



GLASTONBURY CONSERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 151 – Spring 2019

Chairman's Report

Hello and welcome to our new members, thank you very much for partaking in our sponsor scheme for hedging and fruit trees at Herbie's field, the planting is now complete with a lot of help from the community service people who came up from Bridgwater on two Sundays to help us plant the hedge.

January is the month for collecting our subscriptions and thank you for those who pay by direct debit. We have noticed that a few of our members have not updated the amount you pay. Meaning that some are still paying £5.00 instead of £7.50. We ask if you could rectify this by informing your bank or fill in a new membership form, which can be found on our website.

Our A.G.M. was well supported by members back in November 2018. The chairs report for this follows.

The year started with us receiving our bequest from the late Maureen Luckes. To date we have donated to St. John's church to help them with their proposed revamp of the interior. Also we have had a well head rebuilt, this well head is the deepest and highest well in Glastonbury and is situated on the junction of Sandpits and Old Wells road. Glastonbury in Bloom have had a trough installed in the front of the well and planted it out to make a nice feature of the well. We have also donated £10,000 to help with bringing the Baylies building back to life.

The committee have been thinking of ways for the Society to attract new members, with this in mind

Ian Tucker came up with the idea of us planting a hedge around a field that the Town Council have just bought to hold Tor Fair in. This hedge is going to be sold to the community. Meaning that we are going to sell it in sections of 2 metres for £20.00. When a section is sold the person will then receive 1 Year free membership of the Society. Also if they wish they can come along on 26th January and plant their section of hedging. There is also an option to buy a fruit tree as a memorial which will be planted around the field. Now this is over the Society have planted 51,600 trees and hedge plants, the 50,000 plant was planted in Herbie's field, with a picture of me planting it going in the latest Mendip Times.

St John's Church

Congratulations to St John's Church. They have been given a grant of £465,500 from the National Lottery for their Securing the Future project. This means that the church will be closed for most of 2019, while the nave floor is conserved and a up to date underfloor heating system is installed, also installing a modern glazed draught

resistant porches at the west and south entrances. The church will also install multi function lighting and audio visual facilities to support a wide variety of activities, including concerts, productions and history and heritage displays. Also improve the catering capabilities to permit hosting proper hot meals as well as casual refreshments.

St. John's is a living building, which has changed and evolved over the centuries along with the ever changing town of Glastonbury. Through this time, the changing needs of the congregation and the town, as well as normal wear and tear and weathering, most recently requiring the restoration of the clerestory windows, are part of the continuing life of the fabric of the church.

Dennis Allen

Dennis Allen, a long serving member of Glastonbury Conservation Society, died on 15th November 2018.

His mum had been married before and Dennis had an older half-brother. His dad worked for Whiteheads Engineering Company, which bought the family to Weymouth, where he became involved in building equipment for use in the second world war. Weymouth experienced some very heavy bombing raids during the war, so the family moved to the safety of a rural village—West Pennard. For Dennis and his family, the village at the time felt quite 'enclosed' it seldom saw new families arrive and they found it quite tricky to settle. Ena and her family also lived in the village only recently moved there themselves from Wales. One day her brother was showing off his amazing cycling skills, by riding backwards when quite by accident he managed to knock young Dennis down! Ena's family were mortified and came to visit and apologise.

Thus began a life long friendship between these two families. They went to school together, were in and out of each others houses and the grown ups socialised together. With the bombing worsening in London, Dennis saw the arrival of his maternal grandparents as they fled down to escape the Doodlebugs.

When Dennis left school he started work for Clarks, until he was called up for National Service. He was to elect to serve for an additional year and so spent 3 years in the R. A. F. Following his initial training, he served most of his time on Cyprus. When Dennis came out of the R.A.F he returned to Clarks. He and Ena had been friends since childhood and for them falling in love was a bit like falling in love. Slowly at first and then suddenly all at once. They married on the 14th September 1963. Sadly Dennis was made redundant by Clarks. However with courage this made Dennis and Ena try various new jobs. Starting with a convenience store in Newton Abbot and then a Gift

shop and launderette with bed and breakfast, which they ran together for some 16 years.

When Dennis was 29 he was driving along the road behind a car driven by an elderly lady, as they crossed Cold Harbour Bridge her car plunged into the river below. Without a seconds thought Dennis leapt into the water and was able to rescue her from what would almost certainly have been a watery end. Dennis received The Royal Humane Society Testimonial Award, for his brave actions.

In later life Dennis was to show great consideration for the well-being of others by taking young offenders out and about in the community also he became a voluntary driver for Social services.

Dennis was a member of the Society, he became treasurer and an active tree planter. He also became a local councillor and District councillor. Then in 1994 Dennis became Mayor of Glastonbury, with Ena supporting him as Lady Mayoress.



Glastonbury Conservation Society

presents:

'Glastonbury At War'

The memories of

RICHARD SQUIRE

during the Second World War

(2018)

Part One (pre-war)

Going back 70 years some names and people may not be familiar to "New comers to Glastonbury" but older Glastonians I am sure will remember a few names.

"Germans" referred to Nazi Germany in 1940 (this is to cause no offence to modern day Germany).

My memories are in 4 sections

- A. Outbreak of war**
- B. Imminent invasion of the British Isles**
- C. D-Day landings in Europe**
- D. Victory celebrations and after**

I Richard Squire was born in 1936.

First part of the war was hearsay from my parents. My father was in business at 9 Market Place and late one night my mother and father said they heard a lot of lorries entering Glastonbury Abbey, what was being delivered in the Abbey was never known but it must have been something very important.

Another thing mother and father said was when the Australians came over here they started to climb the monument in the Market Place. Glastonbury fortunately had a policeman Ginger Harris, he was a large policeman and would take no nonsense from anyone. Once he arrived at the Monument the Australian's dispersed.

My Mother at the outbreak of war worked for a builder name Lel Dunthorn (after the war he built Thorndun Estate on the Wells Road and it was said that he called it Thorndun because it was his name in reverse). I remember my Mother saying that he had a telephone call from the Ministry one day to build pill boxes and concrete tank traps and my Mother said he was on the phone all day ordering material. Pill Boxes were built on the north side of rivers assuming the Germans would come from the south. The concrete blocks were built on the south side of the river and where the roads ran through the concrete blocks there were angle irons situated near the road so that these angle irons could be dropped into the road to complete the defence. I can remember at the entrance to Street these triangular irons lay there rusting away during the whole war.

Invasion

We go back in time to the early 1940's with hindsight there was no television, no satellites, no iPads and no internet. There was imminent danger of invasion of the United Kingdom by the greatest war machine ever. YES invasion of the British Isles. Enemy troops in Somerset, Enemy troops in Glastonbury. Imagine Nazi Germans in Bove Town, in Norbins Road, in Northload Street and in Bere Lane (guarding Acquidoc the lost canal) if the Germans could find it? Occupying the Town Hall, the Drill Hall, The Vestry Rooms, Abbey House and the Abbey itself.

Once again imagine living in Tor View Avenue, Coursing Batch looking towards Butleigh and with the naked eye seeing the armies of the German Army towards Butleigh Monument, tanks, fighting men and eventually a puff and a bang as fierce shells landed on Glastonbury.

Glastonbury would be attacked, Glastonbury was considered a vital road communication network as roads are very essential to armies. Enemy action on Glastonbury could have meant heavy air attack, landing of parachute troops and attack by enemy land forces.

Glastonbury residents would not know what to expect. A Glastonbury Invasion Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Alderman Jack Alexander, Mayor of Glastonbury, Deputy Chairman Reg Mapstone of Northload Hall. On the committee Mr Heaphy had a haberdashery shop in the Market Place, H F Scott Stokes, Alderman and Director of Morlands, Mr A James who lived in Street Road, Edmund Carter Fire Officer, Dr Pinegar Medical Officer, A E Smeathe Borough Treasurer, Stan King Acting Surveyor (eventually became Borough Surveyor and did marvellous work for the town), Major Bath St Edmunds Lodge, Mr West Skin Seed shop in the High Street, Mr Ginn Clothes shop in the High Street, Jack Voake Butcher, Mr George Harland Solicitor in charge of the Home Guard.

This was a War Committee for an expected invasion of Glastonbury.

Glastonbury would be defended for it was a vital road link. Parts to be

Obviously men were called up during the war and the Glastonbury Borough Rate Collector was one of these, my Mother then worked for the Borough Council as acting Rate Collector. Also working with her on the council was Stan King, he was acting Borough Surveyor (one good thing that came out of the war was that Stan King was kept on as a Borough Surveyor and all Glastonians will remember how very good he was at this).

Mother's office was at 8 High Street with Ernest Smeathe and at Morlands factory their accountant who ran the finances of the factory was Scott Stokes. These two Mother said ran the town for the Glastonbury people. Smeathe was very good at figures whilst Scott Stokes had a very good business sense for the town.

defended. Road block top of the High Street, Lambrook Street, Silver Street and Queens Head lane. All houses in this block to be evacuated. Another vital item would have been the Tor with its magnificent views (remember Monte Cassino).

Available resources. Home Guard, two platoons, 75 men in each. 1 Railway platoon of 37 men. Police 4 regulars, 4 reserve men, 4 reserve women, Special Constables 42. REGULAR TROOPS None. Civil Defence, 104 Wardens, Rescue parties 1, Messenger Service 50 ATC and girl training corps. Officer that was in charge of the ATC R J O Myer of Mill field School. Firemen part time 29, Fire women part time 11, reserves were available from villages. Baltonsborough 16, Meare 7, West Pennard 3. Fireguard officer Bill Fear (Queens Head), Fireguard second in command Bill Foster of Avalon Coaches.

Information to the Towns people of Glastonbury of enemy action all under control of the Police. Information Officer E A Smeathe High Street, Volunteer typists Mabel Selby and Winifred Squire (my mother). Information to be posted on notice boards at the Police Station, Town Hall, Public Library (at George Street) Town Clerks office, St Johns Church, Borough Surveyors Office and Methodist Church.

Action upon invasion. Notice number 1 was to "stand to" Notice number 2 "action stations" (imagine how Glastonbury people would have felt if Notice number 2 had been posted up).

Upon action stations the Police would call out the Home Guard, the Police would close all roads to all but essential traffic, police would prevent unofficial evacuation by the town's people.

Road Blocks to be set up at: Dye House Lane and Godney Road, the bridge over the Brue at Cowbridge (defended by a tin shed in an orchard), Chilkwell Street at Chalice Well, 98 Bove Town (to be manned which ever way the enemy would approach).

Civilian Population

Advance of enemy ground attack was expected, civilians were to be protected by trenches, trenches to be dug by gangs of 15 men (one intelligent member had to be in charge of each gang), trenches to be dug with a fall to one end for water drainage and had to be dug 30 feet from any building due to falling rubble. The trenches were as follows:

1. Abbey Grounds in front of the Abbots Kitchen for Benedict Street and

Magdalene Street.

2. Abbey Grounds off of Silver Street for the High Street.

3. Abbey Park at Fishers Hill for Street Road and Bere Lane.

4. Butleigh Road Park for Hill Head.

5. Abbey House Lawn for Chilkwell Street

6. Orchard rear of Northload Hall for Northload Street

In total trenches for 1,400 people

Shelters

Some stayed a long time after the war. One in Archers Way and one in George Street. There were private shelters and the one I can remember was in Cyril Sparks garden in Benedict Street. It seemed to be always

flooded but a buddleia tree grew on top of it and during the war it had most beautiful butterflies.

Static Water

Abbey Pond: St Dunstons car park (this was an iron static water tank) St John's Churchyard, Lambrook Street underground tank in wall, Major Bath's swimming pool, bottom of St Edmunds Road, Gas works Northload Street,

Police Station Yard, Draper & Co, Bere Lane, Bove Town, George Street, The Millstream, Pond at Edgarley Hall, Pond at Avalon Brickworks.

Wells

14 High Street: 34 High Street: Vincents Garage High Street: 3 Lambrook Street: Blenheim House Chilkwell Street, Dr Pinegar Bove Town: Public Pump top of Old Wells Road: Bove Town: Mr Hallway's Garden Norbins

Road: Farmer Morse Northload Street: Major Bath Wells Road: Farmer Mapstone Northload Hall: Northover nurseries: J Chislett Northload Street: St Benedict's School: Gillmore Wells Road.

Burial of the Dead

The Cemetery would have enough room. Council to arrange the burial of the war dead (THIS WOULD NOT BE A PAUPERS FUNERAL) The carriage of the dead would be arranged with Cyril Spark's lorry that could carry

150 bodies (compare this cargo with all the goods that Sparks carriers now carry today).

Emergency transport

Farm tractors: Austin Cullen: J Masters at Edgarley: John Snow & Co: Tinneys Farm at Cradlebridge. Horses and horse drawn vehicles: Godfreys at Northload Dairies: Wrights and Sons Stables at Bere Lane: John Snow & Co: Hallways Bakers: Corners Bakers: Appleby High Street. Farm Horses: Reg Mapstone: Jack Libby: Bernard Slocornbe: J Mapstone

at Northover: Fouracres Cinnamon Lane: H R Mapstone Abbey Farm.

And so: In 1941 Glastonbury awaited the invasion by the Germans which we were sure it was to come.

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The night the invasion did come

The Observer Post on the top of Wirriall Hill saw signals on Godney Moor. The Observers called the police, the police called the Home Guard and the Home Guard called the Military. As they went to the moor they

could see flashing, they gradually got closer and closer when they found it was a cow rubbing against an electric post with a loose connection.

My memories of the War

Holes in the ground. There was an aircraft gun in the depression on Wirriall Hill another at Beckery and at Porchestal Drove where there was a search light. The Observer post on Wirriall Hill stayed in position

for many years, there were Nissan Huts in the Abbey Park and in dry summers you can see where they once stood.

Vehicle Accidents

Jack Checkley the Ironmonger lived at 3 Bere Lane, a tank came up Fishers Hill, around the corner and ran straight into his wall. The Armoury at the bottom of Fishers Hill facing along Street Road a lorry

one dark night ran straight into the houses there and if you look to this day you can see where the new bricks are.

Schooling

The sound of the siren would go which was a straight forward siren sound that would indicate raiders were approaching, the siren would sound a continuous sound and on radars past an undulating noise. At St Benedict's School next to the Police Station the siren would sound

and all the pupils would assemble in the cloakroom area which is now the main entrance. I myself lived in the Market Place would run home to be looked after and return to school when the all clear had gone. The teachers at the time were: Mrs Adlam, Mrs Edwards and a Mrs Baldwin.

Schooling continued

We as children were shown pictures of bombs by the Police and during Air Raids silver metal strips were dropped by the enemy, we as school children were told these could be poisonous and not to touch (AND WE DID NOT TOUCH THEM). We school children would go out collecting old iron from anywhere. All iron railings were removed in the front

of premises, the only bits that were left were small decorative nobles were left on the wall, these could be seen in various houses in the town including the Copper Beech and in Benedict Street opposite Rapsons Garage.

No Invasion Yet but large cities bombed

The house where I live is Number One Bere Lane, one day a visitor called and said during the war she said she stood in one of these windows and watched Bristol being bombed. As my Mother was in the Council she dealt with the evacuees and as London was being bombed they would arrive on the last train at Glastonbury Station, as we lived in Benedict Street she would take various children in late at night, so it meant that sometimes I would wake up in a different bed to which I went to sleep in. One story she told was one of the evacuees all he could say "Jerry

bombed his greenhouse and he lost it", another one had lost his false teeth imagine what a state he must have been in having no teeth.

Boys of my age would come and stay with the relatives from the large cities and we would only know them by name by calling them either Bristol or London. A boy from London which must have been an Eastender my mum would say he went to sleep in an ordinary bed but during the night he would move his bed to the centre of the room, my Mother asked why and he said because bugs would climb up the wall.

Collecting

We as children would be sent out in the country to find whatever iron we could for bomb making. We would collect rose hips from the hedges when they were in season. Paper bags would be used over and over

again. Various places in the road "pig bins" would be placed so that all the food scraps would go to feeding pigs.

Firewatching

Even at my tender age of about 8 I played my part in the war, I used to take Dad's fire book to a different member of the fire watchers. For years after stationary ladders could be seen on church roofs. We lived at 95 Benedict Street which had a large rear window and for blackout

all windows had to be covered, during the day the blackout would be rolled up and tied with string, then one time during the day there was a big bang, the string broke and we were suddenly in darkness.

Toys and Games

Comic annuals were ordered in August as only 3 were allocated to the newsagent. Christmas presents were second or third handed down toys, but they were still toys and we enjoyed them. We had pen palls from America and they sent us toy parcels and in one of these parcels I can remember various coloured writing pads, they were so precious to me

I kept them for years and never used them. The cardboard milk tops off of bottles would be used as toys by throwing them to see how close to the wall you could get. I also remember a son of an Ironmonger playing with live ammunition and it was said that he nearly lost a finger.

Rations

Gradually everything became rationed, sweets were on ration and my Mum and Dad said I was not allowed to buy chewing gum. Families with a lot of children would have extra coupons and these would be exchanged with my Mum which was very useful for extra rations. Five inches of bath water were allowed per person but Mum and Dad were clever and we all took our bath at one go. Dad kept chickens and you

had to have somebody registered with you to take eggs. There was a terrible time when for two weeks chickens did not produce eggs, a farmer came to look to advise Dad and he said "have you moved their water?" Dad said yes, and the farmer said chickens are a bit silly and they could not find the new water, they had developed "a croup" in the end everything was alright.

Perhaps Jerry is not coming but the Americans arrived

Their main headquarters was in a building in the station yard and they loved drawing everywhere, years after when I was an apprentice electrician I worked in these buildings and can remember seeing the

drawings on the wall. The Americans had plenty of supplies and we as children would wait outside their headquarters waiting for sweets, oranges and this time chewing gum.

American training

The Americans trained in what was the Fairfield which is now houses and a supermarket and the way they would march, they would sing

"hipp""haw", 1,2,3,4 1,2-3,4. They dug trenches in the Fairfield and they stayed there for a long time and we boys really enjoyed playing in them.

The Americans

We lived at this time at 95 Benedict Street and one hot summers evening, Mum and Dad had the radio on with the windows open, they were curious as an American stood outside for a long time, they asked him why he was there and he said he was listening to the news through the window. My family made friends with a soldier Karl and he was very very homesick, we also made friends with an officer called Brue, he stayed

in Glastonbury for a long time training soldiers, he was billeted at the Lodge in Coursing Batch and he borrowed Mums bicycle to cycle to the station. Disaster? He came to Mum one day and said he had lost his bike, later on as I was walking around Glastonbury I found her bike and all was forgiven, when he left on D-Day a Shaffer pen which he treasured very much he gave to Mother, he did not expect to return and he did not.

Army vehicles

More and more Army vehicles arrived in Glastonbury, these vehicles were all parked in Benedict Street and they had guns and we children were allowed to sit upon them. ONE DAY THEY WERE ALL GONE.

News

June 4th D-Day. My family missed the announcement on the 9 o'clock news in the morning, they listened again at the 10.00 news and I was told to keep VERY QUIET. The D-Day landings had taken place. Two days

after the Daily Express produced an European map with cardboard pins and flags, this map was pinned on the wall and for the rest of the war these cardboard pins and flags advanced into Germany.

Local War Effort

Torpedo's (Whiteheads) were manufactured at Clarks, leather flying equipment at Morlands and various other small industries helped the

war effort.

Advancing Armies

The pins on the map of Europe began to advance until they had a hiccup at the "Battle of the Bulge", one person I worked with who came back from the war said that they were ordered as they entered Germany to destroy all in sight, and he says he can remember a brand new bungalow just over the boarder being completely destroyed. Then came

the Rhine crossing, a local dignitary Major Bath had a long map of the Rhine and this was pinned up in the window of the Gas Showroom. Later on my Mother asked if she could borrow it to have a good look, he said that was quite alright and that she could keep it forever, this map is still in my possession.

After five years the battle is won

Germany surrenders. VE-Day. At last a happy circular was sent out from Mr Smeathes office and this included two days holiday, immediately after I can remember things that took place. A grocer had an illuminated sign "get your groceries at Ganes". A gas lamp was erected by the fire brigade in the Market Place so as to illuminate the Cross. Celebrations A policeman's son obtained a thunderflash and he brought it down to Fairfield Terrace, lit it and there was a massive explosion, doors opened

and everyone looked out wondering what the noise was. In the Town Hall there were

celebrations for us children. Cecil Dowdney on the accordion played tunes. "Lay little hen" and "You are my sunshine". The caretaker at the time was Bill Sharp and he had a daughter who said she went to London and shook hands with Winston Churchill and Mother and Father said she did not wash her hand for six days after.

Men who returned

Denis Vine (Rapsons Garage), as a despatch rider he visited 14 countries. Jack Tucker when he returned he was manager of Avalon Orchards, Mum and Dad said after the life he had lead it was probably to mundane of a job for him. Jack Dowdney along with Denis Vine operated Avalon Scramble. Alan Dowdney he was a Japanese prisoner of war and he came home very weak, the other brother Michael Dowdney I think just missed the war. Ted Wright who had an ironmongers shop in the

High Street, it was said he was decorated for the magnificent way he organised the stores. As an apprentice I worked with Joe Rogers from Street he said he never expected to come back, but he did but he said two days to the end of the war his best friend who had gone with him through all the war was killed by the German youth. Another friend he had he said would shoot any German on site but I don't think Joe liked that idea much.

Men who did not return

On the cenotaph there are 21 names of the Second World War such as Chivers, Brass, Linham and others, but at the base of the cenotaph one

can read "Also in grateful appreciation for those who returned".

Lasting Memories

A sailor climbed a pinnacle on St John's Church and tied a Union Jack Flag on it, the vicar at the time, Lionel Lewis offered a reward for anyone who would climb up to remove it, but I remember it stayed there for a

long time gradually disappearing.

Pill Boxes

Some are still standing. They said that Henry Tinney kept a tractor which he used long after the war. The Borough Surveyor Stan King and my Mother stayed in their jobs with the Borough Council for a long time.

That was Glastonbury during the War

Before I end let us think of the American G I's, young men came to Britain, came to Glastonbury probably very religious as many are, they probably knew the hymn Jerusalem relating to Glastonbury. From Glastonbury they went to the south coast, Dorset, Devon looking back after embarkation to go to war and seeing England the green fields of Dorset and Devon, many never to return.

This was a long time ago now, but all those who lost their lives in the war should never be forgotten, so whoever reads this just remember what took place a long time ago

Richard Norman Squire
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