SAVARIC, GLASTONBURY AND THE MAKING OF MYTHS: A REAPPRAISAL

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Historians have long been aware that the vicious feud between the monastery of Glastonbury and its bishop in the early thirteenth century was responsible for turning Glastonbury's scriptorium *into the most astonishing and inventive manufacturer of forged documents. In what Julia Crick has memorably termed 'the marshalling of antiquity', new documents were produced and older ones annotated, all tending to demonstrate the antiquity of Christian Glastonbury, and its right to self-government and autonomy, free from external interference. The monastery's chroniclers were equally partisan, but historians and archaeologists alike have tended to accept their account of Glastonbury's more recent history at face value. Correcting the chroniclers' anti-Savaric bias allows for some fresh thinking on the construction of both the Glastonbury* mythos *and of the abbey building itself. It also raises questions about the remarkable reverence with which scholars continue to treat Glastonbury's ancient texts.*

CONSTRUCTING BUILDINGS

Glastonbury Abbey went through several profoundly unsettling changes in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. A disastrous fire in, or about, 1184 destroyed the fabled Old Church and much of the rest of the conventual buildings. Henry II allocated funds for its rebuilding but Richard, his war-like son who succeeded him in 1189, was indifferent to the abbey's fate. He appointed a self-interested abbot, Henry de Sully, who was subsequently bribed with the bishopric of Worcester to stand aside for the thoroughly evil Savaric fitzGeldwin, or de Bohun, Bishop of Bath. As a kinsman of Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI – who kidnapped Richard on his return from the Crusade and held him to ransom – Savaric was sent to negotiate his release, and he took advantage of his position to persuade Richard into making him abbot of Glastonbury as well. On his return from imprisonment Richard promptly removed Savaric from office and took the abbey back into royal custody, but Savaric had support from the pope and was able to regain control. He died in 1205, but it was another fourteen years before the convent of Glastonbury was restored to what it felt was its rightful autonomy.

This, in essence, is the official Glastonbury account of this period. Two chronicles cover these dates: one, that of John of Glastonbury, was compiled in the fourteenth century,[1] and although John adds certain details, almost all of his information for this period is a paraphrase of an earlier chronicle which ends in 1291 and bears the name of Adam of Damerham. This is the usage followed in this paper, although Julia Crick points out that the

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1. For John of Glastonbury, see Carley and Townsend 1985.

chronicle is actually a 'house production', the work of many hands. Building on the work of Simon Keynes and John Scott, she has established that the portion dealing with the period in question is in the same hand as a library list dated to 1247 or 1248. It was therefore produced during the abbacy of Michael of Amesbury, described by Crick as 'a strenuous upholder of abbey privileges', who, from his youth, had dedicated himself to restoring the liberties of the monastery of Glastonbury.[2] This undoubtedly explains why the feud with Savaric dominates and structures the Damerham account. Events deemed by posterity to be more important, such as the exhumation of King Arthur and even the rebuilding of the abbey itself, receive minimal attention compared to the detailed, blow-by-blow account of the feud, with full supporting documentation. At the same time, a breathtaking cluster of forgeries was created with the purpose of affirming Glastonbury's deep roots and total independence from the tutelage of the Bishop of Bath.[3] Damerham, too, was a document forged – like a sword – for a specific purpose.

Until 1189, Damerham's account, though exaggerated, is supported by external evidence. There is archaeological evidence for the fire,[4] and, although Damerham does not give a date for it, he does say that the fire followed the death of the abbey's custodian, Peter de Marcy, in 1184. Thereafter the king's chamberlain, Ralph Fitzstephen, dedicated the revenues of the abbey to the rebuilding project: 'what the revenues of Glastonbury could not afford, the king himself made good'.[5] This is undoubtedly an exaggeration. As long ago as 1904 St John Hope pointed out that there was no evidence from the Pipe Roll to suggest that the abbey received any help from the royal exchequer.[6] As chamberlain, Fitzstephen continued to collect scutage fees in lieu of service from Glastonbury's knights.[7] However, no account for Glastonbury was rendered to the exchequer for the period after de Marcy's demise in 1184, so it does seem, as Stacy suggests, as though '[t]he king assigned the estate's revenues to the rebuilding of the monastery'.[8]

Real discrepancies in the records begin in 1189, with the death of Henry II. According to Damerham, his successor, Richard I, had no interest in the building work: his 'war-like tastes diverted his attention from the building of Glastonbury church. Wherefore the work stopped, because no funds were forthcoming to pay the wages of the workmen'.[9] This statement has been taken at face value by most scholars, including at one point buildings archaeologist Jerry Sampson, whose meticulous survey of the standing structures at Glastonbury, and the masons who carried out the work, have transformed our understanding of the building sequence. His work demonstrates that there were some striking similarities in the construction of Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral, both of which went through major rebuilding programmes during this period. He describes the abbey as 'a building very much the twin of Wells', and suggests that work on the two buildings alternated. The different phases can be detected by the use of different building stone. When it was available, both buildings made use of the high-quality

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2. Crick 1991, 234–8, 242; Carley and Townsend 1985, 213.
3. Crick 1991; Gransden 2001; Wood 1991, 279–80.
4. Sampson 1995/2007, 11–13.
5. Standen 2000, I, 46, 47; Scott Stokes 1934, 21. I have used the edition of Adam of Damerham by David Standen, since this is now freely available online. Translations are from Scott Stokes except when indicated otherwise.
6. Hope 1904, 187.
7. Round 1925, 158.
8. Stacy 2001, 2–3.
9. *sublimatus in regnum rebus bellicis animum dirigens, ab edificacione ecciesie nuper incepte studium diuertit. Quapropter ab opere cessatum eo quod non esset qui laborantibus stipendia conferret*: Standen 2000, I, 50. The translation is from Willis 1866, 22–3.

Doulting stone from quarries owned by Glastonbury. When it was not, the masons of Wells had to make use of stone from their own quarry at Chilcote, 'a greyer, more pebbly limestone of poorer quality'.[10] The use of Doulting stone at Wells thus ceased once Glastonbury had need of it after the fire of 1184, but began again after the death of Henry II. Work on rebuilding the Great Church 'ground to a halt,' he suggests, 'and while it may have continued sporadically during the mid-1190s, the seizure of the abbey by Bishop Savaric of Wells, and its incorporation into the new diocese of Bath and Glastonbury in 1199, probably caused major disruption to the building programme'.[11]

Documentary evidence for this statement, beyond the chronicle, is hard to find. The new king's lack of interest, according to Damerham, was shared by the abbot he appointed within a month of his coronation, Henry de Sully, whose refusal to help fund the rebuilding process drove the poor monks onto the roads as preachers, taking relics and 'the indulgences of various bishops' with them in order to raise the money.[12] This statement was probably derived from a still-extant list of indulgence-granting bishops, compiled around the same time as Damerham's own chronicle, and it is clear from the list that these indulgences were being granted over a number of years (as Bishop of Worcester between 1193 and 1195, Henry de Sully himself offered a twenty-day indulgence to those who contributed towards building works at his former abbey).[13] What the list therefore demonstrates is that reconstruction was ongoing, a fact confirmed by the Pipe Roll for 1194–5, years in which the abbey and its revenues had reverted to the Crown, which record payments for *operationes factas in abbatia* – work carried out in the abbey.[14] Damerham himself mentions in passing that, in February 1197, there was *nouo opere* ('new work') then under way.[15] That building work should have continued into the 1190s is not so surprising since, as most scholars accept, one purpose of the exhumation of King Arthur in 1191 was to increase the flow of visitors and their income (and a grant made to the guest-house by Abbot Henry, and later confirmed by Savaric, may be evidence that they were indeed coming).[16] Since the exhumation was presided over by de Sully, there is no reason to assume that he did not take an interest in the building work from the moment that he was appointed.

More recently, Sampson has suggested that the constructional 'hiatus' should be shifted back a decade to 1199: 'the change back from Chilcote to Doulting stone at Wells is probably best explained by Bishop Savaric's seizure of Glastonbury abbey on Whitsunday 1199, the canons of Wells presumably benefiting from their bishop's virtual usurpation of the abbey that owned the best quarry in the district'.[17] Whilst it is true that Damerham considered Savaric as a usurper, it does not follow that Savaric himself intended to treat Glastonbury as an asset to be stripped. It was the other cathedrals in the diocese that now came under pressure, as Frances Ramsey points out:

> It is evident that Savaric's annexation of Glastonbury posed a very great threat to the status of the churches of both Bath and Wells. From the time of Celestine III's confirmation [1195] arrangements had been made for the re-ordering of

10. Sampson 2010, 111–12.
11. Sampson 1995/2007, 15.
12. *diuersorum pontificum indulgencies*: Standen 2000, I, 56.
13. The list is printed in Hearne 1726, II, 383–6; cf Cheney *et al* 2008, 32.
14. Stenton 1928, 10; Stenton 1929, 48.
15. Standen 2000, I, 67.
16. Ramsey 1995, 173–4; Gransden 2001, 46; Wood 1991.
17. Sampson 2010, 113.

Glastonbury as a cathedral priory and the bishop had adopted the style 'Bathoniensis et Glastoniensis'. The church of Wells cannot have regarded this as in any way increasing its hopes of retaining its ancient privileges.[18]

It was Wells, not Glastonbury, that felt abandoned. On Savaric's death, in 1205, the canons of Wells wrote to the pope bemoaning the neglect they had suffered, 'deprived so long of the comfort of a ruler, tossed with storms and exposed to various oppressions and perils', and welcoming the appointment of his successor, Jocelin.[19] Sampson suggests that building work at Wells resumed in 1199.[20] Yet, at the end of his life Bishop Jocelin claimed that Wells Cathedral had been in danger of collapse when he took over in 1206 'because of age', a phrase which sits ill with the idea of a recent resumption of building work at Wells. 'Modern experience of builders suggests that any misdemeanour discovered by the client is necessarily someone else's fault', says Sampson. Were the workmen of Wells 'anxious to deflect any blame from their own, more recent, work?'[21] Jocelin's statement might more plausibly be taken at face value, to mean that building work at Wells was neglected but continued unabated at Glastonbury during Savaric's rule. It may even have accelerated. Between 1202 and 1205, Savaric as bishop and abbot appropriated and dedicated the revenues of two churches 'to the sacristy and fabric of the abbey',[22] and the papal awards of 1201 and 1205 both make special mention of the fabric.[23] It would not be surprising to find that extra attention was being given to what was now the principal building in the diocese; in fact, it would be more surprising if it were not.

Why does Damerham wish to give us the impression that building work had all but stopped with the death of Henry II? The simplest explanation for this distortion is that, from the perspective of the Glastonbury chroniclers, everything began to go wrong at this point. The new abbot, Henry de Sully, 'fled like a hireling' and abandoned his flock to the 'wolf' that was Savaric.[24] John of Glastonbury, reviewing events from the fourteenth century, still felt incensed by de Sully's 'shamelessness' and the 'inhumane greed' that caused him to desert Glastonbury 'in his desire for the bishopric of Worcester'.[25] Modern historians are often tempted to suggest that de Sully was coerced into leaving his abbey,[26] but there is no reason to doubt John's inference here: in terms of ecclesiastical hierarchy, bishops ranked above abbots, and from de Sully's point of view the translation to Worcester was certainly promotion.

The point is worth making because the relative status of abbots and bishops was at the heart of the feud between Savaric and the Glastonbury convent, which was merely one episode in a wider struggle between abbeys seeking exemption from episcopal rights and bishops seeking to enforce them: according to David Knowles, there was an 'unparalleled' degree of hostility to the monastic orders at the end of the twelfth century, and a 'concerted attack' by bishops on monastic claims led to similar situations to Glastonbury at Coventry and Canterbury.[27]

18. Ramsey 1995, xxxv.
19. Church 1894, 130.
20. Sampson 2010, 113.
21. Ibid, 114–15.
22. Standen 2000, I, 53; Ramsey 1995, 165–6.
23. Standen 2000, I, 88, 98.
24. *mercennarius uidens lupum uenientem fugisset*: Standen 2000, I, 50; Scott Stokes 1934, 22.
25. Carley and Townsend 1985, 185.
26. For example, Cheney *et al* 2008, xxx.
27. Knowles 1963, 314, 316.

At issue, from the monks' point of view, was their autonomy from external authority, control over property and finances, and the 'terms and conditions' of their daily existence, notably the regular reaffirmation of generous food-allowances by good abbots and their circumscription by bad ones. Damerham devotes much more space to these topics than to such details as rebuilding the abbey after the fire, which rather supports Wood's comment that the monks 'were enjoying the excesses of the good life':[28] this was a cloister that looked back to a Golden Age when they had been pampered by Henry of Blois, abbot from 1126 until 1171, who made liberal provision for the convent 'since a sufficiency of creature comforts doth incline the minds of men to the service of God'.[29] In short, it is important to distinguish between the monastic community, which was clearly feeling under threat from Savaric's reforms, and the institution itself. Savaric may have been ruthlessly ambitious, determined to remould Glastonbury in his own image, but that does not in any way mean that he wanted to diminish its status, power or reputation. Indeed, why would he?

CONSTRUCTING LEGENDS: THE EXHUMATION OF KING ARTHUR

Henry de Sully's brief rule at Glastonbury is marked by one of the best-known events in the abbey's history: the discovery in 1191 of the bodies of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere in the graveyard of the Old Church, identified by the presence of a cross bearing the inscription: 'here lies the great King Arthur, buried in the Isle of Avalon'. The bodies were translated to the great church and buried 'in a nobly-worked double mausoleum'.[30] Richard Barber has demonstrated that the many contemporary references are derived from at least three versions, itself ultimately derived from a Glastonbury-generated 'newsletter'.[31]

Although most modern historians agree that the exhumation came at a very opportune moment for the rebuilding programme, it is striking that the account in Damerham makes no further reference to it: the exhumation is simply inserted into its chronological context, too well known an event to ignore but apparently not one to make too much fuss about. This is presumably because of Damerham's desire to minimise any positive developments at Glastonbury during the 1190s. Charles Wood even suggests that the discovery may have generated the prosperity that drew Savaric's unwelcome attentions in the first place, and subsequently his attempt to reduce the monastic lifestyle, inflated by prosperity, to something more in keeping with the frugal tenets of the Rule of St Benedict.[32] Wood's suggestion may be provocative, but it does serve to highlight the fact that historians have been diverted from thinking about the contemporary context in which this highly formalised piece of dynastic theatre was staged.

Glastonbury had become a plausible burial-place for Arthur since Caradoc of Llancarfan's *Life of St Gildas* appeared sometime between 1130 and 1150. According to Caradoc, Guinevere was kidnapped by Meluas, king of the summer country, who hid her at Glastonbury amid its 'fortifications of thickets of reed, river and marsh'. Arthur sought her for a whole year and was threatening war, but St Gildas, then abbot of Glastonbury, succeeded in reconciling the kings, who responded by giving the abbey 'many domains' and promised never to 'violate the most sacred place nor even the districts adjoining the chief's seat'.[33] Antonia Gransden has plausibly

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28. Wood 1991, 278.
29. Standen 2000, 1, 37; Scott Stokes 1934, 15.
30. Scott Stokes 1934, 33.
31. Barber 2001, 153; cf Gransden 2001, 50.
32. Wood 1991, 278–9.
33. Williams 1899.

suggested that Caradoc was employed by the abbey to write the script; perhaps he had been commissioned to make good a lack of Arthurian matter in William of Malmesbury's account, produced a few years earlier by commission of Abbot Henry of Blois and which, to judge from the extensive interpolations that Glastonbury's own chroniclers later made, was felt by them to be woefully inadequate.[34]

Caradoc had nothing to add about King Arthur's death or final resting-place, however. Damerham states that its location at Glastonbury was known; other accounts, including those that Barber believes to be the most authentic, suggest that the bodies were found by chance.[35] However, the best-known version credits Henry II with the discovery. According to Gerald of Wales, who recounted the story twice in his long career, the king himself had heard about Arthur's burial at Glastonbury 'from an ancient Welsh bard, a singer of the past', who gave him precise instructions as to where to dig, which information he thoughtfully relayed to the abbey.[36] Gerald's dating is certainly wrong, since his account, like the others, places the exhumation under the abbacy of Henry de Sully, who was not appointed until after Henry II's death. However, since he was in the employ of both kings,[37] he was very well placed to have obtained information of this kind; so the emphasis which he places on Henry's involvement is puzzling and requires explanation.

According to Martin Aurell, Gerald's account of the exhumation is one of only two occasions in which Henry made any use of Arthur as 'an instrument of Plantagenet policy'.[38] The other, likewise recorded by Gerald of Wales, concerns the conquest of Ireland. There were five reasons, said Gerald, why Ireland should submit to Henry, one of which was that Arthur had once been Ireland's overlord: the Irish kings had come to pay tribute to him at Caerleon.[39] In 1185 Henry sent his son John to Ireland to reassert Plantagenet authority. Gerald went with him as a clerk, and stayed on to serve the 'seneschal', Bertram de Verdon.[40] It was a role in which he may well have been required to adduce evidence to legitimise Henry's claims to Ireland: his words have a quasi-official feel, and may perhaps have been composed in the first place for some official occasion.

The involvement of Gerald of Wales in propagating these two accounts is very interesting, for both may have had ramifications for John 'Lackland', the youngest son of Henry II. His father made repeated efforts to find him fiefdoms of his own, one of which was Ireland. Henry appears to have intended to crown him King of Ireland as early as 1177, but to do so required papal blessing.[41] According to Damerham, Peter de Marcy, Henry II's custodian at Glastonbury in 1182–4, was sent by the king to Rome to transact 'some business' because his brother (Henry de Marcy, Cardinal-Bishop of Albano) had the ear of the pope.[42] It is quite possible that Henry II wanted to wheedle an Irish crown from Pope Lucius; the pope was 'strongly opposed', however, and it was not until 1185/6, after his death and the election of a more sympathetic successor, that Henry's wish was granted. A crown of peacock feathers was duly delivered, but this did not arrive until January 1187, by which time everything had changed.[43]

34. Gransden 2001, 40.
35. Barber 2001.
36. Carley 1996, 148.
37. Bartlett 1982.
38. Aurell 2007, 389.
39. Dimock 1867, 148, 319–20.
40. Bartlett 2006.
41. Warren 1973, 204 n 1.
42. *negocia quedam in curia Romana*: Standen 2000, I, 45; Scott Stokes 1934, 19.
43. Warren 1973, 598–9.

Whilst one de Marcy brother may have been trying to persuade the pope to grant John a kingdom, the other was maintaining a potential contender for John's intended earldom of Cornwall. As custodian of Glastonbury Abbey, Peter de Marcy inherited the wardship of William, the illegitimate son of Earl Reginald of Cornwall: the exchequer accounts for 1180–1, and again for 1183–4, include clothing allowances for him (and in 1180–1 for his teachers and his servants too).[44] Reginald had been one of Henry II's most trusted followers in England and had enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in Cornwall. On his death in 1175, both lands and title were taken in hand by the king as part-provision for John.[45] This upset many people. Perhaps the most bizarre reaction was the theft of St Petroc's relics from Bodmin Priory by one of its own canons: claiming that Petroc was 'the chief of the saints of Cornwall', Canon Martin took his bones to the abbey of Saint-Méen in Brittany, 'asserting strenuously that if that body of the most holy confessor were kept safely and carefully, soon the whole of Cornwall would be subjected to the county of Brittany'.[46] Since Brittany was nominally ruled by John's nineteen-year-old older brother, Geoffrey, this episode might best be seen as a rather eccentric attempt to influence the succession. Henry intervened, and made sure that the relics were promptly restored to Cornwall.

More prosaically, Earl Reginald's offspring were not best pleased. At a stroke, the king had disinherited the earl's legitimate daughters and their husbands, prompting one of them (Aimar, Vicomte of Limoges) to rebellion.[47] No more is heard of William after 1184; presumably he died young. In view of his equally illegitimate brother Henry's later enthusiasm for reclaiming his father's title (according to Simon Lloyd, 'Henry's greatest aspiration was undoubtedly to secure the earldom of Cornwall'[48]), the king had good reason to keep close watch over him, and Peter de Marcy was evidently felt to be an appropriate guardian.

The fact that the de Marcy brothers may have been simultaneously engaged on business connected with the fortunes of John Lackland is noteworthy, particularly since both projects may have had 'Arthurian' ramifications: Cornwall's Arthurian credentials, already well established, were dramatically reinforced by the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose widely disseminated *History of the Kings of Britain* had brought both Arthur and Cornwall to an international audience.

Henry was building up a specifically western inheritance for John. In addition to Cornwall and Ireland, he had betrothed him to Isabelle, daughter of the Earl of Gloucester, who had extensive lands in Wales and Ireland. Given Arthur's 'western' associations, it is quite likely that Henry was seeking to attach some of that lustre to his son. This may explain the presence of 'the sword of Tristan' (*ensem Tristami*) amongst John's royal regalia, perhaps presented to him when he was knighted prior to going to Ireland, since the Cornish hero's first martial exploit had been to slay an Irish giant.[49] Henry, although the ruler of a huge domain, was not himself a king's son and was very conscious of a need to emphasise his own right to rule. He made something of a speciality of the strategic reburial of ancient rulers, thereby stressing his dynastic and territorial links with them. In 1162, during a campaign to establish his ascendancy in Normandy, he arranged for a high-profile translation of the remains of two Norman dukes to a prominent position at the abbey of Fécamp.[50] In 1161, at

44. Round 1909, 16; Round 1915, 27–8, and see also p xxxvii.
45. Gillingham 2010.
46. Jankulak 2000, 153–98, esp 195–6; Bozóky 2000, 283; Everard 1998, 99.
47. Gillingham 2010; Gillingham 1999, 53–4.
48. Lloyd 2004.
49. Aurell 2007, 372–3.
50. Gazeau 2007a, 340; Warren 1973, 95.

his behest, the pope canonised Edward the Confessor, and two years later the new saint's bones were transferred to a new shrine at Westminster, in this way confirming the sanctity, respect and legitimacy of Henry's claim to the throne of England.[51] The translation of Arthur's remains, as ruler of the western realms, would fit very well into this pattern; and it is possible that Henry's appointment of Peter de Marcy was intended as a prelude to a 'rediscovery' along similar lines to that which actually occurred in 1191. In this reading, Earl Reginald's son would have been a prime witness, perhaps required to act as first cheerleader for Arthur's anointed successor in Ireland and Cornwall in return for a smattering of West Country manors, such as his half-brother Henry was to receive in 1194.[52] This is admittedly all circumstantial, but it might explain why someone as well placed as Gerald of Wales was so sure that Henry II was ultimately responsible for King Arthur's exhumation.

Two things put paid to any interest that Henry II might have had in creating an Arthurian inheritance for his youngest son. The first was the death of John's older brother, Geoffrey, Duke of Brittany, in August 1186. Only two of Henry's five sons – Richard and John – were now left alive. Although Richard was the elder he, like his brothers Henry and Geoffrey, had been tarnished in their father's eyes by rebellion, and it was widely believed, perhaps with reason, that he intended John to succeed him. The Irish project was abandoned, in William Warren's words, because 'John had now become the sole counter to Richard in Henry's game of keeping his sons in uncertainty about his intentions'.[53]

Any specifically Arthurian dreams that Henry might have nurtured on John's behalf were scuppered by the naming of Geoffrey's son, born after his father's death in March 1187. According to William of Newburgh (1136–98), Henry II 'had ordered that the child be given his own name', but he,

> was opposed by the Bretons, and by solemn acclamation the child was named Arthur when he was held over the sacred font. Thus the Bretons, who are said to have been long waiting for an imaginary Arthur, are now raising up one who is quite real, and they do so in great hope, in accordance with the opinion that certain prophets express in their long and celebrated Arthurian legends.[54]

Several other chroniclers also commented – equally sardonically – on the significance of this name, which Martin Aurell suggests reflects Geoffrey's own growing receptiveness to Celtic mythology 'as a weapon in this struggle against his father'.[55] From that moment, Henry had no further interest in promoting Arthurianism; indeed, his favourite son now had more to gain from suppressing it.

The situation in 1191 was very different. Henry's refusal to acknowledge Richard as his heir led to the rebellion of 1188–9. John joined the winning side shortly before his father's defeat and death in July 1189, and was rewarded by his brother with the revenues from a sizeable estate in England. Richard was careful, however, to keep control of the castles, and on the eve of his departure for the Crusade in March 1190, whilst entrusting Normandy to John, he also made him swear an oath not to come to England for three years.[56]

51. Bozóky 2000, 278, 281–2; Warren 1973, 223.
52. Lloyd 2004.
53. Warren 1973, 599, 617, 622.
54. Quoted in Aurell 2007, 387.
55. Ibid, 386–8.
56. Gillingham 1999, 119–20.

Seven months later, in October 1190, at the Treaty of Messina in Sicily, Richard announced that his three-year-old nephew, Arthur of Brittany, was to be his heir. What were Richard's motives here? Gillingham and Aurell suggest that he was laying claim to Arthur's legacy himself, as the crusader hero-king. Everard, more prosaically, points out that the nomination would have served to keep Arthur's mother Constance, Countess of Brittany, loyal to Richard whilst he was away on crusade: like his father, 'Richard preferred to keep the rival claimants to the throne in a state of uncertainty'.[57]

What is clear is that a revival of interest in King Arthur at this point cannot have been to John's liking at all, as those responsible for the exhumation must have been aware. Henry de Sully can safely be described as a Ricardian loyalist. In February 1194, as Bishop of Worcester, he was one of seven bishops to join Archbishop Hubert in excommunicating John for rebellion; he was present at Richard's council in Nottingham the following month, and again for his re-crowning at Winchester in April.[58] He was appointed abbot of Glastonbury at the great council of Pipewell, one of Richard's first actions as King of England,[59] and it is reasonable to assume that he had specific qualities that fitted him for the task. Glastonbury cannot have been an easy vacancy to fill: in the wake of the disastrous fire, following nine years of pastoral neglect, a certain combination of skills were necessary to turn the place around. Henry de Sully was clearly a competent and vigorous administrator, and he wasted no time on getting to grips with his task. Elected on 29 September, he was already ensconced at Glastonbury by 8 October, receiving homage and fealty, and promptly commissioning a survey of the abbey's estates: 'the regulation of affairs after so long and disastrous a vacancy must have been uppermost in the new abbot's mind when he began his rule', Stacy says.[60] Over the next three months a flurry of grants were made to the abbey by Bishop Reginald of Bath, who was close to the new king and who was then with the royal court, which suggests both royal favour and an awareness of an urgent need to increase the abbey's revenues.[61]

Henry de Sully may also have had even more relevant specialist skills. According to Damerham, de Sully was of royal lineage, a cousin and a close friend of Henry II.[62] It is generally held that Damerham was confusing de Sully with the abbot of Fécamp of the same name, who was said to have died in 1187.[63] Derek Baker, however, thinks that this is too much of a coincidence and that 'without further detailed investigation it seems best to retain a single Henry de Sully until the hypothesis is proved untenable'.[64] Baker's observation supports the hypothesis that we are dealing with one abbot rather than two, which is significant since the abbot of Fécamp and the abbot of Glastonbury had very similar achievements. In 1171, less than three years after a major fire had destroyed most of the abbey buildings at Fécamp, the fortuitous rediscovery of a relic of the Holy Blood helped to revive the lucrative pilgrim trade. Henry had also been abbot when Henry II had organised the translation of the two Norman dukes in 1160–3.[65] It is often overlooked that there were four other significant re-interments at Glastonbury in the wake of the fire: St Dunstan,

57. Everard 2000, 158–9; Aurell 2007, 390; Gillingham 1999, 3–4.
58. Stubbs 1870, III, 237, 241, 247.
59. Gillingham 1999, 109.
60. Stacy 2001, 2–3.
61. Ramsey 1995, xxxviii.
62. *de regia stirpe progenitum … cuius consanguineus et dudum familiaris extiterat*: Standen 2000, I, 50.
63. For example, Greenaway 1991; Hoskin 2008.
64. Baker 1971, note on pp 92–93.
65. Gazeau 2007b, 116–21; Gazeau 2007a, 169, 189, 340.

St Patrick, St Indracht and St Gildas (three of whom were the subjects of hagiographies written by William of Malmesbury, and the other, Gildas, by Caradoc of Llancarfan).[66] These reburials were credited by Damerham to Henry II's chamberlain, Ralph Fitzstephen, but Bozóky, pointing out that the Fécamp relics had been reburied together with those of various saints, 'which in some measure sanctified the bodies of the two dukes', suggests that the same phenomenon was at work at Glastonbury.[67] If the reburying of saints was a prelude to the reburying of King Arthur, the same guiding hand may well have been behind both operations.

To summarise: at a challenging moment in Glastonbury's history, when there were expensive building repairs to fund, Richard may have appointed as abbot a relation with a track-record in lucrative discoveries and strategic reburials; moreover, his father had perhaps already set the scene for the drama of Arthur's exhumation in this particular theatre. Since the drama had considerable dynastic implications once Arthur had been named as Richard's successor, it is quite likely that, as Catalina Girbea suggests, Richard was himself involved.[68] There is some artefactual evidence for this. At Glastonbury a leaden cross was found in the grave, conveniently identifying the king and the location of his burial as the Isle of Avalon. In Sicily, shortly before leaving for Cyprus, Richard presented King Tancred with Caliburn, 'the best sword of Arthur, once a noble king of the Britons'.[69] It is curious indeed that these two Arthurian artefacts should first come to light within a few months of each other. It is curious also, not that Richard should take such a relic with him on the Crusade, but that he was willing to part with it so soon on his journey and, on the face of it, to such an unlikely candidate: Tancred had usurped his throne from Richard's brother-in-law, and had only returned the dowry under duress. But Tancred also ruled a strategic island on the route to Outremer, an important consideration to a crusading king that may explain why Richard betrothed the young Arthur to Tancred's daughter.[70] One chronicler claims that Richard had named Arthur as his heir before he set out on the Crusade,[71] which would explain why Caliburn came to be on board Richard's ship. Since both cross and sword served to affirm the existence of the same legendary monarch, it reinforces the idea of a similar intention: to legitimise the claim of Arthur of Brittany to the throne of England, and to keep the ambition of Richard's brother, John, in check.

It is remarkable how little attention Glastonbury scholars have given to the possibility of a connection between the exhumation of one Arthur and the nomination of the other. Charles Wood is an exception, but even he is nonetheless constrained by Damerham's narrative, to which he gives a twist all of his own. Wood holds Richard I responsible for the cessation of building work at Glastonbury, but not Abbot Henry de Sully. In this reading, the nomination of young Arthur was a fortuitous coincidence which 'created a context' that allowed de Sully to construct a script that would persuade or shame the king into picking up the tab.[72] The place of the exhumation in the greater drama of the Plantagenet succession is overlooked: once again, the myopic self-interest of Glastonbury's medieval chroniclers has succeeded in framing modern historical discourse.

66. Standen 2000, I, 47; Scott Stokes 1934, 21–2.
67. *qui assurait en quelque sorte la sanctification des corps des deux ducs*: Bozóky 2000, 281–2.
68. Girbea 2003, 292.
69. *gladium optimum Arcturi, nobilis quondam regis Britonum*: Stubbs 1867, II, 159.
70. Gillingham 1999, 132–8.
71. Luard 1865, 64; Appleby 1963, 29 n 1.
72. Wood 1991, 277; Wood 2001, 88.

SAVARIC AND BURGUNDY

Reassessing Savaric as a potential benefactor of Glastonbury, instead of its greatest scourge, allows – in fact requires – a reappraisal of his potential role in the myth-making process. Scholars have rightly focused on the phenomenal outpourings of the Glastonbury *scriptorium* once its autonomy from Wells had been more or less confirmed, but there are some intriguing hints to suggest that the myth-makers may have been at work during the era of Savaric and de Sully too.

Martin Aurell suggests that Richard 'fostered a new veneration of the mythical king of the Britons'.[73] This is a big claim, but, in spite of Damerham's reticence, there must have been a lot of interest in King Arthur at Glastonbury in the years immediately after the exhumation. Two important contributions to the Grail cycle from this period may have Glastonbury connections. Robert de Boron's *Joseph d'Arimathie*, written 'shortly before 1200', takes the Grail to the '*Vaus d'Avaron*'. 'Avaron' is generally taken to be a misspelling of 'Avalon', widely understood as Glastonbury after the exhumation of Arthur in 1191. De Boron's work has much in common with the *Perlesvaus*, written slightly later but which, according to the text itself, was based upon a Latin original to be found 'in the Isle of Avalon, in a holy house of religion that standeth at the head of the Moors Adventurous, there where King Arthur and Queen Guenievre [*sic*] lie, according to the witness of the good men religious that are therein, that have the whole story thereof'.[74]

James Carley thinks it 'somewhat unlikely' that the author of the romance came to Glastonbury to consult this book, whose very existence is debatable.[75] It seems much more probable that the romance travelled in the opposite direction: that a tale already current elsewhere was brought to Glastonbury and adapted to its purposes. The obvious candidate for 'elsewhere' is north-eastern France where, in the early thirteenth century, the fame of Joseph of Arimathea was quite precisely situated. All the early copies of *Perlesvaus* have links with that area;[76] Robert de Boron's acknowledgement of Gautier de Montbéliard as his lord strongly suggests that he came from the village of Boron that lies close to Montbéliard;[77] and in the mid-thirteenth century the abbey of Moyenmoutier, near Nancy, claimed to have once possessed the relics of Joseph of Arimathea until they had been stolen a century or so previously.[78]

What makes this so interesting is the fact that Savaric himself may very well have come from the same region. Stubbs, who, according to Poole, was 'greatly interested' in the question of Savaric's origins, believed that his father came from 'the neighbourhood of Verdun'; Poole suggested that he married a relative of Simon, Duke of Lorraine.[79] At some point before 1197, the Emperor Henry VI made Savaric chamberlain of Burgundy. What this role meant in practice is far from clear, but it does suggest that there may well have been some intercourse between Glastonbury, Wells and what is now the eastern part of France: as Poole rather quaintly puts it, possibly Savaric was in 'touch with a wide circle of family connections in Burgundy and the neighbouring country'.[80] If Savaric's entourage at

73. Aurell 2007, 389.
74. Carley 1996, 89.
75. Carley 2001b, 319.
76. Ibid, 311.
77. Nitze 1953, 280.
78. Cayon 1857.
79. Poole 1927, 268 n 1.
80. Ibid, 270–1; Ramsey 2004.

Glastonbury included Burgundians, it is quite possible that their number included *trouvères* with the talents needed to enhance the history of what he intended would become his new cathedral city.

Whilst it cannot be demonstrated beyond doubt that *Joseph d'Arimathie*, the *Perlesvaus* or its prototype were known at Glastonbury during Savaric's time, the Glastonbury *scriptorium* of Abbot Michael's day was certainly aware of them. A legend current at Glastonbury at least a century earlier had it that the Old Church had been founded by early missionaries, but on this William of Malmesbury was disappointingly non-committal; and, in an annotation dated to 1247, 'the book of the deeds of the famous king Arthur' is invoked to affirm that 'the noble decurion Joseph of Arimathea, together with his son named Josephes and very many others, came into great Britain, now called England, and ended his life there'.[81] This was to become the trump card in the Glastonbury pack: taken with the evidence of the Old Church, proof positive not just that Christianity came early to these shores, but that it came specifically to Glastonbury (and not, for instance, to Wells).[82]

According to Cesar Baronius, writing in 1586, Joseph had originally journeyed to France with Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and Martha and her maid Marcella in AD 48; and then, 'they say he sailed from France to Britain'. Baronius claimed to have found this information in a 'History of England' in the papal library, but, like so many other such citations, this one has proven elusive: Ussher, indeed, claimed to have evidence that the 'History' was a modern forgery, 'written in our times'.[83] Joseph was keeping plausible company, however; these three siblings were, as was Joseph, implicated in the miracle of the Resurrection. In fact, Joseph was a late addition to the passenger-list. In earlier versions, the boat, 'without sails or oars', carried just Mary, Martha and Lazarus to Marseille. Paul Meyer lists five surviving pre-fifteenth-century manuscript copies of the *Vita Sanctae Mariae Magdalenae, Marthae et Lazari*, of which the earliest is twelfth century, and comes ultimately from Clairvaux, on the border of Burgundy. The others, surprisingly, are of English provenance, and the earliest dates from the mid-thirteenth century.[84] The catalogue of books in Glastonbury library, compiled in that productive year of 1247/8, records another.[85] Bearing in mind the geographical provenance of those early Grail stories and of Savaric's Burgundian connections, Glastonbury's early interest in this story is very intriguing. Baronius' 'History of England' may be suspect, but Joseph had certainly arrived at Glastonbury by 1247; his story might well have passed through Burgundy, to be adapted and embellished in Savaric's forgotten *scriptorium*.

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81. Carley 1996, 92.
82. Lagorio 2001; Stout 2012.
83. Baronius 1738, i, 225; Baker 1930, 12.
84. Meyer 1898, 96 n 1.
85. Williams 1897, 70.

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