

## Chairman's notes

*Alan Fear*

Let me start with a date for your diaries. On the evening of **Friday July 29** Alan Gloak invites Conservation Society members to amble around his gardens at Coombe House, Bovetown, with a glass



*Monty wants us to play with him in Coombe House gardens, 102 Bovetown, on July 29.*

of wine. Alan invites us every year so please come along and enjoy these magnificent gardens, from 6 to 8:30pm.

A few weeks ago Alan told me that his gardeners George Payne, Finbar Fleming and Sheilagh Bodenham have moved some things around, so there are new vistas to view this year.

**Paradise Lane** – During late May and early June we managed to put road planings down along the worst parts of Paradise Lane. The town council kindly let us borrow motorized wheelbarrow—it really made the job a lot easier.

These planings are the bits of old asphalt scraped off when a highway is resurfaced. Mark Radford brought three tons of them each Saturday morning, and our small band of volunteers succeeded in laying about 12 tons. Overall, about 30 tons of planings have gone down along Paradise Lane.

We plan to place a bench, made from a sleeper, in the lane, so that walkers can rest and admire the view over the Levels towards Wells. A new pedestrian gate will be installed and a farm gate we had to remove will be replaced. So, many thanks to our willing band of volunteers who helped the Conservation Society accomplish this task.

**Bushy Coombe path** – Our next project is to lay planings on the steep footpath up from Dod Lane. Somerset and Glastonbury councils have tried putting stones along this footpath in past years, but rain washes the stones to the bottom of Dod Lane. Unlike stones, the road planings will be compacted by the feet of many walkers and even melt together in hot weather.

A contractor will do this job for us.

## Bill Knight's mural wins a vague stay of execution *JN*

Mendip council has agreed—for the time being—not to proceed with enforcement action against the psychedelic mural adorning the end wall of Bill Knight's listed building at 9 Northload Street.

A petition signed by 1,500 Glastonians who like the mural, saying tourists also like it, was presented to the full meeting of all 47 councillors on July 11.

One point made at the meeting was that it could be “tolerated”, just as the travellers’ camp at the Morland site, though not exactly legal, is tolerated. Another was that enforcement is discretionary, not mandatory.

The council agreed not to enforce but rather to refer the decision to the planning board and consult with interested persons first.

*History:* Bill commissioned the mural in 2015 in order to deter ad-hoc graffiti on his otherwise plain rendered wall. John Mason and his MOA UK crew—known as Sym, Sikoh (who has a shop in Church Lane), DMK and Luvm—did the work in eight days at the start of August last year. They paint murals at music festivals all over the country.

The Knight commission asked for a flavour of Glastonbury and particularly specified the words on the scroll in the picture, Sikoh said. [Oops: the “Welcome



## Town in bloom impresses judges

Two judges from Southwest in Bloom visited Glastonbury on July 14 and saw the town centre, old people's homes and the Red Brick Building community garden. They spent longer than planned in town, talking to people. They especially liked the community projects—which is where Glastonbury fell down last year. It seemed the gardens at St Margaret's chapel

and almshouses made a particular impression on them.

Awards will be announced in September. Glastonbury won a silver gilt award last year.

Glastonbury in Bloom runs its own competition and will judge entries for allotments, gardens, commercial premises and tourist attractions.

Mendip in Bloom was discontinued some years ago.



*Bill Knight practising with a big brush in case the council forces him to paint over the colourful mural.*

to Glastonbury” sign hides the scroll in our photo, so you will have to go read the words for yourself. —*Ed.*

Bill's blunder was that he did not first get planning permission for this change to a listed building in a Conservation Area. A member of the public complained to Mendip. In September Bill applied for retrospective consent. In December Mendip refused it. In January Bill appealed to the Planning Inspectorate; the appeal was dismissed on June 1.

*G* Flower power sprouted in 1969 on the walls of the Pat Li Shun art shop at the top of the High Street. It horrified the borough council—and made an indelible first impression on any visitor arriving on a bus as it turned the corner.

Pat Leyshon (mother of Liz Leyshon of Strobe Theatre) is finishing her handiwork in this photo. Her husband Alban had done his homework: they could not be forced to remove this street art, because it contained no wording.

The photo is from Jan Morland's online diary, [riseandfallosmallbusiness.blogspot.co.uk](http://riseandfallosmallbusiness.blogspot.co.uk)





# Pylle celebrates the railway's 104 years

Adrian Pearse

A number of Conservation Society members participated both as cast members and spectators at the Pylle Pageant staged on May 22.

The pageant commemorated the arrival of the Somerset Central Railway in 1862 as it extended from Glastonbury eastward to Evercreech and beyond, and also the 50th anniversary of the line closing in 1966.

The Pylle Pageant was a truly impressive event masterminded by Stephen Tudsbury-Turner—the culmination of more than a year of preparation and research. It involved especially the villages of Pylle, East Pennard, Pilton and Evercreech.

More than 125 participants were in period costume as characters from 1862. The main feature of the day was a procession led by Wells Town Band from the church to the Old Rectory followed by speeches and entertainment. The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



**E** Consoc members Jacinth Latta and Adrian Pearse with Lisa Britton and Anne Howes as Sir William and Lady Miles and party. Sir William was one of the two East Somerset MPs and thus one of the VIPs at the event.

**H** The crowd outside Pylle church. In rehearsals, the 1862 concept of social segregation was implemented: the lower orders were not to approach their betters, and, if they did come into proximity, to bow or curtsy and speak only if spoken to.

Sir William Miles MP (our Adrian) adds: "One great photo shows our unscripted but horrified reaction to the approach of one of them. Most didn't have the vote, so their opinion didn't matter. In a village like Pylle if anyone uttered a word against their betters they could be instantly evicted. We loved it and can't wait for the next pageant!"



**G** Hilary and Hugh Tripp, also Consoc members, as Hugh's great-great-grandfather William Leir (1768–1863), who was squarson of Ditcheat.

[Editor learns a new portmanteau word: a main local landowner who is also the rector.]



## Antiquarians explore unique sites in Devon and Dorset Adrian Pearse

More than 20 members of the Glastonbury Antiquarian and Conservation societies enjoyed the annual field trip to Whitchurch Canonorum, Colyton and Shute Barton in a particularly picturesque area of west Dorset and east Devon on June 18.

The morning was occupied with the visit to the church of St Candida and Holy Cross at Whitchurch Canonorum, five miles west of Bridport. This church has one of only two saint's shrines in England that survived the Reformation. St Wite (Candida) may even have been adopted from the pre-Saxon era: the structure of the building incorporates earlier Saxon and even Roman elements as well as fine Early English features.

Following lunch at Symondsburys Kitchen the party proceeded to

St Andrew's church at Colyton, which is notable for the spectacular tombs within the Pole Chapel and the monument to Margaret Courtenay, granddaughter of Edward IV.



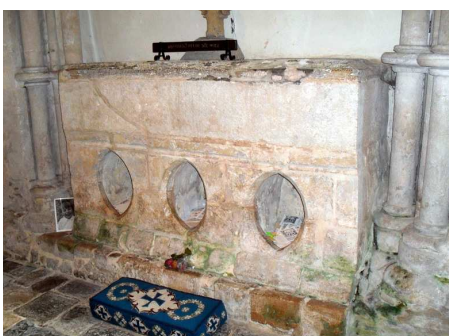
**E** In the Pole chapel of the church at Colyton, in east Devon, reclines the effigy of Elizabeth, daughter-in-law of Sir William Pole (1561–1635), the noted antiquary who laid foundations for future students of Devon history.

**G** The relics of St Wite survive at Whitchurch Canonorum, for whom the Dorset village is named. In 15th-century Latin she was called Candida (white). Little is known about her: she might have been a Christian martyred by the Danes. Pilgrims put their head, hands or feet into the openings in the shrine for healing.

The next destination was Shute Barton, an embattled 14th-century manor house—one of the best surviving and most important examples of a non-fortified manor house in England.




**E** Close by Colyton church is Old Shute House, known as Shute Barton in the past. It is listed Grade I and owned by the National Trust. Pole descendants were custodians until 2008. The main house is available as a holiday let.



## Long-service award

The National Trust honoured John Brunson, the society's president, with a badge and certificate celebrating his 30 years of volunteering, mainly on the Tor. Until recently he climbed the Tor every day to make sure it was clear of litter.

"I believe that John is the longest-serving volunteer we have ever had in this area," said Paul Harvey, who coordinates volunteers in the National Trust's North Somerset area.

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To email, use chairman@, trees@, etc—for example, editor@glastonburyconservation.org.uk



# One month of planning applications in the Conservation Area

A summary of planning applications put before Mendip council in June:

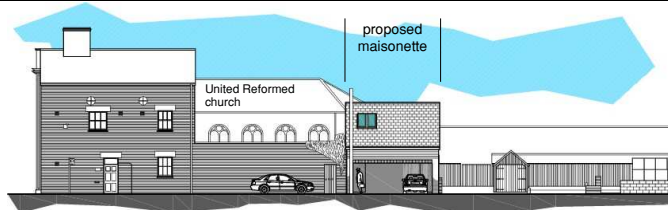
- At Orchard Court (the library) in Archers Way, the county council asks planning permission to display adverts, building identity and a services sign over and to the side of the main entrance.

- B & Q is to remain on its site at Wirral Park—its lease runs another 10 years. The unit will be split into four separate units at some point in the near future; planning permission was already obtained in 2015.

- At Chalice Hill House, Dod Lane, Ms Sophie Sleekx asks to add work to existing planning approval: to replace a low-pitched slate roof with a new lead roof, to replace poor-quality timber in the living-room floor with wide oak planks and to clarify the layout of the patio retaining wall.

- A dwelling for agriculture workers will be constructed at Paradise Farm, Edgarley Road, if Mr I. J. Walker gains planning permission.

- A proposed single-storey extension to the rear of 4 Fairfield Gardens would be 5.4 metres deep, whereas 3m is the limit under “general permitted development” in the Town and Country



**E** A garage with a small flat over it (orange site on map) would face 2 Victoria Buildings across the small one-way road. Drawings show Velux roof lights, windows in gable ends, natural slate roof, and timber cladding above brick. The architect is Collier Reading of Wells (whose former office was 66 High Street, shown at the left of sketch).

**Editor wonders:** If the neighbour were to follow suit and build an adjoining garage-with-flat, the gable windows would be of no use. Indeed, wouldn't a complete mews project along the east side of Victoria Buildings make for a much better townscape than piecemeal development? Further, what about the unused gardens (hatched red on map) behind the four shops between this site and the church? A similar sad example of piecemeal development is St John's "Square".

In my long-held opinion, “planning” is a misnomer—the local authorities only say yes or no to individual developers' proposals. The town would so benefit from inspired plans for imaginative new use of neglected land and schemes that encourage neighbouring landowners to collaborate. *JN*

Planning Order 2015. Gwynneth Morgan applied for a Lawful Development certificate but Mendip council refused it.

- Howard Malpas applied to extend the Camino Centre, a community education project at 1 King Street.

- A foodstore and a motor dealership have been approved for Plot E at the Morland site.

- The Glastonbury Goddess temple

won approval for the change of use of Somerset House, Magdalene Street, to a wellness and holistic centre (category D1 in planning terms). The previous owner, West Country Business Systems, used it as offices (B1). The new use requires no material changes to the building.

- On gardens belonging to 2 Victoria Buildings, the estate agent Julian Bending proposes a maisonette and parking.



**G** Somerset House, listed Grade II along with the wall and pillars on its Magdalene Street boundary, was built in the 1850s as the residence of the chief of the newly founded Somerset Constabulary. Glastonbury was close to the geographical centre of Somerset, as the boundaries then were.

The connected houses between Somerset House and the Catholic church are also listed Grade II. From 1904 these houses were the convent of the Sisters of Charity of St Louis; they expanded to Somerset House in 1953. The sisters first opened an orphanage and then ran a neighbourhood laundry from a hut behind. The three-storey building next to the church was built in 1926 as a school staffed by the nuns; by 1964 it had more than 260 pupils, including boarders. In the 1950s the sisters taught typing and shorthand at Somerset House (a precursor to its more recent use by a computer software business). The convent closed in 1984.

The Safeway supermarket opened on the former school playing fields in 1988, but the three-storey building continued as Millfield's pre-prep school for another decade. More at [stlouisconvent.co.uk](http://stlouisconvent.co.uk)



## Rescue Our Ruins appeal reaches the one-third mark

Glastonbury Abbey's appeal to raise £100,000 for conservation work is nearly at a third of its target. The appeal's “Final Chapter” aims to raise £274 a day, and so far totals £29,700.

Steve Henderson, the Glastonbury butcher, town councillor and enthusiastic musician, completed the road run in May and raised £500 through sponsorship.

Meanwhile, the Somerset quilter Jane Harwood donated a hand-stitched quilt to be auctioned.

Jane has been lovingly making quilts for 60 years. Her latest work is inspired by the country churches of Somerset. “I have found some splendid old patterns—medieval tiles made by monks, carved bench-ends depicting the concerns of medieval times, mythical beasts. Among them you can see the Green Man from Bishop's Lydeard, an ox team from Kingston St Mary and a vase of flowers from Broomfield.”

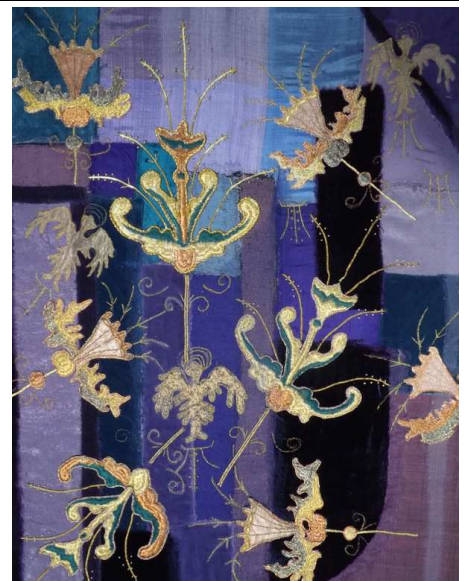
To bid on this unique piece of local heritage, visit the online auction, [jumblebee.co.uk/abbeyquilt](http://jumblebee.co.uk/abbeyquilt). It ends on **July 28** at 8am. All of the profit will go to the Abbey appeal.

At a vintage-themed tea party at the Abbey on **Saturday July 23**, 2–4pm, visitors are encouraged to wear 1950s-style clothes and enjoy tea and cake by the Women's Institute for a donation—normal Abbey admission applies.

**H** This embroidery by Jenny Blackburn, inspired by the 15th-century Othry Cope, will be on show at the Abbey this autumn and winter. It's part of the “Ruins and Riches” exhibition of stitched textiles.

The works in the show are by seven highly skilled textile artists, collectively calling themselves Heptad. The Abbey ruins and artefacts are a source of ideas for them.

Visitors can expect both contemporary and traditional embroidery techniques and will see innovative designs, incorporating a range of



mixed media. All the work is of exceptional quality. The exhibition opens on October 1 and runs until January 29.

# Every tree at Bushy Coombe needs separate permission *Jon Grocock*

We are writing this note because of concern expressed in Newsletter 144 (April) over “what seems to be excessive work at Coombe Orchard”. We hope to allay fears that we are doing anything other than good to the trees at the top end of Bushy Coombe.

A considerable number of the most “significant” trees in Glastonbury are sited in this area, broadly the confluence of Bulwarks Lane and Wick Hollow—specifically 6 to 14 Wick Hollow, Bushy Coombe Farm (owned by Rory Weightman) and peripheral work on land managed by Bushy Coombe Land Trust farther down the coombe.

The list includes large oaks, horse chestnuts, a stone pine and other large and rare conifers, and several mature purple beeches. Many of these trees are in poor condition; certainly no remedial works have been done in recent years. Storm damage, disease, overgrowth by self-seeded saplings, landslip and prior inappropriate planting have all contributed to what amounts to a bit of a crisis up here.

We are in danger of losing some important trees. In fact the whole process was prompted by a significant branch falling off an oak in Wick Hollow and blocking the road last year.

With professional tree-surgeons we reviewed all the trees in the area, consulted their owners, and embarked on a comprehensive preservation programme (at considerable personal expense). This has involved reducing the size of trees under stress from disease or likely to lose overextended limbs and removing a number of smaller diseased trees or trees damaged by squirrels, trees that are overgrowing or impairing others, removing brambles and creepers.

In other words, what we are doing is exactly the sort of management that should be ongoing in any wooded landscape.



**G** Somewhere on the horizon, hidden by self-seeded ash and sycamore saplings, is the Tor. The landowners intend to remove them to liberate the major oak and beech that form the real Bushy Coombe landscape.

**E** The view from the top of Bushy Coombe to the west has already been restored by the pruning so far.

**G** This stone pine is part of the arboretum planted by John Morland. His family at one time owned all the top end of Bushy Coombe. Wild deer love the coombe and often lie on the old Morland tennis court near this tree.

*“It’s a very special landscape, Bushy Coombe,” says Jon Grocock. “But it won’t stay special without looking-after. Our overall vision is for the coombe to look like a better version of what it always has been.”*

**Cliff in Wick Hollow** – Trees clinging to the cliff-like side of Wick Hollow are a separate concern. The owner of the land on the north side cannot be traced.

previously bare slopes, largely of non-native species that are now in poor condition. The TPO came a long while after that.

The blanket TPO means that even the most trivial and uncontentious work requires planning permission. There are significant trees on the site, especially along Bulwarks Lane, but there is a plethora of, for instance, self-seeded ash saplings that clog it up, impairing the growth of the more mature trees and rendering the land unsafe and unusable and

degrading the canopy. Because of the blanket TPO, separate permission has to be granted for each one of these to be removed.

Our only objective is to preserve and improve a neglected treescape in one of the most beautiful parts of the town. We really hope that concerns will be allayed by this note and that in future we will have the wholehearted support of all members of the Conservation Society in our endeavours.

If anyone has further concerns please feel free to contact Jon and Pamela Grocock at 8 Wick Hollow (077 9893 2252, [jon.grocock@sjpg.co.uk](mailto:jon.grocock@sjpg.co.uk)) or Anne Furniss at 12 Wick Hollow (077 9694 2093, [annefurniss@gmail.com](mailto:annefurniss@gmail.com))—we are all members of Glastonbury Conservation Society.

## War effort brought profound changes to the Brue valley *Jim Nagel*

During the war, a munitions factory near Bridgwater required so much water that the Huntspill River was dug in 1940, the huge Gold Corner pumping station was built, and the Cripps River was radically altered to flow south instead of north.

For me, this was the most striking new information to come from Bruce Garrard’s talk to the Conservation Society on June 3. The author of *The River*, the story of the Brue and the Axe, Bruce focused this talk on the period since the war. He also posed some important conservation issues.

The Puriton ordnance factory was sited on the edge of the Levels because it

needed a guaranteed supply of 4.5 million gallons of water every day—equivalent to 100,000 households.

Louis Kelting, the Catchment Board’s chief engineer, combined this requirement with reviving a drainage scheme mooted in 1853: the Huntspill drains 45,000 acres, a third of the Somerset wetlands.

The main engineering problem was that the Huntspill River was designed to be 25 feet deep, but it turned out impossible to dig past 16 feet, where clay underlies the peat. So Gold Corner pumping station had to be redesigned: it’s the biggest in the Southwest, lifting water

from the Cripps River two or three metres to get it into the Huntspill. “If it hadn’t been wartime, I doubt whether this would ever have been done,” Bruce said.

The ordnance factory is no more, but the pumping station carries on pumping. Without it, the Brue valley would flood every winter from Burnham back as far as Glastonbury.

[Glastonburyconservation.org.uk](http://Glastonburyconservation.org.uk) has a link to the full illustrated text of the talk, including the conservation issues Bruce raised. About two dozen Consoc members turned out; he was pleased that nearly all bought a copy of his book.