



Watchet Conservation Matters

Promoting, Conserving & Improving
Our Physical & Natural Environment

Issue 58 May/June 2018

From the Chairman



Party for West Street children at The London Inn to celebrate The Coronation in 1953.



Hello Members,
When I accepted the Chair of the Conservation society, I have to say that I thought that most of my duties, would be a walk in the park. Pressing the flesh, making the odd speech, helping to organise, being encouraging, a little bit of negotiation, running the occasional meeting, it should be relatively easy and enjoyable. However, not everything runs according to plan. It can be just a little frustrating at times. However, I think we are making progress.

The Mineral Line booklet is progressing slowly but hopefully within the month will be published. We are, however having to make a few tweaks to the Turner interpretation board, but still hope it will be up on Splash Point this Summer.

The developer at Stoates Mill has made a wonderful effort in renovating and painting the Turbine (see rear cover) and

we will be announcing the erection of the interpretation board shortly. The planting of the wild flowers at the West Street car park has been going ahead for some time and if you're passing do please check on the progress, particularly in a few months time.

We will shortly undertake the cleaning of the tidal pool at West Beach and whilst we are there, seriously think about construction of the fish weir, we are intending to repair and preserve the notice on the wall outside the old Council office in Swain Street.

The Society was asked to back the planning application for the East Quay development and this we did without reservation, it's important for the future of Watchet and its regeneration.

This will be Jan Simpson Scott's last newsletter, make the most of it. As things stand I will be doing the next one. I would like to thank her again for all her work for the society over many years.

Lastly I am delighted to announce that Molly Quint is re-joining the committee and we are also to be joined by Beryl Haden-Guest, who has agreed to take and produce our minutes in future. They are both most welcome.

Enjoy the fine spring weather.



Bob Cramp



How Watchet Celebrated The Queen's Coronation

How Watchet Celebrated The Queen's Coronation - Maurice Chidgey

Amidst the celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II's 65th Anniversary of her Coronation this June, I thought it might be appropriate to stir the memories of older Watchet folk as to how the town celebrated Her Majesty's Coronation on Tuesday, 2nd June, 1953. This was achieved with the considerable help of the archives of the West Somerset Free Press. The weather that day was not very summery, but threatening clouds and wintry showers of rain could not dampen the enthusiasm of Her Majesty's loyal subjects.

With religious observances and parties for schoolchildren, the Watchet celebrations covered a period of five days. Thanks to a lead by the Urban District Council, bunting, flags and other decorations transformed the streets and terraces that was a fitting preliminary to mark so memorable an occasion. Business houses everywhere co-operated in reminding the public of this very special occasion, distinctive among the displays being a collection in Mr. V. E. Danby's antique shop window of plates, mugs, etc., souvenirs of Coronations and Silver and Golden Jubilees and one Diamond Jubilee of earlier successive monarchs.

Mr. G. N. Hinton, president of the Court Leet, the most ancient of local bodies, had forwarded to Buckingham Palace a scroll, neatly inscribed by Mr. R. J. H. Werren (town surveyor), bearing the Leet's loyal greetings

at Her Majesty's Coronation, for which he received an official acknowledgement.

On the preceding Sunday afternoon in the Methodist Church a service primarily for children was arranged, but several adults were among the large congregation. The leader was Mr. A. E. Morgan (headmaster of St. Decuman's Primary School), who had cleverly improvised replicas of the Royal regalia which mark the service at Westminster Abbey. Co-operating with him was his son Bryan and Joyce Bryan, Pam Clausen, John Rudd, Rodney Wells and David Jones, bearers of the replica Royal symbols. Mr. T. Young (headmaster of the County School) was at the organ.

An hour later a united service was held at St. Decuman's Church, with the Vicar (the Rev. Alan Symon) officiating. He was assisted by the Rev. William Green (Methodist), Pastor J. Sidwick (Baptist) and Mr. Wilfred Bale (Salvation Army). The musical portion of the service, with Miss Ivy Stephenson at the organ and the Town Band (bandmaster T. W. Bulpin), made acceptable contributions. Members of the Urban District Council, headed by their chairman (Mr. H. S. Allen) and officers, were among the congregation.

The feature of Coronation Day for a host of folk was the television display in the Community Centre, made possible by the public-spirited enterprise of Mr. W. A. Peppin, of the Radio Shop in Swain Street. All the main features of the Coronation procession and ceremony were enjoyed by a captivated audience.



How Watchet Celebrated The Queen's Coronation



One of the many Watchet street parties celebrating the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. This shows the top of Liddymore Road and among those pictured are Hugh Amery, Len Blackmore, Harold Binding, Anthony Short, Peter Binding, Gillian Binding, Stuart Strong, Pat Baker, Helen and Janet Amery, Mrs. Betty Binding. Note the prefabricated buildings (prefabs), now demolished, which were built as temporary homes after the Second World War.

Unfortunately, a spiteful storm broke when an assembly took place on the Esplanade in the afternoon of Coronation Day but, under the direction of Mr. F. B. Penny, a parade quickly moved off to the Memorial Ground. It was headed by Assistant Scoutmaster Michael Axon, and in a gaily decorated lorry driven by Mr. Howard Strong were the Watchet Coronation Princess (Miss Diane Lodge) and her maids of honour, Misses June Bulger, Mary Mason, Marlene Webber and Ruth Norman. Suitably attired, they made a colourful study that won general applause. Also on wheels were a Civil Defence rescue party in charge of Mr. R. J. H. Werren and a full crew of the local fire brigade under Sub-Officer Lauris Sully.



How Watchet Celebrated The Queen's Coronation



Watchet Home Guard Club outing to commemorate the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. People in the bus include; Priscilla Bulpin, Peter Bale, Rosemary Bruford, Shirley Webber, Elizabeth Binding, Mrs. Bindon, Nesta Taylor, Hilda Bale, Diane McMillan, Gertie Allen, Judy McMillan, Florrie Clausen, Clara Knight, Della Bulpin (holding daughter Shirley), Kathleen Bulpin (holding son Adrian), Minnie and Henry Bulpin, Brian and Philip Taylor, Stuart McMillan, Sue Hurley, Kelvin Bulpin, Diane and Veronica Bulpin.

Organisations represented on foot included members of the UDC, the British Legion with Mr. T. Pearce as standard-bearer, the Women's Section of the British Legion with Mrs. Axon as standard-bearer, Sea Scouts and Cubs with Patrol Leader Nicholas Axon and David Jones, and Mrs. C. Western from the W.I. By far the largest contingent in the parade was made up by youthful competitors in fancy dress, all being given a musical lead by the Town Band.

On arrival at the Memorial Ground, Mr. H. S. Allen gave them an official greeting, and the Princess briefly expressed thanks for the honour conferred upon her and her attendants. They were then given as prizes the dresses they wore, which had been made by Mrs. Kirby. Others who received souvenirs as sellers of tickets were Margaret Jones,



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Sylvia Bulley, Barbara Morse, Jean Eveleigh, Rona Lewis, Jennifer Hunt, Violet James, Josephine Guest, Geraldine Conway, Pamela Baker, Marianne Guest, Gay Bulpin, Janet Lewis, Rosalie House and Christine Moseley.

Patriotic, national and sporting topics with characters from fiction provided an entry of about 50 in a fancy dress competition. Dr. and Mrs. Myles Tonks and Miss Jose Collins were judges and awarded prizes as follows: 1 Barrow Boy (Robert Gunter), 2 Three Trumpeters (Jimmy Neal, Keith Norman and Michael Webber), 3 Pirate (Graham Watts), 4 Drummer Boy (Arthur Webber), 5 Straw Umbrella (Raymond Eveleigh). Consolation awards were made to Susanne Gunter, Hilary Darby, Michael Binding, Barbara Webber, Barbara Morse and John Trunks. Mrs. Keith Burnell won the adults' class.

A full programme of sports, under the direction of Messrs. A. E. Morgan and T. Young, followed. Messrs. H. W. Norris, M. W. Tennant and F. J. Lockyer acted as judges, with Messrs. T. D. Meaden and W. E. Groves as starters. Among the children competing were: Michael Sherlock, Susan Gunter, Barbara Webber, Philip Tipper, John Nicholas, Ann Roberts, Graham Somerville, Brian Stevens, Ann Chamberlain, Frances Morse, John Eslick, Michael Binding, David Allen, Susan Hurley, Wendy Sully, Christopher Groves, Rosemary Trunks, Maureen Date, Hugh Amery, Richard Webber, Janet Humphreys, David Groves, David Jones, Gowan Hunt, Ann Kirby, Margaret Jones, William Strong, Robin Pearce, Ruth Norman, Keith Date, Nigel Groves, Pat Chave, Janet Doble, Helen Clavey, Jacqueline Bulpin, Nina

Chave, Dorothy Dane, Roy Date, Pamela Willicombe, Ann Date, Sheila Jones, Diane McMillan, Raymond Sully, etc. Before leaving for home to tea, upwards of 100 children received Coronation mugs from Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Allen.

During the five days of celebration in Watchet many street parties were held, including one at the Community Centre for residents of Almyr and Portland Terraces when over 150 people attended.

The town's Coronation celebrations reached a fitting conclusion on the Thursday with a friendly "get-together" for the old folks, the proceedings consisting of a grand tea and entertainment in the Community Centre. Some 250 invitations had been sent out to residents over the age of 60 and there were few vacant places. After a splendid tea prepared by Mrs. A. Groves, Mrs. J. Owens and assisted by other ladies, Mr. J. Denman mentioned that all old folk unable to attend had been forwarded a souvenir parcel. Following appropriate entertainment the National Anthem terminated a delightful programme.

Footnote: Built as a British Restaurant in 1943, the building became Watchet Community Centre after the Second World War and served the town well for many years. Sadly it later became a garage, which was then demolished and the site is now known as Beverley Drive.

Maurice Chidgey



Butterflies of Watchet Area by Dave Ayling



Open Meeting - Butterflies of Watchet Area by Dave Ayling

Our well attended spring meeting was appropriate with a fascinating talk by Dave Ayling on butterflies and moths likely to be seen around Watchet and Exmoor.

Dave is a recorder for the British Butterfly Conservation Society and as befits that roll was very knowledgeable; however he spared us the more scientific side and entertained us with stories about some of the unusual lifestyles and migration.

Dave concentrated on the less common species; covering every possible butterfly would take all evening, but he included the 'green veined white' which looks so similar to the small (cabbage) white we all see. I'm sure I am not the only one who will be looking more carefully when next I see a small white. Only when it closes its wings will you see the difference and hopefully the green veins.

The migration of butterflies was covered and in particular the 'Painted Lady' which comes over from southern France sometimes in very large numbers. These are quite large butterflies but it still seems amazing that they can cover 1000 miles in around 36 hours - no doubt with a good following wind!

Some butterflies are very localised like the 'Comma' which was once only found in Kent but is now more widespread; also the 'Large Blue' which became extinct and was reintroduced to the Polden Hills in Somerset from where over the last 50 years it has successfully spread to Gloucester, Devon and Cornwall.

Dave also covered a few of the larger moths seen locally, in particular the day-flying moths like the 'Jersey Tiger' which is seen often in Watchet gardens. This moth, once confined to the island of Jersey, spread to the south coast of England around 1990 and found its way to Taunton. It was rumoured that a school field trip brought back eggs and studied their development and finally released the adults into the local countryside. It's a very plausible story. I knew a school master who did just that in the 1950s albeit using more exotic species which he knew could not survive our winter climate and could not therefore affect local populations. Ignoring the rights and wrongs of it, I welcome the 'Jersey Tigers' when they arrive in July. Do look out for them.

The considerable number of questions that followed Dave's talk showed how much we had all enjoyed his talk.

Alan Jones



Blue Anchor



Blue Anchor

According to Kelly's 1861 directory "Blue Anchor is delightfully situated on the coast of the Bristol Channel and is one of the most pleasant resorts for visitors in the county, the air being most salubrious and bracing, with extensive and picturesque scenery in the surrounding neighbourhood and the Welsh coast in the distance. Visitors will have the advantage of sea-bathing, and will find excellent accommodation."

The reason for the name Blue Anchor which is usually given is because of the fine blue clay which covered the anchors when boats moored in the bay. But I have heard that Blue Anchor can be given to any place where it is safe to anchor a boat.

John Gilman in his book on Blue Anchor says that it did not exist as a settlement until 1874 when a name was needed for the railway station. On the British history website it says

that north-west of Chapel Cleeve a sea-bathing resort was established in the late 18th century known as Cleeve Bay.

There are two 1840 tithe maps that cover what we now know as Blue Anchor - one under the name of Carhampton and one under the name of Old Cleeve. The one under the name Carhampton shows very little except Marshwood Farm and buildings.

The Old Cleeve Tithe map shows more buildings. There was a lodging house, other than the Blue Anchor Inn, and cottages.

But of course even if it didn't have a name Blue Anchor was known to the local population. In prehistoric times people would have come to the coast in search of food and in the 16th and 17th century farmers used the land as pasture or woodland and the leased fishing weirs and stacks.

There are mentions of these fishing weirs back in 1596, 19 of which belonged to George Luttrell and in the 1730s there were around 23. Each of them was named and could be identified because you had to pay rent for each one. Also you could be taken to court if you let it deteriorate! It's possible that some people just caught enough for their family but others obviously sold their catch as at the end of the 18th century it is recorded that Nettlecombe Court had 9 soles from Blue Anchor that cost 6 shillings! In 1979 an aerial photo showed there were still remains of 25 of these fishing weirs at Blue Anchor.

Jane Sperring



My Final Newsletter



My Final Newsletter

I have been Editor of the newsletter in its current form since March 2015. It is a role I have enjoyed immensely and have been very fortunate in having Jason Robinson to design it and arrange printing.

It is time for me to move on; I have been offered new challenges which I want to take up. It is vital that a new Editor fills this post with fresh ideas; someone who will continue this role, part of the face of WCS, carrying on the tradition ably done in the past by Edward Frewin and Alan Jones. There is no prescriptive style; we have each made our own interpretation so there's a completely free hand for the next Editor.

The work of Conservation Groups is vital, the more so in today's world where both the natural environment, local architecture and vernacular buildings are under threat for very many reasons, not simply financial, carelessness or ignorance. Human activities and processes are causing destruction,

degradation and impairment. We can and must work to protect our local environment in all its forms. Watchet is an important town, wealthy in resources. Its character is often described as quirky; but it is much more, wholesome and diverse, rich in environmental features dating from earliest times. It will only remain so whilst we, its residents, protect and preserve its personality in all its forms.

Ask not what the Conservation Society can do for you but what you can do for the Conservation Society (apologies to John F. Kennedy for my plagiarising his lines). Offer your help to our Chairman Bob Cramp today and together we can make that difference.

Thank you so much for your support and friendship over the 10 years I have been involved in the society both as Secretary and Editor. I hope that I shall be allowed to make the occasional contribution to future newsletters.

Jan Simpson-Scott

Watchet Conservation Matters is published six times a year. If you would like to contribute news or an article, please contact our secretary Bob Cramp on: bob2cramp@gmail.com

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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Gilke's Turbine, Stoates Mill

Stoates Mill was powered by a water wheel until 1927 when a Gilkes 'Vortex' turbine was installed. It was rated at 45HP turning at approximately 200 RPM to drive the electrical generator to power the works. Of the many turbines designed, the 'Gilkes

Vortex' (Gilbert Gilkes of Kendal, Cumbria) was the most favoured machine and they manufactured them at their factory from the 1890s to the 1920s.

Bob Cramp