

Margaret Thornley – “Pilgrim of St. Michael”

Sally Cunis (October 2012)

I have long wanted to write about this very unusual woman who came into my family's life back in the early 1950s. My father, at the time, was building up a business as a Dartmoor Guide; he spent weeks and months exploring the Moor, learning about its history, its peoples, geology, ancient monuments, topography, flora and fauna. He became an authority on Dartmoor, spending the spring, summer and autumn months leading people on walks and pony treks, and speaking to various groups as well as speaking on radio, and writing books about Dartmoor in the winter months.

Because of this background and his local knowledge, one day a lady came to the old Dartmoor town where we lived at the time. Her name was Margaret Thornley, and she was advised to contact my father, as her quest was to look for and heal “the dark places on the Moor”. We were all somewhat taken aback by this very strange request, but my father duly took her to many of the places which Margaret felt to be holding a negative and dark quality. It is only in more recent years, since working with energy myself, both as a dowser, and sometimes as a healer, that I have begun to appreciate what she was doing, and I feel very much that she was a forerunner of the thinking which has come into being today: i.e. that places, buildings, and people hold energy, some of it feeling good and positive, and some of it feeling very low, damaged, or in some instances, downright evil. She also had an intuitive understanding of Earth Energies and the effects that damaged places can have on the network of lines which I believe are all over the globe, and which of course, many famous dowsers such as Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst have identified in their books. The “Mary” and “Michael” Lines being well described in their book *The Sun and the Serpent*.

Margaret called herself a Pilgrim of St. Michael, as she felt very strongly that she needed to visit as many of the St. Michael places as she could, mainly in Devon and Cornwall. On arriving at a site, she would take her walking stick and, using a small piece of wood affixed to the stick, would turn it into a cross. She then held it up, and invoked the powers that be (Hamish Miller called them “The Management”!) to let go of the darkness, and bring in the light. I think she came from a Christian perspective, but what mattered was that she brought such love and wisdom to everyone she met, as well as to the places she was compelled to visit, and that her Intention to do good was the most important factor.

Margaret spent many years doing this with absolute dedication and total certainty. Miracles seemed to enable her to achieve her goals: she told us once that on encountering a very high stone wall, which she was completely unable to climb over, she prayed for help, and suddenly “found” herself on the other side. The gate, previously locked, was open for her when she had finished her prayers and invocations.

Margaret also visited many of the Holy Wells abounding in the area, and being a practical soul as well as a very spiritual one, she contacted local councils to persuade them to clean them out and tidy them up – she had marvellous powers of persuasion!

She was also a close friend of Wellesley Tudor Pole (WTP as he was known), a seer and a visionary who wrote many books, and who was instrumental in setting up the Chalice Well Trust in Glastonbury. He was also the founder of the Big Ben Silent Minute

Observance in 1940. Indeed, for many years, in the entrance hall at Chalice Well, there was what Margaret had called her prayer wheel. In fact it was a handwritten - and illustrated with little sketches - record of all the places she had visited on her spiritual quest. I understand it is now in the Chalice Well archives as someone once tried to steal it!

I never actually met Tudor Pole, but my parents did and, by all accounts, he was an extraordinary man. I would love to tell you of another “miracle” which occurred when my parents were once travelling with him and his sister in their very ancient (even then!) Austin 7. It became stuck in a ditch; WTP was reassuring, and told them not to worry, help would be on its way. This happened at a lonely crossroads in the middle of Dartmoor. Seconds later, three cars appeared from each of the roads converging at the spot, five men got out of the cars, lifted the stricken vehicle from out of the culvert – and then drove away! This seemed more than just “coincidence”, more like divine synchronicity. To my parents it seemed like a miracle, which in its way, I think it probably was, although apparently WTP thought of it as being nothing remarkable, but simply the result of faith in the power of prayer.

Even though Margaret was quite elderly when we met her, she seemed possessed of remarkable grace and agility. She never doubted for one minute that her prayers would not be answered; she was always gentle but had an incredible inner strength. One could see this in her very blue eyes, determined demeanour and facial expression. My father took her into the furthest reaches of Dartmoor, to which few tourists in those days could find access; the way was often treacherous, boggy and challenging even for the most determined walker. Margaret particularly wanted to be taken to places of spiritual significance, or to places which had sinister names. She felt that there were powerful beings (we might call them devas or nature spirits today, perhaps), “locked up” in the tors and hills, who were sleeping, and waiting to be awakened from their age old slumbers. I can’t be the only one who has felt what I call “the spirit of place”, or sensed that sometimes one is making contact with a “sentient being”. When I am dowsing in a place of significance, I always ask for permission to dowse – from just these great and powerful entities. Twice I have been told NO – in no uncertain way!

Even as a child, I appreciated her benign and powerful influence for good; we kept up a correspondence for many years until she died, and her encouragement of my career choice led me into nursing, then subsequently and many years later, both into counselling and dowsing. One day in 1999 when I was dowsing in Cornwall, I was very excited to come across “by chance” or, more likely, synchronicity again, another “place of power”, where there was a small chapel dedicated to St. Michael, with a plaque on a large granite boulder with Margaret’s name on it. I quote from my journal I always write when I’m travelling on one of my own “quests” in my camper van.

“Took the van and drove to Carn Brea – wonderful spot with spectacular views. Found a St. Michael chapel encircling a large stone, and I was stunned to see a plaque with the inscription as follows:

Chapel Carn Brea

Site of The Hermitage Chapel of St. Michael

The Pilgrimages of Margaret Keturah Fulleylove Thornley

Bard Maghteth Myghal

Servant of Michael

Led to the acquisition of the hill

Presented to the National Trust

15th May 1971.

I found, unsurprisingly, several very powerful earth energy lines, which may well have linked in to the St. Michael line towards St. Michael's Mount, as well as to St. Buryan's Church not far away. I was thrilled and quite emotional. As the years rolled away, Margaret came sharply into focus, and in a very minor way, I was stumbling along in footsteps much greater than my own, some 60 years later. I felt much humbled, and very privileged, to be doing so.

Among the many valuable lessons which Margaret taught me, was this: "Thoughts", she said "are Things". I understood a little then, and perhaps a little more now, that they are indeed "things" and are not meant to be taken lightly or misused; that they have a powerful effect, and are the energy behind bringing things into material manifestation – a great responsibility and one which most of us may not use very wisely. Dowsing a "thought form" brought this vividly home to me one day, when several members of Devon Dowsers were conducting an experiment - so be careful what you think!

There is much more to be said about this extraordinary woman, but space and time will not allow, and I have barely done her justice. One last word: many years ago I was trying to recover from a trauma (another one!), and had taken myself to Brentor church, another St. Michael place. With my inner eye, and having asked for help and healing, I "saw" St. Michael over the altar of the church, shining and luminous, and holding up his sword like a cross. In the centre of the sword was a ruby heart, which glowed with warmth and light. Telling my mother about it later, she reminded me that it was Margaret Thornley's symbol, which she used to put on her letters and notes to us all.

Further Reading:

The Silent Road, by Wellesley Tudor Pole

Writing on the Ground, by Wellesley Tudor Pole

High Dartmoor, by Eric Hemery

The Sun and the Serpent, by Hamish Miller and Paul Broadhurst

Some Memories of Margaret Keturah Fulleylove Thornley, printed by Cornwall Lithograph printers Ltd.