



The hedgehog is an animal well loved by man because it eats many of the pests that plague the gardener, like slugs and snails.

Baby hedgehogs are born with soft spines but soon lose these and develop the stiff spiny characteristic of the adult.

During the winter,

unlike squirrels or mice, the hedgehog hibernates so has no need to store food.

Their difficulty, particularly for the young, is building up sufficient store of body fat to see it through the winter. The overabundance of badgers is making food supplies scarce and hedgehogs are now falling prey to hungry badgers. The sight of a hedgehog in our gardens is now sadly a rare sight.

***Members of the Watchet Conservation Society receive this newsletter bi-monthly either the printed copy or by e-mail. If you have enjoyed reading this publication and are not a member, please will you consider joining the Society, you would be helping to conserve our physical and natural environment. It costs just £6 a year, any of the committee members below, would be delighted to welcome you.***

#### **WATCHET CONSERVATION SOCIETY**

[www.watchetconservationsociety.co.uk](http://www.watchetconservationsociety.co.uk)

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## **WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS**

Promoting, conserving & improving our physical and natural environment

Issue 32 Jan/Feb 2014



#### **From our Chair, Molly Quint**

Dear Friends and Members, May I, on behalf of all the Committee, wish you all a very Happy New Year. We have got rid of the 13 and are now moving into the much kinder number 14, so may it be a Good Year for us all and for Watchet Conservation Society. Already teatime is lighter and looking out into the garden there are cheeky primroses and catkins. Hurry up Spring !!!

This coming Open Evening (see below) is just that ! I feel that the Committee are voted on by you, as members, to move the WCS forward as stated, Promoting, conserving & Improving our physical & natural environment, so at this meeting we will discuss and talk about decisions, projects and future happenings, so do please come along and move forward with us,

Yours Molly Q.

#### **Editorial.**

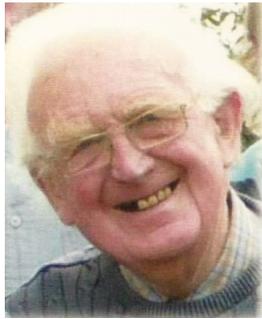
2013 was an exciting year for the Conservation Society, at the AGM in November Molly highlighted our activities, I felt in need of a rest just listening to them. This month we have an article from Pat Wilks talking about her life in Watchet in the 1950's. I'm sure many of you will relate to Pat's story, which because of space will be spread over two editions.

It would be really nice to hear from some of our old established families about their memories of Watchet in the 50's or earlier. It doesn't matter if you don't type we can cope with hand written copy we just want these stories told and recorded before they are forgotten. Talk to granddad and granny, sort out their old photos and share them with Society members.

AJ

Our **OPEN MEETING** on Tuesday 21st January at the Methodist Schoolrooms 7.30 will give you an opportunity to hear about and discuss our

**'Projects and Activities for 2014'**



Derek Quint

With very great sadness we report the death in November of Derek Quint 'Kwinty' the lovely husband of our Chairman Molly. In the Conservation Society we shall cherish the memory of Derek for his interest in us all and our activities, and for his unfailing support of Molly.

Derek was an inveterate raconteur, always with a story to tell guaranteed to make us laugh. His own smile was ever-present, likewise the twinkle in his eye.

I remember several occasions when he and Dave shared a bottle of port and provided entertainment for all. Another delightful memory is when Derek asked for some plain paper and then took Elba, Edward and Sheila's grandson, under his wing and showed him the art of cartoon drawing, so kind, so patient.

At our charity dinners at the Indian Restaurant he worked the room causing chuckles at all the tables. Derek was so easy to like, his company so easy to enjoy. He illuminated the time you spent with him with laughter and we are all richer for having known him.

J.S.S. Society secretary

### 2013 highlights

Our first open meeting in January featured Phil Gannon's talk on the Mineral Line, Phil is such an interesting speaker and his knowledge of the Mineral Line inspired interest from everyone present.

In February 2013 we saw the opening of the Goviers Lane crossing, the culmination of all our hard work in co-ordinating the different partners in the project along with the Conservation Society getting stuck in with the planting of the new flower beds.

February also saw the repairs to the packhorse bridge which was instigated by the society.



In March we had a wonderful open meeting with Paul Upton and Nick Cotton

day in the Wyndham crypt at St Decuman's Church. After the funeral, and the family had returned home, they were astonished and unbelieving as Florence knocked on the window dressed in her grave clothes. It is said that the servants refused to let her in believing her to be a ghost or a witch. Sir John fainted and took to his bed. In the morning she was found on the doorstep in labour.

What actually happened was that the sexton, a man called Tom Hole, had seen the rings on Florence's body and decided to steal them. He returned to the crypt at night and opened the coffin. He was unable to prise them from her fingers and so he used his knife to cut them off. When he saw the blood flowing from Florence's hand and the body stirring, as she recovered from her coma, the terrified Tom Hole fled down the hill to Watchet never to be seen again. Florence struggled out of her coffin and staggered down the hill back to her home at Kentsford farm. She recovered completely and gave birth to a son, John Wyndham II, who in turn married Joan Portman and subsequently raised 9 sons and 6 daughters from whom all the world wide Wyndham family are descended. A fortuitous escape indeed.

Some years later, whilst Florence was on her way home to Kentsford farm, it being too late to complete her journey, she gave birth to twins, at the Bell Inn in Watchet.

To this day members of the Wyndham family are not buried until three days after their death.

### CONSERVATION DUBLIN STYLE

An extract from the St Patrick's Cathedral short Guide.

"There is unfortunately no record of the stained glass in St Patrick's Cathedral before the 1850s and only one window predates Sir Benjamin Guinness's restoration of the cathedral in 1860. The fact that Guinness did not employ an architect but rather trusted the work to Murphy & Sons, builders, probably explains why no 'stained glass scheme' was drawn up at the time of the restoration."

*Perhaps if Murphy had been given the job in 1960 he would have fitted UPVC double glazing throughout!*



The pubs – The Anchor where you'd expect it to be, The West Somerset Hotel in Swain Street, The Bell and The London and The Star and of course The British Legion Club. There was a licensed Conservative Club on The Esplanade where Roy Chave has his Esplanade Club now. So they haven't altered much. We still have plenty of choice. The Library had just been opened on The Esplanade in the old life-boat house, next to the cinema managed by Mr Tommy Peele. The Phoenix building was just being converted into a room for Red Cross training. Mrs Joan Baker and Miss Jo Erskine-Collins were in charge there. Jo is still around, she is 100+ and lives in Colyton, South Devon.

There were 3 banks in the town. Lloyds was on the Esplanade with Mr Baker as manager. At the top of Swain Street, opposite the Council Offices was the Nat West Bank with Mr Hal Norris in charge. He was a real character with a strong and slightly wicked sense of humour. Ron's little sub-branch was where Blondie and Baldie have their hairdressing and barber's shops now. It was next to Mr Stone's foundry and opposite Miss Hibbert's sweet shop and cycle accessory shop. Besides all these undeniably essential shops and offices there were three schools in Watchet, two in South Road. Watchet County School was next up from the Freemason's Hall and St. Decuman's Church School was opposite, where the new flats are now. Then there was a small private school at Bucklands where Mr and Mrs Pirt live now.

There were two doctor's surgeries. One in Doniford Road, No 59 (where Alan & Ellie Jones now live), where Dr Tonks, a clever water-colourist, lived when I first came to Watchet. Later Dr Lewis and Dr John Killick shared the surgery there. Drs Paula and Sheila – I've forgotten their surnames – lived in St. Decuman's Road. These surgeries actually contained real LIVE-IN doctors. There was no need to go to Williton in those days! South Road was also where our two district nurses lived. *(2nd half of Pat's story in March/April edition. Ed.)*

The following is an extract from a booklet soon to be printed about the Wyndham Memorials at St Decuman's Church

### **The legend of Florence Wyndham**

In 1559 about a year after their marriage, Florence was pregnant and the family hoping for an heir, but towards the end of her pregnancy she was struck down, apparently dead, Sir John was overcome with grief. Florence was buried the next



talking about Watchet 'then and now'.

In April we raised the beautiful golden sail boat weathervane upon the old beacon post on the Memorial Ground and prior to its installation we had the local school children continuing an old tradition of 'jumping over' the weathervane (of course it was on the ground at the time and not thirty feet in the air).

In May our open meeting talk was by John Gilman who discussed his new book 'Crossways', a study of Celtic holy places in West Somerset and North Devon. His talk was quite controversial requiring a depth of faith in the supernatural but very interesting and thought provoking.

In June the Society produced two leaflets for use in the tourist office giving visitors some insight into the Fitzroy barometer and Seascape sculpture in Esplanade Lane.

July saw the unveiling of the St Regis Chimney Interpretation Board and a guided tour of St Decuman's church by Eric Robinson and Alan Jones.

Two further leaflets for the tourist office were subsequently produced one on the Chimney interpretation board and the other on St Decuman's church and the Holy Well.

Throughout the spring and summer the society continued their endless battle with the weeds that grow so tall at the Holy Well.

The subject of the September open meeting was 'Water Power Past And Present' delivered by Alex Gannon and assisted by his brother Phil, their knowledge of things historical and mechanical makes for really interesting talks.



Our year concluded with the AGM at the Phoenix Centre in December when we



auctioned the original watercolour sketches by Nick Cotton produced for the St Regis Interpretation board. David Milton our auctioneer helped the society raise £328 towards its funds. Our thanks to everyone who took part in the bidding and to David and, of course, to Nick Cotton who kindly gave us the pictures.

Following the auction we had a quiz based on the content of the society's newsletters throughout the year, (just to see who reads their newsletters).

The quiz was won by Phil Gannon who deliberately didn't answer the questions based on his own talks. A truly worthy winner.

#### **DON'T FORGET**

#### **WE HAVE OUR INDIAN MEAL TOGETHER AT THE SPICE MERCHANT**

Monday 24th February book your time with Molly (632592)

#### **A few more thoughts about Watchet by Pat Wilks Part one.**

Jan Simpson-Scott has written an entertaining and glowing account of coming to Watchet to live, along with some of the reasons why she and her husband David love Watchet so much.

My reasons for coming to Watchet originally were more mundane. We lived in Minehead for some of the years of the 1950s in our early married life. Ron, my husband, worked as a junior clerk at the Minehead Branch of The Midland Bank at Wellington Square. Ron had recently returned to "civvy" life after six years in the Army from 1939 to 1946.

Minehead was OK and the surrounding countryside was as beautiful as West Somerset always had been, but the hierarchy at the bank had decided we ought to live in Watchet where Ron was already in charge of the small sub-branch of the Midland Bank. The "powers that be" had decided that we should live at Watchet to join in the community and social life there. I suspect that the "powers that be" were less interested in our happiness but more interested in the business possibilities that might ensue. Suspicious? Well I'm third generation banking staff and I know the way their minds work.

So in 1954 having looked around carefully we bought a small bungalow on the upper reaches of Brendon Road. It had wonderful views of Cleeve Hill and up the Brendon Hills to Exmoor. There were extensive sea-views too and a panoramic vista of Watchet town. Situated immediately above the Paper Mill we also could

enjoy industrial Watchet and the lower part of the Mineral Line.

We worried a bit as young families do when the necessity to move house occurs. How might we fit into the established community? Would we soon make friends? We already had two children, Rachel aged 4, and Catherine about 2. Would they settle in happily? On a practical note - how would we cope with septic tank drainage? The upper reaches of Brendon Road were not yet blessed with main drainage though this was remedied quite soon.

We soon discovered Watchet's biggest asset - and one which is still around - the community spirit in the town was strong. The little town had its quota of basic shops. Fish and Chips (twice), 2 or 3 butchers, a fresh fish shop, several grocers,



large and small - no supermarkets yet, several cafes, a milk bar, 2 bakers at least, and a big and wonderful ironmongers - Organ's, managed by Mr Jago. It was where the Museum is now, underneath Holy Cross Chapel. There was also a big general store where Albert's 'Ardware is now, selling ladies' wear, materials, haberdashery as well as kitchenware and china. Next door to that was a men's outfitters, and where The Sanctuary is now Mr and Mrs Chilcott (Eilenn Tapp's Mum and Dad) had a large

newsagents and sweetshop. The Post Office was exactly where it is now with Mr and Mrs Arthur Pye in charge.

Mill Farm, a working dairy farm down Whitehall, run by the Nicholas family.

Jack Nicholas used to coax his cows down Anchor Street for milking. I remember hearing him talking to a heavily pregnant cow, coaxing her to get home before the calf was born. "Now come on my dear - you can't have your calf until you get home to the farm".

In those days there was also a travelling POP van selling fizzy drinks and TIZER.

I nearly forgot to mention the chemists, always where it is now - and always a friendly helpful shop. There were at least 2 first-class greengrocers, Mrs Kingdom's was where the optician is now, and Mr and Mrs Young, I think, was where the St. Margaret's Hospice shop used to be - opposite Blondie's and Baldie's.