



THE CHEPSTOW SOCIETY

Members Bulletin **October 2024**



www.chepstowsociety.co.uk

Wednesday 16th October

Talk by Alex Knight
Goodrich Castle

This is a change from the previously advertised talk on Rolls Royce, which will now be given in January.



Wednesday 20th November

Talk by Jeff Grosvenor
**The Newport
Transporter Bridge**

Wednesday 11th December

Talk by Nathen Amin

**The Tudors - How Welsh
Rebels Became English Kings**

In conjunction with Chepstow Books and Gifts



Our meetings and talks are usually 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 £4

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

Meeting ID: 513 005 1668 Passcode: Waters

EXPLORE THE OLD INNS & PUBS OF GLOUCESTER

THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024

Price per person £10.00

Meet: 09.30, Chepstow Railway Station

Departure: 09.45

Return at your leisure

Please arrange your own day return rail ticket to Gloucester.

The Tour starts at 11.00 from St Michaels Tower at the Cross in Gloucester, and will be about two hours. It will again be led by a guide from the Gloucester Civic Trust.

Following our enjoyable walks of Mediaeval Gloucester and its Docks, we be going slightly off-piste but equally fascinating. We will be visiting some of Gloucester's historic watering holes and also investigating some of its inns which have been lost to antiquity, such as the "Ram" and the "Fleece," former coaching Inns.

The cost is £10 for the guided tour, excluding train travel. No fixed return time is arranged, to allow more time to experience Gloucester.

Please book as soon as possible with the number of people travelling, together with your remittance and contact details:

outings.chepstowsociety@outlook.com OR
gale.p.mr@gmail.com

or in writing

Patrick Gale for Chepstow Society
Excursions

Flat 33, Wye Apartments, Chepstow, NP16
5FG

Mobile: 07760452629 (for text messages)

Please note: We have changed banks and is now as follows for electronic transmissions:
Lloyds Bank: Sort Code 30-54-66. A/C:
11461460

The Chepstow Society presents

President's Spring Luncheon

at The Beaufort Hotel on

Saturday

18th January 2025

1.00 for 1:30pm

**Roast Chicken and trimmings,
with apple pie and ice cream for dessert.**

Vegetarian option available

**Cost £20 per person
cash only, payable in advance please**

Entertainment to be provided

*Book early to secure a place for the social
event of the year.*

ZOOM ARRANGEMENTS

The Society's Committee is aware that some members are disappointed that Zoom meetings could not be continued regularly after lockdown, due to technical difficulties.

Unfortunately, the Drill Hall cannot provide the expertise needed to run hybrid Zoom and face-to-face meetings.

If any Chepstow Society member wishes to train to use the equipment and set up hybrid meetings, please contact Marion Huckle in the first instance.

We realise that this will be disappointing for those members who are unable to attend meetings on a regular basis.

Other ideas for sharing meetings are also being explored and members will be kept updated as soon as possible.

Marion Huckle

MARGARET KINSEY



Members of Chepstow Society, both past and present gathered at The Forest of Dean Crematorium on 21st August to remember and celebrate the life of Margaret.

Margaret had been a member of Chepstow Society for as long as anyone could remember. She and her late husband Ron were very much part of the society, regularly attending meetings, going on excursions and holidays. They also gave talks relating to the many adventures they had on their expeditions to the four corners of the world, including climbing Kilimanjaro

to welcome in the new millennium. I can also remember a talk about when they were in South America speaking Welsh to the local people in Patagonia.

At the funeral her children, Susan, Martin and Sara, paid tribute to their mother, her enthusiasm for the outdoors, especially her love of walking and how she and Ron met at a Youth Hostel and continued with that activity throughout the rest of their lives.

Following the service at the Crematorium, we gathered at The Speech House to share memories, including Margaret's love of teaching EVERYONE to share singing experiences - and so inevitably we all sang 'Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'. This song will now always be associated with Margaret and bring back happy memories of such a lovely person.

Margaret was passionate about being Welsh, she believed in education and most importantly fair play and equality for all.

Margaret will be sadly missed by all who knew her. Gorffwys mewn heddwch.

Sallie James, Vice Chairman and friend

MONDAY 2ND DECEMBER 2024

..... is the 500th anniversary of the granting of the charter to the Town of Chepstow by the Marcher Lord, Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester. This gave Chepstow responsibility for its own governance.

We celebrated the charter, and the quincentenary of the rebuilding of the Town Arch in its current form, at the town's Tudor Day in May this year - but the charter was actually formally presented to the town's burgesses on 2nd December 1524.

This year, the Society, together with the Town Council, are arranging a procession and a re-enactment of the ceremony on that day. The event will be attended by the Earl's direct descendant, Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort.

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW !



The Bristol Riots of 1831

It is not usual for Chepstow Society members to boo a speaker, but such was the case at September's meeting in the Drill Hall, when members loudly booed; and hissed and cheered.

Such raucous interaction was an integral part of the lively and insightful talk about the Bristol Riots of 1831 given by Garry Atterton of the Barton Hill History Group.

Garry has researched the topic extensively and illustrated his talk with extracts from contemporary news reports and other documents, and also used paintings from local Bristol artists depicting the disorganisation and chaos that occurred.



The riots (or uprising, as Garry would prefer the events to be named) escalated rapidly across the three days at the end of October 1831 leading to death and property destruction, but it appeared that the mob had in essence no real direction or leadership, a charge which can also be levelled at the security forces.

Garry set the scene by describing the progress of the Reform Bill to bring electoral reform, a Bill which had been rejected earlier in 1831. Although riots had occurred earlier in the summer in other cities, Bristol had been quiet. However, the catalyst for the riots would be the visit of Judge Wetherell for the assize sessions in late October, a figure who was hated locally for opposing the Reform Bill, and the crowd were firmly behind the pro-Reform Bill Bristol Political Union under the leadership of William Herapath. In fact Bristol was firmly pro-Reform.

Using maps to illustrate the progress of the riots, Garry took the Society through the first confrontation at the Three Lamps Junction, which

was largely peaceful, to the increasing tension by the Courts where Wetherell disembarked his carriage. On then to Queen Square where the crowd increased in number to protest outside the Mansion House, where the Mayor and the local dignitaries were hosting the Judge. It became clear that the security measures put in place were insufficient, which led to the Bristol Corporation calling in Colonel Brereton and a deployment from the British Army, including some from the hated "Bloody Blues" of the 14th Light Dragoons.

It soon became clear that the crowd could not be dispersed and the first buildings were set fire to. The Bristol Corporation members fled; Judge Wetherell fled disguised in women's clothing; even the Mayor fled. The rioters also set prisoners from the Bristol Gaol free.

The upshot was that buildings burned, and then the soldiers charged the mob causing loss of life and injury. It was only after the weekend that the riot subsided.

Garry Atterton then took the Society through the aftermath - some rioters were imprisoned at the Gaol and subsequently hanged as a deterrent, others were transported to Australia. But those on the Corporation side also faced consequences. Brereton was court-martialled; Wetherell lost his seat as an MP; but the Mayor and the Corporation were exonerated.

Perhaps the most significant outcome was that the following year the Great Reform Act of 1832 was passed, bringing electoral reform and a fairer system of representation at Parliament.

Garry presented an authoritative description and insightful thesis about what was a messy and unplanned incident which was appreciated by members of the Society whose many questions were the prelude to a big round of applause.

Our thanks go to Garry Atterton for giving of his time and knowledge.

Marcus Keppel-Palmer

Thanks, Marcus! We always welcome members contributing summaries of the talks in our programme – particularly to inform those of our members who are unable to attend our talks and discussions.



THE DRUIDS

Prof. Ron Hutton

17th July 2024

Professor Ron Hutton, academic, author and speaker, made a return visit to speak at our July meeting. He is a Professor of History at the University of Bristol and a specialist in early modern Britain, British folklore, pre-Christian religion, and modern paganism.

Professor Hutton explained that Druids can be traced back to pre-Roman times in many locations across Europe. However, the focus of the talk was the Druids in Britain: he himself was a Druid in the past. In later questions it emerged that even the origin of the word Druid is shrouded in mystery.

Our mental pictures of Druidism are largely based on writings from Roman times and later as there were no eye-witness accounts or contemporary written records of early Druidism. Many of these accounts were contradictory. In some, Druids were portrayed as wise prophets, in others they were described as hostile and warlike pagans who engaged in vile practices, such as human sacrifices.

The Ancient Greeks portrayed Druids as figures to be admired. It is likely that the early Roman writers (including Julius Caesar and Pliny the Elder) were not ones to let the truth get in the way of a good story, and we should treat their stories with a healthy dose of scepticism.

Professor Hutton described a number of 'types' of Druids, some of which are less well-known than others.

Patriotic Druids, were described by Tacitus as pious and wise leaders associated with rebellions against invading Roman forces. Following the unification of Britain, when the three nations started to create their own cultural identity, Patriotic Druids became increasingly associated with Welsh culture.

Confessional Druids appear to have their origins in the ancient world, an idea promoted by William Stukeley, a Church of England clergyman who tried to demonstrate that Confessional Druids were all potential converts to the Anglican faith. He carried out numerous excavations that demonstrated that many famous monuments were the work of prehistoric Britons, making an important contribution to our knowledge of a little-known part of British history.

Green Druids appear to be Roman in origin and are associated with woods, caves and meadows and became popular romantic figures in the 18th century. In contrast, Demonic Druids were associated with barbarous behaviours such as human sacrifice and other dark practices: a view favoured by the Victorians.

Other ideas of Druidism included: Masonic or Social Druids, who eventually gave rise to the development of Friendly Societies in Great Britain; Druids of the Universal Bond and the New Age Druids, who became associated in recent times with the equinox ceremonies at Stonehenge. The latest iteration is the Counter Cultural Druid movement, of whom the most well-known member is probably Arthur Pendragon. This group is associated with campaigning for the natural world and civil liberties and is the largest Druidic order in the UK. In 1997 Arthur Pendragon was arrested for carrying an offensive weapon in public (he was holding 'Excalibur' at a demonstration) but a letter from Professor Hutton secured his release!

Professor Hutton concluded by emphasising the overall contribution of the Druids to British cultural and social history and the enduring appeal of the images we hold of Druids as both teachers and healers.

Marion Huckle

The Bristol Channel on the *Waverley* – June 2024

On 10th June 2024 members of the Chepstow Society, with colleagues from the Tidenham History Group, joined the world's oldest sea going paddle steamship, the *Waverley*, at Penarth for a cruise down the Bristol Channel to Ilfracombe.

The weather was fine and the sea calm. The cliffs of Glamorgan and the nuclear power station under construction at Hinckley Point, Somerset, were visible. The high cliffs of North Devon were very impressive.

The *Waverley* berthed at Ilfracombe for a few hours enabling a walk around, and a visit to the 19th century tunnels through the headland to a secluded beach with distant views of the island of Lundy; and time enough for a Devon cream tea!

Many thanks to Patrick Gale of the Chepstow Society and Richard Clammer of the Tidenham History Group for the organisation of the event.

John Burrows



SS Waverley approaching Penarth - 10 June 2024



Devon Cream Tea!

LAST CHANCE TO SEE – CLOSING MID DECEMBER

DISCOVERING HIDDEN *HER*STORIES

The volunteer nurses at Chepstow Red Cross Hospital in World War One

An exhibition from the National Lottery Heritage Fund project, working with local volunteers to research and tell the life stories of the women who volunteered in the Red Cross Hospital at Gwy House, Chepstow in World War 1, including film, photos and fascinating objects and their stories.



CHEPSTOW MUSEUM, Bridge Street
Open Daily , 11am – 4pm (except Mon & Weds) - Free

Chepstow's Roman River Crossing: Day School

Saturday 19th October 2024
1.30 – 5 pm, The Drill Hall



- 13:00 - 13:20 Welcome and light refreshments**
- 13:30 - 13:50 The geography of Chepstow and getting across the River Wye -
John Burrows**
- 13:50 - 14:20 Old timbers in the Wye - the Roman Crossing? - Simon Maddison**
- 14:20 - 14:30 Dating the timbers - Professor Nigel Nayling**
- 14:30 - 15:00 The Roads to the Roman Crossing - Lynne Davies**
- 15:00 - 15:30 Refreshments**
- 15:30 - 16:00 Pontifex Maximus: Bridging the gap in the Roman Worldwide Web -
Dr Mark Lewis**
- 16:00 - 16:30 Chasing the Conquest: Recent Cropmark Discoveries in SE Wales -
Dr Toby Driver**
- 16:30 - 17:00 Round Table discussion - Chair: Dr Julian Whitewright**

Following the successful investigation of the Roman structure in the Wye in 2023, as well as the timbers filmed by tv's 'Extreme Archaeology' in 2003, we now have extremely good evidence for the Roman crossing of the Wye, upstream from Chepstow Castle. This includes the latest C14 dating.

To present these very exciting finds, and set them in their historical context, the Chepstow Archaeological Society is organising a **Day School on Saturday 19th October**.

The programme consists of a series of presentations on the history of the Wye Crossing, the findings of the Society's investigations, the context of the crossing in Roman South Wales, and new finds within both the immediate vicinity and wider landscape.

The event will be concluded with a round table discussion on the finds and the implications for understanding the Roman conquest and occupation of South Wales.

Light refreshments will be provided during the afternoon.

Details of how to book are at

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/chepstows-roman-river-crossing-day-school-tickets-951305760137>

MonLife Heritage Museums

are delighted to bring you Autumn Art History Courses with popular lecturer Eleanor Bird.

As usual there will be live lectures in person at the Drill Hall Chepstow on Monday afternoons and online via Zoom lectures on Wednesday mornings.

Participants of both courses will have the chance to access recordings of the online lectures for 4 weeks after – so don't worry about missing classes if you are away..

You will notice that there is a price increase, but it is the first in the 10 years since we have been running the courses at Chepstow (from £100 to £110)

This link will take you to all the art-history events:
www.visitmonmouthshire.com/arthistory

Introduction to Art: The Late 19th Century into Modernism

10 week course

Monday evenings 7-8pm, beginning 30 September 2024 (break on 11 November)

Online via Zoom

Recordings available so that any lectures missed can be caught within 4 weeks, on Zoom

Course Fee: £55

Exploring one of the most dramatic periods in the development of art history, our introductory series of ten evening lectures takes us from 1880 and Post Impressionism through some of the first movements in Modernism.



Facing the Past:

The Art of Portraiture

10 week course

Monday afternoons 2-4pm, beginning 30 September 2024 (break on 11 November)

and

Wednesday mornings 10.30am- 12.30pm, beginning 2 October 2024 (break on 13 November)

Online via Zoom

Recordings will be available to members of both courses, so that any lectures missed can be caught within 4 weeks, on Zoom

Course Fee: £110

From van Eyck to van Dyck, Raphael to Reynolds and Pissarro to Picasso, explore how artists' portrayal of their sitters reflected the art, politics and religion of their era.

From the time when it became popular in the 15th century, portraiture began to emerge from providing a mere adjunct to religious paintings to become a means to demonstrate power and status. The desire to show individual character and bring sitters to life developed alongside the portrayal of a simple likeness, until we reach the 19th century when style and exploration of new ways of painting meant the sitter's identity became increasingly subordinate to the process of making art

'Facing the Past' is also a chance to look into the eyes of people from other times – were they so different from us?