

THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin

July 2021



www.chepstowsociety.co.uk

Notes from the Chair

Two things have happened recently which have made me glad that our new Civic and Amenities group is up and running.

The first is a report in the *i* newspaper that Chepstow has been ranked by some organisation as the third worst shopping High Street in the country. While I think that their points of reference must have been a bit skewed, it is not good to have this printed in a national newspaper.

The second is that my wife wanted to catch a train to Cheltenham and realised just how few trains now stop at Chepstow.

I realise that cuts have had to be made since the virus struck but the service that we now have is disgraceful. According to the press services stopping at Chepstow have been cut by more than half.

I know that Transition Chepstow have protested about this and now that we have a group able to make our voice heard, I think that we should too.

I don't know if either of these topics will be on the agenda of the Civic Section for the next meeting on Wednesday 1st September, but I am sure that the Society will continue to make its feelings known about our High Street and about the future of the town.

If we are to suffer the reduction in our train services together with over-crowded roads and the prospect of more congestion and pollution in the future with developments being permitted in and around the town, then our future looks very concerning.

On a more cheerful note, now that summer is upon us and we are being discouraged from holidays abroad, our thoughts turn to what are now called 'staycations', i.e. holidays in the UK.

For many people of our and our parents' generation, this meant Butlins or Pontins or Warnes holiday camps. Our July talk is about these camps and I hope will bring back happy memories for many.

Geoff Sumner

Our next talk via Zoom

Wednesday 21st July
at 7 p.m.

<https://zoom.us/join>
Meeting ID: 562 383 2571

Passcode: Waters

Stephen Wells

The Story of

The logo for Butlin's, featuring the word 'Butlin's' in a bold, cursive script font.

Holiday Camps



EXCURSIONS

Good news! Majestic have very generously offered to refund the remainder of the monies owing from the deposit to Ibis hotels.

Members who had planned to go to Belgium can therefore look forward to a cheque in the post in the next few weeks.

Because of this, and as Covid restrictions are easing, we have decided to go ahead with the holiday to Kent next spring.

The holiday will be based in Folkestone from Monday 25th April to Saturday 30th April (6 days, 5 nights), with excursions to Margate art galleries, Dover Castle and a heritage railway.

We don't have final costs at this stage, but it should be approximately £300.

We will require £50 deposit per person by the end of August and would suggest that members arrange their own travel insurance.

Cheques payable to: Chepstow Society Excursions, or by BACS – sort code 20-60-58, account number 73276457. If you use this method, please tell us.

Keith and Sallie James

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CIVIC AND AMENITY NOTES

The Society's third quarterly Zoom meeting with local councillors and others, on 2nd June, was again a successful and interesting event.

Particularly valuable were the contributions from Mark Hand, the Monmouthshire CC chief officer responsible for planning and highways matters. He explained that the **pedestrianisation of the High Street** is a temporary trial scheme, intended to make the area better suited to pedestrians in the pandemic, and had been supported by Wales Government funding. All necessary safety audits had been and would continue to be carried out, he said.

There will be further discussions and public consultation before any decisions are made on making the scheme permanent, or changing it. There is no specific timeframe for this, and the temporary road closure arrangements may be extended into 2022.

Our civic and amenity officer Simon Maddison's comments on the High Street scheme are circulated with this bulletin.

Consultations will also take place shortly on the **Chepstow Transport Study**, looking at long term solutions for the area, and on the next stage of the new **local plan** (RLDP) for Monmouthshire. No dates yet.

In relation to the **Future Chepstow** "place plan", a number of concerns were raised at the meeting, and will be pursued.

These include our concerns over changes in Bulwark, such as the future of the former Severn Bridge Club site; and the need to improve the Wales Coast Path through and around the town, including the unattractiveness of the sections at Bulwark and around the Newhouse Farm industrial estate.

We have also been asked to comment on the Monmouthshire **Active Travel Plan** – covering walking and cycling, and seeking "to identify routes and facilities to encourage greater levels of Active Travel in everyday lives."

The current proposals are set out on the website mccactivetravelconsultation.commonplace.is/, and consultations continue until the end of August. We are preparing the Society's response, so comments are welcome.

Members of the Society are welcome to raise any issues over amenity issues in and around the town with myself or Simon, and we will try and respond, and pursue them as necessary.

Guy Hamilton

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MEMBERSHIP - Have you paid?

You are all probably aware that I have taken over from Marian as the Membership Secretary.

As you can imagine this has been a confusing and difficult year for everyone and Marian has done a sterling job of keeping on track with subscriptions.

Unfortunately, paid membership of the society has dropped substantially over the period. I'm sure that this is not an intentional lack of interest or reluctance to join, but simply an oversight.

Last year's membership, which was free, ran out at the end of March.

Membership fees (£10 per person) can be paid

- through BACS transfer (payable to Chepstow Society, sort code 30-98-90, account number 18173668);
- by standing order; or
- by cheque, (payable to The Chepstow Society), which can be posted or delivered to me at Pen y Morfa, Mathern, NP16 6JD.

If you are unsure as to whether you have paid for the current year just email me at chepsocmemb@gmail.com or phone **01291 622210** and I can enlighten you.

Sadly, anyone who has not paid by July 31st will be removed from the mailing list and will not receive details of any of our exciting forthcoming events.

After a shaky start the Zoom meetings have been tremendous, both in content and in allowing us to see others, even though only through a computer screen.

In the beginning, until we all got used to the mute function, we were party to some interesting phone calls and some asides which I'm sure were not meant for public consumption!!

Please remember to use the mute button whilst the speaker is talking - there is an opportunity to chat both at the beginning and the end of the meeting.

Hopefully we will be able to enjoy some sort of more social togetherness soon but, in the meantime, Geoff is putting together his usual eclectic mix of speakers which will be zoomed to you in the comfort of your own homes.

If you are having problems accessing the talks, or are reluctant to try Zoom please get in touch with any of the committee who I'm sure will be pleased to help.

Finally it would be extremely helpful, if you could send me a message with your email address, a current postal address and phone number. I can then make sure our records are up to date.

Thank you

Angela Middleditch

CHEPSTOW CASTLE INTERPRETATION PROJECT



The Society has been contacted by Sarah Douglas, who is one of a team of consultants from Fielder Green Associates.

They have been contracted by Cadw to undertake work at Chepstow Castle over the next year. The aim is to improve the interpretive media within the castle.

The first phase is to prepare and agree an interpretation and media plan for the castle, and part of Sarah's work is to consult with local organisations and communities about the history of Chepstow and the castle.

In particular, Sarah is seeking views on these questions:

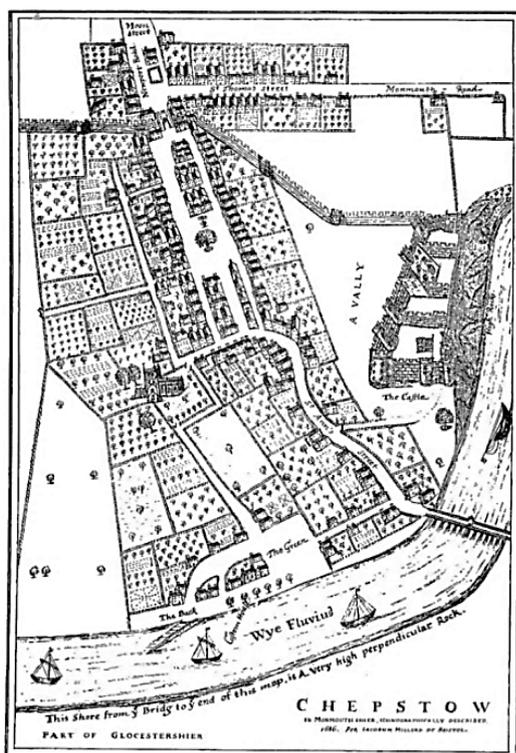
- **If there is just one thing that visitors remember about their visit to Chepstow Castle, what should it be?**
- **What are the quirky and memorable stories about the Castle?**
- **What sites and facilities in Chepstow, linked to the castle, might be included in the Castle interpretation?**

What do you think?

If you have any thoughts or comments on these questions - or other questions that might be addressed - please contact Sarah at

sarah.douglas@redkite-environment.co.uk

TOWN WALKS 2021



Starting on Monday 5th July, we will be restarting our popular early evening strolls around the historic centre of the town. These will take place at 7 00 pm on every Monday in July, and continue on every Wednesday in August from 6 30 pm (as the evenings start to become shorter). The meeting place for the walks is outside the Tourist Information Centre, opposite the Castle.

The walking tours take between 60 and 90 minutes, and introduce some of the history of the town, its castle, the historic riverside area and the town centre. The Society has run these for several years, both for residents and visitors, but could not do so last year. They are led by experienced members of the Society, who know something of the town's history and stories.

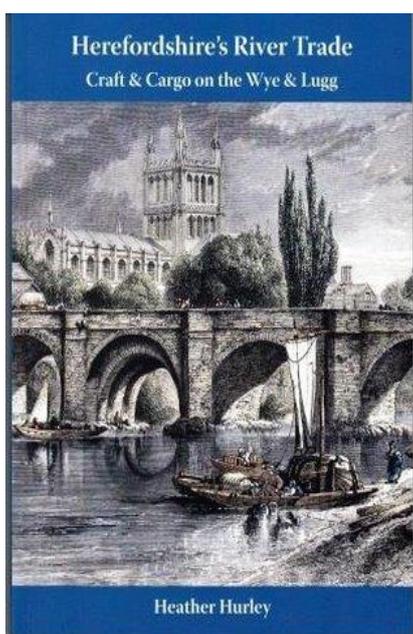
Bookings in advance are preferred – text or call 07786 500609 - but it may be possible to include people turning up on the day, depending on numbers. Track and trace details will be taken, and people are asked to bring their own sanitiser and to abide by social distancing guidance.

The cost is £3 per person, payable by cash only, at the start of the walk.

At our Zoom meeting in June, we had another interesting talk, this time from author Heather Hurley, on **“Trade and Transport on the River Wye”**.

The river trade developed after the weirs on that part of the river were dismantled in the late 17th century.

Flat-bottomed barges, 50 feet long would be poled, or towed by teams of up to 15 hauliers. Downstream, the more familiar trows were used.



Timber was also floated downstream, bound together as rafts.

This was particularly important during the Napoleonic Wars, when the timber needed for shipbuilding would be floated down to Chepstow and stored on the river bank.

From 1809, horses were allowed on towpaths to pull the barges. There were few bridges, so towing was not unduly interrupted.

Many places had boat building yards. All the riverside towns, like Hereford, Ross and Monmouth, had important quays, as did many of the villages – some have been restored and can still be seen, as at Brockweir and Lydbrook, but others have been virtually lost. Heather located some of them from old adverts, maps and barge records.

Generally, the cargoes going downstream were agricultural products, bark, timber, lime, cheese, cider, paper, etc. Going upstream were coal, iron, bricks, rags and wine. One record details stone from Brockweir being transported to Hereford Cathedral to repair the West end after its collapse. Chepstow had its warehouses, for French wine to be transported upstream.

The development of larger steam ships, and especially the development of the railways from the middle of the 19th century, effectively ended the Wye's role as a trading route.

This was another fascinating talk. Heather Hurley's research was published a few years ago in her book, *Herefordshire's River Trade: Craft & Cargo on the Wye & Lugg*.

Forthcoming meetings

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

All talks start at 7 pm and are subject to change, depending on circumstances.

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