



John Brunsdon MBE Eulogy

John loved Glastonbury and he loved walking. Many have memories of John striding up Glastonbury Tor following a yellow labrador.

When John collected his honorary veterinary degree in 2016 he insisted on walking from Paddington station to Westminster Hall through the various London parks on a hot summer's day and then back again afterwards, a six mile round trip. Not bad for 85.

John went to boarding school at St Lawrence College in Reigate and during the war the school was moved, to avoid the blitz, to Courtenhall a Georgian mansion in Northamptonshire. He felt that this experience, surrounded by Van Dyke paintings, gave him an appreciation of architecture and heritage.

John acknowledged that his academic achievements at school were 'unremarkable' but he enjoyed athletics, particularly running and in 1945 he won every school track event.

John's Canadian cousin Conrad Templeton visited the family whilst on leave and went cycling with John and his elder brother David. Shortly afterwards Con was killed aged 19 when the destroyer HMS Bonaventure was torpedoed by an Italian submarine south of Crete. John always remembered Con on Remembrance Day and thought of the contrast between Con's short life as compared to his and his brother who both lived to a good age.

John hated extravagance. His fondness for recycling and make do was perhaps due to being born in the year of the Wall Street crash and growing up in the 1930s recession, wartime and rationing.

John went to the Royal Veterinary College at an early age and considered himself lucky to be one of a small intake straight from school as there were many ex service entrants. Qualifying he said was a struggle, he thought he was slightly dyslexic.

One of the professors received a letter from Brian Fletcher who wanted an assistant in a mixed but predominantly cattle practice in Glastonbury. John expressed interest even though his professor commented that he would spend his working life with his arm up the rectum of a cow. John later said he was largely correct.

John arrived in Glastonbury on his pre war motorbike in 1952. Asked how he got on when he first started working he replied in his typical modest way "Alright, except I kept crashing the practice car." He was always in a hurry and admitted that although he had a

motorcycle license, he hadn't actually passed his car driving test.

John enjoyed telling stories. Once Brian Fletcher asked John to keep an eye on his house at Coursing Batch whilst he went on holiday. John received a call from a farmer who wanted a post mortem on a sow. He said he would drop the pig round. When John checked on Brian Fletcher's house he found to his horror that the sow had been dumped on Brian's driveway instead of the surgery. With some difficulty John dragged the sow to the back garden where he undertook the post mortem and then buried it. It might have ended there but unfortunately several weeks later a badger dug the sow up. John had to confess.

During his career John contributed to eradicating tuberculosis and brucellosis in cattle and made an early diagnosis of foot and mouth disease thereby preventing a regional outbreak.

In 1955 John married Jean Richards, daughter of Ted and Agnes Richards who were very involved with Lambrook Methodist Church. They moved to Hill Head and had three children Paul, Fiona and Mark. In 1966 the family moved to The Hermitage in Chilkwell Street.

John was one of the younger founder members of Tor Rugby Club and assisted with the construction of the old club house below Wearyall Hill. On a rainy weekend he and some fellow players had the unwelcome task of refitting the toilet waste pipe in a muddy trench that had floated to the surface in a flood. After the games the players would have a hot steaming communal bath.

John enjoyed his work but needed other interests to cope with the stress of a busy practice. Walking, restoration of antique furniture and butterflies fulfilled that appetite.

He got behind the government campaign with his friend Barry Hudson to 'Plant a Tree in 73' in response to the Dutch Elm disease and organized tree planting around the town. Barry went on to work in Forestry in Scotland whilst John carried on tree planting in Glastonbury.

In the 1970s he spearheaded an initiative to reopen and promote footpaths around Glastonbury. This was not necessarily in the best interest of his veterinary practice, as many farmers were not at all keen on promoting rights of way across their land. John persevered and the town now has a well established network of footpaths.

John loved Glastonbury and Glastonbury seemed to love him. Mayor three times,

23.4.1929 – 26.1.2021



Freeman of the Borough, in 2001 he was awarded an MBE for his conservation work, latterly Alderman of the Town. He was chair of Glastonbury Conservation Society for many years.

In retirement he took up bell ringing again and made some lasting friendships.

The family are touched by the messages of sympathy which show an overwhelming warmth and appreciation of John, typical comments are that he was a true gentleman, people remember him with affection as their vet and as someone who worked tirelessly for the town.

John was a loving and supportive father and grandfather and in his civic life gave his all to Glastonbury, the town that he loved.

John was once asked by a local reporter if you had to write your epitaph what would it be to which he replied, "I may have been trying but at least I tried."

Memories of a very fine man Words – Amanda Montague

I first met John Brunsdon fondly known as JB in early 2019. I was buying and renovating a house in Chilkwell Street and JB was to be my nearest neighbour. Number 11 was steeped in history having been a solicitor's office for most of its life and I was fascinated to learn more so JB was my natural first port of call. I was given a warm welcome, sat by the Aga drinking tea with bickies. This turned out to be a regular ritual. John was quite honestly one of my most very favourite people. We never ran out of conversation and I found his stories of his first visit to Glastonbury in the 50s fascinating.

He described an emerald green suit he used to wear and said it was 'positively serpentine' – his words. JB made sense of so much that made Glastonbury the town it is today. The

reason why we have double yellows outside of the white spring is because of a blockade of travellers who arrived after the festival and continued the party-overstaying and creating havoc! JB remembered so much, he was an absolute treasure I always meant to record his stories but like many things regrettably covid prevented me from spending his last year with me.

I refused to adhere to isolation rules JB was a man of people and nature, not isolation, so we defiantly sat outside, him on his bench, me on the lawn, socially distancing! Tea and bickies of course, watching the butterflies. I loved the way people smiled and waved to John, it was so heart warming. Once taking him down the high-street in his wheelchair, which he finally surrendered to, felt like walking with royalty – everyone loved John,

his kindness and always polite ways.

John Inspired me to dream up a walk around Glastonbury. I told him as we planned and mapped it out during our Conservation Society meetings, (always held at JB's house, The Hermitage), that we would always carry his staff and walk for him. By this time John was house-bound, a terrible sentence for a man who most days walked the Tor, picked up litter and was a true custodian.

So with the help from many sources, what is now known as the Glastonbury Way was born. Funding was secured and with much hard work dear JB's bench was erected on Paradise lane which was his favourite spot. I still haven't visited, and after JB's death, moved away from Glastonbury after 35 years.

It's hard to put into words what a true gentleman John was. I was heartbroken to

hear of his passing but I see him in every butterfly I see and am so glad he is now free. Glastonbury is a lesser place without him but richer for his legacy of trees which he planted during his fine life, his kindness to wild animals, support he offered, humour and wisdom.



The new age arrivals

Recollections of Stuart Marsh

In 1967 a new type of person started to appear around Glastonbury. Flower power and new age hippies, promoting a new lifestyle of freedom, beards and mind-bending drugs. These disciples of what became known as flower power preferred to live close to nature in caravans, horse drawn waggons and tents that were parked anywhere they found a space which led to some confrontational situations.

There had long been travellers in the shape of Romany Gypsies since time immemorial. What changed in the late sixties was the adoption of some elements of that itinerant lifestyle by people, mostly young middle class city dwellers who sought a lifestyle at odds with what they saw as a culture that was too materialistic and divorced from the natural world they sought a closer relationship with.

There was a connection between the self sufficient movement that favoured communal living that was propelled by a desire to pollute less and eat what the commune could provide. It was a reaction against the throw away world that advocates of the new way saw as unsustainable before the word gained its later currency. Worthy goals underpinned the mostly youthful ambition though harsh reality and practicality discouraged many of the early disciples from making it a permanent lifestyle.

There was some precedent to this culture at least in terms of raising their own food and living off the land but it was an indulgence of upper middle class people with means to realise their dreams. With the arrival of flower power it was the turn of a broader constituency.

Some tried establish businesses with one



group launching their own cafe in town in the shape of The Peasantry that was accessed from St John's car park. The emphasis was on locally sourced vegetarian food, the business being supplemented by a magazine 'The Tome'.

It was the start of a more colourful time. The first wall paintings appeared characterised by psychedelic flowers that decorated a shop at the top of The High St.

It was about this time (Nov 1970) that Jim Nagel arrived from Canada with his vision of a land-based Christian community offering an alternative to the traditional 'man, wife, dog and 2.4 chickens' as Jim put it. Soon he established what he called 'Green Plus' in recognition of his first van that was green, establishing his summer tent camp in Paradise Lane where anyone could stop and live for a few months in the summer.

Green Plus featured a commercial kitchen, prayer tent and at night, a camp fire. The project shifted location many times. Numerous people came to stay, seekers of a different lifestyle or their own identity and destiny, pilgrims, the unattached, all benefitted from the friendly camaraderie they found there.

Eventually Jim, in partnership with others, managed to acquire part of Higher Wick Farm that was worked by an original core of people. I milked the cows. Greenlands Farm as it was called, proved a magnet for people to stay offering a sanctuary for people who formed friendships. Some thrived in the town, others didn't, but Jim's vision gave them a chance.

Greenlands Farm lives on as Paddington Farm, a worthy successor, sustaining a vision of that time over half a century ago.

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Larger scale mapping of the Glastonbury area



**The war with France during the 1790s prompted a decision in 1795 to map England; the project to be carried out by The Board of Ordnance, hence the Ordnance Survey (OS).
Article: Adrian Pearse**

Commencing in Kent and initially working westwards along the coast a trigonometrical survey was followed by plotting of topographical detail at a scale of two inches to a mile, reduced to one inch to a mile for the published sheet maps, on the Cassini projection, and now known as the 'Old Glastonbury area' was surveyed in 1811, as part of Sheet 19, eventually published in 1817, with sheets laboriously produced individually at the Tower of London from engraved copper plates.

Detail encompassed roads, settlements, buildings, and the natural topography, and reflected information gleaned locally by the surveyors, mostly cadets from the corps of Royal Engineers. The result is a depiction of an essentially eighteenth century landscape - and while the nineteenth century saw the greatest transformation of the landscape to date, these maps, apart from the piecemeal addition of railways as they appeared, were not seriously revised until the 1890s and publication of the 'New Series'.

Besides the state-sponsored activities of the OS, private commercial ventures were also producing larger scale mapping - the Day and Masters map of 1782, essentially a county map, but issued in sheets at a scale of approx. 1 inch to a mile, was an initial attempt, but did not show smaller roads. The Greenwoods issued their one inch to a mile map of Somerset, in sheets, in 1822. It corresponds closely to the OS product, supplemented by a companion volume containing statistical and historical information by parish.

The principal rival to the OS maps was the half inch to a mile series produced by John Cary, an expansion of his earlier mapping from the 1790s. Glastonbury is included on Sheet 17, first issued in 1820. Cary's plates were purchased in 1844 by G F Crutchley and the maps re-issued in many formats, subsequently by Gall and Inglis, and were still in production until WW1.

Conscious that the Old Series had become seriously out-of-date, the OS commenced their 25 inch to a mile survey in 1863. Technically 'plans' - these sheets involved the close inspection of every feature and are the most comprehensive national survey ever produced. The Glastonbury area was surveyed in the mid-1880s, with revisions in 1904 and 1930. A reduced version at six inches to the mile was issued concurrently.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century a mass market demand for maps developed,

especially to cater for commercial activities and leisure aspects of cycling and later motoring. Numerous publishers responded such as G W Bacon and J Bartholomew, producing maps derived from various sources though largely based on those by the OS and John Cary, under their own imprint or for others.

Marketing of maps thus became an aspect of their production, and even the OS responded in the design of the successor editions to their one inch maps issued through the twentieth century, as well as responding to the popularity of the half inch scale. Sheet maps were even issued as advertising material by various retailers.

The OS Old Series one inch map was also used as the base map for specialist mapping - such as the successive geological sheets produced from 1845, and well into the twentieth century. Geological sheets were supplemented by those of the Soil Survey, and during the 1930s the Land Utilisation Survey was undertaken, and as with the soil mapping, supplemented by detailed supporting volumes. There were further issues covering Agricultural Land Classification and for specific military purposes. During the 1970s metrication was adopted by the OS and other map publishers, but the advent of digital and satellite technology has since rendered the majority of traditional map production increasingly redundant.

The Glastonbury Way

The Glastonbury Way was inspired by the idea of a defined scenic walk connecting places of historic and spiritual significance that could be walked by anyone in reasonable health in a short day. The most scenic part of the walk lies along Paradise Lane, the altitude affording wonderful views across the levels toward the Mendips. From the Tor the walker can enjoy a 360 degree vista across an inspirational landscape that has drawn generations of seekers in search of meaning in their lives as well as pure appreciation of natural beauty.

The society's late president John Brunsdon, who frequently walked much of the route in his younger days was a motivating force for the project that was discussed at meetings held in the Hermitage, his home in Dod Lane not far from the route of the walk. Former Councillor now Alderman Ian Turner, Amanda Montague, Stuart Marsh, Mike Smyth and Adrian Pearse experimented with variations to a basic route and the project took shape during the early days of the pandemic, all walkers communicating with each other from socially distanced intervals naturally.

Information boards and benches were identified as necessary elements of a project which it was hoped would supplement the tourist attractions of the town's environs.

After much consideration, simple metal benches were chosen as representing a minimum of maintenance with reasonable comfort that steered short of the luxury that might encourage permanent residence. After viewing several options these were provided by Bannel Engineering who, being located on the Beckery Estate, satisfied the goal of employing local businesses on which commitment the grant for the project was made.

The supporting structures, like the benches were also manufactured by Bannel Engineering.

While devising a route that could accommodate wheel chair users was not realistic, an effort to prevent walkers being mutilated by the horned Highland Cattle on Wearyal Hill was made. In the interest of health, safety and the avoidance of legal claims by the families of the terminally impaled, a fence was constructed. This defines the path where it borders the field that often accomodates the cattle. The path that leads down to Roman Way was improved with stone chippings to enhance its wet weather practicality.

The planning group for the Glastonbury Way expanded to include Morgana West of the Glastonbury Information Centre, Liz Leyshon of Mendip Council, Lynne Sedgmore and William Bloom.

After a team effort of extensive editorial consultations to ensure that factual history could sit alongside mythology and legend. William Bloom wrote the text for all twenty information boards. Richard Kingston of Glastonbury's Young Rascal Design, was employed to design the boards. To meet 21st century expectations, a phone app was introduced to complement the paper maps that are available from the Information Centre. The app was developed using the text and images from the boards and narrated by Sabrina Dearborn.

Early feedback on the walk and facilities has been overwhelmingly positive and so far no damage to the boards or benches has been reported.

Walkers will find one of the benches along Paradise Lane dedicated to Jim Nagel, the former editor of this news letter.



Early scoping walk: L to R Adrian Pearse, Amanda Montague, Phoebe Montague, Stuart Marsh, Ian Mutch, Baily from Curtis's



Kissing gates – a preferred option to styles to accommodate the less athletic



All-metal benches won the day, this one is on Paradise Lane



Boards offering information make the walk more of an educational experience



Top of the walk, Amanda and Mr Bear, son Asher, Stuart and Adrian. Amanda's stick was the property of John Brunsdon



Oaks in John's memory

The society planted a line of oak trees in memory of John Brunsdon along the Street Road at the foot of Wearyal Hill. To protect the young trees from the Highland cattle that often inhabit the site, heavyweight guards were built. These guards have legs that extend several feet into the ground in order to withstand bovine modification. Four people were required to carry each half guard to the planting site across boggy land that had become sodden by the inclement weather. A blend of high winds and driving rain added to the joy of the event that took place early in 2022. *L to R foreground: Cllr. Mike Smythe, Cllr. Michael White.*



