

### Chairman's notes

*John Brunsdon*

First of all, a happy new year to all our members and to all Glastonbury.

#### Blooming good work

Congratulations to the Glastonbury in Bloom team for a good win in 2008. They probably deserved even better. Visitors and residents were delighted with the floral displays that worthily promote our tourist-dependent town.

Our society's own efforts in tree-planting, care of county footpaths and the historic environment generally all contribute in the same way.

#### Managing vehicles

We need people to visit this town, so we have to manage the motor vehicles they arrive in. Too often our carparks remain underused while our High Street is congested and side roads are clogged with parked cars.

Mendip council commissioned RTA Associates to provide a parking strategy report. The report has few surprises. It emphasizes weaknesses in our current system. New signage is needed to promote St John's carpark as the main one for visitors. There will still be a need for signs to point direct to the Abbey parking at St Dunstan's carpark: short-stay coaches might not come otherwise, and school parties need to get on and off close to the Abbey. The Abbey needs more visitors, not fewer.

Nevertheless, overuse of St Dunstan's carpark creates problems for drivers when it is full: it is difficult for them to find the next available carpark.

On-street parking will be more difficult to control. Civil parking enforcement may eventually come, along with residents' parking permits, and prove controversial. There is an urgency, however, to control the motor vehicle before it dominates the town.

#### Practical volunteers

Volunteers have been active in tidying up and planting hedges at the cemetery. Please keep in touch with Alan Fear (83 3185) for this year's tree-planting.

Heavy December rain in Bushy Coombe washed away part of the newly laid stone footpath to the Tor. Three of us separated from tree-planting to repair the path the next morning. Rory Weightman and myself continued the work on Boxing Day, and the path is walkable again. Mendip District Council has no funding for more repair at the moment.



*More than 20 people have formed a rota to keep the redbrick Morlands building occupied around the clock. Their ages range from 16 to 65.*

*"This place is very much like the painting studios at our college," said one Strode student among the protesters.*

*For links, see Consoc website*

### Morlands buildings are occupied at last ... but it's not what the RDA intends

*Jim Nagel*

A group of protesters claimed squatters' rights in the abandoned redbrick buildings at the Morlands site on January 5 to stop their demolition. They say they will not leave until the Southwest Regional Development Agency gives a written promise of proper public consultation.

The RDA timed its announcement for Christmas Eve, in an apparent attempt to bury the news. Demolition would begin on January 5, the agency decreed, because of "serious safety issues". Young people had been breaking in and using the empty buildings as a clubhouse.

Protesters, however, say the redbrick buildings are sound. "I'm walking around in my socks: that's how dangerous it is," said Hazel Pegg, by mobile phone from inside the building with her daughter. "There was broken glass and bits, but we have cleared the immediate hazards. The roof doesn't leak. The floor is rock-solid; you could walk an elephant on it. In my opinion, this building could be restored—as Urban Splash promised would be done in 2007."

Urban Splash and Priority Sites are the two developers appointed by the RDA in 2006. They said work would

begin in spring 2007 and business would move onto the site in 2008.

The Conservation Society committee, also meeting on January 5, was reminded by Paul Branson that Urban Splash was to turn the redbrick buildings into affordable workshops for artists and craftspeople. But Urban Splash is in economic trouble (based in Manchester, it began laying off staff in September) and now finds it more convenient to demolish than to restore, he suggested. The boarded-up terrace of houses in Beckery Road could go the same way; why has no work begun in all this time?

The meeting asked John Brunsdon as chairman to contact the Member of Parliament. John reports that the MP is already asking the public auditor to look into the RDA's handling of the site.

The Morlands buildings are not listed and nor are they in a conservation area, another committee member said. The old Northover Mill Cottage, however, is listed Grade II and would benefit from new buildings next door more sympathetic than the jerrybuilt Morlands redbrick. Members of the society have helped the Beckery Island Trust to clear brambles and rubbish while funds are arranged to refurbish the cottage for community use.



*"Save Our Space" says the banner (left). The listed Mill Cottage (right) is behind the buildings.*

# Talks in summary: Victorian speculative builder, wetland nature reserve

## Marchant's Buildings Bill Knight

I was delighted to receive members of the Conservation Society at Marchant's Buildings on September 1. The restoration of this old Glastonbury terrace, off Northload Street, has been a lifelong ambition of mine, now accomplished. In my time in Glastonbury I have witnessed with sadness the demolition of several Victorian terraces (Hunt's Buildings and Dowdney's Mansions, for example), and of course there was a terrace of what I believed to be almshouses built against the Abbey boundary wall, to the left as you enter the main gate.

The Marchant's Buildings terrace was built by my great-grandmother's brother, Jacob Marchant, in 1865. I think it was a speculative building exercise at the time. It has been home to many generations of Glastonians. The Chapman and Howe families as well as our dear Joan Snuggs are among those I remember.

The toilet arrangements were a little primitive, to say the least: two outside privies at the bottom of the terrace and two at the top. I remember the story of a cow that escaped one Tuesday from being driven to the George Street market. She collapsed against the door of one of the toilets. Mrs Chapman was inside and had to remain there for about an hour while farmers endeavoured to move the exhausted beast.

I have always been a collector of all things Glastonbury. I have pieces of Abbey stone as well as the former pinnacles of St Benedict's church tower, which were in the garden of Crocker's shoe shop for many years until John Crocker offered them to me when he sold up and moved to Minehead.

I am currently making sound recordings of conversations with elderly residents of Northload Street and Benedict Street. Miss Edna Moody has lived in Benedict Street since 1920, and Phyllis



Collard, from 11 Northload Street, is the seventh child of 14. Her old house, along with numbers 13 and 15, have long been demolished. So have 41, 43 and 45, all medieval buildings. Although these properties no longer exist, I think that the new streetscape, if you stand on the Cross looking towards the former Northload Bridge, is most pleasing: it has some fine elevations and sympathetic design.

Some members of the society heard the Burtle Silver Band play in my courtyard on July 19. I hope to arrange further concerts this summer to mark the centenary of my family's involvement in the fish-and-chip restaurant. No other family in Britain in any way connected to the fish-frying trade can boast such a record.

Having restored the cottages I can now move on to something else. What it will be I know not, for, being a true Scorpio male, I have no choice in the matter.

## Greylake nature reserve Martyn Webb

Damon Bridge, the warden of Greylake nature reserve off the A361 toward Taunton, gave a very professional and informative talk on the purchase, development and future of the reserve.

His interest was formed at a very early age, as he spent his childhood in Gloucestershire with parents who worked at Peter Scott's Slimbridge reserve on the

banks of the Severn. Damon has a vast experience of reserves all around Britain.

The Greylake reserve, 270 acres (210 hectares) of wet grassland, is one of three reserves on the Somerset Levels belonging to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. The RSPB bought Greylake in 2003.

When the land floods in winter, flocks of lapwings, golden plovers and other wading birds arrive, as well as wigeons, teals, shovellers and Bewick's swans. Lapwings, snipe, curlews and redshanks nest on the reserve, along with other ground-nesting birds such as yellow



wagtails, skylarks and meadow pipits. The RSPB is creating habitats that will attract breeding ducks and other wetland dwellers such as spotted crakes and water rails. Wetland wildlife also includes dragonflies, water voles, otters and roe deer.

We were grateful for Damon's talk to the Conservation Society on October 17. He also works at the West Sedgemoor reserve.

The entrance to the Greylake reserve is on the right of the A361 about a mile past Greinton. It is open all year; entry is free.

## The mapping of Somerset Adrian Pearse

The first map of Somerset arose out of the desire of Elizabeth I and her principal secretary, Lord Burghley, to produce a detailed map of England. Joe and Christine King told the Conservation Society after the AGM on November 21. One of the main purposes was to enable scrutiny of the Catholic gentry, seen as a major potential threat to Elizabeth's crown and the Protestant reformation.

Burghley appointed Thomas Seckford to oversee the project. It was undertaken by Christopher Saxton, issued with a royal pass instructing the gentry to give him every assistance. Saxton took seven years to accomplish his objectives, and the map of Somerset was produced in 1575.

Considering the magnitude of his task, the result is astonishingly accurate. Engraved by two Flemish artisans, the map shows towns, villages, rivers and hills, together with an elaborate armorial and ships and sea monsters.

Later in Elizabeth's reign Burghley undertook a second mapping project, this time employing John Speed. The Somerset

## Dates for the winter and spring diary

● <b>January 27—Street Neighbourhood Watch, past and present</b> , a talk by Maureen Davis, with a chance to ask questions of community-support police officers	.....	S
● <b>January 30—The earliest evolution of Glastonbury legend</b> , Paul Ashdown	.....	A
● <b>February 17—Gardens of the Bishop's Palace</b> , a talk by James Cross	.....	S
● <b>February 27—The Knights Templar in Somerset</b> , illustrated talk by Juliet Faith and Ronert Williams	.....	A
● <b>March 17—A passion for Somerset</b> , a talk by the local author Diana Crighton	.....	S
● <b>April 3—Victorian Glastonbury: contemporary descriptions, views and plans</b> , illustrated talk by Neill Bonham	.....	A

**Bridgwater visit:** We will host Bridgwater Civic Society members on **Saturday May 9** for a tour of Glastonbury. And then members of Glastonbury Conservation Society are invited to a reciprocal tour of Bridgwater on **Sunday June 14**. Details next newsletter.

A Antiquarian Society meetings are on **Fridays at 7:30 at the Library, Archers Way**.  
S Street Society meetings are on **Tuesdays at 7:30 at the Methodist church hall, Leigh Road (chairman Nina Swift, 44 3881)**.

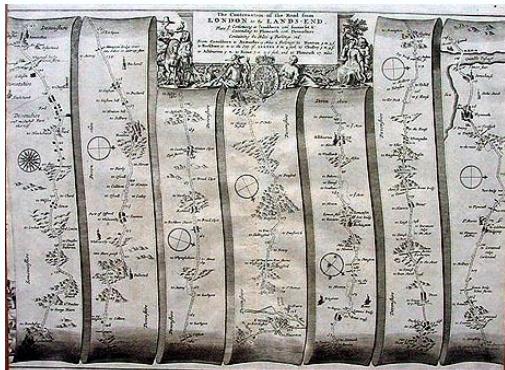
## early Somerset maps

map appeared in 1612, and was the first to include town plans and administrative boundaries.

Saxton and Speed established a standard that was to be copied and adjusted in only minor respects for the next 150 years. Plagiarism was the order of the day, and the high value of printed maps meant that many were ready to produce their own versions. Notable Somerset maps were made by two Dutchmen, Johannis Janssen in 1639 and Willem Blaeu in 1645.

Some maps were certainly bizarre—notably that in Michael Drayton's *Poly Olbion* of 1612, showing rivers, hills and towns only, but profusely decorated with nymphs and other fanciful characters.

Robert Morden's playing-card map of Somerset of 1676 introduced roads for the first time. He omitted them from his large map of 1695 but re-introduced them on his map of 1704. John Norden produced a table of road distances as early as 1625. The need for such information prompted John Ogilby to issue strip maps based on the road system in 1675—a popular format that continued with numerous examples into the 19th century.



Ogilby's road in 1675 from Somerset to Plymouth.

North was not always at the top. Peculiar orientations were sometimes used, as with Badeslade and Toms in 1742 and Cooke in 1806. In 1748 George Bickham, better known for his work *The Universal Penman*, produced a panoramic view map of the county.

A succession of maps made throughout the 18th century added further features, but it was not until John Billingsley's maps for his *Agriculture of Somerset* of 1797 that the potential of maps for particular purposes was utilized—in this case types of land and crops. Examples concentrating on canals, mail-coach routes and railways were soon to follow.

Engraving on steel rather than copper plates made sharper images at smaller scales possible as well as truly mass production of maps. The results were often very similar in appearance, though oddities were still seen, such as William Pinnock's map of 1834 with a reversed white-on-black printing. Such eccentricities as William Cobbett could as late as 1832 produce extremely inaccurate maps.

The work of the Ordnance Survey during and after the Napoleonic wars brought a whole new approach to map-making.

## Who remembers Digging for Victory? 50 years on, it's food for thought

Linda Hull

This year will be a very important anniversary for many Conservation Society members as they remember the outbreak of the Second World War. At a recent committee meeting I was informed that food stocks became an issue almost immediately in 1939, as enemy submarines in the North Atlantic threatened supply. I was duly handed a copy of the Home Guard manual circa 1941 to study!

This got me thinking about the potential for an exhibition at the 2009 Harvest Show focusing on the wartime mobilization of Britain's front lawns as productive food-bearing gardens. If any member has memories, stories or photographs they would be willing to add to such an exhibition or would like to get involved in any other way, please do contact me (83 5001).

**Tree sites:** Over the last few months a recurring agenda item has been the search for land to plant the surplus of trees that the society has in its possession. It seems that many acres of formerly treeless terrain have been planted up over the years, for which the townspeople of Glastonbury owe the Conservation Society a huge thanks.

I agreed to ask around to see if there were any spare acres requiring trees and was delighted to get a number of responses. This coincided with the

notion of planting an orchard of 350 trees in and around Glastonbury to raise awareness that 350 parts per million (ppm) is the latest reported "safe" level of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere. We are already beyond 385ppm, and that number rises every day. So finding an opportunity to raise our community's awareness about this by combining with the Conservation Society to plant an orchard is very satisfying.

If you have land or know of anyone who does who might like to take part in this initiative, please do let us know. More information about this international campaign is online at [www.350.org](http://www.350.org)

**Local food booklet:** Also on the food front, as part of this year's Mendip Food Festival, volunteers from the community group Transition Glastonbury have put together a new publication: *A celebration of local food—a guide for Glastonbury and the surrounding area*. This booklet provides information about some of the food producers in the local area as well as the businesses that support them, focusing on cafes, shops and markets.

It also has information on other local food and growing projects including the forthcoming Community Supported Agriculture project, Torganics, at Paddington Farm Trust. Free copies were available at the AGM and can be found at many food outlets in the High Street.

## Medallion was for George V in 1911

David Orchard

The bronze medallion found in a garden in Hampshire (Newsletter 126, August) dates from Glastonbury's celebration of the 1911 coronation.

The obverse bears an "approved" version of a double portrait of King George V and Queen Mary, almost certainly produced by the Royal Mint. The legend reads GEORGIUS V REX ET IMP (ET) MARIA REG—"George V King and Emperor (and) Queen Mary".

I assume these were available to all local authorities for use in their celebrations in 1911, and that each authority provided the Mint with a simple line drawing of the required inscription and arms for

reproduction on the reverse, to mark the coronation of George V on June 22.

The Glastonbury arms shown is the second variation of the correct depiction as it appears on the mayor's badge of 1870. The bands (*infulae*) which should depend from the back of the mitre are shown as a detached ribbon, as if intended to bear a motto.



The Town Hall's untarnished medal from the 1911 coronation.

A new charity, the Mary & Margaret Charity, has been formed to manage the restoration and development of the ancient chapel and almshouses off Magdalene Street.

The chapel is still owned by St Benedict's Church, and the almshouses and garden have been gifted to the Bath & Wells Diocese by Mendip Housing (to whom they had passed from the old borough council). The diocese and St Benedict's Church are represented on the new charity's board of trustees.

Heriz-Payne of Glastonbury are the architects for the project and they have proposed plans for the restoration, maintenance and development of the site. They are currently talking to English Heritage and Mendip Conservation officers before submitting planning applications.

The main elements of work are:

- Restoring the chapel – removing and probably replacing the old plaster with a lime product; rewiring; new lighting and heating
- Maintaining the chapel and almshouses – repairing the rainwater system; repointing stonework with lime products as necessary; repairing pathways
- A new building just beyond the west wall, on the garden of Magdalene Close, to provide a toilet and kitchenette. This will also create a space for visitors to look back at the end wall, which currently is not accessible. (This is possible because Mendip Housing, which is refurbishing the Magdalene Close flats, also transferred a three-metre section of the garden to the diocese.)
- A new boundary wall on the south side to replace an old fence and retaining wall
- Redesigning the garden as a medicinal herb garden. This will reflect the site's long association with healing. (Glastonbury residents were invited to submit their ideas and designs.)

The intention is to carry out the work this spring—subject to approval from English Heritage (a slow process) and local planning and some further funding, although a healthy balance was left by the Quest Community, which used the chapel and almshouses for a decade, for the restoration of the site.

When the work is completed the Mary & Margaret Charity

envisages maintaining the chapel as an open, sacred space that welcomes people of all faiths or none. Noon prayers continue daily, and a breaking-of-bread service takes place on the first Monday of each month. The chapel is also available for one-off or regular use by the community. It has been used for meditation, birthday blessings, Taizé chants, Dances of Universal Peace, small recitals, presentations and meetings of support groups.

The almshouses will be developed into an education centre.

One almshouse will be a re-creation of its early use as a dwelling, and the other four will provide space for various exhibitions. In 2009 a display of icons and the history of iconography is booked, including resident iconographers working in the summer. Since they have no heating, the almshouses will open only from April to October.

The garden will evolve in 2009, and the charity hopes to involve local volunteers. Essentially the intention is to maintain the quiet, peaceful nature of the garden as a sanctuary for the town and for birds and wildlife.

The trustees have been delighted with the response to the plans and with some of the old sketches and lithographs that Neill Bonham has shown (such as the one here). They would like to find copies of all existing images of the chapel and almshouses to create a collection that people can view both on the site and online.

A pleasant surprise was finding a couple from Street who lived in the almshouses in the 1940s. They are in their 90s now and apparently qualified to live there as “poor folk” under the bequest of Thomas Prowse. The trustees have invited them to be interviewed to record

their story of life in the almshouses, and will appeal for other memories from the community.

The future of the site depends heavily on volunteers and Friends. If you would like to be a Friend, or can volunteer some time, please contact Liz Pearson, the secretary of the Mary & Margaret Charity, c/o 7 Albert Buildings, Glastonbury, BA6 9JN, or email [liz\\_pearson@btinternet.com](mailto:liz_pearson@btinternet.com).

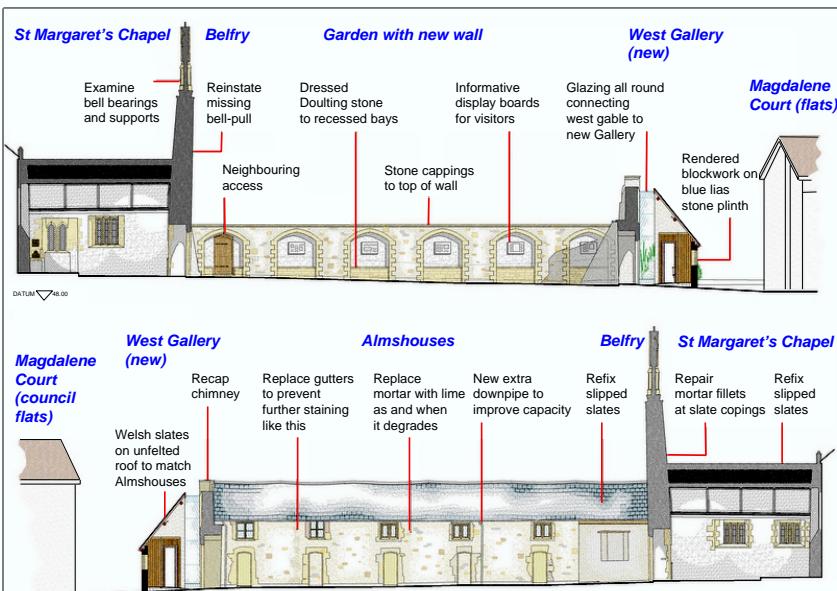
Some more information is at [www.stmargaretschapel.org.uk](http://www.stmargaretschapel.org.uk) but it has not been updated recently.

## St Margaret's Chapel and Almshouses

Liz Pearson



Buckler's sketch of the ancient Almshouses, still occupied, about 1825, looking northeast. Two rows of almshouses faced one another across a narrow passageway until in the 1960s the old Glastonbury borough council demolished one row (at right in this sketch) and built the Magdalene Court flats in the almshouses' vegetable garden (foreground).



Architect's drawing of proposed work in 2009, looking south (above) and north (below).

