

INDUSTRY

A working model of the 1 in 4 West Somerset Mineral Railway incline illustrates how, in the 19th century, iron ore from the Brendon Hill mines was transported to Watchet for shipment to smelting works in South Wales. A good collection of photographs and models support the preservation of this piece of industrial heritage, including a walking trail following the rail route. This was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2009.



Find out about Watchet's local industries and how the Harbour was essential for local trade and industry.



The paper mill

Don't miss the outside display windows and the unique Court Leet jail and its prisoner. Browse our fine collection of photographs and a Chronology time line that will help guide you through the ages and provide a special experience.

So much to see in our little museum... Enjoy.

Admission is free but donations would be appreciated.

LOCATION

Watchet Market House Museum is close to the Esplanade and Marina. Car and coach parks, bus stop and railway station are all within easy walking distance. There are restaurants, cafes and pubs nearby.

By road from the M5 motorway take the A39 from Bridgwater or A358 from Taunton. Combine your visit to the Museum with a trip on the West Somerset Steam Railway.



OPENING TIMES

Open every day from Easter weekend until the end of October.
10.30 am. to 4.30 pm.

ADMISSION FREE

Group visits by arrangement with the Curator.

Contacts

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Watchet Market House Museum

**FREE
ENTRY**



The little museum...
...with a lot to see!

Watchet Market House Museum

The Museum is on the ground floor of the old Market House built about 1820. There was a market in the town as long ago as the 13th century and the present building stands on the site of a previous Market House. Traders sold their wares through the large windows to folk standing outside.

The focus of the Museum is Watchet and its history and this is reflected in the displays which try to capture the times from prehistoric to the present day. See fossils found on our local beaches, including an ichthyosaurus, mammoth's tooth and many others which amazingly are still being found today. Our early ancestors left us a collection of Stone Age implements, while locally discovered Romano-British remains show the effect of Roman influence in West Somerset.



PRE-HISTORY...

Locally found Jurassic Fossils including Mammoth Teeth. Stone Age implements from West Somerset.

Viking raids in the 10th century are well documented through evidence of their plunder of Saxon coins, produced at Watchet's Royal Mint, being found as far afield as Scandinavia. Kings Ethelred, Canute and William the Conqueror all made use of Watchet's mint. Replica coins can be purchased from the museum bearing the name WACET.

ANGLO-SAXON MINT...



MARITIME...

Watchet's maritime history is of the utmost importance to the town. It is its *'raison d'etre'* since the earliest times, from its formation as a natural harbour after the last ice age up to the present day as a man-made harbour supporting a modern marina.

Photographs, shipwright's tools, navigational instruments, model ships and paintings by Watchet's own 'Pier Head Painter' Thomas Chidgey all help to tell the story, along with displays of the RNLI and Coastguard.



It is widely accepted that Samuel Taylor Coleridge began his famous 'Ancient Mariner' poem while visiting the town in 1797 and the Museum has honoured that connection by commissioning a wonderful statue in 2003, which stands nearby on the Esplanade. Alan Herriot, the sculptor, also made an equally impressive statue of 'Yankee Jack', a well known local sailor and shantyman from the late 19th century, commissioned by the museum in 2008.



EXHIBITS INCLUDING...

Photographs - Paintings by local artists - Lifeboat Gear - Equipment - Shantyman Story - Models Court Leet jail with Prisoner - Video "The Watchet Story"

Earl Dunraven entering harbour in 1890



Models of lifeboats

Stories of Viking raids

