

Chairman's notes

Alan Fear

My thanks to all who filled in the yellow forms that came with the last newsletter, amid the December floods. This has helped us to get our record of membership up to date. For a few who did not respond (you know who you are!) a repeat of the yellow form is going out with this issue.

Holy Thorn – I was invited to the Town Hall for a gathering to plant a Holy Thorn and a Peace Pole toward the end of January. I was under the impression that I was to be a spectator, but suddenly someone announced that I was to plant the tree! Many thanks to Bill Knight for finding me a spade at short notice. The last time I looked, the tree—at the edge of the carpark near the bus stop—was doing well. It's an offspring of the one on Wearyall Hill, thanks to work by experts at Kew Gardens.

Tree-planting – Our winter tree-planting season finished on a high. Many thanks to Paul Chant and Frank Naish, who invited us to help them plant an orchard of 190 cider trees—rare varieties with strange names—at West Pennard, behind the Hillyer garage. This took two very cold Saturday mornings and was helped by some very nice cider with bread and seriously strong cheese.

At the ancient Abbot's Mill at Northover we planted a prickly-rose hedge and, across the main road from it, a crabapple.

A very big thank-you to those who gave up time to help complete these plantings. The Conservation Society's grand total of plantings, from the foundation in 1971 to the end of this season, is 48,000.

Abbot Bere's footsteps – Guided walks in July will commemorate Abbot Bere's perambulation around the Twelve Hides of Glastonbury in 1503–10. Natural England is heading this scheme, and we as a society are arranging a walk in Glastonbury to help: meet at Bretenoux Road on **Saturday July 27** at 9:45am.

Garden evening – Conservation Society members are again invited to an evening in the wonderful garden of Coombe House, Bovetown, thanks to Alan Gloak and Colin Wells-Brown (despite his illness). This year's date is **August 2**, a Friday, from 6 to 8:30pm.



New signs are 'overkill'

Huge new road signs went up in the Conservation Area in May. About four years ago the town council asked the county to replace damaged signs, but the long-awaited result is, in the words of Clifford Gould, a Conservation Society member in Chilkwell Street, "overkill".



Fisher's Hill, wrong side: Two signs, too much information? What driver has time to take in all this? In a 2011 policy paper called "Signing the way", the transport ministry intended to reduce clutter.

Mendip District Council used Richmond Villas (right) to illustrate the cover of its leaflet about Article 4 of the Planning Act coming into effect in Glastonbury last summer [Newsletter 137]. Somerset Highways has now added a motorway-sized sign on 15-foot poles. This sign faces vehicles travelling along a road that is not a designated route for through traffic.

Saturday tour behind the scenes at bakery

Visit the working bakery behind the High Street frontage of Burns the Bread. An opportunity is open to Conservation Society members this **Saturday June 1**, at 3pm.

Some of the bakery buildings date back to the 18th century and some touch the Abbey wall. The outbuildings were erected piecemeal in various eras, making for a fascinating roofscape.

Numbers are limited

to 16 for this tour, so please leave a message with Stuart Marsh (83 4727) if you would like to come along. Alternatively, email bakery@glastonburyconservation.org.uk.

In either case, please state your name and phone number. If the day is oversubscribed you will be contacted, and a second date may be arranged.

Trees talk – The talk about new tree diseases and how we can expect our future environment to be affected has been postponed till autumn.



Bob Burns won the 2012 Baker of the Year award.

1949 town from the air

An aerial view of Glastonbury taken in 1949—no carparks or duck ponds yet—is for sale as an A1-size poster at £15 from Paul Manning at Blue Cedar Print Works, 3 Silver Street. £5 of this will be donated to the Conservation Society. The photograph is available as a smaller print and as a greeting card too.

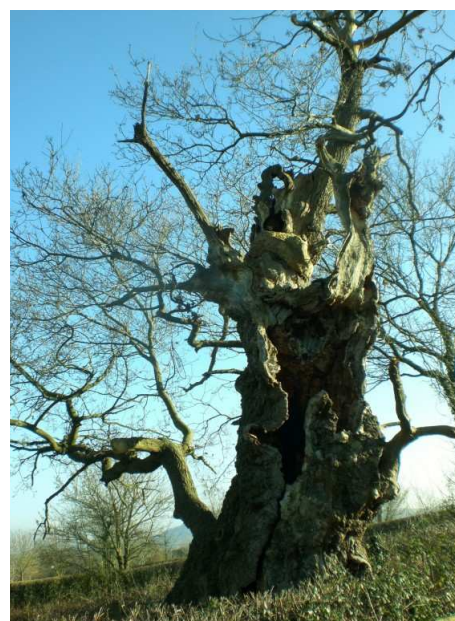


Modern oaks will be ancient for future generations *Nathan Pritchard*

The oak is one of Britain's most loved and revered trees, beautiful to behold and supporting a great variety of wildlife. Sacred oaks have always had a place in Glastonbury's long history.

Most of us have visited the ancient oaks at the foot of Stonedown hill, known as Gog and Magog. One of them, sad to say, is dead, but its companion still sends forth new growth each year.

There has been much speculation over the years about how old they might be. What we do know is that they are the only survivors of an ancient grove and avenue that once stood in this area. The



Nobody is sure which is Gog and which is Magog, but this is the tree on the right if the Tor is behind you, and it still produces green leaves every spring. Thirty years ago the other oak looked much the healthier of the pair, but now it is dead. (Photo by Nathan Pritchard)

rest were cut down in 1906 to make way for farmland—there was no protection for ancient oaks back then.

But there is hope. Since its inception, Glastonbury Conservation Society has planted nearly 50,000 trees, including many oaks, in Glastonbury and the surrounding area. Oak rows, avenues and single plantings are enhancing our environment. Have you noticed them?

They are maturing well and will be much loved by the generations to come, who, we hope, will plant their own.

Footpaths – Kevin Mitchell, Nathan Pritchard, John Brunson and the society's newly acquired strimmer have been out since early spring, keeping footpaths clear of overgrowth. Despite months of tiresome weather, the country paths around Glastonbury were well used, judging by footprints in the mud.

Farewell to two of our members



John Little

In memory of John Little, the society has planted a tree in the view he so enjoyed while visiting his daughter, who lives in

Bushy Coombe Gardens. John died on February 2 at the age of 98.

He was editor of the *Central Somerset Gazette* and its siblings from 1967 to 1979 and after retiring continued to work freelance. He wrote his own obituary and organized his own funeral.

John lived at Bilbury Lane and then for seven years at Old Market Court in Glastonbury and his final three months at Arthur's Court in Street. He loved his allotment; he was a founder member of Wells and District Gardening Club.

His ashes are interred at Haycombe in Bath alongside those of his wife Enid. He leaves his daughter Yvonne Penna, two grandchildren in their 40s and three great-grandchildren.



Frank Carling

Frank Neville Carling was born in Yorkshire in 1926 and as a young lad came to Somerset to receive TB treatment in Bath hospital. He lived

with his aunt and uncle, the Gilroys, in Compton Dundon.

He worked at Clarks as chief buyer and became a Glastonbury borough councillor to fight the county's proposal back in 1970 to build an inner relief road through the heart of the town. The counterproposal for a new road along the old railway line eventually won through.

Frank married Vivien Jean Almond and leaves four children, including Debbie Fear (wife of our chairman, Alan Fear), and ten grandchildren. For his last few years, Frank lived at the Glastonbury Care Home off Sedgemoor Way and became a Conservation Society member to get his own copy of the newsletter.

He died on March 27.

Dates: historic bakehouse, Abbot's walk

- * **June 1, Saturday**—*Tour of Burns the Bread's* historic outbuildings. Numbers limited, ring Stuart Marsh (83 4727) to book. Meet 3pm at bakery. C
- * **June 12, Wednesday**—*Rocks and landscapes in the Wells area*; local stone used for building. Elizabeth Dover, tutor in earth sciences at Bath University. . . . W
- * **June 21, Friday**—*Field trip to Dunster Priory Church and Orchard Wyndham*. (Note change of date.) Details will be sent to Antiquarian Society members. . . . A
- * **July 18, Thursday**—*Battle of the Atlantic, the battle Britain could not afford to lose*: a lecture to mark the 70th anniversary, at the Fleet Air Arm Museum, Yeovilton. Advance tickets required.
- * **July 27, Saturday**—*Abbot Bere's perambulation*: guided walk marking his tour of the Twelve Hides 500 years ago. Meet at Bretenoux Road, 9:30am. C
- * **August 2, Friday**—*Coombe House gardens* open to Conservation Society members by kind invitation of Alan Gloak and Colin Wells-Brown, 6–8:30pm. C

Where and when

C = Glastonbury Conservation Society.

A = Glastonbury Antiquarian Society.

W = Wells Civic Society meetings are on **Wednesdays at 7:30pm** in the large conference room of Wells Museum, Cathedral Green.

Our own website, glastonburyconservation.org.uk, has links to the other societies.

Abbey Barn and Old Farm win awards for preservation *John Brunsdon*

I attended the ceremony for the Somerset Building Preservation Trust and William Stansell Building awards at Taunton Race Course on April 13. The event had been postponed from 2012 due to snow.

Several notable local awards are worthy of mention in the newsletter:

- The Via Crucis Steps at St John-the-Baptist Church, Frome—repair and restoration by Somerset County Council.
- Abbey Barn, Glastonbury—new doors for the south porch by the county council.

- Bishop’s Palace, Wells—new visitors facilities by Caroe & Partners, Wells.
- Old Farm, West Pennard—repair and restoration by Richard Evans (owner).
- Museum of Somerset and courtyard, Taunton—repair and refurbishment by the county council and Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios, Bath.
- Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Kingston St Mary—reuse of an outbuilding to provide toilets, by Annie Evans, architect, Bridgwater.
- Tithe Barn, Lyng Court Farm, West Lyng—repair and re-roofing by Amanda Watmore and Jonathan Rhind, architects, Taunton.
- Lang’s Ford, Horton near Ilminster—

reconstruction by the county council.

- Hans Price Building, Weston-super-



Old Farm, West Pennard.



Abbey Barn's new oak doors open to courtyard.

The Rural Life Museum hopes for lottery funds for a makeover: replace the 1970s shop area and convert a cowshed to a new gallery.

Mare—refurbishment by Weston College.

- Tyntesfield House and Chapel, Wraxall—repair and refurbishment by National Trust.
- Tithe Barn, Nailsea—restoration by Architecton, Bristol.

Commendations:

- The Glove Factory, Old Station Way, Yeovil—repair and conservation by Zero C, Poundbury, Dorset.
- All Saints Church, Oakhill—extension by Mr D. A. G. Stanton, Oakhill.

David Clark, principal conservation officer for Mendip District Council, said: “We’re delighted that so many local projects have been recognized by these awards. It’s important that old buildings are preserved for future generations and it’s thanks to these people that this will happen.”

The panel of judges was headed by Patrick Brown, a retired conservation architect who was an Inspector of Historic Buildings for English Heritage and a lecturer at the University of Bristol.

John Brunsdon is a founder board member of the trust, which occasionally meets in Glastonbury.

Tour sees ancient mill ready to roll, and progress at listed tannery *JN*

About 75 people turned out on April 28 to see the refurbished Northover Mill and progress inside the listed Baily tannery buildings.

Planning students from the University of the West of England were on hand to show ideas for affordable housing along the Millstream bank. With match-funding from the Heritage Lottery, this would be a way of financing repair of the old stone tannery and glove factory. “They were encouraged by the people who came and the many questions that were asked,” John Brunsdon reported.

Centuries ago there was a millpond on the proposed housing site, the Beckery Island Regeneration Trust discovered—it powered the Abbey’s corn mill. This pond was behind where the Baily canteen stood: between the chapel-like house (now gone) and the main Baily building.

Drawings and plans were on display to show the workshops and studio spaces the trust proposes for the 19th-century Baily buildings—a “business nursery” to

stimulate local employment. The estimated cost of full renovation is just under £5 million. So far the trust has waterproofed the roof, shored up the

foundations and secured the buildings, as well as remodelling the millstream.

A prospective tenant is already interested in Baily’s East—the building nearest the tall chimney—when it is renovated.

Northover Mill was once the Abbey’s fulling mill (cleansing and thickening woollen cloth; in some regions a fuller was known as a tucker). The renovated building is ready to become offices and is now waiting for a tenant. Its plumbing and heating and lighting were complete on the tour day and it was ready for painting.

“Everybody was impressed at the size of the mill cottage and the lightness and airiness of it,” said Ian Tucker, chairman of the trust. “I think we changed perceptions of it.”



Left: Fine woodwork in the office part of the Baily tannery. Right: New leaded-light windows at Northover Mill. The effectiveness of its new heat-exchange system impressed visitors: energy is extracted from the water passing beneath the building. The system is cheap to run, though expensive to install. (Photos by David Thomas)

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To email, use chairman@, trees@, etc—for example, newsletter@glastonburyconservation.org.uk

Bees: pesticide not the only threat *David Charles*

Modern difficulties for not only bees, but butterflies, hedgehogs and many forms of wildlife are well known. It is good that the pollinating activities of bees are more greatly appreciated these days than formerly, when the question generally asked of beekeepers like me was "Have you had a good honey harvest?"

What joy to travel around the area at this time of year and enjoy the beauty of apple orchards, some credit for which must go to this Conservation Society. Whether it be the large stands such as we see at West Bradley and many other places, or just the few one can admire on the hillside ahead when driving up Bere Lane, apple trees are part of what we associate with this area. They need cross-pollinating by honeybees and other species in order to bear fruit.

Currently in the news is controversy about neonicotinoids for controlling insect pests and of disagreement between

the British agriculture ministry (Defra) and the EU, the latter having ordered a two-year restriction on these pesticides starting later in 2013. Will this decision mean that funding for further research will cease and that farmers, to protect their crops, particularly oilseed rape, will turn to other, possibly more harmful chemicals? The current focus on neonicotinoids as being the main cause of bee losses is unhelpful and untrue.

Other factors exist, such as the appalling weather for the past year. Habitat destruction and lack of continuity of forage, in combination, have a greater impact on bees and other pollinators than do pesticides.

For honeybees, the main problem is the varroa mite, first found in Britain in 1992. They suck the blood of both larval and adult bees and also act as vectors in the spread of virus diseases formerly tolerated by the colony but from which it



"Beehives over Avalon at Blossom Time" (1975) by John Lowe, who taught art at Millfield.

can now succumb. Enthusiastic beekeepers wish to continue keeping bees despite the challenges they face.

The varroa mite has transformed bee husbandry, and beekeepers have risen to the challenge. This year beekeepers will concentrate on making good their winter losses, helping their fellow beekeepers and hoping for good weather later in the summer when the flowers of clover, brambles and lime trees will abound.

A butterfly-filled summer thanks to West Pennard nettles *Tim Phillips*

We immediately saw the potential in the garden for butterflies when we moved into our new house in November 2011. Nearby were several buddleias, other nectar sources and caterpillar food-plants, including a number of large nettle stands in the grazing field behind.

In May, realizing that silaging was about to begin, we went into the field and collected around 130 caterpillars in various stages of growth (instars). Within an hour the field was strimmed and no nettles were left standing except for a few poorer ones at the margins.

From years ago, I had kept a couple of breeding cages, and these were soon filled with nettles and hungry insects. Within a week some had pupated and a fortnight or so later began to emerge. This first brood proved to have been heavily parasitized, mainly by *Ichneumon* wasps and *Sturmia bella*, a fairly recently identified parasite with a particularly unpleasant life cycle. Nonetheless, about 70 adults flew off.

Keen to do better in the second brood, in early July we collected six first-instar clusters within a day or two of hatching from the eggs laid on the underside of nettle leaves at the top of the plant. These tiny clusters can be identified by what looks like a small closely spun spiderweb, but the silk is actually secreted by the tiny caterpillars at this point not much longer than a millimetre or so. Two new very large breeding cages were ordered online and

arrived in the nick of time, because the speed at which the caterpillars grew was astonishing, despite the perpetually miserable summer of 2012.

Our feeding efforts drew attention from the neighbours, who watched us collecting bucketloads of nettles from the



Small tortoiseshell on buddleia. (Photo by Stephen Wealton)

field behind with some amusement. In the initial few days before they pupated, we were bringing home six or seven bucketfuls a day with upward of 40 nettles in each. One kind neighbour rang the doorbell twice with some gathered from her own garden.

On July 20 the first pupae were formed, in itself a fascinating process, and within a week nearly 700 hung from the tops of the cages. Two weeks later the miracle of metamorphosis began to reveal itself, and by the end of the following week more than 650 adult small tortoiseshells [*Aglais urtica*] had been released. Far fewer had been parasitized, perhaps because they were collected at an earlier stage. Between

mid-August and mid-November many were seen around the area, and the nettle-supplying neighbour invited us to her garden to show us dozens of "our" butterflies on her dahlias.

Let's hope that enough adults will have survived the winter to make 2013 year a memorable year for these magnificent creatures and that the weather does its bit too.

Butterfly Conservation, a national charity, has an excellent website at butterfly-conservation.org with lots of information.

Don't forget to visit Collard Hill in late June as well, to see the Large Blue, a national rarity just on our doorstep. Follow the excellent signs from the youth-hostel carpark at BA16 0TZ.

• *John Brunsdon adds:*

Well done, Tim. Peacock butterflies as well as the small tortoiseshell live in clusters on nettles as caterpillars. If short sleeves of butter muslin are made, the young can be reared inside on growing nettles with the sleeve gently tied top and bottom in safe sites. The sleeve with caterpillars has to be moved to fresh sites as they eat the nettles.

Near chrysalis time, the caterpillars can be moved to upside-down cardboard boxes with a muslin side or top. The chrysalides can be suspended from a sun-lounge ceiling to watch butterflies emerge—fascinating for all ages. I had great fun doing this when living at Hill Head in Glastonbury while my children were small and the field slopes still orchards.

Warning: freshly emerged butterflies drop a staining liquid shortly after emerging and expanding their wings!