

About Watchet Boat Owners' Association:-



We are delighted that you have shown an interest in Watchet Boat Owners' Association (WBOA) by visiting our website and hope that you are considering making use of Watchet Harbour Marina. You'll find it's an ideal base for sailing, power boating and fishing, with blue water within easy reach and at least a dozen destinations only a day's sail away.

Watchet Boat Owners' Association is Royal Yachting Association (RYA) affiliated and is recognised as the Watchet berthholder representative group by the RYA, Watchet Harbour Marina Ltd and the local authority, West Somerset Council, which actually owns the harbour. The association can trace its history back to 1875 when Watchet sailors and fishermen started to organise regattas and water sports to raise funds for the town's lifeboat.

For nearly 70 years, football matches, races and tug-of-war events held at low tide in the deep harbour mud together with over-tide swimming, sailing and rowing races drew large crowds and helped to keep the lifeboat financially self-supporting.

These activities ended when the lifeboat station closed in 1944 but were revived seven years later as part of Watchet's 1951 Festival of Britain celebrations and continued for another ten years under the auspices of the Watchet Aquatic Sports Association.

Later the organisation evolved into the Watchet Sailing Club and finally into the Watchet Boat Owners' Association that widened its remit to include sailing, motor boating, rowing, fishing and even canoeing. Watchet Sailing Club was a founder member of the Bristol Channel Yachting Conference - recently renamed the Bristol Channel Yachting Association.

From the early 1970's WBOA administered the moorings in the harbour, initially under an agreement with the Watchet Urban District Council and laterally under a similar agreement with West Somerset District Council. Under these agreements WBOA installed and owned all of the mooring tackle, let the moorings to members and collected fees for onward payment to the council.

The end of commercial shipping at Watchet in 1993 allowed the WBOA to extend its moorings and also to suggest that part of the harbour be made into a retained-water marina - an idea that finally became a reality in 2001.

The association played a major part in the marina project with committee members putting in many hours and days of work alongside West Somerset Council officers to ensure successful delivery. Initially it was planned that the marina would be operated by WBOA on a community or not for profit basis with its berthholder members effectively having a share in the business. Even though this idea was substantially supported by the RYA it did not sit well with the funding providers and was eventually dropped in favour of full commercial operation.

Over the years the club has had to evolve from a small do-it-yourself group of people with a common interest into a more structured organisation with a membership that at times has peaked at over 100 berthholders. The comradeship and spirit of community exhibited by those local sailors and fishermen over a hundred years ago is still very much there but the focus has shifted. WBOA exists to promote all forms of boating activity, to make those activities available and affordable to all sections of the community and to serve all members of the Watchet boating community whatever their needs or aspirations and no matter how modest or ambitious those needs or aspirations might be.

WBOA is deeply involved in all the harbour developments and social and marine activities, and represents the interests of all harbour/marina users at regular meetings with the marina company and West Somerset Council. WBOA is the officially recognised berthholders' representative on the statutory Harbour Advisory Committee.

WBOA does not operate a clubhouse and for many years club meetings were held in the skittle alleys of pubs in the town, with the longest tenure of any being in the Bell Inn. Shortly after the marina opened in 2001 we moved our social and meeting headquarters to the Esplanade Club next to the Coastguard station. It's a friendly place which is open most evenings and weekends with probably the cheapest beer in Watchet! Members of WBOA are enrolled as members of the Esplanade Club and are entitled and encouraged to use its facilities whenever they wish.

As part of our declared aims we actively support voluntary organisations that enable others to enjoy the boating experience. In particular we are very closely aligned to the local Sea Scout troop which organises boating activities and associated training for over 100 youngsters. Because we recognise the very important role the scouts play in our community encouraging youngsters to participate in our chosen pastime the 1st Watchet Sea Scouts have free and unfettered use of all of our facilities (Except the bar of the Esplanade Club!). We are very proud of and pleased to support this group that is part of an elite band of scout troops having Admiralty recognition - no mean feat for a group in the heart of rural Somerset - an area not necessarily renowned for such prestigious recognition.

With its own freehold boatyard, lifting equipment and workshops, the club can now offer a complete range of services to members from hauling out to power washing all of which are available to all members. Included are:

- A fully serviced boatyard with a general storage capability for boats up to 30'. The yard also doubles as a very secure car park for use by those who may be cruising for a few days.*
- A fully tested lifting cradle and tractor with a capacity of 4 tonnes to carry your boat to and from the yard.*
- A well equipped workshop with an ever increasing selection of tools to help you maintain or repair your boat.*
- An occasional newsletter to inform of club news and marina developments.*
- Regular training sessions in all aspects of boating for novices and the more experienced.*
- Regular monthly meetings at the Esplanade Club, Watchet, at 7pm on the second Monday of each month.*
- Social events.*
- A huge accumulation of local maritime knowledge for you to tap into*

The association also has sea rowing section that was established in 2002 with the aim of promoting sea rowing as a recreational sport, offering people the opportunity to row in the Bristol Channel and improve their general health and fitness. The section is run by a small but very enthusiastic group of men and women of all ages and has its own boat, the Sarah Pilkington, that is a glass fibre version of a traditional Celtic Longboat so much loved by sea rowers in west and south Wales.

We invite you to join WBOA and take advantage of our ever-evolving organisation. As a new member - experienced sailor or a complete novice - you can be sure of a warm welcome from an enthusiastic community of like minded individuals whose aim in life is to make your boating affordable and pleasurable and who will always find time to give you a helping hand.

All we ask of members is to remember that, whilst there is no compulsion to do so, any help or assistance they can give in running the club or to other members will always be welcome. We also encourage them to tell us what they expect from their boat club - whatever their reasonable expectations we try to organise it for them but we feel it better they come along, get actively involved and make their ideas happen!