

Notes of an Executive Meeting of the Chepstow Society
held on Thursday 21st April 2022 via Zoom

Present: Geoff Sumner (Chair), Keith James (Vice-Chair), Guy Hamilton, Sallie James, Angela Middleditch, David Nicholls

Apologies for absence: Nicky Bailey, Simon Maddison, Harry Middleditch

1. Geoff welcomed everyone present. He paid tribute to Chris Penrose, a longstanding member of the committee and past Chairman, who had sadly passed away and whose funeral had taken place earlier in the day.
2. **Notes of meeting on 17th February 2022**
These had been circulated and were agreed.
3. **Matters arising**
 - Item 7: Guy reported that he had again spoken to Ned Heywood about the proposed James Stephens plaque.
4. **Treasurer's report**
 - David presented the draft accounts for the year to the end of March. These showed a modest surplus of £191 over the year. The reduction in the insurance cost was due to a misunderstanding over previous years' payments.
 - The accounts would be presented to the AGM. David would approach David Phillips with a view to him auditing the accounts. *Action: David*
 - A SumUp card reader had been purchased and used successfully.
5. **Membership Secretary's report**
 - Angela reported that almost half of the membership had renewed their subscription, within the first month. Reminders would be sent out to those who had not yet paid. *Action: Angela*
 - Angela would look at preparing an updated and improved membership recruitment leaflet in coming months. *Action: Angela*
6. **Arrangements for Annual General Meeting**
 - Guy reported that Henry Hodges was happy to continue as President, and proposed that Geoff be nominated as Vice-President. This was agreed.
 - Keith said that he would stand down as Excursions officer at the AGM, but agreed to continue as Vice-Chair if required.
 - It was noted that the position of Chairman would need to be filled at the AGM, following Geoff's decision to stand down. Discussions on possible arrangements would need to continue until then with possible candidates. *Action: All*
 - Guy noted that the increase in membership fees would need to be formally ratified at the AGM.

7. **Future monthly meeting arrangements**

- After discussion it was agreed that, following the AGM, Geoff and Sallie should share responsibility for finding speakers for meetings. *Action: Geoff, Sallie*
- It was agreed in principle that, for preference, meetings should be held in the Drill Hall but that Zoom meetings with remote speakers should be considered for the winter months.
- Arrangements for “hybrid” meetings were discussed. After initial problems, it seemed that the arrangements for the talk in April had been satisfactory, but it still required input from Ned Heywood on the day. Useful advice had been received from Hugh Hutton on the U3A’s arrangements.
- Geoff would transfer the Zoom account responsibility to Guy. Further consideration would then need to be given as to whether it would help to acquire additional licenses to facilitate the meetings. *Action: Geoff, Guy*

8. **William Marshal statue**

- Geoff reported that the town council had supported the idea in principle. No response had been received from CADW. It was agreed that Geoff continue to seek to make progress on seeking support and on a funding bid. *Action: Geoff*

9. **Town walks**

- Guy said that these would continue in July and August as before. As well as Guy, Keith, and Tim Ryan, another member, Jackie Neal, had also offered to lead walks. Guy would circulate and publicise details of the walk programme. *Action: Guy, Keith, etc.*

10. **Excursions**

- Keith reported that the Kent holiday, from 26th April, was in hand, with 39 travelling. Discussions would take place with those on the trip, to seek one or more volunteers to take over responsibility for future excursions. *Action: Keith, Sallie*
- It was suggested that one-day excursions could be restarted, and various suggestions were made for possible venues. It was agreed that any ideas be forwarded to Sallie, to be discussed with anyone willing to take over responsibility. *Action: Sallie*

11. **Civic and amenities matters**

- It was agreed that the meetings should continue to take place via Zoom. The next meeting would be arranged after the forthcoming town and county council elections, if possible so as to fit in with the further consultations that are expected on the High Street, placemaking plan, and transport strategy. *Action: Simon, Guy*

12. **Museum and TIC**

No report

13. **Publications**

- Guy said that he had gratefully received a substantial donation of secondhand local books and booklets from a member, Maureen Pouton, and these would be advertised for sale. *Action: Guy*

- There were sufficient numbers remaining of all current publications, with the exception of the Society's book on "Thomas Street: Courts and Characters", of which there were few copies left. Guy had discussed this with Tim Ryan (son of the book's author), and it was felt that this should now be digitised and made available on the website, rather than reprinted. *Action: Guy*
- The frequency of future members' bulletins would be kept under review. *Action: Guy*

14. **Secretary's report**

- Guy said that he had raised the possibility of the Society being involved in efforts to promote awareness of the history of St Mary's Church, such as through talks or guided tours, with the vicar and with the church's Friends group. This idea had been favourably received, but further discussions were needed and were awaited. *Action: Guy*
- Guy reported that he had been approached by a librarian at Chepstow School, over whether the Society would take the school's local history books which were now regarded as surplus to the needs of the curriculum. He had replied favourably but also expressed concern that the school's local history resources were being lost. Further discussions were awaited. *Action: Guy*
- Guy said that a member, Rebecca Tyson, who is a researcher in mediaeval history and experienced in educational initiatives, had expressed an interest in being involved in working with schools on behalf of the Society. Guy would take this idea forward with Rebecca, and hope to develop ideas with her and with local schools. *Action: Guy*
- Guy said that he would be willing to act as the contact with the Gwent Local History Council. He also agreed to check what material was held on the Society's behalf at Gwent Archives. *Action: Guy*

15. **Future events**

- Sallie suggested that the Society should arrange a landmark event, perhaps in the autumn, with one or more nationally known speakers, on a topic that would gain local publicity and hopefully attract new members. Guy mentioned that the Society would have its 75th anniversary in March 2023.
- Various suggestions were made as to possible speakers and subjects, but more consideration needed to be given to this. Members were invited to make further suggestions. *Action: Sallie, all*

16. **Future committee meetings**

- It was agreed that committee meetings continue to be held via Zoom for the time being.
- No date was set for the next meeting but the Secretary would canvass options following the AGM.

17. **Chairman**

- All members present thanked Geoff for his considerable work and help as Chairman over the last 12 years.