

A HISTORY OF WATCHET

By A. L. Wedlake, updated by Paul Upton

"If the name of any one man be linked with that of a single place, not as a landowner or captain of industry, but as historian and interpreter of the past, then there is no better example than that of A. L. Wedlake and the port of Watchet on the north Somerset coast...." (Victor Bonham-Carter 1987)

In 1955, Leslie Wedlake published *A History of Watchet* – a thorough, comprehensive, well-resourced and very readable account of the town's past which had never been attempted before. It was soon out of print and a second edition with some updating was published in 1973. Both books are now difficult to obtain.

This reprint of Wedlake's work includes much new material and many more photographs. Paul Upton provides new material to bring the history up to the present day; adds a biographical chapter on Leslie Wedlake himself; and supports the original, unaltered text with additional notes.

A. L. Wedlake's original book proceeds readably and in easy stages from geology and pre-history, through Saxon times and the middle ages the industrial period and the twentieth century.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

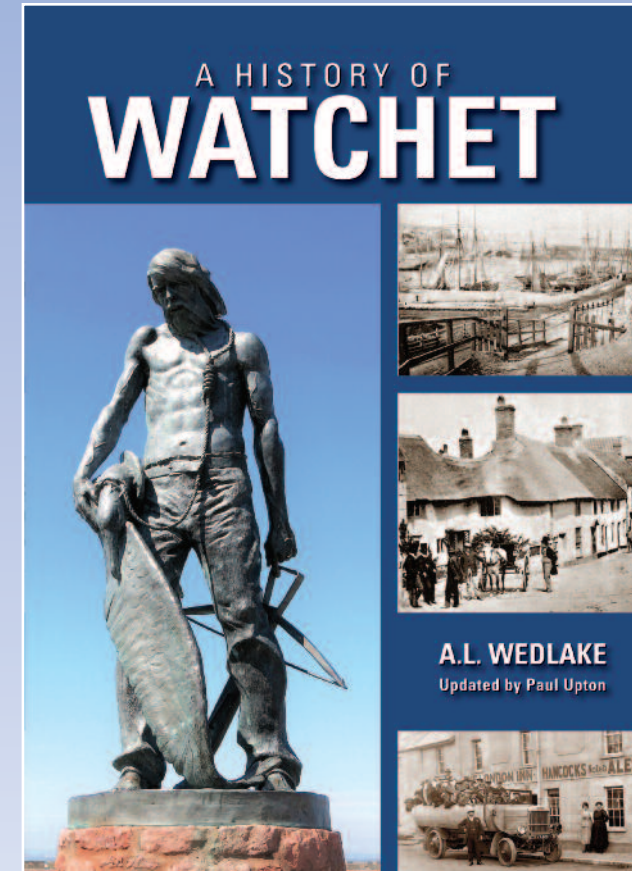
Alfred Leslie Wedlake was born in Watchet in 1901, son of a long-established Watchet family. Apart from one year in London he lived and worked in the town all his life. From an early age he became interested in archaeology and local history. For most of his life he owned and ran a nursery garden and floral business whilst pursuing these interests in his spare time. Although not formally educated after the age of fourteen, he studied widely and became an important authority on the history and pre-history of West Somerset. He published several books, the most ambitious being *A History of Watchet* which remains the definitive work on the subject. He was a keen and active member of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society and was its president from 1981-2. He was the inspiration for and co-founder of the Watchet Market House Museum.

Paul Upton grew up in Bridgwater and now lives on the Quantock Hills. He trained to be an architect in the 1960s but then pursued a career in Education which included three headships and a principal lectureship at the University of the West of England. He returned to architectural conservation work in 1997 and through work on buildings in Watchet he acquired a deep interest and respect for the town and its people. He was a founder-member of the Watchet Conservation Society and was for many years its case officer.

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