But there is a final capstone to this amazing story still to take place – the return of a red dragon "who had gone far away on a quest to bring back a new source of magic for people". (Aren't dragons wonderful?!!!!!) Humanity is saved!!

The story of the red and white dragons is celebrated every May in Glastonbury (Covid-19 permitting). It is the battle of the dragons in Glastonbury High street when the frost dragon of winter (white) is challenged by the fire dragon of summer (red) and is defeated.

But remember also the story of the red and white springs that flow only yards apart in Wellhouse Lane. Hmm, symbolism is everywhere!



Here are two videos from 2019 that give a flavour of the Beltane celebrations in Glastonbury.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUjPhYbCclw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DB3eaxuFS7M>

## Chapter Ten

In chapter eight Merlin asked Alyssia to teach young people about magic and encourage them to love the world. Now we learn that Merlin has apparently started some classes himself, taking on the three young children - that we've already been introduced to by name - as apprentices.

On this particular evening, on the grassy slopes of Wearyall Hill, he is giving them instruction on how to learn from one another and to share their magical abilities.

Merlin starts the session by telling the young boy to use "eyes of wonder", so that "you're always looking for something new and will never take anything for granted ... and not make the mistake of thinking that you know everything". The boy is surprised to hear Merlin admit that he doesn't know everything because that would mean he has nothing left to learn.

Each child is well acquainted with their "gift" and is able to talk about it with great insight, giving practical examples for the others to see how the gift might be used and adapted by themselves. Each gift that's described is an opportunity for the reader/listener to see how they might use their own magical abilities, to know what they are and to sense how to use them and talk about them to others.



Later, at the Tor, Alyssia and the young boy are waiting for something amazing to happen. This is a test of the boy's faith: to be able to receive information and authenticate it without doubting his telepathic ability.

Finally, they witness the long-awaited return of the red dragon – though "to their eyes it was a pulsating red light that seemed to fill the night sky, interspersed with flames of gold". The dragon has been on a quest to bring a new source of magic to the world.

But that is not all. For the boy has been told to welcome the dragon people - and they suddenly appear in dramatic fashion through the Glastonbury mist. Where have these life forms come from? Why have they come to Glastonbury Tor? Are they somehow connected with the new magic?

The dragon people are mysterious but magical: their presence makes the air sentient and conscious. And the boy "felt waves of joy, wonder and ecstasy explode through him as they moved into the depths of the Tor". What will they do there? Will further acts of magic be demonstrated in the final chapter?

All that we know is that a new chapter in Avalon's history is about to unfold.

## Chapter Eleven

This is the final chapter. We are left mildly wondering if the earthly Avalon has indeed been unified with the etheric Camelot. Is that what the return of the red dragon symbolises? Is that what the dragon people entering the Tor suggests? Perhaps there will be a book sequel to explain this further.

Meanwhile, what we do know is that this part of the story echoes the legend that surrounds Joseph of Arimathea and the planting of the holy thorn tree in Glastonbury – a tree that is said to have sprouted from Joseph's staff.

We are not told where Merlin's staff is planted, whether somewhere near the vandalised holy thorn tree on Wearyall Hill or perhaps in the apple orchard to the rear of Glastonbury Tor. It doesn't matter really, for people are inexorably drawn to magic, and wish to see the miraculous blossom before their eyes before they think to look within themselves and wonder at what they might find there.

And doesn't the "magic-beanstalk like" reference call to mind another tale of magic? A tale in which a beanstalk points the way from the ordinary and mundane into the fantastical and unknown. There is no doubt that stories have a big part in revealing hidden truths ... or at least showing us that truths aren't really hidden ... just overlooked.

So, the telling of this tale has had several purposes, one of which has been to give emphasis to the true nature of magic – that it is not the privilege only of wizards and mages, and something to be feared or treated with distrust and disdain or ignored completely. Through heart-inspired benevolence and simple teachings, Merlin has given magic a new place in people's consciousness.

It is, to use Merlin's words – "that part of us that wants to be explored, cherished, and expressed for the eternal joy and happiness that it brings."

Magic is renewal

*And so it is*