



Chairman's notes

John Brunsdon

Dig for victory: I well remember, aged 10, accompanying my father at the outbreak of the Second World War “digging for victory” on our new allotment. It was created from waste land, and a lot of work went into it. The result was that the family had fresh vegetables to eat throughout the war, even if little else.

Some of our Conservation Society members are keen allotment holders. Our vice-chairman, Ian Rands, has for many years produced fruit and veg, meat, coppiced wood for fuel, compost and so on from Victoria Farm, so that it helps pay for itself. Again a lot of work, but skilful and rewarding.

For the rest of us it has become too easy to buy in food that could have been home-grown, often from overseas and out of season. This may be unsustainable, and the message once again is to grow your own—but where? The town council provides allotments, which are still available.

Looking back to “island Glastonbury”, food had to be grown on the higher ground free from flooding. Hence the terraced escarpments that can be identified above the cemetery, the Lynchets, and even the Tor (whatever their previous use), and fields off Basketfield Lane. Already many of these medieval features have been built over—off Leg of Mutton Road, for example.

In the 19th century there were market gardens in Sharpham. Again, the 1902 Ordnance Survey map shows the town had orchards, allotments and nurseries as well as large kitchen gardens. Many of these spaces have been built over, but some remain as yet unused.

The urgency to grow our own has not yet sunk in, as it is so easy to buy at the supermarket. It may, however, not be so far away—so it is as well to think about it and better still to dig for victory, this time over global warming.

Coombe House gardens: Rain held off to allow another memorable evening visit to Coombe House gardens on July 25. Everything looked particularly lush and green in a rather wet season. Many thanks to Alan Gloak and Colin Wells-Brown for their hospitality, and congratulations once again on their splendid achievement.

Oldest shop shut: It was sad to see Miller's Hardware close in July after 128 years of trading. Keith Miller, the fourth generation, retired last year and sold the business to Steve Rowe (Newsletter 122).



While the Burtle Silver Band played for the grand opening on July 19, Bill Knight welcomed holidaymakers to the newly refurbished row of cottages behind his family fish-and-chip shop. Marchant's Buildings have a new life as Glastonbury Holiday Homes. Jacob Marchant was the brother of Bill's great-grandmother; he bought the Lamb Inn (now the Who'd'a' Thought It) and built the four one-up-one-down cottages in 1865 on the end of an existing Georgian building.

Over the wall to the right of this photo are more holiday homes, newly built around a private courtyard called Woodward's Mews.

** Bill Knight invites Conservation Society members to tour the renovated Marchant's Buildings a on Monday **September 1** at 6:30pm. He has put some fine detailed work into the project.*

Still time to prepare for the self-reliance Harvest Show this September *Linda Hull*

Glastonbury's second Harvest Show takes place in the Town Hall on September 20, and the Conservation Society is taking part with a stand.

Unlike many harvest shows, the prizes will not go to the biggest leek or the longest runnerbean—fruit and veg will be judged on their taste, smell, colour, freshness and visual appeal. They don't have to be “supermarket quality”. It's a show that celebrates local food rather than showcase inedibles.

As fuel and food prices continue to rise, a celebration of local food and the associated growing, cooking and preservation skills is a timely reminder that we really don't want to lose these tools of self-reliance.

Entries are welcomed from local amateur gardeners. There are classes for fruit, vegetables and flowers. The cooks need to get busy in the kitchen as well—there are also classes for jams, chutneys, honey and other preserves, with a focus on the use of locally grown ingredients. There are special categories for young

people, as well as a breadmaking workshop on the day.

There's still time for you to get out and plant some salad crops, nurture your courgettes to the peak of perfection or dust off granny's recipe for green tomato chutney in time for the show!

Conservation Society members are invited to get involved and help with a display telling how food used to be grown in Glastonbury before super-markets transported food all over the country and the world. Do you remember Granny Jones of Sharpham? Or the allotments that covered Windmill Hill? Have you got colourful stories of the market gardens that used to supply our town, or old photographs to bring those stories to life? If so, please let John Brunsdon know, who is co-ordinating the Consoc stall on the day.

Show schedules can be obtained from the Town Hall foyer, Avalon Fair Shares in Abbey Mews and various cafes and shops in Glastonbury.

The show will run from 12 till 4pm.

Restoration work at Norwood Park and East Street farm *John Brunsdon*

The Somerset Building Preservation Trust was set up to rescue period buildings of merit that other agencies considered unviable commercially. Core funding comes from county and district councils, and bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund make specific projects possible to undertake. The trust invites members of the public to join. Our society should consider corporate membership.

A notable success was the restoration of Rook Lane Chapel in Frome (previously reported). As a founder member when on the Somerset county council, I still sit on the board. Recently the board met at Glastonbury Town Hall.

Some 50 members of the trust met at Norwood Park Farm, Wick, on June 12 to see the work being undertaken privately by the new owner, Martin Harrison. Already he has replanted the parkland with trees and restored hedges. Fire-gutted Dutch barns have been removed, allowing the view of the park from the medieval manor house. He has yet to start his “groundbreaking” social housing project to convert Edwardian farm buildings to retirement houses for local tenant farmers.

Norwood Park

When the marshes were gradually drained by the monks, scrub woodland developed to the northeast of island Glastonbury—the north wood. Earlier, island Glastonbury could be approached only by a narrow causeway from the east, now the A361. Astride the road at Hayatt remain bank-and-ditch earthworks—Ponters Ball—that can be explored by public footpaths. They possibly date from the bronze age, later



The front and gable end of the Old Farm house at East Street today and (below) as we saw it 5½ years ago in Newsletter 106 when the restoration project began



occupied in the iron age. They were fortified during the medieval period. The name derives from *pontis vallum*, the fort of the bridge.

Once the marsh drained it would have been easy to bypass the earthworks. A deer park was constructed within the northwood in 1305–06, palisaded to allow entry of deer only. At the Dissolution, the king’s commissioners described it as four miles round and containing 800 deer. It survived until 1622.

John de Selwood, the third-from-last

abbot, 1456–92, built a manor house within the deer park. It was a modest hunting lodge of three floors (the top is now gone), consisting of a large room with ground-floor kitchen to the west. It is now supported each side by later mostly Edwardian extensions. Fireplaces, parts of old ceiling and a screen survive in the old part, but the newel staircase has gone.

Norwood Park was an important part of the Glastonbury manor estates throughout the middle ages, providing venison, timber and charcoal. There was a small dairy herd. Cheese would have been made, but the main dairy was at Sharpham Park. Norwood Park provided “good and sweet herbage”. Martin Harrison tells me it still does. At the Dissolution the house was described as being in good repair—it was not long built.

Afterwards the property became a farm. Notable owners included Bruton School and latterly the Porch family and the squire Neville Greville. It is a fortunate survivor. John de Selwood also built the George and Pilgrim; he and his successor, Richard Beere, were extensive builders.

Old Farm, East Street

Richard and Nicola Evans then welcomed us to their restoration project, which has been a feature on Channel 4 television. This very early cruck building was recognized by Jennifer Cheshire while a conservation officer at Mendip council. She now works for English Heritage. (See also Newsletters 104 (2002 July) and 106.)

It was in a ruinous state, neglected for many years. The previous owners hoped to “enable” restoration by gaining planning permission to develop the rest of the site. When this failed, the present owners took on this enormous restoration project, intending to live in the building now completed. It retains many early features. Permission to link to a rather charming 18th-century cottage using a glass canopy has been applied for.

David Clarke, Mendip’s historic-buildings officer, presented the site to us. Again, many thanks to the owners for allowing us to visit.

It is possible to walk from Norwood Park Farm by footpath across the park to East Street. The old farm can be seen from the public highway outside.

References

- *Somerset Victoria History*, volume 9, Glastonbury manor houses.
- Sheppard Dale print notes
- *Glastonbury Footpath Walks*, walk n°11, also n°9, obtainable from Glastonbury Tourist Information Centre.

Autumn dates for your diary

- ✱ **September 1, Monday**—*Marchant’s Buildings* tour (see page 1). 6:30pm ... C
- ✱ **September 8, Monday**—*Low-Impact Housing* group hears about Cole Street Farm Cohousing Community (Gillingham, Dorset). St John’s Centre, 7pm. (Contact Anthony Ward, 83 5997.)
- ✱ **September 20, Saturday**—*Harvest show*: Conservation Society display in Town Hall, 12–4pm ... C
- ✱ **October 3**—*A disappearance and an appearance—two unknown Glastonbury relics*. Tim Hopkinson-Ball’s illustrated talk after the Antiquarian Society AGM. A
- ✱ **October 17**—*The Greylake bird reserve*. Illustrated talk by Damon Bridge ... C
- ✱ **October 31**—*The Lake Villages in context*. Illustrated talk by Nancy Hollinrake A
- ✱ **November 21**—*AGM of Glastonbury Conservation Society* ... C
- ✱ **November 28**—*Glastonbury’s ecclesiastical, royal and civic heraldry*. Illustrated lecture by David Orchard ... A

When and where

- C *Glastonbury Conservation Society meetings are (unless otherwise stated) on Fridays at 7:30 as usual, but this year will be in the small hall of the Town Hall.*
- A *Antiquarian Society meetings are on Fridays at 7:30 in the library, Archers Way.*

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@tiscali.co.uk to give him your address.

Trees: Scouts help plant and prune *Alan Fear*

Glastonbury Scout Group contacted the Conservation Society to ask if we could help the Explorer Scouts earn their environmental badge. We said we would be happy to help in any way. So we got the Scouts to plant a holly hedge at the Wells Road cemetery, with help from John Brunsdon, Debbie Fear and myself.

We met at the cemetery on a Saturday morning and set the Scouts to work. They were so keen they asked if there was any more work they could help with. So John and I took them tree-pruning at St Edmund's Road and the Thorndun estate.

The new Pilgrim Reception Centre, in Church Lane, wishes to start a scheme in which visitors can donate money towards the buying and planting of a tree in the locality—to commemorate their visit or in memory of a loved one. I said we would help, but they would have to find the land where these trees could be planted. So far they have agreed to this.

If any readers have trees we could use for this project, or even land, please let me know.

Now for a social gathering! I spoke with Bill Knight, who said members would be welcome to look around Marchant's Buildings (*see page 1*). The date is Monday September 1, 6:30pm.

Why did our house martins relocate? *Ian Rands*

We came here to Victoria Farm in 1972. At that time there were nine house-martin nests under the eaves at the south-facing front of the house. Of an evening we would sit watching and listening:

delighting in the frantic activity as the parent birds glided up to their nests to be greeted by the excited squeaking of the young demanding to be fed—evidently cries from all of them, "My turn now!"

There's something exciting about being among house martins. Unlike the swallow, who almost furtively glides

from his nest in a shed or cowbyre, the house martin shouts out from his, and suddenly reveals his bright white back. Like a flash he is suddenly there.

Every year they returned about a week after the swallows (ie, April 26). But one year, about six years after we arrived, they did not come back, and have not done so until this year.

Now we are delighted to watch them building two very robust-looking nests snugged up under the eaves, and supported by the keystones of the arches above two bedroom windows. Much chattering, maximum activity, and by mid-July they had hatched a brood each.



House martin (*Delichon urbica*)

There never were such important or hard-working parents!

One year, long ago, the house martins behaved most peculiarly: they set up or repaired their nests at the front of the house, had one or two broods each, and then moved out to the north side of the house and built fresh nests for the third broods. Now, why? We hadn't changed the colour of the paint, we didn't own a pestering dog or cat, the crops in the surrounding fields were the same, we were not aware that the season had been especially

hot or cold or wet or dry.

A friend of ours, somewhat of a bird expert, didn't know why they should have done this, but his best guess was that, in a hot summer and with two broods using the nest, it could have become uninhabitable because of fleas or mites.

Ahoy there, out there, does anybody know why they should have moved? Please let the editor know your explanation, or your way-out theory, or of your experience of similar phenomena.

I shall keep a close eye on them this year, and will let you know of any development.

Abbey Barn has plenty for summer visitors



At the cidermaking weekend on October 18–19, apples from the Abbey Barn's own orchard will go into a vintage mill and press from the Rural Life Museum to make cider in the traditional way (that's Tim Poontree in the foreground). Les Davis will talk about orchard management and cidermaking in the 19th century. Meanwhile you can help Zaida Haworth cook with apples in the Victorian kitchen, and then tuck into apple juice and apple cake in the museum's tea room.

Visitors to Glastonbury and especially children will find a varied programme of activities this summer and autumn at the Somerset Rural Life Museum, in the Abbey Barn, Chilkwell Street.

Demonstrations of spinning, making rag rugs, stick weaving, corn dollies, paper sculpture, lacemaking and Victorian cooking are on the menu. From further in the past, you can see how cording and braiding was done in the 16th century, and how tiles were made in medieval times. For dates and times of these, pick up a timetable at the Abbey Barn, ring 83 1197, or check on the web: www.somerset.gov.uk/museums

"Henry's Horrid History Day" is on Saturday August 25: living-history entertainment with Mike Farley as Good King Hal.

Bath Artist Printmakers are the major exhibition for the autumn, opening on September 6. The 32 members of this cooperative work from a studio in Larkhall, Bath. Some of them will be present in Glastonbury on various days until November 15, and during the school half-term holiday in October David Birks will lead a free drop-in workshop to celebrate the Big Draw, the National Campaign for Drawing.



Can anyone identify this medallion? Robert Lawrence found it just under the surface while digging a garden at Wherwell, Hants. It had been buried for at least 22 years.

The medallion is about 35mm in diameter and 3mm thick. It has a small hole at the top with a ring through it, which seems original. The colour is much the same as an old penny.

On the tail side (shown here after some digital enhancement) the words "Celebration Glastonbury Coronation 1911" encircle the Glastonbury town crest with "M H Stean" above and "Mayor" below it. The head side is more tarnished but, says Mr Lawrence, shows "two heads male in the foreground with a lady behind, both facing left". The name "Georgius" can be made out but other words are unclear. The edge does not seem to have markings. Tales to the editor, please.

A select group of Glastonbury Conservation Society members met in the carpark behind St Mary's church hall in the week of the Glastonbury Festival, to discuss the kinds of stone purloined from the Abbey ruins for building in Glastonbury.

There, the old carpark wall facing the new Cavendish Lodge displays the higgledy-piggledy masonry that characterizes stone walls built of second-hand materials. Here we recognized Douling stone, lias, tor burrs and the conspicuous tufa with which the Abbey was vaulted.

Especially interesting was the tufa, material deposited from lime-bearing springs similar to the present-day spring in Dulcote, a kind of spring that must have been more abundant in centuries gone by. The material was popular for vaulting in medieval churches because of its spongy, lightweight nature, combined with strength, coherence and ability to be cut to shape.

The profusion of fossil belemnites in the tor burrs was explained as being the vomited-up material from the stomachs of plesiosaurs and ichthyosaurs, marine creatures that had largely lived on eating the soft parts of belemnites (relatives of the modern squid), but were unable to digest the hard parts they swallowed. This led the group to the Abbey carpark to locate and identify a bone of one of these predators, preserved in a similar wall outside the Abbey (the precise location is a secret), along with more yet more vomited belemnites.

On the way, St Mary's church, built 1939–42 of Bath stone, was examined in detail, and the natural stone was compared with the later work of the church hall in reconstituted stone. The versatility of Bath stone was noted: the church shows it in use as exterior paving slabs, large monoliths for the entrance steps as well as smooth ashlar work and more rusticated styles of building, as well as its capability to be carved to fine detail in statuary. The overland journey from the Bath quarries to Glastonbury was not feasible until the arrival of the railway, so use of this stone can be discounted in any of the town's older buildings. A characteristic feature of Bath stone is the lacy, milky-coloured cement that holds together the rounded ooliths (looking like fish roe).

The buildings which till recently had been Abbey School and prior to that the St Louis convent and its school were admired, and the difference between the very fine stonework of the lias on the older northern building (now labelled Naish House) were compared with the more modern lias work on the school part nearer the church.

Next port of call was the Natwest bank, where we did not loiter long for fear of being thought to be "casing the joint". The warm colour of the Ham Hill stone façade was noted as well as the tendency for this stone to weather out along the dune-bedding layers. This weathering characteristic has led to

recent stone replacement work around the doorway. Problems of sympathetic repair and maintenance of old stonework were discussed outside the George and Pilgrim (Douling stone, now almost totally obscured by render), and the Tribunal, where a layer of lias just above pavement level was discussed as being a possible damp-proof course to the wall.

The afternoon ramble through 180 million years of Earth history terminated at the Avalon Club, which is largely built of a stone from the Mendips, the confusingly named Dolomitic conglomerate or Draycott marble. The attractive stone, which colours the walls of so many lovely buildings in Wells as well as the imposing city walls, was likened in origin to slope breccias in the modern-day Valley of the Kings in Egypt. Likely locations of quarries for this stone in Wells have now been built on, though one may be still visible in the woods on Tor Hill. A few buildings at the top end of Glastonbury High Street use this stone.

Roofing material other than Welsh slates (which did not arrive till after the railway) and locally-made clay tiles were also discussed. The possibilities were Delabole slate from Cornwall, or fissile layers from local limestones. A rare location where old limestone roofing slates are still to be seen in use is the old Park Farm buildings at the far end of Benedict Street (formerly called Station Road), but this was not visited. The merits of Glastonbury bricks and tiles, products of three or more brickworks along Wells Road, were discussed in passing. The importance of mortar in brick and stonework, and use of burnt material in local mortars led to interesting discussion.

In recent decades, stone arrivals in Glastonbury include York Stone paving slabs in the Market Cross area, and most recently, two large glacial boulders of granite-gneiss which have been installed in the Morrison carpark. These last could not have originated nearer than Brittany or the northwest Scottish Highlands, or less likely, Anglesey. These highlight the ongoing trend for ever more far-flung materials to be used, as the world continues to come to Glastonbury.

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What is Glastonbury made of?

Susanna van Rose



"It's permanently in here," says Susanna, producing a jeweller-style magnifying glass from her shoulder bag. In the Abbey wall she finds a fossilized belemnite, an extinct squid-like sea animal. A geologist at the Natural History Museum specializing in building stone, Susanna again lives in her native Glastonbury and edits Rock Watch for children.

Glastonbury Conservation Society was founded in 1971 to care for our built and natural environment. If you enjoy the newsletter and are not already a member, please consider joining: the subscription is only £5 a year. Forms are available from the treasurer or can be downloaded from the web (glastonburyconservation.org.uk). Officers for 2008: chairman John Brunsdon (83 1283), vice-chairman Ian Rands (85 0509), treasurer and acting secretary Janet Morland (83 5238, janet.morland@lineone.net).