

Journal of Geomancy vol. 3 no. 3, April 1979

From *Proceedings of the Somersetshire Archaeological & Natural History Society*, **59**, 64–73 + plates IV and V (1913; published 1914), omitting section (b), a geological report by W.A.E. Ussher. In the *Journal of Geomancy* the text was reproduced as artwork, and the photos of the stone were redrawn.

{70 & 71}

THE ‘EGG STONE’ AT GLASTONBURY ABBEY

By *FREDERICK BLIGH BOND* (1914).

Discovery and Description of the Stone.

When the work of excavation on the site of the east alley of the cloister had reached its limit, a cut was made eastward along the line of a stone water-channel, now to be seen running from the south-east angle of the cloister. A short distance along this a huge boulder stone of the sort locally known as the “Tor Burr” was encountered. This was lying in the bank on the south side of the drain, in an irregular position, on its side. It appeared to be roughly egg-shaped, but flattened, the measurements being approximately 3ft. by 2ft. 4ins. by 1ft. 4ins. One of the flat sides was exposed, and this was found to be artificially levelled over a considerable area. In the centre was a cavity, roughly hollowed.

The stone was left as it was found until the summer of 1913. Beyond the surmise that the cavity might have been formed as a socket for a post or shaft, for which so large a stone would form a stable footing, no theory was at that time advanced to account for it.

Many of these stones are found to have been utilized in the foundations of the Norman or other earlier walls exposed.

The boulder naturally enlisted the interest of visitors, and was a subject of speculation. Among suggestions thrown out was one which may be worth recording, namely, that the flat surface may have been formed for the rubbing of grain, but it cannot be said that this would make a satisfactory quern.

On July 11th, 1913, I called upon a friend who was staying at the hotel for two or three weeks, and was much interested in the history and antiquities of the place. He introduced the subject of the egg-stones used by the various primitive cults, and I was struck by his remark that such a cult-stone must necessarily have existed at any place bearing the name of “Avalon.”

He then, as I well remember, asked me whether I could recall having seen such a stone in the neighbourhood of Glastonbury.

I replied that there were many natural stones of this shape found locally, and one in particular of remarkable size and character (as above-mentioned),

over which I told him I had been keeping a jealous watch since its discovery about three years before.

I said I had never examined this fully, but that if he wished we could meet to inspect it, and have it turned over, to ascertain whether any definite indications of its former use, either as a cult-stone or for any other purpose, existed on the lower side.

We went to see the stone, and made a brief inspection of it as it then lay. On removal of the moss and earth with which the cavity was filled, it was found that this cavity was flattened on one edge and roughly curved for the rest of the margin. The recess was deepest on the flat side, and from its inner point were seen several chisel grooves radiating outwards towards the curved periphery. This gave the recess the rough similitude of a hollow pecten-shell.

Of the other visible markings we could make nothing very definite, though it was obvious that many of these were artificial. Most of the marks were obscured by clay.

On July 16th we had the stone turned over, when it was at once evident that the whole of the under surface and most of the sides were covered with markings, many of them natural, *perhaps* the result of glacial action, whilst others were palpably artificial. The markings were of the following order:— (a) small circular holes; (b) parallel grooves; (c) convergent grooves like star-points, and grooves with X-shaped intersection; (d) chisel-marks and artificially flattened areas; (e) other incised marks of peculiar shape.

At the centre of the lower surface was found another hole, back to back with the first. This showed a square sinking, or mortise, such as would be formed for the tenon of a shaft or pillar—possibly for a cross or other standard. Two sides of this mortise were found to be broken away to a considerable depth, and it appeared that some object formerly united with the stone at this point had been broken away with violence, inasmuch as a large flake had been split off the stone on one side of the mortise. The cavity was found to contain a small remnant of what appeared to be cement of greyish colour.

On July 19th, the stone was brought out and set up in the south cloister-alley in an erect position, where it remains at this time. The surface was carefully cleaned, and my friend proceeded to make a minute examination of it. On my return after a short absence, he pointed out a peculiar marking or group of markings which, he said, might be suggestive of hieroglyphs, and he handed me a rough sketch of these as they appeared to him.

At present it seems safe to say:—

- (1). That the stone is a natural boulder, with remarkable surface-features.
- (2). That it has been worked upon artificially in a variety of ways.

(3). That it would appear to have been used for various purposes, and possibly at various dates widely removed.

Ancient Examples of Egg-stones and their Symbolism

A brief note on the subject of “Egg-stones” may be of interest to readers, since the subject is one which has received comparatively little attention, and on which it is difficult to gather much information. For a succinct account of such as are known to have existed in connection with early religious foundations, readers are referred to Lethaby’s “Architecture, Mysticism, and Myth.”

This author shows the almost universal occurrence of such stones, which were held to mark the centre or “navel” of the world, and hence called by the Greeks *omphalos*. Delphi was to them the earth’s true centre, and here was the famous and ancient temple of Apollo, the god who, according to Plato, “sits in the centre on the navel of the earth.” I understand that there is a passage in the works of Pausanias in which allusion is made to the preservation of primitive cult-stones in the primitive sites of the worship of Apollo, and it is said that a remarkable specimen of the kind was discovered at Delos under the statue of the god.

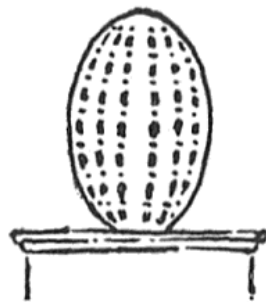


Fig. 1 Egg-stone—
from an ancient Greek
vase (see *Journ. Hellenic
Soc.*, vol. ix—T. H.
Middleton).

On Greek vases of early date are many drawings of the *omphalos*, one of which is here reproduced from Lethaby (Fig. 1), and this, not only from its form, but from the affinity which exists between its markings and those cruder, and to a large extent natural, ones seen in the photographs of the Glastonbury stone (drawing over), presents a certain parallel, and suggests that a more critical study of the latter might be productive of interesting results, since such a stone might be chosen for its natural features and subsequently worked upon. The sacred stone in the later temple at Delphi is described as a

marble ball, which was garlanded. Sometimes the *omphalos* was a flat circular slab. There is one on the floor of St. Peter’s at Rome, of antique porphyry, upwards of 8ft. in diameter, on which certain official acts were performed. Ducange mentions another at Santa Sophia, just under the dome. Sayce (Hibbert Lectures) says that the great temple of Bel at Babylon was called “The house of the Foundation Stone of heaven and earth,” and the Talmud speaks of “the foundation stone in front of the Ark in the Holy of Holies, which was in the centre of the Temple, of Jerusalem, and of the world.”

The Arabs venerate their “Caaba” of black marble as the *omphalos* or world-centre. Curzon, in speaking of the church at Jerusalem, says that in the centre of the choir is a globe of black marble on a pedestal, under which they say that the head of Adam was found, and you are told that this was the exact centre of the globe.

The circular pavement in the east part of Canterbury Cathedral will be recalled by those who have seen it. There are possibly other traces or records of the *omphalos* in this country.

The Egg as a symbol of Creation has an equally venerable use as a pendent ornament, and may be seen in Greek or Coptic churches at the present day. The symbol was used by the ancient Egyptians, being shown on monuments and referred to in texts. M. Dognée has traced its symbolic use in his work "Le Symbols Antiques—L'Oeuf."

The word "Avalon."

The name "Avalonia" was applied by the Romans to several places in which a primitive religious culture existed. But the roots of the word are much older, and very widely found, since they exist not only among the early Mediterranean dialects, and those of the ancient civilizations of the nearer East, but are found also in the Celtic.

The old name of the Sun-god, the *Baal* of the Hebrews, and the *Bel* of the Septuagint, are connected with the Cretan word *afelios* or *abelios*, meaning "the sun," and this with the Greeks became *Helios*. With the god Helios, the Greeks have since {72} the time of Æschylus, identified their "Apollo." The origin of this name is, however, said by scholars to be uncertain. Avlona in Thrace is however associated with a more ancient "Apollonia." On the west of the Adriatic we have Apulia, spoken of as the garden of Italy, and Avellinum, or Abellinum, in Campania, whence, according to Cormac's *Glossary*, the Celtic word *aball*, meaning "apple-tree," is derived. Whitley Stokes's translation of this rare work gives the following:—

Aball (apple-tree)=Abellano oppido Canipaniae.

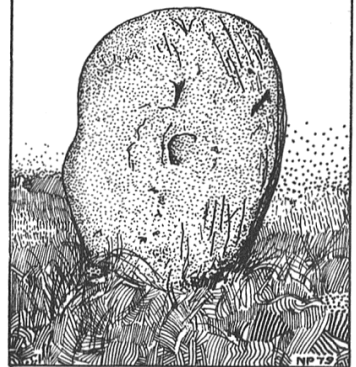
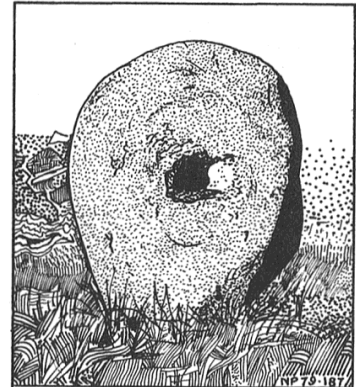
Uball (apple)—quasi aball=Aball autem, from a town in Italy whereunto is the name Abellanum: thence they brought the seed of the apple.

Avalon in Burgundy marks another ancient centre of the primitive cult.

The termination *On* of the words Avalon, Avlona, etc., is again reminiscent of the names of many of the great cities and temples of antiquity. The root in the Celtic implies a stone.

Cormac's *Glossary* gives the following :-

Onn (the double N gives a long vowel)=Stone. This he terms the "inexplicable" name for a stone, the ordinary one being *cloch*.



"EGG-STONE," GLASTONBURY ABBEY.

This description would seem to imply some special, and possibly symbolic, meaning for the word, and it would be interesting to discover its origin. Whether, as my friend supposed, the occurrence of such a term in the place-name “Avalon ” denotes the possession of a cult-stone in these localities is a point which demands enquiry. Whether, again, the root is in any way akin to certain Greek words implying “Being,” or the embryo of Being, I must leave to others to determine. There seems, at least, no doubt that stones of a globular or egg shape did, in early days, and among primitive races, figure the genesis of creation, and mark the symbolic centre of the world.

F. Bligh Bond is famed for his brilliant excavations of Glastonbury Abbey, and his interpretation of its sacred geometry in terms of the 37-foot module which links its dimensions with gematria. His studies, which included psychically-gained material, finally led to his removal as director of the excavations, and the destruction of the excavated apse of the Edgar Chapel at the east end of the Abbey, which he had discovered and revealed. This apse had the disturbing property (to the Christian owners of the site) in that it made the Abbey’s total length equal 666 feet! This was too much for those who were over Bond, and, by various dubious methods, his work was vilified. Moves are now afoot to vindicate the good name of Bond, whose work at Glastonbury goes yet unrecognized, the apse of the Edgar Chapel being buried beneath an earth bank, and his ideas and discoveries being unmentioned in Glastonbury Abbey literature which is notable in that nothing mystical or geomantic is ever mentioned. The officials who now run the Abbey as a tourist attraction fight shy of anything which might be ‘tainted’ with what they consider to be the occult, and consequently even their museum does not have the egg stone discovered by Bond. Its whereabouts is not now known. If any JOG reader knows anything about the continued existence of the stone, the editor would be pleased to hear from them.

There is information about the Glastonbury egg stone on the Web; see for instance a [photo taken in 2013](#) . – MB, February 2016

Republications

Prev Base Next

Home