

THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY



Members Bulletin March 2021

www.chepstowsociety.co.uk

Notes from the Chair

I write this shortly after the Prime Minister has outlined his 'roadmap' out of lockdown.

Although there may be many a bump on the road to normality (or what will become normality after Covid-19), it is to be hoped that in the not too distant future we will all be able to sit in the Drill Hall again and enjoy tea and biscuits.

However I am conscious that the present Zoom arrangements are allowing us to enjoy speakers from around the country, or, indeed the world, and I have realised how limited is our scope when we have to rely on speakers coming to Chepstow.

Not only that but the Society's coffers do not suffer so much if transport and accommodation do not have to be paid for!

Consequently I am trying to find out if the Drill Hall equipment will allow us to have speakers talk to us via Zoom and projected onto the screen in the Drill Hall. Asking questions may be a problem but I'm sure that we can arrange something.

It will be a pity if the benefit that has resulted from this pandemic can't be preserved for the future.

In the meantime we have a talk by Dr Rhian Morgan on the DNA evidence that led to the identification of Richard III's remains in Leicester on March 17th; another by Peter Crowhurst on Cecil Rhodes on April 21st, and a new entry – a talk by our own Anne Rainsbury on Nathaniel Wells on May 19th.

This talk was suggested by Annie as a talk to complement that on Cecil Rhodes. There is, as you may know, controversy over Rhodes and his attitude to native Africans.

Nathaniel Wells was a black man, born into slavery in St Kitts, who ended up owning Piercefield House and on 24th January 1818 he was appointed High Sheriff of Monmouthshire. No-one knows more about Nathaniel Wells than Annie and it should be a very interesting talk.

Geoff Sumner

MEETINGS THIS MONTH

<https://zoom.us/join>

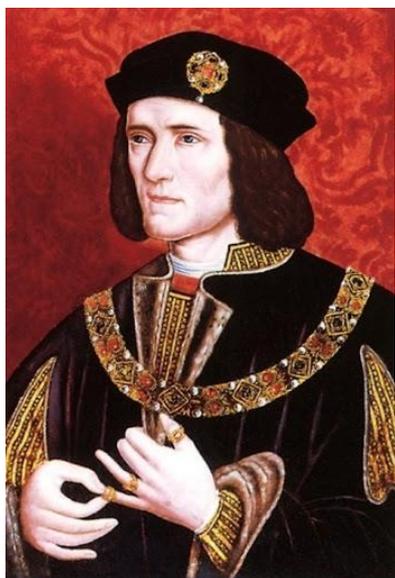
Meeting ID: **562 383 2571**

Passcode: **Waters**

Wednesday 3rd March, 7pm

Civic and Amenity meeting – to discuss current issues in and around Chepstow

Wednesday 17th March, 7pm



Dr Rhian Morgan

**The King's
DNA –
The Discovery
of Richard III**

Future meetings

These will be held via Zoom, until such time as we are able to meet in the Drill Hall again.

Wednesday 21st April

Peter Crowhurst

Cecil Rhodes

Wednesday 19th May
Annual General Meeting

Anne Rainsbury

Nathaniel Wells

Wednesday 16th June
The Festival of Britain, 1951

Wednesday 21st July

Stephen Wells

The Story of Butlins

Wednesday 15th September

David Williams

The History of High Street Shopping

Wednesday 20th October

Philip Ashford

**The Berkeley Plantation in Virginia,
1619-22**

Wednesday 17th November

Dr Frances Hurd

The Birth of the English Parish Church

Wednesday 19th January 2022

Simon Draper

Surnames and Local History

Wednesday 16th February

Simon Waterfield

The Agincourt Archer

All talks are subject to change, depending on circumstances.

THE 1942 'SECRET' PLANE CRASH

Over 60 members joined the February meeting via Zoom for a fascinating talk from David Scaysbrook.

David's talk was called 'The Death of Stereo', but it soon became clear that it was a lot more than this.

David took us back to June 1942 to the events that happened at a small hill, Rosemary Topping, near the banks of the River Wye and Welsh Bicknor, when a Hadley Page bomber crash landed.

On board were eleven men, but these were no ordinary RAF personnel. As well as five RAF crew there were six passengers from the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE) and EMI. TRE was based in Malvern and David explained the important work that was being carried out there with the development of RADAR.

Amongst those on the plane that fateful day was Alan Blumlein. Blumlein was a brilliant electronics engineer and David explained the various inventions that he had worked on.

As well as radar these included television, early development of the microwave, and stereophonic sound - hence the title of the talk.

Blumlein was only 38 when he was killed, and David emphasised the great loss that this was, obviously to his family, but also to the war effort and to the world. We can only imagine the contribution he could have made to the development of electronics.

The talk concluded with many questions from members and Geoff Sumner, the Society's Chairman thanked David.

Sallie James



SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2021/22

We are coming to the end of our "free" subscription year, so we will be collecting subscriptions for the new season starting from 1st April 2021.

Subscriptions remain at £10 per member per year.

As we are unable to meet face to face at present, we need subscriptions to be paid by one of the following methods:

By BACS, Standing Order, or direct payment

Please contact our Treasurer, David Nicholls, david.m.nicholls5@btinternet.com – for further information.

By cheque, made payable to the Chepstow Society and sent to our Membership Secretary, **Marian Thomas, 24 Severn Crescent, Chepstow NP16 5EA**

We are unable to issue membership cards this year.

CIVIC AND AMENITY

Thanks again to Simon Maddison for the review of current development applications, which is circulated along with this bulletin.

Don't miss the opportunity to hear about, and discuss, the latest proposals that may affect the town, at the second of our quarterly Civic and Amenity Zoom meetings, on

Wednesday 3rd March at 7pm.

As before, local councillors and others with an interest in the town will be there, to help answer any questions you may have – for example, about the (temporary??) closure of the High Street, issues over recycling, and future proposals including the forthcoming (we hope) Chepstow Place Plan, and the Transport Study.

Guy Hamilton

Drill Hall Community Asset Transfer

Chepstow Town Council (CTC) recently resolved to approve the next steps suggested in the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process regarding a potential Community Asset Transfer of the Drill Hall from Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) to Chepstow Town Council.

CTC are setting up a Working Party to consider preparation of a proposal for such a transfer to be submitted to MCC.

A few years ago, the Drill Hall Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) was set up and submitted a bid to the Big Lottery which would have covered major structural improvements to the building and also resources to operate the facility and greatly expand the programme of events/use of the building.

The bid was unsuccessful, and the Drill Hall CIO has remained in a dormant state.

However, at a recent CIO meeting the possibility of CTC leasing the Drill Hall to a reinvigorated Drill Hall CIO was discussed.

The CIO trustees set out certain conditions relating to a possible lease.

These conditions were accepted at a recent CTC meeting, opening the way for a joint meeting between the CTC Working Party on the CAT and the Drill Hall CIO.

The updated position may be revealed at the scheduled "Civic and Amenity" meeting on 3rd March

Chris Penrose



I would be very grateful if anyone can help to solve the mystery venue and celebration in this old family photograph.

My late Grandfather, George Henry Smith, is sitting at the table on the right hand side, middle, 4th from bottom.

He was born in Weston-under-Penyard in 1893 but moved to Alpha Road, Bulwark in about 1920, working as a shipwright.

I believe the family stayed in Alpha Road until the late 1920's.

I wondered if it could be an end of War celebration?

When my Grandfather returned from the War, he lived with his sister for a while in Ross-on-Wye. (There wasn't enough room in the family cottage at Weston-under-Penyard!).

I will be keeping my fingers crossed and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

Maureen Jordan

Ref. the request by the Chairman for reminiscences of anybody who went to the 1951 Festival of Britain Exhibition.

I was on National Service in REME at Arborfield near Reading at the time, training to be a Telecommunications Mechanic.

A fellow National Serviceman, with whom I am still in touch, in fact he rang me this week, went up to London on a 36 hour pass to go to the Exhibition .

We spent Saturday at the South Bank Exhibition which I can just about remember. The Skylon comes to min. I missed No.70000 Britannia the first of the standard British Railways locos which made me cross.

We spent a long time in the Dome of Discovery.

There was an existing shot tower which had been spruced up and included in the exhibition.

I remember that there were a lot of full sized trees which had been transplanted onto the site and were very much alive, we were quite surprised at this, I suppose that it was the first time it had been done.

We spent a not very comfortable night in the Red Shield (Salvation Army hostel) in Elephant and Castle, and spent Sunday at Battersea Park which was a huge fairground with all the rides familiar but much more frightening than usual. We went on every ride and felt so sick that we had to sit on a bench for some time to recover.

I am afraid that I have no photographs. I hope that this may be of interest

Mike Simmons