

Notes of an Executive Meeting of the Chepstow Society
held on Thursday 15th July 2021 via Zoom

Present: Geoff Sumner (Chair), Keith James (Vice-Chair), Guy Hamilton, Harry Middleditch, David Nicholls, Chris Penrose, Anne Rainsbury

Apologies for absence: Nicky Bailey, Sallie James, Simon Maddison, Angela Middleditch

1. Geoff welcomed everyone present. Nicky, Sallie and Angela were involved in a Drill Hall trial event.

2. **Notes of previous meeting on 29th April 2021**

- These had been circulated and were agreed.

3. **Matters arising**

- Item 11: Guy reported that he and Keith had been interviewed and filmed as part of the intended video by Andrew Wells on the history of the town, but further news on the initiative was awaited. *Action: Guy*

4. **Treasurer's report**

- David's summary of accounts for recent months had been circulated. There was currently a small excess of expenditure over income, as a result of reduced membership and having no meetings.

5. **Membership report**

- Angela had circulated a report which suggested that, compared to 2019/20, there had been a drop in the number of paying members, from 139 to 82. David indicated that, according to his financial records, the number of paying members was significantly less than this. David and Angela would liaise in order to reconcile the figures. *Action: David, Angela*
- Reminders to members to pay for the current year, or else their membership would cease at the end of July, had had some limited success. However, because of the continuing uncertainty over holding physical meetings, it was considered that more flexibility should be allowed. It was agreed that a further reminder should be sent out but that the existing membership records should continue to be used to circulate emails, bulletins, etc., until the position became clearer in August or September. *Action: Angela, Guy*
- Angela would liaise with Keith over any members who regularly went on excursions but had not yet paid. All committee members were asked to inform Angela if they knew of any members who had moved or passed away. *Action: All*

6. **Future arrangements for monthly meetings**

- There was extensive discussion over when, and how, monthly meetings in the Drill Hall could be restarted. Relevant factors included continuing uncertainties over infection rates; the changes in the Wales regulations and guidance due on 7 August; the Drill Hall committee's

plans for meetings, including their equipment and the need for risk assessments; and the attitudes of our members to reconvening in public, especially as winter approached.

- It was noted that some other groups such as the U3A were trialling “hybrid” meetings, with some physically in the hall and others present via Zoom, but at present those attending needed to maintain social distancing, the hall could only allow quite small numbers, and the kitchen could not be used to serve refreshments. It was not clear how “hybrid” meetings for Society talks would be feasible at present.
- After discussion it was agreed that, because of the need for all concerned to review the position after the August changes and take the necessary actions, the September meeting should be via Zoom, but that the aim should be to hold the October meeting, with a local speaker, in the Drill Hall if possible.
- The position would be reported to members in the August bulletin, with a request for views – in particular over the circumstances in which members would want to attend a Drill Hall meeting.
Action: Geoff, all

7. Excursions

- Keith reported that the outstanding sum of £1600 from the cancelled Belgium trip had now been paid, and members had been refunded.
- He reported that plans for the trip to Kent in April 2022 were going well. At present, some 25 members had signed up, but 40 were needed to make the trip viable and reminders would be sent out.
Action: Keith, Sallie
- Sallie was progressing plans for a visit to the new energy from waste recycling plant near Gloucester in November. Numbers would be limited.
Action: Sallie

8. Town walks

- Guy reported that these had restarted successfully, though numbers so far were quite low. The walks were being led by Guy, Keith, David Barber and Tim Ryan, whose input was greatly appreciated.
Action: Guy, Keith, Tim
- Through Alison Nicholls, the Women’s Institute had asked for the Society to lead a walk on 22 July. Tim Ryan would lead this and would reimburse the Society.
Action: Tim

9. Civic and amenity matters

- Guy had attended a Planning Aid Wales workshop on town centres via Zoom on behalf of the Society, and would report in the bulletin.
Action: Guy
- Guy and Nicky had both attended an exhibition on the MCC Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Preferred Strategy, which was currently open for public consultation, ending on 31 August. The proposals included levels of housing growth above those previously supported by the Society, with options being considered for new development to the west of Chepstow (and in Severnside and elsewhere). Guy, Nicky and Simon would liaise and prepare a draft response, which would be circulated to committee members for comments before being submitted to the county council.
Action: Guy, Nicky, Simon, all
- The June civic and amenity Zoom meeting, between Society members and councillors and other local groups, had been interesting and useful, especially with officers discussing the

MCC actions over High Street pedestrianisation. The next meeting was arranged for 1st September.

Action: Guy, Simon

- The town council and consultants were continuing work on the Future Chepstow place plan, with a view to further public consultations starting in September. There was no news on the ongoing Chepstow Transport Study, but the Wales Government had recently ruled out spending on new roads.

10. Museum and TIC

- Annie reported that the Museum was now open for six days a week, 11-4. There was a one-way system in place, and so far it was managing well.
- The TIC was also now open, and numbers of visitors were picking up.

11. Plaques

- Guy and Annie reported that initial discussions had taken place with Ned Heywood on a plaque to commemorate Chartist and trade unionist James Stephens, born in Davis Court in Chepstow in August 1821. Ned's view was this would be best done with an informative wall plaque, probably on the end wall of the Montague Almshouses though this would need listed building consent. It was agreed that these discussions should progress, ideally with an announcement to coincide with the bicentenary.

Action: Guy, Annie, Ned

12. Secretary's report

- Guy reported that he had written to the town council in support of their campaigning over returning the Minor Injuries Unit to Chepstow; and also responded to their request for views over signage for the Thomas Street public toilets.
- The town council were considering how best to commemorate the Queen's platinum jubilee in 2022. Guy had suggested informally that the flag beside the Gloucester Hole (originally painted for George V's silver jubilee) should be repainted.
- Guy reported that the Society had been asked to support a campaign, "Walking with the Wye", on improving river water quality, which would culminate with an event in Chepstow on 31 July.

13. Publications report

- Guy reported that sales through the TIC and Chepstow Books were now picking up again
- A substantial donation of mostly unused and signed copies of Ivor Waters' hardback books, published by the Society between the 1940s and 1970s, had been gratefully received from Linda Platten (nee Rees), whose parents were friends of Ivor Waters. These would be offered for sale to members in the first instance, before being advertised publicly.

Action: Guy

14. Date of next meeting

- The next meeting would be on Thursday 30th September, at 7 pm.