



## WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS

Issue 3

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*24/10/08*

### Moving into a second year- what's so and what's next...

Without you there is no society! We need your continued support if the Society is to grow and thrive. Last year your contributions enabled us to do the following:

- check every planning application and comment on them where there was a conservation issue
- offer six informative well attended talks
- create the lighting and pavement project intended to enhance Watchet's main streets.
- find the owner of the Limekilns so we can restore them to their former glory
- establish an archive of Watchet in which every listed building and building of historical interest is recorded,
- create a website for the archive, news and give you an easy access point to what's going on
- develop a photographic library of snapshots into the past
- circulate two newsletters to all the membership
- develop a constitution so that we can become a charity which means your money goes further
- make links with other organisations in Watchet like WASP, Wacet and the Museums,
- form relationships with Somerset County Council Heritage and Environmental Service, the Somerset Vernacular Buildings Research Group and others

We want WCS to become an influential organisation which gives you a voice where it matters. We can't do that without YOU!

### Annual General Meeting

So what do you think? Have we been looking in the right direction? Do we need to change what we are doing? We want to go on doing much the same but getting better at it. We need your feedback! **The Annual General Meeting is at 7.30 pm on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008 at the Methodist School Room in Harbour Road.**

Be there! Come along! Have your say! The membership fee stays the same as last year. At that meeting you will be able to renew your membership. We will put the constitution before you and hopefully you will approve it so that we may move forward.. We want to tell you more about what we have been doing and ask you what you want us to do. We want to find out whether the programme of talks in the past year were about right and whether you approve the plans for the coming year. So please be there ready to participate and pay your annual membership of £5 a head or £7.50 for a family. If you cannot come membership can be renewed through the secretary.

We would welcome more Committee members. Please contact the secretary to nominate yourself or a friend.



## The WCS Certificate of Merit

There are Watchet people, who have completed outstanding pieces of conservation work, which combine high quality workmanship with historical correctness but keep their homes in this century too. For example Andrew Coram who owns Buttercups and Roses building in Swain Street has carefully restored the shop front and the entire interior.

We are all very quick to complain when apparent conservation heresies occur, like painting a building in a garish colour, removing ancient railings, tarring in cobbles or replacing Georgian windows with upvc. But are we as good at recognising the quiet stars who maintain Watchet's authentic architecture?

The WCS has created a Certificate of Merit which will be awarded at the AGM on September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Come and acknowledge the conservation stars! This year we chose them, next year we intend the awards will be the result of a membership vote, with you nominating your friends, family or neighbours.

WCS intends to find out what grants are available and how people may access them. When we know we will put the information on the website.

## Check the website

Read the comments we have made on your behalf on the East Quay Planning Submission. You will also find the proposed Constitution for Watchet Conservation Society to read before the AGM. You will also find more archive material

## Lecturettes and seminars

Richard McDonnell's talk on the archaeological remains along our coast was a good end to the season and like all the others was well attended. His lecture revealed the lonely life of an archaeologist wandering the length of our coastline uncovering from the mud and silt lost stories of those who lived here before us.

Watchet fishermen walk out at low tide to pick up harvested fish and set stake nets anew. McDonnell introduced us to the elaborate patterning of wooded stakes made by our ancestors up to 3000 years ago to trap fish easily as the tides came and went. Fish weirs were sophisticated structures with a practical purpose. He showed us the fossilised footprints of tiny men, who tended those original weirs thousands of years ago. Somehow it all seemed not hugely different from what Watchet people do today— let the sea leave a gift.

Next year we plan a similar programme. Paul Upton will give a talk in November about Traditional Building Materials; their history, care and maintenance. We plan to invite Chris Sidaway, Chairman of SANHS to talk about local vernacular buildings for our February meeting. We have other ideas but please tell us what talk or film you think would be interesting to this group.

## Watchet Conservation Society

*Chair* Sam Westmacott 01984 639674

*Secretary* Peter Murphy 01984 639261 *Treasurer* Bruce Scott  
*Membership Secretary:* Alison Eastwood *Casework Officer:* Paul Upton  
*Archivist* John Skudder *Committee Members* Nick Cotton, Gena Pearce Andrew Musgrave Chris Danby Eric Robinson  
Helen Chave



*Painted by Capt Henry Press this picture of the Joseph Soames Watchet's first lifeboat, hangs in the Town Council Chamber. It was in Service from 1875. The last lifeboat in Watchet was de-commissioned in 1945.*

## Farewell and thanks

John Skudder, who has been on the Committee since Watchet Conservation Society was founded is moving on. He is house hunting in Devon and has resigned from all the organisations with which he has been associated.

He will be deeply missed. As our Archivist he has collected together information about Watchet listed buildings and sites of interest..

He has listed all the buildings mentioned by Somerset County Council within the Watchet Conservation Area. These are indexed both by street and location so if you want any information about your house you can retrieve it easily.

We will be putting the Archive on our website, which will also carry a link to the Somerset Historical Environment Record. which he has also negotiated on our behalf.

While we wish him well that means we need someone to step into the Archivist position. If you have an enquiring mind and the skill to explore the past through records, please get in touch– we need you!

## The Future.....

John Skudder's departure has made us realise how lucky we were that when we started there were a number of experts handy to step in and help us find a direction. We get the impression that people like what we have done so far, commenting on building plans like the East Quay, Downfield and the Old Mill. Our public meetings have been well attended.

Now we need more members for the Committee willing to help us stay on course. If you are interested contact Sam Westmacott .

## We've found the Lime Kilns owner!...

Advertising works! Thanks to the Free Press we finally found out that James Payne, who farms in Brompton Regis is the owner of the Lime Kilns

He is enthusiastic about clearing the site of brambles and undergrowth. This summer mother nature has covered it over with even more and denser vegetation.

The plan now is to clear the site in the Autumn with the help of Youth Services, and our Vicar, David Ireson before he leaves for Exmouth,. We have a piece of timber on one side to make a bench for the site. English Heritage are planning to provide an information board telling passers by what's there.

We want to uncover the site, reveal the old brickworks and find out more about how the man below worked the site. John Stone believes he was his grandfather. . We are now aiming to complete it in October. With a bit of luck we'll get it done by Fireworks night and use the wood and brambles for a cracking bonfire!



## An Apology.....

We deeply regret that due to unforeseen events the meeting on 27 June was cancelled. We failed to communicate by newsletter soon enough and thus people were disappointed. The next meeting is on 22 July and we hope to see you then.

## We hope to see you....

Our next meeting is **Tuesday 22nd July, 7.30pm** at the Methodist School Room, Harbour Road. **RICHARD MCDONELL** will talk about the shipwrecks along our coast – and recount tales of danger, smuggling, run-ins with the Revenue men and extraordinary bravery of Watchet men and women.

## WATCHET CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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*Membership Secretary*, Alison Eastwood *Casework Officer*, Paul Upton *Archivist* John Skudder  
*Committee Members* Nick Cotton, Gena Pearce Andrew Musgrove Chris Danby Professor Eric Robinson Helen Chave