

# WATCHET REUNITED

Maurice & Joyce Chidgey

*Can you remember their names?  
Smile at the fashions.  
How have they changed?  
I remember that shop.  
What happened to that building?*

It is fitting that the historic seaport town of Watchet should be the first to be featured in a new series of books by publishers Halsgrove which incorporates in its titles the theme Reunited. A wide range of photographs representing people, places, events, groups, sport and personalities have been selected, accompanied by relevant captions and in some cases longer articles. The book attempts to give a glimpse of life in the town during the past seven decades and into the present one.

Watchet's maritime history continues with its marina, and the West Somerset Railway retains the town's rail link, bringing many visitors. It is to be hoped that the photographs will stir memories and reunite Watchet folk past and present. The town, with a remarkable history of over 1,000 years, remains a fascinating place with much to offer and a great community spirit.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

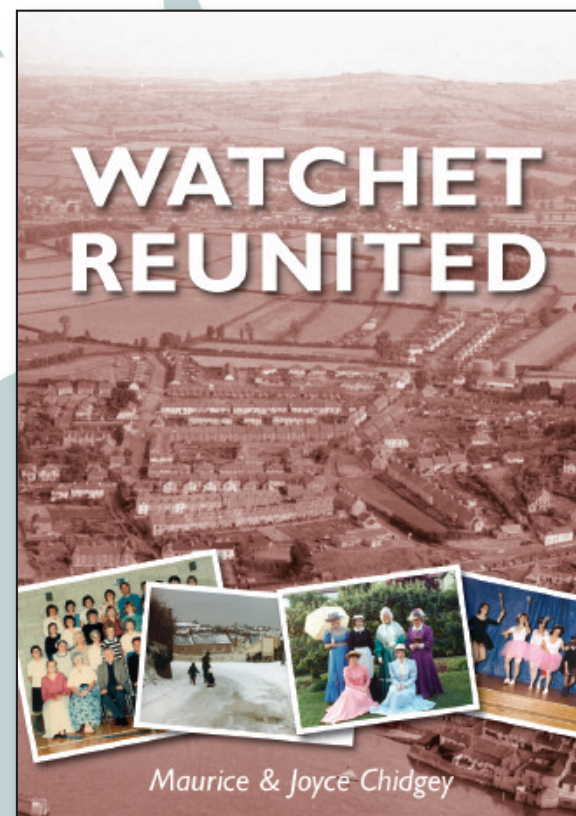
West Somerset-born **Maurice and Joyce Chidgey** are keen local historians and members of the Watchet Market House Museum Society, with Maurice serving on its committee. For 50 years Maurice was in the printing department of the West Somerset Free Press, where Joyce was also employed in a clerical capacity. Residing at Watchet for many years, they have two daughters and three grandchildren. Their previous publications in Halsgrove's Community History series have been widely acclaimed.

## HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

The full Halsgrove catalogue is available free or visit [www.halsgrove.com](http://www.halsgrove.com) for regional and category listings of available titles.

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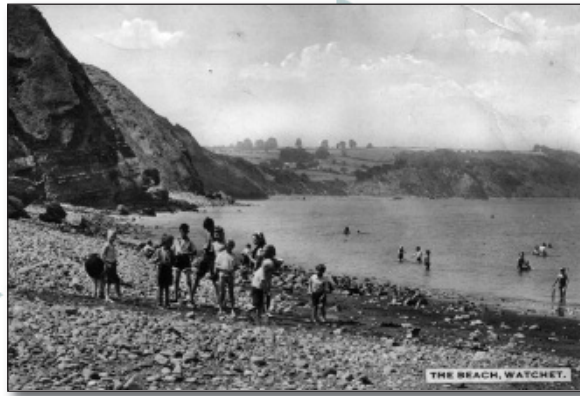
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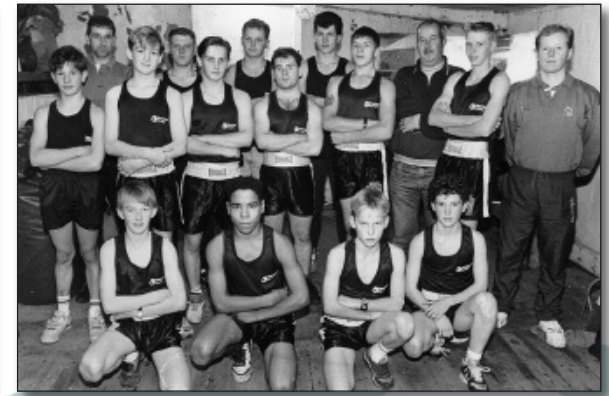
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A Causeway Street party in celebration of the Festival of Britain in 1951.



Long Sands, c.1946.



Watchet Amateur Boxing Club, 1991.

Watchet Flower Show flower girls, 1969.



Example of a double page spread.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**In the 1930s**

**T**his was a decade of great Royal occasions – firstly the Silver Jubilee of King George V in 1935 and the Diamond Jubilee in 1947, followed by the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1952. His reign was short-lived to be followed in 1952 by the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The Silver Jubilee in 1955 and the Coronation in 1957 were celebrated with many more public demonstrations of commemorative events and other traditions.

The decade opened in 1930 with the discovery of oil in the North Sea and the subsequent discovery of the first oil field in the North Sea.

In 1930 the most severe winter since the 17th century, the annual event which included dancing to see the arrival of the first snow in the English Channel, the first of the year. Entertainment for Watchet folk was further enhanced by the opening of the Cinema Cinema in 1930.

With war clouds looming, the late 1930s saw much increased military activity at nearby Dorchester, especially with the use of the Queen's Own Buffs in the coastal plain for target practice by the Germans. Like other nearby rural villages, Watchet had in 1939 the evacuation of children from London and other cities at the outbreak of war in 1939.

The advent of the Second World War, with its tactical restrictions, saw the end of an old Watchet custom, Ladies' Night. It took place on the 15th of September and was a customary occasion of Watchet Fair.

In the opening month, Watchet saw one of its greatest, Handel Gubbitt, die in a fire with a catastrophic death for his family, leaving a widow in her first month in 1937. Never was the Watchet folk enjoying considerable success, winning many trophies. Women were invited to members of Watchet Bowling Club in 1937.

**IN THE 1930s**

Victims of Parsonage Farm, 1930. The victims of the farm were then, Mr John, seated together with his son Richard. Left is Tommy Paine (Dial 300), Mr Lodge (Dial 300), Bob Mole.

Mr Lodge, seen behind (24) and Jack Moleby by the sheep dog at Parsonage Farm, 1930.



Sidney Watts, a worker at Parsonage Farm, with one of the farm's cart-horses 'dressed overall' outside 'Windwhistle' after winning first prize in the local cart-horse parade, 1930.



Watchet Carnival personalities, 1981. Left to right, back: Mrs F. Mc Ginley (carnival glamorous grannie), Kim Harris and Annette Pope (carnival queen attendants), Jennifer Cordell (carnival princess); front: Alison Date (carnival queen).