

Michael Protheroe RIP

1948-2017

Like many others I was very sad to hear of the death of Michael Protheroe last December. Michael spoke for us at the English Catholic History Association on the subject of *King Arthur and Our Lady of Glastonbury* during a visit of our members to Cornwall in 2009, and that is when I met him and we remained friends.

Michael was born and brought up in Solihull where he attended Tudor Grange Grammar School. He read History at Lincoln College, Oxford, and subsequently trained as a teacher at Downing College, Cambridge. He taught in Norwich before moving to the Wirral, and had other teaching posts in Shaftesbury and Matlock.

While in the Wirral, teaching at Calday Grammar School, West Kirby, he wrote the history of the school which is still in print.

Michael was a devout Christian and he joined the Anglican community of Crawley Grange Monastery in West Sussex in the mid-1980s. Perhaps it was his interest in medieval history that influenced his conversion to the Roman Catholic Church. He became a member of the Benedictine community at Pluscarden Abbey in Scotland in the early 1990s. After some years at Pluscarden he returned to England and settled in Glastonbury. He was a committed member of the Shrine Church of St Mary's of Glastonbury, supporting its mission with his fervent prayer and presence at daily Mass and many of the activities of the parish, including his membership of the Legion of Mary. He researched indefatigably into the history of Glastonbury, believed to be the most ancient Christian settlement in Britain dating from apostolic times, and home to what is claimed to be the oldest church dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

His publications on this subject are numerous and are listed after this article insofar as I have been able to find details of them. If anyone knows of others, I would be grateful to learn of them.

Michael was instrumental in securing the return of a significant statue of the Virgin Mary to Glastonbury. Carved by Eric Gill and placed in a niche on the outside of the the first Catholic church in Glastonbury to be built after the Reformation by Fr Burdett, it was removed when that church was demolished to make way for the current shrine church just before the Second World War. It then spent many years in the garden of the convent of the Sisters of St Louis, whose convent was adjacent to the shrine. When the convent closed the statue was moved to the diocesan archives for safe keeping. Michael was aware of its existence and together with Fr Kevin Knox-Lecky and Dr Tim Hopkinson-Ball, who was a Trustee at that time of Glastonbury Abbey, they secured the permission of Bishop Declan Lang for its return. It now has pride of place in the Glastonbury Abbey museum and is well worth a visit.

Michael's Requiem Mass was held on 22 December 2017, and he is buried in the green, natural burials end of the beautiful hillside cemetery on the Wells Road leading out of Glastonbury. *Our Lady of Glastonbury pray for him.*

Elizabeth Hunter Johnston

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Publications

A History of Calday Grange Grammar School, West Kirby, 1676-1976. Published by The Old Caldeian Union and the Parents Association 1976.

A Hidden History of Roman Catholicism in Glastonbury over the last 400 years, Glastonbury Conservation Society Newsletter, No 108, 2003.

In Somerset and Dorset Notes & Queries VOL XXXVI

Gildas, Glastonbury and the Genetrix: A Historiographic Review, March 2008, Part 367, No.36.

St Wilfrid and Glastonbury, March 2009, Part 369, No.48.

Glastonbury's 'Holy' Well Demystified, Sept 2009, Part 370, No.58

Glastonbury's Urtext, March 2010, Part 371, No.63

New Light on the Mystery of Glastonbury's Old Church, Sept 2010, Part 372, No.70

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Pre-Conquest Glastonbury and Montacute, March 2011, Part 373, No.5.

Glastonbury as Roma Secunda: An Excursus, Sept 2011, Part 374, No.6.

Glastonbury and Tintagel: Parallels and Links? Sept 2011, Part 374, No. 11

Blake, 'Jerusalem', and Glastonbury, March 2013, Part 377, note.

The Iconography of the North Doorway of Glastonbury's Lady Chapel, Sept 2013, Part 378, note.

Saxon Somerset and the Eternal City: Links in a Chain, Sept 2014, Part 380, No.50

Saints of Glastonbury and the Making of 'Engalande': The 'Secgan' Evidence, Sept 2015, Part 382, No.63.

In Devon and Cornwall Notes & Queries

St Aldhelm in Dumnonia, Autumn 2011.

The Chapel at Golden: a conundrum resolved? Autumn 2016

The Origins of Buckfast in context: A reassessment. Autumn 2017

On the ECHA website (audio) www.echa.co.uk

King Arthur and Our Lady of Glastonbury, Tintagel, 2009.

