



Watchet Conservation Matters

**Promoting, Conserving & Improving
Our Physical & Natural Environment**

Issue 61 November/December 2018



From the Chairman



Dear Members,
Warmest greetings, I am nearly coming to my end of my first year as your chairman, and I thought we might indulge our selves to consider how lucky we are to be living in this small coastal town balanced precariously on the edge of the Bristol Channel.

With only three and a half thousand inhabitants, Watchet punches well above its weight. Where else would you enjoy, such a varied, and diverse melange of organisations and activities, mostly run by volunteers.

A street Carnival (dating from 1906), a Film and a Music Festival, Watchet Summertime,

Street fairs and Markets, Queen Caturday night. A Town, and Brass band not forgetting our wonderful Town Crier, or indeed, our Town Council.

Football, Cricket, Boxing and Bowls clubs. Sea Scouts, Scouts, Cubs, Beavers, Brownies and Guides and a Youth Club. Market House and Boat Museums, Harbour Community Bookshop and the Library. The Harbour or Marina, The Boat owners Association and Fishing. WACET, Watchet Arts Group, Wheels, Pals and Roots. Pubs, Bars, Music Venues and Cafes, Sea Shanties, The Mineral Line, West Somerset Railway, The British Legion and The Salvation Army.

St Decumans, Methodist, Baptist and Catholic Churches, The Phoenix Centre, The Sanctuary, Forget me Not Café, The Dementia Alliance, Mothers Union and Knit and Natter, and I apologise for the probably many omissions.

Last Saturday morning I was talking with some folk in the pannier market at South Molton and when I said I was from Watchet, eye-brows were raised and several comments made, "Watchet's an up and coming place", "Watchet's on the up" etc. and clearly it is, in spite of the Paper Mill closure in 2015.

You certainly would not have heard that comment seven years ago, when I moved here, from my memory quite the reverse, so what has changed? The answer is, The Onion Collective. I have been a fan since the early days of the Makers Club in which I was involved, Splash Point and the Boat



Museum (items 1, 3 and 4). I have often noticed they are not universally liked or appreciated, but, for me they are the only “Game in Town” and Watchet is extremely fortunate to have them, which is why I asked Georgie Grant for an article. I would mention we (WCS) are members of the WCCT (item7).

The other article is about the Wild Flower Project, also not universally understood and appreciated, but it’s one we have sponsored helped and encouraged and intend to continue doing so in the future. I asked lone and Liz for a report, the first year has not been without its problems, but everyone is very positive about next year.

Lastly the one group I have yet to mention is ours the WCS which at the time of going

to print is still in existence. And that is some thing to be celebrated.

See you at the AGM.



Bob Cramp



Stone Wayside Crosses

If you live in Watchet, there are several ways of driving into Williton, and it is on one of those roads that you can see the remains of a rare stone Cross... one of only two of its original purpose in Somerset. I first noticed it when, 10 years or so ago, someone had laid flowers beside it: and yet it has been there for centuries. Why was it built there? and why do only the base and part of the shaft remain? What had happened to the other parts of it?

Since we first saw it, on the left of Doniford Road after the bus stop at the right turn in the road to Williton, we have noticed that someone from time to time has cut back the grass and undergrowth round it to reveal more of its base. This had once been

an important Cross marking one of the Williton parish boundaries, but the deeper reason for its position there was not so easy to discover.

There are thousands of wayside Crosses in the British Isles: the most beautiful are not always the oldest, or even the most recent, but the Celtic Crosses are far and away the most ornately decorated. Most often found in the south-west, especially in Ireland, Wales and Cornwall, the cross at the head of the shaft is frequently surrounded by a wheel-like circle and the shaft has a never-ending tracery with leaved and other symbols: both circle and tracery represent eternity, and the circle alone can also represent the world. An 11th. century Cross



at Carew in Pembrokeshire is 13 feet tall, with 164 feet of endless tracery on its shaft. Some Cornish granite Crosses are of a material so hard that the wheel head cross could not be pierced through and remains as a carved moulding.

Although Crosses were erected over the centuries for many different reasons, it is believed that the plain mark of a cross on stone had not always been a Christian symbol only. The symbol could be used as a way-marker in rugged country, such as the Peak District and Dartmoor, and probably Cornwall was the first county, in the fourth century A.D., to have stone Crosses erected

by missionaries: these were mostly of the local granite and had the wheel-head solid and not pierced through.

Later, mediaeval Crosses were set up not only as way-markers on roads but also at crossroads where people would gather to worship and listen to travelling preachers. These are known as Preaching Crosses and when eventually a church was built by the growing community, such Crosses were incorporated in the churchyard. They were used especially at Easter time as the focal point of processions: there are examples where a series of steps is built into the base and show worn areas where people have knelt in prayer over the centuries, thankful for blessings or asking forgiveness. These stepped Crosses have at the top of the shaft a figure of Jesus, and other Biblical people are also depicted, especially showing the Crucifixion. Such Crosses are known as Calvaries, and many were smashed in the 17th. century as the Puritans considered them idolatrous. Some fragments were, however, saved, or later found elsewhere and incorporated in restoration of the church itself.

It seems that the Cross whose remains I had noticed at Doniford may have originally marked the place where a Celtic saint had first landed nearby. It is also known as a Water Cross: these were placed where a road passes over running water, and at Doniford the stream had originally run out to sea at this point through a culvert. Later, the Doniford Stream had to be diverted and the culvert was filled in.



Incidentally, at one time Williton had a further four Crosses. Only parts of St. Peter's Church Cross remain, across the road from the Church. This 15th. Century Cross are now only 4'5" high, for the original upper part and surrounds were ruined during a Civil War raid, and the debris was apparently sold in 1660 for 14 shillings. Another, the "White Cross" can no longer be seen but it is marked on a map of 1800 as at the end of Long Street, and apparently in 1623 eight pence was paid "for the mending of White Cross" (Compare this with the estimated £10,000 to repair the Ilchester Market Cross which was knocked down in August last year!).

In the churchyard on the south side of St. Peter's, are remains of a 13th. century Cross, and there were two other Crosses which marked the junctions where the north-south road into Watchet was joined by others from east to west.

Crosses were not only raised as memorials and to mark holy places; in towns where traders gathered, more elaborate Crosses were built incorporating covered areas to shelter sellers and their goods. They were intended to sanctify commercial transactions or to commemorate the market's charter. They provided a focal meeting point for officials of preachers



Stone Wayside Crosses

to address the crowds Later, mediaeval and Tudor benefactors had provided a roofed shelter to surround the Cross, with arched walls and a central Cross or lantern to crown the canopy. These were known as a Butter Cross, though in Dunster the remains of the Butter Cross was moved some way from what is today known as the Yarn Market.

Closer than Dunster is Raleigh's Cross, where the stump of a rare Cross marks a manorial boundary. It was erected by Simon Raleigh (who fought at Agincourt) in memory of his first wife, buried in their parish of Nettlecombe. It had a massive base, and was located close to the dangerous Snipe Bog to warn packhorse travellers to keep south of it. When the hill was enclosed in the late 19th. century the stone was removed and positioned as a boundary marker between the Carew and Trevelyan estates.

Much closer to home, we know that Watchet too has had its Crosses, and still has the 15th. century one in St. Decuman's churchyard. At about that time Market Street was known as Chipping Street and there was a large open area at the mouth of the Washford River: this became the site of the Shambles, the Great Cross, Holy Cross Chapel, a pillory and the "tollestrig". Here there was a market. Swine Street, as Swain Street was then called, ran from the east end of the market place up to its junction with Harbour Road, and on old maps this Junction is marked as Lime Cross. Presumably non-perishable goods, such as the locally-produced lime, were

sold. The Lime Cross itself was removed during living memory, but I have been unable to find out if, and where, it was preserved. The area around the northern end of the railway footbridge is still known now as "The Cross", even though the market and its Cross have gone. The market area it denoted was close to where the Salvation Army now stands, and the market probably ceased trading when the railway came to Watchet.

There are many prehistoric cross markers to be seen in Somerset and beyond, notably the Culbone Stone and similar engraved boulders which have been excavated and set upright: however, the Crosses which were raised as memorials to the dead of two World War have a much more accessible history, as witness our own Watchet War Memorial.

Valerie Ward

The Wildflower Project



The Wildflower Project

The inspiration for the Wild Flower Project came about when residents saw the continued use of pesticides in and around Watchet and the persistent strimming of unused grass spaces that would, if left to grow through the spring and summer be producing an abundance of wild flowers.

With the help of the WCS it was put forward to Watchet Town Council as an idea that would increase the bio diversity and beautify the area. Permission was requested to use a small part of the banks to West Street Car Park as a pilot scheme to be run by volunteers and to show what could be done with a little forethought and care to create areas of natural beauty where insect life could flourish and give

the resulting benefits to the environment as a whole.

A complete plan for the project was formed and plants and seeds collected and prepared from September 2017. It was decided that native plants from the immediate surrounding area would be used and a huge list of plant species was compiled. Work started on the project as soon as permission was granted by the Town Council and the snowfall had ended in late March.

There was an area that had been left untended for many years where Alexanders had self-seeded about and had become an invasive and dominant species. These were





The Wildflower Project

dug out and a large number of foxgloves added along with many other flowers and grasses. Plug plants were also sown through the grass bank running along the road edge.

Sadly, due to an error, the grass bank was accidentally strimmed at the worst possible moment and the summer drought which followed set the project back and the challenge of continuing to find the plants through the grass for regular watering in became too great. For a few months in the summer the site was just kept tidy and dead plants removed. Meanwhile the project was given funding by the Harbour Community Bookshop and plug plants bought and tended until such time that they could be planted.

As soon as we had some rainfall in late September planting started again. Now there is an abundance of seedlings appearing giving hope for drifts of flowers throughout spring and summer next year. Many of the plants have survived and are picking up and looking gert lush and more plants are being added every week. It's still dry and watering in is still necessary.

The volunteers are feeling ever more positive that the original vision for the project will come to fruition in the spring and that people will be greeted by a blaze of colour as they drive down the hill from Blue Anchor into Watchet.

Ione Harris & Liz Passmore

The Onion Collective



The Onion Collective

People often ask 'why did you call yourselves Onion Collective?' It is a good question, since really we have very little to do with onions. We have various answers that range from liking to make grown men cry (joke!) to a symbol of rural life that stems from the Latin 'union'. On a personal level, one of my favourite poems comes from Carol Ann Duffy:

"I give you an onion / It is a moon wrapped in brown paper / it promises light".

In truth though there are two main reasons. The first is that each of us represents a layer of skill – each layer entirely different; we need each other to form the whole. No one layer can achieve the things we want to achieve at Onion, and therefore we must always be a collective.

The second reason is more practical. It acts as a useful mnemonic, people remember hearing about 'The Onions'. Our children can be 'spring onions' our fundraisers 'shallots', when in the pub we are 'pickled onions' (hoho!).

We are a community led regeneration company. This means that we believe true regeneration, the type that brings prosperity and social wellbeing (rather than the type that makes shareholders rich) is most successfully achieved when the people who live in that place are involved with what that regeneration is, and how it should be delivered. We believe in civil society, where community, the





The Onion Collective

state and business work together for the common good.

In order to demonstrate these ideals, we are working on a number of projects (7 in fact) that all aim to deliver economic, cultural or social regeneration. All of our projects stem from community consultations, and we thank all of you who have taken part to help us devise and design these projects. Over the years your knowledge, advice and support has been invaluable to us.

1. Watchet Community Makers

A volunteer making and upskilling project, led by a professional builder, the makers work on projects requested in the town to make or repair something of community value. The makers have worked on storage for the Sea Scouts, an IT suite for Knights Templar First School, shelving for Watchet Foodbank and a huge variety of other projects.

2. Splash Point

Community space leased for a peppercorn rent by landowner John Richards, and maintained for community and visitor enjoyment. In 2015 50 volunteers built a pavilion over the course of a single weekend, in doing so made friends, learnt new skills and created a stage and entertainment space for all to enjoy. Conservation Society have a cider orchard up there, and we worked together to produce the Turner interpretation panel.

3. East Quay

A cultural enterprise development, situated on the quayside which includes

a double storey gallery, artist workshops, a papermill, a geology lab, office space, community space and outdoor events space, a restaurant and self-catering accommodation 'pods'. The scheme received planning permission in June and we are now fundraising in earnest. We are particularly grateful for the support the conservation society has shown this project over the 4 years that it has been in development, and thank you wholeheartedly for your advice and expertise and energy to help us get this far.

4. Watchet Visitor Centre

Watchet Visitor Centre and Boat Museum
A great example of collaborative working, the building houses Watchet Town Council, the Boat Museum owned by the Flatner Association, an office for Cliffs Cabs and the Visitor Centre. Since opening in July 2016 the VC has become the hub of tourism for the town, and received some 15,000 visitors.

5. Contains Art

A rogue entry, as Contains Art is not officially part of Onion Collective, they are however our sister company and was set up by two of our OC Directors, and much work is intertwined. Shipping containers on the quayside which houses artist studios and a programme of exhibitions, Contains Art is dedicated to making nationally important art accessible and fun for all.

6. Industry for Watchet

A proposal for a bio recycling plant, based at the old Mill Site, that will use living organisms such as algae or mycelium

The Onion Collective

(vegetative part of the mushroom) to break down waste. Mycelium can then be used to make new products such as insulation, a kind of 'vegan' leather or furniture. The project has completed its first stage 'road map' and is now looking for investment to build a full business case. Using industrial regeneration to build community resilience the project intends to explore models of community ownership that will benefit even the most vulnerable in the town.

7. Watchet Coastal Community Team

We are proud to be a member, and on the board of this exemplar partnership of 30 organisations all working for a flourishing Watchet. WCCT is closely connected to the Visitor Centre and is involved in many of the tourism activities and initiatives that take place. WCCT has recently submitted a £240k bid for 'Place Based Social Action' to DCMS/Big Lottery to find ways in which local people can work together to solve local problems. Following consultation we have, with WCCT designed plans that address small scale community transport journeys, help develop skills and training, support young people, open democratic processes and expand information sharing. If WCCT is successful, which we will find out in January, OC will work to help deliver these projects.

In order to pay our salaries (there is unfortunately no money in community development!) we also offer bespoke business support, particularly in the social enterprise / community business sector, and for voluntary sector organisations. We work all over the country, from

Liverpool to South Shields to Kent helping other community organisations build their capacity and resilience; essentially helping other places to develop their own community work.

All of these projects in some way go towards building and demonstrating our hypothesis that true regeneration must come from the roots up. That community led people power is achievable and demonstratively successful. That together, as a community we form a strong, healthy and vibrant whole. That we need each other's' layers! We hope to show that our team at Onion is just a microcosm of the whole of community life in Watchet. In truth and in all fairness Watchet has always had this spirit of endeavour. It is what Watchet is known for. Really our ambition at Onion is to conserve and enhance this incredible spirit that Watchet has, and help to translate it into jobs, visitors and a community full of well-being.

And so really, the Onion part of our name matters little. But collectively we are strong, Watchet always has been, and that's something worth conserving.

Georgie Grant

onioncollective
HELPING COMMUNITIES BE THE BEST VERSIONS OF THEMSELVES





Watchet cricket team of 50 years ago by Rob Hutchings



Open Meeting - Watchet cricket team of 50 years ago - Tuesday 17th September by Rob Hutchings

Sadly Jenny Hill was unable to deliver her 'Watchet Memories' so at the last minute we were able to put a programme together as Rob Hutchings, who is a member of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, kindly stepped in with some wonderful old photographs of the Watchet cricket team of 50 years ago. The photographs sparked so many memories for members and visitors present also, of course, many questions.

When we had exhausted the 'cricket,' Paul Upton stepped in with more challenging local pictures, so many people present had extra information, which is always the

bonus of these meetings, by adding to the recorded wealth of local history and knowledge.

This was truly a meeting of participation with as much talking coming from the audience as from the speakers.

A big thanks to Rob for 'saving the day'.

We do hope Jenny makes a speedy recovery and will be persuaded to give her 'Watchet Memories' in the New Year.

Alan Jones

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

Members of the Watchet Conservation Society receive this bi-monthly newsletter via email for free, or a printed copy for only £1.50 each. If you are not a member and have enjoyed reading this publication, come and join us to help us conserve our physical and natural environment. All of our committee members would be delighted to welcome you.

Membership (per annum):

£6.00 (single membership)

£10.00 (couple membership)

Printed copy of Newsletter:

£1.50 each (£9.00 per annum)

£2.00 each (ad hoc single purchases)

Both (per annum):

£15.00 (single membership, 1 x newsletter)

£19.00 (couple membership, 1 x newsletter)

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Tuesday Evening Talks Programme 2019

15/01/2019	Peter Baker	Illustrated talk on woodland walks for fungi foraging The Methodist School Rooms, 7.30pm
19/03/2019	Francis Farr-Cox	Illustrated talk on getting to know Somerset spiders The Methodist School Rooms, 7.30pm
21/05/2019	Neil Wilson	Collecting, restoring radios & running a radio museum The Methodist School Rooms, 7.30pm
16/09/2019	Andy King	Illustrated talk on Watchet's Jurassic coast The Methodist School Rooms, 7.30pm
17/09/2019	TBC	TBC The Methodist School Rooms, 7.30pm
19/11/2019	AGM	The Phoenix Centre, 7.30pm