

**Notes of an Executive Meeting of the Chepstow Society**  
**held on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 via Zoom**

Present: Geoff Sumner (Chair), Keith James (Vice-Chair), Guy Hamilton, Sallie James, Angela Middleditch, Harry Middleditch, David Nicholls, Chris Penrose, Anne Rainsbury; John Waters (for item 2); Ned Heywood (for item 3)

Apologies for absence: Nicky Bailey, Simon Maddison

1. Geoff welcomed everyone present.

2. **Website**

- Guy explained that the Society's website at [www.chepstowsociety.co.uk](http://www.chepstowsociety.co.uk) had been down since early September, as a result of a communications failure between the hosting service, The Hosting Heroes, and their nominated contact in the Society. John Waters had voluntarily provided essential assistance in resolving the problem, which had not been straightforward and involved numerous exchanges of messages.
- John had suggested changing the hosting service to EcoHosting, and this had been agreed by Guy and subsequently put into effect by John. As a result, the website was now at the point of being reinstated as before. Remaining questions over the administrative contacts for the site and other details would be resolved between John and Guy. *Action: Guy, John*
- The committee thanked John for all his efforts in reinstating the website.
- After John left the meeting, the committee agreed that, because of his invaluable voluntary assistance, his commitment to helping maintain the site, and his personal connections to the Society, he be given honorary life membership of the Society.

3. **Arrangements for meetings in the Drill Hall**

- The committee discussed whether it would be possible to arrange a "hybrid" meeting in the Drill Hall on 20 October, as discussed previously, with some members in the hall and others accessing the event via Zoom. Attempts by organisations such as the U3A to arrange similar meetings had not been very successful because of the technological challenges.
- Ned stated that the Drill Hall had, or could obtain, the necessary equipment, but it was essential that someone with good technical knowledge could operate it on the night. A meeting had been arranged on the morning of 4 October between Guy, Ned, and Trevor Davis of Lydney Music, to see if this could be achieved. *Action: Guy, Ned*
- In further discussions, Annie noted that a full risk assessment would need to be carried out before any Drill Hall meeting, whether or not there was a Zoom arrangement; and the Society would need to establish the numbers that could be accommodated, the seating arrangements, and the advice to be given to members on social distancing, mask wearing, etc.. Under the current regulations it would not be possible to provide refreshments. All the necessary information would need to be circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

- In view of the uncertainties, and the meeting arranged with Lydney Music to discuss them, it was agreed that a special committee meeting be held via Zoom at 6 pm on Monday 4 October, to consider whether arrangements could be made to hold the 20 October meeting in the Drill Hall. *Action: All*
- Sallie agreed to prepare a risk assessment in advance of that meeting. *Action: Sallie*

#### 4. **Notes of previous meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

- These had been circulated and were agreed.

#### 5. **Matters arising**

- **Item 8: Town walks.** Guy and Keith reported that the Society's walks held in July and August had been successful, though the numbers taking part were lower than in previous years. Tim Ryan's involvement in leading some of the walks and providing a new approach had been very useful.

#### 6. **Treasurer's report**

- David had circulated the accounts summary for the year so far, showing an excess of income over expenditure of £444. He noted that the summary needed to be corrected to show the cost of the Zoom account but this did not affect the overall figures. *Action: David*

#### 7. **Membership report**

- Angela reported that, currently, there were 102 paid-up members and 10 non-paying members (including John). Only three previous members had indicated that they were not continuing, but there were a further 25 with whom no contact had been made and whose continuing membership remained unresolved.
- Angela would circulate an up-to-date list so that this could be checked against lists of those who had taken part in excursions, and to see if any were known to have moved or passed away. *Action: Angela*

#### 8. **Proposed statue of William Marshal**

- Geoff reported that he had made contact with possible sculptors, who had responded with ideas and indicative costs for producing a statue for display in front of the castle.
- David supported the idea but was concerned about the costs. Keith and Sallie suggested that any statue of Marshal should also show his wife, Isabel, as it was their marriage that had brought Marshal to Chepstow. Guy regretted that the possibility of a statue had not been floated during the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary events in 2019, and considered that the Society was in danger of over-committing to an unfeasible idea; he thought it was unlikely that there would be sufficient enthusiasm and commitment in the town to progress this through the time-consuming and complex fundraising and bureaucratic hurdles.
- Annie said that there was little point in trying to progress this without the endorsement of Cadw who were responsible for maintaining the castle and surrounding land. It was agreed that Geoff approach Cadw on an informal basis, to obtain their initial thoughts on the idea. *Action: Geoff*

## **9. Commemorative plaques**

- Guy reported that he was waiting for Philip Averay, as chair of the almshouse trustees, to report back with their views on using the Montague Almshouse wall for the proposed plaque for James Stephens. Once their views were known, Guy and Ned would liaise over the design, and on getting the necessary listed building consent. *Action: Guy, Ned*
- Guy and Annie would consult on options for further plaques in the town. *Action: Guy, Annie*

## **10. Excursions**

- Keith reported that 40 bookings had been made for the 2022 holiday in Kent, and the necessary deposits had been received. Further detailed booking arrangements would be made in the new year. *Action: Keith, Sallie*
- Sallie said that bookings for the proposed visit to the energy from waste recycling plant near Gloucester had been disappointing, and the venue had changed the possible dates. She would reconsider the arrangements, and in the meantime the trip would be postponed. *Action: Sallie*
- Keith said that Tim Ryan had offered to show members around the Severn Princess ferry, to show the restoration work taking place. Details had yet to be confirmed. *Action: Keith*

## **11. Civic and amenity issues**

- Guy said that the Society had benefitted from discussions with Dick Cole (Abergavenny Civic Society) and George Ashworth (former MCC chief planning officer), and had submitted comments on the Monmouthshire RLDP Strategy. The Society shared the view that the housing levels proposed by the county council were too high.
- Guy and Simon would represent the Society at the Future Chepstow consultation event on 19 October; other members would be welcome. *Action: Guy, Simon*
- The civic and amenities meeting held on 29 September, chaired by Simon, was successful though only one town councillor was present. Issues discussed had included the High Street, transport and planning strategies, the Bulwark shopping area, and concerns over tree felling, and the standard of pavement repairs.
- At the meeting, it had been agreed that Guy would contact the town council to suggest that they survey town centre businesses to seek their views on the High Street closure and whether it should continue; and would write to Mark Hand to obtain some clarification on when the various ongoing transport studies would be published, and on how they would be integrated in relation to the town. *Action: Guy*
- Simon would write to the MCC tree officer expressing concerns over the felling of trees at Warren Slade in Thornwell; and would contact Mark Hand (MCC) to express continuing concerns over the poor standard of pavement repair in the town following utilities work. *Action: Simon*

## **12. Museum and TIC**

- Annie reported that the Museum was open for six days a week, but restrictions still applied
- The opening hours of the TIC over the winter were unclear.

**13. Secretary's report**

- Guy had circulated a request from a travel writer, Richard Collett, to meet Society members in mid-October, to talk about the history of Chepstow as a border town. Annie and Keith said they would be available. *Action: Annie, Keith*
- Guy reported that the town council would repaint the flag beside the Gloucester Hole as part of the 2022 platinum jubilee celebrations.
- Guy said that he was continuing to maintain the separate Facebook page as well as the website.

**14. Date of next meeting**

- A special Zoom meeting to consider the Drill Hall arrangements would take place at 6 pm on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October
- The next regular meeting would be on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November, at 7 pm.

**Notes of a Special Executive Meeting of the Chepstow Society**  
**held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021 via Zoom**

Present: Geoff Sumner (Chair), Keith James (Vice-Chair), Guy Hamilton, Sallie James,  
Angela Middleditch, Harry Middleditch, David Nicholls; Ned Heywood (for item 1)

Apologies for absence: Nicky Bailey, Simon Maddison, Anne Rainsbury

**1. Arrangements for Drill Hall meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> October**

**Technical arrangements**

- Guy and Ned reported that, earlier in the day, they had met with Trevor Davis (Lydney Music) to discuss the technical arrangements that would be needed to host a “hybrid” meeting, with the speaker in the hall and with members able to attend in the hall or log on via Zoom as they chose. Ned said that the Drill Hall could provide all the equipment needed, including laptop and camera.
- Trevor Davis could be available at the meeting, to ensure that the set-up worked, and to train one or two Society members (or Drill Hall employees) to operate it in future meetings.
- It was agreed that a trial be arranged on the morning of Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> October, at which Guy, Ned, Trevor and others would be in the Drill Hall and Geoff would check its operation remotely via Zoom. Various technical set-ups may need to be tried then, to see which worked best.  
*Action: Guy, Ned, Geoff*
- The cost of Trevor’s services over the two days would be about £170.

**Risk assessment**

- Sallie was thanked for producing the draft.
- It was agreed that members would need to book places in advance with Guy, and there would be no charge on this occasion. Numbers would be restricted to 70 maximum. Face masks would be made available for those without, at no charge, and those attending would be reminded of the need to keep them on throughout the meeting. Seating would be as normal, i.e. without tables. As discussed previously, there would be no refreshments available.
- A slightly amended risk assessment form would be provided to the Drill Hall. *Action: Sallie*

**Conclusion**

- After discussion it was agreed to go ahead with a “hybrid” meeting in the Drill Hall on 20<sup>th</sup> October, on the basis suggested, provided that the trial on 12<sup>th</sup> October was successful.
- The meeting would be flagged up in the members’ bulletin. Guy would send out an email nearer the date itemising everything that members would need to consider, and requiring them to book places in advance. *Action: All*
- Although there was no need to take payments on this occasion, it was agreed that a card reader would be useful, and Guy and David would look at options. *Action: Guy, David*