

# THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin November 2021



[www.chepstowsociety.co.uk](http://www.chepstowsociety.co.uk)



## Notes from the Chair

Members,

On 20<sup>th</sup> October we held our first 'hybrid' meeting with some members in the Drill Hall and others joining from home via Zoom.

Thanks mainly to the efforts of Ned Heywood, we managed to bring about the meeting, although the quality of the Zoom transmission was not as good as we would have liked.

We will continue to try and find the technology to produce an acceptable system as I think that we will need more such 'hybrid' meetings in the future.

I do believe that such meetings are what holds our Society together and the fact that, even after over a year of remote meetings, our member numbers have hardly decreased at all bears this out.

Having said that, I am very pleased that the Society is continuing with its other activities such as its visits and excursions and

our expanding civic and amenities section with its own separate meetings.

I think that the inauguration of the new approach to this section has been a great success and its development is vitally important to the Society.

However, we, like most other Clubs and Societies, seem unable to persuade members to take an active part in helping to run the Society, and we must expand our image in the town with a view to attracting more active members.

This was why I am trying to press my statue project which I feel would boost our image in the town, but even if that is not successful I feel that we must find new projects which would bring us to the attention of the inhabitants of Chepstow.

So please let us know if you have any thoughts on how we can attract new members and watch this space !

**Geoff Sumner**

**Wednesday  
17<sup>th</sup> November,  
7 p.m.**



## **The Birth of the English Parish Church**

***Dr Frances Hurd***

**NOTE: *Because the speaker for this event is 'remote', the talk can be accessed either from home via Zoom, or in the Drill Hall, where it will be streamed and shown on the screen.***

**<https://zoom.us/join>**

**Meeting ID: 562 383 2571**

**Passcode: Waters**

- There is no charge for this event
- Face masks must be worn throughout the meeting
- Refreshments will not be available but you can bring your own.

# ***BACK TO THE DRILL HALL !***

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> October saw the Society return to the Drill Hall for the first time for twenty months, for our regular monthly meeting.

Though the arrangements at the moment cannot yet be the same as they were before – masks are needed, people need to sit apart at tables, and there are no refreshments – it was good to see a reasonably healthy attendance of members.

Unfortunately, we have still not quite mastered the technical issues of feeding the presentation back in a satisfactory way to those who connected remotely via Zoom.

It was also noticeable that presentations that work well on a laptop cannot easily be read when they are projected onto a screen.

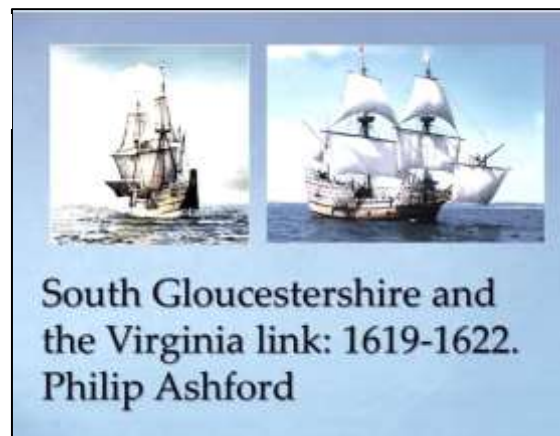
But, we will learn from the experience.

The talk itself was excellent, given by Philip Ashford from Wotton-under-Edge, on one of the earliest settlements by the English in Virginia, starting in 1619.

This – the Berkeley Plantation – was largely led by men from south Gloucestershire, including Berkeley itself as well as Bristol – their departure port – and other parts. The group included landowners, labourers, and their wives.

The plantation was initially successful. For export, they produced timber, and grew maize and – particularly important – tobacco, which had recently become fashionable in England.

However, after a few years, many of the original settlers were massacred.



Those who escaped either returned to England or joined one of the other new colonies being set up in Virginia at the time.

**Another advantage of returning to the Drill Hall was very evident – there were many more questions to the speaker from our members!**

**The Society's committee will review the meeting arrangements at the end of November - views welcome, as always.**

***Guy Hamilton***



*Keith James introducing Philip Ashford to his Drill Hall audience*





## RESTORING THE SEVERN PRINCESS

**Saturday  
20<sup>th</sup> November,  
11 am**

**Meet outside Tesco.  
No charge, but donations to the  
Restoration Trust welcome.**

Society members are invited to join Tim Ryan of the Severn Princess Restoration Trust, to see how the work is progressing on restoring the former Severn ferry at its current resting place beneath Brunel's railway bridge in Chepstow.

Please bear in mind that access on to the ferry is via a ladder, and there are a few minor trip hazards on the deck, so access to the deck is entirely at your own risk. The top and bottom of the ladder will be held.

**If interested, please book your place  
by contacting Keith James,  
01594 529713  
[kp.james@btinternet.com](mailto:kp.james@btinternet.com)**

## A CHARTIST CONVENTION

**will be held on November 6<sup>th</sup> 2021  
at Newport Cathedral, Stow Hill  
Between 10 and 4 o'clock.**

In attendance will be the following personalities:  
**Roger Ball & Mark Steeds** will discuss  
"The Rise and Fall of Edward Colston"  
**Joan Allen** will debate "Legality and  
injustice in the Age of the Chartists",  
**Les James** investigates the life of  
"Zephaniah Williams"

After lunch **Dave Steele** will talk about "The  
1848 Kennington Chartist Meeting"  
followed by a tribute from  
**Ray Stroud** of the esteemed historian  
"David J. V. Jones". The final speaker,  
**Peter Strong** will examine links between  
**Henry Vincent and Tolpuddle**

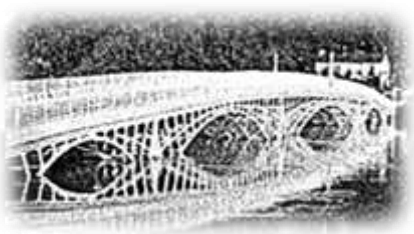
On **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November**, the  
annual Newport Chartist Convention  
will take place at  
**St Woolos Cathedral  
Stow Hill  
Newport NP20 4ED**

There is a full programme of lectures,  
with guest speakers as well as stalls  
(including a Chepstow Society stall).

Lunch (in pre-prepared individual  
portions), tea and coffee are included  
in the admission price.

Tickets are available, price £12,  
through the link below

**[https://www.newportrising.co.uk/e  
vents/chartist-convention-2021](https://www.newportrising.co.uk/events/chartist-convention-2021)**



## CIVIC AND AMENITY NOTES

- There is still no news on when Monmouthshire county council will review the **closure of the High Street and Arch**. They have – rather vaguely – stated that there will be public consultation before a decision is taken on whether to make it permanent, but no dates have been mentioned, and the town council (and at least some local county councillors) seem to be as much in the dark as everyone else.
- Work is now in hand to reinstate a pedestrian crossing at the bottom of the High Street, and to upgrade the damaged tactile paving edges there, which are intended to help the visually impaired.
- Further public consultation is now taking place on the **Future Chepstow “place plan”**. A document on “emerging issues and ideas” has been produced by consultants working for the town council, and can be seen at [www.futurechepstow.co.uk](http://www.futurechepstow.co.uk) This summarises the comments made by members of the public earlier in the year and suggests ways forward – though, at present, without stating clearly what will be the responsibility of the town council as against other bodies such as the county council. **Comments are sought by the end of November, and the Society is preparing a response.**
- Some doubt has been cast on the Future Chepstow initiative by the county council’s decision to prepare, with Wales Government funding, what it calls a “**master plan**” for Chepstow - supposedly to ensure that the “place plan”, the county’s local plan (RLDP), transport policies and other strategies are integrated. There are concerns that this will simply add more confusion, and not produce any helpful action. The Society will continue to watch this carefully and become involved when appropriate.
- The latest report by Arup as part of the **Chepstow Transport Study** was published last month.  
<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/2021/10/report-published-into-chepstow-traffic-and-travel/>  
It recommends further study of a single carriageway bypass and bridge between Thornwell and Sedbury, alongside improvements to public transport and provision for walking and cycling.
- Separately, it has also been suggested that the **M48** could be downgraded to A-road status – which could allow a new junction to be put in to help serve Caldicot.
- Plans for a new car park to serve **Severn Tunnel Junction** station have been approved by the county council.
- **The 1816 bridge** over the Wye at Chepstow is likely to be closed to traffic at some point over the next year, so that the need for further repairs and weight restrictions can be assessed. The possibility of closing the bridge to all vehicles has already been raised in other studies.
- The issue of **phosphate pollution** in the River Wye, and the associated damage to wildlife, is gaining more attention, and local MPs covering the river’s catchment have sought Treasury funding for a strategy to clean up the river.
- A new group, **Chepstow Priory Friends**, has been set up in order to raise funds to support St Mary’s Church, and promote its use for a wider range of community activities.
- The next Zoom meeting to discuss civic and amenity matters with local councillors and others is likely to be held in January – date to be confirmed. **Comments are welcome at any time, of course!**

**Guy Hamilton**  
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