

March 12th 1960 - March 12th 2010

Special Golden Jubilee Edition

Riverside Restaurant Celebrates 50 YEARS in the 'Watson' family

On March 6th 1960 the lease for the Riverside Cafe and Post Office was assigned to the Watson family who had previously run the Bay House Cafe in West Bay and the Old Watch House Cafe on the East Beach. The business in 1960 was very different from what it is today. The Post Office was well used and the locals stayed for a cup of tea, a debate and a game of dominoes which sometimes lasted well into the evening. Visitors were very seasonal and most stayed on the municipal camping ground. As gas stoves hardly existed most meals were taken in local cafes. There was a daily influx of coach parties who mainly came for cream teas and crab sandwiches. The coaches came from as far away as Bristol and Swindon but mostly from Chard, Taunton, Yeovil and Dorchester. West Bay was very popular because it was easy going and not expensive.



Jan and Arthur Watson

How the Watson family arrived at the Riverside, West Bay... Memories by Arthur Watson

My father, who had been in the Army during the 1st world war, was called up in 1939 to join the Navy as a machine gunnery instructor for arming Trawlers and Merchant Ships. We then lived in Purley, Surrey, so he decided we would be safer out of the London area and for some reason, we ended up in West Bay. First of all we lived at East Cliff Cottages and eventually moved to West Cliff, my home for 20 years.

I lived through the war in West Bay and went to school in Taunton as it was felt that a German invasion of Dorset was possible. Our most memorable times then were when the American forces were stationed in West Bay, we had our first banana, Wrigleys chewing gum and rides on tanks. A German Heinkel also landed on the rocks below our house - they thought they were in Spain!

My mother was Tatiana Ystamanova and was born in Tbilisi in Georgia. She met my father in the early 1920s when his Regiment was in Georgia, they married and she moved with him to the UK. After the 2nd World War, my father got involved elsewhere and did not return. My mother had to earn a living and started doing Bed and Breakfast. Later she took the lease of the Bay House Cafe which was a typical seaside operation, and after that she then took the lease of the Old Watch House Cafe on the East Beach. These businesses were operated from 1948 until the mid 1950s. My sister, Tamara, had been in the WRNS and returned home in 1960, my mother then purchased the lease of the Riverside Cafe and Post Office on March 12th 1960. I was on a three masted top sail Baltic Schooner that had been dismantled in a force 12 gale off Cape Finisterra and was in north-west Spain. When I returned I helped a bit and gradually got more involved until December 1st 1964 when the lease was assigned to me.



Arthur aged 12 (with a French friend) at West Bay, 1948



West Bay in 1964

From 1964 Onwards

When Arthur and Jan Watson took the helm in 1964 the trade was limited to local fishermen, coach parties and people on camping holidays in the area. The menu was fairly basic with roast dinners and cream teas the specialties. However local crab and lobster were listed and sometimes local fishermen would bring in buckets of mackerel, whitebait or sprats and any other thing they caught, which would be quickly added to the menu. Monkfish, squid, John Dory and spider crabs were considered to be bait fish and were practically given away.

RIVERSIDE POST-OFFICE & CAFE		
SOUP 1/-		
Prime Ramp Steak	10/6	Egg & Chips 2/6
Tomato and Chips	7/6	Bacon, Egg & Chips 4/6
Pork Chop & Chips	7/6	Sausage, Egg & Chips 5/6
Chicken & Chips	10/6	Local Plaice & Chips 3/6
Chicken & Chips	3/6	Fish & Chips 3/6
Beefburgers & Chips	3/6	Fish Fingers & Chips 5/6
Ham & Chips	3/6	Ham Salad 5/6
Sausages & Chips	3/6	Chicken Salad 7/6
Hamburger & Chips	3/6	Fresh Local Crab Salad 7/6
EXTRAS available with all meals		
Egg	1/6	Baked Beans 2/6
Peas	1/6	Baked Beans on Toast 2/6
Tomato	1/6	Egg on Toast 2/6
Bacon (grilled)	1/6	
GENERALLY AVAILABLE 8/-		
Grilled Gammon Steak with Egg & Chips		
Special Local Lobster Salads (minimum of two persons) about 12/- each		
DRINKS ETC.		
Pot of Tea (per person)	1/6	Hubby Bubby 1/6
Cup of Tea	1/6	Luzocade 2/6
Cup of Coffee	1/6	Other Minerals 1/6
Coffee (all milk)	1/6	Ice Cream Soda 2/6
Hotchicks	1/6	Bread & Butter 1/6
Ovaltine	1/6	Toast 1/6
Hot Chocolate	1/6	Cheese, Biscuits & Butter 1/6
Milk	1/6	Jam (per portion) 1/6
Milk Shakes	1/6	Cakes & Scones 1/6
Fruit Squashes	1/6	Dairy Cream & Jam Scone 9d
Coco Cola, Cydrax	1/6	
New or Mashed Potato generally available with all Meals.		

The business grew but West Bay became increasingly prone to flooding and storm damage and the Riverside got flooded several times a year during the 60s and 70s. The disastrous floods in the 1970s called into question the future viability of the site, but in 1976 permission was granted for the present building to be erected at a higher level and a design was commissioned from the Architects Piers Gough and Roger Zogolovitch.

The rebuild in 1976 coincided with the spread of car ownership and the purchase of holiday homes. The demand changed radically and led by Jan Watson, who was the Chef, the Riverside was soon offering a full seafood menu and attracting customers from far and wide. Local produce and seafoods have always featured prominently on the menu.



Jan, Arthur and his mother, Tatiana, 1980



Tatiana Ystamanova & Sister circa 1905 in Tbilisi Georgia



Arthur, 1956, Sub Lt. National Service

History of The Riverside

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of refreshments being available at the Riverside site. It seems that the people of Bridport and surrounding area would walk to West Bay on high days and holidays and one route crossed the meadows to the footbridge by the George Hotel. Some enterprising soul decided to make cups of tea available from a tent and then a wooden cabin. Food was the next step and an increase in size of the cabin occurred. This took place in the early 1900s and by 1930 the village post office had moved there together with a shop. The cafe was secondary to the other activities.



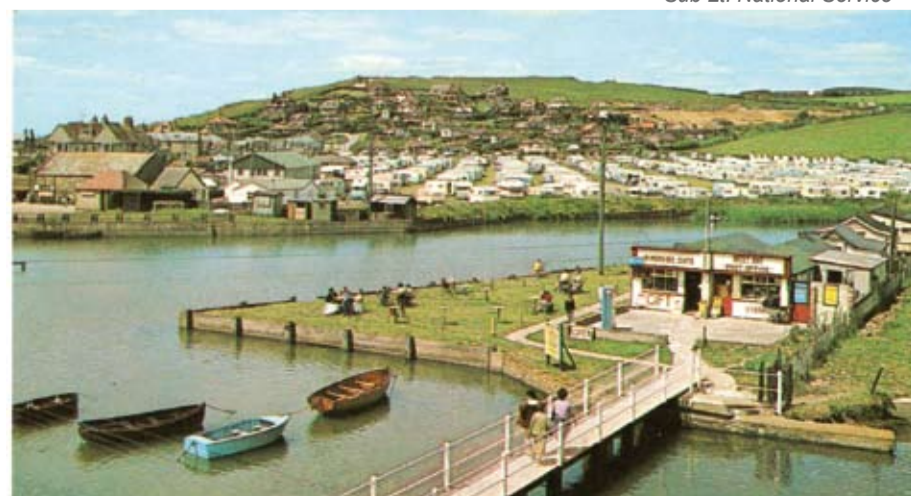
1910



1932



The Riverside surviving the floods in the 80s!



Riverside Cafe and Post Office, 1963

... History Of The Riverside Continued



1939



1962



1970s



1976

The Riverside was rebuilt to a design by the Architects Piers Gough and Roger Zogolovitch. The post office was moved temporarily to the shop coming into West Bay, now occupied by Samways, The Fishmongers.



Painting by Terry Whitworth

1990s
Painting by local painter, Terry Whitworth, still used on promotional material. In the mid-90s the Post Office was moved permanently from the Riverside to the Harbour Stores.

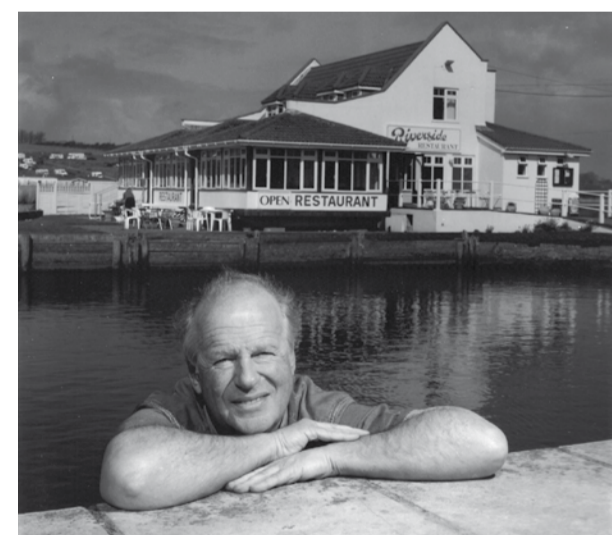


Photo from Dorset Man book 2005

2005
Photo taken by George Wright for 'Dorset Man', a book written by local author, James Crowden.



2009 (with new dining extension)

2007
The lounge area of the Riverside was extended, designed by John Matthews, a Bridport Architect, from a sketch by the original Architect Roger Zogolovitch.

A special thank you to Keith Alner for letting us not only view his large collection of postcards, but also allowing us to copy them.

The Family-owned Restaurant with a ~~UK~~ World-wide Reputation

The Riverside is recognised as one of the best seafood restaurants in the UK. It has an extremely loyal customer base, locally, UK-wide and internationally. **"We are justly proud and greatly appreciate it"**

"... we went for grilled Dover sole, brill and red mullet – beautifully fresh and perfectly cooked. ... This is a lovely restaurant, well worth a detour, with an imaginative and eclectic list of white wines, friendly local service and bright happy atmosphere..."

Ben Rodger, Independent

No 1 in the Observer's Top Five Seafood Restaurants in the UK 2006

"This West Dorset institution does simply cooked oysters, squid and mackerel, pulling off the genuine feat of being a family restaurant, and yet also perfectly sophisticated for a meal à deux in the evening... ingredients are cooked with the best technique, the outcome is the best dish..."

No 1 in the Sunday Times - Where to eat fish 2007

"...What matters here is the food, and that is whatever the boats bring in, from local lobster, crab, oysters and mussels to mackerel, Lyme Bay Dover sole, skate or bream. All of it is prepared with a restraint that ensures the fish is always the star..."

"...Many connoisseurs call this West Bay stalwart the south coast's finest fish restaurant, on account of its supplies and the simple verve with which they are prepared..."

Sophie Dening, Harpers Bazaar 2009

Mario-Wyn Jones, Food Critic describes the Riverside as **"one of the only genuine seafood restaurants along the whole south coast of England"**

A few Guest Book comments from UK & international visitors

"Perfect meal, perfect service, thank you"
diner from Australia

"Been coming 18 years now and still as sublime as ever!" - local diner

"Lovely atmosphere, fab fish" - diner from Sweden

"Wish every 'wonderful' restaurant had food as amazing as this!" - diner from London

"Consistently excellent for 25 years (so far)"
diner from Germany

"There is no point in eating fish soup anywhere else... and we have tried soups all around the world. We haven't been here for 13 years and are not disappointed ... the soup is just the same as it was last time and is still the best!!"

Said Steve & Rebecca Graham who popped in just to have fish soup on their way back home in Switzerland.

Recent Awards

Taste of The West Gold Award 2009



Taste of Dorset Restaurant Award 2008 and Runner-up in 2009

Tourism Award 2010

The Bridport and District Tourism Association awarded Arthur Watson with their 2010 Tourism Award for the most significant contribution to tourism in the area. The Award was presented to Arthur by the Chairman, Maureen Jackson who said ...



Arthur and Jan receiving the award from sponsors Humphrey Kirk Solicitors

"Most of us know the quality of the Riverside Restaurant. But it is not for the excellence of the food that we make this award – Arthur has already had plenty of those - it is for the fantastic contribution to the local economy by way of the many tourists and visitors to the area who come and stay here in order to dine at the Riverside".



Receiving the Local Tourism Award 2010 from Maureen Jackson

The Team Is What Makes The Riverside An Ongoing Success

Said Jan Watson...*"The Riverside's success is not just about the family, it is about the staff, their dedication and loyalty. Without a good team and teamwork our business would not be the success it is today!"*

Jan and Arthur have always employed staff from the local community and several of their present team have been with them for over 20 years. The Manager, Chilly and Sue Turner for over 20 years and Nick Larcombe, Assistant Manager and Marilyn Hedditch, Waitress, for nearly 20 years.

They have also offered holiday employment to some 500 young people during school holidays.



The Team in 1994 (L-R) Marilyn Hedditch, Jan Watson, Michaela, Kim, Nick Larcombe, Stefanie, Tom Watson, Neil (Chilly) & Arthur.



The Riverside Team 2010
Back Row: Neil (Chilly), Jan & Arthur Watson, Sue Turner.

Front Row L-R: Nick Larcombe, Daniel Chilcott, Tony Shaw, George Marsh, Amy Moss, Helen Taylor.

Missing from picture Joe Taylor

What else happened in 1960?

The beginning of the swinging 60s!

LOCAL NEWS (From the Bridport News Archives)

WEST BAY

West Bay in 1960 saw its biggest spate of buildings for many years.

- The building of the esplanade shelter on the seafront which included an ice cream kiosk still there today.
- The building of new houses on the West Cliff.
- Building of three new lock up shops coming into West Bay which provided a welcome addition to facilities for residents and holiday makers and much improved the entrance in to West Bay. The shops were built on a site formerly occupied by advertising hoardings on land owned by Messrs Norman Good & Sons. Shops were occupied by a Baker, Messrs Roberts & Sons, Gift Shop Fancy Fayre Mr F A Brinson and a drapers 'Owens' Mr A E Owens
- Considered the most significant development was the Borough Council's £10,000 hall on the municipal camping site [now Parkdean].
- West Bay's first Amusement Centre was approved by Bridport Town Council despite local opposition. It opened on East Beach consisting of slot machines, children's roundabout and other amusements.

BBC TV Cameras came to West Bay to film a bumper out-of-season sprat harvest. Crowds of holiday makers watched as the fisherman were filmed shovelling tons of sprats into baskets ready to be taken away by lorry to be made into fish manure and fertilizer in the factory in Netherbury. The sprats could not be marketed for human consumption because they would not keep.

245 Tons of Potash Comes to West Bay - The Dutch boat Tjoba arrived at West Bay with a cargo of Potash for fertilizer for the Mill at Waytown. N Good & Sons of West Bay then loaded her with 220 Tons of gravel to go to Sunderland

Two giant cousins became the new Captain & Vice Captain of the Bridport Swimming Club senior water polo team. At the Clubs annual meeting at the Greyhound Hotel Mr Rex Trevett who is 6ft 6" was elected captain and his cousin Mr Jack Trevett 6ft 8" was chosen as vice captain.

"A Woolaway Insulated Bungalow was only £1,320 from the Woolaway's factory in West Bay. For this sum within our Free Delivery Area, we can build a fully insulated Two-bedroom bungalow on your level site in eight weeks!!"

Bridport

"The Navy Lark" film shows at the Palace Cinema Starring Ronald Shiner, Cecil Parker and Leslie Phillips some of which was actually filmed at West Bay in 1959.

Vauxhall Cresta Saloon for sale Askers Service Station £1,040-0-10d. Royal Blue/Silver Grey, Leather Upholstery, Pile Carpets, Fitted Heater and Screen Clean

Heavers of Bridport was established
In October Sunday 23rd the whole of West Dorset was flooded including Bridport and West Bay, described at the time in the Bridport News as 'The Worst floods in living memory' .. Trail of damage, misery & destruction ..

UK NEWS

Sport

FA Cup was won by Wolverhampton Wanderers beating Blackburn Rovers 3-0 at Wembley

Burnley won the First Division with 55 points, beating Wolves by 1 point and Tottenham by 2. Man Utd 7th Arsenal 13th Everton 15th Chelsea 18th and Liverpool were 3rd in Division 2!

Top goalscorer for the 1959-60 season was Denis Violet of Manchester United, survivor of the Munich air disaster] with 32 goals interrupting Jimmy Greaves run as leading goal scorer.

Wimbledon Champions

Mens - Neil Fraser, Womens – Maria Bueno

1st televised Grand National

Won by Merryman II owned by Winifred Wallace, trained by Neville Crumps & ridden by Gerry Scott, who rode with one arm immobilised by strapping as he was recovering from a broken collar bone.

Epsom Derby

St Paddy Owned by Sir Victor Sassoon ridden by Lester Piggott and trained by Noel Murless. Also won the St Ledger in the same year.

Olympics

GB 20 medals 2 Gold, 6 Silver & 12 Bronze
A British team of 252 athletes travelled to Rome, and managed a respectable tally of twenty medals. However, only two were gold. Swimmer Anita Lonsbrough won a gold in the women's 200 metres breaststroke, setting a new Olympic and world record in the process. Don Thompson secured Britain's second and final gold medal in the men's 50 kilometres walk. Dubbed "Il Topolino" or the little mouse by the Italian crowds, he finished seventeen seconds ahead of his nearest rival.

Other News

Population of Britain 53 million

The Farthing coin used since the 13th Century ceased to be legal tender December 1960

First contraceptive pill made available on the market

Coronation Street first aired on television across the UK

1960 was the last time we had 0% inflation

HMS Dreadnought the nuclear submarine launched

Eddie Cochran US rock and roll singer dies in car crash in Chippenham Wiltshire at 21 years old

The architect of the NHS, Aneurin Bevan dies

Britains first Motorway restaurant opened on the M1 at Newport Pagnell

MOT test for cars was introduced

Traffic Wardens were introduced to London

Jukebox Jury became a hit on BBC TV presented by David Jacobs - The show - in which assorted celebrities rated new single releases a 'hit' or a 'miss'

Tower blocks considered a solution to the housing shortage caused by second world war damage and increased population

The average house was £2530

Loaf of bread 1/- (5p)

A season ticket to see Manchester united cost £8 10/- (£8.50)

A bottle of Lambs 70° proof Navy Rum cost 38/- (£1.90)

Fairy Liquid was introduced

Music

No 1 in the charts in March 1960

5 Feb 1960	Why	Anthony Newley
10 Mar 1960	Poor me	Adam Faith
17 Mar 1960	Running Bear	Johnny Preston
31 Mar 1960	My Old Man's A Dustman	Lonnie Donegan

WORLD NEWS

World's population was just over 3 billion

John F Kennedy elected President of the USA

Elvis Presley discharged from the United States Army

05/03/1960

Alfred Hitchcocks film 'PSYCHO' opened in New York

The 17th Olympic games held in Rome

Muhammad Ali won the gold medal in boxing

The halogen lamp was invented.

First Playboy Club opened by Hugh Hefner in Chicago

Massacre in Sharpeville, South Africa: Police open fire on a group of unarmed black South African demonstrators, killing 69 and wounding 180

A United Airlines DC-8 and a TWA Super-Constellation collide over New York City, killing 134



'Found' Joe Taylor Riverside Somelier!



We would like to thank our suppliers for the excellence of their produce & services and, most importantly, we would like to thank all our customers for their loyal patronage over the years.