

THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin October 2022



www.chepstowsociety.co.uk

Wednesday 19th October, 7:15 pm

The Nature of the Brecon Beacons

Talk by Kevin Walker

Kevin Walker lives in the Brecon Beacons, and has been a professional mountain leader, hill guide, and now author, for almost four decades.



Wednesday 16th November, 7:15 pm

Elizabethans on the Severn Estuary

Talk by Mark Horton –
archaeologist, television presenter, and writer

**Our monthly meetings
are at the Drill Hall,
Lower Church Street,
Chepstow NP16 5HJ**

**All welcome
Members £1
Non-members £3**

The meetings will also be
streamed via Zoom

**<https://zoom.us/join>
Meeting ID: 513 005 1668
Passcode: Waters**

MORE DIARY DATES

*Some of these details are provisional –
final details will be sent to members in due course*

Wednesday 2nd November

***Zoom meeting with
councillors on issues
affecting Chepstow***

Saturday 21st January

***Chepstow Society lunch,
Beaufort Hotel***

Wednesday 14th December

***Chepstow Society social
event in the Drill Hall***

Wednesday 15th February

***Monthly meeting
Talk by Nick Thomas-Symonds
MP on “Aneurin Bevan and the
start of the NHS in 1948”***



EXCURSIONS

My name is Patrick Gale and I have lived in Chepstow itself for just over a year, having moved from further up the Wye between Monmouth and Ross.

My work background has been travel - firstly with Cooks as a tour operator, then for a German firm where I experienced the fall of the Berlin Wall and then for myself, arranging special interest tours for schools, the British Legion and the Colditz Society, amongst others.

I am now retired, but when I moved to Chepstow, I joined the Society and now have been asked to look at possible day outings.

A few spring to mind.

The first is the **National Botanic Garden of Wales**, which lies 9 miles east of Carmarthen. It offers a range of gardens, from a bee garden, an apothecary garden and an arboretum amongst other areas. There is also a birds of prey centre. It offers catering facilities and plenty of walks. It would seem perfect for an outing. This looks ideal for a spring visit. Near there is a POW camp where Italian POWs' were held during WW2. They converted one of the POW quarters into a marvellous chapel using only their own resources which is certainly worth a visit.



For those who have a fascination for steam railways, the **Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Steam Railway** at Toddington between Tewkesbury at Stow is in operation again. The trip would start at Toddington which is their base with many railway things to see, travel on 1960 coaches, steam-hauled with buffet facilities to Cheltenham Racecourse and then return to Broadway following the base of the Cotswolds with fabulous views. Not only is Broadway a lovely Cotswold town but there is also the opportunity to visit Snowhill Manor and its garden created by the eccentric Charles Wade.

As an earlier in the year excursion, we are looking to visit the ancient **Cathedral city of Worcester**, and to arrange a visit to its world-renowned porcelain museum.



Further details with a booking form will be available shortly - but for these outings to be a success we do need to fill the coaches, as with the cost of coach diesel as it is, small coaches or small numbers on the coaches are not viable any more.

We do hope you will find interest in these arrangements.

To express an interest in any of these trips, please contact Patrick Gale

**gale.p.mr@gmail.com
01291 616507**

William Fitzosbern

A talk by Rebecca Tyson at our monthly meeting on 21st September

The Chepstow Society enjoyed a talk by one of our own members, Rebecca Tyson, at our meeting in September.

Rebecca is a PhD student in Mediaeval studies at Bristol University, and gave a talk on William Fitzosbern.

There was a good attendance, and Rebecca aimed to give an overview of the duke's early life and family, his inner circle, his role as companion to the Conqueror, his activities in England, the part he played in building Chepstow Castle, his death in Flanders and his legacy.

William Fitzosbern was cousin, friend and counsellor to William the Conqueror, and Rebecca displayed the connection in a family tree. He came from one of the highest-ranking families in the relatively new duchy of Normandy, and had vast wealth. William's father was murdered when he was barely 8 years old and there is a possibility that he witnessed the murder, showing that the world he lived in was a brutal and ruthless one. An experience of the world he brought with him to England.

William Fitzosbern was one of the earliest and most vigorous advocates of the invasion of England, and was in the vanguard of the Norman invasion. He was



reputed to have provided 60 ships to aid the invasion but it is difficult to say exactly what form this took – for example, it could have been in the form of timber to build the ships. There is little known about his role in Normandy. He may have been a Marcher Lord and already have had experience of building castles before invading England, where he was charged with suppressing rebels, fighting the Welsh and building strong castles. Some people were deployed in England in a similar role to the one they had in Normandy and this may have been the case with Fitzosbern.

There is some uncertainty over the castle in Chepstow, which began to be built in 1067, and there is some conjecture as to how much involvement he had. Rebecca's opinion was that he was heavily involved, giving a good argument to support her reasons and naming her sources. As well as building Chepstow Castle, Fitzosbern strengthened existing castles and built others in the country and on the border, including Monmouth, Berkeley, Clifford, Carisbrooke and Wigmore.

At the same time he started to build the Priory of St. Mary's in Chepstow. He had founded Lyre Abbey and later Corneilles Abbey and Saint Evroul Abbey in Normandy. Corneilles has been twinned with Chepstow since 1972. He also had major land holdings in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire and the Isle of Wight.

William Fitzosbern was described as a gallant leader in battle, and was a great terror to the English, using great brutality to quash rebellions, and taking part in the Harrying of the North. Fitzosbern was made regent during the King's absence, showing the trust placed in him, although one criticism that he did not listen to the English was aimed at him.

William Fitzosbern died at the Battle of Cassel in Flanders on 20th February 1071. He was universally lauded by his contemporaries as an extraordinary man. He left a lasting legacy in the building of Chepstow and other castles.

Rebecca gave a talk that was precise and well researched and contained a phenomenal amount of detail and information. She named her sources of information and discussed the pros and cons of believing them. When her talk finished she answered questions from the audience.

Jackie Neal

THE ACCESSION



I am sure that we were all impressed and moved by the ceremonies connected with the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles III, but for me one of the most interesting parts was the Accession Council held in St James' Palace on 10th September.

Nowadays this is more or less a formality, but it was not always so. In this country succession to the throne requires more than a claim based simply on descent. In Anglo-Saxon times it was accepted that a new sovereign had to belong to the royal house, but it would then be determined by the leading territorial magnates who comprised the Witan – the council of the sovereign's advisers – who had the power to depose a sovereign who proved inadequate.

The early Norman kings went through a form of election or 'recognition' by the Witan's successor, the 'Commune Concilium'. Obedience was granted in exchange for royal protection.

The real beginning of the idea of constitutional monarchy dates from Magna Carta in 1215. Clause 39, which declared that no one could be imprisoned without due process of law, was the first means of controlling the behaviour of royal officials and indeed of the sovereign.

The Glorious Revolution of 1689, when Parliament changed the line of succession from James II to William and Mary by means of the Declaration of Rights, established the fact that the monarch ruled not of right but subject to the consent of Parliament.

The Act of Settlement of 1701 further established the control of Parliament by providing that succession to the throne was restricted to the descendants of Electress Sophia of Hanover, even though there were over 50 descendants of the Stuart kings who had a better claim – unfortunately all Catholic!

So you see that the fact that Charles was his mother's son is not enough in this country – succession must be by consent, and theoretically the accession of King Charles needed the consent of the Accession Council on 10 September 2022.

(I am indebted to Professor Vernon Bogdanor for much of this information)

Geoff Sumner

**CHEPSTOW & DISTRICT
ROTARY CLUB**

**Present an Evening
with the
CHEPSTOW MALE
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Friday 21 October 2022

**At 7.30 p.m.
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CIVIC AND AMENITY ISSUES

Our Zoom meetings to share information and discuss civic and amenity issues affecting the town with local councillors and other interested organisations, took place successfully during the Covid lockdowns - but for various reasons it has not been possible to arrange them since before the council elections in May. We hope that the new intake of councillors will find them as valuable and interesting as their predecessors.

The next Zoom meeting is provisionally set for 7:15 pm on **Wednesday 2nd November**. Details will be sent out to members nearer the time. Please prepare questions about what is happening – or should be happening - in and around the town!

The Society has submitted comments on the Forest of Dean Local Plan – objecting to the high

levels of housing development proposed for both Lydney and Beachley, which would be likely to cause further damage to the environment and road congestion in and around Chepstow. Our comments are very much in line with those expressed in the media by Monmouthshire County Council, and some councillors in the Forest of Dean.

Information on the recently-publicised “Transforming Chepstow” initiative, prepared for the town and county councils, is set out below.

The Society is hoping to take part in a new working group involving the town council, Cadw (who manage the castle), local business groups, and voluntary and amenity groups such as ours. The aim is, we hope, to improve the coordination of activities in the town. We await further details on this.

Guy Hamilton

“Transforming Chepstow”

A Monmouthshire County Council public consultation launched on 5 October, for residents and businesses in and around Chepstow, to gather feedback on ideas being proposed within the Transforming Chepstow Masterplan.

The County Council, working with Chepstow Town Council, is holding two initial face-to-face events and is encouraging locals to attend to find out more and share their thoughts. The first session took place on Saturday 8 October at the Palmer Centre, Upper Nelson Street, from 10am until 5pm. On Tuesday 11 October the team will also be at Bulwark Community Centre between 10am and 8pm.

Exhibition boards from these two events will be available to view at Chepstow Library from the afternoon of Wednesday 12 October.

Information about the Transforming Chepstow Masterplan can be found on the Council’s website along with a link to the online survey, for capturing views and comments.

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/transforming-chepstow-masterplan/>

The survey will also be available in a paper format throughout the consultation period - until 5pm on 30 October - from Chepstow Library and the offices of Chepstow Town Council.

The consultation follows and builds upon part of a Place Plan process during 2020 to 2021. Once the consultation has closed and the feedback gathered, a report of consultation will be published. The draft plan will then be updated to reflect the comments that were received, and a final copy of the Transforming Chepstow Masterplan will be made available online.

DONATED BOOKS

We continue to receive donations of secondhand books and booklets of local interest – including many written and printed by Ivor Waters for the Society some decades ago.

A more complete list is on our website, listed under Publications. They include the following:

£40 - Inns and Taverns of the Chepstow District (1949 hardback)

£30 – The Unfortunate Valentine Morris (1964 hardback)

£25 - Chepstow Street Literature and Ephemera (1979 hardback)

£25 - Chepstow Printers and Newspapers (1981 hardback – revised version)

£20 – Chepstow Parish Records (1955 hardback)

£15 – “Chepstow: A Poem” by Edward Davies (1992 reprint of 1786 original, hardback)

£12 – A Chepstow and District Anthology (1948 hardback)

£12 – The Prisoner of Chepstow Castle : Henry Marten and the Long Parliament (1973 paperback)

£6 each - The Town of Chepstow, Parts 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 (paperback booklets)

We have many more!

If you would like to buy any of the donated books, or would like further details, please contact
Guy Hamilton
ghmyrtle@gmail.com
07786 500609

NEWPORT CONVENTION SPECIAL. 2022

THE STAR AND LEEDS NORTHERN GENERAL ADVERTISER

Vol. 2—No. 14. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2022 PRICE FOURPENCE HALFPENNY (for advertising per Quarter)

A CHARTIST CONVENTION
will be held on November 5th 2022
at Newport Cathedral, Stow Hill
Between 10 am and 4 o'clock.

The convention extends an invitation to all free thinking people who will enjoy presentations, both verbal and visual, from a celebrated panel of Chartist historians. Keynote Speaker, **Victoria Clarke** will talk about “The Northern Star” and **Colin Thomas** will debate “Putting Welsh History on Television”. **Sylvia Mason** introduces her book, “Mary Frost”. **Fatma Nur Aksoy** will discuss her role in the Welsh Youth Parliament. **Guy Hamilton** will report on **James Stephens** the Chepstow Chartists. **Ray Stroud** and **Ollie Blackmore** will update the convention on the **Westgate Hotel** bullet holes and the day will conclude with a short musical performance of “Treason”

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www.chepstowsociety.co.uk

COMMITTEE NEWS

As you can read elsewhere in this bulletin, Patrick Gale has been welcomed onto our executive committee as our new excursions organiser.

We have also managed to persuade several other members on to the committee in recent months, most recently Marion Huckle, and Jackie Neal.

At the same time, Harry Middleditch has stood down from the committee, after some 13 years. Harry has been a constant and reliable source of good ideas, and has always been willing to step in at the last minute to help when gaps in our organisation have appeared. Thanks, Harry – you will be missed!

John Burrows, who you all know and who is also now a committee member, has been ill in hospital, and we wish him well. Both John and myself were interviewed and filmed a few months ago as part of ITV presenter Trevor Fishlock's latest series, *Fishlock's Choice*, and the episode covering Chepstow will be broadcast on Thursday 20th October, on ITV Wales at 11 pm. We don't know yet if our contributions have been edited out!

Jackie Neal, Keith James, Tim Ryan and myself led our usual town walks in the summer, and we also showed groups from Thornbury around the town. Next year we hope to expand our town walks programme, and develop the idea of mutual exchanges with amenity groups elsewhere.

We are getting together with the Forest of Dean Local History Society, and hope that we will be able to organise joint visits and/or meetings.

On 14th October, a few of us are taking part in an event at the former shipyard / Fairfield Mabey site, now being developed for housing by Barratts, to mark the preservation of one of the First World War slipways there.

Plenty happening – and I haven't even mentioned next May's "History Day" (or "ChepStory") event - which may well extend over several days. Watch this space!

Guy Hamilton

The Chepstow Society was established in 1948. Our aims and objectives are:

- *To advance education by the study of local and natural history in the town and hinterland of Chepstow.*
- *To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of the features of general public amenity or historical interest.*
- *To stimulate public interest in, and care for, the beauty, history and character of the area, and to stimulate cultural activities therein.*

CHEPSTOW SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Nicky Bailey

John Burrows

Patrick Gale - Excursions

Guy Hamilton - Chair

Henry Hodges - President

Marion Huckle

Keith James – Vice-Chair

Sallie James – Secretary

Simon Maddison

Angela Middleditch - Membership

Jackie Neal

David Nicholls - Treasurer

Anne Rainsbury

Geoff Sumner – Vice-President

Rebecca Tyson

Contact –

secretary@chepstowsociety.co.uk

www.chepstowsociety.co.uk