

# Glastonbury Conservation Society

Newsletter 155 [www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk](http://www.glastonburyconservation.org.uk) July 2021

## Jim Nagel tributes

Jim was born and grew up in Canada, taking a degree in Mathematics and German at the University of Waterloo, also meeting Viola during those years. He remained after graduation as editor of the university paper, followed by beginning a journalism career at the local newspaper, the Kitchener Waterloo Record.

He arrived in England in 1970 and was captivated by Glastonbury, commenting "Avalon is the heart: the crossroads of imagination, a place where young see visions and old dream dreams". He was a driving force in the establishment of a Christian community project, initially as summer camps but developing into a full-time operation, which lasted for a decade, supporting himself in a variety of local and London jobs. Marriage to Viola came in 1982, and the birth of sons Christopher and Bartholomew followed. Employment as editor or writer for the Somerset County Gazette, The Times, Church Times, Amstrad Action, Computer Shopper and Archive kept him busy, and in 1991 he founded Abbey Press which involved him in a wide range of editorial and publishing activities.

As the years passed Jim became ever more involved in the activities of Glastonbury - including membership of the Conservation Society and production of the newsletter, as well as creating our website with its comprehensive archive of newsletter material produced over the years. Jim was an active member of St. John's Church. He served on the PCC, joined the choir and, in early years, produced their newsletter. Latterly, he assisted with the church website. Jim was also part of the local drama scene.

Jim was deeply imbued with the spirit of Glastonbury in a way which can perhaps happen only to those who are not actually born or grew up there. He had a deep interest and understanding not only of the physical structure of the place but also of the myths and spirituality surrounding it and the effect these had on people, whether residents or visitors to it. Consequently, in his own modest way, he was a mine of information on various aspects of the town, for which he cared very deeply. The Conservation Society Newsletter, which he edited for many years, combined with the website, bear abundant testimony to these attributes - which as a contributor one took very much for granted and with the comforting realisation that Jim knew what needed to be done - especially in the field of computer related matters. Here, as in so many other aspects, Jim was always

modest about his abilities and knowledge, and it is only now that he is no longer with us that we realise how much his efforts underpinned our activities and presence.

Diagnosed with cancer in 2011, Jim continued to undertake his various roles as far as possible, and produced the previous Conservation Society Newsletter in his typical format earlier this year, which was much applauded at the time, and seen as a return to normality just as a world pandemic was to make 'normality' an untouchable concept. We all owe him a great debt of gratitude, and working with him over many years, if only in a small way, was indeed a great pleasure.

### J Roger Parsons

#### Archivist at Millfield Prep School

Jim was a jewel in the life of Glastonbury, presenting narratives in a way that greatly enriched the historical and social fabric of the town he loved so much. Nothing was rushed, every thread was carefully teased out, nurtured and woven into a thing of beauty for us all to appreciate. A true craftsman.

### Gabriel Munns

I was so fortunate to have long conversations with Jim; he had such love for all around him, both this place and its people, and the ability to provide reassuringly rational solutions to both one's own, and the wider world's problems.

His interest in Glastonbury's character and history, and boundless curiosity about it, was inspiring.

Meeting Jim by chance in the town streets often gave rise to a spontaneous tour of upper-stories and roof-lines, alleyway histories and otherwise overlooked points of view.

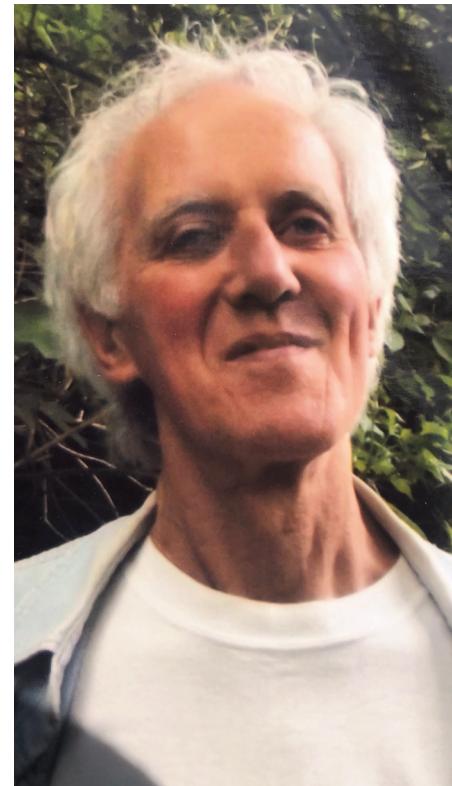
Because of the Conservation Newsletter, we're lucky to have a written record of his passionate appreciation and knowledge of the town and its surroundings, alongside those of his fellow contributors for whom he was such an expert and courteous editor.

When walking through Glastonbury, something he told me usually comes to mind.

### Richard Biddlecombe

Jim was a gem! He was a great friend with a kind heart and a keen sense of humour. We both had media backgrounds and shared similar views on current affairs which even led us to go on a fact-finding trip to Israel and Jordan. By some fluke of destiny we had even ended up living in the same Glastonbury

### A Glastonian with a Canadian accent



*Former editor of this newsletter, Jim Nagel:  
July 29, 1944 – March 21, 2020*

road. It was soon realised that whereas Jim and his family were located in 'Upper Norbins Road', my humble family was based in 'Lower Norbins Road' and that one could look up to the other just as much as the other could look down on one – always in good taste. Great social evenings between our two families were a highlight of the calendar and Jim's observational insight into local issues, which included such technical detail as the patchwork of tarmac on the roads, was a constant source of intrigue and entertainment. I miss him but I still feel his spirit.

### Neill and Dawn Bonham

Jim had so many talents: he was a lateral thinker and an excellent journalist, getting to the core of the story and willing to spend time getting it right.

He had great IT skills, making a significant contribution to the Glastonbury Conservation Society in producing an excellent news sheet.

He had a probing mind and loved to talk with people and extract interesting stories. He was a mine of information.

He contributed greatly to St. John's as a member of both the PCC and St. John's Choir.

Jim's legacy will live on. He became a true Glastonian – with a Canadian accent.





# Glastonbury Conservation Society AGM

The coronavirus pandemic with associated consequences for normal life and procedures has impacted the functioning of the Society to a continually evolving degree, and with which we have had to adapt accordingly. National restrictions make the holding of our normal autumn AGM in the normal form impossible, and we have decided not to attempt a 'zoom' version as the technology is not available to all. Many societies are experiencing similar problems and as memberships are often predominantly in the more 'at risk' age groups have largely suspended their activities. As circumstances have permitted we have continued our Committee meetings at a basic level, thanks to the hospitality of John Brunsdon at 'The Hermitage', and were able to produce a

Newsletter in the spring. Very sadly in March our Newsletter editor and webmeister Jim Nagel passed away, as mentioned in this issue. Since the spring 'lockdown' we have been working on a bid for funding from the Towns Fund which was successful, and more recently intensively on the implementation of this in conjunction with other interested parties.

We are using this Newsletter as a substitute for the normal AGM and invite comments from members should they wish to have any matters explained or have issues to raise. The annual accounts are presented, having been accepted by the Committee, and all matters and appointments which require formal adoption by the membership will be subject to such at the next opportunity that this

becomes a practical possibility, and we trust that members will accept our actions in the meantime. The current Officers and Committee will therefore continue until the resumption of normal procedures, hopefully during 2021.

**President:** - John Brunsdon; [acting]  
**Chairman:** Adrian Pearse; **Treasurer:** Kevin Mitchell; **Secretary:** Amanda Montague; **Committee:** Ian Rands, Stuart Marsh, Ian Mutch, Ian Tucker, Bill Knight, Mike Smyth.

Members wishing to join the Committee at any time are most welcome; please make contact accordingly. We take this opportunity to thank our newsletter distributors and those who assist Society activities in any way.

**Adrian Pearse, Chairman**

## New boy says 'hello'



I seem to have been volunteered for the job of editing this newsletter having recently joined the society, a role I am proud to accept.

Having read the tributes to my predecessor Jim Nagel I am sorry I never met him as he was clearly a character who earned affection and respect.

I am from the great Babylon of London which I still love but I just love being here even more and moved here in 2013.

I first heard about Glastonbury via a TV programme in 1969 where a band of pilgrims were being interviewed at the top of the Tor. I was mesmerised by the vista across the levels and resolved to head here as soon as I left school which I did in 1970 and kept coming back ever since. It has always felt like my natural home and I have not had a moment's regret about my move.

As a failed hippy I joined the British India Steam Navigation Company in 1971 and graduated to second officer before switching tack into publishing magazines and writing travel books about journeys by motorcycle around the USA, Europe, Africa, NZ and the Holy Land. My sales are rubbish so I hope my efforts in producing this organ don't disappoint. I am happy to accept any suggestions about content and style of these pages. **Ian Mutch** [theroad@mag-uk.org](mailto:theroad@mag-uk.org)

## Financial accounts

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### Balance sheet

Bal C/F	current account	£3,774.25
	Reserve account	£57,980.7
	CCLA Account	£7803.88
	Total	£69,558.83

Current account	£4,043.42
Reserve account	£45,070.78
CCLA account	£7,762.82
Total	£56,876.82

### Income:

Subs	£740.50
Footpaths	£150.00
Books	£30.00
Interest received	£96.23
Lucke's Estate	£12,805.23
Add excess	
inc/Exp	£13,821.96

Bal B/F 5,6876.82

Add excess inc/over exp  
£12,682.01  
£69,558.83

Signed as a true and accurate record of the 2020 accounts  
Kevin Mitchell Hon Treasurer

## Farewell John Brunsdon



Members will have heard of the sad passing of the society's president John Brunsdon earlier this year at the age of 92. Following the loss of Jim Nagel this has been a double blow to the Society and we shall publish a full obituary in the next issue of the newsletter that will return to a quarterly from now on.

## Consoc Contacts

**Acting Chairman:** Adrian Pearse  
01749 89 0216

**Secretary:** Amanda Montague  
**Treasurer:** Kevin Mitchell 079 6887 6440

**Membership:** Vacancy

**Trees:** Mike Smythe

**Planning:** Bill Knight 01458 835144

**Liaison:** Ian Tucker 01458 83 4841

**Website:** Sean Miller

**Footpaths:** Mike Smyth 075 3224 0620

**Newsletter:** Ian Mutch 07799 764 161

**Accounts:** Murray Wallace

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



# Glastonbury Holy Thorn

This is the definitive account of one of Glastonbury's most famous assets and contains a vast array of research, undertaken over many years and from some very obscure sources. It's very readable and in the style that those attending Adam's talks for the Antiquarian Society will be familiar with.

Greatly to be commended are the production standards - case bound, it has a very tactile 'feel'; the green cover with the impressionist image of the recently lost Wearyall Hill thorn in a swirling background could not be more appropriate for such a mystical subject, while the smooth cream paper evokes the colour of freshly cut thorn wood. Layout is traditional. As well as numerous monochrome illustrations in the text there are also two blocks of colour plates reproduced to a high standard. It is an ideal gift for anyone interested in aspects of Glastonbury.

Readers might be surprised to learn that the Glastonbury thorn's first appearance in the historical record is not until the first decades of the sixteenth century, shortly before the dissolution of the Abbey. This oldest recorded thorn was situated near the south-west tip of Wearyall Hill and consisted of three large

trunks. All subsequent and current examples of the thorn derive from this and are grafted onto a common hawthorn rootstock. They are not particularly resilient, with 80 to 100 years being a good lifespan. It does not grow true from seed. The 'original' thorn, having three trunks perhaps suggests that this was indeed the original example, probably a mutated seedling of the common hawthorn, and may thus have been some centuries in age, as hawthorns when growing as a tree become top heavy, fall over, and are replaced by new shoots from around the base, with the original centre eventually rotting out. This would account for the durability of this specimen in the face of the various degradations visited on it after the Reformation, as it was growing on its own roots.

In fact for over half its recorded history there has been no living thorn on Wearyall Hill. Its durability as a symbol is much greater than as a living specimen. As Adam shows, over time a variety of legends and stories have accrued to it, for a whole range of different purposes, each of their age.

The world changes but the thorn goes on, a vision of hope to many.

Adam's book is thoroughly recommended;

## GLASTONBURY HOLY THORN Story of a Legend



**ADAM STOUT**

*Glastonbury Holy Thorn by Dr. Adam Stout, is now available from local retailers for £12.99 and online direct from Adam - see [green-and-pleasant-publishing.square.site](http://green-and-pleasant-publishing.square.site) postage is free in the UK.*

together with the recent books on Glastonbury by Tim Hopkinson-Ball and Paul Ashdown, it represents a contribution the town should be proud of.



Above: The Thorn Brooch, below the Thorn Button, made in Paris

## Some Holy Thorn souvenirs

Examples of Glastonbury thorn souvenirs produced and retailed by J. Gillmore.

The teaspoon (1908) is silver gilt and cost 10 shillings (50p) new, and is the most elaborate and expensive example from his range; an example was presented to the Princess of Wales on the occasion of her visit in 1909.

The smaller salt spoon (1905) is one of a pair issued with a pair of silver Glastonbury replica bronze bowl salts in presentation blue silk lined case.

Similar items from a wide range of thorn souvenir items were also retailed by

Goodalls in the High Street; they only surface occasionally in spite of many being sold. Perhaps readers may have other examples?



### The Glastonbury Way

The Society has been successful in its bid for £45K from the Towns Fund to create a circular Pilgrims Walk around the town. It will start at The Glastonbury Information Centre and includes The Willow Walk, Wirral Hill, Glastonbury Tor and Bushey Coombe. There are now seats and interpretation boards all along the route and it should provide enjoyment for residents and tourists.

The bid was championed by our President of many years, John

Brunson and the Society salutes the work he did in the 1970s to rescue overgrown paths and get them recorded and saved on the Definitive Map.

The reason there are so many footpaths to walk around Glastonbury is because of the work of clearing and building stiles carried out by John and many Society members 40 years ago.

The Society has printed a book of footpaths available from the Glastonbury Information Centre.

**Ian Tucker**



L to R Stuart Marsh, Adrian Pearse, Ian Tucker, Amanda Montague



# The History of The Red Lion Pub at West Pennard

When we bought the Red Lion in 2014, amongst the boxes of papers we inherited was a brief history of the pub. I reproduce some of this here but there was no identification as to the author(s) so I have been unable to credit them for their research.

"The Red Lion is an exceedingly old property, being referred to as an 'Old Auster or Ancient Tenement' in the earliest surviving records for the area.

The property probably began life around 1450, when Henry VI reigned England and the 100 years War was coming to its end. It was most likely a farmhouse, for a tenant of the Manor of West Pennard and may have replaced an even earlier dwelling on the site. At that time the building would have consisted of one thatched cottage – the area around the inglenook fireplace, and was later extended as the family grew. 1539 saw the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and it is thought that some of the larger stone blocks used in the property might well have come

from the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey. Though it is likely that they lived in the house for some time before this, the earliest recorded tenants of the property were the Reade family in 1605; the year that Guy Fawkes was arrested for trying to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

Not long after, in 1685, farm workers and craftsmen of the area, carrying improvised weapons, were rallying to the aid of the Duke of Monmouth in what became known as the Pitchfork Rebellion. Villagers would have witnessed troops, from both sides of the conflict, marching through the village with the Rebels resting in the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey on their way to battle.

By the Census of 1841 Newtown House had become a rented property – the tenant being Henry Clarke, an elderly publican. The Red Lion had come into being

The Peoples Refreshment House Association bought The Red Lion Inn from Frank King Greter in 1914 and continued to run it until



1939 during which time the property was extended once again.

After the Second World War the property changed hands several times in rapid succession.

A full documented history of the property is available for viewing by request."

It is obvious from reading the above that the pub has been the subject of many alterations and improvements over the centuries. We have been carrying on with the work during Lockdown and hope that a new tenant will be taking over the premises in November.

**Ian & Caroline Tucker  
October 2020**

# The Marsh Family of Edgarley Manor

## Article: Roger Parsons

In 1986 Millfield School purchased Edgarley Manor with 14 acres, formerly occupied by Kenneth and Dorothy Marsh since 1926.

Kenneth Marsh was born in 1889, the youngest of five children, at Old Sarum House in Yeovil, where his father William was a solicitor, a CBE, and deputy Lieutenant of Somerset. Kenneth attended Sherborne School and rather than join the legal profession went into agriculture as a rubber planter in Sumatra and Malaya, where he married Dorothy in 1918; their son Julien was born in 1919, followed by a daughter, Dawn.

A downturn in rubber plantation prospects resulted in Kenneth returning to the UK and investing in Somerton Court; he then took up chicken farming and moved to Edgarley where he remained until his death in 1975, followed by Dorothy in 1985.

During the Second World War a morale boosting radio programme was made at Edgarley, where Kenneth described chicken production. He was, however, involved in



*Edgarley Manor*

more clandestine activities as a radio transmitter was concealed in a chicken coop, supporting his role as Head Observer on Wearyall Hill.

Julien Marsh was educated at Glastonbury and Cheltenham, and was talented, cultured and sensitive, as revealed in his surviving writings. During the War he served in Palestine and Italy, being involved in the assault on Monte Cassino. Captured, he spent the rest of the War as a POW in Germany. He became a solicitor with Austin & Bath at



*Kenneth and Dorothy Marsh*

Glastonbury, later working in Singapore and Kenya.

He was married three times before returning to Reading where he died in 1990 of Parkinson's disease. His affection for Glastonbury endured, and his ashes were scattered on the Tor.

