



WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS

Issue 4

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Square Riggers and Yankee Jack

On Tuesday 17th February we are holding a celebration of Watchet as a port. Chris Danby has found a remarkable film of the last square rigger to sail from the North of England around Cape Horn to the Western Coast of America with a full cargo.

The film was made by an amateur film maker who was not a sailor at the start of the journey but certainly was by the end. It shows life on board from storm to calm and how sailors amused themselves on long haul journeys.

As so many Watchet people have long histories of a relationship with the sea and shipping we invite you to come and talk about your connection or listen to others. And to round the evening off we have folksingers Barbara and Tom Brown to lead us through sea shanties made memorable by our own Yankee Jack.

We intend to ask how should we as a modern maritime town remember our past?

We hope to see you at 7.30pm in the Methodist Schoolroom on Tuesday 17th February.

Watchet and the Worldwide Web

When we launched the Watchet Conservation Society website we had no idea that we were opening up a doorway which would bring us into contact with people in far flung corners of the world; the States, Canada and Africa. Since Ollie Cotton created it, there have been numerous enquiries on many aspects of conservation, restoration and our town's history.

In just the short period since the forming of the W.C.S. we have been contacted by people with similar interests, who want information from us. Excitingly we now have a direct involvement with the South African Heritage Resource Centre.

In December last Jennifer Kutto, the Director, contacted us regarding lime kilns located in the Cradle of Humankind – an important heritage site in South Africa. With little knowledge of lime kilns she came to W.C.S. with a plea for help. Since then we have been in

regular contact supplying advice and suggestions as they progress. Special thank go to Eric Robinson who is masterminding this project. It is very encouraging that we are able to have a positive effect not only locally but also worldwide!

Our Industrial Past– the turbine

Many people in Britain and worldwide make enquiries about the Gilbert Gilkes water turbine at Stoates Mill from various parts of the country. All of these have been answered by John Skudder and we are grateful for his help.



Photographic archive

Our photographic archive now numbers over 150 shots of the town many of which were taken after 1860. They show life as it was lived here from the shipyards to the back streets. It is hoped that some time in the future, people will be able to access the archive from the website but there are all kinds of complications with copyright which have to be carefully considered.

Once something is on the web anyone can use the image and without a control system that is not in the original owner's interest.

With this project the society is particularly grateful to Lyn Hart who has made her personal collection available.

Competition

We are about to launch a competition in partnership with WACET and the Carnival Club in the West Somerset Free Press which will be entirely due to Paul Upton's inventiveness. Those of you who came to the Christmas Party will remember the competition we ran based on his unique pictures. The competition is an extension of that idea. Keep your eye open

Analysis of Buildings

There are a large number of generous home owners who have invited us in to 'poke and prod' around in their house establishing its history. There is so much of our town's heritage to be found behind the innocent doors and windows of later facades.

The analysis of those buildings is on the website. If you live in a house with an interesting history do let us know. The society continues to be indebted to Paul Upton for his continuing enthusiasm and involvement in this time consuming chronicling of Watchet's past.

Heritage Walks

Tourism is the life blood of Watchet. Many of those tourists come here to walk and enjoy our coastline.

We have worked out the first of a series of Heritage Walks. It takes the walker from the Esplanade across to the limekilns at Doniford. The accompanying leaflet describes what of historical interest is along the route. Future routes will take the walker along to Blue Anchor or up around St Decumens. The leaflets will be available from the Tourist Office.

Planning Issues

The East Quay development has been the most important building to come before the Planning Committee in the last three months. It was formally passed in November 2008 despite considerable opposition from the Marina and Watchet Boat Owners Association among others.

The next big planning application will be Klaus Middleton-Smith's proposals for a housing development and residential care home at Stoates Mill in Anchor Street. We have supported this application. His plans encompass retention of much of the existing building and blending it into a modern pleasing architectural design.

It is an example of how the past can be brought into the present and on into the future

without falling into the trap of creating pseudo historic sham or thrusting futuristic ideas into a reluctant traditional background.

If the design is approved it will provide a long term home for the old red turbine which is part of our industrial history. Klaus has other good ideas to draw visitors attention to the history of that area with the leat and the old mill.

Administration news

Two members of the committee will shortly meet with members of the town council to discuss working together to move the successful pavement project on to a larger scale.

The nine Committee members voted in at the AGM in September 2008 elected the following officers: Sam Westmacott chair; Edward Frewin, treasurer; Peter Murphy, secretary; David Simpson – Scott, case work officer. Members are Nick Cotton, Myra Barrett, Derek Fawcus and Andrew Musgrave.

Next Meeting

Watchet Conservation Society has a members' meeting on the 4th Tuesday in every alternate month. The next meeting is on **TUESDAY April 28th**. Our next speaker will be author **John Gillman** a writer who spends the summer in Watchet. He is fascinated by the history of the Bristol Channel coast and sailing.



What was the name of, and why was this ship towed into the harbour in the 1930's?