

# GLASTONBURY CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Newsletter 122

[www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk](http://www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk)

DOUBLE ISSUE 2007 May

## Chairman's notes

John Brunsdon

**Green Fair:** Many members attended the Green Fair at the Town Hall on February 23. Our stand had photographs of planting trees and restoring orchards, and displayed awards and certificates acquired over the years. All this has put us in the “top ten” of societies affiliated to the Civic Trust, along with others such as the Faversham Society who have much greater resources.

We must not rest on our laurels, but look for new ways we can serve Glastonbury through conservation, remembering that we are a civic-amenity society and not a militant environmental group. Our role is to work with the establishment when they are pursuing good ends but, as in the past, being ready to remind them of their responsibilities if they are not. We are probably on safer ground when thinking “locally” rather than “globally”. From small acorns grow great oaks. Enough oaks can affect global warming too!

(Photos of the Green Fair are online: [www.palden.co.uk/photos/ggg.html](http://www.palden.co.uk/photos/ggg.html))

**Local plan till 2027:** The Local Development Framework process continues in its quest for a local plan for the next 20 years. We know that the town is almost “developed out” as regards housing, and that a time will come when Glastonbury housing needs may have to be met in Street.

One thing is certain, however: the dangerously busy A361 continuing to divide the town is totally unsatisfactory. It affects the lives of those living alongside the road and endangers those who have to cross to reach shops and schools. For a town so dependent on tourism, it is impossible not to make safer the approaches to the Abbey Barn, Chalice Well and the Tor, which attract thousands of visitors each year. I doubt if any “plan” will have the confidence of the townspeople if it does not work towards a solution of the A361 problem.

**Eco track:** Walkers have been interested to see the “eco” access track under construction at top of Bushy Coombe. It lets vehicles reach the gothic barn (Grade II listed) where Rory Weightman now lives. He explains that when the grass grows through the grid, the track will merge into the landscape unobtrusively, and is pleased with the positive response he receives.



*The Abbey has expanded its “living history” presentations. From May, two characters are in the grounds four times every day to talk to visitors. Three are shown here: Alice the kitchen maid (Kay Wych), Thomas the pilgrim (Lou Panetta) and Brother John Vernay, the novicemaster (Rodney Gifford).*

*Others include Brother Cedric (Duncan Smith) from Saxon times, Alkanet (Alison Hughes), another kitchen maid, who is skilled in weaving, crafts, cookery and medieval music, Sir Richard Pollard (Bill Wych), the King’s Accountant who came to prepare the Abbey for its final days by order of Thomas Cromwell, Prior Nicholas London (Dan Bradford), returning to a devastated abbey after the king’s men have wrecked it, and Alfric (Tony Hughes), one of the Flemish weavers who worked in the Abbot’s Kitchen in the 1600s.*

*You might also meet Sir Edwin the Unreliable (Dan Bradford again) wandering the grounds in search of King Arthur after his final, fatal battle.*

## Abbey centenary: people behind 1907 auction come to life

June 6 will mark a century since one of the most iconic buildings in England was knocked down at auction for £30,000—something like £11 million today. The purchaser was Ernest Jardine, a wealthy Nottingham manufacturer of lacemaking machinery and the prospective Parliamentary candidate for East Somerset. The building was the ruined Glastonbury Abbey.

Jardine bought the ruins and grounds on behalf of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who was determined to procure it for the Church of England. The bishop immediately set about a fundraising campaign and appointed a committee of local worthies—Arthur Somerville and Robert Neville Grenville.

Glastonbury Abbey is marking the centenary of the purchase with an exhibition called “The Bishop, the MP and the local gentry”—opened on **May 4** by David Heathcoat-Amory, our current MP (who also has roots in lace: his ancestor John Heathcoat invented the bobbin net machine and established a lacemaking business at Tiverton).

The exhibition runs for all of May, to coincide with the national Museums and Galleries Month, and focuses on the personalities involved in the purchase

>> *Abbey special continues on page 4*

## Hardware shop has new owner

JN

The hardware shop at 22 Benedict Street, believed to be Glastonbury’s oldest business, has changed hands as a going concern. The only visible difference is that till receipts now say Miller’s Hardware instead of “G. Miller & Son”.

Keith Miller, 77 on St George’s Day, retired on March 24 just before his date for heart surgery. The operation was a success and he came home within days, but complications set in from an ulcer and he is back in intensive care at Bristol Royal Infirmary, slowly improving.

The new owner is Steve Rowse. He too is a familiar face as a Glastonbury trader: he ran the healthfood store in the High Street from 1989 to 2001.  
> *Iron in the blood, 1851–2007: page 2*



*Keith and Mary Miller behind the hardware counter on the day of the handover.*

Summer  
strolls

May 19  
Blossom

All are on Saturdays starting at 2:30pm. Details on page 6.

June 16  
Beetle I

July 14  
Butterflies

August 11  
Beetle II

September 15  
Bottling

# Town's oldest business: the Miller dynasty had iron in the blood

Jim Nagel

Keith Miller was the fourth generation of Millers to run the hardware shop in Benedict Street. The founder was his great-grandfather, George—in 1872, the year after his marriage to Sarah Ann Dickinson (although an advertisement in the 1909 *Homeland Handy Guides* says it started in 1840).

The couple purchased four old cottages in Benedict Street, according to the 1931 newspaper report of their 60th wedding anniversary—“picturesque thatched buildings, with walls six feet thick built of Abbey stone”—and replaced them with the present brick building.

Later in life, they had nine children and lived at Glencoe in Fishers Hill. George was a Temperance supporter, stood for Liberal MP, and died in 1937 at the age of 86.

He owned one of the first cars in Glastonbury—a photograph shows it with a chauffeur. He also had one of the town’s first telephones. Old advertisements show the shop’s number as Glastonbury 92. More and more digits were prefixed: it was Glastonbury 2292 for decades, became 32292 in the mid-70s, and the 92 is still there in today’s 01458 83 2292.

“I met him when I was a nipper,” Keith said. “He used to give me a penny—an old penny—and I had to save a ha’penny of it. One time I spent the whole penny on two big marbles, and that got me into trouble.”

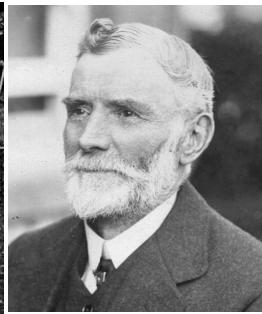
George’s son Harold took over the shop, and in his time there was also a scrap business: sheds extended behind the shop into what is now the public carpark. George’s other two sons also had hardware businesses: John (the eldest) at Keyford near Frome, and Willy (Keith’s grandfather) at Shepton Mallet and then Street. And two of his six daughters married into hardware families, at Bridport and Burnham. Francie, the youngest, was prominent at St Benedict’s Church and in the Red Cross.

About 1929 Keith’s father, George Jr, came to work for his uncle Harold. The time came when he had either to leave or to buy the business, so he went to Lloyds Bank, where he knew the manager well, and borrowed £2,000. It took him until the war to pay it off. Meanwhile the manager, who lived at Baltonsborough, spent his dinner hours sitting in a chair at the shop to keep an eye on his investment.

Jack Miller, 13 years younger than his brother George Jr, helped in the shop almost up till his death last April at 94. Another brother, Mac, was a famous Frome footballer.

Keith, George Jr’s only child, was born in 1930. He left school at 15 and worked at Clarks for four years, helping in the shop and yard when his father was unwell. Coming fulltime into the business with his father in the 1950s meant a cut in wages: from £15 a week on piecework to £10 at the shop. George Jr died at the age of 81.

Warren Chapman, who carries on serving customers, with Steve Rowse, the new owner.



George Miller (b. 1851)  
and his shopfront in  
Benedict Street, 1909.

Benedict Street used to be much busier, Keith recalls. “People used to flock up from the railway station on Tuesdays for the market. I remember my father saying we had to be prepared for the trade.

“Of course when I came into it, he didn’t sell anything but china, glass and lamps—and lots and lots of chamberpots. Ladies would come in, see only me, and say: ‘Is your mother here?’ That was still a big market in the 1950s.” He recently turned up a receipt in his mother’s handwriting for an entire dinner set, probably Staffordshire: £2 and 10 shillings.

The sheds behind the shop were the scene of Keith’s most famous wartime exploit: hacksawing into a bullet he and a friend had found in a German aircraft that crashed at Coxley. The cartridge exploded, shrapnel whizzed past his ear (he was lucky), and his mother fainted cold when she saw the blood.

The outbuildings stored lamps and wicks that arrived from Czechoslovakia packed in straw. When Keith took over the business, he sold off all that stock as a job lot to a woman from Shepton Mallet, and diversified into electrical goods, kitchenware, ironmongery and paint.

At that time the High Street had two hardware shops (besides A.W.G. Curtis & Son farther down Benedict Street, started by Gilbert Curtis in 1924 and still thriving under Roderick and Anita). E.G. Wright was opposite the post office until 1970. “Stan Palmer came to work for me when it closed. He was a jolly good salesman: if someone came to buy paint, he would always ask if they also needed sandpaper, white spirit, and all the rest.” Checkley’s, which traded until around 1975 in the premises now owned by Glastonbury Experience, stocked more ironmongery than Millers at the time. When Keith branched out into tools, “Jack Checkley didn’t like it very much.”

Keith also started selling fishing gear—rods, reels, bait, maggots. “That saved our bacon in some lean years.” He was also one of the first to sell DIY goods—timber, hardboard, plywood, tools—and further introduced telephones and videos.

Among the Saturday boys who worked in Millers Hardware over the years were David Titchener (now the photographer) and Max Thurgood, besides Keith’s sons Matthew and Jonathan.

Will Keith miss the shop? “I certainly will, after 55 years. I walk up the town and people speak to me, and I scratch my head: ‘Who was that? They must have been in the shop.’”

Somehow Keith also found time over the years for two stints as St Benedict’s churchwarden and to play bowls regularly in Street. He looks forward to more relaxed bowls when he is out of hospital and no longer has to watch the clock and worry about the shop.

Steve Rowse, the new owner, lives in Roman Way. The hardware shop “is a fine business”, he said. “I don’t intend to change a thing, other than maybe a coat of paint.” Warren Chapman and Jamie Allen will carry on as staff.

Property development is Steve’s main business. He plans to make two flats above and behind the shop after Keith and Mary move to their new house in Tithe Street, on the Actis estate.



# Wash where you walk—Look! Colour! JN



Remember the town-centre enhancement in 1995: new pavement slabs to replace ugly asphalt? With red bricks among them to add colour? Probably not, because everything underfoot has been uniformly grey and grimy for years, and we avoid looking.

Well, the High Street footpaths are getting a much-needed cleansing—not just a daily sweep but a thorough annual scrub. Graham Carter is at work here with new pressure-washing equipment that takes water from a fire hydrant and pumps it out hot or cold; it even shifts chewing gum. His firm, Connaught Environmental, on contract to Mendip council, carried out a pilot scheme in Shepton Mallet last year, making the town look so much cleaner that the programme is now being rolled out across the whole district. It will work its way down from the Queen's Head at the top of the High Street over the next few weeks. Let's hope those bricks will turn red again.

Meanwhile Steve Brown, who happens to live opposite where this photo was taken and came out to say hello on his day off, carries on his everyday round of picking up litter and sweeping footpaths.

Mendip won the British Cleaning Council's award in March as the cleanest district in Britain. "Cleaner streets are one of our top priorities," said the councillor in charge.

## It's a treat to put your feet on the street

What an improvement to the alley leading off the High Street to the Assembly Rooms, splendidly cobbled! Thanks is due from the whole town to Ruth Morland of Glastonbury Galleries (out of sight to the left), the landowner, who funded most of the £8,500 job. And then she added new planting tubs.

Contributions came from others who share access: the Assembly Rooms, Emma Howe the clairvoyant, the flat above Bishopston Trading, and Ricky Bologna, owner of the Yin-Yang shop, who lives in Spain. The work was done by Lee Pearson (LP Surfaces) of Walton, using Chelsea Pavers stone.

O that Church Path could be next, from the High Street to Norbins Road, where hundreds of schoolchildren and parents walk four times a day on dreary multi-patched asphalt. Whatever happened to Mendip's plan to continue the attractively paved footpath from St Benedict's School through all the carparks right up to the Wells Road surgery? This is all within, or on the boundary of, the Conservation Area.



**May 1–7:** In what organizers hope will become an annual May festival, there's an exhibition of contemporary art in St Mary's hall, a sculpture trail up Bushy Coombe, music in the Assembly Rooms and St John's, films at the Phoenix, etc. Details from AvalonCAN (Creative Arts Network, [www.avaloncan.com](http://www.avaloncan.com)).

**May 4–7:** Grace07 is a show by local artists including Caroline Bacon and Tony Martin at Glastonbury Galleries, the Methodist church and Silver Street.

## Plastic at last to be collected

Plastic and cardboard could soon be included among the material collected from Glastonbury residents for recycling. Mendip started a year's pilot scheme in October involving 2,500 households chosen at random throughout the district, and is coordinating results with Somerset Waste Partnership.

Meanwhile residents can take plastic bottles to Morrison's carpark; the household recycling centre at Street takes cardboard as well. Plastic items marked 1, 2 or 3 in the triangular recycling symbol are taken—which generally covers bottles of all sorts. Margarine tubs, veg and meat packaging and so on fall into types 4–7 and are not yet recycled.

Somerset recycled 40% of its waste in 2005–06, a doubling from four years before. In October, a single seven-year contract is to be signed covering the whole county, replacing the present 10 separate contracts for waste and recycling for each district.

Tackling the problem at source, local-government groups want producers and supermarkets to cut down on plastic. In Canada, retailers must charge a deposit on plastic bottles, and people rightly return them to where they bought them.

## Picture puzzle

Answers on a card or email to the editor.

New buildings, mostly houses, are springing up like mushrooms in the centre of Glastonbury. Do you know where these are? And the names they have been given?



This one is probably toughest.

Answer to puzzle in last newsletter: The carved Abbey stones in Stephanie Morland's photos can be seen on the left as you go into Street. They are set in a low wall in front of a former Millfield house, at the bus stop facing the old Jobcentre.

# ABBEY 1907–2007

>> continued from page 1  
and the subsequent fundraising appeal. It uncovers the stories behind the event—which, in true Glastonbury style, has developed a mythology all of its own.

Over the winter, members of Glastonbury Abbey Friends Association (GAFA) immersed themselves in the Abbey's archives and ferreted in libraries and record offices to discover the fascinating details that make the people and events of that day in 1907 come alive.

Letters, photographs and other material from Abbey collections will be on show for the first time. Look through the list of donors to the purchase fund—is your family listed? Who was the anonymous benefactor who gave £2,500? (In today's earnings that's £920,000.)

Museums and Galleries Month is the biggest celebration of its kind in the world, highlighting the entertainment, cultural enrichment and education that Britain's museums and art galleries offer. With a theme of "People—who are we?", MGM2007 launches throughout Britain with a big Welcome Weekend (May 4–7) followed by hundreds of events in museums and galleries around the country (see [www.mgm.org.uk](http://www.mgm.org.uk) for further details). Somerset events are listed at [www.somerset.gov.uk/museums](http://www.somerset.gov.uk/museums).

How are the Abbey trustees meeting their responsibility to ensure the preservation of the Abbey ruins and grounds for the enjoyment of present and future generations?

The trustees have looked after the Abbey diligently over the past 100 years: W.D. Caroe was the first of several talented architects appointed to repair and consolidate the ruins; Frederick Bligh Bond was the first to excavate the site; after him were the eminent archaeologists Theodore Fife, Charles Peers, Alfred Clapham, Ethelbert Horne, C.A. Raleigh Radford and Bill Wedlake. The excavated finds were displayed in the Abbot's Kitchen and guidebooks were produced. Presentation became increasingly sophisticated with displays in the gatehouse and then the kitchen. In 1993 the new museum was built.

At its height in the early 1980s, the Abbey welcomed more than 150,000 visitors every year. With increasing competition for leisure time, we are pleased to be holding our own for the past few years at 100,000. Sustaining visitor numbers is essential: around 90% of the Abbey's income comes from admission charges and shop sales. The Abbey is run by its trustees, a small staff, professional advisers and, latterly, the welcome help of volunteers.

In 2002 the trustees commissioned a Conservation Plan. This is a formal document, which does not, as its name might suggest, give the mix for the mortars to be used to consolidate the ruin or set out a schedule of repairs. It is a concept, developed first in Australia, I believe, and taken up by English Heritage and now the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is basically an audit of a

• **Take a fresh look through a lens:** Amateur snappers and seasoned professionals are invited to enter the Abbey's 2007 photo competition, on the theme "Life and wildlife at Glastonbury Abbey". Photos must be taken within the Abbey grounds during normal opening hours. There are cash prizes of £100, £50 and £25, plus certificates, and the best pictures will be displayed at the Abbey in October. Deadline for entries is noon on September 12. Ask for an entry form and full rules, or download it ([www.glastonburyabbey.com](http://www.glastonburyabbey.com), bottom of page).

• **Vote for the Abbey:** The Abbey is one place nominated as Britain's best historic site in an Alan Titchmarsh series running on the UKTV History channel. A further five-week series runs from July 23, and the result comes during the final programme on September 17. Vote at [www.uktvhistory.co.uk](http://www.uktvhistory.co.uk). You can also upload photos, video, audio and comments. Clifton Suspension Bridge (hmm) currently has by far the most votes in the South.

• **Lacey snowdrops:** Staff, trustees and volunteers planted another 8,000 snowdrops this winter at the Abbey for future generations to enjoy. The snowdrops were given by the family in memory of Eli and Patrick Lacey, who used to live in St Dunstan's House, beside the Town Hall. A particular batch has taken root under a beech tree, their favourite spot.

## Abbey House ancestor

[Letter to the editor](#)

 In 1824 my great-great-grandfather Robert James married Charlotte Down, daughter of John and Jane Down, at St Benedict's Church, Glastonbury. John Down was the owner of the land where the Abbey stood. He was a gentleman farmer and mayor of Glastonbury at some stage. He is listed in the Town Hall mayoral lists [1804, 1811].

Family legend tells of Abbey stone being used in the construction of the Copper Beech, the house opposite the Abbot's Kitchen. It is now divided into flats but I wonder if there is anything there to help support this story. Perhaps some carvings may have remained or been used in the garden?

John and Jane had a further daughter, named Jane, who married William Tice James, MRCS, in 1833. He was also a mayor of Glastonbury [in 1850].

William and Robert James were brothers. Thus two brothers married two sisters. Robert

and William's parents and grandparents came from Chard and were related to the Blake family of Bridgwater.

John and Jane Down had five children: Charlotte, Henry Wilcox, Elizabeth, John and Jane. Henry Wilcox Down married Elizabeth Blake [and was mayor in 1836].

I should be most interested to know if there are still descendants of the Down family living in the Glastonbury area and indeed if there are any Town Hall records which may be useful for both Down and James family research.

**Mary de Viggiani**

Cranmore Lodge, East Cranmore  
BA4 4SD

• **Footnote:** William Tice James, a surgeon, purchased The Hermitage, 5 Chilkwell Street, now owned by John Brunsdon. He considerably enlarged the house but retained its Regency style.

monument or site, a sort of SWOT analysis. It was written by a team of professionals, including historic building specialists, an archaeologist, a museum director, an archivist and a landscape consultant. It is a public document—copies are in the Antiquarian Society's library and in the Local Studies and SANHS libraries in Taunton.

It is the first comprehensive, professional summary and analysis of the issues affecting the Abbey: everything from conservation and repair of the buildings, grounds management, governance, staffing, interpretation, access, layout, etc. It is a mixture of the scholarly and the practical. It is a massive document and the complexity of the issues it identifies is boggling—what the principal author described as "Glastonbury bogginess".

The trustees are addressing the issues it identified. To help them select priorities and ascertain what is feasible, they have commissioned a Business Plan and are now working their way through this. Their prime object is to preserve the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, but they also have a duty to preserve the collections and associated information—an area where they have been woefully lacking.

In the meantime the Abbey cannot stand still. I will outline some of the recent and ongoing developments. Perhaps you haven't visited us for a while? Do come and see what is going on.

◆ A partnership has been struck with Dr Roberta Gilchrist of Reading University to set up a research project to study, interpret and publish the 100 years of archaeology at the Abbey. [See news of grant, above right.]

## Glastonbury Abbey: assuring the future

Vicky Dawson (from a talk to Glastonbury  
Antiquarian Society in February)

# Centenary celebrations

Full list at [www.glastonburyabbey.com](http://www.glastonburyabbey.com)

or pick up a leaflet from the Abbey

◆ **May 4 to 31**—Exhibition “*The bishop, the MP and the local gentry*” (see page 1).

◆ **May 26, Saturday**—*Centenary Evensong*. Abbey grounds open free for visitors from 2:30pm, service at 3:30. The Bishop of Bath and Wells presides, and the whole Christian spectrum takes part: the Dean of Clifton (representing the Roman Catholic bishop), the Abbot of Downside, Free Church ministers, ... St John’s choir leads the music.

◆ **May 12–13**—*Outdoor theatre*, “Colder than here”, a look at death and dying with a touch of humour, 7:30pm.

◆ **May 19** (St Dunstan’s day)—*Compline*, 5:15.

◆ **May 20**—*Tim Pitman sings*, 2:30pm.

◆ **June 3**—*Clifton Brass*, 2:30pm.

◆ **June 9**—*Townswomen’s Guild choir*, 2:30.

◆ **June 10**—*Songs of Praise* led by Street

Salvation Army, 2:45pm.

◆ **June 16–17**—Anglican, Catholic *pilgrimages*.



**May 26 to June 1 — Flower festival**, “*Words of wit and wisdom*”, all around the Abbey. Volunteers led by Bonnie Tillbrook do flowers in St Patrick’s Chapel year round.

◆ Displays and demonstrations include *basketmaking* (May 5–7), *calligraphy* (May 7–9), *stonemasonry* (June 4–8), *mosaics* (June 11–14); and, later, *medieval pottery*, making a *coracle*, medieval *music* and manuscripts, *blue lias stone* from the Abbey, *falconry* and *woodcarving*.



A scrolled-up petition to the town council about the Abbey surprised Maggie Stewart last week when it fell out from behind books. She lives at 51 Chilkwell Street, a house known to exist in 1300 when the Abbey was in its heyday, and has no idea how the document came to be there.

19 years after the C of E bought the Abbey, the borough council wanted to buy the land between the Abbot’s Kitchen and Magdalene Street to use as a carpark. “The petitioners view with alarm and disfavour the proposed purchase,” says the document, dated December 1926. “Although a cheap tourist traffic might be stimulated by the provision of the further space for motors, the place would be vulgarized and the better class of visitors disappointed.”

The first signatories were at 6 Buckingham Gate, London, and the rest in Bath — which the document cites as a town “which has acquired a new lease of popularity through the preservation and restoration of its ... antiquities”. It seems this was radical thinking at the time.

◆ We hope soon to commission digital surveys of the grounds and the standing buildings. Without an accurate benchmark from which to work, it is difficult to monitor decay and human interventions on the site. The surveys will help with managing the grounds and conserving buildings, besides being an invaluable tool for the research project.

◆ One of the most successful ventures over the past four years has been the policy of enhancing the Abbey grounds by planting thousands of bluebell, crocus and snowdrop bulbs and by introducing a less austere maintenance regime that encourages wildflowers and greater biodiversity. This encourages people to make repeat visits to the Abbey and makes the site attractive to gardeners as well as lovers of ruins.

◆ The Abbot’s Kitchen is being refurbished to show visitors how it would have looked when in use. Reproduction pots, cauldrons, roasting spits, food and spices are the backdrop for actors playing a female servant, the novice master, a monk and a pilgrim.

◆ This is the fourth year that a varied programme of events—craft demonstrations, concerts and exhibitions—has been organised at the Abbey. Their purpose is to enrich visitors’ experience and encourage repeat visits. Look out for our new events leaflet.

◆ Trustees are also planning a project to repair and enhance St Patrick’s Chapel. They hope to employ disadvantaged youngsters and teach them traditional building-repair techniques of using lime wash and lime mortar. Another group will work with professional artists on decorating the inside of the chapel with murals and stained glass.

◆ The café in the Abbey proves very popular and will continue this year. Its drawback is limited undercover space, so it can operate only during summer.



# Grant will help toward publishing Abbey’s archives

The long-anticipated publication of the Abbey’s excavation archives moved a step nearer this spring with a £47,000 grant from the British Academy to the University of Reading.

Professor Roberta Gilchrist, an archaeologist there, is to run a pilot study to investigate how well the Abbey’s collections can reveal the full story of its past. There are finds of stone, pottery, glass, tile and metalwork as well as plans, drawings and photographs from 100 years of archaeology in the precinct. She will also study records held by English Heritage.

Publishing the material has been a longterm ambition of the Abbey trustees. Its importance for Glastonbury and the study of monasticism internationally was underlined in 2005 in the Abbey’s Conservation Plan.

“This is a very prestigious and exciting award for trustees and staff at the Abbey,” said Dr Robert Dunning, chairman of the trustees, “especially as it comes in 2007—a hundred years since the Abbey was put into the care of a charitable trust that began its conservation and archaeological investigations in earnest.”

Work on the study is to start at the beginning of June.

The facilities to offer warm drinks on a cold November afternoon would be much appreciated.

◆ It is two years since the Glastonbury Abbey Friends Association (GAFA) was launched. Members have organised a range of successful fundraising events and contributed many hours to helping hard-pressed Abbey staff. GAFA volunteers welcome visitors in summer, sell guide books, audio guides and brass-rubbing equipment. Others keep the flower beds and tubs in order or work with me on the museum collections. The research for the centenary exhibition is largely the effort of my trusty band of volunteers. New members are always welcome (contact the Abbey for details).

There are other improvements trustees and staff would like to see, for example a better entrance and shop layout and a dedicated space for education activities. They want to improve the signage around the grounds,

build more toilets, raise the profile of King Arthur and store the collections in an accessible space. To do all this will be extremely expensive. There will be a need for new buildings, with all the consultations, archaeology and landscaping that means.

This may sound daunting and seem to disregard the profoundly religious inheritance of the Abbey. Rest assured. The trustees are only too aware of the overriding importance of the peace and spirituality of the site and buildings, which are greatly valued by visitors too.

In developing the site to meet the expectations of 21st-century visitors and generate the income necessary to preserve the ruins, the Abbey trustees are guided by best practice in visitor care, conservation, curation and management. They will be academically rigorous and profoundly sensitive in executing their task.

# Glastonbury since the destruction of the Abbey

Adrian Pearse

Neill Bonham's erudite overview on March 9 of a series of plans and illustrations of Glastonbury from 1600 to 1820 provided a fascinating insight into the development of the town during the post-Dissolution centuries as it came to terms with its much reduced importance.

Senior's survey of 1610 for the Duke of Devonshire showed the various plots and their subdivisions covering the greater part of the town and surrounding area in the ownership of this estate. Such detail was complemented by the two views prepared by Wenceslas Hollar c.1670 for Dugdale's *Monasticon*. The first was a more distant view from a spot near the present Butleigh monument; the second [*below*] was from Wearyall Hill, providing detail of the built-up streets as well as the condition and extent of the Abbey ruins, where the Abbot's Lodging and parts of the Abbot's Hall were still standing. Glastonbury was also shown on Ogilby's strip road map from Bristol to Weymouth of 1675.

In 1723 the antiquarian William

Stukeley made detailed drawings and plans of the Abbey ruins and precinct—including a view of the Abbot's Lodging, though this had been demolished ten years earlier. The great Abbey church had by this time assumed a state very like today. A decade or so later John Cannon, a schoolmaster in the town, added drawings to his *Chronicles\** of various buildings and curiosities in the town, together with detailed descriptions. The drawings are naive but provide useful information, such as detail of the Court or Market House erected in the middle of Magdalene Street by R. Strode in 1650. Use of Abbey materials was judged an ill omen, and the market duly failed to prosper—the structure was demolished in 1814.

It was also recorded in a watercolour of some merit by an unknown artist in the late 18th century. Adjoining it was the mediaeval market cross surrounded by an ornate canopy of 1604, and the conduit, both of which fell victim to the requirements of passing traffic and were demolished early in the 19th century. A Rowlandson drawing of 1816 shows the isolated conduit in its final years.

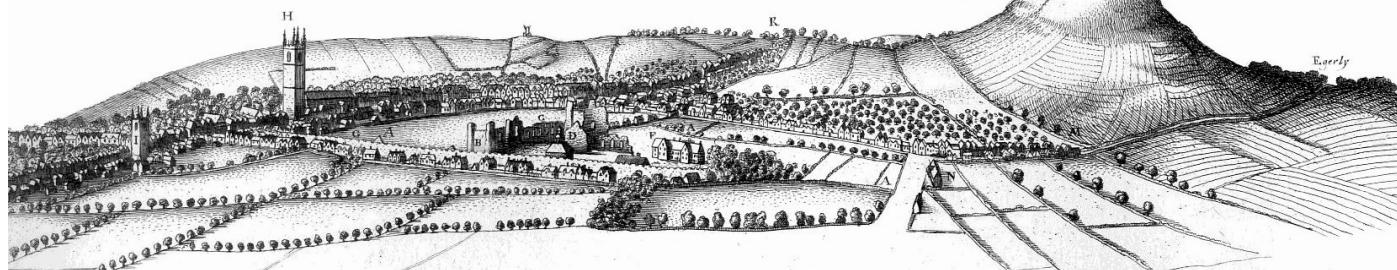
An Inclosure Map of 1722 shows individual buildings, and can be closely

related to the layout shown more than a century earlier. Antiquarian interest produced many drawings—often taken from common sources. Especially notable was the series of small wood engravings produced by John Carter in 1784 and published in 1789. Commissioned by Mr Gould, they reveal many minor buildings and carvings of interest surviving in the town, together with a plan of their location.

The sale of the Abbey site by the Chatsworth estate prompted George Cox's survey of 1799—revealing how absentee ownership had fossilised many of the plots shown in 1610. By 1820 and the very detailed Church Rates plan and survey it is clear that development was proceeding—for example, Street Road at the base of Wearyall Hill was under construction.

Neill intends to continue the story with the plentiful records of the subsequent era in a future presentation to the Antiquarian Society.

\*John Cannon's *Chronicles*, to be published later this year, contains a great deal of material of Glastonbury interest.



Hollar's prospect of Glastonbury around 1670, when the Abbot's Lodging (F) and the Abbey wall along Magdalene Street still stood.

## Saturday strolls all begin on B

⌘ May 17, Thursday—Do book for the Chalice Well tour (details at right).

Ian Rands has organized a series of five Saturday-afternoon walks for the summer. All begin at 2:30pm. He advises appropriate clothing and stout footwear or gumboots.

⌘ May 19—**Blossom**—meet at Dod Lane, go on to Bulwarks Lane, the Tor (and more?)

### DATES

⌘ June 16—**Beetle I: "In search of the noble chafer"**—meet at Dod Lane.

⌘ July 14—**Butterflies**—Meet Geoff Brunt at Fountain Forestry (OS grid reference 507 326, where they sell Christmas trees).

⌘ August 11—**Beetle II: "In search of the noble chafer"**—Meet 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 his Glastonbury Spring Water plant at Park Corner Farm, for an “additional bonus” and interesting environmental innovations.

### Are you on email?

If you would like an email reminder in time for Conservation Society events, please send a quick message to Terry Carmen (new address [trec44@waitrose.com](mailto:trec44@waitrose.com)) to add your address to his list.

## Chalice Well evening tour

⌘ Conservation Society members are invited to a guided tour of the Chalice Well gardens on Thursday **May 17**, 7–9pm. This is a rare opportunity to visit and discuss planting and maintenance with the inspirational head gardener, Ark Redwood.

Only 16 places are available, so book ahead (via Anthony Ward: [anthonyward77@hotmail.com](mailto:anthonyward77@hotmail.com) or 83 5997). Cost is £2, payable on the day, which includes tea in the meeting room afterwards. This event is arranged in recognition of the tree-planting work of the Conservation Society at Chalice Well over many years.

Ark Redwood, a Bridgwater native, trained in organic horticulture at Otley College in Suffolk and became head gardener at Chalice Well seven years ago. Under him the garden has become totally organic, with home-produced compost and leaf mould used to mulch rather than dig over the naturalistic planting. He propagates thousands of plants every year behind the retreat house, Little St Michael's. His team includes a landscaper, an assistant gardener, a groundsman, an orchard maintenance man and many volunteers who work at least two hours a week.

# 20 years of restoration on the East Poldens

*Geoff Brunt*

The East Polden hills run from Walton Hill (with its old windmill) to the Millfield School nature reserve of Worley Hill at Littleton. The shape of the hills is an escarpment (steep slope) with a near plateau at its top.

Most of the East Poldens escaped the usual destruction by modern agriculture, the society heard in a talk on January 26. The escarpment was steep enough to prevent agricultural “improvement” (herbicide, ploughing, re-seeding) from destroying its wildlife interest, although the work involved in grazing steep slopes meant that grazing was abandoned in the first half of the 20th century. Grants available in the 1960s led to planting most slopes with conifers—which generally performed badly in the calcareous ground, and so small pockets of the original flora survived where the conifers failed.

Much of the plateau was unspoilt since it was protected by the mid-19th-century planting of oak.

In about 1990 various landowners decided to clear the escarpment of conifers and restore it to downland with the help of mainly sheep grazing. Grants from the lottery and English Nature helped. More recently work started in some plateau woodland, clearing blocks of conifer and creating glades among surviving blocks of the 19th-century oak, along with much wider rides than in the past.

Slides, taken before and after restoration, featured the butterflies and insects that expanded into the restored areas—for example, the hundredfold increase in the Chalk-hill Blue butterfly on its last site on the Poldens. The Large Blue has also done very well.

In some woodland, new glades and wider rides have increased the numbers of the spectacular silver-washed fritillary, the beautiful dark green



*The silver-washed fritillary is thriving in restored habitats on the East Poldens.*



## Membership

*Glastonbury Conservation Society welcomes new members, so if you are reading the newsletter and have not yet signed up, please ask any committee member for the green form. Subscription is only £5 a year (though many give more). The newsletter alone is worth it!*

## Officers for 2007

chairman	John Brunsdon	83 1283
vice-chair	Ian Rands	85 0509
treasurer	Dennis Allen	83 2214
secretary	Janet Morland	83 5238
trees	Alan Fear	83 3185
footpaths	Nathan Pritchard	0775 221 3128
committee:	Ena Allen, Neill Bonham, Roy Coles, Bill Knight, Adrian Pearse, Neil Stevenson, Martyn Webb	

*The newsletter is published four times a year, edited by Jim Nagel 83 3603 editor@glastonburyconservation.org.uk*

fritillary has established a small colony among the new glades. Marbled whites and other grassland butterflies along with orchids and other flora have become established in the glades already. There is much scope for further such work in plateau woodland where too many conifers remain.

A walk to see some of this work has been arranged for Saturday **July 14** (see box for details). For those who do not walk easily, a restricted and flat route will be taken among the plateau’s woodland glades on private land. For those who feel very fit, a look at the escarpment will be possible.

## John Brunsdon's 55 years

John Brunsdon arrived in Glastonbury as a young veterinary surgeon in 1952. The full text of his reminiscences of how the town has evolved in that time are online: [www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk](http://www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk)



# Death of Vic Jones

*John Brunsdon*

With the passing of Vic Jones this winter, Glastonbury has lost a great character. Born in Snowdonia, he arrived in the town during the war and became more “Glastonbury” than many Glastonians. He was especially knowledgeable about Bere Lane, from when it was still a lane and before it became a national A-road. He wrote about the characters who lived in the lane and the many activities that took place, and the grand elm trees at Abbey Farm across the road.

A Dunkirk and Normandy veteran, he was a standard-bearer of the British Legion, collecting thousands of pounds each year for the Poppy Appeal. He was devoted to Beryl, the local girl he married, and worked most of his life at Morlands, serving in its fire brigade.

Latterly he was appointed macebearer to the town council, which greatly pleased him.

He “adopted” neighbours’ dogs for regular walks and always kept a bowl of water at his gate in Bere Lane covered by a slate.

In the early days of the Conservation Society, when planting trees in St John’s carpark, it was Vic who operated the pneumatic drill to break up the asphalt—and the quiet of a Sunday morning! He continued delivering newsletters to the end of his life, apologizing for their being “a little late” as he had not been very well.

Goodbye, Vic. Thank you. And we will miss you a lot!

## Hugs are possible again in Market Place

*The “Betrothal Couple” carving has had to have yet another repair. The man’s left arm was broken off on Carnival night last November—John Brunsdon had arranged for an inspection that night. Through hasty overnight clearing-up, the arm was never recovered, despite appeals in the press.*

*Ben Sabran, a local sculptor, carved a replacement arm and fitted it using a stainless-steel pin. Lawrence Kelland, a conservator, did the final modelling and repairs in lime mortar to match the stone and applied a coloured lime “sheltercoat” to protect it from the weather.*

*This lovely little corbel, along with its neighbour, has enriched Glastonbury Market Place for 500 years. It was cleaned and conserved in 2004, and the woman was given a new right arm—it had been missing for many years.*



Norwood Park was built in 1480 as a residence of the Abbots of Glastonbury. It is listed as Grade II\*, a Building of Special Architectural or Historical Interest. "In spite of additions, this remains an important building in Glastonbury," the register entry states. At the time of the Dissolution in the 16th century, the estate accompanying the residence was said to be "in splendid condition" with some 800 deer. By 1791 the estate comprised 750 acres.

Norwood Park Farm currently extends to 230 acres. My client Martyn Harrison bought it in April 2005. Before this the Saunders family intensively farmed the land for milk production. In the 1970s many trees and hedges were removed to increase field sizes and efficiency.

Martyn established a suckler cow unit, with a small amount of arable production to feed livestock. In March 2006 he began an extensive landscape programme. Some 4,000 yards of new hedges have reinstated the old field boundaries and created a parkland setting for the house. Works to the house are underway, including lime to replace concrete pointing and the renovation of windows in accordance with conservation advice.

Martyn approached me in 2005 to advise on the development potential of barns at the farm. East of the house is a range of model farm barns dating from 1910. A good example of Edwardian

agricultural architecture in their own right, the barns are an intrinsic part of the setting of the farmhouse. They are linked to it by an intervening barn, recently granted consent for use as ancillary accommodation. Fire damaged part of the range in 2003, exposing the fabric to further risk from weather.

Martyn was very clear about what he wanted to do with the barns. He wanted to provide self-contained dwellings where retired farmers could live in the countryside near to the activities of his own working farm. He knew that tenant farmers in particular often have insufficient earnings to provide for their retirement, and to cease farming would mean losing their tied homes. They would then be at the mercy of public-sector housing provision.

My initial advice to Martyn was that obtaining planning permission for such a proposal was likely to be tricky. Policy strictly controls development in the countryside and seeks to secure commercial uses for redundant barns, in preference to residential. Nevertheless Martyn was determined to give it a go.

The first application sought to convert the barns as six homes plus warden's accommodation and included four new-build units for disabled persons. Considerable work went into justifying the development in the face of policy objection. Officers praised the conversion scheme which utilized all existing openings, proposed only two new conservation roof lights and returned altered aspects to their original state. They

objected in principle to the new-build element. English Heritage supported the principle of conversion and use on the basis that it would ensure the future of the barns and the setting of the listed house, and that the site would remain within the control of one party rather than splitting into separate curtilages.

This first scheme was refused in March 2006 on the basis of principle and lack of special need to override policy objections, substandard access, details of the new build and the potential for nuisance from the adjacent livestock buildings.

Considerable work then went into gaining support for the proposal from charities and organizations such as the Tenant Farmers' Association, the Royal Agricultural Benevolent

Institute and the National Farmers' Union. They provided evidence that a need does exist. A barrister gave a legal opinion on the potential nuisance between the houses and the over-wintering of cattle in the adjacent barn: this was a non-issue, and the council had been wrong to consider it. The new-build units were deleted, overcoming some previous objections.

The application went to Mendip's planning board this January. Still the officer recommended refusal on the basis that if a need for affordable housing exists it should be met through conventional means and that the need we had demonstrated was insufficient to override policy. Officers also kept to their position on smell and noise.

The board members, however, were rather more sympathetic and were almost unanimous in their support. Permission was granted subject to a legal agreement to ensure that the site remains in one ownership, and to restrict occupancy to retired farmers in financial need. The details of the agreement are currently being finalized.

This proposal has the potential to bring about many benefits:

- It will ensure the maintenance of a range of traditional buildings in the same form and appearance as originally built.
- It will help the council to fulfil one of the key commitments of its Housing Strategy 2002–07 in providing affordable housing.
- It will enhance the lives of the occupants.
- The prairie-like landscape will revert to smaller fields, with native species for hedgerows and trees.
- The landscape will be "living"—used and maintained for a purpose.
- Parkland tree-planting will contribute to the historical character of the landscape.
- The conversion of the barns, demolition of the modern buildings and removal of concrete yards will enhance the setting of the listed building.
- The tidying of the site will enhance visual amenity and not detract from the appearance of the open countryside.

A fantastic result!

## Norwood Park in the 21st century

*Jo Fryer, of Town & Country Planning Practice Ltd, Littleton*

*Right: an aerial view of Norwood Park Farm in 1981. Stonedown Lane is at the left edge, near bottom.*

*Below: the Edwardian barns that the new owner hopes to convert to affordable homes for retired farmers.*



editorial service  
Jim Nagel