



# THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

## *Members Bulletin*

**July 2018**

### ***Notes from the Chair***

My notes this time are about the Society's 'civic' functions.

Earlier this year I attended a meeting of the Monmouthshire County Council's Lower Wye Area Committee where the talk was about concern over the impact on Chepstow of the removal of the Severn bridge tolls. In particular they were worried about the effect on Chepstow traffic and a county planning officer who was there was urged to consider again the effect on Chepstow infrastructure.

However since that time we have learnt of the effect that the increase of business rates is having on town businesses and to that end I set out below a letter I sent, on behalf of the Society, to the Chepstow Town Council, Monmouthshire County Council, Nick Ramsay AM, David Davies MP and the local press editors.

"I write as Chair of the Chepstow Society which, as you may be aware, is a body formed 70 years ago for the purpose of, among other things, preserving features of general public amenity in Chepstow.

At our meeting this week it was apparent that our members are extremely concerned at the number of town centre businesses that are about to close, principally due to the huge increase in business rates that they face.

Although these business rate increases are being felt throughout Monmouthshire, Chepstow businesses are particularly affected because of competition from the Cribbs Causeway retail centre, which competition is likely to increase after the abolition of the Severn Bridge tolls.

We strongly urge you to take any steps that you can to alleviate the burden of business rates now being imposed on Chepstow businesses and preserve our town centre.

This Society, which represents a large number of Chepstow residents, does not want to see Chepstow becoming a ghost town, but this is a very real possibility unless some steps are taken without delay to reduce the impact of business rates.

We would appreciate your comments."

It is to be hoped that something will be done but your Society will monitor the position closely.

*Geoffrey Sumner*

### ***Reply received from Nick Ramsay AM***

Dear Mr Sumner,

Thank you for your letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

I share your concerns about the ongoing impact on small businesses in Monmouthshire of the Welsh Government's business rates revaluation. I spoke out against it at the time, organised petitions against it in all the main county towns and held a public meeting which was attended by Welsh Government and the Valuation Office Agency. I urged many constituents to challenge their rateable value assessments, which resulted in some reductions.

Clearly, that revaluation went ahead in 2017 and the impact on small businesses and particularly those on the high street has been damaging. While I am not a member of the Welsh Government, I have continued to speak out in the Assembly chamber about the negative impact business rates are having on the vibrancy of our high streets and I have urged Welsh Government to overhaul their entire business rates regime.

Residents I speak to want to see that variety on the high street, including many small independent local shops, rather than typical UK-wide brand names. I recognise that small shops are already competing with out of town retail parks, online shopping and the rise in the number of charity shops.

I can assure you that I will continue to put pressure on the Welsh Government to reform business rates so there is a level playing field and small businesses contribute a fair share to the pot as opposed to the overly oppressive regime in place at the moment.

If there is anything further that I can do to help, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,  
Nick

**MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR  
2018/19 ARE NOW DUE. THE ANNUAL  
SUBSCRIPTION REMAINS AT £10 AND  
SHOULD BE PAID TO MARIAN THOMAS.**

# Honorary Secretary's Report

Beside the problems in the High Street with shops closing due to the large increases in Business Rates, the County Council has also issued a schedule of proposed new Car Park charges.

These alterations include imposing charges on the two small areas off Station Road (currently free); making the Drill Hall a long stay park at £1.10p all day; and increasing the charges at Welsh St, The Dell and Nelson St.

Warning was given about these variations some time ago but this present notice could have almost immediate effect if the pay machines are altered/ installed to suit.

The effects are obvious - people using the railway station would face a new charge; users of Welsh St, The Dell and Nelson St would face raised charges; and lower charging at the Drill Hall would increase pressure here and threaten the viability of the Hall as a centre for theatre , arts, and cinema.

We (The Society) use the Drill Hall for our meetings etc., as do others for all sorts of events. Changing its parking arrangements in this way might lead to real problems.

*Henry Hodges*

**MOUNTON REVEALED**  
*An illustrated talk*

**The original Mounton House**

**The story of a Tudor Mansion in Mounton**

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2018**  
**at 12:30pm**  
**St Andoenus Church Mounton**

Buffet lunch included (with vegetarian option) served next door at Church Cottage. Bar available.

Tickets: £10 from Chris Dale on 07964080940 or email: chris@dalesinwales.co.uk or 01291 622317/621778

All proceeds to St Andoenus Church



## **EXCURSIONS**

### **Day trip to Concorde Museum (Filton) – Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018**

Leaving from Severn Bridge Club at 9.30am. There is a guided tour booked for 10.30am. Total cost £25, this is now due.

Unfortunately, we have postponed the trip on the Matthew; this will give us more time at the aerospace museum where there is plenty to see and do.

### **Holiday 2019**

We are in the early stages of planning next year's holiday to Scarborough. The dates are April 29<sup>th</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup> (5 days, 4 nights Monday to Friday). We do not have all the information at present, but it looks as if the cost will be about £250.00 with a small single supplement. We would be grateful if you can leave any questions and queries until the autumn when we start taking bookings.

### **Christmas Party**

The Christmas extravaganza is booked for Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December – more details in September.

*Keith and Sallie James, 01594 529713 or kp.james@btinternet.com*

## **MEETINGS AND SPEAKERS**

**Weds. 18 July –**  
***The Three Viscounts of Lydney Park -***  
***Sally James***

**NO MEETING IN AUGUST**

**Weds. 19 September –**  
***In Search of King Arthur - Chris Barber***

**All at 7.15 p.m. in the Drill Hall**