

Chairman's notes

John Brunsdon

Good architectural design is all-important in our new buildings, especially at the entrances to the town. After a regrettable planning decision about the Avalon Tyres site in Street Road, it is heartening to read of the commitment by Avalon Plastics to high standards at a prominent Morland site (*see page 4*). The application has gone to Mendip planning.

The same company filed a planning application (*below*) for a new Tesco store on the site of the present plastic factory in Beckery New Road. Car parking is planned underneath the store, which is raised above the floodplain. If floodwaters were ever to rise seriously, no doubt merchandise would remain high and dry, and shoppers could moor underneath in boats. (Tongue in cheek.)

Meanwhile in George Street the old Imco plastic factory—latterly a tool-hire shop—was demolished at the start of April to make way for housing.

Local listing – The conservation area in Glastonbury needs an appraisal and statement urgently. Mendip's planning department can manage only two such appraisals a year; Street recently benefited. Boundaries can be adjusted to safeguard against unsuitable redevelopment in the future and include existing buildings worthy of "local listing".

Neill Bonham agreed to undertake the management of local listing in Glastonbury, and the town council approves. Paul Branson will assist him, and they will look for help from members.

Wick trees – Congratulations to Paddington Farm Trust for the recent planting of hedges and 500 trees at Wick. We assisted in a small way—thanks to those who helped with the planting.

Poldens – Geoff Brunt has decided to step back from day-to-day management of the Clark Trust and Millfield conservation sites on the Poldens, though he still plays a very active role. Geoff is a longstanding member of our society, and we helped in the start of the project.

Litter – Town councillors recently did a litter-pick on Wearyall Hill. And Bushy Coombe is to get a new bin for dog litter.

Light on the path

Martyn Webb



The wrought-iron lantern and supporting arch at Glastonbury Methodist Church in Lambrook Street have been restored, thanks to a generous grant from the Conservation Society. The work was undertaken by Darren Frisby (DWF Metalcraft). The lantern, arch and gates were the only ironwork to survive the Second World War. The fence up the path was taken to help the war effort.

This work was part of the Access project by the church, to make a ramped path to the front entrance. The lighting was improved and added to, and the lantern was rewired.

A new noticeboard (left) has also been added to the bank over the fountain. This fountain (not in photo) has interesting and unusual carvings in its stonework. We are hoping that Bristol Water, which owns the fountain and the reservoir behind it, will do some restoration work in the summer.

Workshops focus on local food

Linda Hull

Come along to a conference at West Camel, near Yeovil, on **April 24** called Community Food in Action. Among the 12 workshops, one is called "how to kick the supermarket habit", one is about a local food policy for Somerset and one looks at Polish cooking. Two speakers are Sue Chant of Somerset NHS and Martin Caraher of London City University.

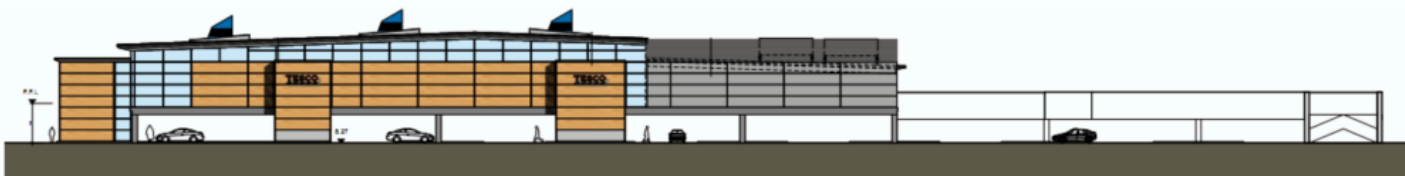
By building our capacity to produce food, not only will our local producers stay in business, but every one of us stands to gain hugely from working together, both professionally and personally. Local healthy food is a basic need of everyone.

Book soon: Angela Durbacz, 83 2983 or www.somersetcommunityfood.org.uk

Inching along at the Morland site

JN

- For £1 the county council has acquired the St Bride's mound, near the Brue, from the Southwest Regional Development Agency, for public access to it. Nothing remains above ground of either the chapel or priest's house, which were excavated by John Morland in 1889 and again by Philip Rahtz in the 1960s.
- The RDA planted more trees alongside Street Road at the site of old cycle sheds.
- Urban Splash is conducting a feasibility study—six months?—into reusing the redbrick buildings, whose demolition was blocked by protesters in January.
- Mendip Housing signed a deal with the RDA on February 19 to refurbish the 12 empty cottages in Beckery Road, built in the 1930s to house Morland workers.



The proposed Tesco-on-stilts at Wirral Park, as it would appear from Street Road. The architect (Saunders Partnership, Bristol) shows aluminium glaze and larch timber for the outside walls and windcatchers and skylights on the roof. The site already has planning permission for 2,000 sq metres of food sales. This plan totals 5,000m², which includes non-food sales, a cafe and warehousing. Compare the present Morrison store, about 1,700m².

Summary of the winter talks: about relics, lake villages, heraldry,

Catching up on reports that overflowed from previous newsletter ...

Two unknown Glastonbury relics

Tim Hopkinson-Ball recently investigated the location of relics claimed to have been taken from Glastonbury Abbey and their survival through centuries of vicissitudes to within four decades of the present time, when they vanished without trace. He told the Antiquarian Society on **October 3** of his researches.

First, a disappearance: After the Abbey's dissolution, the relics were located in the side chapel of the Roman Catholic church of St Cecilia and St Anselm at Lincoln's Inn Fields in London. A Franciscan chapel was established here in 1687, but sacked and burnt the following year. In the early 18th century it became the chapel attached to the Sardinian Embassy, and was again ransacked and burnt in the Gordon Riots. It was sold in 1798 to the Roman Catholic Bishop Douglas and restored.

The supposed Glastonbury relics were within the high altar. When it was opened in 1902 they were found to consist of a small (either portable or a fragment) altar stone and 14 relics of saints with a 17th-century vellum document giving details of their origin and reproducing the *IESVS MARIA* carved inscription on the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury. In 1908 the relics were moved to the altar in the side chapel and survived the bombing of the church in 1940. They were last recorded there in 1967, but have since vanished.

The document was published in 1917 and appears genuine; a photograph of the relics appeared in a contemporary parish magazine, but no copy can now be found. This intriguing tale shows that sacred objects could have survived the Dissolution.

And then an appearance: Having a spare moment in the British Library, Dr Hopkinson-Ball ordered an old guidebook to the Roman Catholic church at Ely Place, also in London. It dates to the 13th century, when it was a chapel to the bishops of Ely.

In 1874 St Ethelreda's chapel was reconsecrated, and in 1876 the Dominicans of Stone, Staffordshire, donated part of their relic known as the "Hand of Ethelberta"—a genuine female left hand then perfectly preserved, which they had acquired from the daughter of a land agent of the Duke of Norfolk, to whom it had originally been given. This fragment had been sealed in a small heart-shaped receptacle, which was inserted in a corresponding aperture cut through the palm of a rather crudely cast mediaeval bronze or latten hand, of actual size, and plated with silver at this period.

The guidebook stated that the cast hand had been dug up "near Glastonbury". It is now housed in a wooden reliquary in the church. On inspection it is indeed from the 14th or 15th century. The wrist forms a socket, retaining a rivet, so was originally attached to a larger figure or pole. But as there is no parallel for this object, and its history is lost, the original purpose must remain speculative. Furthermore, no record of its discovery survives at Glastonbury.

Tim Hopkinson-Ball clearly has a talent for discovering the most obscure of Glastonbury curiosities. Perhaps he may even track down the long-lost Arthurian lead cross and the brass tablet from the monks' cemetery!

The lake villages in context

How do the lake villages fit into the Iron Age settlement system? Nancy Hollinrake in her talk to the Antiquarian Society on **October 31** set out her considerations

regarding the Glastonbury and Meare lake villages in their local and regional context, using the surviving material evidence together with the results of research into Iron Age settlement and society in Britain and Ireland.

Their position was significant. The Glastonbury village lay close to the river Brue, which at that time meandered north to join the Axe. The Meare village lay a mile west. Both were at the edges of lakes within an alluvial peat swamp, with higher agricultural land to the east.

Their construction was sophisticated. At Glastonbury house platforms were of timber beams held in place by piles, with imported clay layers above. Pottery recovered included Dobunnic wares (from north Somerset or Gloucestershire) but no Durotrigian examples (south Somerset or Dorset) and also local Glastonbury wares as well as pottery from Armorica (Brittany) and Normandy. There was also a large range of wooden items often of intricate design, tools, weaving equipment, whetstones, personal effects, horse harness, chariot parts and special finds such as the bronze bowl, giving an exceptional insight into Iron Age material culture not found on other sites of the period.

At Glastonbury lake village metal working, bone usage, textile manufacture, chariot making and food preparation were carried out; and at the Meare village, which appears to have been occupied only during summer, there was evidence for working shale and bronze and making glass beads.

In a wider context, the lake villages were positioned between three or four tribal territories: the Silures in south Wales, the Dobunni to the north and Durotriges to the south, and the Dumnonii to the west in Devon. Examination of the hillfort locations and allocation of their respective territories suggested that the lake villages were at the edge of the territory of the Compton Dundon hillfort. Inter-tribal market sites were often on the boundaries between the tribal areas but it is unlikely the lake villages performed this function. Although having a defensive position and being secular and of high status, they were dependent on the adjoining agricultural hinterland.

Despite the larger number of dwellings at the Glastonbury lake village, there are clear comparisons to Irish crannogs. These appear to be largely of Dark Age construction but may derive from Iron Age predecessors. Documentary evidence in the Irish law codes also raises the possibility that they had a direct Irish connection—an intriguing line for future research.

Glastonbury heraldry

"Glastonbury heraldry: the Abbey, the Crown and the town—some confusions" was the full title of David Orchard's talk to

Bridgwater visits us and we reciprocate

Bridgwater Civic Society members are coming on **Saturday May 9** for a tour of Glastonbury, hosted by the Conservation Society. Assemble at the Rural Life Museum carpark at 2pm. After a guided tour of the town, there will be refreshments back at the museum.

And then members of Glastonbury Conservation Society are invited on **Sunday June 14** to tour Bridgwater on foot and learn about its history, social development and architecture. Park at the Dampiet Street carpark (free on Sundays, unlike Mendip!) and assemble by 2:30pm outside the east window of St Mary's church. The walk guided by Dr Peter Cattermole (who lives at Shapwick) will finish with refreshments in the Unitarian chapel, Dampiet Street.

Bridgwater's rich and colourful history dates back to at least AD800, when the town is mentioned in the Saxon Chronicles. In 1200 a charter from King John granted it borough status and the right to build a bridge across the river Parrett. A huge castle stood from then until 1646, the year after the Civil War. In Bridgwater's heyday as a port, vast quantities of bricks and tiles made from the local clay were shipped to all parts of the world. Bridgwater Civic Society's website is bridgwatercivic.org.uk

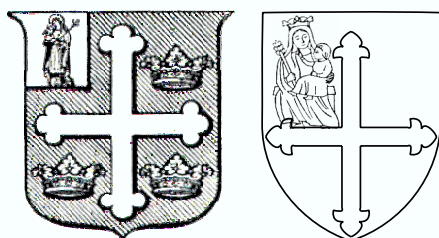


the Antiquarian Society on November 28.

The Abbey. Several forms of the Abbey shield of arms have been given over the centuries. It is possible to account for the appearance of the various heraldic devices used, but it is not possible to establish a definitive form.

The shield of arms used just prior to the Dissolution was green, a silver cross bottonee, with a virgin (seated) and child in the first quarter, and the shield surmounted by a mitre pretiosa—this last device having been acquired by Bishop Savaric in 1193. Abbot Whiting incorporated this form of the arms in his personal arms.

However, there are carved examples of these arms surviving from the previous three abbots—Chinnoek, Selwood and Beere—which have a cross fleury instead of a cross bottonee as well as variations in the form of the virgin and child, which might suggest the form of the arms was



Two forms of the Abbey arms:
bottonee (left) and fleury

changed in Whiting's time. In fact, the cross bottonee does occur occasionally throughout this earlier period—such as in the Sherborne Missal of Chinnoek's abbacy [and also in the east window of East Pennard church c.1420—AVP].

Post-Dissolution and more recent versions of the arms sometimes include crowns in the second, third and fourth quarters, which appear to derive from the arms ascribed to King Arthur. The symbolism of the cross and virgin and child also appear to be based on Arthurian myth as recorded by Blihis in the early 13th century and later by John of Glastonbury; an actual crystal cross survived at the Abbey until the Dissolution period.

The Crown. Many examples of royal arms can be found in Glastonbury—four in the High Street. On the post office are carved the arms of George VI; in St John's church are splendid Stuart arms—recycled with various Hanoverian versions on the back. The George and Pilgrim has a fine tournament shield from the late 15th or early 16th century bearing the arms of Edward III, and the Tribunal has above its door a Tudor rose and the arms of Henry VII. These decorations as well as the architectural features of the tribunal façade were probably taken from the ruins of the Abbot's lodging in the early 18th century, David Orchard said, as unauthorized use of royal arms during the Tudor period was a risky undertaking.

The Town—the Borough regalia. Each Glastonbury mace bears the royal arms of Queen Anne. In 1870 Alexander Bailey gave the mayor's badge, which bears arms of Glastonbury not officially recognized by the College of Heralds. The arms themselves are beautifully executed, but the surrounding metalwork is less competent or has been poorly repaired.

Earliest Glastonbury legend

Paul Ashdown examined the importance of Glastonbury in the early mediaeval period. By identifying strands in the myths which built up around it, he showed that many had roots back into the dark ages.

Certainly Glastonbury was of great importance to the West Saxon kings, he told the Antiquarian Society on January 30. Not only was it a favoured burial place to these rulers, but also through such luminaries as Dunstan it was central to royal affairs. In cultural matters too, Glastonbury was important in the production of manuscripts, metalwork, lapidary and enamelling.

Many scholars portray Glastonbury as an ordinary monastery—with the myths of Arthur and Joseph of Arimathea developed essentially to raise funds for the extensive rebuilding after the fire of 1184. Paul Ashdown argued that the myths' roots went far deeper—even the name Glaston had origins in the Celtic past and featured in Welsh mythology, and the locality was a centre of Irish influence in the southwest. Glastonbury was identified with Arthurian legends in Welsh, Anglo-Saxon and Norman sources long before the fire.

He argued that its origins as a monastery go back at least to the period before the Saxon conquest of the area in 658, which was essentially a political takeover. Charters soon after this date survive, and suggest an established institution; and Geoffrey Ashe points out a pre-Saxon reference in Gildas possibly indicating a monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It could have been an Irish rather than British house, or indeed even Frankish. Glastonbury's connection with St Patrick is certainly of early origin, and the links between Glastonbury and the east Mediterranean, where there are sources of Glastonbury legends in Egypt, brings a link to the tales of Joseph of Arimathea and St Bridget.

Archaeological evidence is sparse, but it could very possibly be true that the wooden church preserved part of a Roman building containing a mosaic floor or painted image interpreted as Mary, and giving rise to the tradition of a church "not built by human hands". Glastonbury's importance in the following centuries and its role in high politics cemented the body of myth as a foundation for later developments.

Knights Templar in Somerset

The Order of the Knights Templar was founded in 1119–20 in the Holy Land to protect pilgrims, crusaders and resident Christians, the Antiquarian Society learned from Juliet Faith and Robert Williams on February 27.

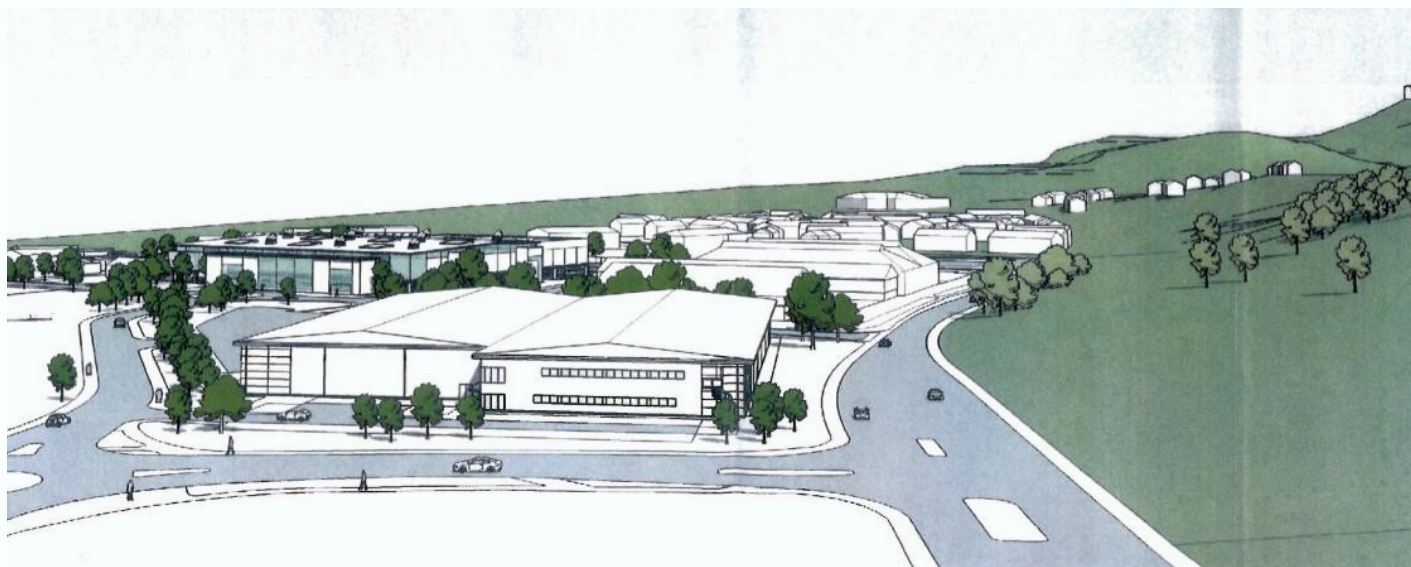
In 1129 the order was approved by the Pope, to whom they owed sole allegiance. It gained lands and privileges throughout Europe, developing a banking system—most of the kings of Europe eventually were in their debt. In 1291 Christian settlers were driven out of the Holy Land, and in 1307 King Philip of France seized the Templars' lands, followed by an order from the Pope instructing monarchs to arrest the Templars. In 1312 the Grand Master was burnt at the stake in France and the Order was suppressed.

In Somerset, Templar holdings were widely dispersed. The county held a middle position in the list of Templar property. They ran their scattered holdings from preceptories, and their income was immune from taxes. The Knights themselves were usually of aristocratic background; their estates were populated by tenants and servants of the Order, who saw themselves as Templars, but were otherwise indistinguishable from the general population.

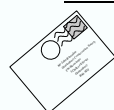
Examples of Templar holdings in Somerset include the Temple Meads area of Bristol—one of their earliest grants in England, which included a hostelry, church and farm. Textile manufacture and dyeing was a feature of this site. Templecombe, granted in 1185 and the ninth richest Templar holding in England, possessing 400 acres, became the main preceptory in the southwest. Little now survives, though an early photograph shows substantial remains of their chapel. The famous panel painting is now preserved in the parish church.

On the Mendips, Temple Down Farm was an important sheep-rearing centre, with 1,000 sheep and 60 other beasts. Fleeces were taken to the preceptory at Temple Newbury, near Coleford, where three water-powered fulling mills produced white broadcloth. The oldest recorded corn mill in England was here too. Templar estates were also established at Temple Cloud and Cameley, where in the church of St James is preserved a wooden carved head believed to be of Templar origin and possessing a possible relationship to the Templecombe painting and Turin shroud.

An aura of mystery surrounded the Templars—their power and secrecy contributed to misinterpretation of their ceremonies and their ultimate demise. A book to be published later this year will give further insights into the Somerset Templars.



Avalon Plastics would be the first new building on the Morland site. The sketch shows a 5,000-square-metre factory—a big plant—at the site's main entrance. (The brightest traffic signals in Somerset, on their 15 bendy poles, are not shown.) Behind it, left, is the proposed Tesco where the present plastics factory stands. Cyril Driver moved Imco (= injection moulding co) to Somerset from London during the war; it became Avalon Plastics in 2003.



Boyhood in Glastonbury

Letter to the editor

Dear sir—As a schoolboy, born in 1934, I was lucky enough to spend all my holidays in Glastonbury, staying with my Aunt Eva and Uncle Lou Day at 44 Manor House Road (which I can see on Google Earth!). They were very happy days, enjoying the countryside and making friends with the local boys who lived nearby. Names I recall were the Cox family, the Squires family and Peter Rogers.

One other young man was always called “the boy Fussell”. He delivered the milk for Cullen’s dairy, by pony and cart. The pony’s name was Kitty; she knew the round by heart and would stop at every door. Mr Cullen opened an ice-cream parlour. His dairy farm was near the red phonebox at the top of Manor House Road, and he was a VIP in my aunt’s eyes. His daughter Pamela, about my age, served in the shop. She was exceptionally pretty, as I recall.

Bruce Chivers used to take me on rounds in his post van. That was between 1946 and 1950.

I am trying to trace my aunt and uncle and their son Gordon, who would be aged 75–80 now. He worked at the sawmill for a time. Uncle Lou (Walter Louis Day) was a bellringer at St John’s, and I would appreciate any information that you may possess.

I never met my grandparents on my mother’s side. He was called Henry Thomas Rogers, and I also know my grandmother (born Mary Ann Osmond) is buried in Glastonbury cemetery.

Roger Lord

21 Lakeside View
Rawdon, Leeds, LS19 6RN

Open days for green homes and gardens

A weekend for eco-friendly houses and gardens in the Mendip area to be open to the public is planned for **September 10–13**. The first such event in Somerset, it is modelled on Somerset Arts Week and the Civic Society’s National Heritage Open Days scheme.

The idea is for 20 to 30 homes and gardens, old and new, renovated and new-build, to be open to visitors, who can talk to the owners and see how they have implemented green ideas.

Similar events in Brighton, Bristol, Stroud and Oxfordshire attracted great public interest and suggest that visitors are often inspired to make green improvements to their own homes.

The Mendip scheme will be launched at a Glastonbury in Transition evening at the Town Hall on **May 30**. If you would like to discuss opening your home or garden or to help with the organization, contact Anthony Ward (anthonyward77@hotmail.com).

The society’s 2008 AGM *(held over from previous newsletter)*

A Victorian letterbox in Chilkwell Street at the top of Bere Lane was lost because it had not been listed, the annual general meeting of the Conservation Society was told on November 21 in the Town Hall. We need to get important buildings and other items onto a local list so that they do not disappear.

Linda Hull outlined the role of Transition Town Glastonbury. The theme for the 2009 harvest show will be “Dig for victory”, and there is a plan to plant a special orchard of 50 trees in Glastonbury. Apple Day at the Chalice Well will be on October 17.

Roger Forsey was elected secretary. The rest of the committee was returned unopposed: John Brunsdon as chairman, Ian Rands as vice-chairman and Janet Morland as secretary. Other members are Dennis Allen, Neill Bonham, Paul Branson, Alan Fear, Linda Hull, Bill Knight, Jim Nagel, Adrian Pearse, Nathan Pritchard and Martyn Webb.

After the business, Joe and Christine King gave an excellent talk on Glastonbury maps, bringing along a large number of their own maps. (This talk was reported in newsletter 127.)

Accounts for 2007–08

Balances	31 July 2007	31 July 2008
Current account	1,470.53	710.92
Reserve account	25.14	828.67
Cash		0.00
Building society	8,784.58	0.00
CCLA		8,688.10
Total	10,280.25	10,227.69
add income	5,098.11	
less expenditure	–5,150.67	
	10,227.69	

Income	
Subscriptions	1,065.50
Talks	123.90
Trees SCC	2,920.00
Footpath book	140.00
Town council grant	150.00
Donations	272.92
Building soc interest	234.16
CCLA interest	188.10
Natwest interest	3.53
Total	5,098.11

Expenditure	
Trees	3,907.50
Talks	212.50
Display unit	341.93
Other	35.00
Admin	32.89
Newsletter	115.85
Civic Trust 2006–08	315.00
Insurance	190.00
Total	5,150.67

