

WATCHET CONNECTS

March / April 2025



Web Edition 36

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Editor's Artworker's Page

Welcome to issue 36 of Watchet Connects

That's been 6 years and still going strong.

We really hope you get lots of valuable news, insights and some unexpectedly interesting stories from our many contributors. This issue includes a few articles from and about our new MP, **Rachel Gilmour**, in her first term. There are also some important pieces about our **landscape**.

There is so much going on in Watchet that our page-count keeps rising, despite our requests to "keep it short". Visitors cannot believe that so much goes on in our small coastal town of just 3,500 people. We find it delightfully amazing that even in this age of internet information **Watchet Connects** is still the "bible" for so many residents, not just those who aren't "tech savvy".

Rachel (the Editor) and myself (the Artworker) spend many unpaid hours putting each issue together and we hear lots of positive comments but at the end of the day it needs to be of value to all Watchet residents! So if you love and value your *Connects*, it's really important that you let us know. Email us!

We are always delighted to welcome new sponsors and advertisers, no matter how big or small, so if you run a business or organisation do talk to us. With Liddymore Park and other new housing developments, the number of homes we distribute to is rapidly approaching 2,500 (huge thanks to Fiona and her band of volunteers). Our print run rises to keep pace and Coastal Community funding will not last indefinitely so we want to become self sufficient i.e. for *Connects* to break even rather than be subsidised.

And on that note...

We are really sad that *Williton Window* had to close last year. Maybe at some point we could include articles of interest to both towns.

On behalf of our Editor – who at the time of finishing this issue is up to her eyes getting ready for *Words in Watchet*, which has grown hugely in stature since its launch in 2024 – I wish you all a wonderful 2025.

Christian Williams (the Artworker) / Chiz (the local cartoonist) / Blenkinsop

Watchet Connects wishes to thank our advertisers and sponsors, especially the **Community Choir**, whose financial support helps enable this publication. Further details on how you can support: see inside back cover.

Please send any copy or updates on adverts to editor@watchetcct.co.uk by the deadline of **24 March for the May/June edition**.

Many thanks to Louise Brandon for the cover photo

Help with Winter Bills

Are you concerned about winter bills? There is a lot of help if you know where to find it. West Somerset Green Forum and The Community Council of Somerset gives **'Surviving Winter grants'** to eligible people over 50 and we advise on other ways to increase income, reduce energy consumption or apply for discounts. A number of schemes provide funds to help with the cost of bills, and there is help with online forms.

Trained home energy advisors visit you at home to offer help understanding bills and heating systems and reduce the amount of energy that you use. They make sure you get all the help that you are entitled to. Old appliances and boilers may be replaced with new ones, and there are schemes to help with draught proofing, upgrading heating systems and increasing insulation.

Help with home improvements is not just for people on means-tested benefits or low incomes as we all need to reduce the amount of heat that is lost from inefficient homes. But we need impartial advice on what is best for our houses. People frequently contact us offering free home improvements but care must be taken to ensure that they are not scammers or people selling products that will not make our homes better. Advice is available from several organisations, on-line, phone helplines or in person.

For more information contact:

Hester at **West Somerset Green Forum** 01643 821 768

For home energy visits contact:

Burnham and Weston Energy 01278 558 370

For advice and information contact:

The Centre for Sustainable Energy 0800 038 5730

Currently, *Watchet Connects* is being sponsored by
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Watchet Carer's Group

Watchet Carer's Group, part of Somerset Carers Service is a free, informal gathering for people who regularly offer a helping hand with daily tasks to a friend, family member or loved one. We socialise, share ideas and to talk about our experiences. Professional speakers and service providers also visit to offer support and information. We are also regularly joined by Tracey from the surgery.

We have teamed up with the **British Legion** who offer a low-cost light lunch before hosting our group from 13:30 on the last Wednesday of the month.

Before attending the group for the first time, it is best to call Cath, on 07535 279 359, in case of schedule changes.

For one-to-one Carers Support and information, please contact:

The Somerset Carers Service Advice Line: 0800 316 8600

Email: carers@somersetccc.org.uk

Website information www.somersetcarers.org

Cath Holloway, Carers Support Development Worker

Tel: 01823 331 222

Mobile: 07535 279 359

Email: cathh@Somersetccc.org.uk

I work flexibly and may send or respond to emails outside normal working hours. Please do not feel you have to reply outside your usual working hours.

CCS is a charity. Your support enables us to help Somerset's communities to thrive. Find out more at: ccslovesomerset.org/pay-it-forward-for-somerset
Somerset Carers online: www.somersetcarers.org



Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

Introduction to a Green Blueprint for West Somerset Landscape

A Path to Nature Recovery

Much is being talked about ways to reduce our carbon footprint and to regenerate our countryside for nature and sustainable farming.

Despite efforts by conservation organizations and many landowners, our nature continues to become depleted. Our villages, towns and infrastructure are being flooded by water and soil runs off into the roads every time we get heavy rain, then after just few weeks of dry weather we see the same land turns to concrete! The consequence of intensive land use.

In my opinion this beautiful countryside is under intense pressure from changing land use and it is becoming more fragmented, by intensive agriculture and ongoing development plans. Changes in the landscape across this special area is something we should be very concerned about.

West Somerset is one of the most beautiful parts of the UK, so we need to make sure it stays that way. The area still includes small meadows, ancient trees, hedgerows and pasture woodland, numerous natural springs, brooks and streams eventually running into the Bristol Channel.

Using my experience accumulated over many years of managing countryside and sustainable land use, I have carried out a vegetation and land use survey between the Quantock Hills and Exmoor, using old maps and aerial photos (but also many miles of walking and cycling) and have devised a plan on how this special landscape can continue to grow food and include nature, so ecosystems are resilient and thrive.

Sir John Lawton in his report *A Place for Nature* identified the need to make the natural landscape bigger, better and joined up. (see article overleaf)

This area is ideally suited to be better joined up and to become a more biodiverse and functioning ecosystem. The benefits are wide ranging, for both nature, and for landowners, i.e, locking up more carbon, cleaner watercourses, shade for livestock and a rejuvenated soil to produce healthy sustainable food.

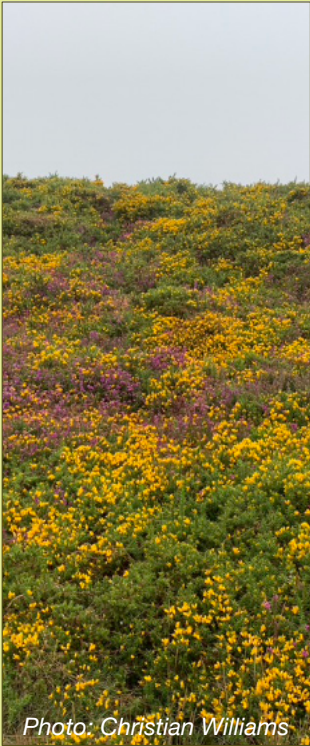


Photo: Christian Williams

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Nature based solutions

A landscape joined up, richer in wildlife with flowering hedges full of nectar and naturally regenerating trees can be achieved by working together and learning when to intervene or manage less and to let nature heal itself by working with nature, rather than against it.

I hope to have a map in leaflet form available soon. It will show where remnant corridors are still in existence, ripe for enhancement; it will also illustrate where potential new green highways can link the landscape together, by regenerating a strengthened hedgerow network, which I hope would see nature bounce back very quickly.

It is important to us all.

Paul Rutter

January 2025

See Lawton Principles article overleaf

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The ecology of conserving biodiversity (the Lawton principles)

Biodiversity is a term that we use to give a name to ALL of the life on this planet, and comprises all of the plants and animals, bacteria and fungi, humans and every other organism. The term is also used to encompass all of the genetic diversity of those organisms and to encourage us to think about the habitats and ecosystems within which those organisms live and the ecological processes that they are a part of. It is anything and everything that is alive in the world around us, and even within us, and its presence is critical to our own.

However, it is not just the actual presence of biodiversity that is important to us but also how the different species interact with each other and with their surrounding environment – this is what we call the ecology of biodiversity. If those interactions are compromised – for example, by significant human interference – then so is the integrity of the surrounding biodiversity. It is therefore essential that we give space for nature to operate as naturally as possible.

At its very simplest, these natural interactions include familiar concepts such as predators eating prey leading to food webs and trophic layers; mating and migration leading to the mixing of genes within a population and to the possibility of adaptation and evolution in the long term; and to changes in habitats and ecosystems that we sometimes call 'succession'. None of these concepts can arise if species (or rather, their genes) cannot move across the landscape in some way. As a result, trying to find space for nature and human beings in the same landscape is perhaps our greatest challenge.

As we have through history made greater and more intensive use of the resources available to us in the landscapes that surround us, we have adopted perhaps 3 different ways of dealing with nature: to domesticate it, to eradicate it or to 'protect' it. Despite our best efforts, it is increasingly clear that the nature and biodiversity with which we share the landscape is changing, and probably not for the better. We need to do things differently.

The two major drivers of change are habitat loss and habitat deterioration, and alongside or within those changes also sits the loss of species and genes, and the deterioration of populations of species and genes – because we have either removed these from the landscape or prevented them from moving and mixing. There have been gains, of course, but in the main they are outweighed by the losses.

In the past we have tended to protect species and habitats either by creating protective legislation or by creating 'protected' sites – and this is how we now have laws such as the Wildlife & Countryside Act and areas such as nature reserves. However, as we continue to use more land for people, growing food and for various other purposes, the amount of landscape available for species to interact has become limited, and inadequate: many species and habitats now survive in small, isolated sites: this is difficult for many species, and often impossible in the longer term, as they rarely contain the level of resources or diversity of habitats needed to sustain populations.

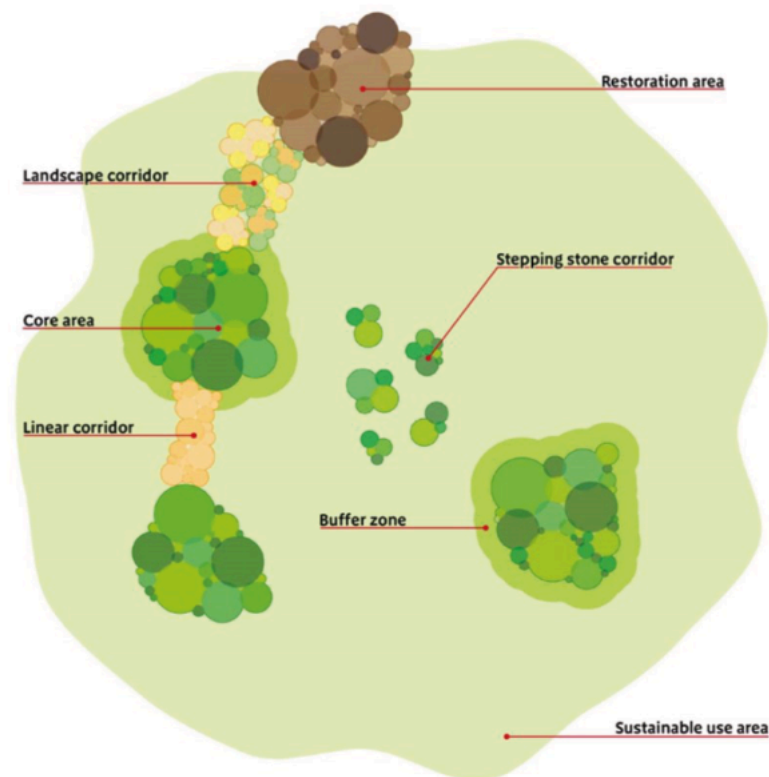
Therefore we need to find a way to create more space for nature and allow it to move and interact more naturally.

In 2010, Professor John Lawton presented a report to the UK Government, called 'Making Space for Nature', that highlighted this. The report called for the creation of a healthy ecological network operating across the landscape as a whole, not in isolated reservoirs. This approach is now being taken forward widely across the UK, and elsewhere in the World, and is integral to the current Environment Bill.

Five components are needed for an ecological network to be effective:

1. **Core areas** – these are the areas of highest wildlife value
2. **Corridors and stepping stones** – the places that allow movement and interaction
3. **Restoration areas** – areas where species and habitats can be restored
4. **Buffer zones** – these protect the core areas, corridors, stepping stones and restoration areas from the pressures of human influence
5. **Sustainable use areas** – areas of greater human influence and resource use.

To create an ecological network that operates more naturally and effectively, the Lawton report called for some simple measures - more, bigger, better and joined-up sites within the landscape.



Watchet Summertime News



Thanks to all who attended our Annual General Meeting in December, and also those supported us by attending our Fundraising Evening at The Boat Museum in January. We enjoyed a great evening listening to David Milton and Becky Shaw singing together, as well as Don Jones and Graham White and of course the lovely Tabitha. We were spoilt with an amazing evening of entertainment and laughter, which kept us warm despite the bitter temperatures – and we raised nearly £400 towards our summer events!

We have two Watchet Summertime fundraising events in store for you! The **Safari Supper** evening (£10pp) will be on Sunday March 2nd and then in anticipation of St Patrick's day, we are holding an **Irish Ceilidh** (a form of barn dancing, £20pp) which will include an Irish Stew supper (meat or veg option) at the Bowling Club Saturday 15th March.

Contact Bernice for tickets for both events 07502 242 309.

Places are filling up, so book your tickets ASAP!

Hope to see you at one of our events.

Watchet Street Fair – Sub Committee of WCCT

Dear Everyone,

Spring is here!!!! and so is **Street Fair**. We will start on 2nd March and then **every first Sunday** of each month until and including October.

All our old faithful stalls will be back, Mark Cheese, Gemma Chocolate, Karen preserves, Garden ornaments, Mirror man, the Children's tent etc etc.

So, come down and see us and enjoy the coffee, the food, the music and find your friends again.

If you would like to run a Charity stall (one for each market only) or if you would like to book a pitch please phone me. We are already getting busy, but I would love to hear if you have any new ideas for stalls.

Best Wishes,

Molly - 07557 644 141



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Rachel Gilmour MP

Column - 24/01/2025 - Jools' Law

One of the first debates in Westminster Hall I attended in the new year was about Ellen Roome's campaign for Jools' Law. In 2022, her son, Jools Roome, was found dead in his room. There were no bullies at school, troubles at home, or signs of other troubles; there was a record of online internet challenges, some of which have been known to be dangerous. Ellen has been fighting since to get access to Jools' social media, so that she could see his messages and find out what it was that meant Jools wouldn't live to see his 15th birthday.

Jools' Law is that campaign: Ellen is a parent fighting to be able to see what their child is doing online, to keep them safe. Social media companies have refused access to the website Jools was using at the time of his death. Ellen has had to demand a second Coroner's Report, but still does not know what element of social media "triggered" Jools' death.

This is not the first time that social media companies have fallen short in how they protect children. Who could forget the excellent campaign that Molly Russell's parents ran. Molly, like Jools, was 14.

Of course young people, as they explore sensitive issues such as sexuality, even gender, should be entitled to privacy. Social media offers answers to many questions, and also acts as a means of support with many teenagers seeking support groups on websites.

However, social media may also cause harm, in this case to the extent of a child losing their life. Ellen is fighting for the right to see what made her son die. It strikes me as grossly unjust that social media companies will not allow her to see what Jools was looking at on his social media before he died. I attended the debate yesterday to show my support for Ellen and all parents who find themselves in such a tragic position.

My Liberal Democrat colleagues and I are also calling for an independent children's online safety advocate, along with the NSPCC, who would have watchdog-like powers to promote and protect children's interests. We need proper safeguards in place and to have a system which empowers children to responsibly exercise their rights in this digital age, but protects them from online harms.

I am also supporting the Safer Phones Bill, coming before Parliament later this year. In an age where smartphones are everywhere, and social media is the overwhelming way in which children and young people communicate, the idea of keeping phones out of the classroom might seem anachronistic, but along with many parents, teachers and children in Tiverton and Minehead,

I believe that it is necessary. Plenty of constituents have written to me about this, sharing their concerns about phones in the classroom, and also about the way in which phones can exacerbate issues in life. Whether it is harmful social media algorithms amplifying dangerous content, or pocket-sized content distracting children in the classroom, and other environments where they can develop the skills they need in life outside of the virtual world, I believe that the Safer Phones Bill provides the appropriate vehicle to push ahead: making sure that we give our children the best start in the virtual world, as well as the physical world.

It is important that we continue to interrogate the role of social media companies in today's society. We have seen what happened to Twitter, now X, what has been happening with the TikTok algorithm, and what may happen to Facebook now that Meta is relaxing its fact-checking systems in America. We can only hope that they all step up to the mark in the coming weeks, months and years. I will continue to act to try to make our online spaces safer, and better for everyone.

Let there be no more Jools' or Mollys. May they rest in peace.

Rachel Gilmour



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Watchet Town Council (WTC) meet the PCC and our local MP to discuss matters important to Watchet residents

On January 16th, Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC), Clare Moody took part in a walkabout tour of Watchet town, accompanied by local MP Rachel Gilmore and Watchet Town Council members, Chair and Mayor Loretta Whetlor, Chair of Asset Management Committee, Cllr John Irven, and Town Clerk Jo Grellier.

The tour gave attendees the opportunity to discuss the challenges of safety in the area and to look more closely at how Watchet CCTV system can be updated and, in some areas, repaired. Somerset Council have recently confirmed that they will no longer finance the upkeep and monitoring of Watchet's existing CCTV. WTC will be considering investing in the future of the Town's security and was keen to have the support of the Crime Commissioner and her thoughts about its future, coverage etc.

The PCC wanted to visit the site of the smallest operational police post in the Avon and Somerset Branch. WTC and Avon and Somerset Police have reached an agreement to continue its use as an occasional police post. The building is owned by the Town Council who also use it for storage and when managing community events on the Esplanade. The Council have agreed to maintain and service the building and make it available for use by the neighbourhood policing team when they need a presence in Watchet, such as when attending to a local need or community event.

Cllr John Irven, Chair of the Council's asset committee said, "the council value partnership working with our local force and we are grateful they continue to commit to maintaining a local presence, which is very important for our community."

Clare Moody commented "this is about listening and learning from communities, gaining insights from the people bringing and sharing their expertise, so that we can make a difference to West Somerset."

Rachel Gilmore MP was delighted to be able to welcome Clare Moody to the constituency, and to discuss the issues at the heart of people's concerns in West Somerset.



Town Clerk, Jo Grellier commented "WTC are pleased to be working closely with the PCC and the local MP and we welcome their support. There is much value in building good relationships and we hope that with the support of our leaders, we can put Watchet back on the map as a safe and wonderful destination for those who reside here and those who visit."

Cllr Whetlor commented "It was good to have Clare Moody visiting the town and looking specifically at the CCTV and the police post. Her comments were supportive of what we are trying to do in the town. We look forward to a continuing collaboration."

The following day, on Friday the 17th January 2025, WTC met with MP Rachel Gilmore, to allow attending Councillors the opportunity to discuss their concerns across a multiple of topics such as, the B3191 closure, Urban design, Planning, and funding for much needed enhancements for Watchet. The session gave Rachel an in-depth view of the challenges and the ongoing aims and ambitions of the Town Council.

The Town Council are delighted to gain commitment from Rachel that she will support them and continue meetings with Watchet Town Council twice yearly or more often if necessary.

Rachel Gilmore commented "There is still much to do, but by working collaboratively we can secure a safer and more prosperous future for West Somerset."

After their meeting, the Town Council were able to secure additional time with the MP to allow the Watchet Coastal Communities Team (WCCT) to encourage their extensive Community Organisation membership to meet with the MP at a follow-on Q&A evening. The evening was co-hosted at East Quay by resident, Sam Westmacott, who kindly made the arrangements for the well-attended evening event.

Rachel will be offering weekly surgeries in our area so please keep an eye on her website for dates, times, and locations.

Council Chair and Mayor Loretta Whetlor commented "I was privileged to chair the meeting of the Town Council at which Rachel Gilmore attended. I was heartened to hear how she likes our town and that she visits here quite often and it was pleasing to hear her listen and answer questions of the Councillors and community organisations. We look forward to collaborating with her and the PCC in future."

Jo Grellier - Town Clerk (text and photos)

Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

Watchet Coastal Community Team report re MP's visit

Following our MP, Rachel Gilmour's visits to Watchet in January, (see the report from Watchet Town Council - WTC), Watchet Coastal Community Team (WCCT) was asked by WTC to co-host a subsequent evening meeting with Rachel at East Quay. By inviting representatives from each of our 71 local organisation groups we helped broaden community involvement and gave members an opportunity to ask questions directly of the MP.

Topics raised during the meeting included the problems associated with closure of the B3191 and the desirability of re-opening or by-passing it; inadequate local infrastructure provision and public transport; how to best realise the economic benefits and potential of the marina; connecting the West Somerset Railway to the national network; concerns regarding the use of prime farmland, particularly Parsonage Farm, for housing and of overdevelopment in general; the pressing need for social housing and quality well paid employment opportunities, and also the importance of the preservation of local ecology.

During Rachel's visit to Watchet, she was asked to confirm future opportunities for her constituents to discuss their concerns directly with her. She has since published a larger number of surgeries across the constituency, including those to be held in Watchet. The date for her visit to Watchet will have been 21st February (before this Connects goes out), with visits to Minehead on 8th, 15th and 29th March and Bishops Lydiard on 28th March (these dates are taken from a list of other surgeries and are part of a regular programme published on her website). At these, any individual can ask to meet her and pose a question. Due to security issues, full details of location, time and date cannot be pre-published. People cannot just 'turn up', but to need to book a surgery appointment by emailing Rachel Gilmour's office at: rhys.wallis@parliament.uk or call on 07356 087 010.



Watchet Conservation Society



Promoting, Conserving & Improving
Our Physical & Natural Environment

We began the year with an excellent talk by Paul Upton on *Historical Buildings in Watchet* on 21st January and this will be followed on **18th March** (at 7:30pm) by one of our Committee Members, Kevin Shelton-Smith, talking about the **United Nations**. Kevin and his wife are renovating Doniford Farmhouse, after having retired from serving in the RAF for many years. Do come and then stay for a coffee or tea afterwards.

Kate from **Geckoella** gave us an excellent talk about Bats last year, and following that, we have begun to install Bat boxes along the Mineral Line.

With the guidance of Andy King of Geckoella, the Town Council and WCS are planning to erect notice boards asking people not to dig fossils from the cliffs or the beach. Not only is this a dangerous pastime, but fossils should never be dug out, the only ones which should be taken are those that are loose along the shoreline.

Sean Terrett has produced a wonderful WCS Newsletter, and we hope to send this out to paid members as soon as possible. The intention is that our Newsletter will be available quarterly. If you have any contributions to make to further issues we would welcome them.

WCS currently have 2 sub committees, **Hedgehogs** run by Jane Sharp and **Wild Life** led by Christine LeHegarar. If either of these are of interest to you do, please come along.

We are in the process of doing a new Website and we are committing to keep it up to date and put any special news onto it, so please lookout for it soon.

Other Committee news:

Rob Hutchings and Lucy Corlett-Smith have both stood down from our committee and we thank them both for all the time they have spent with WCS.

Molly Quint
Chair WCS

Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

Doniford Play area given a new lease of life by WTC with the installation of new play equipment

WTC are pleased to announce that a brand-new piece of agility play equipment has been installed in the Married Quarters play area in Doniford.

The Council made the decision to remove many items in the play area from the site, as they were old and in disrepair and these redundant items have been cleared and replaced with a new agility play course suitable for children of all ages. Choices on how the play equipment could be best updated were made after feedback from residents to a survey issued by the Council's Recreation and Tourism Committee.

In line with WTC's green policies, the new equipment has been designed by children's play experts, specialising in designing greener equipment with a long life.

Cllr Sean Terrett, the Recreation and Tourism Committee Chair commented "WTC are delighted that this project has been completed and to such a beautiful standard. We as a Council fully understand the importance that play has on a young person's mental and physical wellbeing, so it is our priority to do our bit and upgrade the Town Council owned recreational equipment. We hope that children love, enjoy and respect the new equipment and that the community are pleased with the end-result".

Jo Grellier - Town Clerk (text and photos)



Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

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EASTER HOLIDAYS FAMILY FUN

Lots of family workshops over the holidays at East Quay for all ages, plus a drop-in activity in the foyer daily from 10am-5pm. Kids' activity sheets available for gallery exploration, FREE* suitable for all ages.



FOOD & DRINK

KITCHEN & BAR: Open daily for breakfast: (9 — 11am), lunch (12 — 3pm). Evening meals and drinks (from 5 — 8pm) on Fridays and Saturdays (special events on Thursdays).



EXHIBITIONS

SHOWING IN GALLERY 1: RECOLLECTION featuring selected works from the home of writer and art historian, Jeremy Cooper. 25.01.2025 — 05.05.2025.

SHOWING IN GALLERY 2: THE DOCKERS' MUSEUM / SHIP OF FOOLS presenting works by artist Allan Sekula, courtesy of the collection of M HKA, the Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp. 25.01.2025 — 05.05.2025.

NEW PROJECT IN STUDIO 10: COATING by Anna Chrystal Stephens featuring sculpture, eco analogue photography and digital photographic typologies of 'From Scratch' processes. 01.03.2025 — 20.04.2025.



EVENTS

Loads of events from supper clubs and film nights to artist talks and comedy in the Kitchen. See the Watchet Connects events listings pages or check out our website for more details and to book.

www.eastquaywatchet.co.uk 01984 263103

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Friends of Watchet Station (FoWS)

We are delighted to announce that, as well as completing the gargantuan task of restoring and repainting much of our heritage station throughout the Winter by our band of dedicated volunteers, and with thanks to financial assistance from the West Somerset Railway Association, we have been able to restore our station's heritage fireplace in our Booking Hall in time for the 2025 season. No mean feat as it was deemed totally unsafe. As this



dated to the original Brunel station building of 1862, this was something of a heritage conundrum: do we simply bung an electric flame-effect heater in the unsafe fireplace or get it rebuilt to resurrect its heritage status? Given that the Friends of Watchet Station are charged with upholding the status of this iconic Brunel-era building (sadly, Brunel didn't live long enough to see his final railway's completion), there could be no quibble: the original fireplace should be restored. Thank you, WSRA.

Many locals will be delighted to hear the sound of steam trains once again as they approach Watchet from **22nd March** onwards. At first, it will just be weekends, and only 3 trains a day each way. That said, please do be extra careful: coaches and wagons will be moving back and forth between what we call BL (Bishops Lydeard) and MD (Minehead) at any time, getting ready for the season.

Some of our WSR locos have been loaned to other heritage railways, or are in for major overhauls: these beautiful ancient beasts are incredibly reliable given they're often 60+ years old, but they do need regular TLC. WSR's teams of volunteers work hard to maintain and repair the engines but a mandatory "boiler service" is required every 10 years, which is the equivalent of stripping your car's engine down and completely rebuilding it! (if you've ever seen inside a steam engine's boiler you would immediately understand why it's such a long and extremely costly procedure). We can expect some newcomers over the season, especially at our galas, when fans from all over flock to the longest standard gauge line in the UK. Our first Gala of the season will be the Spring Steam Spectacular from 2-5 May, so expect lots of special steam locomotives running back and forth.

As always, we welcome **prospective volunteers** to join our happy team. You only need to commit to a few hours a week and there are plenty of different roles. Drop by and ask anyone on duty or email fows.chris@gmail.com.

Watchet/St Renan Town Twinning visit!

We have been invited to visit our corresponding branch in Saint Renan at the beginning of the summer. At the time of writing we are very much looking forward to it but the dates have not yet been settled. When we visit, we always learn so much about family life, Breton culture and French food, and it is so good for everyone's language skills!

Looking beyond that we are planning to hold the annual **French Breakfast** at the Phoenix on July 19th and are also negotiating a **Barbecue** evening at the Star Inn for June or July.

Our current objective is to involve the **West Somerset Brass Band** more in our activities as this will facilitate their biennial concert visits to Saint Renan.

We are always happy to have new members.

If you are interested in joining the Twinning contact:

CynthiaPWebb@outlook.com Watchettwinning@gmail.com

Salvation Army News

March and April brings us to the season of Lent leading up to Easter, a very busy time. Yet an exciting one.

On March 29th we have a sale from 10am-2pm to launch the **Car Boot** season. Come and grab yourself a bargain, or just pop in for coffee and cake.

Monday April 14th is the start of **Holy Week**. Our hall will be open Monday to Thursday for reflection, and you will be welcome to pop in and out anytime between 10 am and 12 noon.

On Good Friday 18th '**Reflect at the Cross**' 9.45am. Following this, 11am '**Walk of Witness**' meeting at the Boat Museum.

Saturday 19th **Campfire Church** 3pm-5pm.

Sunday **Easter Day** 10.30am we will be celebrating the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may have lots going on, but we always have time to stop, listen or just share a coffee if anyone wants to talk.

Let us look at Easter with open eyes and hearts and say,

"Lord, make Calvary real to me, open my eyes so I can see victory in Christ. Lord, make Calvary real to me."

Every Blessing, Sam Searl

Backyard Theatre

The Steaming Coasters - One Foot In The Mud

Saturday 8th March

Prepare for more laughter as Watchet's very own comedy sketch group are back with their latest spectacle. Imagine speed dating Gorillas and ducks navigating the cosmos...

For all tickets see ad opposite



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BACKYARD THEATRE

*Upcoming shows at Watchet's
very own 87-seat theatre*

A Flight at The Opera

Saturday March 29th 7.30pm

Tickets £16.50

Fancy a Night at the Opera? Buckle up your seat belts and let the Bluebirds delight you with their 'inflight' entertainment. This promises to be a feast of opera classics with a uniquely popular twist. It's glitzy, it's glamorous and it's great fun. So hurry to secure your seats and join us on board at the Backyard for 'A flight at the Opera'.



Enid Blyton

Saturday

May 17th

7.30pm

Tickets: £15

Experience the remarkable and controversial life of Enid Blyton, brought to life by the talented Liz Grand, in a performance that delves into the depths of her literary impact and personal escapades. An unmissable journey into the life of a woman whose stories shaped generations, despite the odds stacked against her. This production invites you - its audience members - to a special question answer session at the end.



Havisham

Saturday

April 19th

7.30pm

Tickets £15

Step into the world of one of Dickens' most enigmatic and formidable gothic creations. Who was the woman behind this tragic figure? Prepare to be enthralled, and utterly captivated through award winning actress 'Heather Alexander's' performance as she offers a fresh perspective of Charles Dickens' greatest work of gothic characterisation.



The Musicians of Bremen

Friday

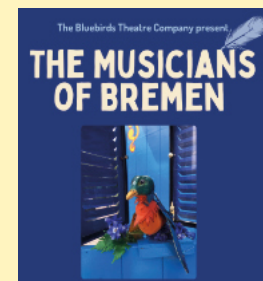
May 30th 7pm

Tickets:

£10 adults,

£8 children

Sponsored by Watchet Harbour Bookshop, we bring you our next family show for those aged 4-104! It tells the delightful story of the Musicians of Bremen. The show features enchanting puppets and a talented violinist along with author and amazing storyteller Clive Pig who brings the story to life. Find out how four lost animals: Spike the dog, Zelly the donkey, Alpha the rooster, and Old mother cat, outwit some naughty humans.



BACKYARD THEATRE

Anchor Street, Watchet TA23 0AZ

Tickets online: www.backyard-theatre-watchet.uk

Box Office: 0333 666 3366

What's on in March

Sunday 2nd Watchet Street Fair on the Esplanade 10am – 4pm. All your usual favourite stalls back for the season. Award-winning European trumpet player Luis will perform.

Sunday 2nd Evening Safari Supper, raising funds for Watchet Summertime. £10pp. For tickets and details hurry to contact Bernice 07502 245 309

Thursday 6th 2.30pm Watchet Climate Group (see article) contact Paul Levy by phone: 01984 632 108 or email: paul.levy78@gmail.com

Thursday 6th 7pm East Quay Film Night. 'Adventure Night', In conjunction with Watchet Community Cinema, a selection of films from the London Mountain Film Festival. £5, book online.

Saturday 8th 7pm The Steaming Coasters: One Foot in the Mud at The Backyard Theatre. Booking required. www.backyard-theatre-watchet.uk

Wednesday 12th 7.30pm Methodist Schoolroom, Watchet Market House Museum Annual General Meeting followed by a talk by Tim Hill. **Outdoor Music in Somerset**. All welcome.

Thursday 13th 7pm East Quay Supper Club: Tunisian Cuisine £35 book online. A selection of starters and a tagine main, vegetarian options available.

Friday 14th Watchet Community Cinema at Knights Templar School. £4 on the night. **Paddington in Peru** – our favourite bear, not to be missed! Doors open 6.30pm for refreshments, film at 7pm. Ring Anne for further information 07557 734 795.

Saturday 15th Evening Irish Ceilidh at The Bowling Club. £20 pp including Irish Stew supper (meat or vegetarian options available). Fundraising for Watchet Summertime, for more details and to book, hurry to contact Bernice on 07502 242 309

Tuesday 18th 7.30pm Watchet Conservation Society Talk at the Methodist School room. **'The United Nations'** by Kevin Shelton-Smith. All welcome, refreshments afterwards.

Wednesday 19th 7pm East Quay Spoken Word Evening. Free. Monthly spoken word night, come along and listen or share your work. March's guest **Ceri Baker**.

Thursday 20th 7.30pm East Quay Film Night. £5 inc popcorn – book online. A screening of the superhero classic **'Batman'**, with an introduction by movement-double Carl Newman at 7pm. Food available 5 – 6.30pm (please book your table).

Saturday 22nd Watchet Market House Museum reopens for the season. Saturday to Thursday weekly. Open Friday by appointment, see article.

Thursday 27th 2pm – 4pm at The Harbour Bookshop on **Lasting Power of Attorney** (2 hr workshop). See article elsewhere. To book and for more information contact the Community Officer 07775 328 625 or communityofficer@watchetcct.uk

Friday 28th Watchet Community Cinema at Knights Templar School. **Conclave**. Ralph Fiennes! Doors open 6.30pm for refreshments, film at 7pm. £4 on the night. Ring Anne for further information 07557 734 795.

Friday 28th 7.30pm An Evening of Comedy in The Kitchen at East Quay, featuring **David Eagle**. £5 – book online. David's stand-up comedy explores how being blind often turns everyday life into surreal, surprising adventures.

Saturday 29th 10am – 2pm. Car Boot sale at The Salvation Army. Bargains, Coffee and Cake. All Welcome.

Saturday 29th 7.30pm A Flight at the Opera at the Backyard Theatre. Booking required: www.backyard-theatre-watchet.uk

Saturday 29th Clocks change overnight to British Summertime!

Sunday 30th Mothering Sunday

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*Offer applies to households with no more than £30k income, or if one resident is in receipt of benefits.

What's on in April

Saturday 5th Watchet Harbour Community Bookshop reopens for the season. Open daily 10am – 4pm.

Sunday 6th Watchet Street Fair on The Esplanade 10am – 4pm. The Fun Puppets will provide entertainment

Monday 7th – Saturday 12th Watchet Walking Week. A programme of guided walks with a difference. Book at Visitor Centre, booking fee for each walk £1, other payments/donations to be decided, enquire at Visitor Centre (VC). See article

Monday 7th 2- 4pm Natural Printmaking with Anna Stephens. East Quay. All ages, £3 per family, book online. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Print making workshop using natural materials and processes.

Tuesday 8th 11am – 1pm Cork Character Workshop. East Quay Drop in. Free. All ages, a fun morning using recycled bottle corks, beads and pins to create little characters and creatures.

Wednesday 9th 11am – 1pm Spring Creatures Workshop. East Quay Drop in. Free. All ages, create a cute spring creature using a variety of materials.

Thursday 10th 11am – 1pm Paper Collage Workshop (with Devon artists Allegra Galvin and Jo Waterhouse) East Quay drop in, Free. Children and adults make collages together and explore talking about art and creativity.

Thursday 10th 7.30pm Watchet Singers Concert in The Methodist Church. *'Songs of the Sea and other watery events!'* Retiring collection for **Watchet Summertime**. All welcome.

Friday 11th Watchet Community Cinema at Knights Templar School. Doors open 6.30pm for refreshments, film at 7pm. **Firebrand** – an Historical drama. £4 on the night. Ring Anne for further information 07557 734 795.

Saturday 12th Steaming to the Coast. From 12noon until approx. 2pm. 400 runners will be heading through Watchet along The Esplanade (Channel Events).

Saturday 12th Hatch Fashion Show 8pm at East Quay. Free. **The Hatch** artists return to present a brand-new fashion show, their theme *'Future Folklore'*.

Monday 14th Holy Week begins

Monday 14th Natural Printmaking with Anna Stephens. 2 – 4pm at East Quay all ages but children must be accompanied by an adult. £3 per family, book online. A printing workshop using natural materials and processes.

Tuesday 15th Puppet making workshop at East Quay. 11am – 1pm. All ages, drop in, free. Bring along old toilet rolls, use collage materials and pens to make and decorate a string puppet.

Wednesday 16th 11am – 1pm Cyanotype Workshop at East Quay, all ages, Free, Drop in. Explore a cool technique using the sun to create photographs. Bring your favourite small items to photograph.

Wednesday 16th 7pm East Quay Spoken Word Evening. Free. Come along to listen or share your work. Guest speaker is **Aish Humphreys**.

Thursday 17th 11am – 1pm Easter Clay Workshop at East Quay. All ages, free, drop in. Join us to make an Easter decoration using white clay, making different textures and panting your creation.

Friday 18th Good Friday – see Churches articles for further information

Saturday 19th Havisham at the Backyard Theatre. Booking required: www.backyard-theatre-watchet.uk

Sunday 20th Easter Day – see Churches articles for times of services

Thursday 24th 7pm East Quay Supper Club Japanese Cuisine. £35 book online. Celebrating the bold and unexpected flavours of Japan, vegetarian options available.

Friday 25th Watchet Community Cinema at Knights Templar School. **Small Things Like These**. Doors open 6.30pm for refreshments, film at 7pm. £4 on the night. Ring Anne for further information 07557 734 795.

Advance Notice from Watchet Branch of the Royal British Legion

There is to be a Service of Commemoration to mark the end of War in Europe to be held at the Methodist Church, Harbour Road, Watchet, on **Sunday the 4th of May at 3pm**. All are welcome.

On **Thursday the 8th of May**, there is to be a short service of **Remembrance** at the War Memorial, Harbour Road, Watchet, with the laying of Wreaths to remember all those who gave their lives in **Europe**, throughout WW2.

On **Friday the 15th of August** there is to be a short service of **Remembrance** at the War Memorial, Harbour Road, Watchet, with the laying of Wreaths to remember all those who gave their lives in the **Far East**, throughout WW2.

Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

Diary – Regular Weekly Classes and Events

If you would like your regular class or club featured in this section, please let the editor know at editor@watchetcct.com

First Saturdays 10.30am – 12 noon **Councillors' Surgery** Watchet Town Council's Reception, Harbour Road, Watchet 01984 633 344.

Ask a question, raise an issue or share ideas. No need to book, just drop in.

First and Third Mondays 10.30am **Knit and Natter** at The Phoenix

Weekly Mondays 7pm **Watchet Community Choir** at The Bowling Club

Last Monday 7 – 9pm (Feb - Nov) **West Somerset Family History Group** meet at The Phoenix. £2 for members, £4 for non-members (inc refreshments).

Weekly Tuesdays 2.30pm **Flexercise** in The Methodist Schoolroom. Balance and chair based exercise for over 55s £4 a session.

Weekly Wednesdays 10am – 12.30pm **Watchet Art Club** The Methodist Schoolroom. Meet to paint and/or draw and have a cup of coffee. Occasional workshops. Contact Phyllis 07972 693 239

Weekly Wednesdays 12.30 – 1.30pm **Low-Cost Lunch** at The British Legion. Suggested donation £3. (numbers are increasing!)

Last Wednesdays 1.30 – 3pm **Carers Meeting** at The British Legion, after the weekly lunch. Why not come to both?

Weekly Wednesdays 12.30 – 1.30pm **Low-Cost Lunch** at The British Legion. Suggested donation £3. (numbers are increasing!).

Every other Wednesday 10.30am **Forget-me-not Club** at The Sanctuary (5th and 19th March, 2nd, 6th, 30th April) all enquiries to Margaret Tatham 07973638030 or watchetdementia@gmail.com

Last Wednesday 5 – 7pm at The Esplanade Club monthly **Folk Club** free to attend, welcomes new players (29th March and 30th April)

Weekly Thursdays 10.30 – 12.30pm **Digital Drop-in Café** at Watchet Library. Get help with your laptop, smartphone or tablet.

Weekly Thursdays 7.30pm **Watchet Singers** at Methodist Schoolroom.

Every First Thursday (except August) 2.30 – 4.30pm **Watchet Art and Crafts Group** at The Phoenix Centre £3 inc hot drink. (6th March, 3rd April)

Every First Thursday (except August) 1.30 – 2.30pm **Crime Fiction Book Club** at The Phoenix Centre £1.50 inc hot drink (6th March, 3rd April - check)

Regular Weekly Classes and Events continued:

Every Second Thursday 2.30pm **Thursday Circle** at Methodist Schoolroom. 13th March, a talk about **Gran Canaria** with slides.

Every fourth Thursday 2 – 4.30pm **Watchet Art and Crafts Group** at The Phoenix Centre £3 inc hot drink

Weekly Fridays 9.30 – 11.30am **Salvation Army Coffee Morning**

Weekly Fridays 10.00 – 11.30am **EmpowerHer Coffee Morning** at The Phoenix Centre, £2

Weekly Fridays 5 – 6.30pm **Community Meal** at The Sanctuary

Second and fourth Friday 7pm **Watchet Community Cinema** at Knights Templar School (14th and 28th March, 11th and 25th April).

Every third Friday 2.30pm **Gardening Club** at the Phoenix, £1 inc free raffle (21st March and 18th April - please check!)

Weekly Saturdays from 10am **Methodist Coffee Morning**. In March we are supporting **Mercy Ships**

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Useful Contacts

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Watchet Visitor Centre 01984 632 101 info@lovewatchet.co.uk

GP Surgery Williton and Watchet 01984 632 701

Lighthouse Counselling Sally or Tracey on 07722 618 828

Village Agent Izzy Silvester 01823 331 222 / 07931 018 045
izzy@somersettrcc.org.uk

Watchet Good Neighbours 01984 573 073 Mon-Fri 10am-1pm

Watchet Drives and BickWatch Community Car Schemes

Community Vehicle Co-ordinator Donna Stevens

07599 955 096 coordinator@watchetcct.co.uk

Working hours: Monday to Thursday, 9:00am-12:30pm

Quantock Food Bank quantockfoodbank@gmail.com
or 07483 815 122

Wheels Journeys to hospital/clinic/health related/shopping/banking etc For Bookings call 07891 821 861

Forget-me-not Cafe watchetdementia@gmail.com 07973 638 030

Magna Housing 0800 138 6107

Age UK Somerset

Info and Advice 01823 345 613 www.ageuksomerset.org.uk

Somerset Sight

Info and advice 01923 333 818 or www.somersetsight.org.uk

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Mind in Somerset Mindline Somerset 01823 276 892

Emotional Support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Harbour Community Bookshop Jeff and Mary Bird 01984 634 749

Watchet Chamber of Trade (WACET)

07836 239 932 visit-watchet.co.uk

Market House Museum

Gill Williams 01984 634 001 or Gay Chilcott 01984 631 411

Churches

Watchet Methodist Church

Rev Andy Day 01643 705 175 andy.day@westsomersetmethodist.org.uk

Rev Jane Sperring 01984 631 054 jane.sperring@btinternet.com

St Decuman's Church

Revd Mark Phillips 01984 639 669 revdmarkphillips@outlook.com

Janet Bremner 01984 632 118 or janetbremner31@btinternet.com

www.watchetandwillitonbenefice.com

Watchet Baptist Church Minister Mike Sherburn 01984 633 755

www.watchetbaptist.org.uk or find us on Facebook

Watchet Salvation Army Samantha Searle 07979 575 453

Samantha.Searle@salvationarmy.org.uk

Watchet Catholic Church Deacon Vincent Woods 01984 634 681

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Donna Stevens Enquiries and Community Vehicle Co-ordinator

07599 955 096 / 01984 633344

9:00am – 12:30pm Monday to Thursday

coordinator@watchetcct.co.uk www.watchettowncouncil.org

The Watchet Singers

The next concert from The Watchet Singers will be held on April 10th at 7.30pm in the Methodist Church. It will feature Sea Songs, and other watery events. There will be no admission fee and the retiring collection will be for **Watchet Summertime** – the week of entertainment for residents and visitors during the school summer holidays.

At the time of writing rehearsals are well under way. The Watchet Singers is a small choir with room to expand. There will be a summer recess after the Spring concert, and if anyone would like to join us when we resume in the autumn they will be very welcome; we particularly need male voices, but could do with a few more sopranos and altos as well. There are no auditions, and we are not scary.

For more information contact thewatchetsingers@gmail.com

Contact: thewatchetsingers@gmail.com



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Thursday 6 15pm

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Monday & Thursday 7 30pm
Wednesday & Friday 5pm

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Watchet Marina Update

Work on our dredging campaign has continued steadily, with only a brief break over Christmas to give our hardworking dredging team a well-deserved rest. At time of writing, the team has successfully completed dredging of Pontoons A and B and is currently focusing efforts on Pontoon C.

While the marina gate infrastructure suffered some additional damage during a recent storm, repairs are underway, and we're committed to restoring a fully functional marina gate as soon as possible.

In February, we hope to have replaced the fuel tank, which will allow us to test the system and identify any additional work needed before we can resume fuel dispensing.

Although there's still much to be done to reach the high standards we are striving for, we're making steady progress. We're excited to continue improving the marina and look forward to delivering a finished product that will benefit both the marina and the town of Watchet.

Many thanks

Johara Sykes-Dale, Commercial Director

Flooding in Somerset

Be prepared with help from EVAG

Flash floods are becoming a part of the Somerset way of life and with anticipated changes to our climate, the risks to homes and businesses in Watchet will only increase.

So, what can you do to protect yourself and your property?

The Rotary Club of Minehead EVAG Group are offering a free survey of any home or business that has been flooded or feels they are at risk of flooding.

This local Emergency Volunteer Action Group (EVAG) have the support of Somerset Council and have a supply of Flood Alleviation items that can be made available, at a much-reduced cost to Somerset residents and will be glad to help you.

In the first instance please email: community@mineheadrotaryclub.co.uk

Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

Watchet Methodist Church

Everyone is welcome to our services with a variety of preachers at 10.30am every Sunday morning.

Our Saturday Coffee mornings are from 10am. Thank you for raising £366.58 for **Lighthouse Counselling**, £197 raised for **Hearing Dogs for the Deaf** and £200 raised for the school we support in India.

In March we will be raising money for **Mercy Ships**.

On Thursday 13th March at 2.30pm we are having a talk with photos of Gran Canaria. Everyone is welcome.

We will be continuing to read Matthew's gospel together on 10th & 24th March and 14th April at 2.30pm. Refreshments at 3.30pm.

A service will be held at 10am on Good Friday, April 18th before the Walk of Witness at 11am.

Our Easter Day service will be at 10.30am 20th April.

Everyone is welcome to our events, and they are free!



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Phoebe Rees: A Long-Overdue Revival

In the January/February 2024 edition of Watchet Connects, Maurice Chidgey chronicled the life and work of Phoebe Merion Rees, who enjoyed a long and illustrious career as a playwright for over 40 years, gaining many accolades including an OBE before passing away at her home in Watchet in 1992.

But sadly, to many in the world of West Country amateur dramatics, Phoebe Rees is just a name atop a document, albeit one that carries some weight in such circles.

Since 1954, the Somerset Fellowship of Drama (SFD) has allocated an award in Phoebe's name to the best amateur production of the year, a most prestigious honour, indeed even the adjudication notes are hotly anticipated by those seeking honest critique of their efforts.

In 2023 my mother surprised me with a bag of playbooks, discovered at the home of my grandmother Shelagh Bishop, who helped care for Phoebe in the last years of her life.

I now possess copies of 16 of Phoebe's plays, as well as a few letters, with some curiosities like Sanctuary of which the only editions I have are translated into Welsh, or The Miraculous Year and The Victory, both of which made it as far as Japan with the English text intact and Japanese notation provided by Professors Harada and Sugino.

Around this time, as a member of the Taunton Thespians I was on the hunt for a one-act play to serve as my directorial debut, and stumbled upon Rats, first performed and published in 1936, a gentle rural comedy filled with the warmth and wit of the West Country that Phoebe loved so much.

I am proud to announce that rehearsals are well underway, and we will be performing on the first day of the SFD's Country Drama Festival, Saturday the 22nd of March, at the Warehouse Theatre in Ilminster (exact time TBC).

Tickets can be purchased via the Warehouse's website, please keep an eye on the Thespians' Facebook page/website for more information, and we hope to see you there to celebrate the rediscovery of a local literary legend.

Charlie Warren



Knights Templar Community Church School and Nursery

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Happy New Year from Knights Templar Community Church School!

It has been a very busy start to the new school term!

Staffing news: we are excited to welcome Mrs Llewellyn formally into our teaching team. She is replacing Mrs Cleere who retired at Christmas after 6 years with us.

We have a new Head Boy and Girl this term – Jacob and Millie. They take over the baton from Charlie and Alice who did a fantastic job in the Christmas term and supported the school in various ways including having the important job of visiting Willow Stream Christmas Trees to choose the school Christmas trees and representing the school at the Remembrance Service in November.

In conjunction with the 'Words of Watchet', who are running a competition for children in the area, we had Michael Loader in for a poetry day. Michael led workshops with the Key Stage 1 children where they created their own poems about senses and animals. A great day was had by all those involved and we would like to extend our thanks to the Words of Watchet Committee for subsidising this visit for our children!

Key Stage 1 enjoyed a visit from a travelling theatre show who performed an engaging play related to the Great Fire of London. This was a great interactive experience for the children and kickstarted their new history topic!

We also had a Chinese Workshop Day for the whole school. The children participated in a Chinese Dragon Dance workshop and the school hall was transformed into China Town! The children got to sample Chinese food during the day. Thank you to our KTSCA for organising and funding this special day.

We were very fortunate to have in a team from Somerset County Council to talk to all the children about road safety. Each Key Stage had a half hour assembly on the importance of staying safe near and on the roads and were given merchandise to remind them how to stay safe.

Looking ahead to the rest of the term we have some very exciting events coming up, including our Eco-Warriors getting involved with the Watchet Beach Clean, a 'Teach Rex' Gorilla workshop and a workshop by author and TV presenter Gemma Hunt! Look out for updates about these activities in the next edition!

Arts & Crafts

We are now meeting on the first Thursday of the month every month except August. 2.30pm at Phoenix Centre cost £3.00 inc. hot drink. Parking free. Art, paper mache, weaving, box, flower, iris folding project crafts for this year. U3A or Phoenix membership required after 3 sessions. Contact Lori or Ann for further info 07935 318 022 or 01984 634 203



Watchet Gardening Club (Daytime)

(NOTE Change of time and Venue)

Preparations are starting for this year's Gardening Show being held on Sunday 20th July! We are trialing holding the club meeting during the day in March Friday 21st at 2.30pm at the Phoenix centre (please check at Phoenix to confirm afternoon or evening). Cost as usual £1.00 inc. free raffle ticket (please bring small prize if you can) and various teas/coffees will be available for £1.50 (or bring your own). We hope to have a seed swap in March and April a talk on succulents and a bonsai follow up. We are a lovely friendly group so if the evening meetings have put you off coming out please come along and help support the Gardening Show. Further info contact Lori 07935 318 022.

Crime Fiction Book Club

(NOTE Change of Venue)

We are full as a group for library book borrowing but we now meet in Phoenix 1st Thursday of month 1.30-2.30pm each month except August. If you are happy to get the book we are reading each month on kindle/second hand purchase you are welcome to join as now we have moved to Phoenix Centre plenty of room. Cost for this is £1.50 inc. hot drink. U3A or Phoenix membership required after 3 sessions. Contact Lori for further info 07935 318 022.

Forget-me-not Club

For more information contact Margaret on 07973 638 030 or email watchetdementia@gmail.com

Margaret Tatham

News from St Decuman's Church

We would like to thank all the many local organisations that brought beautiful and original Christmas trees up to St Decuman's for display during the Christmas Tree Festival and over the whole Christmas period. They have been greatly admired by our visitors and have given everyone a lot of pleasure. The community support resulted in the amazing sum of just over £4,500 being raised, which will be put towards a much needed new heating system to replace our broken boiler. Thank you again.

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to the Baptism of Sophia Ann Virgin into our church family on Sunday, February 16th and on March 9th, the Baptism of Arthur George Harrison will take place. May God bless them both.

We are now preparing for the start of **Lent** on **Ash Wednesday** which this year falls on March 5th. There will be Services at 9.45am in The Sanctuary, and Holy Cross Chapel at 11am.

Our Mothering Sunday service is on March 30th and small posies of spring flowers are always given out to all the ladies present.

Palm Sunday is on April 13th, and we hope to have a real donkey joining us!

Easter Sunday is on April 20th, and all are welcome at our 10.45am Service of Holy Communion to celebrate the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Our pattern of services continues as usual with Holy Communion on Sundays at 10.45am. Special Easter Services will be advertised on Facebook and on "A Church near You."

Everyone is very welcome to come to any Service.

British Summer Time starts on March 30th and this usually heralds the start of Spring so why not come up and spend some time in our beautiful, peaceful church or perhaps visit the Holy Well in its tranquil surroundings...

Our Church information Page is on "A Church near You"

All Enquiries – Baptisms, Weddings, etc are most welcome...

Contacts/Enquiries: Revd Mark Phillips Tel. 639 669
email: revdmarkphillips@outlook.com

Churchwarden: Janet Bremner Tel. 632 118
email: janetbremner31@btinternet.com

A very Happy Easter to you from all at St Decuman's

Watchet Harbour Community Bookshop re-opens!

The Bookshop will open for the new season on Saturday 5th April. We look forward to meeting old and new customers. We are happy to accept donations while we are closed.

Please ring 01984 634 749 to arrange collection.

In 2024, thanks to our volunteers, the excellent donations and loyal customers we were able to make donations locally and to the **Cystic Fibrosis Trust**. In total we gave £8,617 to local good causes and £17,000 to the CF Trust.

Thank you everyone for your support. Please note we have already this year sponsored the Gardening Club towards the Flower Show in July and look forward to giving many more donations in the coming year.

Jeff Bird



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DEMENTIA ACTION**

**Forget me Not Cafés
2025**

**Alternate Wednesdays
10.30am - noon**

Good company, tea/coffee, cakes & biscuits,
games, support & so much more.

Jubilee Rooms, Castle St., Stogursey	The Sanctuary, Swain St., Watchet
8th & 22nd Jan.	15th & 29th Jan.
5th & 19th Feb.	12th & 26th Feb.
5th & 19th Mar.	12th & 26th Mar.
2nd, 16th & 30th Apr.	9th & 23rd Apr.
14th & 28th May.	7th & 21st May.
11th & 25th Jun.	4th & 18th Jun.
9th & 23rd Jul.	2nd, 16th & 30th Jul.
13th & 27th Aug.	No meetings in Aug.
3rd & 17th Sep.	10th & 24th Sep.
1st, 15th & 29th Oct.	8th & 22nd Oct.
12th & 26th Nov.	5th & 19th Nov.
10th Dec.	17th Dec.

Caring & Sharing

The Watchet Phoenix its history and its future

Watchet Phoenix is a very special resource. It has existed in different forms since 1963 when the Centre on the Esplanade was built by local funding in Watchet, initially for training and furthering Red Cross interests and functions, including the support of elderly and vulnerable people. It quickly became a Day Centre run by the same Watchet volunteers who had originally helped raise the funding. They provided lunches, social activities and events, which developed over the years.

In 2003 the Red Cross decided to change its focus and discontinue social welfare to become a more rapid response organisation. Watchet volunteers were told that the Centre would be closed and sold. There were many protests as the Centre had been built with local funding, so The Red Cross delayed the sale in order that local money could be found to purchase the Centre.

Volunteers formed a new group calling themselves the **Watchet Phoenix**. More funding was raised and then in 2010, deeds were signed over to the Phoenix. *(So the town has effectively purchased the Centre twice)*. Now, all but one of the original trustees remain on the group, but the work of the Phoenix and its registered Charity continues. Our object is to promote the well-being of the elderly in Somerset by providing a range of daycare services to improve their quality of life and enable or assist them to maintain their independence.

The Future

The Phoenix now faces a further setback. Many of our long serving Volunteers are having to realise the fact that time has taken its toll on them, just as it has with the many people that they have helped over the years.

The Phoenix is in a sound financial position and the building is in good condition with modern facilities. The Trustees have decided it is time to encourage other **local community groups** to make the Centre their home and encourage more volunteers to join.

Recent retirees looking to fill some of their newly acquired free time, or newly arrived residents coming to the area for their retirement and wanting to properly integrate into this community, would be willingly accepted into the Phoenix family. Many local organisations also hire the Phoenix premises for their meetings and events, and it could be in the interests of all concerned if the Centre continued to operate in its usual way. Some members of those groups may like to integrate individually into the Phoenix to ensure its continuity.

continues on next page

Would you like to know more information?

If so, please contact Bryan Howe (Treasurer) on 07989 852 264 or email bryan.howe@talk21.com

A future **open meeting** can be organised at the Phoenix for those interested in our work and how it can continue to benefit both our elderly and the wider Watchet and surrounding communities.

Thank you for reading about us.

Watchet Walking Week

Monday 7th – Saturday 12th April

A programme of guided walks with a difference.

Book at the **Visitor Centre**, booking fee for each walk £1, other payments/donations to be decided, enquire at Visitor Centre (VC).

Monday 7th 11 am **Art Walk** with Alison Jacobs from Studio 10 EQ.

Tuesday 8th 11am **Poetry Walk** with Anne Lovejoy from VC.

Wednesday 9th 10am **Toddle** with Watchet Salvation Army from Esplanade (free of charge).

Wednesday 9th 2pm **Shanty Walk** with David Milton (TBC).

Thursday 10th 10 am **Coast Walk** with Isobel Pring from VC.

Friday 11th 10am **Natural History Walk** with Dr Mandy (TBC).

Friday 11th 2pm **Hole Walk!** With Dr Mandy (TBC).

Saturday 12th 2pm **Singing Walk** with Watchet Community Choir from VC (booking fee only).

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Watchet Market House Museum

Watchet Market House Museum will re-open for the 2025 season on March 22nd. We will be open every day except Friday, which will be available by appointment only. By the time you read this we will have submitted our bid for Accreditation renewal, which if successful will be valid for 5 years.

New this season will be a small exhibition exploring our historical links with Bristol via the Bristol Channel. This is part of our exhibition last year, which successfully featured on the MV Balmoral for two months, thanks to a grant from the Royal Society.

We will be looking at the work of the '*Hobblers*' who assisted ships into the harbour during the 19th and 20th centuries. We will also have a small display featuring finds by 'metal detectorists' on Doniford and Dunster Beaches, thanks to a small grant from Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society.

A reminder to all our members that annual subscriptions are overdue but can still be paid, by cash, to a member of the committee or direct into the Museum bank account (Sort: 30 19 57, Watchet Market House Museum, Acct No: No, 00002231) Please include reference: SUB followed by your surname. Many thanks to our members who have already paid.

Jim Nicholas 01984 631 660

Lunch at the Legion - Watchet

Every Wednesday from 12.30pm

Lunch served 12.30pm-1.00pm - stay for a cuppa and a chat until 2.00pm

People in Watchet have been enjoying a low cost, home cooked lunch at the Royal British Legion in Watchet every Wednesday. We have exclusive use of the Legion and serve good, homemade meals and a cuppa for the low cost of £3, or free to those who need it.

Why not come and join us? (bar not open)

Everyone Welcome!

WATCHET COASTAL COMMUNITY TEAM

Watchet Climate Group

In our last meeting, we discussed a lot!

- **Land Management and Biodiversity:** fire and flooding risks
- **Solar panels** for domestic and commercial roofs
- Small scale domestic **wind and river turbines**
- **Water management** and how we can also save energy and general waste
- Setting up a **Repair Café**. *We need people with any relevant specialist skills* who are willing to offer their time on maybe two or three Saturdays a year

Also, we will need people to make cakes etc!

Our next meeting is 2.30pm on Thursday 6th March.

If you are interested in the Climate Group and/or in donating your time to the running of a repair café, please contact:

Paul Levy by phone: 01984 632 108 or email: paul.levy78@gmail.com



36 Swain Street, Watchet TA23 OAE
Telephone 01984 633 888 Facebook @Amy B Hair

Unisex salon based in the heart of Watchet, offering all aspects of cutting, colouring and styling for both Ladies and Gents

The Salon also supports The Little Princess Trust Charity

To arrange a consultation or make an appointment, pop in and speak to Amy or Janice, who will be both happy to discuss your requirements and personalise your appointment.

Opening hours Tuesday to Saturday from 9.00am
with late appointments available on Request.

Lighthouse Book Club

We are a small friendly group who meet once a month in each others' homes to talk about a book chosen by one of us. The books are mainly fiction of a variety of genres.

We would welcome more members. Contact Paul on 01984 632 108 or by email on paul.levy78@gmail.com

Lasting Power of Attorney Workshop

Have you and your family members considered preparation for your future?

What about if you were unable to make decisions for yourself following an accident / illness - Decisions on medical treatment or your finances?

Unless you have prepared a **Lasting Power of Attorney** in advance, even your wife/husband, son daughter or next of kin could not make those decisions for you. They would be consulted but ultimately someone else would make that decision in an emergency.

Come along to this **free 2-hour workshop** hosted by WCCT on LPA's and find out what you need to do to secure your decision making into the future.

The Harbour Bookshop, The Esplanade, Watchet on Thursday 27th March 2025 from 2pm until 4pm (full 2-hour workshop)

*Please note that you will need to come for the full 2 hours in order to hear all the information you will need – **this is not a drop-in***



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Groups in Minehead on Tuesday

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What's on at the Regal, Minehead

Steven Lee – Story Time Sunday, 2nd March - 3:00pm

Popular children's author Steven Lee joins us to bring some of his best loved books to life with a magical mixture of music, puppetry.

Film Title to Be Confirmed Tuesday, 4th March - 7:30pm

The Frog and the Princess Saturday, 15th March - 2:00pm

All Froggy really wants is to hear a story starring someone like him.

Exhibition on Screen: Dawn of Impressionism: Paris 1874

Tuesday, 18th March - 7:30pm

The Impressionists were scorned at first and were penniless outsiders.

Royal Ballet & Opera: Romeo & Juliet Thursday, 20th March - 7:15pm.

Running time: 210 minutes, including two intervals.

Creation – the Bubble Show Saturday, 22nd March - 2:00pm

Bubbleland, is brought to life in a dazzling display of soap and water.

National Theatre Live: Dr Strangelove (Cert TBC) Thursday, 27th March -

7:00pm. Steve Coogan plays four roles in the world premiere stage adaptation of Stanley Kubrick's comedy masterpiece Dr Strangelove.

Somerset Opera – HMS Pinafore Friday, 28th March - 7:30pm

The Roy Orbison Experience Sunday, 30th March - 7:30pm. A celebration of the music of Roy Orbison, fronted by the incredible voice of Oliver Harris and a live band dedicated to faithfully replicating the iconic sound.

The Fureys Tuesday, 1st April - 7:30pm. Legends of Irish music & song,

Regal Comedy Night Friday, 4th April - 7:30pm

Join us for a night of fun, laughter and something a little bit different for The Regal Theatre. Four acts to enjoy!

Here Come the Girls Saturday, 5th April - 7:30pm. Get ready to be blown away by the ultimate celebration of some of the most iconic female artists of all time!

Royal Ballet & Opera: Purccini's Turendot Sunday, 6th April - 2:00pm

Film Title to Be Confirmed Tuesday, 8th April - 7:30pm

The Wizard of Oz Pantomime

Monday 14th - Sunday 20th April - 2:30pm - 7:30pm



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Watchet Bowling Club Activities

**It's not all bowls at the Watchet Bowling Club
and Community Venue!**



Variety has been the spice of the activities in 2024. In addition to facilitating many occasions, including weddings, theme nights ("Great Burns Nite"), discos and live band events in the Clipper Lounge, things have been busy on the charity front also.

- A music quiz night in aid of the Watchet Twinning Society took place, the Club team managed not to come in last and did help to raise some £300 too!
- The Macmillan coffee morning complete with delicious cakes, raised over £700.
- Miss Jam Tart provided the entertainment at a drag night which raised some £1500 for Cancer UK.
- A lovely summer days' bowling generated circa £2300 in aid of prostrate cancer work, with half donated directly to the charity and half to the Beacon Centre, Musgrove hospital.
- Even the Club Christmas Draw saw £100 donated to Cancer UK.

Oh, and there was a bit of club bowling as well: club and county matches and three of the ladies, three of the men and two juniors made the National finals at Leamington Spa. Some of the members went on the club tour and even played in Portugal, becoming quite International!

Yes, a busy year with plenty of fun. Do come along and see or join us to enjoy.

Contacts:

General Enquiries – watchetbc@outlook.com

Events (inc hire) – watchetbowlingevents@gmail.com

Gym – the_wbc_gym@outlook.com

Membership – wbcmembership783@gmail.com

Watchet Baptists

Spring is a wonderful thing – for lots of reasons.

For me, probably the biggest one is hope. I don't much like the winter – it's a whole bunch of cold and grey. Maybe it's age-related but I feel the cold much more than I used to. The arrival of brighter and warmer days makes a big difference to me. And then there is all the new life.

If you're walking somewhere like Hodder's Combe or Weacombe Combe, or up the path to St Decuman's – there is so much new life to see. That's what brings out the hope in me. It's not a hope for a particular thing, it's more a sense of hopefulness. I think that this is something human beings have felt for a long time. Celebrations of new life – from lambs to flowers to more daylight – have been going on for thousands of years.

What I find interesting, is that the joy of new life and springtime only happens because winter comes before it. That's where my sense of hopefulness overlaps with my faith. Right through the Bible, runs the idea that life comes out of death. After all, compost helps things grow and fallen trees make great habitats for new plants. The life of spring emerges from the death of winter.

I'm going to enjoy the spring and everything that comes with it. Here's to sunset walks in the evening, roadside flowers and the chance to use the pub gardens a little bit more! If you've got any recommendations for springtime walks, get in touch through mike@watchetbaptist.org.uk and tell me about them. (I won't be adding you to any mailing lists, I just like to hear about good new places to walk.)

Mike Sherburn - Pastor, Watchet Baptist Church, 01984 633 755

(Please note – my day off is Monday, thank you.)

watchetbaptist.org.uk [youtube.com/watchetbaptist](https://www.youtube.com/watchetbaptist)



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Article and Ad deadline for the May/June edition is 24th March

Watchet Connects Advertising

Watchet Coastal Community Team CIC

Watchet Connects is the **free not-for-profit newsletter** distributed to **everyone** who lives or works in Watchet. It is probably the most well-thumbed reference for the town's inhabitants, even in this digital age.

Generally, not-for-profit and charitable organisations can submit articles for free up to half a page (*for community entries - e.g. charities, social enterprises, churches etc - approx 200 words or less if images included. Please adhere to this limit to ensure we can continue to provide **Watchet Connects** free of charge*). **Watchet Connects** depends very much on the generosity of local organisations to support our cause via advertising and sponsorship.

Watchet Connects is published bi-monthly and is distributed to around **2,200 households** in Watchet by **volunteers**. The handy A5 booklet is usually around 48-52 pages and is available to outlying villages at cost.

Advertising and sponsorship rates are extremely affordable for even the smallest of shops, clubs, pubs, cafés, self-employed and other local businesses. We can design your advert for a very modest charge – or even free if you book a series of ads. Sponsorship opportunities are available.

Copy deadlines are before the start of the month preceding publication.

Interested?

If you want to promote your local organisation or business in this up-and-coming coastal community get in touch.

Contact Rachel: editor@watchetcct.co.uk
or Chris: williamsart@mac.com

Registered Office: Watchet Coastal Community Team CIC,
7 The Esplanade, Watchet TA23 0AJ

Watchet Connects Advertising Rates to April 2026

Size	H x W mm	1 issue	Annual 6 issues
Full page	186 x 128	£60	£320
Half page	91 x 128 [or 186 x 62]	£35	£190
Quarter page	91 x 62	£18	£95
Inside Front or Outside Back			£400
Inside Back			£375

Annual advertisers starting mid-year will be charged proportionally for the number of ads to April 2026.

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ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

March - April Dates

Sunday 2nd March

Danny Jukebox – Dan Aspey Swing and Jazz

3pm-6pm

Sunday 9th March

Rods Faces

3pm-6pm

Sunday 30th March – Mother's Day

ST Fian - Acoustic Duo

3pm-6pm

Saturday 12th April – Barry Paull's ELVIS

9pm till late

Still currently booking, keep an eye on our FB page
for any updates to our entertainment nights

*Please note that admission will require proof of membership and a privilege
card is to be shown except for events (as above) and private functions*

Opening Times:

Monday	5pm-11pm
Tuesday-Thursday	7pm-11pm
Friday	4pm-12am
Saturday	12pm-12am
Sunday	12pm-11pm

*More dates to follow:
keep an eye on our FB
page for any updates to
our entertainment nights*



Opening hours may be subject to change
on quieter nights (Bar Discretion)

Live at the Legion Watchet RBL, Mill Lane, TA23 0AR