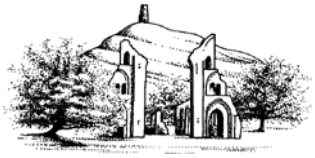


GLASTONBURY CONSERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2015

Chair's Report

Alan Fear

Hello and welcome to another lovely Springtime. It's so good to see the trees and hedgerows bursting into life.

At the last A.G.M. Paul Branson decided to step down as our planning advisor (thanks for all your hard work Paul). After asking members if anyone was interested in taking over from Paul, Jim Gossling stepped forward. So, welcome to our committee Jim!

Our tree planting this season has basically been nonexistent. Then, just as I was getting ready to hang up my spade, I got a phone call from Paul Chant. Paul took over Frank Naish's farm at West Pennard. In 2013 we helped them to plant an apple orchard of 190 rare cider apple trees. Paul has told me that they lost about 10 from within the orchards and has asked us to help him plant 20 more trees in various orchards around the farm.

The other work we have carried out this winter was to prune the oak trees along the bottom of Wearyall hill (Street road).

The scouts asked if we could help them get their community badge. With this in mind, John Brunsdon suggested they prune the trees along Bretenoux Road. So one Saturday morning we all met up and together completed a great job. I was really pleased with the way that these young people got on with the job and how much energy they possess. Some must be running on dynamos! My thanks to the scouts of Glastonbury.

It now seems as though the planet is getting greener after years of mankind ripping up forests and felling trees to make way for palm oil plantations and larger cattle ranches. Vast areas of Russia, China, Australia and South Africa are being taken over by plants. This is due to the collapse of Soviet and Chinese farms and the higher rainfalls around the world.

The results of a survey show that the world's plants are storing 4 billion more tonnes of carbon than they were a decade ago. This is equivalent to 7 per cent of the 60 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted by industry and transport in the same period. So it seems that our planting of 48,500 tree/hedge-plants over the years *is* having some effect!

I thought it may be a nice idea to help keep you all fit to start to print some of Glastonbury walks for you to try. To start with, a small walk up Bushy Combe.

‣ Start at Silver Street (Silver = Silva = Wood – one of the town's oldest streets). Turn right up Chilkwell Street (Chilkwell = Chalkwell – to do with Chalice Well). Turn up left to Dod Lane (Dead lane, or to do with Quagmire). Straight on to stile or kissing gate and up over Bushy Combe. Fine view back over town and over combe to back of Bove Town – old road to Wells. The Tor is now visible ahead. Through the kissing gate, straight along a short bit of Bulwark Lane, straight again up lane at top, go through gate. Views right to Tor and Polden Hills and Hood monument. Diagonally right to next gate and left up Well House Lane. Join Stone Down Lane junction, and passing Tor entrance (or continue to 2), continue to junction with Stone Down Lane and turn right down Basketfield Lane. On right notice medieval field system and Pack Springs for watering pack horses. Left into Gypsy Lane, pass an old apple orchard on left and a small field, then through a gate on left to the Lynches (a terrace cultivation system). Ascend first terrace and turn right, continuing on terrace to stile and footbridge. Look back to Tor. Continue on terrace around contour line of the hill. Look right to the Polden Hills, Cary Hills, West Pennard church and finally Norwood Park Farm, one time Abbott's Palace and Deer Park. Turn left at stile in right end corner of field up Stone Down Lane (Abbey stone was quarried here). At top of Stone Down lane either:

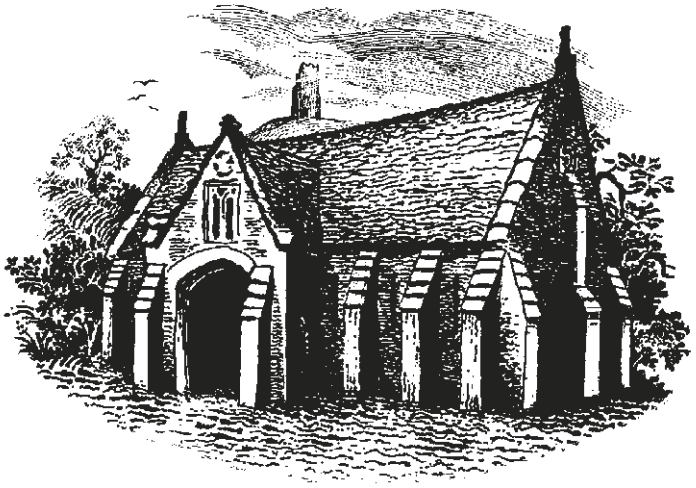
Pass Tor and turn right into Maiden Croft lane, past the hillside farm on left and Paradise Lane on right, and where Maiden Croft Lane bends to the right, look for stile in hedge on left. Follow line of hedge, look right to Mendip Hills, through gate, descend to Wick Hollow, turn left at Wick Hollow and almost immediately right into Bulwark Lane and so to Bushy Combe.

‣ ***Or,*** A more energetic walk. At top of Stone Down Lane, enter official National Trust entrance on left to Tor, climb the Tor. The Tor is 520 feet high; the tower is all that remains of St. Michael's Church. Two carved figures represent St. Michael weighing souls and St. Bridget milking a cow. The view is very fine. Southwest is Wearyall Peninsula. Polden, Quantock and Exmoor form the western background. Northward is the long Mendip range, broken at Cheddar. At its western end, Brent Knoll N.T. stands out. In the foreground is Chalice Hill. Northeast is Wells (pick out the cathedral). East is West Pennard church under a wooded hill. Southeast, in line with the reservoir, is Baltonsborough Church. Forty five degrees to the right is Butleigh Court Mansion behind which is Kingweston Church spire. At the other side, by gentler slope, is the monument to Sir Samuel Hood. Descend the Tor the other side by gentler slope. Halfway down turn right at the gate and cross field to gate at Wellhouse Lane. Turn right lane and left into Lypyatt Lane, which joins Bulwark Lane, and so left down Bushy Combe at first bend.

Abbey Barn

J. Brunsdon

I attended a board meeting of the Somerset building preservation trust held at the Heritage Centre, Taunton. Afterwards we had a progress report on the Abbey barn, now 3 months into the new £2.3 million development project. Little work has been carried out for more than 40 years, and the museum, judged outdated, is being modernised/ renovated. The new reception area will be via the original Victorian farmhouse entrance. The work is being carefully undertaken, keeping as many of the original features (like the mullion windows and timbers) as possible. There will be a large open gallery space installed upstairs and a new cafe with facilities in the old cowshed downstairs. A much needed lift is also to be installed. Little will change outside, but the 'wagon shed' will become an educational indoor learning space with glass frontage.



The work is progressing well with good reports of the contractors who have an experienced understanding of working with old buildings. Unexpected difficulties have been overcome and these have needed additional planning permission. Existing walls of outbuildings in the rear yard need strengthening to make them load bearing and dips in the ground need levelling. The project is expected to be completed in December 2015 for the museum to reopen its doors in 2016.

We were shown an old photograph of the Mapstone's dairy shorthorn cows plodding back from the Actis fields to be milked, and this brought back nostalgic memories of the 1950s, when I first came to Glastonbury. Meanwhile, the Friends of the Abbey barn organisation continues to function with meetings and newsletters.

Baltonsborough and Australia's Early Prosperity

Owen Mace

9th October 2014

Owen Mace, a descendant of Baltonsborough Austin emigrants to Australia, provided an outline of their story, in Abbey House, of which they were the last private owners.

"Australia's prosperity rode on the sheep's back" – a statement which certainly applied to the Australian Austins.

James Cook began Britain's occupation of Australia in 1770, and after the loss of the American colonies in 1776, it was seen as a substitute destination for deported convicts. James Austin was baptised at Baltonsborough on 13 August 1776, the second son of John Austin, a farmer, and his wife Sara (nee Higgins). His prospects as a second son in this locality were poor, making the promise of Australia attractive to him, but his father could not afford the fare. To obtain free passage, James and his friend, John Earle, stage the theft of some hives in 1802, for which they were sentenced by their uncle, Peter Higgins, a magistrate, to transportation, and thus arrived at Hobart, Tasmania, after first landing at Port Phillip which had proved unsuitable. James worked off his sentence by 1809, and he and John Earle established a ferry across the river at Hobart, known as Austin's ferry. From this modest beginning, James set up a hostelry and 300 acre farm called Roseneath. James died in 1831, and John Earle in 1840.

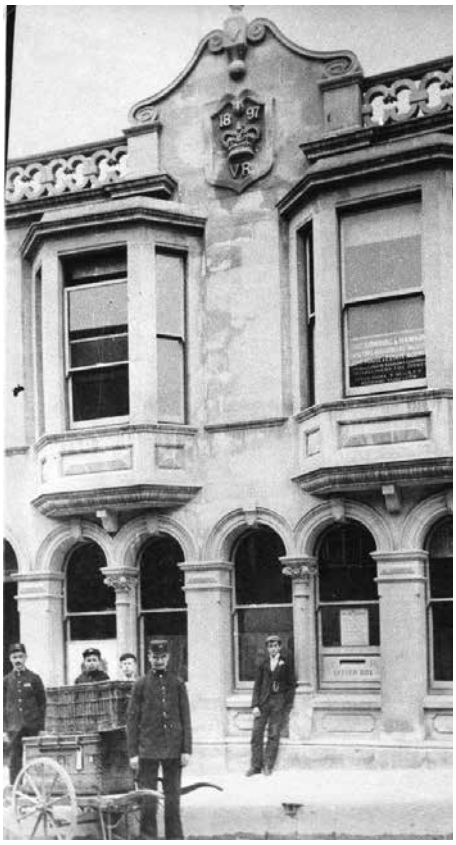
Four of James' Austin nephews, Solomon, Josiah, James and Thomas, came out to Australia, and established Tor Hill Farm or 10,000 acres in sheep country. James and Thomas took sheep over to Victoria and expanded to 300,000 acres of some of the best land in the state. James' house, Avalon, incorporated a Glastonbury rose salvaged from the abbey. Later, James returned to England with members of his family and bought Abbey House, which was eventually sold by his son Stanley in 1907, by which time the Austins had married into locally prominent families.

Thomas Austin had had a consignment of rabbits sent to Australia in 1859, but they escaped containment and rapidly became a devastating pest as they spread across the country. His niece, James' daughter, married William Hose Bullivant who became very successful with the sheep enterprise, using a breeding strategy to double the wool take, while with other family members was a major prize winner in various aspects of the industry, which remained the foundation of the Australian economy until the 1950s.

The Postal History of Glastonbury and District

Allen Cotton

31st January 2014



A national postal service emerged from the late 1680s, which by the late 1700s had become something we could recognize today, with Glastonbury Post Office at the White Hart Inn. Postage due was collected from the recipient to ensure delivery, and postmarks appeared in 1785; Glastonbury was, initially, G134 (the distance from London), later amended to G135. Red postmarks indicated the rate was prepaid, and one sheet of paper constituted a letter. The penny post started at Glastonbury and the villages around in 1826, with a uniform national post of 4d, in 1839, and 1d in 1840. Envelopes were introduced, some in printed design, such as the 'Mulready' envelope.

In 1844 the Glastonbury Post Office was given the number 311, and from 1870 postcards were introduced, issued by the Post Office, at a ½ d. rate; the stampable version appeared in the 1890s. In 1870, the Post Office took over telegrams, and postal orders were introduced in 1881, with Premium Bonds appearing in 1911. Parcels were taken from 1883, and stamp books issued from 1901. A new Post Office was built in the High Street in 1897/8 – and is now Barclays Bank. Postal rates remained the same until after WW1 when a letter became 2d. (reduced to 1 ½ d. in 1922) and a postcard 1d. In 1938, London House was removed to make way for the new Post Office, which is now a franchise office, and a sub office was opened at Windmill Hill in 1961, closing in 2008.

Allen was able to show many of the franking marks and variations produced over the decades to illustrate these developments from his extensive collection.

World War I in 3D

Jim woodcock

21st November 2014 (G.C.S)

Stereo photography was in widespread use from the invention of photography in the 1840s, throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and into the first part of the twentieth; and was viewed using a wide range of equipment from simple hand held viewers to the cabinet carousel stereoscopes available to wealthy households. The standard format in use during this period was a dual image pasted on stiff card 7" x 3 ½".

Jim Woodcock has converted a selection of original stereo images to the polarizing system, and added modern stereo views of some of the locations, mainly from the series of WW1 views produced by the company realistic Travels, many of which were taken by the proprietor, Hilton Girdwood. The set is thoroughly Anglo-centric, and primarily concerned with the British sector of the Western Front, but also includes images from other theatres of operation, such as Gallipoli and East Africa, as well as naval and aerial aspects of the conflict.

Thus, after an introduction detailing the national alignments that unfolded as war was declared across Europe, images showed the initial operations at Mons and the Marnes, followed the development of the trench system from the English Channel to Switzerland by late 1914. 1915 brought the futile Gallipoli campaign, as well as Zeppelin raids and the use of gas, while in 1916 came Verdun and the Somme, conscription and the appearance of the tank. 1917 saw revolution in Russia, and the entry of the U.S.A. to the conflict, with notable actions at Arras and Messines. In 1918, the German spring offensive was stalled and then reversed as American troops poured into France, eventually resulting in the armistice in November 1918.

Jim concluded with a selection of views reflecting wider aspects of the war, as well as his personal reflections encapsulated in poetry of the period.

The Life and Times of the Reverend Charles Marson (1859-1914)

David Sutcliffe

10th October 2014

Charles Latimer Marson was born in 1859. His father, later Vicar of Clevedon, was a strict evangelical clergyman; his mother an unswerving puritan. Charles went to Clifton College, then University College, Oxford, by which time he had lost his faith. However, as a volunteer, then a curate, at St. Jude's, Whitechapel under Rev. Samuel Barnett, he saw extreme slum poverty and developed ideas of Christian socialism combined with an Anglo-Catholic style of ministry. In 1885 he joined the Fabian Society and became the editor of a Christian socialist newspaper, as well as a member of many socialist groups. He met Chloe Bayne, and they married the year after he was posted to Adelaide in South Australia, where he set up a branch of the Fabian Society.

While in Australia, Charles met Cecil Sharp, and continued their friendship after he had returned to England as a result of his chronic asthma, where, after a spell in London, he returned to his native Somerset as incumbent of Hambridge, in 1895. He was shocked by the rural poverty he found, but recognized the heritage folk songs and ballads amongst the rural population. He invited Sharp to Hambridge in 1903, and over the next three years they collected and published over 1,000 folk song variants, before a split in 1906 ended their collaboration. Charles continued his research, and their systematic record remains an outstanding resource.

In 1909, Charles Marson published Glastonbury – The English Jerusalem, which ran to three editions and is a significant work, perhaps as a product of his Anglo-Catholic interests. He died in 1914 of a heart attack, leaving his widow Chloe, daughter Mary, and son John, shortly to be killed at Gallipoli. A cache of 400 letters and papers written by or to him was found in 2010, and provide much of the source material for David Sutcliffe's biography of Marson – The Keys of Heaven – published in 2010.

John Dee, St. Dunstan and the Glastonbury Elixir

Paul Ashdown

15th November 2013

John Dee, 1527-1609, was educated at St. John's College, Cambridge, and at Leyden and Paris, and entered the service of John Dudley, possibly as tutor to the Earl of Leicester. In 1555, during the reign of Mary, he was arrested for 'magic against the Queen' but released, and ordained as a Catholic priest. In Elizabeth's reign he was rehabilitated and possibly acted as a double agent; and set up a research unit at Mortlake which had the largest library on technical subjects in England. He was the foremost mathematician in the country, and also had a scientific interest in parapsychology, as a means of contacting the angels using a crystal ball. He was assisted by Edward Kelly, and the pair journeyed to Kracow, then Prague and the court of Rudolf II – Dee returned in 1589 and was appointed warden of Manchester College by the Queen.

After the dissolution, St. Dunstan, while being a hate figure to protestants, kept his popularity with alchemists and goldsmiths, and greatly influenced Dee, as seen in the latter's work General and Rare Memorials Pertaining to the Art of Navigation which promotes the strengthening of the fleet to establish an empire. The book also has references to Glastonbury, and its patron was Edward Dyer, who had estates locally, and was dedicated to Glastonbury landowner Christopher Hatton.

Elias Ashmole's work on alchemy, the Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum of 1652, states that Dee had found an 'elixir' in the ruins of the Abbey, and although the details are inaccurate they may possibly relate to the finding of the 'elixir' in Dunstan's tomb – which was said to be at Glastonbury. Edward Kelly claimed to have found at Blockley in Wales a Life of Dunstan, the philosopher's stone and a scroll giving the location of buried treasures, several of which were possibly at or near Glastonbury. However, the identity of the Book of Dunstan, in spite of much research, is a mystery and likely to remain so.

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