



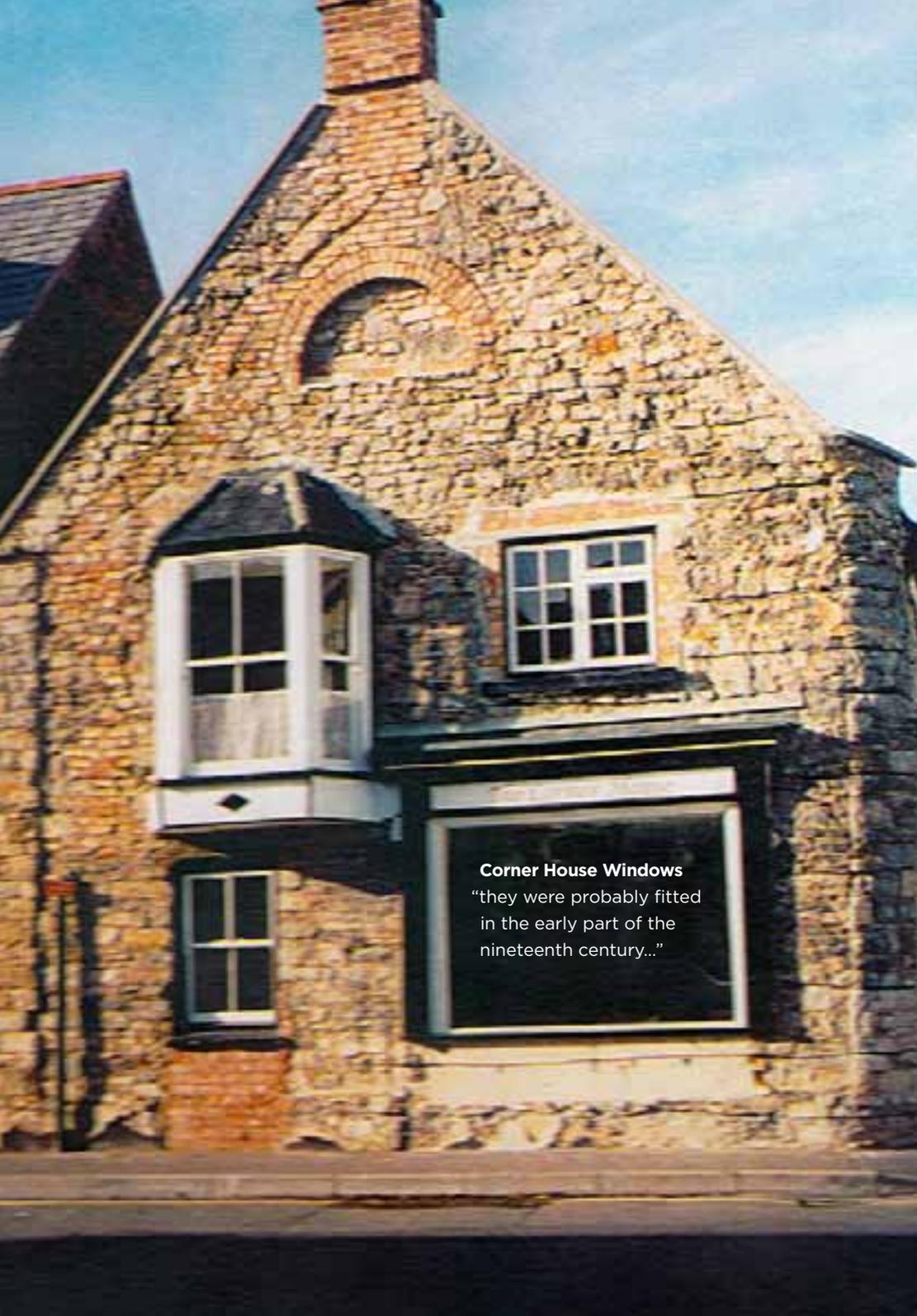
# Watchet Conservation Matters

Promoting, Conserving & Improving  
Our Physical & Natural Environment

Issue 45 March/April 2016



## Our Chair Molly Quint



**Corner House Windows**  
“they were probably fitted  
in the early part of the  
nineteenth century...”



how he was getting on and some slides of his work. The meeting is on Tuesday 15th March at 7.30pm in the Methodist School Room so do please come.

We have at long last started to plant our Cider Apple Orchard on Splash Point with the two trees given to us by Pebbles at the Wassailing evenings last year and this year, with promises of others in years to come. WCS have also bought 6 small trees from a grant we received a few years ago now, so fingers crossed for a little crop this year and more to come in future years. If anyone would like to donate a Cider Apple Tree that would be a lovely thought.

Looking forward to a busy and happy Spring ahead.

Yours very sincerely,

**Molly Quint**

Dear Friends and Members.  
When you read this we will be into March. How lovely! Fingers crossed for an excellent Spring and Summer, although we will miss the daffodils for it seemed as though they chose the mild Winter to bloom this year.

The Spice Merchant was excellent, and we are so grateful to the very kind donation to our funds. Tony James gave us an excellent talk in January about the Flatner and less serious subjects, as only Tony can!! This coming talk will be by our very own Case Officer, Paul Upton, who did such a wonderful renovation on 41, Swain Street. I am sure he will tell us about his discoveries in the house and its history, of stories told by people who kept “popping in” to see



### Corner House Windows

The Corner House is one of the most important buildings in Watchet and has been for a very long time, sited as it is on the corner of the most important streets in Watchet - Market Street and Swain Street. It has many interesting features, not least its beautiful plain tiled roof. But it is also notable for two very unusual windows.

The term sash window is usually used to indicate sliding windows, and locally, these are mostly vertically sliding. However, in other parts of the country, and occasionally in the south-west, they are horizontally sliding. Such windows are known as Yorkshire lights.

Two of the upstairs windows in the north elevation of the Corner House were Yorkshire lights, although they no longer slide as was originally intended. However, what made these particular windows different was that

they slid into concealed cavities in the wall. Outside, these cavities were framed out and finished with lath and plaster. In the mid 1980s, when Nigel Murphy removed the render in preparation for re-rendering, he exposed the laths. Molly Quint (who was the Corner House proprietor at the time) has lent me a photograph taken at the time. Inside, the cavities were finished with timber panelling. Lesley Baker, the present proprietor, kindly allowed me to take a photograph.

These two windows show in the earliest available photographs of Market Street, and I think that they were probably fitted in the early part of the nineteenth century. The building was probably originally thatched, and this would perhaps have been at the same time that it was re-roofed with Bridgwater plain tiles. The third window, to the left, which did not slide, was



added sometime in the early part of the twentieth century. It does not show in early photographs of this part of Market Street.

I have not come across windows like this anywhere else and would like to hear from anyone who has seen similar ones elsewhere.

Another interesting feature of one of these windows is that names are scratched into the panes of one of them. Molly tells me that a family from Australia once visited her and were thrilled to find them still there as they had been done by relatives before setting off for their new life in Australia.

**Paul Upton**



## The Beulah Chapel



### The Beulah Chapel

In my last article I talked about the treasures around us which we either don't know about or can't see.

How many of you have travelled on the road from Raleighs Cross to Wheddon Cross and have passed a little chapel at the fork in the road where you turn off to Wheddon Cross? I have driven along that road many, many times, and each time I pass the chapel I wonder what it is like inside, as it nearly always seems to be closed!

Last August the Beulah Chapel had an open weekend to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Bible Christian movement and also to allow visitors to look around. So, being the inquisitive type of people we are, my husband Stephen and I went to have a look.

If you watch Dr Who on the television you will know what I am referring to when I say

that the Beulah Chapel is just like the Tardis - it appears to be larger on the inside than on the outside! I was amazed how lovely it was. Wooden screens can be pulled across so that about a third of the chapel is closed off and would have been used for the Sunday School. There is no electricity so gas lights provide the only illumination. Large windows let in lots of light so the building is bright and welcoming.

Its history goes back to the coming of the Mineral Line. When the mines opened on the Brendon Hills several hundred miners came from other parts of the country. A large number of the miners were Methodists, or Bible Christians, and needed somewhere to hold their services. The land the chapel is on was purchased for £5, and was opened on 31st May 1861. You can imagine the excitement of the community of miners when the building was opened; they had

## The Beulah Chapel

somewhere to worship, to meet, hold social gatherings, concerts and temperance rallies. However, economic disaster struck, when one after the other the mines closed down and the mining families moved away. Sadly the chapel closed in 1889.

Twenty years later there was a revival of the mine workings when it was considered that the operation would still be viable. As a result, the Circuit Minister Rev T C Jacob made a proposal to restore the chapel and so it was re-opened in 1910. Unfortunately this was the year the brief revival of the mines came to an end. But the Chapel was built to last and is still in use today. Services are held every Sunday at 6.30 p.m.



I had the pleasure of attending the Harvest Festival service in the Beulah chapel. It was full to capacity with worshipers from far and wide, from local farms and surrounding villages and towns. There was such a friendly atmosphere I felt welcome straight away. The service was the typical Harvest Festival celebration, with a table decked with food and the customary "wheatsheaf" made of bread. We sang hymns and the minister talked about what Harvest Festival meant.

But all the time part of me was thinking about all of the miners and their families, and worshipers from local farming communities who would have attended services such as this over the last 150 or so years. And how I was sitting in a wonderful building, packed with history and probably a few Ghosts from the past. If you get chance to visit the chapel then do, you will be surprised.

**Jane Sharp**





**Mr W.G. Penny's & Co, Tailor and Costumier of Swain Street**

Mr W. G. Penny was a bespoke tailor and Urban District Council Chairman. This photograph taken in 1905 of his shop-front showing straw boaters amongst other wares is the very essence of Edwardian respectability, as is the gentleman standing outside. Mr W.G. Penny himself?

He employed five or six men in this shop and five women and sold his suits all over the country so it was clearly a thriving business. His mother owned the Post Office and wrote letters for the visiting illiterate seamen and ships' captains who regularly visited Watchet. She wrote to their companies and even wrote love letters for them!

W.G. Penny was a devotee of cricket and took his son to cricket matches in Minehead, travelling on a pony and trap costing 6d. He owned one of the first wireless sets in Watchet and would post the Test Match scores on a board outside his shop.

**Jan Simpson-Scott**



**Somerset Flatners - Speaker Review Open Meeting on 19th January**

In front of an audience of 32 members and visitors, Tony started his talk in modest terms quoting a conversation outside Albert's. "They're scraping the barrel a bit aren't they Tone, what are you talking about?" When Tony replied "Flatties!" He said "Why do they want to hear about shoes?"

Well or course Tony had come to talk about Somerset Flatners, affectionately known as flatties. And Tony continued in like vein with his self-deprecating humour that had his audience gripped by his subject but continuously falling about with laughter.

His story began in 1996 when Sir Robin Knox-Johnson was rowed across Watchet harbour in a decrepit 19' Bristol Channel flatner by Graham Goggins for a TV series he was making about West Country harbours. Sir Robin was heard to say that at no time during his world circumnavigation had he felt so close to sinking.

Soon Tony's love affair with flatties would have him attempting to build one, ably assisted by a retired Rolls Royce engineer Derek Vivian and Graham Coggins and Bruce Scott. Work began in a derelict Great Western Railway shed which of course later became the Watchet Boat Museum. The work took about 1000 hours but, there was no breakdown of hours spent working and drinking tea and head scratching. The flattie was launched in July 1997 and named Yankee Jack.

Tony often drifted off his subject and somehow the talk got round to stories about his time as deputy pilot-boat driver, which somehow got round to stories about the now departed 'big Janet', a 'lady' he described as being formidable and the size of a chest of drawers. (If you are not familiar with stories of this famous Watchet character, you must ask the locals).

Tony's plan to sail his flattie around the west country harbours was often met with scepticism, his discussion with Stan Rawle, an elderly ex Minehead harbour-master, was greeted with the comment, " No offence ,my boy, but I think you'd do better on the bus". Tony was of course quite undaunted and made his journey which resulted in his enjoyable book "Yankee Jack Sails Again".

This short review hardly does justice to the wonderful evening we had but I hope you get some of the flavour.

**Alan Jones**



## Annual Charity Meal at The Spice Merchant



### A Spicy Burns Night

A jolly evening was had by one and all on 25th January when over 50 members and friends of Watchet Conservation Society congregated at the Spice Merchant restaurant for a fundraising evening.

Molly had done her usual magic trick of arranging tables and timings perfectly, and the staff smiled and conjured delicious food from the kitchen, seemingly unfazed by the numbers and complexity of orders from so many noisy, laughing customers.

As it was Burns Night, (a festivity I have assiduously avoided since being violently sick years ago after eating haggis), the assembled company were treated to a rendition of poems by Robbie Burns. These were performed by Keith Jones, wearing his best ringing Scottish accent, who gave us verses against Lord Galloway, cutting and ironic, and then declaimed 'A Man's a Man for a' That' to the delight of the audience.

Raffle tickets were brought to all the tables, and prize winners received bottles of wine and other goodies. Over £100 was raised by the raffle, and the total sum raised for the whole evening was an amazing £360.

The Spice Merchant regularly give their support to local charities by donating all their Monday evening profits. We are very grateful to them for their generosity and the wonderful food and service they provide.

And we all look forward to the next time, please, Molly!

**Liz Murphy**

**Photography - Dave Simpson-Scott**



***Wassailing Event outside Pebbles Bar with our second Cider Apple Tree kindly donated by Pebbles for our new orchard.***

Watchet Conservation Matters is published six times a year. If you would like to contribute news or an article, please contact our secretary Jan Simpson-Scott on: [jan@topcreative.co.uk](mailto:jan@topcreative.co.uk)

Members of the Watchet Conservation Society receive this newsletter bi-monthly either via email for free or a printed copy for £1.00 per copy. If you are not a member and have enjoyed reading this publication, please consider joining us and help us to conserve our physical and natural environment. Membership is just £6.00 per year. All of our committee members would be delighted to welcome you.

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**Sheila Mannes-Abbott 1939-2014**

**“She loved and painted flowers”**

**Violets are blue...**

Inspiration for a traditional rhyme, a romantic 1960s film and a novel; above all else a constant reminder of Sheila and her favourite colour which again creeps in here, a complement to the riot of primroses, with anemone blanda bordering her March Garden.

Sweet and delicate anemone blanda is one of the unsung treasures of a spring garden; a fabulous windflower which provides drifts of bright colour to lift us from winter's

gloom. There is promise here, a vibrancy of colour, new life; the survival of small plants through winter's harshness, to give us those simple pleasures of a re-awakening. These are not rare species, far from it. Sheer joy comes from their very simplicity.

Like these plants, primrose, violet and anemone blanda, Sheila lifted the spirits of anyone fortunate enough to spend time in her company, in her sitting room. Now Sheila was most definitely a rare species...

**Jan Simpson-Scott**