

THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin May 2022



www.chepstowsociety.co.uk



Wednesday 18th May

7 pm

**The Drill Hall, Lower Church Street,
Chepstow NP16 5HJ**

All welcome

Members £1 Non-members £3

The meeting will also be streamed via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 513 005 1668 Passcode: Waters

Annual General Meeting

This should be brief, and will include the election of officers of the Society, the appointment of auditors, and the approval of annual reports. Nominations for officers may be made at the meeting.

followed by talk by Guy Hamilton

on James Stephens

of Chepstow



"...the man to whom, more than any other individual, Australians owe the conditions under which they live today."

Notes from the Chair

Members,

As you will know by now, I intend to step down as your Chair at our AGM on 18th May so this will be my last 'Notes from the Chair'.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank all members for supporting the Society during a very difficult couple of years, and particularly to thank Secretary Guy Hamilton for this bulletin which has helped us all keep in touch.

I am not vanishing however, since the Executive Committee has asked me to fill the role of Vice-President which was left vacant by the sad death of Chris Penrose, and I have been honoured to accept.

I will also continue to be involved with the finding of speakers, this time working with Sallie James. As we are anxious to have as many speakers 'live' in the Drill Hall, any suggestions as to speakers will be most welcome. Please send any suggestions to Sallie at sallie_james@btinternet.com or to myself.

I am very pleased that the Society has continued to build its membership and I am particularly pleased that our Civic section has branched out into a separate existence with separate meetings which are now

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Notes from the Chair* *Contd..

attended by councillors from Chepstow Town Council, Monmouthshire County Council and even councillors from Gloucestershire, as well as members of the Society. It is becoming a forum for the discussion of town matters which are of concern to us all and I hope that such meetings continue to grow.

Finally there is some progress concerning the William Marshal statue. I have at last received a positive response from CADW, and Keith Underwood and sculptor Andrew Sinclair have voluntarily produced maquettes of statues which I hope to show members shortly.

I also hope that we shall be able to arrange a site meeting to discuss the location of the statue.

All this depends of course on raising funds, and I have assembled all necessary information to make an application for National Lottery Heritage Funds. If anyone else has any fund raising ideas please let me know.

So, removing my Society's Chair hat and donning my Vice President's hat, I thank you again for all your support and look forward to the future of our Society.

Geoff Sumner

PEMBROKE PRIMARY SCHOOL - LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Society has been approached by Pembroke Primary School in Bulwark, to help with their Platinum Jubilee project on local history.

Humanities teacher Cheryl Rees writes:

"For our Jubilee celebrations this year Pembroke Primary School would like to study Chepstow through the decades of the Queen's reign.

"Each Year group have been given a decade to study and we would really appreciate help from knowledgeable local people.

"Our aim is to look at one significant local event, building or person, and could involve someone visiting our school to talk about their experiences or a visit to a location with a guided tour.

Year 6 are studying the 1950s

Year 5: the 1960s

Year 4: the 1970s

Year 3: the 1980s

Year 2: the 1990s

Year 1: the 2000s

Reception and Nursery: the 2010s

Additional Learning Centre: the 2020s.

"We would appreciate any help and support you could give us, and would hope to develop and continue a similar project every year to develop our understanding and knowledge of where we live and go to school."

We have all lived, worked and shopped in Chepstow during at least some of those decades - and I'm sure many of us in the Society would like to help with this school project, which will start straight away.

If you are interested in helping with the Pembroke School project, please contact

Guy Hamilton, phone 07786 500609

or email

secretary@chepstowsociety.co.uk

or contact Cheryl Rees at the school

cherylrees@pembrokeprimary.co.uk

Hopefully, this could be just the start of a longer-term programme to encourage more young people locally to become interested in, and excited about, the history of their town !

Chris Penrose

1938-2022



The Society has sadly lost one of its most influential and respected members with the death of Chris Penrose.

Chris was born in Newport in 1938.

His parents were both Cornish, from Truro. His early schooling was in Newport.

On leaving school he became an apprentice to the British Aeroplane company, and went to Southampton University where he obtained a degree in Aeronautical Engineering.

He spent his entire working life at Filton, Bristol, going through the changes of the aircraft industry with different companies, the final one being Rolls Royce.

The highlights there were the development of the air intake to the Bristol Olympus engines which powered Concorde, and his regular visits to Boeing aircraft company in Seattle - to the extent that, even after he had retired, Boeing contacted Filton about a problem

they had, and insisted that Chris was the only person they wanted. Rolls Royce had to persuade him out of retirement to go there.

He married Rosemary in 1966. They had two children, Tracy and Elizabeth, and a grandson Christopher, to whom Chris was especially close

He was, during his time with the Chepstow Society, its Vice President, Chairman, committee member, our representative on the Drill Hall Management Committee, and then, following the death of his wife Rosemary, our representative on the Gwent County History Society, and the external examiner of our accounts prior to submission to the Charity Commission and Customs and Revenue. His commitment to all these roles was outstanding and will be sadly missed.

Among his other activities, he was active in the U3A walking group (Strollers 2), leading walks with Rosemary, and organising and leading walking holidays both in the UK and Europe; a member of the Newport Playgoers Society, Monmouthshire Antiquarians Associations, Family History Society which took him on many occasions to Cornwall to research his family history, and Probus.

The Society's condolences go to his daughters Tracy and Liz, and his beloved grandson Christopher.

David Barber

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS FOR 2022/23 ARE NOW OVERDUE

Our membership year ended in April.
Membership is now **£12.00 per person.**

This can be paid either by BAC's to the Chepstow Society account:

sort code 30-98-90

account number 18173668

(don't forget to include your name as a reference)

or by cheque payable to Chepstow Society and sent to :
Angela Middleditch, Pen y Morfa, Mathern. NP16 6JD

If you have any questions, please email
chepsocmemb@gmail.com

Forthcoming meetings

Wednesday 15th June, 7.15 pm

Peter Strong

Crossing the Severn

Wednesday 20th July, 7.15 pm

Brigadier Robert Aitken CBE

The Lord Lieutenant of Gwent: my role

Wednesday 21st September, 7.15 pm

Rebecca Tyson

William fitzOsbern –

founder of Chepstow Castle and Priory

***Further meetings to be arranged –
watch this space!***

SECRETARY'S REPORT, 2021/22

This is the end of my second year as Secretary, so again, as we come to the AGM, I would like to thank all our members and all those who help keep the Society going, in particular Geoff who is now standing down after 13 years as our Chairman.

What has the Society achieved over the last year? Well, at least we are still running, unlike many small voluntary history and amenity groups around the country. Our membership numbers have held up well despite everything.

We have maintained our regular programme of 11 monthly meetings (including a Christmas special), covering a wide range of subjects, from local ones including the war memorial, Nathaniel Wells, and sometime nearby resident Martha Gellhorn, to matters of wider interest including the history of parish churches, shopping, holiday camps, and the loss of the *Titanic*.

After a false start last autumn we are now meeting back in the Drill Hall, and though we recognise that not everyone can attend in person, I hope that we can continue to get together there, while improving how we make the talks also available via Zoom.

We have continued to make comments and provide input to the town council and others on civic and amenity issues, including the housing proposals in Monmouthshire's local plan, the Chepstow "place plan", transport studies, the High Street situation – and the new bin store in Bank Square!

We are awaiting progress on most of these, and after the local elections we will arrange more of our very useful Zoom meetings with local councillors and others. Simon's input and his regular planning update bulletins have been invaluable.

We ran our series of town walks last summer, and plan to do so again in July and August. We also arranged a visit to the *Severn Princess*, now being restored – and of course we are all extremely grateful to Keith and Sallie for the work they have put in to arranging the holiday in Kent.

As well as producing our booklet on the stories behind the town's war memorial, in its centenary year, we have continued to sell our other publications successfully, and have received several donations of books and booklets from generous members.

We are continuing to progress the possibilities for new information plaques and even a statue in the town, and hope to develop other initiatives to "stimulate public interest in, and care for, the beauty, history and character of the area", in line with our charitable objectives. New ideas are always welcome, of course!

The Society's committee has met six times over the year, and the notes are put on our website once approved. The average number at these committee meetings is now around 7, compared with about 11 some five years ago - and having fewer volunteers helping to run the Society means that we can do less than we would like.

On a more positive note, almost 700 people now follow our Facebook posts, and we hope that some of them, and those who look at the website, will become active members in the future.

As the Society approaches its 75th anniversary next year, I'm confident that we will continue to play a part in informing and (hopefully) entertaining our own members, as well as in our wider roles of taking initiatives to protect and enhance our historic town and its surroundings.

Guy Hamilton,
secretary@chepstowsociety.co.uk

DONATED BOOKS FOR SALE

The Chepstow Society has received a number of donations of books and booklets of local interest. If you would like to buy any of these, please contact
Guy Hamilton,
secretary@chepstowsociety.co.uk
or 07786 500609

£40

- Ivor Waters: Inns and Taverns of the Chepstow District (hardback, 1949)

£30

- Ivor Waters: Inns and Taverns of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley (revised - complete set of 5 booklets, 1976)

£25 each

- Ivor Waters: Chepstow Street Literature and Ephemera (hardback, 1979)
- Ivor Waters: Chepstow Printers and Newspapers (hardback, 1981 – revised version)

£15

- Nathan Rogers: Memoirs of Monmouth-shire (1978 reprint of 1708 booklet)

£12 each

- Ivor Waters: Henry Marten and the Long Parliament (paperback, 1973)
- Mercedes Waters: Chepstow Sketches (1973)

£10 each

- Ivor Waters: Chepstow Clock and Watch Makers (1972)
- Ivor Waters (trans.): Sunlight and Scarlet: selected poems by Antonio Machado (1973)
- Ivor Waters: Inns and Taverns of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley, Part 1 (inc. map, 1976)

- Ivor Waters: Inns and Taverns of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley, Part 3 (1976)
- Brunel's Tubular Suspension Bridge over the River Wye (1970 reprint of 1856 pamphlet)
- S B Rogers: An Early Victorian Severn Bridge (Merlin Bookshop, 1974 reprint of 1845 pamphlet)
- Fred Hando: Out and About in Monmouthshire (1958, reprinted 1974)
- Whitebrook: a community brought to life through images and recollections (ed. Bevan and Rees, 2005)

£8 each

- Ivor Waters: Impressions and Versions (poems, Chepstow, 1973)
- Ivor Waters: There was a young lady from Gwent (poem, Chepstow, 1976)
- K M Denison: Mathern – History from the Parish Registers (1977)
- F H & M Keyte: Tidenham Parish Registers Part 1 (1970)
- F H & M Keyte: Tidenham Parish Registers Part 2 (1971)
- Arthur Clark: Chepstow – Its Castle and Lordship (1958)
- Arthur Clark: The Story of Monmouthshire Vol.1 (1962)
- Arthur Clark: The Story of Monmouthshire Vol.2 (1979)
- Ray Howell: Fedw Villages: A Lower Wye Valley History (1985)
- Robert Thompson: Images of Itton: The story of a rural parish (2000)
- Chepstow and the River Wye in Old Photographs (2000 edition)

£6 each

- Ivor Waters: Chepstow Town Gate and Museum (1953)
- Ivor Waters: The Wine Trade of the Port of Chepstow (1967)
- Ivor Waters: Chepstow Churchwardens (1967)

- Ivor Waters: The Town of Chepstow Part 1 – Riverside (1972)
- Ivor Waters: The Town of Chepstow Part 3 – Lower Town (1973)
- Ivor Waters: The Town of Chepstow Part 6 – High Street (1974)
- Ivor Waters: A List of Vicars of Chepstow (1975)
- Ivor Waters: Inns and Taverns of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley, Part 4 (1976)
- Ivor Waters: Inns and Taverns of Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley, Part 5 (1976)

NOTE: Parts 4 and 5 of "Inns and Taverns" – a list of all recorded local inns and their licensees - can be purchased together with a scanned copy of the map of Chepstow Inns (from Part 1), for **£11**

- Selections from "Chepstow: A Poem" by Edward Davies 1718-1789 (Chep Soc, 1967)
- W H Greene: Jack o' Kent and the Devil (Chep Soc, 1974)
- Historical Assn., Monms. & Newport: Visit of the Council of the Historical Assn., 1938
- Arthur Clark: The Castle of St Briavels (1949)
- John Guy & Ewart Smith: Ancient Gwent Churches (1979)
- Jeremy Knight: Civil War & Restoration in Monmouthshire (2005)

£4 each

- Thomas Birbeck: Caldicot Old Houses and Families (1978)
- F R Rowbotham: Brief Guide to the Severn and its Bore (1967)
- The Birds of Gwent (Gwent Ornith. Soc., 1977)
- Tintern's Story (ed. Judith Russell, 1991)