

# NAILSEA AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## Members Newsletter No. 13 November 2002

Published by the Society for its members

*The editor, Trevor Bowen, can be contacted at  
6 Dunster Gardens, Nailsea, North Somerset. BS48 2JY. Tel: 01275 854972*

### Additions to the Committee

I am delighted that four members volunteered at the recent AGM to serve on the Committee - Roy Warwick, as Secretary and member of the former Civic Society; Margaret Bowen, Life Member, with previous service on the Committee; Josie Griffiths, recently arrived in Nailsea and with a particular interest in military history; and John Woods who has an outstanding knowledge of local people and places. A warm welcome to them all.

### Nailsea Victorian Street Fair

Search out our stall on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> December between 5.30 pm and 9.00 pm - we should be in the Precinct outside Boots the Chemist. Given reasonable evening for the Society with all our publications on sale.

Peter Wright has reproduced eight popular articles that have appeared in Pennant over the years, each printed on coloured card and in A5 format. Further titles in the series will be forthcoming, so start your collection now.

### Inside Out

Many of you will have seen the BBC TV programme broadcast on 16<sup>th</sup> September, which included a ten minute Item on Nailsea Glass. As a Society we

were very much involved in supplying photographs and background information, guiding the production team around Nailsea to view remains of the Glass Works, and of course, talking on camera at selected locations. In all the BBC took three days to produce this one item, and although our contribution in the final version was limited, it was all good publicity for Nailsea glass.

We offer our support to Peter St Clair (co-founder of Bristol Blue Glass Ltd., and founder of St Clair Glass and Nailsea Glass Ltd.) in his efforts to establish studio glassmaking in Nailsea.

### Betty Brooks writes about the latest Local History Forum

In the afternoon of Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September Joan and Peter Wright and I (having spent the morning at Nailsea School's "Nailsea Showcase") went to Blagdon to attend the latest Local History Forum. This took place in the quaint "Court Lodge", in the centre of the village at the junction of the High Street and the road down to the Lake and the Pumping Station. The meeting room was approached by outside stairs and was large enough to seat about 36 people, allowing for space at the back to serve refreshments. This is the headquarters of Blagdon Local History Society, thanks to

the generosity of local landowner, Mrs. Mary Mead.

We and the representatives from other North Somerset Local History Societies were welcomed by Nick Goff of the Museum Service. He said that a replacement had been found for Sharon Poole, who would probably start in late October. A scheme was being set up to encourage people to report any archaeological finds. This could operate on a national basis with Lottery funding, possibly providing one officer to cover two counties.

Elaine Mellor updated news of the Library and Information Service. The Library Service has bought a copy of the Civil Registration Index 1837-1901 and the 1901 Census is now up and running on a trial basis. Local Libraries were getting new terminals. Nick Goff then reported that the visits of archivists to local libraries would be concentrated on the larger libraries only from January. Nailsea would continue to enjoy this service. A pilot scheme was under consideration to look at the possibility of a common access point to search catalogues, for example those of Record Offices, Libraries and Museums.

***Check web site for news:***  
**[www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk)**

At the suggestion of Roy Pullin of Long Ashton, representatives were asked to take with them examples of their Society's published articles. Peter produced a series of 5 leaflets, reprinted from early editions of 'Pennant', which were very well received.

Dr. Bentham, Chairman of Blagdon L.H.S., then gave us an account of how the Society had started. A Heritage Sub-Committee of the Parish Council published in 1986 a small booklet on

'Bygone Blagdon', largely as a result of interest in Family History. When the Heritage Sub-Committee closed down, the funds were saved by the Parish Council in case a successor emerged. Dr. Bentham became interested in Blagdon's history and inserted a note in the Parish Magazine inviting similarly minded people to attend a public meeting. Forty people came and B.L.H.S. was set up in 1988, helped by £750 from the Parish Council. Then began a marathon fund-raising effort. Dr. Bentham applied to every likely source available, such as 'Rural Action', 'Awards for All' and, of course, the Lottery Fund. The meeting place, referred to previously, had been a (rather makeshift) doctors' surgery for Wrington. When this was vacated, the Wills Estates bought it, but could find no suitable commercial use for it and it lay idle for four years, until Mrs. Mead bought it, had it converted to 'Court Lodge' and gave it to B.L.H.S. It costs about £200 per year to run. £5000 was raised from one source to buy computer equipment. Dr. Bentham described his approach to the Lottery Fund. To be successful it was necessary to go into great detail about the aims of the Society (initially the publication of a History of Blagdon), the involvement of local people, the support of local landowners, businesses and the school - and the benefits which would accrue to the village as a result. Financial estimates had to be meticulous. The actual research covered information extracted from farm records (the Watts Archive), Poor Law records, the Wills family records, Blagdon Lake records as well as details of every house and family in the village. All residents were invited to produce memorabilia which could be of help. After "getting our breath back", we were treated to a detailed account (with plans)

of the building of Coombe Lodge, a substantial mansion on the outskirts of Blagdon for Sir George Alfred Wills, president of the Imperial Tobacco Company. The architect, Sir George Oatley was the same gentleman who had designed the imposing tower of Bristol University, given to the University by Sir George Wills and his brother Henry Hubert Wills.

The meeting ended with refreshing cups of tea and biscuits. Those who wished to do so were invited to look around St. Andrews Church, rebuilt in Victorian times by William Henry Wills, Lord Winterstoke (cousin of Sir George). A former curate in charge was Augustus Toplady who, sheltering from a thunderstorm in Burrington Combe, was inspired to write the hymn 'Rock of Ages'.  
*Betty Brooks*

### **Constitution**

It is some years since we printed and distributed our Constitution, so many of our current members may be unaware of our aims, committee structure, disposal of funds and artifacts on dissolution, etc. If you would like a copy which includes the 2001 amendments, please contact Roy Warwick our Secretary.

### **Transport requests**

A small number of our more senior members feel unable to come to meetings during the dark winter months, and would appreciate an offer of transport. If you regularly have a spare seat in your car we will put you in touch with such a person in your neighbourhood. Offers to myself please.

### **TESCO**

The design and construction occupied our thoughts for much of the year, with aesthetics; press over-reaction with arsenic and oil pollution and finally the alleged shift of the building towards the High Street and its dominance of the cottages opposite. On the positive side, TESCO have provided two superb historical panels on the car park elevation and are also paying for the writing-up and publication of glassworks excavations over the past twenty years. On the negative side a large section of the horsewhim which adjoins their boundary has been damaged and the shaft covered over. North Somerset are pursuing remedial work.

### **Middle Engine Pit**

Having been in the doldrums since it was handed over to North Somerset following the demise of Avon, progress is now being made by a sub-committee of the Avon Industrial Buildings Trust. Representatives of the Trust, N & DHLS, Nailsea Town Council, North Somerset Council and English Heritage are shortly to advertise for a part time Project Organiser, having secured a substantial grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund. Heritage Lottery Funding for consolidation and landscaping of the site will be available, but completion is not expected for three/four years.

### **Information Service**

At the request of Nailsea Library, we are staffing a twice monthly Information Desk to answer / investigate local history questions. This is for a limited period but will continue if there is sufficient public demand, and most importantly members willing to help on a rota basis.  
*Trevor Bowen*

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Nailsea & District Local History Society held at Nailsea School on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2002 at 7.30 pm**

1

**Apologies** were recorded for Margaret Thomas, Judith Codrington, Phil Barclay, Veronica Fox, Pat & Phil Thorne, Phyllis Horman, Eileen Johnson and Judy Green. There were 42 members in attendance.

2

**Minutes** of the AGM held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2001. These had been circulated and were now accepted by the Meeting. Proposed by Mr. D. Cains, Seconded by Mr. T. Bertram.

3

**Matters Arising** - None.

4a

**Chairman's Report** Previously circulated. In answer to a question, Trevor Bowen expanded on the damage caused to the horsewhim during the construction of TESCO and the children's play area.

4b

**Treasurer's Report** The audited accounts had been circulated and were now accepted by the Meeting. Proposed by Mr. P. Feakins, Seconded by Mr. J. Green.

5

**Appointment of Auditor** Mr. Bob Brooke stated that it was professionally desirable that he should stand down, having audited the accounts for a number of years. The Chairman expressed the thanks of the Society for his valuable service. Mr. G. Irons volunteered to replace him and his offer was gratefully received. Proposed by Mr. P. Feakins, Seconded by Mr. R. Forse. Agreed.

6

**Nominations for Secretary** - None.

Following the Meeting, Mr. Roy Warwick volunteered to fill the vacancy and was co-opted onto the Committee.

7

**Election of Officers** Mr. Peter Weaver took the Chair during the election of the Chairman. Trevor Bowen was returned unopposed. Proposed by Mr. P. Feakins, Seconded by Mrs. J. Wright.

Similarly, Roger Mitchell was returned as Treasurer. Proposed by Mrs. B. Brooks, Seconded by Mr. P. Wright. He was thanked for his continuing services.

8

**Election of Committee** The Chairman expressed thanks to retiring members, Ronnie Fox and Janine Clarke, and to Roger Forse who had left the Committee earlier in the year.

The following were standing for a further year and were re-elected en block. Proposed by Mr. J. Woods, Seconded by Mrs. J. Griffiths.

Peter Wright, Betty Brooks, Mike Phillis, Phil Barclay, Patrick Feakins, Mike Lord, Maureen Livesey.

Additional nominations to the Committee. John Woods, Margaret Bowen, Josie Griffiths. Proposed by Mrs. M. Livesey, Seconded by Mr. W. Gibson. Agreed.

9

**Any Other Business** In answer to an enquiry, the Chairman considered the future of the excavated glassworks site adjacent to the Royal Oak Garage. He confirmed that preservation and sympathetic development were essential and English Heritage were being consulted.

There was no further business and the Meeting closed at 8.02 pm.