



WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS

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From West Beach to Swain Street

Watch out for unusual activity around Alec Danby's backyard at 54 Swain Street. The original cobbled yard which must have echoed to the sound of horses' hooves remains intact and dates from the late 19th Century. Alec with enthusiastic young helpers is restoring it to its former glory.

On the other side of the road, the owner of 8 Swain Street is turning his attention to the cobbled yard at the rear. The society in association with the Watchet Sea Scouts is undertaking its restoration and will complete the project fairly soon.

The boys began by removing the algae, pulling out weeds and grass to expose the condition of the cobblestones. Next they will replace damaged or missing cobbles from a stockpile of original cobblestones Eric Robinson found many years ago.

It's likely the cobbles were picked up on West beach and laid around 1850.

Have a good look as you walk by. Alec Danby's yard at the condition of the stones. It is remarkable what a good surface the uneven pebbles provided for horses hooves and carriages and extraordinary how well the stones have withstood the passage of time.

Eric Robinson and Nigel Murphy plan to repair the stones outside Severn House. Gerry Lowe is repairing the cobbles outside his house after all he is keen on Pebbles.



Exploring the past

One of the tasks the Society has taken on was creating an archive of the buildings of Watchet. A team is analysing and dating the interior and exterior features of many of the older houses in the town. In Swain Street alone, there are seven properties which have interior features which predate 1700.

The project is heavily reliant on the co-operation of the owners of the houses. Our team of investigators with their cameras, measuring tapes and inquisitive minds have found it gratifying that so many enthusiastic people want to uncover the history of the people who lived there before them, through the houses they built.

So far the archivists have hardly scratched the surface recording the interior features of each house. They are recording their findings on the Watchet Conservation Society website. So far Myrtle Cottage, The Georgian House, and Beachstone House are all featured. Our streets boast more original shop fronts than even our County town of Taunton. We suggest the shop owners are encouraged to keep them and the experience of shopping in Watchet far removed from the bland uniformity of so many of Britain's high streets..



Gladstone Terrace (1880)

The owner of 8 Swain Street which incorporates an original Victorian shop front has taken great care to restore the property sympathetically. He replaced the UPVC windows and doors with wood. He reinstated the stained glass windows and the fireplace, reintroducing a complimentary cast iron fireplace and surround. He intends to toast crumpets through the long winter months.

Under construction with wooden scaffolding— what a heath and safety nightmare that would be today!

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IS THE NEWSLETTER OF

WATCHET CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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For conserving and
promoting good civic
design and protecting
our natural
surroundings

WCS website

Nick Cotton has been working on our website.

If you are able to go online, do go and see what is there.

This is developing into a resource for information about the heritage of Watchet and contains several photographs and more information about what the Society has been doing and planning to do.

The address is:

www.watchetconservationsociety.co.uk

You can download a membership application form there.

Plans, plans, plans...

Watchet Conservation Society has been monitoring plans submitted to the District Council. Where there is a significant conservation and heritage interest, we have made a submission to the planners. So far we have commented on the East Wharf proposals, the Downfield site and the

Old Engine Shed in Market Street. We hope some developers will talk to us before sending in their plans so that we can make an input at an early stage.

The Pavement Project...

There is clear evidence of 19th century pavement construction identified by Eric Robinson and Helen Chave. Cobbled areas would have been commonplace as the availability of the necessary materials were close to hand. An excellent surviving example may be seen at the entrance to the yard at No. 54 Swain

Street (below) complete with cobbles, kerb and flag. It is not difficult to imagine the clatter of hooves and cart wheels as it passed over the uneven surface.

We held a meeting with Russell Lillford and his colleagues where various ideas were aired. Some wanted to see Swain Street paved from side to side and various ideas focused on reducing the speed of traffic to make the pedestrian king.

Russell suggested working with the Town Council to draw up a scheme which could be implemented over a 5 year period.

Residents would be fully involved with discussing ideas about how our town would look.



To apply or renew membership, contact Alison Murphy on 01984 633922