



# WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS

Promoting, conserving & improving our physical  
and natural environment

Issue 35 July/August 2014

## From our chair Molly Quint

Dear Friends and Members,  
What wonderful weather, do so hope it lasts for the tennis and all the other Summer activities England is so famous for, and for all the things that are happening in and around Watchet.

I think the more serious thing that involves Watchet at this time is the development of the East Quay. This has been the subject for heated discussion for many years now, but it has only been discussion, with no movement forward or any real progress. However four Young Mothers, with the energy and ideas of youth, have formed Onion collective and we were very pleased to invite them to a special Open Meeting for members and friends to hear how they propose to move plans forward for Watchet.

Many of you came and I am sure you will agree with me and the Committee that it was an excellent evening. The Directors of Onion collective introduced themselves, gave very impressive CV's, and explained that not only were they looking at the Easy Quay in the feasibility study but were including the Youth Club Building, the Boat Museum and the Council Offices. All members were then asked, in turn, what they would like to see done for the benefit of the Town and ideas ranged from a Community Hall, to a Lido, to units for sea & land engine repairs, for craft and art cabins, and parking for visitors with water views.

These ideas have all been collated and will be discussed by the Onion collective plus Stake holders, which I am thrilled to say we have a position, and Paul Upton, our Case Officer for WCS, will be taking his great knowledge and judgement to the meetings, which will then be finalised and printed in September.



To be a Stake Holder on this move forward for Watchet is an honour for WCS and we wish Onion collective and of course Paul , the very best results for our town.

Members will have seen my previous email regarding the Mill visit and the Pool Fun Day which has now been postponed to Bank Holiday Monday, helpers very welcome indeed, my email [quint407@btinternet.com](mailto:quint407@btinternet.com), and on the 15th July our Open Evening will be Brunel, the engineer, with a speaker from SS Great Britain, do come.  
With very best wishes for a wonderful summer, yours Molly.

### **A plan for Watchet starts to form.**

First of all, thank you to everyone who came to the Onion Collective consultation session back in May. To us it felt like an extremely positive and energised meeting, full of great ideas and interesting discussion. In fact,

possibly the most energising and interesting of all the sessions we held, so thank you! Just to re-cap, the top ideas for creating a stronger future for Watchet, that you came up with and voted for included: Important architecture, a community function space, to celebrate Watchet's story, small craft and engineering work units, to improve the entrance to the town around the Cross area, improved footpaths, a giant engraved glass window at the boat museum, a lido, a local energy supply, a water-side restaurant and to resolve the mud issue in the marina. Those were the most popular ideas that came out of the session.



Interestingly, many of those top ideas were echoed by others, so much so that many of them have made it to the top shared priorities for Watchet. We held 10 post it sessions, like the one held for the Conservation Society, and managed to reach around 150 people that way, together with the questionnaire, public drop in sessions, videos and visitor postcards. The responses from which all fed into the picture of shared priorities for the town. Pictured is an illustrated proposal listing the top priorities, and placing them where we believe they most 'fit'. As you can see, many of your top ideas are present! Mud was also a top town priority, so we should point out, from discussions we have had with the Marina Operator it is clear that resolving the mud problem is high on their agenda, therefore it isn't appropriate that we take this forward as an Onion Collective proposal. These were the top objectives that came out of town consultations:

### **Watchet Community Objectives:**

- Create more for visitors to do (Tourism)
- Meet the needs of the community, including young people (Community)
- Generate jobs and enterprise (Jobs & Enterprise)
- Deliver improved public space (Public Space)
- Enhance the arts/cultural offer (Culture)
- Enhance the marina/maritime offer (Maritime)
- Exhibit high quality, sensitive design (Architecture)
- Improve cycling/walking infrastructure (Pathways)
- Celebrate the coast, heritage, geology of town (Heritage)
- Retain and build on the unique vibe of the town (Vibe)
- Effectively market/brand the towns offer (Brand)
- Improve parking and traffic management (Parking)
- Enhance Civic Space (Civic)

These objectives form our guiding principles and we will work to ensure that the development we propose will meet these objectives.

So, we split the top shared physical priorities, the ones that were actual things into four areas. Broadly, East Quay for visitor and cultural activities, the Cross area and boat museum site for historical and heritage ideas and the Youth Club site for Community activities. This division was also guided by the feedback from consultation. Coastal pathways and footpaths were also clearly a top shared priority and so forms part of our early outline proposal.

And so we have the makings of a plan! This is where we will begin business planning from. We will now begin the process of working out how much

space these ideas would need. Is there enough demand and need for these things? Would they be financially resilient in bad economic times as well as good? There are still too many ideas, and some will likely fall by the way-side, but we are now able to start visualising what might be. Our funding will pay for architectural drawings for one scheme at this time, so we also have to assess which scheme is most achievable and fulfils as many of the objectives as possible. Again, we will of course look to take all the projects forward in the fullness of time. But we have to prioritise, and it has to be led by the strongest business plan, with the least risks and the most community improvement impact.

The illustrated proposal also doesn't quite capture everything, so for a more detailed look at our first outline proposal have a look at our Prezi presentation which is available on our website [www.onioncollective.co.uk](http://www.onioncollective.co.uk) and via this link [http://prezi.com/mtzsvbvphhttps/a-stronger-future-for-watchet-onion-collective-cic/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/mtzsvbvphhttps/a-stronger-future-for-watchet-onion-collective-cic/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

We are now going to put our nose to the grindstone and spend the next few weeks deep in business planning. We are also investigating quality architects that could deliver a development that really celebrates Watchet. Please do continue to be involved in this project, all your thoughts and insights are very welcome and needed. Contact us via facebook or twitter, email ([info@onioncollective.co.uk](mailto:info@onioncollective.co.uk)) or pop by the office. We'd love to see you.

**Georgie Grant, Director Onion Collective**

### **Open Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

Twenty five people turned out to hear Graham Browning's talk on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his time in Nether Stowey.

Dressed in traditional costume as 'Tom Poole', Graham explained a little of Tom Poole's background and his relationship with Coleridge.

Coleridge hated the name Samuel and referred to himself as STC and I will do the same.

Tom Poole was a Tanner, inheriting the business from his father. Growing up in a house where books and book learning were considered trivia and of no value in business, Tom had to wait until his father died before he could pursue his own evident love of learning.



Tom's connection to STC arose from the fact that the garden of his cottage adjoined that of Coleridge Cottage in Nether Stowey. Graham's presentation included some interesting illustrations of Coleridge Cottage since the 1750s up to the present day and a diagram showing how it was set adjacent to Tom Poole's house and garden making it easy access for both men to visit each other for their conversations on life. When STC needed to get peace and quiet he would go into his garden and through the hedge into Tom Poole's garden.

Tom Poole also used the gate to bring milk to Sara when Coleridge was away. (STC asked Sarah to drop the h from her name on their marriage)

He also showed a rare and beautiful illustration of Sara who was clever in her own right, able to read and write well which was quite rare for women at that time. He referenced the friendship between the Coleridges and William and Dorothy Wordsworth which is an important aspect of the lives of both families resulting in STC and his family moving from Nether Stowey to The Lake District where they had two more children before their marriage finally disintegrated.

Graham gave an account of STC's troubled life, including several attempts at university life, a spell in the army under the name of Silas Tomkyn Cumberbache (artfully using the same initials). He spoke about STC's long suffering wife Sara and, of course, his addiction to laudanum (a mixture of alcohol and opium).

Graham showed plans and drawings of Coleridge Cottage, depicting the layout as it was then and of how it looked when it was first pur-

chased by the National Trust. Coleridge Cottage was one of the first properties to be bought by the NT in 1909 following its conversion to a public house in 1870 when it was known as Moores Inn. Graham also showed pictures of the restoration work that has taken place in recent years, including the lime tree bower featured in an earlier newsletter.

This was Graham's first venture into talking to groups and we hope Graham has the opportunity to give more talks on our local legend?

The cottage is open every day until the end of October from 11am to 5pm. There is a quiet reading room where the visitor can use a head set and sit on a comfy sofa to listen to Coleridge's poems and a good stock of books on Coleridge to browse through. The garden is lovely at the moment thanks to volunteer gardeners who are trying to restore it to replicate how it was at that time and visitors can sit in The Lime Tree Bower after partaking of delicious refreshments in the tea room.

AJ (with help from Jan SS)

*An extract from "Tales of Watchet Harbour" by Ben Norman*

***Bob Williams***

"Bob Williams was not such a notable man as his brother Ben, but nevertheless an interesting and amusing little story has been handed down by those interested in harbour lore.

It seems that Bob kept a small holding but also helped in the loading and unloading of ships. Some of the ships brought wheat from overseas for use in Stoaite's Flour Mills; much of it came from France. On one occasion a cargo of sacks of Russian wheat was brought in from Danzig. It was the custom that dockers would sweep up any loose and dirty wheat which might otherwise be left in the hold of the ship and this they usually took home to feed their chickens. Bob however decided to sow his dirty Danzig wheat in his small holding. In due course the Russian wheat broke through the ground but it was accompanied by hundreds of pretty little weeds which had never been seen at Watchet before. Many people gathered around to see the pretty weeds and laughingly gave them the name of Bob Williams Weeds. By the next year however they had stopped laughing for the weeds had spread into all the adjoining fields and gardens. The name of the weed was rapidly altered to "That Bloody Bob Williams Weed". Some years later ap-

parently it had spread over the hill to the little town of Williton but was known by the gardeners there as "That Bloody Watchet Weed". It still flourishes at Watchet and is probably still spreading all over the country under various names.

Subsequent enquiries to the Somerset College of Agriculture & Horticulture have ascertained that the correct name for the weed is Annual Mercury (a relative of Dog's Mercury). Miss Caroline Giddens, an authority on local wild plants and flowers, confirms that Annual Mercury was not known in West Somerset until the 1880's".

*By permission of Margaret Norman*

**Watchet Conservation Society**  
**Open Meeting Talk 15<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30**  
**Methodist Schoolrooms, Harbour Road**  
An illustrated talk by Brian Portch on  
**Isambard Kingdom Brunel**

Brian's talk highlights each of the major works of Britain's greatest engineer and includes photographs of the surviving evidence of Brunel's legacy as well as unique images from the National Brunel Archive.

This meeting is open to all and free, but if you would like to make a donation to support the work of the Conservation Society please do so.

If you would like to join the Conservation Society or renew your membership, please see John Irvén as you come in with your £6.

**Man & wife.**

With bible in hand I read to the year 10 students.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife."

From this passage in the bible what do we learn is important in marriage?

A voice at the back said, "Cleavage".



**Tiger Moth**  
from a painting by  
Sheila  
Mannes-Abbott  
**and Jersey Tiger  
Moth**  
photo by  
Alan Jones

For the past 100 years, Jersey tigers were found mainly in the Channel Islands and the southern coasts of Devon & Cornwall, the only parts of Britain where conditions were reliably warm enough, but in 2010, members of the public taking part in the Big Butterfly Count saw record numbers of the large moths across the Home Counties. It's a moth which is colonising Britain from the South and last summer in 2013 it was common in Watchet throughout July and is now more common than the normal tiger moth. I have already seen several in Watchet this June.

Everyone thinks of moths as brown and night-flying, but the Jersey tiger is as big as a butterfly, with brightly coloured red under-wings and it flies during the day. Keep a look out. AJ.

*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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