



WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS

Issue 8

October 2009

Going into our third year— our achievements and hopes...

October is the month for our Annual General Meeting. We will review what we've done, think about our efforts which went well in 2008-9 and those which did not. It's the time to say what we would like to achieve in 2009-10 and for you to vote in a Committee.

Your Conservation Society has had a busy year. Our mission statement is "*conserving and promoting good civic design and protecting our natural surroundings*". A major part of what we do is to read every planning application put before West Somerset District Council and if it has a Conservation element we comment on your behalf. Our Casework Officer, David Simpson-Scott, reviewed more than 20 plans this year and commented on some half a dozen to the Planning Authority.

There were two major planning applications in 2008-9. Last November West Somerset District Council approved the Urban Splash submission for a modern block of 85 flats on East Quay. We support the development of the East Quay and the regeneration of the marina area. However, we commented adversely on its overall mass and suggested changes to improve its inclusion in the Conservation Area.

In April, an application was approved which will see the old buildings of Stoates Mill turned into 10 residences and a new build 61-bed care home on the field behind. We supported the developer through two WSDC planning meetings since Stoates Mill is part of Watchet's historical heritage. We want the buildings incorporated into a sensitive new design rather than continue to moulder and decay. Importantly we believe a care home is needed for those in our community who can no longer care for themselves. We will continue to monitor developments at the site.

Our lecture programme was attended by audiences of about 45 at each of the six evenings. One of the most memorable was a 1930's movie, shot by one of the sailors, of the last tall ship sailing from England to California through the Panama Canal, and listening to Vernon Stone and older residents reminiscing about Watchet as a working harbour.

The lime kiln project ran into Health and Safety problems but we are maintaining the cobbles and paying attention to the look of the town.

In June Myra Barrett with others surveyed the signs

throughout the Conservation Area and submitted to the Town Council a list of redundant or damaged signs needing removal or replacement. We hope to be working closely with the Town Council on other aspects of signage and lighting in the Conservation Area. The Council has voted a representative onto our Committee.

We plan more informative and fun evenings, trips to famous houses and a Carnival entry! Please check the website for events, house surveys and other relevant information, and look out for Town Crier, Alec Danby, who graciously advertises our events.



JMW Turner—The Bridgewater Sea-Piece

The clouds are dark, the sea rough, and waves more threatening...

Annual General Meeting — 27th Oct 7.30pm Methodist School Room, Harbour Road.

This is our second AGM and we want as many members as possible to hear about the progress made this year and have their say about what they want to see happen in the future.

Are you happy with this year's talks? Who would you like to see next year? What else would you like the Society to do? Can you help in any projects?

Can you spare time to help, perhaps as a Committee member? We would welcome more Committee members. If you would like to know more, please contact the chair, secretary or other committee member. Nominations for committee members must be with the secretary at the latest just before the meeting on the night. All paid up members can vote at the AGM. Your subscription renewal is not due until January 2010.

Martyn Snell talks to Watchet Conservation Society — 25th August

Martyn Snell gave us a very interesting, amusing and comprehensive talk centred on the West Somerset Railway. He described the historical developments of the railway pointing out Brunel's involvement and provided a focus on each of the stations—particularly Watchet, and some up-to-date statistics on the numbers of people using the railway's 20 miles of track, pointing out that trains run for some 230 days each year.

He made many other points. The recent economic climate, galas arranged on the railway and the obvious enjoyment of most customers have all encouraged the use of the railway which can look forward to a profitable future serving Watchet with the other stations and customers in our area.

The meeting was well attended—with several faces from Watchet station being present, and the talk was followed by a very lively question and answer session.



Tornado entering Watchet station on June 4th 2009.

For your diary:

Watchet Conservation Society AGM to be celebrated with a special recital of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by local actor

NEIL WILSON

This should not be missed.

Tuesday 27th October
7.30pm

Methodist School Room,
Harbour Road.

Admission free but
donations welcome.



Another example of our historic links with South Wales



Watchet vessels sailed for almost fifty years from the West Quay to Newport with iron ore from the Brendon Hills. However they made return voyages with cargoes *other* than South Wales coal.

At Ebbw Vale, the destination of the ore, the local colliers mined fireclays and clays between the coal seams. This was fired to produce hard wearing yellow brick and moulded details for buildings. Between 1855 and 1914 many Watchet houses bear evidence of this trade link - even with an impressed Ebbw Vale stamp.

Passing over the railway crossing towards Goviers Lane and past the steps leading to the Memorial Ground is the entrance to the old Coastguard Cottages. The Pillars and steps leading to the cottages illustrate local materials of Capton stone, Treborough slate and the Welsh imported yellow brick and distinctive architectural pediments.



From the Editor's collection

"One day, about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand."

Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe (1661-1731) who visited the area in the 1720s and was amazed by the fossils he discovered at Watchet.



Watchet Conservation Society Committee

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Secretary Peter Murphy 01984 639261

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Members Nick Cotton, Andrew Musgrave,
Derek Fawcus, Myra Barratt,
Jan Simpson-Scott