

Glastonbury History Timeline

This article presents a chronology of some notable events in the history of Glastonbury and the surrounding areas – some of them more significant than others! If you would like to visit the sites connected to where these events took place, locations are provided towards the end of the article.

Prehistory (Before 43 A.D.)

- 8500-4000 B.C. – Flints from this era found around Chalice Well
- 7th millennium B.C. – The sea level rose and flooded the valleys and low-lying ground surrounding Glastonbury so the Mesolithic people occupied seasonal camps on the higher ground, indicated by scatters of flints
- 3806 B.C. – Sweet Track built along the route of an even earlier track, the Post Track, dating from 3838 B.C.
- 200-100 B.C. – Glastonbury Lake Village occupied

Romans (43 A.D. – c. 410 A.D.)

- ?60 A.D. – Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury after the crucifixion and from this the legendary first Christian community was founded
- 166 A.D. – Missionaries sent by Pope Eleutherius built a church in the grounds where Glastonbury Abbey later stood

Early Medieval (c. 410 A.D. – 1066)

- Late Saxon period (the Saxon period extended from 410 A.D. to 1066) – Small monastic settlement, with cells cut in the rock, and possibly a timber church on Glastonbury Tor
- 5th Century – early 6th Century – The oldest known monastery in the United Kingdom located at Bride's Mound

predating Iona Abbey in Scotland, founded in the late 6th Century, and Glastonbury Abbey, which dates from the 7th Century. The graveyard here stayed in use until the 9th Century when Viking raids may have caused its end.

- 449 A.D. – St Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland visited Glastonbury
- 460 A.D. – St Benignus came to Glastonbury (settled in Meare). He was a disciple of St. Patrick and the third to succeed him in his Irish see.
- 488 A.D. – St Brigid of Kildare visited Glastonbury
- 6th Century – The first certain occupation of Glastonbury Tor
- 7th Century – St Collen came to Glastonbury; he quarrelled with the monks and left for the ‘mountain of Glastonbury’ and made a cell in a quiet spot near a rock and had a curious vision of the King of the Underworld (Gwyn app Nudd)
- 712 A.D. – King Ine of Wessex directed that a stone church be built in Glastonbury
- 10th Century – Irish colony established in the Beckery area and was thus nicknamed ‘Little Ireland’. This area was known to the Irish as Glastimber na n-Gaoidhil ‘Glastonbury of the Gaels’.
- 940 A.D. – Dunstan of Glastonbury summoned to King Edmund’s court at Cheddar and made a minister
- 943 A.D. – Dunstan takes Holy Orders in the presence of Ælfheah and returned to live the life of a hermit at Glastonbury. As the Abbot, Dunstan established a Benedictine monastery at Glastonbury Abbey and extends King Ine’s church.
- 944 A.D. – King Edmund I takes control of York and the surrounding area removing sacred relics from the remains of Whitby Abbey and moves them to Glastonbury Abbey
- 946 A.D. – King Edred comes to the throne and selects Dunstan, the Abbot of Glastonbury, to be his prime

minister and Lord high treasurer

- 955 A.D. – King Edwy gives a vineyard to the monks of Glastonbury Abbey and many vines were grown in the area for making wine in the Middle Ages
- 967 A.D. – Remains of King Edmund I interred in Glastonbury Abbey
- 975 A.D. – King Edgar the Peaceful buried in Glastonbury Abbey (died 8th July 975)
- 983 A.D. – Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia buried in Glastonbury Abbey
- 1016 – Edmund Ironside's coronation as King of England in Glastonbury Abbey
- 1030 – King Canute visits Glastonbury Abbey to grant the Abbey gifts and privileges

Medieval (1066 – 1485)

- 1070s – St Margaret's Chapel built on Magdelene Street, originally as a hospital and later as almshouses for the poor
- 1077 – Abbot Thurstin dismissed after his soldiers kill monks by the High Altar in Glastonbury Abbey
- 1086 – At the time of the Domesday Book – Glastonbury Abbey was the richest monastery in the country and the Abbey estate consisted of 884 hides of fertile land. Among the many privileges granted to the Abbey was a mint for the coining of money.
- 1091 – The monks of Glastonbury took the relics of a holy man named Beon or Beonna by boat from Meare to be added to the collection at Glastonbury Abbey; at his last resting place, an oration was delivered, and, after a liberal offering, a church (St Benedict's) was built on the site, being consecrated around 1100.
- 1126 – King Henry I brought his nephew, Henry of Blois, from Normandy to be Abbot of Glastonbury.
- 1127 – A charter for holding a fair was granted by Henry 1 to the Abbot and Monks of Glastonbury Abbey 'to hold a

fair at the monastery of St. Michael on the Tor in the island of Glastonbury'. It was to last for six days, five before the feast of St. Michael and on the feast day itself.

- 1129 – William of Malmesbury stays with the monks of the Abbey and documents the early history of the Abbey
- 1184 – A great fire at Glastonbury destroyed the monastic buildings including the old church, *vetusta ecclesia*. The Abbey's connection with King Arthur and his Queen, Guinevere, was created by the monks. King Henry II puts his chancellor, Ralph Fitzstephen in charge of rebuilding.
- 1189 – First street market held in Glastonbury
- 1191 – The monks uncovered two skeletons that they claimed were those of King Arthur and his second queen, Guinevere at Glastonbury Abbey
- 1195 – Start of a 24 year feud between Glastonbury Abbey and the Bishop of Bath and Wells
- mid-13th Century – The earliest reference to the Tor is in the so-called 'charter of St Patrick' which names 'two lay brothers' on the Tor
- 1243 – A charter gives permission for the holding of a fair 'at the monastery of St Michael on the Tor'
- 1275 – 11th September – Earthquake destroyed St Michael's Church on Glastonbury Tor
- 1278 – Easter – King Edward I and Queen Eleanor visited Glastonbury Abbey and ordered that the tomb of King Arthur be opened for their inspection. In a ceremony the remains were taken to the high altar and then reburied.
- 14th Century – Tithe Barn at the Somerset Rural Life Museum built to store wheat and rye
- 1322-1335 – The Abbot's Fish House built by the Abbot of Glastonbury and is the only surviving monastic fishery building in England
- ?1334 – Nine-bayed aisled nave at Glastonbury Abbey completed

- 1334-1342 – The Abbot's Kitchen built by Abbot John de Breynton as the kitchen for Glastonbury Abbey and is one of the world's few surviving Medieval kitchens and has been described as one of the best-preserved medieval kitchens in Europe.
- 1366 – Great Street becomes known as High Street
- 1439 – First reference to 'George ynné' (The George Hotel and Pilgrims' Inn built to accommodate visitors to Glastonbury Abbey)

Tudors (1485 – 1603)

- 15th Century – Church of St John the Baptist built
- 15th Century – The construction of the Edgar Chapel made Glastonbury Abbey the longest ecclesiastical building in England approximately 175 metres in length with an area greater than that of Canterbury Cathedral
- 1493 – Richard Beere installed as abbot of Glastonbury, the election of Thomas Wasyn having been quashed by the Bishop of Bath and Wells.
- 16th Century – Arthurian legend expert John Leland identified Pomparles Bridge as the place where King Arthur's sword Excalibur was cast into a lake after King Arthur's burial on the Isle of Avalon
- 1500 – Glastonbury Abbey relegated to the second wealthiest abbey in Britain, after Westminster
- 1520 – Holy Thorn first mentioned in a pamphlet published by Richard Pynson called *Here begynneth the lyfe of Joseph of Armathia*
- ?1520 – The Church of St Benedict rebuilt by Abbot Richard Beere
- 1524 – Abbot Richard Beere buried in Glastonbury Abbey
- 1534 – Abbot Richard Whiting signs the Act of Supremacy granting King Henry VIII of England and subsequent monarchs Royal Supremacy, such that he was declared the Supreme Head of the Church of England

- 1539 – 15th November – Richard Whiting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, executed with two of his monks. Henry VIII closes and destroys much of Glastonbury Abbey.
- 1539 – The Mere (or Meare Pool) was 5 miles (8 km) in circuit and a mile and a half (2.5 km) across
- 1550 – Colony of Flemish weavers settled on the Abbey site
- 1587 – The last monk from Glastonbury Abbey died

Stuarts (1603 – 1714)

- 1607 – 30th January – Tsunami hits Glastonbury covering 200 square miles with floodwater which reached the base of the Church of St Benedict
- 1685 – June – The Church of St John the Baptist used for shelter by Monmouth's troops during the Monmouth Rebellion
- 1685 – July – Duke of Monmouth's army pass through Glastonbury on their way to the Battle of Sedgemoor – 1300 troops were killed or wounded and 2700 were captured
- 1685 – 7th July – In the aftermath of the Pitchfork Rebellion, several rebels hanged – from the sign of the White Hart Inn and elsewhere in the town
- 1705 – Glastonbury granted a Royal Charter by Queen Anne and first mayor (John Aplin) appointed replacing churchwardens who were once a corporate body owning considerable property in the town
- ?1707 – Henry Fielding English novelist and dramatist and founder of the Bow Street Runners, London's first intermittently funded full-time police force baptised at the Church of St Benedict
- 1712 – Meare Pool covered in a network of rhyes draining the pool

Georgians (1714 – 1837)

- 1750 – October – Matthew Chancellor from nearby North Wootton had a dream and having taken water from Chaingate was cured of asthma and Glastonbury was briefly invaded by the sick and infirm in their search for a miraculous cure. On Sunday 5th May 1751, 10,000 people came to drink the water from Chaingate.
- 1753 – 12th August – A pump room and baths opened in Glastonbury
- 1780 – The pump room closes and converted into a shop
- 1792-1794 – The ground adjoining the Abbey ruins cleared, levelled, and converted into pasturage; many loads of stones were raised here, and employed in making a new turnpike road between Glastonbury and Wells. In 1793, during the clearing and levelling, a free-stone coffin was discovered containing a skeleton without the skull.
- 1806 – Glastonbury's Market Cross demolished
- 1812 – Lilly, Brown & Co, the first private bank in Glastonbury established; it was also known as the Glastonbury & Shepton Mallet Bank.
- 1818 – Town hall built
- 1825 – Last fair held at the foot of Glastonbury Tor in Fair Field
- 1827 – The Glastonbury Canal authorised by Parliament

Victorians (1837 – 1901)

- 1833 – 15th August – The Glastonbury Canal operated by The Glastonbury Navigation & Canal Company opens
- 184? – John Clark laid a stone on Wearyall Hill to mark the exact spot where the Holy Thorn once stood (give or take a few hundred metres as the earliest engraving of Glastonbury shows the Holy Thorn as located at the roadside of Roman Way). The stone was salvaged from the Abbey and the inscription read 'I. A. Ann. D XXXI' meaning I[oseph] A[rimathea] Anno Domini 31.

- 1844 – The house and shop that stood at 35 High Street was occupied by Peter Marquand, linen draper where John Lewis apprenticed before founding the John Lewis empire
- 1846 – Current Market Cross erected – replacing the cross demolished in 1806
- 1848 – St Michael's Tower on Glastonbury Tor rebuilt
- 1854 – 1st July – Canal closed as a through route
- 1854 – 17th August – Railway opens
- 1854 – The first record of an organised procession in Glastonbury – eventually becoming the Glastonbury Chilkwell Carnival
- 1859 – Branch of railway from Glastonbury to Wells opened
- 1862 – Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway formed from an amalgamation of the Somerset Central Railway and Dorset Central Railway – the main line of which passed through Glastonbury
- 1863 – 10th March – Glastonbury Thorn tree planted on Wearyall Hill – planted by John Austin, 12 year old son of James Austin the owner of the Abbey and Wearyall Hill, to celebrate the marriage of the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII, to Princess Alexander of Denmark ('The Prince's Thorn' had died by 1884).
- 1864 – The Glastonbury Assembly Rooms built on the site of the White Hart Inn's old stables
- 1865 – The Town Council warned that Cholera might be expected in the town as
- 1867 – The first Somersetshire County Ball held at the Assembly Rooms. What was to become an annual event played host to dignitaries from across the county.
- 1870 – John Morland bought a tannery in Glastonbury particularly attracted by the water (essential to the tanning process), which he described as being "of unusual purity"
- 1872 – Well house was constructed over the White Spring, to provide a reservoir. The clean water, which it

provided for the town suffering with Cholera, was a great blessing.

- 1872 – May – As part of the Whit-Monday Fete, Charles Blondin French tightrope walker famous for crossing Niagara Gorge visited the Abbey making trips across a high rope with his footman on his back. Eight thousand people attended and the Fete included a race over six flights of hurdles into the Abbey pond and across it to the cup on the other side.
- 1873 – First of forty-five groups of prehistoric wooden trackways discovered, connecting the Somerset archipelago of islands
- 1877 – January – William Gladstone, four times Prime Minister, visited Glastonbury
- 1879 – Charles ‘Bungy’ Heal known as The King of Showmen born in Glastonbury in the building on the corner of Market Place and Benedict St, now home to Heaphy’s Cafe
- 1882 – Glastonbury Lake Village, the best-preserved Iron Age village ever found in Europe, discovered by Arthur Bulleid
- 1886 – July – Glastonbury railway station renamed Glastonbury and Street
- 1895 – 12th September – The first religious pilgrimage for 356 years held in Glastonbury. Over 1500 Catholic pilgrims walked from the railway station through the town to Glastonbury Tor where a service was held in honour of the last Abbot of Glastonbury Richard Whiting.
- 1897 – 3rd August – Anglican Pilgrimage, took place within the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey to celebrate the thirteen hundredth anniversary of the coming of St Augustine to this country. Over 100 Bishops, 6 Archbishops and around 1000 dignitaries and clergy from the Anglican Church took part in a procession from St John’s Church to the Abbey.

20th Century (1901 – 2000)

- 1908 – The Abbey ruins purchased by the Church of England and Frederick Bligh Bond appointed as director of excavations. In 1919 Bond published *The Gates of Remembrance*, which revealed that he had employed psychical methods to guide his excavation of the Glastonbury ruins and as a consequence of these revelations he was sacked in 1921.
- 1909 – Knights of Glastonbury, the oldest fish and chip restaurant in the UK established
- 1909 – 22nd June – Prince and Princess of Wales visited Glastonbury to mark the restoration of the abbey to the Church of England
- 1912 – Alice Buckton bought the Chalice Well and opened a hostel there which drew pilgrims from around the world
- 1914 – 5th August 1914 – The first Glastonbury Festival began in the Assembly Rooms
- 1921 – November – Glastonbury holds it's first Remembrance Day memorial service to honour armed forces members who died in the line of duty – following a tradition inaugurated by King George V in 1919.
- 1924 – A pilgrimage to the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey was held by a few local churches – becoming the annual Glastonbury Pilgrimage
- 1929 – Christmas – Tradition of sending sprig of the Glastonbury Thorn to the monarchy revived. In 1950 the new vicar tried to end the tradition until the Town Clerk received a letter from Queen Mary asking why the thorn had not been sent.
- 1933 – National Trust acquired Tor field with St Michael's Tower
- 1935 – Katherine Maltwood announced her discovery of the Glastonbury Zodiac
- 1937 – Draper of Glastonbury, the oldest sheepskin footwear manufacturer in the UK founded
- 1937 – 14th October 1937 – 27 acres of land on the top of the Tor including the tower sold for £2500 to the

National Trust

- 1948 – Restoration works on St Michael's Tower
- 1951 – 1st July – Glastonbury Thorn tree planted on Wearyall Hill – planted by Mayor Harry Scott Stokes as the centrepiece of Glastonbury's celebration of the Festival of Britain, the tree was grafted from the one in the churchyard of the Church of St John the Baptist and the ceremony was attended by nearly 2000 people (the tree died and had to be replaced within months).
- 1952 – 17th December – Glastonbury telephone exchange on Archers Parade came into service (built in 1938 and now the Royal Mail delivery office)
- 1953 – Sir Edmund Hillary took Morland's boots on his successful Mount Everest expedition
- 1953 – Charlie Chaplin visited Glastonbury (stopped briefly in the George & Pilgrims)
- 1954 – The last recorded occupants left the Royal Magdalene Almshouses
- 1957 – Cutting of a sprig of the Glastonbury Thorn to send to the monarchy at Christmas first televised
- 1959 – Chalice Well Trust founded by Wellesley Tudor Pole
- 1966 – 5th March – The last train leaves Glastonbury and Street railway station heading for Highbridge
- 1966 – 7th March – Railway line closes
- 1966 – 2nd June – Queen Elizabeth II visited
- 1970 – 19th September – Pop Folk & Blues festival held in Pilton – eventually becoming the Glastonbury Festival
- 1970 – Ray Sweet discovers what became known as The Sweet Track
- 1974 – 1st April – The Local Government Act 1972 reorganises local government ending Glastonbury's status as a borough with the creation of Mendip District Council

- 1975 – 0700 4th June – Glastonbury telephone exchange on Archers Parade in service since 1952 ceased operation and replaced by the current exchange
- 1978 – Somerset Rural Life Museum opens
- 1982 – 11th October – Morlands tannery – Glastonbury's largest employer appoints a receiver
- 1982 – Glastonbury F.C. moved from within the walls of the Abbey to Abbey Moor Stadium
- 1984 – 3rd April – Princess Diana visited Glastonbury
- 1986 – Christmas – Glastonbury Thorn featured on British Christmas postage stamps
- 1986 – Closure of Chalice Hill to public access
- 1988 – 1st May – The Glastonbury Order of Druids formed
- 1989 – March – Glastonbury cattle market closed – the last calf sold belonged to Henry Tinney of Cradlebridge Farm
- 1994 – Fisons gave their old workings to what is now Natural England, who passed the management of the 260 hectares (640 acres) Ham Wall section to the RSPB
- 1995 – November – Friends of Bride's Mound formed to preserve, protect and enhance Bride's Mound
- 1999 – The Glastonbury Farmers' Market first held and was the first of the Somerset Farmers' Markets.



21st Century

- 2001 – Chalice Well became a World Peace Garden
- 2003 – The Glastonbury Goddess Temple registered as a Place of Worship and is believed to be the first such place in the UK to be officially recognised for 1500 years
- 2007 – The Glastonbury Tercentennial Labyrinth built to celebrate 300 years since Queen Ann gave Glastonbury the Town Charter in 1705
- 2010 – night of 8th December – The Glastonbury Thorn tree on Wearyhall Hill badly damaged

- 2011 – Glastonbury Tor featured on a 1st class postage stamp
- 2015 – Glastonbury Abbey BioBlitz recorded 450 observations
- 2015 – 28th June – Dalai Lama visited Glastonbury
- 2016 – 1400 on Tuesday 5th April 2016 – The Lloyds Bank branch at 3 High Street closed ending 204 years of Glastonbury banking history
- 2019 – May – The Glastonbury Thorn tree on Wearyhall Hill, badly damaged in 2010, removed by the landowner
- 2022 – 19th May – Formation of the Somerset Wetlands National Nature Reserve (NNR) – extending from the edge of Glastonbury to Bridgwater Bay it became the third largest NNR in England and home to a third of the UK's bittern population
- 2022 – September – Glastonbury awarded £23.6m from the government's Towns Fund scheme – spread across 11 projects 'bringing existing assets back into community use and working with local communities to deliver the spaces and resources that they want and need'

Locations

- Abbot's Fish House  query.valley.certainly
- Assembly Rooms  releasing.knocking.navy
- Bride's Mound  mural.paler.owned
- Chaingate Shoot  motoring.wriggle.shallower
- Chalice Well  sparks.dusters.parked
- Church of St Benedict  stood.player.atomic
- Church of St John the Baptist  nerd.household.paths

- Church of St John the Baptist – Glastonbury
Tercentennial Labyrinth  save.mammals.manly
- Draper of Glastonbury  canine.compacts.clerics
- Glastonbury Abbey  forgives.doubts.remake
- Glastonbury Abbey – Abbot's Kitchen  woven.shopping.occur
- Glastonbury Canal (approximate site of canal basin)
 chimp.conspired.bulk
- Glastonbury Cattle Market (site of)  bleach.scrapped.hazy
- Glastonbury Football Club (approximate site of centre of
former pitch within Glastonbury Abbey)  collides.stars.enchanted
- Glastonbury Football Club (approximate site of centre of
current pitch within Abbey Moor Stadium)  silks.milk.hothouse
- Glastonbury Goddess Temple  spellings.replying.driveways
- Glastonbury Lake Village (corner of site nearest to
Glastonbury town centre)  destroyer.albums.everyone
- Glastonbury Railway Station (gates at entrance)  hairstyle.speeded.vocal
- Glastonbury Tor – Fair Field  fish.energy.plausible
- Glastonbury Tor – St Michael's Tower  liquid.invoices.trumpet

- Glastonbury Town Hall  reframe.templates.forge
- Glastonbury & Shepton Mallet Bank (site of)  hampers.motive.hidden
- Knights of Glastonbury  balancing.dollar.bleat
- Market Cross  slurs.rebel.download
- Pomparles Bridge  wager.defends.crisps
- Pump Room & Baths  producers.whites.developer
- Somerset Rural Life Museum – grin.jaundice.speeded
- Somerset Rural Life Museum – Tithe Barn  contracting.trembles.rivers
- St Margaret's Chapel and Royal Magdalene Almshouses  cycles.speak.employers
- The George & Pilgrims  took.goofy.curtail
- The Red Brick Building (once part of Morlands tannery)  upper.hits.proclaims
- Sweet Track (site of)  speedy.chefs.plantings
- Wearyhall Hill (location of last Glastonbury Thorn on hill)  gladiator.organic.averts
- White Hart Inn (site of)  beads.cases.select
- White Spring  charm.objective.paths

More Information

[Glastonbury Abbey – Chronology](#)

[Glastonbury Town Council – Past Mayors](#)

Do you know the dates of any key events in Glastonbury's history that are not on our list?

To book holiday accommodation in the Glastonbury area visit [here](#)