

THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin **December 2022**



www.chepstowsociety.co.uk



Our monthly meetings usually take place on the third Wednesday of the month, at 7.15 pm, at the Drill Hall, Lower Church Street, Chepstow NP16 5HJ

All welcome
Members £1 Non-members £3

Whenever possible, the meetings are also streamed via Zoom - <https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 513 005 1668
Passcode: Waters

Wednesday
18th January

Grove House at
Piercefield

Talk by
Simon Maddison

Simon has been leading the excavations on the site of the house in the grounds of the Piercefield estate.

Wednesday
15th February

Aneurin Bevan and the
start of the NHS –
75 years on

Talk by
Nick Thomas-Symonds
MP

Nick is the MP for Torfaen and a member of the Shadow Cabinet. He is a former university lecturer, and the author of several books, including a biography of Aneurin Bevan.

**LAST CHANCE TO
BOOK!**

Saturday 21st January

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

For details, please contact
Keith James
01594 529713
kp.james@btinternet.com

**MORE DIARY
DATES**

Wednesday 15th March
Prof. Ronald Hutton
***Village Witchcraft
and Magic***

Wednesday 19th April
Naylor Firth
***Chepstow in the
Second World War***

**Wednesday 17th May –
Sunday 21st May**

**CHEPSTOW HISTORY
FESTIVAL**

Watch this space!

Wednesday 21st June
Owen Gower
***Dr Jenner of Berkeley –
the vaccine pioneer***

Wednesday 19th July
Janet Karn
Chepstow Notables



On 16th November, the Society hosted a talk at the Drill Hall from Professor Mark Horton – well-known archaeologist and television presenter, noted for his inputs to such series as *Coast* and, before that, *Time Team*.

Though Mark has a wealth of experience researching sites, trade routes and landscapes all over the world, this time his focus was closer to home.

Having moved to live at “Drake’s House”, beside Gatcombe Pill on the Severn near Blakeney, he was drawn to wonder about the house’s history, and whether or not the stories that Sir Francis Drake had lived there at one time were based in fact.

There were also reports that ebony furniture at Berkeley Castle was brought back by Drake from his raids on Spanish ships. Is that true?

There were certainly links between Drake and the Wintour (or Winter) family of Lydney.



The Wintours invested in many of Drake’s voyages, and family members commanded some of Drake’s ships.

Gatcombe Pill was one of many inlets on the Severn that were used by shipping, and quite large ships could have moored there. There are periods of Drake’s life when his whereabouts are not recorded – Gatcombe would have been a suitable hideaway.

But the supposed Drake memorabilia at Berkeley came from other places at other times. Mark’s conclusion was that whether Drake actually lived for periods on the Severn at Gatcombe remains unproven.

A fascinating and well-attended talk, and perhaps Mark – as an (almost) local resident – can be persuaded to return on another occasion.

CIVIC AND AMENITIES REPORT

After a gap of nine months – which allowed the new town and county councillors time to settle in - the Society held the latest of its civic and amenity Zoom meetings on 2nd November.

The number of Society members checking in was down on numbers during the lockdowns, and far fewer councillors were involved – but, we had valuable input from Councillor Paul Griffiths, who is Monmouthshire county council's deputy leader.

He said that, following further discussions on the Monmouthshire local plan, and the Wales government's insistence that the previous housing figures be reduced, the only new housing site now proposed for Chepstow was in the north-west, for 145 homes between the Bayfield development and the old forensic lab site.

Of course, there are still concerns that any development around the edge of the town will impact on Chepstow's landscape, traffic, and local amenities.

Public consultation on the latest Monmouthshire local plan proposals starts on 5th December, with a closing date of 30th January. The main Chepstow consultation event is at the former Board School in Bridge Street on 12th January. There are also online events on 8th December and 10th January. Further details are at

<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/planning-policy/news-and-consultations/>

At the same time, the Society, Monmouthshire CC, and many others, have expressed our opposition to the much higher numbers of new houses proposed in the **Forest of Dean local plan** at Beachley and Lydney. Because of the failings of our local cross-boundary transport infrastructure, this would all impact directly and negatively on Chepstow.

Further Zoom meetings on civic and amenity matters will continue to be arranged as and when appropriate, but members' views are always welcome.

More closures and intended closures recently in the town centre – Costa coffee, the Lime Tree, HSBC (next June), among them – again raise serious questions about the future of our High Street. Hopefully, the town and county councils, and the business community, will take new initiatives to help improve the situation.

The results of the town council elections in May – when many existing councillors stood down or were defeated – mean that there are now only a small handful of councillors who held that position in the past. Some still seem to be finding their feet.

The town council is attempting to improve coordination between groups and organisations in the town, by holding liaison meetings. A laudable aim, in principle.

One such meeting – in which we were involved – took place at the end of November, and another meeting – seemingly called by different people on the town council and unrelated to the first meeting – will take place in January. These completely separate meetings, called by different people within the same small organisation, are apparently to discuss better coordination. There is a joke in there somewhere!

Guy Hamilton

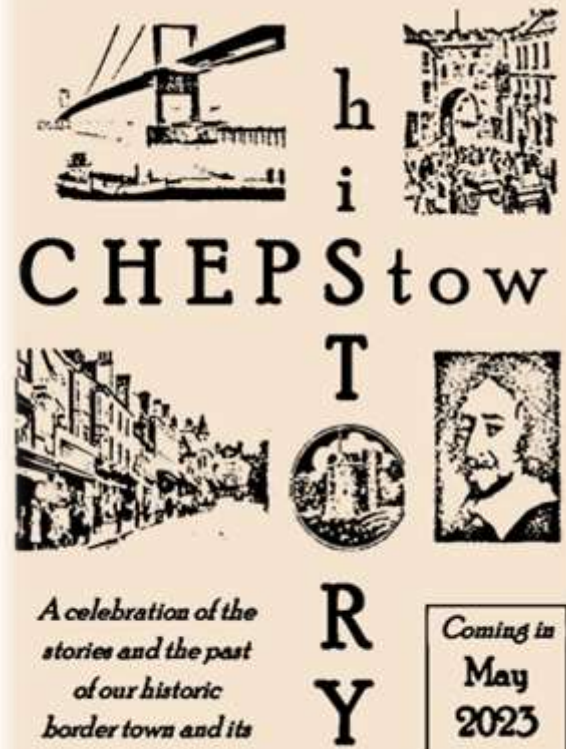


Proposals for new housing in the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Revised Preferred Strategy, December 2022

COMING SOON.....



Chepstow's Christmas tree used to stand outside this Bank Building which was demolished in 1969.



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*Merry
Christmas!*