



# Watchet Conservation Matters

Promoting, Conserving & Improving  
Our Physical & Natural Environment

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## Our Chair Molly Quint

### Onion Collective and Splash Point

*Photographs taken by Dave Simpson-Scott before and after the construction of the pleasure garden pavilion.*



which, as you know, she edits so well. Also Paul Upton our Casework Officer wishes to retire at the end of our next year and will willingly guide someone during the coming year to step into his shoes at the 2016 AGM. We would also love anyone who loves Watchet and its heritage to join us on the committee. Please think about it. We do hope you will come along for this is your AGM and your evening.

Yours very sincerely,

**Molly Quint**

Dear Friends and Members.

Another year has flown by and we are at Annual General Meeting time again. This as usual will be held in The Phoenix Centre on Tuesday 17th November at 7.30pm. Do please come along; we like to do the business side of things correctly, as per the Constitution, which does not take long. Then there will be Jeannette Owen and Paul Dawson singing 1930s and 40s songs followed by refreshments and a glass of wine or two when we can enjoy the company of one another.

Jan, our very good Secretary, has asked if there is anyone who could come and take notes at our Committee meetings. This will give her more time to follow her other interests, especially our great Newsletter



## Onion Collective and Splash Point



### Onion Collective and Splash Point

In just 3 days on the first weekend in September 50 Watchet people got together and built a pleasure garden pavilion, in a workshop led by architect Piers Taylor, timber engineer Charley Brentnall and landscape architect Mark Dix of LT Studio. Funded by Big Lottery's Awards for All, the workshop was "design as you build", meaning that although we had a design principle for the pavilion, no-one really knew what it would look like, or how it would be built.

The point was that together, as a collaborative group solutions are found, mistakes are made and everyone can contribute ideas on how to make the structure sound. The result was an incredibly empowering process, pooling skills, sharing ideas and everyone working unbelievably hard in a joint and supportive effort to build something amazing for our community. We now have a remarkable looking structure

that can be used for stargazing, music events, parties, picnics, theatre productions, and for simply sitting and enjoying the view.

You can read more about the project at:

<http://www.onioncollective.co.uk/#!pleasure-garden/c1zfc>

We shall be applying for more funding to further landscape the pleasure gardens.

**Georgie Grant**  
**Director, Onion Collective**



## A Stroll in the Woods - The Culbone Stone



### A Stroll in the Woods

I don't have to tell you how lucky we are to live in this part of Somerset. We are blessed with beautiful scenery, stunning coastlines and wild moorland. But how many of us are aware of the hidden treasures which formed the history of our area, preserved over time for us all to see. Buildings from times past and ancient stones which show us that Man occupied the area and did the same as us, living, working and worshipping.

I expect you have all heard of Culbone, but maybe not so many of you know about the Culbone Stone. Hidden in woodland just off the A39 Lynmouth to Porlock road. A Neolithic stone situated on private land, normally closed to the public. In August the landowner opened the woodland for a day to give those who wanted to see it the opportunity to do so. The lure of the stone and the fact that you can't normally see it was a very good reason to visit when the

opportunity arose. So off we went one Saturday morning in search of the Culbone Stone.

I must admit that I was a little disappointed when we found it, I was expecting something the size of the stones at Avebury but nonetheless, the little stone stood proudly, on its own, in a small clearing surrounded by trees planted years ago in the 19th Century by Ada Lovelace (of early computer fame).

The Stone was discovered in 1939 and re-discovered in 1940. It is about 3 feet high and is inscribed with a wheel cross, of a kind found in Wales. No one knows what the stone was for, or who carved it, but it is believed to have originally been part of a stone row in that area, erected possibly 4000 years ago. The Exmoor National Park Ranger on duty challenged us to find some of the other stones in the row, warning us that some were buried or covered with vegetation. But we managed to find four of them, albeit quite small.

When we re-traced our route back to the road we saw that the stone was being "worshipped" by two ladies, who were totally oblivious to us walking by. It just goes to show that it still draws attention and interest as it has done for thousands of years!

If you get the chance to see the stone then do; it is just a small part of our history just waiting to be visited, but which opens our minds to the questions, who, what, when?

**Jane Sharp**



## A brief history of lime kilns - Speaker Review



### A brief history of lime kilns

On September 15th WCS member Phil Gannon spoke to an open meeting on lime kilns and lime. He showed a series of pictures beginning with the kiln at Warren Bay with a background view of the limestone cliffs, layered with gypsum, and the causeway from beach to kiln. Coal was shipped from South Wales and dumped on the beach, then hauled up the causeway.

Lime burning was known in ancient times; lime kilns existed in the Middle East in 6000BC, were used in Mesopotamia in 2450BC, in Crete in 1800BC. Phil

explained how lime kilns operated in Roman, Mediaeval and recent times up to early 20th Century. Egyptian buildings were constructed with limestone blocks, plastered with gypsum. Fuel in Egypt was in short supply so no lime burning was done there. The Romans used a "Flare Kiln" and some of these structures still exist.

Phil's pictures included kilns of various shapes in Lynmouth, the West Indies, (where seashells were burned instead of limestone), Treborough and Doniford. Many kilns were built into earth or rocky

## A brief history of lime kilns - Speaker Review



banks, constructed in brick, with firebrick used for the backs. Diagrams showed different types of kiln, Phil explaining how they were used to burn limestone to produce quicklime.

Watchet lime was much in demand as it contained magnesium and iron compounds making particularly good hydraulic mortar. Phil's close-up picture of Warren Bay kiln was especially enlightening showing alternating layers of limestone and shale which made lime mortar so effective when building underwater.

After the Romans left Britain building with wood was again used, until 1000 years later when castles were being built with stone and mortar.

Phil showed us an egg-shaped "Draw Kiln" and carefully explained the chemistry of lime. Kilns were built close to the source of limestone. Transporting quicklime required canals, sea-going ships and decent roads. Our nearest canal to Warren Bay was at Tiverton so packhorses pulled the loads of quicklime on wooden carts over these long distances. Doniford Road in 1829 when The Turnpike Act was passed was classed as a turnpike, as was the B3191 and much of the A39. Therefore tolls should have been paid but quicklime loads destined for farms were exempt. Quicklime was also used for renders and fluxes, waterproofing buildings, sanitation, purifying water and rubber making.

Phil showed many fascinating photographs, one of "Worthy" Sutton who

operated the Doniford kiln. His wooden cart was pulled by a donkey and the kiln operated in tandem with Watchet's last kiln built on the site of Daw's Castle in 1925. On "Worthy's" retirement his job passed to Jack Slade who was to be Watchet's last lime burner.

With the advent of Portland cement, new manufacturing processes and new fertilisers, lime burning and the kilns fell into disuse; many lime kilns were left to become ruins. WCS had hoped to make the kiln at Daw's Castle a restoration project like some others which have been repaired and preserved as a reminder of a bygone local industry.

Phil Gannon's knowledge of the local area and ancient sites is formidable, vast and extensive; his enthusiasm for preserving our local heritage is well-known and his walks and tours are excellent.

This was a real treat from an expert.

### Valerie Ward

*Daw's Castle Kiln  
by Nick Cotton*



### Farewell to The Boatshed

The boat shed was part of Watchet's industrial heritage and was graced by these immortal words.

It seems fitting now that it has been demolished to remind ourselves of those lines which were made famous by our legendary poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in his epic poem The Ancient Mariner inspired by his visit to Watchet

in 1797 with his friends Dorothy and William Wordsworth.

Fair winds had blown the Ancient Mariner's ship northward until it reached the equator and calm waters and rested for a few days without moving. The thirsty seamen blamed the Ancient Mariner and hung the dead albatross about his neck to show his guilt.

Remember these lines when next you stand in front of our magnificent statue of The Ancient Mariner on the Esplanade and reflect awhile on both The Boatshed and Coleridge.

**Jan Simpson-Scott**

*The Boatshed*  
by Alison Jacobs  
Available framed from £40.00  
Tel: 07833 750 428  
[alison@alisonjacobs.com](mailto:alison@alisonjacobs.com)





*The Rime of The Ancient Mariner*  
By Darren Scott

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”**

### **A Garden Border in Winter**

This painting is alive with snowdrops nodding their heads regally. Snowdrops are such a welcoming sight as they creep into view and urge us to sigh that winter is almost over again. Their delicate heads belie their hardiness: they are tough little plants beloved of anyone who dislikes the cold season and who looks forward to their cheery appearance.

In contrast cyclamen, from the Greek *cyclaminos*, provide a burst of colour and charm in the dark days of winter, their ivy-shaped leaves silver marbled.

Peer at the degree of detail, ever-present in Sheila's paintings, and study the hope she captures. She gives us magic in flowers. Her favourite colour purple displays itself under the sharp green leaves, vibrant with life, and the mood she creates uplifts and inspires as her presence always did.

**Jan Simpson-Scott**