



Watchet Conservation Matters

Promoting, Conserving & Improving
Our Physical & Natural Environment

Issue 70 May/June 2020

From the Chairman



Queen Catherine of Braganza



Hello Folks.

I feel I owe everyone a bit of an apology, after my now rather insensitive wish that we should “Be Lucky”, expressed at the end of my last Chairman’s missive written in the last week of February.

Hindsight would be a wonderful gift, how could I know that Covid 19, happening the other side of the world during the next three weeks, would change our lives so dramatically, and that by March 23rd, the government would put us into total lockdown.

Most shops, pubs, bars and businesses closed. All meetings, markets, festivals and functions cancelled for the foreseeable future. The West Somerset Railway closed. Those of us considered vulnerable, including myself, were put into self-isolation for our own safety. Once again, Watchet proved what a strong sense of community can achieve. The Watchet

Coronavirus Community Help was formed in a matter of days to help and support the aged and vulnerable, as well as to assist and protect the NHS, Nurses, Key Workers, Paramedics and Carers in the community.

The story of this astonishing achievement needs to be told. I am grateful to Georgie Grant for responding to my request for an article. Our newsletters are all available online and are now a public record of our times.

As for myself, and probably many of you considered vulnerable, I am unable to leave my house. But I made an exception in order to deliver a donation of £250 from the WCS to the “Go Fund Me” campaign. I delivered this on the end of a fishing rod, maintaining a 2 metre distance, as can be seen in the photograph above which appeared on the cover of the West Somerset Free Post.



From the Chairman



I join all my Doniford Road neighbours on Thursday evenings to make a noise in support of the NHS. I go for a walk, usually late in the evening, enjoying and photographing the stunning Watchet Sunsets. I have a small garden. I have a lot to be grateful for.

However, the main article "Thirteen Shades of Blue" by Michael Quint contributes to the ongoing debate as to the origins of "Watchet Blue": a fascinating piece, full of historical facts and information.

We have another poem titled "Remember This", from our resident bard "Twitch", Deanna Payne to you and me. It's a very insightful piece about her life in Watchet under the Covid 19 pandemic. And if that is not enough, on the top of this page is one of my photographs taken whilst walking in isolation on 30th April.

Where Watchet treads the World follows: The now extended Wild Flower Project (West

Street) is proving to be a very successful experiment. Councils such as Minehead have now taken similar initiatives and are receiving accolades, so a little pat on the back for our town council who cooperated with the society in setting up this trial two years ago.

This year it was the Society's intention to concentrate on a number of projects relating to the natural environment. Sadly these have now had to be mothballed. Who knows how long it will be before life returns to normal in Watchet, and what kind of normal? We have been lucky that so far the scourge of this pandemic has largely passed us by.

Our thoughts must go out to those less fortunate.

Bob Cramp - Chairman

Thirteen Shades of Blue

Thirteen Shades of Blue

What colour is "watchet blue"? Was it named after the town, or was the town named after the colour? Or is it just a coincidence that Watchet has the same name as a historic colour?

There is plenty of evidence that there used to be an important cloth industry in and around Watchet. The "*Victoria County History for St. Decumans, including Watchet and Williton*" states:

"Fulling mills established by the early 14th century seem to have made St. Decumans a centre of the cloth industry. Dyers, fullers, and weavers were found in Watchet before the 16th century, and in the 17th century there were at least four fulling mills in the parish. Williton clothiers like Aldred Bickham, William Pyke, and the Blinmans paid subsidies similar to those of prosperous tenant farmers, and Watchet clothiers such as the Wheddons and another branch of the Bickhams were not far behind. In the later 17th century the leading manufacturers were the Slocombes of Little Silver and the Chapplins of Egrove, with business connexions in neighbouring parishes. Cloth making continued in the 18th century, with Wheddons at Watchet and Pulmans at Doniford still in production, the latter until the later 19th century."

The closure of the Van Heusen shirt factory, in 1982, marked the end of the long association of cloth manufacturing with the town.

According to medieval dyeing specialist John Edmonds, the word watchet was used to denote a textile colour from the 12th century onwards. It is mentioned in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (The Miller's Tale), written in the late 1300s, while information from old wills and tailors' bills suggests that it was a popular shade of cloth in the fifteenth century.

In a Statute dated 1552, Edward VI banned the sale of all colours, except for the following (5 & 6 Edw. 6):

"scarlet, red, crimson, murry, violet, puke, brown-blues, blacks, greens, yellows, blues, orange-tauny, russet, marble-gray, "sad new colour", azure, watchet, sheeps-colour, lion-colour, motley or iron grey"



Edward VI - watchet was one of only 20 cloth colours he allowed





Thirteen Shades of Blue

Watchet (the cloth colour) was popular with Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and King James I (1566-1625), and, according to the book "Costume in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries" it was often specified by costume designers and playwrights in the time of Shakespeare, when it was referred to as a pale blue colour, tending towards green (and said to signify "fayned stedfastnesse"). Mary Queen of Scots apparently wore knitted stockings of "watchett blue" for her execution, in February 1586, while Charles I wore a blue knitted waistcoat of "watchett blue" for his execution, in January 1649.

But perhaps the best-known example of the historic popularity of watchet blue cloth is an event recalled in Ben Norman's "Legends and Folklore of Watchet". Apparently a Queen Catherine (believed to be Catherine of Braganza - the wife of King Charles II) once visited Watchet to select some lengths of the celebrated material, and was so pleased with her welcome that she generously provided a feast for everyone, of hot cakes and cider. The visit is celebrated each year, during "Catur'n's Night" (as Catherine was known locally).

A L Wedlake, in his "A History of Watchet" (updated and republished recently, with the support of WCS), suggests that the colour watchet is derived from an old French word meaning dull and hyacinth-like, and is very similar to the colour of the blue lias found at Watchet (while stressing that there is no evidence of any connection with the town). His reference to a French word for hyacinth echoes the views of Professor Skeat who, in

his 1890s "Notes to the Canterbury Tales", stated the following:

"wachet, a shade of blue. Tyrwhitt wrongly connects it with the town of Watchet, in Somersetshire. But it is French. Littré, s. v. vaciet, gives: 'Couleur d'hyacinthe ou vaciet,' colour of the hyacinth, or bilberry (Lat. uaccinium). Roquefort defines vaciet as a shrub which bears a dark fruit fit for dyeing violet; it is applied, he says, both to the fruit and the dye; and he calls it Vaccinium hysginum."

Skeat's mention of bilberry, known locally as the whortleberry, presumably led W H P Greswell, in his 1903 book "*The Land of Quantock*", to surmise that Watchet "*was probably a whitish blue cloth manufactured at Watchet, and dyed with the juice of the Quantock whortleberry, still largely used as a dye.*" The juice apparently yields a dark-blue or purple dye that has been much used in the past for the dyeing of wool, including RAF uniforms.

Turning to the present, a Google image search on "watchet blue" throws up a range of hits, from period silk embroidery thread, to a Dulux paint colour, and even a Kansas-based blogger's "color of the day", as shown Fig 1.

Meanwhile, another paint manufacturer, Berger, states in the 2018 edition of its online colour magazine that:

"Watchet is a very pale blue colour, similar to sky blue. According to folk etymology, the colour derives its name from the town

Thirteen Shades of Blue

Fig 1: Selected results from Google Image search on "Watchet Blue"



of Watchet on the coast of Somerset in south-west England, the cliffs around which look pale blue due to their rich alabaster content. It is also believed watchet is derived from 'waiss', an old Belgian-French word for royal blue. The word 'watchet' was used originally to describe the material used to line cloaks in 15th century England. This material was blue, and later the word came to mean just the colour, not necessarily the fabric."



It is not clear where Berger got their information.

Taken together, the above images appear to show that there is no current consensus on the precise colour of watchet blue.

Back to historic sources: an important publication relating to UK textile production in the late 1700s-early 1800s was James Haigh's book of 1800 entitled "*The Dyer's Assistant in the Art of Dying Wool and Woollen Goods*". Drawing from the work of French dyers, it includes a



chapter on the shades of blue that can be obtained from dipping wool in a prepared vat of indigo, or woad, as follows:

"It is an ancient custom among Dyers to reckon thirteen shades of blue from the deepest to the lightest. Although their denominations be somewhat arbitrary, and that it is impossible exactly to fix the just passage from one to the other, I shall notwithstanding give the names. They are as follow, beginning with the lightest: milk-blue, pearl blue, pale blue, flat blue, middling- blue, sky blue, queen's blue, turkish-blue, watchet-blue, garter-blue, mazareen-blue, deep-blue, and very deep blue."

This suggests that watchet-blue was regarded as being amongst the darker shades of blue which could be obtained from the process described, at that time. Interestingly, a 1789 translation from a French work by Hellot in 1750 entitled "The Art of Dyeing Wool, Silk and Cotton" also identifies thirteen shades of blue that can be obtained from dyeing wool from an indigo or woad vat, listing their names as follows:

"white blue, pearl blue, pale blue, faint blue, delicate blue, sky blue, queen's blue, turkey blue, king's blue, garter blue, Persian blue, aldego blue, and infernal blue"

Assuming that both books describe the same thirteen shades of blue, from the same process, and in the same order (lighter to darker), watchet-blue appears

to be inter-changeable with king's blue, and vice versa.

While neither book contains a colour chart, a recent (2016) publication entitled *"The Dyer's Handbook - Memoirs of an 18th Century Master Colourist"*, by Dominique Cardon, allows many of the thirteen colours to be tentatively identified. The book contains photographs of blue dyed broadcloth samples from an 18th century dye book from the Languedoc region of France, which can be matched with Hellot's shades (and therefore Haigh's), as Fig 2.

This also suggests that Watchet blue was a darker shade than has been suggested hitherto, although Cardon does note that English colours were generally greener and greyer than their French equivalents.

As indicated above, the dyeing process responsible for the thirteen shades of blue involved the use of woad or indigo. Woad (*Isatis tinctoria*) is a naturalised plant of the cabbage family, which is thought to have been introduced into the UK during the Iron Age, and used as a dye ever since. Variations of colour in woad dyed cloth can be obtained by varying the age of the leaves, the amount and duration of dipping, the presence or absence of other dyes, as well as other factors.

Fig 2. Blues from dyeing woollen cloth with Woad or Indigo, taken from cloth samples from an 18th century dyebook (Cardon 2016)

*Colour name from Hellcot 1750 **Colour name from Haigh 1800



Woad plants

Dyeing with woad involves the crushing and fermenting of the leaves (sometimes with urine and other materials) and the preparation of vats of bubbling liquid into which the cloth is dipped. It can be a messy, smelly process – causing Queen Elizabeth I, on 14 October 1585, to ban the sowing of woad within four miles of a market or clothing town or within eight miles of any house of hers.



Thirteen Shades of Blue

Interestingly, the philologist Robert Nares viewed the derivation of Watchet's name, in his 1822 *"Glossary or Collection of Words, Phrases, Names, and Allusions to Customs, Proverbs, etc, Which Have Been Thought to Require Illustration in the Works of English Authors, Particularly Shakespeare and His Contemporaries"*, as follows:

WATCHET, a. Most probably from wad, or woad. Saxon, wadchet. The colour of the dye of woad, ie, pale blue. This seems to me much preferable to the derivation from waeced, weak.

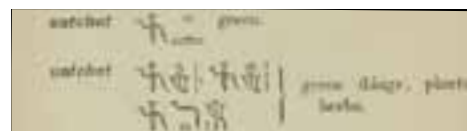
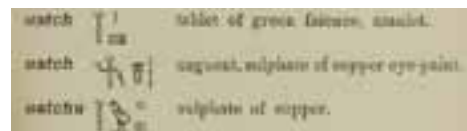
Like Greswell almost 100 years later, Nares has linked Watchet's name to a blue coloured dye, but in this case it's woad, rather than whortleberry, which is the source of the colour.

Although Nares' interpretation of Watchet's name has been superceded in recent years (in favour of Ekwall's 1936 view in his book "English Place Names" that the name Watchet is formed from two Welsh words meaning 'under the wood'), there are indications that woad was used to dye cloth locally, giving it some plausibility. For example, Sir H C Maxwell Lyte, in his "History of Dunster", describes how steps were taken, in the late 1400s, to prevent the pollution of the river there from effluent from the woad dyeing process, known as "le wodewater". Whether woad was being used locally before then is not known, and it's also not known if the woad would have been grown locally (being alkaline, the soil around Watchet is likely to have been suitable), or imported, or both. Somerset

was known as a prime woad growing region for many years (Glastonbury is thought to have been named after the Latin word for woad – glastum), and woad is listed as one of the cargoes imported by sea into Minehead, during the mid to late 1500s.

In 1927, an eminent biblical scholar, James Rendel Harris, proposed an exotic explanation of Watchet's name and its connection with woad. In an essay entitled "A Primitive Dyestuff" he declared that "woad, then, was watchet in the seventeenth century". He also surmised that Watchet was the original settlement of Ancient Egyptian traders, who (he believed) introduced woad to Britain. Harris wrote widely on the possible colonisation of Britain by the Ancient Egyptians, believing there was clear evidence for it in several places, including Stonehenge.

Harris's theory rested on linguistic observations showing a link between the Ancient Greek word for woad - Isatis - and the Egyptian word uatchet. He also drew upon transcriptions of Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs from Sir E A Thompson Wallis Budge's "Vocabulary to the Theban Recension of the Book of the Dead", as follows:

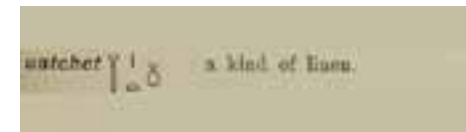


Thirteen Shades of Blue



The Papyrus of Ani (Book of the Dead) - Discovered by Budge in 1888

Intriguingly (but not mentioned by Harris), Budge also translates uatchet as a kind of linen:



To Harris it was clear that, based on his analysis, the Egyptian word watch can be blue or green and:

"The Woad plant is, then, an Egyptian importation, and has a name expressing the colour for which it is valued."

In conclusion, he declared:

"That makes it fairly clear that Watchet has something to do with woad; and as we have shown the Egyptian origin of the famous dye, which appears to have been brought here by Egyptian merchants, and its use taught here by Egyptian artisans, we

may say that we have found an Egyptian place-name and a corresponding Egyptian settlement on the coast of Somerset. The result is surprising, but it need not be much more surprising than the fact, to which we referred above, that the Danes brought their ships round the Land's End and as far as the Severn. What the Danish robbers could do, the civilised Egyptian traders were also capable of attempting."

In 1685, Bristol naturalist William Cole referred to "Watchet blew" in a letter he wrote to the Philosophical Society of Oxford. The letter described Cole's observations on a "Purple Fish" which, he says, he discovered on the West Somerset coast, courtesy of "two ladies at Mynehead" who:

"...(seeing what collections I had made of Natural things I had made in those parts,) told me that there was a certain person living by the Seaside in some Port or Creek in Ireland, who made considerable gain, by

marking with a delicate durable Crimson Colour, fine Linnen of Ladies, Gents &c sent from many parts of that Island, with their names, or otherwise as they pleased which, they told me, (as they were informed) was made from some liquid substance taken out of a Shell-fish."

Cole was intrigued and, after experimenting with various molluscs he had collected, he identified one which contained a liquid substance which, in sunlight, changed colour in the following order:

- white
- light green
- deep green
- sea-green
- watchet blew
- purplish red
- deep purple red

The mollusc responsible was the dog whelk (*Nutella lapillus*), which is likely to be familiar to anyone who walks on the local beaches.



Cole's illustration of a dog whelk

Cole linked his findings to Tyrian purple - historically the most prestigious and expensive dye in the world. Tyrian purple was traded widely by the Phoenicians, who lived in the vicinity of present day Lebanon, during the period 2000 BC to 65 BC. The dye was obtained from different, but related mollusc species (*Murex* spp) local to the eastern Mediterranean which, in common with the dog whelk, contain a substance known as 6,6'-dibromoindigo.

Although there is no colour chart available to identify the colour changes Cole observed, and therefore what he meant by "watchet blew", the results of a study by the Italian brothers A & G de Negri, published in 1876, have been used in a similar way to that used above to illustrate the colours obtained from dyeing wool with woad. In this instance, a colour chart showing the changes in colour during tests on two *Murex* species have been used, as shown in Fig 3.

While the colours from the dog whelk are not expected to be identical to those from the two tested *Murex* species, the chart provides a guide to the potential identity of "watchet blew", suggesting that it was a darker, indigo colour, as shown.

There are also mentions of watchet and "watchet blew" in the horticulturalist John Rea's book "Flora, seu de Florum Cultura, or a complete Florilege", published in 1665, to describe the colour of *Iris Dalmatica* major (Dalmation Iris, Sweet Iris) and *Hepatica nobilis flore pleno caruleo*, respectively. A period image of one of

Fig 3. Colour changes observed in the liquids obtained from species of mollusc; *Murex Brandaris* (*Bolinus Brandaris*)—de Negri, 1876

**English Translation **Cole (1685) equivalent*



these plants are copied below (from other sources), to provide an indication of the colours he was potentially describing.



In conclusion, there are no clear answers to the questions posed at the beginning of this article. The colour suggested by the name "watchet blue" seems to vary from one source to another, although there are indications that it meant a darker shade historically than it does today. The colour's link with the town's name, and vice versa, is also subject to conflicting views.

A theory presented nearly 100 years ago, which suggested that Watchet was the place where the Ancient Egyptians introduced woad to Great Britain, is exotic and intriguing. It would certainly add to the list of things which make Watchet special, if true!

Michael Quint



Watchet Coronavirus Help Group



Watchet Coronavirus Help Group

Now, two months into the Coronavirus crisis, we can begin to reflect on what on earth just happened. It feels like a natural disaster of old; an invisible, biblical and inscrutable plague, a powerful and sinister curse conjured up by vengeful gods! But through this disaster something incredible has happened in communities all across the country. Long held friendships between people of so many professions - carers, shop owners, pub workers, retirees, postal workers, mums, nurses, school workers - all sorts of people, have formed a protective network of care over our most precious loved ones who we see as vulnerable, enabling them to stay home and stay safe.

I always see Watchet as a pioneering coastal town, valiantly demonstrating what a community can achieve! Watchet is one

of many towns across Somerset that has forged a particularly strong network of help. Watchet Coronavirus Community Help might be a bit of a mouthful to say quickly, but it is a group that was born quickly and easily of dedicated, kind and hard working-volunteers, concentrating on the things that matter to people who live here. At the time of writing, 75 volunteers are involved in the support effort. Our volunteers are divided into two groups: Protects and Connects volunteers. Protects volunteers are our 'on the ground' shoppers and deliverers. Our Connects volunteers are our telephone operators and chatters. We run a Telephone Helpline (01984 573073) open 9-3pm Monday - Saturday that offers the shopping of essential food items and medicines. Through the helpline you can also be put in touch with our band of 'telephone chatters' who are there just for conversation and a friendly voice down the

Watchet Coronavirus Help Group



phone, should you need it. These 'Chatters' are volunteering because they would enjoy a conversation, (they too are bored stiff!) so do call - it would make their day!

Now we are a smooth-running operation thanks to some absolute heroes (more about them later), but the early days were pretty scary. Mid-March was a time of frightening uncertainty and the sense of impending collapse of everything we took for granted felt - frankly - terrifying. I'm sure you remember it well. But a few weeks previously, conversations had begun in the Onion office and at Coastal Community Team around 'how could a community stay resilient in the face of crisis?' The discussions were hypothetical, mostly around climate change. Coronavirus was emerging in China but seemed like a distant problem. We talked about developing our Lottery funded Watchet Connects programme into a community discussion around 'resilience'. We had in mind slow, gentle conversations over community meals with guest speakers, maybe some music, and lots of debate and discussion; a way of bringing people together over food to discuss and deliberate.

That all changed very quickly. The emergency seemed to appear overnight. Decisions, systems, safety protocols and governance structures needed development at breakneck speed. Fortunately, a year of developing networks through the Watchet Connects programme meant that strong connections were already in place between Village Agents, the Foodbank, Town and District Councils

and the community groups and volunteers. Our first 'emergency meeting' was on Thursday 12th March in the evening at Sharon Garcia Vince's house, over wine and seated comfortably on sofas while talking through what might be needed. By the following Monday (16th March), a Working Group had formed comprising 15 members, including Watchet Coastal Community Team, Onion Collective, Village Agents, the leads on neighbouring community response teams, Town Council and key community volunteers, all of which were communicating on WhatsApp. The easy use of technology in the face of this crisis has proven to be an organisational godsend. By Friday (20th March) we were holding our first team Zoom meeting. It was long, experimental, confusing and laborious, but good plans were made.

Lockdown was announced on Monday 23rd March. This meant much tighter restrictions for our volunteers, many of whom were over 70 and retired. We suddenly needed far tighter restrictions on our 'on the ground' Protects Volunteers. Now, they must be under 50 (or a fit under 60), have self-isolated for 7 days, not have any high-risk dependants, not be a key worker and agree to a strict hygiene protocol. It sounds like a lot to ask, but it wasn't, we still have more and more people offering to volunteer every day.

Jan Tapp and partner Simon Brown at Cotton Street quickly became absolutely indispensable to the team and remarkable key members of the operation. Putting their business aside, they devoted their



Watchet Coronavirus Help Group

entire energy and focus to the smooth running of the support effort. In many ways they are the perfect leaders of this operation. Their mind-blowing energy (when do they rest?!), combined with an abundance of open-hearted kindness and hilarious easy humour means that volunteers adore them. Cotton Street has become the hub, where Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is stored, and from where the telephone system and website www.watchet.link is managed - Ground Control.

Jan has also been mobilising a team of sewers to make ear protectors for nurses, and wash bags to help with their PPE. The nurses are able to then put their clothes directly into the wash bags after their shift, take them home and put them in the washing machine without fear of contaminating anything else; or having to touch the clothing again. A huge thank you to Ray Waterman and Janet Waterman for helping with this work. Thanks as well to the generosity of Julian Bloys from Julian's Laundry who has donated some 2,000 pillowcases for the manufacture of the wash bags.

Fiona Payne is another hero of the hour, who manages the 70 plus volunteers with kindness, understanding, patience and love. (There's something about the sound of her voice that makes you want to breathe a sigh of relief and tell her all your secrets!) She is also a supremely fast worker, whenever I ask her about anything she says 'it's already done my lovely!' and the world feels like a good place.



Fiona also organises the Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers. Magna Housing stopped all Meals on Wheels very soon after the Lockdown, without providing an alternative plan. Village Agents soon got in touch and devised a plan sourcing Meals from Claire's Kitchen in Minehead and delivering all over West Somerset. Our team of drivers now delivers to Watchet and Williton and will continue to do so until Magna re-opens.

Thanks also to Sam Westmacott for providing the much needed background research into how this crisis is developing globally and what we could expect to happen next. And to Sara Summers who continually provides much needed emotional support to many in the group.

The Telephone Helpline and the website, containing support information was launched on Thursday 26th March, and since then has received over 700 calls, 430

Watchet Coronavirus Help Group

of which have been for essential food and medicine, delivered by our volunteers. It is a system called Tamar, which allows multiple phone lines and 'hunt' system, meaning that if one volunteer does not pick up the phone it will automatically divert to the next in the volunteer group. This is where our team who cannot go out to deliver food and medicine sit. In the early days it was pioneered by Sharon Garcia Vince, Loretta Whetlor, Liz McGrath and Jan Tapp but now there's a fantastic team of 15 all taking calls as they come through on a specially designed rota.



If you call the helpline, you'll be asked 'how can we help?' If your request is for food, the operator will take a short shopping list from you, under £30 or less than 15 items, which means that the volunteers can easily bring it to you. The operator will then email that list to the Co op Swain Street, who will bag the shopping for us and leave it for a Protects Volunteer to pick up and deliver at their designated slot of either 11.30, 1.30 or 3.30pm. Your shopping will then be delivered to your door and paid by you via a contactless card reader. Simple!



There's another hero to this story, which is you, Conservation Society members. The offer of donations from you has led us to set up a Go Fund Me page. The money raised here will go explicitly to two things: direct food donations to Quantock Food Bank and for purchasing Personal Protective Equipment for carers in care homes locally or our micro providers who care for people in their homes. Launched only a week ago we have already raised almost £1,400!

Thank you! Here's the link:

www.gofundme.com/f/supporting-watchet-community

Protects Volunteer Kevin Bown kindly drove to Taunton for us last week, to pick up his silver van full of Foodbank Food ordered from Morrisons and delivered to



Watchet Coronavirus Help Group



Marlene at the Foodbank. Thank you for your enormous generosity.

We are enormously lucky here in Watchet. We were able to divert Watchet Coastal Community Team National Lottery Community Fund funding to support the effort and to pay for the necessary infrastructure – the website, helpline, PPE, card readers, high vis jackets all cost money. We also have an extremely supportive Town Council who agreed to provide letters of authorisation to all volunteers out on the ground, following stories of volunteers in neighbouring areas being stopped by the Police and turned back. District Council too have been incredibly supportive. Loretta Whetlor, District Councillor for Watchet has spent many hours contacting businesses and helping them through the process of claiming their government grants. District have also set up regular support

lists, which contain updated information on where support is in the area, whether business, employment or social care.

There is something deeply reassuring in knowing that in times of crisis, we are good at working together - Local government, businesses, community. That we have the ingenuity and the energy and the resources to create systems that respond to need and that, at the forefront is the desire to care for those who are most vulnerable. If I am afraid of anything, I'm afraid of returning to a 'normal' where we forget this valuable lesson. That we allow the idea that only big business will save us. B*lllocks to that! We don't need saving. We just need to remember how we need each other. We know this now.

Georgie Grant
Co-Director, Onion Collective

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)



Deanna Payne 'Twitch' (over)

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Remember this

On the 23rd of March, the country stood still,
Told to stay in their homes, for the sake of the ill.
The government said 'You must stay indoors!'
So we all immediately went and bought out
the stores...

Stuck in our burrows, things were looking bleak,
Staying safe for ourselves, practising fear for
the weak.

The police on the streets, 'No picnics here, ma'am,
this is not the time nor the place for cream,
scones or jam'

And for a moment in the panic we all got resentful,
Angry at those with lives less eventful.
We divided abruptly and with minimal resistance
Terraced neighbours became strangers
within 6-foot distance.

For a while we were suspicious, and
coughing became a taboo.
And for some reason, a cruel twist maybe,
there was no toilet paper too!
But then a few people saw the division
spreading worse than the virus,
And, with their face masks adjusted, said,
'Lets let it inspire us!'

We reached out to each other, slowly and
ever so cautiously for sure,
And we told those who were struggling,
being alone isn't lonely anymore.
Even though we're all stuck inside, and
trying to survive a potential last stand,
We're all here in spirit, mind and soul, and
ready to lend a "latex'd" hand!

We started to see the sunny side, Easter came
anyway and the bunny brought us hope,
And we all laughed learning how to do
primary school P.E and how to 'correctly'
use the soap!

We taught Nan how to google and how to
shop online - and I tell you it wasn't easy!
People got new hobbies whilst others
media-binged till the notion made them
queasy!

We spent our time nourishing good things,
trading in skills we'd all but forgot,
And without our social luxuries, we finally
saw how good a life we've all got!
Without them, we realised family and
friends are what makes a house a home,
We've grown in our empathy and extended
sympathy to those who wind up alone.

Doctors, nurses and the guy who delivers locally
were revealed as this nation's true heroes
And suddenly money in the bank felt more like
its algorithmic collection of ones and zeros.
We understood for once that politics means
nothing without the masses permission,
And we stood back and saw our mistakes
and made changes through recognition.

We had BBQ's and birthday's all over video
chat and created a new way to party,
We had VE day anyway, social-distancing in
the street, everyone dressed up smartly.
And yes it's all still going, and the end is so unclear,
But out of everywhere to be stuck indoors,
I'm glad my home is here.

Deanna Payne 'Twitch'