The Chepstow Society

Notes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 2nd July 2025 at 7pm at the Drill Hall, Chepstow

Present: John Burrows (Chair), Guy Hamilton, Marion Huckle, Keith James, Sallie James, Angela Middleditch, David Nicholls, Annie Rainsbury

Apologies for absence: Nicky Bailey, Simon Maddison

1. **Minutes of the last meeting, 7th May**
   Approved as a correct record.

2. **Matters arising from the meeting of 7th March, not on the agenda.**
   (i) Confirmed named roles and responsibilities for 2025 – 2026:
   Membership Secretary – Angela Middleditch (NB intends this to be last year in this role)
   Civic and Amenities – Simon Maddison
   Publicity and Publications – Guy Hamilton
   Programme Secretary – Sallie (NB intends this to be last year in this role)
   Excursions – vacant
   Natural Environment – vacant
   (ii) Presentation to Geoff Sumner. Angela to circulate dates for all Committee members to indicate availability for a presentation at Hanley Farm Cafe
   ACTION: Angela (All Committee members to respond, please)
   (iii) Drill Hall invoices.
   The recent incorrect invoice had been challenged and a corrected invoice issued.
   David has up-to-date hire charges for all the areas and services used at the Drill Hall. Noted that invoices for Committee meetings incorrectly include opening and locking up costs that are not applicable as the Society now has keyless entry that does not require caretaker attendance. There appears to be the prospect of a smaller meeting room becoming available later in the year (hire charge likely to be £10/hour). Agreed that the Cttee needs greater clarity about options and the costs of alternative accommodation to make an informed decision about continuing to hold Committee meetings at the Drill Hall or move to a different venue.
   ACTION: Marion to (i) obtain comparative room costs from The Beaufort Hotel and from Chepstow Methodist Church and (ii) ask Gemma for information on when/if a small meeting room will be available to hire and the hourly hire charge. To consider at next meeting.
   (iv) Museum liaison. Annie explained the new structure and personnel now responsible for Monmouth museums. Rachel Rogers has responsibility for strategic matters and is the first point of contact for any discussion about liaison and collaboration. This may then be delegated to museum personnel, where appropriate. Although there is no formal

requirement for museum staff to liaise with Chepstow Society an informal discussion has shown that there is an interest in developing closer links with the Society.

(v) A new member has expressed interest in Civic & Amenities activity and other areas of The Society's work and has also expressed interest in becoming more closely involved with the Society's activities. Noted the member has considerable experience at a senior level in local government. Agreed to invite the member to the September meeting and that John would discuss the Civic and Amenities interest with Simon.

ACTION:

(i) John or Marion to contact the member and invite to the September meeting as an observer.

(ii) John Burrows to speak to Simon about the interest expressed by a new member in Civic and Amenities activity and ask Simon how/if he would like to involve the member more closely in his work

3. Officer Reports:

(i) **Chair**. No separate report. Matters dealt with on the agenda.

(ii) **Secretary**. No separate report. Matters dealt with on the agenda.

(iii) **Treasurer**. Reported £3221.38 in the General Account and £754.59 in the Community Account (aka the Excursions Account). Noted that Marion will be added as signatory to the Community Account, following the recent difficulties accessing the account, a consequence of Patrick's death. Noted also that around £6000 is in the building society account (Reserves Account).

(iv) **Membership**. Report circulated in advance of the meeting and included at the end of the minutes. Angela reported an initial failure with some BACS payments, now resolved. Non-renewers have been contacted more than once and a list of defaulters has been prepared (to be checked against the June bank statement). Non-payers (some of whom may have moved away) will be removed from membership – anticipate this may be around thirty people. Former members remain on the newsletter distribution list as a way of encouraging them to re-join.

(vi) **Publications**. Guy is waiting for information from White Horse Press about existence of proofs of *The Chepstow Story* and reprint costs. Guy highlighted that the centrefold map is now out of date and potentially confusing/misleading. In discussion agreed that the map would be retained and a modern map be prepared. Annie kindly offered to assist in the revision and proof -reading of the revised text. John offered to contribute a more complete text on the Chepstow Bridge. Enquiry about digitisation of certain Ivor Waters publications is in hand.

ACTION: Guy and Annie to take forward revision of *The Chepstow Story*.

(vii) **Civic Matters.** No report from Simon at this meeting. (Later in the meeting Guy referred to an MCC presentation on transport issues on Weds 9 July (from 5.30 PM at the Palmer Centre), that he hopes to attend. Subject matter is expected to be mainly parking, bus facilities at the railway station, cycle provision, etc.

4 Reserves Policy

David circulated an HMRC guidance note for charities on reserves: more information is available on the HMRC website. Agreed that the Society should have a spending plan (projects) and identify operational costs in line with HMRC guidance. Agreed to defer further discussion to September when we will have a clearer understanding of costs going forward and likely project costs (e.g reprinting *The Chepstow Story*). Some projects have already been identified: Cttee members may wish to make further suggestions in September.

5 Arrangements for Chepstow Festival of Arts 19th July

Marion has detailed notes and timetable for the Community Fete, where the Society has been allocated a stall. Guy has a table and display stand ready mounted with photos, which he will deliver to Priory Green. Leaflets about the Society will be available and publications offered for sale. John also has photos for the display if required. Agreed to give away the Childrens' Town Trail and other suitable craft activity material (Angela will provide details). Agreed the Society would cover print costs if the Town Council cannot print materials. Society to supply better quality paper that will withstand handling and possible damp conditions, if necessary.
Noted urgent need for renewal of the Public Liability Insurance through the British Association of Local History Societies (agreed 2024) as the certificate is required by the Community Fete organiser.

ACTION:

(i) Marion to circulate a request for volunteers in the form of a timetable (to include setting up and taking down)
(ii) David Nicholls to renew PLI and send certificate to Marion.
(iii) Angela to specify craft activity materials for copying.
(iv) Angela or Guy to provide a copy of the Children's Town Trail for copying.
(v) John to ask the Town Council to copy the give-away materials for the Society.
(vi) Buy paper if necessary.

6 Summer walks

The first walk on 30th June attracted five people. Currently low numbers for remaining walk – Cttee members to help promote by word of mouth. Simon's Piercefield walk on 7th July is fully booked: Simon may offer a repeat on 30th July (tbd). Tim Ryan's walks are also well booked: repeats of these may be arranged if there is sufficient demand.
Keith and Jackie (Neal) hosted a visiting history group from Cranham that was very successful and well received. (30+ attendees)

ACTION: All to help promote the Town Walks

7 Excursions

The recent trip on the River Avon, planned by Patrick, had been very successful and a number of messages of thanks received following the event. For now, excursions will be arranged on an ad hoc basis. If an individual or a small group has an idea for an interesting visit they will be asked to research costs etc. so that it can be advertised to gauge interest. (Open to any member to research and suggest an excursion). Ideas for excursions and possible collaborations were identified, and Keith & Sallie are attending an event shortly that may yield further ideas. Currently:

Archaeological Society, Forest of Dean History Society, BBC Bristol Hotwells (underground wartime broadcasting studio), BBC Cardiff, have been mentioned.
ACTION: Sallie offered to investigate possible visit to BBC Bristol Hotwells

8 Any other business

i. Details of Naylor Firth's funereal will be announced at the July monthly meeting.
ii. The Newport Chartists Fair will be held in the Riverfront Theatre on 1st November, and the Society has been invited to take part. John Burrows offered to attend and looking for another volunteer. Appeal at meetings and via the Newsletter
iii. Noted the positive response from the Duchess of Beaufort. Will consider further how to maintain communication and closer participation in the Society's affairs.

9 **Next meeting:** Wednesday 3rd September at 7 pm.
NB Please check the agenda in case the venue changes.
The meeting closed at 8.36 pm.