

Imminent dates

✱ **Friday August 7** – Conservation Society members are again welcome to enjoy the gardens of Coombe House, by kind invitation of Alan Gloak and Colin Wells-Brown. 6:30 to 8pm.

✱ **Saturday 8** – Our tree-planting volunteers are invited to Carymoor to see how their past efforts have grown. Meet at 10:30 at Victoria Farm to share transport or at 11 at Carymoor. Contact Ian Rands, 85 0509.

Further ahead, reserve **November 27** for the Conservation Society's AGM. David Charles will give a talk, on bees.

Chairman's notes

John Brunsdon

Bushy Coombe must be one of the town's most visited beauty spots, having a made-up footpath to the Tor that avoids the now dangerous alternative alongside the A361. Its owners, Rory Weightman and his wife Mani, live at the top of the coombe in the converted barn or coach house, which is listed Grade 2 and was at one time considered "at risk".

Recent works by our society include more tree guards and maintenance at a nearby orchard. The town council put up a standard-design bin for dog litter.

At Bushy Coombe Gardens, off Bovetown, a recent planning application for a rear balcony was passed, although recommended for refusal on grounds of overlooking. Councillors debated that overlooking already existed, not least from the public footpath across the coombe, and also that later houses built at the side of Edmund Hill had balconies and were in the Regency tradition of Clifton and Bath in this respect.

Bushy Coombe is run as a nature reserve with resident badgers, visiting deer and a range of birds including buzzards. Bramble bushes have been allowed to grow, which in turn protects wildlife. While sapling trees have grown up, uncontrolled growth of brambles will reduce wildflowers such as vetches, which support Blue butterflies. A balance is necessary, so some clearance will take place.

Cows graze during the summer and have their calves, adding to the pastoral scene, with views up to the Tor and back across the town to the coast and beyond.

Harvest volunteers – Can you help to staff the Conservation Society stand at the harvest show in the Town Hall on September 19? (See page 3.) Contact John Brunsdon, 83 1283.

A tale of two houses: planning refusals followed eventually by accolades

John Brunsdon

In this year's Built in Quality awards, Michael Eavis won the accolade for the best single new house. The Eavis design, next to the Tith Barn in Pilton, was built in a "traditional style" with oak timbers to echo the important listed barn (recently re-roofed).

Problems arose when he departed from his permission brief and incorporated new features "as his ideas evolved". He was then required to apply for retrospective planning permission, and the matter came before the planning board. The planning officer, backed by English Heritage, recommended refusal, largely on the grounds of the introduction of "nonvernacular alien features".

While deploring the retrospective aspect, I considered the house as then built to be "worthy of permission"; I pointed out that two of our fine historic buildings of merit such as St John's church tower, which is in the Gloucestershire tradition, and the Abbot's Kitchen, which is French in style, incorporate alien features and are admired.

Permission was granted and, as stated, Mr Eavis has now received an award!

A "highly commended" went to Rodney Gifford. He had long dreamed of a retirement home in the garden of Little Orchard, his 1930s house at the end of Ashwell Lane. Unfortunately he allowed his outline planning permission to lapse and had to reapply. This time it was recommended for refusal on highway grounds: increased traffic flow at the dangerous A361 junction.

It was, however, pointed out that several bed-and-breakfast outlets already operated in Ashwell Lane, and as a percentage of overall vehicle movements the extra was insignificant. Permission was granted, and the new house now incorporates "highly commended" retirement features. (Incidentally, the builder's name is Brunsdon—one of the clan, no doubt, but not a close relative!)

The annual Built in Quality Awards are run by Mendip council, and the presentation took place in spring at the Town Hall. (*Full list on Mendip website.*)



Orchard Court: Just over the wall from the Abbey orchard, three large houses are to go up next to N°3 Magdalene Street, behind a row of terraced houses. Roofs are zinc, and the exterior walls are cedar and render. This view is from the Magdalene Street direction. (Heriz-Payne architects)

A third tale: no, yes, eventual award?

Jim Nagel

A tale similar to the two above could soon be told about Keith Taylor. He wants to build three striking eco-houses, all with four bedrooms and gardens plus solar panels and heat-exchangers, on land he owns adjacent to the Abbey wall—the site of the former Clarks printing works at 3A Magdalene Street.

Planning officers recommended refusal. They cited government guidelines wanting higher-density housing and suggested Mr Taylor should build nine two-bedroom units—for which planning permission already existed. (A previous owner went out of business before starting to build them.)

"Glastonbury is already saturated with two-bedroom flats crammed into tiny sites. I think they're using us as a dumping ground," Mr Taylor said. "I must be the only builder in history that

wants to put less on a site, not more. I wanted these houses, on this site beside the Abbey, to make a statement."

The application went before a committee of councillors. They approved it on July 22, with conditions about insulation and exterior materials.

The houses will use timber panels constructed in Cornwall and then erected quickly in Glastonbury as a weatherproof shell for interior work to continue. "Each house will have such insulation properties that you can run it for practically nothing. That's one of my reasons for doing this project: it will be totally eco-friendly," Mr Taylor said.

Keith and Julia Taylor have lived in Glastonbury for six years. Their current home is Naish House in Magdalene Street, the Regency house which he

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Bridgwater visits Glastonbury... *Martyn Webb*

Bridgwater and District Civic Society members came for a walking tour of Glastonbury on May 9, hosted by the Conservation Society.

We started at the Rural Life Museum, where John Brunsdon gave a short history of the museum and the ancient Abbey Barn which houses it. Then we progressed to the grounds of the Abbey House, where the highlight was the view from its back garden, down through the Abbey ruins to St Benedict's Church.

From there we studied the architecture of the High Street before entering the Assembly Rooms for a very interesting history presented by Paul Branson. Even the people who work there stayed to listen, and they said they would like to have recorded it!

During the return along Bere Lane to the Rural Life Museum, unfortunately one of the visitors fell and had to be taken first to West Mendip Hospital and then to Yeovil. Our emergency services, including the quick reaction of our first-

aider, John Brunsdon, mean that Ian Sampson is now recovering at home in Bridgwater.

The remainder of us enjoyed tea and cakes at the museum café and a short tour of the museum before returning home. It is fair to say that apart from the mishap it was a successful and enjoyable event.

"Some beautiful buildings and the very impressive shop facades interested us all," wrote Bernice Lashbrook, the Bridgwater and District Civic Society's secretary.

Mr Sampson, she wrote, had broken the bridge of his nose and woke up the next day with two shiners and swollen lips. He was not kept in hospital. He had no recollection of the event other than that he was getting short of breath but wanted to keep up the pace rather than lagging too far behind. He blacked out and saw faces around him when he came to. "We are pleased it was nothing more serious."

Peat Moors Centre to shut after season

The Peat Moors Centre, near Shapwick, is to close permanently at the end of October, a victim of the county's budget cuts. A Roman legion arrives on October 31 (10am to 4pm) to symbolically close the Celtic settlement.

During August, however, various activities and days out are on offer:

- a living history display about the Parisii iron-age tribe (Saturday 1)
- demonstrations of Celtic crafts (Sun 2) and of willow basket-making (Sunday 24 and Monday 31).

And in September:

- an ancient Norwegian saga performed by the storyteller Jem Dick (Saturday 12)
- flint-knapping demos (Saturday 19)
- a "wild day out" on Sunday 27: the Avalon marshes in summer, quizzes and environmental activities for children of all ages.

Details: peatmoorscentre.org.uk or 86 0697.

... And we find Bridgwater more colourful than we thought *Jim Nagel*

A dozen from Glastonbury met up with about the same number from Bridgwater Civic Society for "a little toddle around our old town", led by Dr Peter Cattermole on June 14. Bridgwater was granted borough status in a charter from King John in 1200. It had a church, castle, hospital and friary. Much of its medieval street pattern survives today.

The tall, hollow spire standing on the squat tower of St Mary's Church was begun in 1367 just after the Black Death killed half of Bridgwater's population.

A huge castle dominated the town until the Civil War. The Roundheads destroyed it in reprisal for the town's supporting the wrong side. Today's Court Street, off Fore Street near the bridge, is a filled moat, rising to



On the north door of St Mary's Church, Peter Cattermole points out one of the Green Men carvings from about 1230.

where the castle stood. Castle Street leads from the river to King Square, lined by fine early Georgian houses that were a speculative building enterprise at the time. They stand on the ruins of the castle. Under a manhole a few paces up Castle Street from the river is an extant section of the castle walls.

In 1851 a local man built Castle House—of moulded precast concrete, long before its time. It is now in a dire state.

In Clare Street, another of the blue plaques put up in 2006–07 by the society tells the story of Isolda Parewastel. Her intrepid pilgrimage from Bridgwater to Jerusalem in 1365, and her imprisonment and torture in Crusade reprisals, is well documented. She returned home in 1368.

The High Street is enormously wide because the former shambles that stood in the middle of it was pulled down 150 years ago.

32 Friarn Street was once the house of a rich merchant. Typically, the outer walls show layers from different periods: stone foundations, later brick on top, and

so on. Peter admitted to special expertise on this building, because it is his own.

Bridgwater, in keeping with its history, has an unusually high number of Nonconformist chapels, including Baptist, Quaker and Wesleyan. The oldest is the Unitarian chapel in Dampiet Street, with its shell hood over the door and box pews. It was built in 1688, rebuilt in 1788 and restored in 1988.

Here our hosts served up a fine tea before we returned to Glastonbury, knowing a lot more than we did before about Bridgwater's colourful past.



The triple-arch Water Gate is the most ancient structure in Bridgwater. Dr Cattermole deplored its present state—a cluttered alleyway sporting a blue plaque beside a derelict pub in West Quay—and urged everyone to email their dismay to kerry.rickards@sedgemoor.gov.uk.

[Footnote: John Brunsdon wrote; Mr Rickards is suitably concerned but awaits new ownership.]



39 St Mary Street (part of the Carnival Inn) is by tradition where Judge Jeffries lodged during the Bloody Assize following the 1685 rebellion.

With a fascinating array of maps and prints, Neill Bonham portrayed the evolution of early Victorian Glastonbury to the Antiquarian Society on April 3.

Medieval survivals were still plentiful in the Regency period. The Boundary Commission map of 1835 showed how little the built-up parts of the town had expanded. However, dramatic changes came by the time of the Tithe Map in 1844: grand houses such as Chalice Hill House, Abbey House, Somerset House and Blenheim House all appeared. The row of cottages between St John's and the High Street was cleared away, and the cross by Benjamin Ferrey in the Market Place was erected in 1846.

West's sketchbook of 1844, kept in the Victoria & Albert Museum, contains numerous vignettes of the town, including the "Madras" school beside St John's. The sale of the Abbey site in 1850 (to James Austin) occasioned the printing of a booklet of views by Dolby, giving excellent detail and descriptions.

In the campaign in 1854 to save the canal a poster showed the canal basin and its environs, and several engravings appeared with an article in the *Illustrated London News* recording the celebrations when the railway opened the same year.

Early directories such as Hunts

detailed the numerous coach connections through Glastonbury. The White Hart in particular concentrated on this trade, which by the early 1850s was but a pale shadow of former times.

A tourists' booklet of engraved views around 1855, in many ways a forerunner of the picture postcard, provides several views of the town that reveal recent developments in detail, such as the remodelling of the interior of St John's, with the new font and pulpit by Sir Gilbert Scott and gasoliers. St Benedict's was as yet unrestored (again by Scott). Another view shows the newly erected cemetery chapels.

Neill plans to continue his review of Victorian Glastonbury in autumn lectures.

Harvest show 2009

You're invited to display your produce at the Glastonbury Harvest Show, on **September 19** this year, again at the Town Hall. The idea of harvest is extended to include local sustainable goods and activities.

"We'd love to hear from local amateur enthusiasts who might like to demonstrate their crafts. Beer-makers, wine-makers, rag-rugging—all ideas welcome," said Trish O'Carroll, one of the organizers (83 5810).

Summer events at Abbey Barn

The Abbey Barn as usual has all sorts of activities on offer, August to October: demonstrations of lacemaking, stick weaving, spinning, rag rugs, weaving, braid weaving, cidermaking and cooking with apples. There's even a session entitled "Try your hand at Victorian laundry". There are also farmhouse teas that you learn to cook yourself, a talk about the Women's Land Army, a visit by the Duke of Monmouth's garrison, and a Henry VIII impersonator doing Henry's Horrid History.

Meanwhile, watercolours by Lucy Willis are on display throughout August. The September–October exhibitions are "Prints, pots and chairs" (by Print Southwest, Rodney Lawrence and Elizabeth Raeburn, Lorraine Houlden) and "Portraits of the Somerset carnivals" (Terry Flaxton).

Details: 83 1197. Admission to the Rural Life Museum is free.

◆ **Archive how-to** – How can you research the history of your house? The county archive in Taunton offers a course and tour on Monday **September 21**. How to read old handwriting (palaeography and Latin) is another day course, on October 10. Details: (01823) 27 8805 or somerset.gov.uk/archives.

1940s boy in Glastonbury; getting our Edwards right

I was interested in the letter from Roger Lord of Leeds in Newsletter 128. My recollection of Mr Cullen's daughters is the same! (But I was only 12.)

He mentions his "Uncle Lou", Walter Louis Day, as a bellringer at St John's, and asks for information. The

Glastonbury Antiquarian Society has a record of the St John's ringers, which I will consult, and if Walter Day is listed I will photocopy the entries and send them to Mr Lord.

Thanks for the summary of my heraldry talk (in the same issue). It was a good precis, considering the length of my talk. I should have made two sessions of it!

There is one major error, however, about the royal arms as displayed on the Pilgrims Inn. These are the arms of Edward the Fourth, not Edward III. I should hate to think anyone thought I attributed Edward III's reign to the "15th or early 16th century" as quoted. He died in 1377, and the murder of his grandson Richard II in 1400 led to the outbreak of the Wars of the Roses. Edward IV was the Yorkist king (you

can see the white roses on the Pilgrims Inn) who died in 1483, and his brother Richard III, who assumed the throne from Edward's son Edward V (elder of the two "princes in the Tower") was killed by Henry, Earl of Richmond, at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, establishing the Tudor dynasty.

Letters to the editor

Thus, to say that these arms date from "the late 15th or early 16th century" is incorrect. Edward IV had been dead for 17 years at the start of the 16th century, and the Tudors had been on the throne for 15. The Tudors were not in the business of advertising the House of York (though Henry VII did marry Elizabeth of York to unite the houses).

David Orchard

Glastonbury Antiquarian Society
librarian
20 Norbins Road, BA6 9JF

Medallions and mayoral vanity

[Newsletters 126 and 127 had articles about a Glastonbury medallion found in a garden in Hampshire.]

Some 40 years ago I found a similar medallion in a desk drawer, bearing the heads of the king and queen, the town coat of arms and mayor's name,

commemorating a visit to Middleton (or passing through) early last century. It too had a hole roughly pierced in it. As there are 22 Middletons in my English atlas (not all large), I had to resort to the librarian of Windsor Castle to establish which area and towns HM had visited at the time. They revealed that the visit had been to Lancashire, and I was able to pinpoint the town.

The librarian also provided photocopies of similar medallions depicted in a catalogue (Spinks, I believe)—which indicated that there are collectors of these objects.

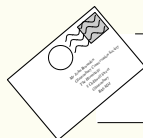
The town clerk of Middleton, Lancs, was pleased to accept my find, to place in the town's archive. It would appear it was common practice for town councils to celebrate a royal occasion by presenting such memorabilia to each householder or ratepayer. No doubt there was a bit of mayoral vanity to boot.

Aluminium was not a common metal and somewhat a novelty; usefully, it was soft and dies could be made cheaply.

Glastonbury council's minutes of business before 1911 would record the council's intentions.

F. N. Carling

Brunel Glastonbury Care Home
Pike Close, BA6 9PZ



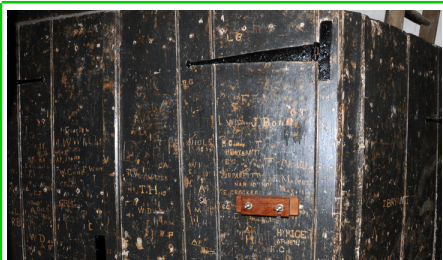
Heritage transforms into a Co-op store

Heritage Fine Foods in the High Street will become a Co-op store overnight on August 20, but its two dozen staff will be unchanged except for new uniforms.

Peter Trinder began the business in 1986. At first he used the name Nisa, after his supplier, Northern Independent Supermarkets Association, and renamed it Heritage in 1996 after Mendip's shopfront scheme helped to transform the brutal exterior of the 1960s building.

Radstock Co-op had apparently been eyeing the shop for some while, and when Mr Trinder wanted to retire the Co-op made an offer he couldn't refuse. The Glastonbury store will be the ninth in a group owned by Radstock Co-op.

"Radstock is a local society, and that's what attracted me," Mr Trinder said. "They're ethical, and they'll look after the staff."



Names and dates of bellringers dating back into the 19th century were revealed when paint was recently stripped from the doors of the clock cupboard in St John's church tower. Among the names carved in the wood are Hy Rice 1874, Job Parfitt Mar 10th 1871, R. Masters May 1860, W. Cane, J. Bryant, J. Bond. Find more in the colour photo on the website (glastonburyconservation.org.uk).

The walls of the bellringing chamber are lined with elm panelling made from the old Georgian box pews. Conducted tours up the tower are scheduled for Saturday August 8 and the holiday weekend in late August.

Tale of three houses

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restored in 2008. The former Priory House was built before 1825 for Sarah and Anna Greenhill Naish, who used the Abbot's Kitchen (owned by their brother, the attorney William Benjamin Naish). From 1903 the house was the St Louis convent and then part of Millfield's pre-prep school. Mr Taylor reconverted it to two large dwellings: Naish House at the front and Greenhill House behind, with its grand ballroom. [Newsletters 123, 125.]

This project won him the Mendip Built in Quality award this year for the best domestic conversion in Mendip. Will his three new houses across the street, rejected and now approved, eventually win another award?

Happenings at St Ben's Church *Roger Parsons*

Many will know that St Benedict's is entering momentous times. The church is to have a much-needed facelift within the next few years, thanks to monies received from the sale of the church hall. With the installation of modern kitchen facilities, better access for the disabled and a general rationalization of the body of the church, it is hoped that this beautiful building will become a more obviously welcoming venue for those who wish to take advantage of its unique atmosphere as a place of prayer.

St Ben's was founded as the Church of St Benignus in the late 11th century, then greatly enlarged and embellished in the time of the penultimate Abbot, Richard Bere. Richard Bere's stamp is to be seen everywhere, from his Bishop's mitre and monogram over the north porch, to the original roof corbels in the nave.

The church possesses some fine stained glass, much of it installed in Victorian times when a south aisle was added. One in particular is dedicated to Reginald Porch, who died in India possibly never having seen his yet-to-be famous son, Monty, who married Winston Churchill's mother Jennie.



St Benedict sculpture by Richard Field

Perhaps an even more famous son of St Ben's was the novelist Henry Fielding, who was born at Sharpham Park in 1707. The baptism of Henry's younger sisters at St Benedict's is recorded, but the register for Henry's early years is sadly missing. Sharpham was built by that busy Abbot

Bere—hence the Sharpham Chapel in St Benedict's, which has housed the organ since the early 19th century.

Recent happenings include the discovery of rare sheet music: poems by Alice Buckton set to music by Frederic Brooks for the Glastonbury Pageant of 1921. The same cupboard held some of Brooks' own liturgical compositions from a decade or so earlier. The

originals are now housed safely in the County Record Office, but copies are available to those who would like them.

The church is serious in its wish to be more accessible, opening its doors more and more, to schoolchildren from across the road and to the visitor from far and near. It will not take them long to find the newest addition—a fine bust sculpted by a local artist, Richard Field, and dedicated to St Benedict.

New chapter for the Abbey's new century *JN*

Not only does Glastonbury Abbey have a new trust deed, but it has many new faces among the trustees. Several chose to retire this year, and several have to retire because they have reached age 75.

Moreover, Matthew Clements is retiring as custodian in October. The position is being advertised.

There are now 14 trustees. All are appointed by the bishop, and include ex-officio the vicar of Glastonbury, the archdeacon, the chairman of the diocesan board of finance and the diocesan education director.

The original Glastonbury Abbey Estate trust deed from 1908 was "worded

in a nebulous way that didn't make precisely clear what we could or could not do as a charitable trust," said Susan Strong, the Abbey's education officer.

The new Glastonbury Abbey Trust has stronger links with the diocese, though wording has been moderated: the old deed specified that trustees must be in communion with the Church of England; the new wording is more like "in sympathy" with the church. "We try to retain an opening and welcoming approach to everybody," Susan said, "but there are restrictions to do with alternative forms of worship, because the precincts remain consecrated ground."

Building begins at Morlands at last



White steel went up in early July for the first new buildings on the site of the old tanneries: nine speculative high-tech units, for light industry on the ground floor and offices above. Priority Sites is the developer. Simultaneously Mendip Housing is refurbishing the cottages in Beckery Old Road.