

THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin January 2024



www.chepstowsociety.co.uk



Wednesday 17th January

**BLUE PLAQUES –
Made in Chepstow**

Talk by Ned Heywood



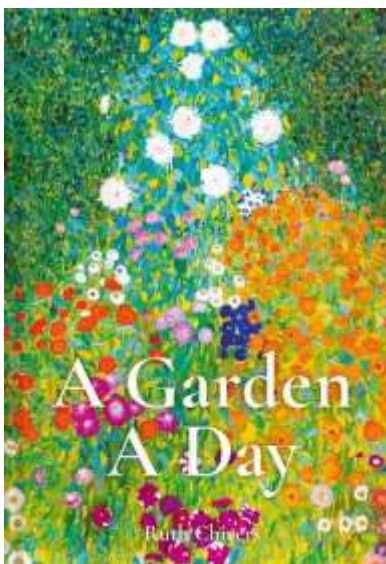
Wednesday 21st February

***The Verderers of the
Royal Forest of Dean***

Talk by Ian Standing



Wednesday 20th March



A Garden A Day

-exploring the
history and
people behind
some of the 366
gardens in the
book, with author,

Ruth Chivers

Our meetings and talks are
held on the third Wednesday
of each month at

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

Tea and coffee from 7 pm.

Talk from 7 30 pm

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

When possible, the meetings are
also streamed via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/join>

Meeting ID: 513 005 1668

Passcode: Waters

At the start of our Drill Hall meeting on 17th January, we will have a short presentation by Michelle Gayle, Community Engagement Officer with Monmouthshire County Council, on the project she is leading with the Museum to place objects in their collection in a context that recognises links with slavery and racism.

Inclusive Histories – The Power of Collections to Bring Communities Together

Playing a significant role in improving wellbeing, many people consider heritage to be an important part of their identity and culture. At MonLife Heritage we are looking more closely at our collections at Abergavenny and Chepstow Museums that relate to empire, slavery, colonialism. We will also look at items that relate to other lesser told stories and which may be looked at as 'difficult' to interpret or hidden. We are asking the question how should we interpret objects and stories which truly represent the richness of our local communities and heritage as part of the wider identity of Monmouthshire?

Museums and the culture sector are playing an important role in delivering Welsh Governments Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan. Within the culture, heritage, and sport section of the plan there are goals and actions that aim to recognise and celebrate past and present racial and ethnic diversity in Wales. MonHeritage has been successful in securing funding from Welsh Government to contribute to this important work, and working alongside our local communities is central to this project.



Inclusive Histories—The Power of Collections to Bring Communities Together

MonLife
HERITAGE

monmouthshire
sir fynyw



MORE TALKS FOR 2024

17th April – The Castle, the Magna Carta, and the Moon – the legacy of William Marshal and Isabel de Clare *John Burrows*

15th May – AGM – Chepstow's Red Cross Nurses in the First World War – *Anne Rainsbury*

19th June – Beer, Birch and Bibles in Tudor England - *Kirstie Bingham*

17th July – The Druids – *Prof. Ronald Hutton*

18th September – The Bristol Riots of 1831 – *Garry Attacombe*

16th October – The story of Rolls Royce – *Roger James*

20th November – The Newport Transporter Bridge – *Jeff Grosvenor*

Subject to final confirmation.

Please note that this list includes some changes from that in the last bulletin.



The Chepstow Society

President's Spring Lunch

Saturday 27th January 2024

1.00pm for 1.30pm

Beaufort Hotel

Roast Chicken

Apple Pie

+ Vegan Option (please let us know)

Plus after lunch entertainment...

Members £20 per person,

Non Members £25 per person

(tips included)

Deposit (£10) required as soon as possible

Tickets available from Keith James

Kp.james@btinternet.com

and at monthly meetings.

A TOUR OF ST MARY'S CHURCH AND TOWER

On 11th November – Armistice Day – a group of about 20 members and guests were privileged to be able to climb the steep steps in the tower of St Mary's church, and admire the view from the top – or, at least, as close to the top as it is prudent to go, given that the steps are in need of further care and repair.

As well as seeing the church bells – mostly made in Chepstow – the views from the roof could be admired. We also had a tour around the various memorials in the church and an explanation of its architecture, from its original Norman foundation to its Victorian remodelling and more recent changes.

Money raised went to the appeal launched by the Chepstow Priory Friends, to repair the church clock and tower steps.

www.gofundme.com/f/st-marys-priory-tower-steps-clock-appeal

Thanks to Annabel Dance and Andrew Amos, for organising the event, leading the tour, and imparting their knowledge of the church. Thanks also to Grace Tucker for the photos.

www.chepstowprioryfriends.uk



Chepstow Memories

October 16th 2023

Dear Friends

I thought perhaps that you might appreciate a few lines from an old member who first joined the Society a few years after its foundation by Ivor Waters in 1948. I came to know Ivor and his wife Mercedes, and daughter Linda, as good friends – and inspiration.

I had not long gone up to Monmouth to encounter a new Headmaster who had similar aspirations to theirs, to expand one's horizons and interests, realising the huge potential of our rich countryside in which we are fortunate to live. He once wrote a cutting comment in an early school report – "I hope he won't become a passenger!" – that immediately galvanised me into action!

I had, however, already ranged over my local riversides, fields and woods as a small boy and loved plants, history, drawing and painting. My world was also based on the radio and the Gaumont in Chepstow – which the family visited twice a week. But I did follow up "The Sea Hawk", "Robin Hood" and "Sinbad", by avidly reading anything I laid my hands on. My mother and I were keen readers in the days before television.

In the light of the apparent difficulties Guy seems to be finding in getting assistance from the membership in setting up the Chepstow Memories project, in the later aftermath of the immensely successful book of reminiscences of the last war, it seems a pity that more of you are not coming forward as potential interviewers and helpers.

Even those of you without computers can help, since it is a matter of just sitting quietly talking together with someone with invaluable memories.

We had immense fun under our chairman, Marjorie Evans and the late, lovely Chris Penrose and our late lamented Henry Hodges, editing the astonishingly rich material.

There are not many of us surviving even from the post-war era, and it is vital that our lives are recorded before we vanish into oblivion.

The collection of photos and/or copies is also important and there will be a need for indexing.

Do put yourself forward – and remember that Ivor would be proud of you. We urgently need to push recorded history forward so that we contribute to this work that stopped in the 1970s!

Every good wish



EXCURSIONS

Following the very successful walking tour around Gloucester in November, Patrick is making plans for a tour around the **Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham**.

The visit is still being finalised, but is likely to take place in late February or March. Details will be circulated to members when available.

For further information on any issues to do with these or possible future excursions, please contact Patrick Gale via text on 07760 452629 or email gale.p.mr@gmail.com

Update :

The Chepstow Memories project, to record memories of the town from the 1950s, 60s and 70s, is now progressing. A pilot exercise to interview two longstanding and highly respected members of the Society is planned for January.

More input from Society members and others – as interviewees, interviewers, advisers or helpers – would be very welcome.

As things stand, the project seems likely to be much smaller in scale than we initially envisaged – which would be disappointing but is simply a reflection of the level of volunteer input that the Society is currently able to provide.

Guy Hamilton
chair@chepstowsociety.co.uk

1524

There are several local anniversaries worth celebrating in 2024.

Most significantly, it is the 500th anniversary of the charter that was given to the town by Charles, Earl of Worcester. This made Chepstow – for a while – a borough, governed by a steward appointed by the Earl, as lord of Chepstow.

This was the last town charter anywhere in the country to be granted by a Marcher Lord, rather than by Henry VIII or any later monarch.

In the 1524 charter, the Earl gave the town the right to imprison offenders within the 'great gate', which had been newly rebuilt at the time. The Gate, or Arch, is largely unchanged in form since then – so, we can also celebrate the quincentenary of one of the town's most iconic buildings.



The Society has reminded the current town council of these anniversaries, and an exciting array of events is currently being planned with the council's full support and involvement. These will probably include a Tudor market, parades, re-enactments and other celebrations.

Some of these may take place in May, with a formal celebration of the charter close to its actual anniversary in December 2024. **Watch this space!**

The Society's committee members are having regular meetings with Chepstow's mayor and other councillors, to develop these ideas.



If you have any thoughts about what we could do – or would like to volunteer to help in these activities – please contact Guy Hamilton, Sallie James, or other committee members.

As well as the 500th anniversary, 2024 also marks...

- The 125th anniversary of the Duke of Beaufort giving the Gate and Gatehouse to the town council, in 1899.
- The 75th anniversary of the town Museum, set up by the Chepstow Society initially in the room above the arch, in 1949.
- The 50th anniversary of the local government reorganisation which saw Monmouthshire definitively included as part of Wales (rather than "Wales and Monmouthshire"), in 1974.

We will have much to celebrate in 2024!



Photographs taken at the opening of the Museum in the Town Gate, April 9th 1949.
(Chepstow Museum)

Above: (left-right) Bob Aitken, Bill Dade, Mrs Mary Collins, Edward Johnson, Sam Judd, Barney O'Neill and Ivor Waters

January brings the new season of MonLife Heritage Museums' Art History courses. We start a bit earlier as Easter comes early in 2024 so the Spring Art History Courses will begin on Monday January 15th.

In the 2 hour weekly lecture sessions, Eleanor Bird will be exploring the Art of Spain... inspiration perhaps for exploring the art in Spanish museums and galleries as well as our own, in the future

We hope you will be fired up to join either in person at the Drill Hall Chepstow on Monday

afternoons or online via Zoom on Wednesday mornings, with the additional availability of recorded online sessions in case you miss a lecture (live or online).

The one hour Introduction to the History of Art online Monday evening course, has now reached the 19th century. This course is not exclusive to those who have joined it from the outset, and anyone can join now to explore this exciting and popular period ...



Diego Velasquez, Las Meninas, detail, 1656 (Prado)

THE ART OF SPAIN

Spain can boast some of the greatest names in art history: Velasquez, Picasso, El Greco, Goya... yet much of its art is little known outside the country. Explore the Art of Spain from medieval to 20th century with our popular Monmouthshire lecturer Eleanor Bird.

2 hour lectures, 10 sessions. Live in person, Mondays 2-4pm at the Drill Hall Chepstow, beginning Monday 15 January, (break on February 12 ends March 25)

Book: www.visitmonmouthshire.com/arhistory
or online via zoom on Wednesday mornings
10.30am – 12.30pm,

www.visitmonmouthshire.com/arhistory

Fee for the course kept at £100

Introduction to Art Series: THE 19TH CENTURY

This broad ranging and absorbing course needs no background in art history, just a desire to look harder at art and understand its developments more clearly. From Romanticism to the revolution of Impressionism, this series of ten online lectures moves from the early 19th century to the 1880s, covering some of the most radical developments in art since the Renaissance.

The course covers the peak of British landscape painting with Turner and Constable leading the way, and the influence that those painters had on French artists. The series goes on to explore dramatic changes in French art – with Realism changing the subject matter artists chose to explore and the Barbizon painters finding beauty in everyday landscapes. While the British Pre-Raphaelites became fascinated with the medieval and William Morris began the Arts & Crafts movement, in France a few radical painters developed the brilliant colours and instant impact of Impressionism.

Join MonLife Heritage Museums online art history course with Eleanor Bird. 10 weeks, of one hour evening lectures online via Zoom. Starts Monday 15 January 7-8pm, (break on February 12 ends on March 25)

Course fee: £50

Book: www.visitmonmouthshire.com/arhistory



Diverse Marine Values

Integrating Diverse Values into Marine Management

We are a group of researchers working to deliver a UKRI project called *Integrating Diverse Values into the Sustainable Management of Marine Resources* (SMMR). The project brings together an expert and creative interdisciplinary team, involving several universities including Cardiff.

The study is concerned with understanding and making visible the many ways coastal communities value the marine environment. This is important in order to widen the scope of the kind of values, such as cultural and social values, that are included in marine decision-making. Part of this work consists of running workshops to elicit community-held values relating to the marine environment.

You can read more about the project here:

<https://www.smmr.org.uk/funded-projects/integrating-diverse-values-into-marine-management/>

We are seeking participants who live around the Severn Estuary. Specifically, we are recruiting participants for a research method called Digital Storytelling (DS). This method aims, through engagement of participants in a 2 day workshop, to encourage local stakeholders in discourse and problem solving, based around sharing of values, knowledge and experiences.

We are running storytelling workshops to capture the experiences of people living in coastal communities. The workshops are designed to be a pleasant experience of creating easy audio-visual work based on stories and experiences of the sea.

You will learn some basic video/editing techniques. You do not need to appear on camera in any way, the story is entirely your creation where you can use the sound of your voice and still images of your choice. No previous experience is required, and it won't cost you anything to attend. You will receive a £20 voucher as a thank you for each workshop you attend (usually your story is completed in the course of 2 workshops)

Please contact Dr Elena Vacchelli if you'd like to take part (E.Vacchelli@gre.ac.uk)

PLANNING NEWS

- Simon Maddison's review of local planning and related issues will be circulated separately to members in the next few weeks.
- In the spring, Monmouthshire County Council will be running a public consultation on the Deposit version of their Replacement Local Development Plan. Their current proposals include a "strategic growth area" mainly for housing, immediately north-west of the High Beech roundabout (rather than north of Bayfield as in earlier proposals).

