



WATCHET CONSERVATION MATTERS

Promoting, conserving & improving our physical
and natural environment

Issue 38 Jan/Feb 2015

From our chair Molly Quint:-

Dear Friends and Members, A very Happy New Year to you all. Let's hope all the berries on the bushes are wrong and that the Winter will not be a hard one, the bulbs are already up in places so let's keep our fingers crossed that Spring will arrive early.

Many of you were able to come to our AGM in November when our existing Committee was voted on again, plus two new members, Jason Robinson and Andrew Harrison. Also we now have three Consultants to advise us, Paul Upton, our Case Officer, Nick Cotton and Phil Gannon. Welcome to you all.

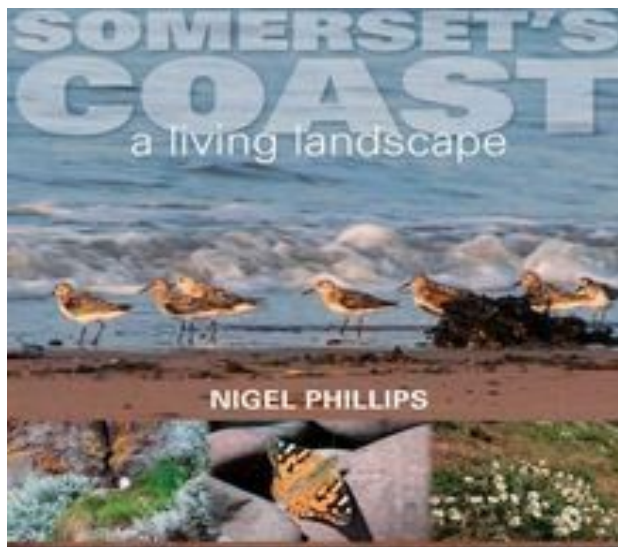


It is so lovely to start a New Year and think of all the things we might find time to do, all the places we might be able to visit, but also, perhaps as a Conservation Society, improvements we might be able to do for Watchet and things we might be able to prevent happening that will remove or destroy part of our heritage. As members, please let us know if there is something that you have heard or seen which you feel is not correct for our town.

Our next Open Meeting will be on 20th January at 7.30pm in the Methodist School Room. Do please come for I am sure it will be a very interesting evening, and perhaps bring a friend with you who has not been before.

Then on 23rd February is our Indian Meal at the Spice Merchants. This is a fun evening and an excellent way to raise funds for WCS. Please phone me with the time you would like your table and how many in your party on 01984 632592.

Let us help to make 2015 a very Good Year. Yours very sincerely, **Molly Q.**



**SPEAKER FOR NEXT
OPEN MEETING ON
JANUARY 20TH 7.30 PM
At the Methodist school-
rooms Harbour Road
Watchet**

Our speaker for January will be Nigel Phillips whose talk will be:-

**"Somerset's Coast -
A Living Landscape"**

An introduction to the huge diversity of wildlife found along our coast. This includes internationally

important numbers of wintering wildfowl and waders in the winter and diverse marine life throughout the year.

Nigel Phillips is supporting the work of the Somerset Wildlife Trust to raise the profile of Somerset's coast to help ensure that its intertidal and offshore wildlife thrive and prosper into the future. Nigel chairs the Somerset Wildlife Trust Marine Awareness Campaign and is also the Somerset Living Seas Ambassador.

Report on Conservation Society AGM, held on 18th November.

AGMs are not the most exciting of evenings out but our faithful members turned up to fill The Phoenix Centre on November 18th. The business meeting was straightforward and a new committee was elected plus three consultants. We now have a committee of nine which provides a wide range of skills and talent but would welcome anyone who would like to join us as a co-opted member for the coming year if you feel you could help us and would like to see how we operate. Then you might like to stand for election at the AGM next year. Do please consider it and don't be shy. We are looking forward to an active year with ideas for new projects which we hope to advance.

The treasurer explained that the accounts are healthy and will allow us to be reasonably ambitious in the coming year. The cost of producing the newsletter was discussed and members requiring 'hard copies' were invited to pay extra to cover the extra cost, a figure of £6 was recommended.



The Onion Collective gave a brief presentation on the ideas for the East Quay (a further article about these ideas follows). Entertainment followed with a performance of sea-faring songs from Acorn Shanty Crew, The crew specialise in songs collected by Cecil Sharpe 100 years ago from Captain John Short (our own Yankee Jack) and Captain Phil Vickery of Minehead.

A tasty selection of nibbles, wine and chat concluded a successful evening.

Report on the AGM of the Watchet Arts Group

Tim Prior opened the meeting with an overview of the “Aims and Objectives of the group” which are to promote, encourage and showcase the arts in the Watchet area.



This was followed by a presentation of the Mineral Yard Re-generation project, during which we saw photos of just how unsightly this area was and how much has already been done to improve it. Tim explained that the ‘Tile Mosaic’ had taken up most of this year, but said 1800 tiles had been created and that the

‘Mosaic’ would be put together in the spring. Work on preparing the sea defence wall was now complete (if you haven’t already seen the improvement go and have a look).

Molly Quint as treasurer explained that donations had been received during the accounting period totalling £2400, this included sales of tiles which raised £1300. The WAG is seeking a grant from EDF in the region of £50,000 to complete the project.



CHARITY INDIAN MEAL AT THE SPICE MERCHANT

23rd FEBRUARY

BOOK A TIME AND A TABLE WITH

MOLLY 01984 632 592

This is a wonderful way of having a good evening with friends and make a generous sum towards the societies funds. Don't miss it.

East Quay Proposals A Report From The Onion Collective

The Power of Making

I don't think we will ever forget the feeling of standing in front of 150 Watchet residents, about to present plans for our town that we feel passionately about. Fear, pride, excitement, hope (did I say fear?). It was an extraordinary feeling, to have spent so long attempting to understand collective needs and desires for the town, to have interpreted those expressed desires into a comprehensive scheme, and then to say, "Here it is, do you like it?"

Thankfully we were blown away by the response, thank you so much to everyone who came. To those who came to the drop in sessions on the following Friday and Saturday, sorry there wasn't much room, but it was great to talk to so many of you. If you weren't able to come, and haven't yet seen the plans you can download the designs for the Boat Museum and for East Quay on the homepage of our website www.onioncollective.co.uk The infographic (pictured) lays out the benefits that the East Quay proposal will bring.

One question that we are asked with some frequency is around jobs and why we have placed such an emphasis on 'making'. The Work Foundry, with its communal makerspace, studio workspaces and co-working represents a core belief that the attainment of skill is the path to employment, confidence and wellbeing. In the Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition catalogue for the 2011 'Power of Making' exhibition, Daniel Charny writes:

"For as long as people can learn from each other, individuality and society will be able to thrive. This starts with instilling confidence and a sense of independence, and runs through to creative innovation and mastery of precious knowledge. Full knowledge cannot be transferred solely through the sharing of information; it must be kept alive and passed on through the experience of making."

Creating opportunities for jobs and employment is one of our main priorities, and we have shown that our proposed development will create 53 jobs, not all associated with 'making' this figure also includes jobs across all aspects of the scheme including catering, hospitality, the running the facilities and associated projects. However, the scheme represents more than just providing a facility for people to learn skills and make things. It is also a kind of manifesto for how rural towns can thrive in the 21st century. In Ele Carpenter's essay on Social Making she writes:

"Makers are not Luddites. They recognise that de-skilling is not simply the result of digitization, but an effect of the geo-political exploitation of technologies for profit

over social or environmental sustainability. In response, re-skilling needs to take place across both digital and craft practices. In the same way that the cooper's barrel-making skills need to be shared for continuity, so the ability to programme code as a material needs to be taught in schools. Otherwise the result is end-user passivity, associated with product loyal consumers who lack the skills for making, communication or survival."

Inventors, computer programmers, engineers, carpenters, furniture restorers, graphic designers, bicycle repairmen, upholsterers, crafters West Somerset has them all, many of whom are toiling in isolation and who have expressed an interest in working together, networking, learning from others, passing on their skills and



enjoying the buzz of working alongside each other. In fact, lots of you have asked how you can get involved and register your interest. If you are interested in having space to work at East Quay, please fill in our Demand Survey by following this link. <http://bit.ly/1pdvwIG>

Lots of you have also said, 'how can we help?' Well, actually there are lots of jobs we need help with, and it would be wonderful to have your input. The things we need help with include:

Information on the Victorian Pleasure Grounds at Splash Point. Does anyone have photographs or printed descriptions of how it once looked, and how it was used?

We'd love to hear from anyone in the restaurant business, the restaurant element forms an important part of our business plan, and we'd like to hear from as many of you as possible to make sure we get this right.

Are there any inventors, engineers, builders and makers out there that would like to get involved with our pilot makerspace projects? To begin with, this will involve getting together and working out how skills can best be used, and what types of projects might work for building a 'maker community'.

Funding for our project will be from various different areas, including grant funding from various possible pots including Power for Change and Coastal Communities. However we will also be looking at social investment and philanthropy. So if you know of anyone who might be interested in investing, or who would like to get involved in some way please let us know.

The tower is the other element of the scheme that is often talked about. The majority of the feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly positive, most of you seem genuinely excited about the possibilities the scheme offers. However some people have voiced concerns over whether the tower is 'too much' for Watchet. Obviously we love it, and feel it is Watchet's take on other coastal tower-like structures up and down the country. It provides a great reason to visit and will help fund the rest of the scheme through the revenue it provides in self-catering accommodation. However, we also want to know what you think. So to that end we will be running further consultation workshops in January to understand more fully what Watchet people think of the tower in particular. Dates will be announced shortly so keep posted!

So, what's next? Well, further discussions with the District Council and Watchet Harbour Marina need to be had, which (we anticipate) may take some time due to the complexities of the land. Then once agreed it's all systems go go go for funding applications. Most funders that we have spoken to have expressed a real interest in our project, our winning the Power to Change short film competition is good evidence of that, this is a scheme that is genuinely interesting to big funders, mainly because it is about giving power back to a town on so many different levels. Power to attract visitors to our town, power to give our young people the training and skills they need to start their own businesses, the power to engage the whole community in something extraordinary and of course, the power of making.

To get in touch with us please email info@onioncollective.co.uk or find us on Facebook (/OnionCollective) or on Twitter (@onioncollective)

Paul Upton is a founder member of the Conservation Society and its Case officer. He is the Society's representative on the Onion Collective's stakeholders group.

The Conservation Society had not been formed when Dean and Dyball drew up some preliminary plans for the development of the East Wharf as part of the Marina proposals, but my memory suggests there was minimal public consultation on this aspect of the proposals and, although plans were submitted in 2001, they were subsequently withdrawn. It was when the developers Urban Splash put forward their ambitious and controversial proposal in 2007 that the Conservation Society was formed. Urban Splash and West Somerset Council did perform a consultation

exercise, but it was clearly inadequate, and many Watchet people felt that their voices were not heard. Since then, the committee of the Conservation Society has been resolved to ensure a thorough consultation exercise, should there be any further proposals for building on the East Wharf. As Case Officer for the Society, I have consistently raised this point at public meetings. Our concern has been that whatever is built on this most significant and important site is appropriate in terms of provision and design, and that most importantly it is what the people of Watchet feel is right for the town.

An important part of the Conservation Society's function is to try to ensure that any changes to the built environment are of the highest quality, but also that new buildings represent the best of current design rather than trying to emulate the past.

Both Dean & Dyball and Urban Splash were large-scale developers whose prime motive was to make money. Their plans may have enhanced Watchet, provided employment, accommodation and attracted tourism, but their commercial interests were paramount.

2014 brought a new and unexpected player to the field. The Onion Collective (OC) was formed by a group of four people whose vested interest was not commercial, but stemmed from their commitment to the town for themselves as local residents and the next generation, including their own children. They set about a consultation process which was thorough and professional, and the Conservation Society could only stand by and approve. There will always be some who will say, "But I wasn't asked!" but they made a genuine attempt to reach all opinion-forming groups and individuals in the town. The results of these consultations have been well publicised.

When the Onion Collective formed a stakeholders' group, I was asked to join as the Conservation Society's representative. I have fulfilled this role, and reported back to the committee on progress. In the process, I have come to admire and respect the Onion Collective's real commitment to the economic regeneration of Watchet: to the provision of buildings on the East wharf which will provide for the town's identified needs whilst being of high quality in terms of design and materials.

There is a long way to go: there are many hurdles to jump, and many obstacles to climb. There is vested interest to tackle and slow-moving bureaucracy to contend with. So far there are no definite plans, and a planning application is a long way off, but we as a Society wish to express our support for a group whose prime motive is for the benefit of Watchet rather than commercial gain.

As we approach elections at Town, District, and National levels, it may be worth challenging our prospective candidates on their views on this subject. The alternative to OC's plans may be a developer's commercially profitable but inappropriate plan – or nothing!

Paul Upton. December 2014.

Foxglove digitalis purpurea

"This painting of a Foxglove from Staple Plain near Watchet, where we used to walk our dog Hattie, is what Sheila was working on when she became too ill to paint anymore. She had intended to finish it in the Spring. Sadly that was not to be".



Sheila died on
January 23 2014.

We thank Edward for the lovely Foxglove painting and quote, also for providing the newsletter with Sheila's paintings throughout 2014
ED.



Members of the Watchet Conservation Society receive this newsletter bi-monthly either the printed copy or by e-mail. If you have enjoyed reading this publication and are not a member, please will you consider joining the Society, you would be helping to conserve our physical and natural environment. It costs just £6 a year, any of the committee members below, would be delighted to welcome you.

WATCHET CONSERVATION SOCIETY

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Committee:- Jayne Hall, Rosalind Pick, Alan Jones, Paul Reynolds, Jason Robinson, Andrew Harrison.

Watchet Conservation Matters is published six times a year. If you would like to contribute news or an article, please contact the newsletter editor:

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