

Notes of an Executive Meeting of the Chepstow Society
held on Thursday 29th April 2021 via Zoom

Present: Geoff Sumner (Chair), Keith James (Vice-Chair), Nicky Bailey (items 1-8), Guy Hamilton, Sallie James, Simon Maddison, Angela Middleditch (items 1-6), Harry Middleditch, David Nicholls, Anne Rainsbury

Apologies for absence: Henry Hodges, Chris Penrose, Marian Thomas

Nicky and Angela both apologised for having to leave the meeting early.

1. Geoff welcomed everyone present.

2. President

- Guy reported on a recent conversation he had had with Henry, and action was agreed.

Action: Guy

3. Notes of previous meeting on 11th February 2021

- These had been circulated and were agreed.

4. Matters arising

- Item 10a: Guy reported that he was awaiting feedback from John Waters, and would raise with him the possibility of digitising some of Ivor Waters' publications and making them available online.
- Item 10b: Guy reported that he was awaiting further contact with Tim Ryan regarding the Severn Princess project.

5. Treasurer's report

- David reported verbally on the end of year accounts. He noted that, as expected compared to previous years, there had been a loss of door receipts and subscriptions, and higher spending on publications (through the reprint of the town trail booklet), but a reduction in other costs.
- David was asked to provide written update summaries for future committee meetings if possible, as well as for the AGM.

Action: David

6. Membership report

- David reported that, according to Marian, there were 63 paid-up members for the new financial year. It was noted that this showed a substantial reduction in numbers, doubtless due to the lack of physical meetings.
- As Angela had agreed to take over as Membership Secretary after the AGM, it was agreed that she send out another reminder email.

Action: Angela

7. Annual General Meeting, 19th May

- It was agreed that the formal AGM business be transacted as expeditiously as possible, in advance of the Zoom talk.
- Action: Geoff*
- Guy proposed that the titles of two of the officers designated by the committee under rule 4b be modified: Press Officer to become Press and Media Officer; and Natural History Secretary to become Natural Environment Secretary. It was hoped that this could help recruit new volunteers. This was agreed.

- It was agreed that Henry Hodges be formally nominated by the committee as President, with Chris Penrose as Vice-President.

8. Future arrangements for monthly talks

- Nicky reported that future arrangements for opening up the Drill Hall for meetings remained uncertain, and that even when meetings were allowed, the numbers attending would be strictly limited.
- The possibility of “hybrid” or “blended” meetings (with some attending in person and others via Zoom) had been considered and would be kept under review. David noted that this option would reduce door revenue.
- It was agreed that, for the time being, arrangements for meetings via Zoom would continue.
- Geoff noted the concerns that some members had expressed over the way Zoom meetings were brought to a conclusion.

9. Excursions

- Keith reported that refunds for the Belgium trip had been paid, but there was still about £1600 outstanding from Ibis Hotels, and there was some uncertainty over when or whether this would be received. *Action: Keith, Sallie*
- He reported that plans were being made for a trip to Kent in April 2022, and possible excursions to the Brooklands transport museum, and the new recycling plant near Gloucester. *Action: Keith, Sallie*
- Geoff noted that any excursions organised by the Chepstow Society needed to fall within the Society’s constitutional objectives (that is, be related to the “town and hinterland of Chepstow”), and that any other trips should be noted as being organised by “Society members”.

10. Town walks

- Guy suggested that it might be possible to reinstate some town walks in July and August, if regulations allowed them, and in accordance with advice from similar groups. Numbers may have to be limited, and advance booking might need to be considered. This would be kept under review.
- Because some past walk leaders were now unable to do so, it was agreed that new leaders be sought from within the membership. *Action: Guy*
- Annie noted that it was hoped that the TIC would open over the summer. If so, walks could be advertised there as well as on the website and Facebook.

11. Video presentations

- Guy reported that he and Keith had met with Andrew Wells, a local resident, who had produced several short and informative videos on historic sites, and was keen to involve them in similar videos around Chepstow, at no cost to the Society.
- It was hoped that some filming would take place in coming weeks. Andrew would have editorial control, but the Society would be mentioned. The videos would be available online, linked from the Society’s website and elsewhere, and would help circulate information about the town’s history. *Action: Guy, Keith*
- Keith suggested another possibility, of preparing a video based around old photographs of the town, linked by commentary, as had been done for Wymeswold in Leicestershire. Any such project for Chepstow would need to involve the Museum. Annie would consider this further. *Action: Annie, Keith*

12. Civic and amenity matters

- The next meeting between Society members and councillors and other local groups had been arranged for 2nd June. As Geoff had indicated that he would prefer not to chair these meetings, Simon offered to do so.
- Simon and Nicky had both agreed to remain on the committee, covering the post of “Civic and Amenity Officer”.
- Guy noted that the Town Council were progressing consultations on their Future Chepstow “place plan”, with stakeholder focus group meetings and community meetings in May. He had booked places for the Society at both stakeholder meetings, and the arrangements for other meetings would be advertised in the bulletin.
- The Transition Chepstow group had also published a “transport plan”. Guy considered that this was welcome in many respects but was probably not a document that the Society could endorse in full.
- It was suggested that both documents could be considered at the meeting on 2nd June. Guy and Simon would seek to get the involvement of the organisations responsible and would liaise over the arrangements. *Action: Simon, Nicky, Guy*

13. Museum

- Annie reported that it was hoped that the Museum would reopen in May, but the detailed arrangements and hours remained uncertain. *Action: Annie*

14. Plaques

- Following earlier discussions, Annie had circulated a list of possible plaque-worthy local individuals, with impending anniversaries. Further discussions would be needed over these possibilities, together with the option of some plaques being added for buildings and sites of historic interest (rather than individuals).
- In particular, a plaque could be prepared for the bicentenary of local Chartist, James Stephens (1821-1889), who was born in Chepstow and became prominent in Australia. Some further research was needed on this, and possible supporters would be approached. *Action: Annie, Guy, Geoff*

15. Date of next meeting

- The next meeting would be on Thursday 15th July, at 7 pm.