

Transcript

Glastonbury Festival

Dr Marion Bowman:

Glastonbury Festival is characterised by Michael Eavis, owner of Worthy Farm in Pilton where the festival actually takes place, as a party that started in the 1970s with a handful of people in a field and grew into a famous festival.

From an estimated attendance of around 1,500 people in 1970 its scale has become vast with 175,000 people attending in Glastonbury 2019.

In the 1970s though, there was increasing interest in Glastonbury as a sacred site. In ancient pre-Christian religion there, in the ley lines some saw as converging there. And Glastonbury came to be known in the 70s as the epicentre of New Age in England.

So, for the early festival goes the location of the festival site in sight of Glastonbury Tor was very significant. Glastonbury Festival's iconic pyramid stage was originally conceived as a one-tenth replica of the Great Pyramid of Giza. Its site located by dowsing.

That alternative side of Glastonbury Festival persists. Not only in the causes which have consistently benefited financially from the festival such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the early days and later Greenpeace as well as Oxfam and WaterAid.

So, for many people the Glastonbury Festival experience consists not simply, or not even, in seeing the headline acts but in going beyond the pyramid to the upper reaches of the festival site. To the areas designated Green Fields, with Green Futures, Greencrafts, Field of Avalon, Healing Field and King's Meadow.

In the Healing Field, as you would expect, the emphasis is obviously on healing but under this heading myriad different groups, individuals, spiritual service providers and religious groups gather offering an enormous range of healing and spiritual experiences.

In King's Meadow at the top of the site there is a stone circle in honour of Glastonbury's ancient sacred past. And this is a place where various ritual and spiritual activities take place as well as a lot of chilling out.

So up in the Green Fields area there is immense creativity in the construction of spaces and sites for gathering, passing through, meditating and taking time out. And the various zones there display their distinctive ethos, aesthetics, goods and services.

So, although seeing Leonard Cohen on the Pyramid Stage in 2008 is probably one of my best ever memories as I hope you'll now see, there is much, much more going on at Glastonbury beyond the pyramid.