

GLASTONBURY CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Newsletter 123

www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk

2007 July

Chairman's notes

John Brunsdon

I was invited as mayor to open The Gauntlet, a prestigious new walkway arcade linking the High Street with St John's carpark. There are 16 small shop units on what was a medieval burgage tenement — a long narrow strip — next to that of the Tribunal, marked out with granite setts.

The idea has been five years in development since it first came to the owner, Doug Hill (who lives in Weston). For much of that time the shop was occupied by the Tenovus cancer charity.

Access from the High Street was created through the already altered listed shopfront, giving the opportunity to restore and enhance it. The theme is Victorian and characterized by high standards of materials, design and workmanship. Non-slip paving slabs are laid for safety, and CCTV security is installed. One notable feature in the new walkway is a window on the east side of the Tribunal building that was not previously in public view.

Visitors arriving at the town's main carpark will have a convenient walk through to the High Street and the Tourist Information Centre. (And now that the prize-winning toilet block is open in the carpark, there must be a strong case to move coaches from the neighbouring Northload carpark.)

This is about conservation being protection and enhancement — not static preservation. The Tribunal should not be altered due to its importance, but in this instance an already altered listed building has been enhanced and its future made more sustainable. The development makes good use of land available, increasingly important in Glastonbury.

Scarlet tiger moths

A flutter of scarlet over comfrey growing in my back yard drew attention to a freshly emerged female scarlet tiger moth. She had assembled three males and was mating with one of them. This less common tiger moth prefers damp areas and is said to warn off predators by its bright colours — scarlet body, white spots on black forewings and black spots on scarlet hindwings. The moths were about for several days, and I hope they evaded nearby nesting blackbirds! The caterpillars are of the longhaired woolly-bear type.



Doug Hill, the owner, took five years to develop his plan and build The Gauntlet to a high standard. All seven of the flats (some are bedsits) are already occupied. Shops open or imminent among the 16 units include Elements of Desire (jewellery), Debra Rose (gothic and crafts), Witchcraft Emporium (another), Enchanted Florals and a perfumerie. All of them have a page on www.thegauntlet.biz



From the walkway, a window of the ancient Tribunal building next door can now be seen.

An archaeological study before development began showed this site was occupied from Norman times. In the 15th century the west side was a yard for the Tribunal kitchen, and parts of this framework is still evident. In the 19th century the shop was owned for some years by Jonathan Payne-Newman, famous for being Glastonbury's mayor on more occasions than any other.

Frank Goodall, the auctioneer and stationer, occupied the shop between the late 19th and early 20th century. In the 1960s it became a Currys branch, then a Spar food shop and an Orthodox bookshop in the 1990s. It has undergone the biggest change in its history in becoming The Gauntlet.

Why the name? Doug Hill said it was a challenge to him (throwing down a gauntlet) as developer, and the narrow walk flanked by small shops suggested "running the gauntlet". And a good logo.

Open evening at Coombe House gardens

Glastonbury Conservation Society members are again invited to visit the lovely gardens of Coombe House, 88 Bovetown, through the generosity of Alan Gloak and Colin Wells-Brown. Definitely put the date in your diary: Friday August 3, from 6:30 to 8:30pm.

Chasing the noble chafer *Ian Rands, Terry Carmen*

Dressed in appropriate safari kit, five of us met by the Shakinashram in Dod Lane (the former stables of Chalice Hill House) on June 16 and headed up Bushy Coombe towards the Bulwarks Lane orchard. We were looking for the noble beetle, or his grub, or evidence of the presence of either.

This beautiful bright iridescent-green beetle, between a cock chafer and a scarab, about the size of the first joint of your finger, is assumed to be a measure of biodiversity. An expert told me that they don't live in Somerset any more. If they do, they should be found in rotting old apple trees. Hence our foray.

We found evidence of their grubs' tunnelling in both the orchards we visited, but no beetle or grub yet. He should be about from June to August, so we will look again.

"The Noble Chafer beetle is generally found in old orchard areas during July and August," explains Jill Nelson, of People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES). "Unfortunately, these types of environment are regularly being destroyed to grow more productive crops. The beetle has been losing its habitat and its numbers have been dwindling for over a century."

Monitoring exactly where the beetle is found helps to focus conservation efforts appropriately. Most recent records have come from Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, but historically it lived in Cumbria, Kent, Devon, Essex, Hampshire and Oxfordshire. So if you think you have seen one, let PTES know — even better, send a digital photo to enquiries@ptes.org. And for a colourful postcard to aid identification, send a stamped addressed envelope to PTES, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4BG).

The noble chafer (*Gnorimus nobilis*) is

a beautiful, somewhat globular, greenish, iridescent rare beetle about 2cm long. It is often confused with the rose chafer (*Cetonia aurata*), but has wrinkled wing cases, unlike the smooth ones of the rose chafer. The noble chafer also has pale flecks on both its wing cases and thorax and a distinct indentation between the thorax and wing cases.

Noble chafers feed on nectar from open-structured flowers such as hogweed, on sunny days in July and August. Their grubs (white, C-shaped, up to 3cm long) live in rotten wood in the central hollows of decaying fruit trees in traditional orchards, where they take two years to develop into adult beetles. Most telling would be the presence of faecal pellets (called frass), which collect like fine gravel, and can last for several years if sheltered from rain.

The weather was warm, and the sounds of the Pilgrimage singing wafted up from the Abbey grounds, so our very unscientific fieldwork in a quiet old orchard on a Somerset hillside was fulfilling if not productive. “Beetle II” takes place on Saturday August 11.

Chalice Well tour *Alan Fear*

15 members took up the kind invitation from Chalice Well of a guided walk around the gardens on May 17, led by the chief gardener, Ark Redwood, and aided by Anthony Ward and Michelle Macaulay-Haines.

We spent two hours being shown the layout of the gardens, ponds and, of course, the well itself. Ark's enthusiasm was infectious. To end the enjoyable evening, we strolled through one of the Chalice Well orchards, which our society helped to plant.

Thanks to our hosts and hostess for a very pleasant evening.

Walks and talks for the diary

- ✿ **July 14, Saturday—Butterflies**—Meet Geoff Brunt at 2:30pm at Fountain Forestry (OS grid reference 507 326, where they sell Christmas trees) for a gentle walk to see butterflies in their restored habitats on the Poldens.
 - ✿ **August 4, Saturday—Tree-planters' picnic**. Details on page 3.
 - ✿ **August 11, Saturday, Saturday—Beetle II: “In search of the noble chafer”**—Meet at 2:30pm at Basketfield Lane (southeast side of the Tor) for a walk with Rob Holden of the National Trust.
 - ✿ **September 15—Bottling**—Meet Ian Tucker at 2:30pm at his Glastonbury Spring Water plant at Park Corner Farm, for an “additional bonus” and interesting environmental innovations.
 - ✿ **September 21, Friday—St John’s interior changes in the past 500 years**: an illustrated talk by Neill Bonham in St John’s Church, 7:30pm A
 - ✿ **October 5, Friday—The movements of Abbot Whiting’s bones from the Tor in 1539 to the present**: a talk by Dr Tim Hopkinson-Ball at the library, Archers Way, 7:30 ... A
 - ✿ **August 3, Friday—Coombe House gardens**. The generous owners, Alan Gloak and Colin Wells-Brown, have again invited Conservation Society members to an evening in these splendid gardens on the slope of Bushy Coombe. 6:30 to 8:30pm.



Indoor barbecue, in Tudor style

With the weather as it is, we should take a leaf out of the history books and put our barbecues inside the kitchen. A new display opened in the 14th-century Abbot's Kitchen showing how the Tudors cooked their meat. A full-size spit roast made to medieval specification has been installed over a realistic-looking log fire. This was designed to a high standard by Oliver Hayles, working with blacksmith Jasper Johns, both from Bristol.

In the last year the ancient building has been equipped to show how the impressive four-hearth kitchen would have fed the Abbey's important guests. Huge tables are set up to show how food was prepared, what herbs and spices would have been used and how bread was baked in the existing oven. A medieval potter, Eddie Daughton, regularly visits to make jugs and bowls using authentic glazes, and many other craftspeople have contributed their specialist knowledge and skills.

Long list of summer events at Abbey Barn

An exhibition of miniatures and book illustrations by Jill Bennett, entitled "Mrs Gosofty presents", runs until July 22 at the Rural Life Museum in Glastonbury.

The next major exhibition is "On the surface" — feltwork by Ama Bolton, Clare Diprose, Kate Hickmott, Jane Paterson and Maggie Stewart. This runs from July 28 until September 8.

A unique collection of computing & consumer technology by Benchmark Software, entitled "Want a brain?", will be at the Abbey Barn from mid-September for two months.

In addition to these exhibitions, a wide variety of one-day events are scheduled, with children especially in mind. Most are free, and only some need advance booking. The list includes demonstrations of weaving, spinning, dyeing, billhooking; storytelling; a donkey day; Victorian washing; Roman objects; making corn dollies, coracles, rag rugs, cider. For a full list, contact the Rural Life Museum (83 1197) or look it up on the web.

How big is your ecofootprint?

Anthony Ward

A new online WWF calculator works out your eco- and carbon footprint: how much impact does your own life have on the planet?

The calculator is based on data modelling by the Stockholm Environment Institute, in York. (The same people recently verified the Findhorn Community in Scotland as having the lowest recorded ecological footprint in the Global North — see the May-June issue of *Resurgence* magazine.)

You'll find the WWF calculator at <http://footprint.wwf.org.uk> — it's part of the WWF One Planet Living campaign.

Have a go and let's compare scores! I had a "two planet" ecofootprint of 3.61 hectares of land, and my carbon footprint was 7.62 tonnes per year — about 70% of the UK average.

Of course it's only a rough guide but the WWF calculator is reckoned to be the best of its kind, and we have to start somewhere.

Mendip environment forum

Ian Rands

The main item of interest to conservation-minded people at the Mendip Environmental Forum on May 14 was an address given by Lesley Rowan, the council's senior waste-management officer (now seconded to the county as project manager for the Somerset waste board).

Her talk was a success story of Mendip and Somerset's handling of our waste, of recycling, of composting, landfill management and kerbside collection — and now of a county-wide scheme for dealing with food waste centrally.

Transition town: what will we do when the oil runs out?

Ian Rands

A band of about 50 people, led by Linda Hull of Glastonbury, are concerning themselves with the potential problems we shall all have to face when the Planet Earth's oil runs out.

Her group's studies are in the early stages. A film was shown on May 18 of how Cuba coped when oil supplies there were suddenly cut off.

The Glastonbury group has formed sections studying food, health, carbon emissions, local government and housing within the setting of (ominous term) "energy descent".

I have agreed to be the Conservation Society's liaison and will report periodically.

Tree report for 2006–07

Alan Fear

My first year of being in charge of the tree-planting all started rather quiet. We began by planting 10 trees by the carnival sheds, and while we were there we did some general tidying up and re-staked some trees.

Next we did some pruning around Glastonbury, for the town council.

My first planting project was for Derek Thyer at Huxham Green, where over three Saturday mornings we planted 1,120 hedge plants.

After this we helped clear a border at the cemetery, ready to plant a holly hedge,

which I hope we can do this year.

When I thought we had finished for the year, up popped a request for 225 hedge plants to be put in for David Stokes at East Street.. This took us one Saturday morning.

Thanks to all the members who gave up their Saturdays to help. As a thank-you I have arranged a picnic and guided tour around Carymoor on August 4, at 10:30. Please let me know if you are coming.

One last request: if you have any holly plants you do not want, please let me have them.



Profusion of blossom all over the town puts Glastonbury in with a chance in this year's Mendip in Bloom competition. The judging is imminent.

Every Action Counts, doesn't it?

56% of adults believe that scientists are still questioning the advent of climate change, according to a recent BBC poll. Yet the latest report of the International Panel on Climate Change was unequivocal: they agree that it is now very likely that human activities are causing global warming. It is puzzling why the climate-change message is not penetrating the public mind as it should, and the BBC findings should be deeply worrying to government.

The Civic Trust, the umbrella organization of which Glastonbury Conservation Society is a member, has begun an Every Action Counts campaign. The idea is to mobilize voluntary-sector organizations like ours to disseminate information and encourage everyday environmental actions among their members.

The website (www.everyactioncounts.org.uk) has tips and general advice and an evaluator of how much progress our group is making toward reducing its carbon emissions.

Community Champions are being appointed to become the voice and conduit

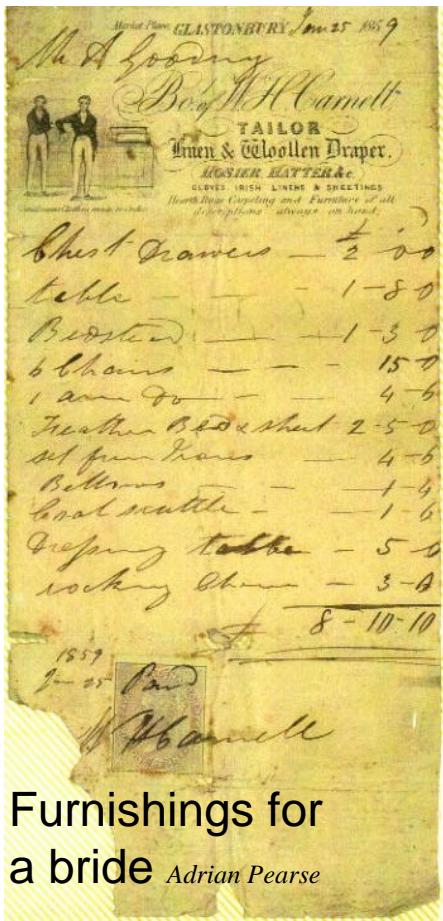
for change within their group. Two days' free training and a range of tools are provided.

The campaign has five themes:

- Energy and climate change
- Resource minimization and recycling
- Transport and travelling wisely
- Caring for where you live
- Ethical and local shopping.

Among examples of how other Civic Trust member organizations are implementing Every Action Counts, the Otter Valley Association is screening Al Gore's movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association has signed up to the Founding Statement on Sustainability, which starts: "Our lives, our communities and our society should be sustainable for generations to come." The Weald of Kent Protection Society prints its newsletter on 100% recycled paper. The Civic Trust itself has signed up to the Third Sector Declaration on Climate Change, which includes adopting public plans to reduce carbon emissions.

Contact: Emma Montlake at the Civic Trust, Monday to Wednesday on 020 7539 7904, or emontlake@civictrust.org.uk



Furnishings for a bride

Adrian Pearse

This is one of the earliest Glastonbury invoices I have ever seen. It came my way from Los Angeles as a byproduct of investigations into descendants of John Cannon, whose Glastonbury diaries from the 1730s and 1740s are soon to be published.

One of them was Emily Plucknett, the bride of the Alfred Gooding in the invoice: the furniture was for their home. £8 10s 10d in 1859 would be worth £5,130 today, going by average earnings.

The couple later emigrated to Nebraska, where a considerable group of Cannon descendants had established themselves at what was to become the town of De Witt, now the place where Vice-Grip wrenches are made — and where I was given a lifetime supply of free samples!

• Adrian's articles about John Cannon appeared in newsletters 108 (August 2003) and 110 (January 2004).

Northover Mill seeks community use

Northover Mill, listed as Grade II and sitting next to the former Morlands site, is on the market to local community and not-for-profit organizations. The two-storey stone mill, built in 1517, was once part of the Morlands tannery and was used for cloth-making. It was rebuilt in the 18th century and has since been residential and office space but has been derelict for 20 years.

Paul Calvert, property manager at the South West Regional Development Agency, which owns the site, said: "It is really important that we bring this building back to life, and we believe that local organisations are perfectly placed to do so because they know exactly what the community needs."

"We are open to suggestions. All reasonable ideas involving community-based activities will be considered. We will make our decision on who to sell this building to based on the most appropriate use — not necessarily the amount of money offered."



Interested parties should discuss their proposals with the local planning authority, Mendip District Council, before submitting them. Offers should include full details of the proposed use and initial designs, which must demonstrate a high environmental standard, and a business plan to demonstrate that the applicant's proposals are financially viable.

The closing date for tenders is August 30. To arrange a viewing or find out more about the property, call King Sturge at 01225 32 4105.

Convent re-conversion to grandeur

Jim Nagel



The Priory, the Georgian house at the right of the photo, once part of the St Louis convent and school and then of Millfield's Abbey School, is to be grand again, as two dwellings of 3,500 sq ft. The drawing room of the rear unit is the original 20ft x 30ft salon with 20ft ceilings and windows.

The developer, Malcolm Lambert of Wells, is keen to restore the windows and asks the society if archive photos or plans might still exist.

The taller building at left, purpose-built by the convent as a school in 1926, is also becoming two large dwellings, on the scale of its neighbour. Richard Middleton is the developer here. Both projects hope to finish by year end; neither is connected with the new-build Cavendish retirement homes at the rear of the properties.



When I first came to Glastonbury in 1970, I enjoyed saying the town's nearest traffic light was at Shepton Mallet. We've kept the record till now — only pedestrian signals on the bypass. But the huge new Morlands Enterprise Park Junction puts paid to the claim. I count fifteen bendy poles wrapped in blue plastic, soon to be flashing in all colours. Plus four poles for pedestrians 50 yards further. Around the back, Beckery Old Road is still closed and the lias-built buildings of Baily's old tannery are shrouded in scaffolding. JN

