



Monmouthshire Antiquarian Association Newsletter

Spring & Summer 2024

Dear Members and Friends,

It is with great sadness I must tell you of the death of our patron, Professor Chris Williams. Chris was well known to many members and will be greatly missed. He had recently undergone a routine operation and was recovering well, in fact so well that he was on holiday in France with his wife when he suffered a catastrophic heart attack. We send our deepest condolences to Sara his wife, and to Chris' children at this very difficult time. This has come as a great shock to everybody.

With this sad news comes an inevitable change in the arrangements for the AGM in May. You will have received notice of this with this mailing. Our President, Jeremy Knight has kindly stepped in with a lecture on a theme that Chris himself would have appreciated. Please see your meeting papers for all details of the AGM.

Looking forward, we have a busy programme over the spring and summer. The highlight of our year will be the **Tintern Study Day on 6th July**. Plans are well under way. It is a privilege for the Association to be hosting this prestigious event. Speakers include David Robinson, Will Davies of Cadw, Richard Lewis of Black Mountains Archaeology and Ross Cook of Archaeodomus. Together they are leading on the major restoration project that is taking place at Tintern Abbey. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to discover the secrets that have been hidden at the Abbey since it was "dissolved" in the 16th century.

Many of you have already booked your place. If you know of anybody else who would like to attend, please do share the poster and booking links with them. They will need to be quick as there are only 20 places left. Tickets include lunch and light refreshments throughout the day. In the afternoon there will be tours of the abbey led by the speakers, each looking at their own area of expertise. If you would prefer a more general tour the custodian is also leading a tour, which will be full of humour and anecdotes. You can view the programme and purchase your ticket following the link below. If you cannot book online, please contact me for assistance.

<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/monmouthshire-antiquarian-association/t-vvkqxyv> .

Regarding the Study Day – Ticketsource, who we are using for the bookings is running a prize draw for all organisations who have events being booked through them this summer. Please support this as you can by adding your vote. A top prize of £1000 is available to the event with most votes, and there are smaller amounts awarded in each category. To register your vote, and **support MAA** please follow this link. <http://wshe.es/negMLgtM> Voting starts on May 1st.

Good news from around the region

The team at **Buckholt Woods Hillfort** has secured a further grant for continuing their project this year. Their work includes the natural environment, the historic environment and engagement with underrepresented groups such as the socially isolated and refugees. Both Mark Lewis at Amgueddfa Cymru and Kate Churchill (MAA member) will be leading archaeological investigations funded through this programme, which will include some excavation works and possibly some more geophysical survey. Volunteers will be needed. I will of course let you know when details of activities are released.

Congratulations to **Chepstow Museum**, who celebrated the 75th anniversary of their opening on the 9th of April. I remember visiting the museum as a child when it was in the old Board School and admiring the mythical whale tooth that sat on a windowsill there. The Museum moved to Gwy House, formerly Chepstow Cottage Hospital in 1973 (Famously my dad and his brother had their tonsils removed here as children in the 1940s). We send our best wishes to curator Anne Rainsbury and all the staff and supporters of this well-loved museum and thank them for the support they give to local groups and societies in SE Monmouthshire.

Simon Maddison and his team have brought work to a close on the Roman road leading to the Wye crossing at Piercefield wood. This work was the subject of a wonderful talk Simon gave us in February, and I am sure you will be hearing more about it in the coming months when the carbon dating results are in. Well done to Chepstow Archaeological Society and MAA members who stuck at it through some cold and wet weather to get the job done.

Moving west to Newport, regular visitors and residents cannot fail to notice that the **Transporter bridge** is undergoing major conservation work. This has attracted the attention of the media far and wide. The work will include a visitor centre. If you want to find out more about this have a look at the website [Transporter Bridge \(newport.gov.uk\)](http://newport.gov.uk). I am looking forward to walking over the bridge when it reopens. Anybody care to join me?

Some more good news – **Our Living Levels Project** has been awarded further funding by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. RSPB has been awarded a development grant of over £450,000 and a potential delivery grant of nearly £2.2 million to secure a sustainable and thriving future for the Gwent Levels by fostering its recognition as a unique Welsh landscape rich in wildlife, history, and productive farming, through comprehensive conservation, enhanced biodiversity, and engaged community participation.

Well done to the team who have secured this grant. We look forward to seeing more talks, walks and community engagement in the coming years. A little bird (appropriately) tells me that there will be more input from **Amgueddfa Cymru** at Goldcliff, and a programme of online talks on all aspects of life on the levels.

For those of you who enjoy an academic experience, Philip Hume of the **Mortimer History Society** has been in contact about the spring lecture series, the first of which is explained here.

<p>Thursday 9th May</p> <p>7.30pm</p>	<p>Dr Rebecca Thomas Chair: Professor Marged Haycock</p>	<p><i>Naming Places in Medieval Wales</i></p> <p>Texts from medieval Wales abound in stories that explain place names. In the second branch of the Mabinogi a cwmwd is named Tal Eboilion after the foals given to Matholwch to repay his insult, whilst Gerald of Wales explains that people associated the highest mountain in south Wales with king Arthur, referring to what is now Pen y Fan as <i>Kaerarthur</i> or <i>cathedra Arthuri</i>. This paper will attempt to put some order on these scattered references through investigating the strategies for explaining place names in both Latin and vernacular texts from medieval Wales together with the reasons for doing so.</p>
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To access these, you need to contact Philip directly on philip.r.hume@gmail.com stating you are an MAA member. More details of the spring and summer programme will be available on the MHS website soon. They are also holding a spring conference on Saturday 18th May. Titled 'Landscapes of the Medieval March', the conference, will be held in the Ludlow Assembly Rooms (and also available live online). You can follow this link to book your ticket. [Event 18-5-24 - Mortimer History Society](#) The Mortimer Society puts all its lectures online and these can be accessed free through their website [MHS Lectures Online - Mortimer History Society](#)

Have you visited the **Roman Legionary Museum** in Caerleon recently? If you have then you are part of a growing trend. It was good to hear from Dai Price at a recent MAA committee meeting that visitor numbers are well on their way to recovering after the pandemic, however there is always room for more visitors. Mark Lewis told us that the museum is in the process of bidding for two local treasure finds. Funding will be needed for this, so if you do visit this unique and free to enter Museum then perhaps you might like to make a donation to help with the purchase. On the bright side it has been noticed that donations by museum visitors have increased per head since the pandemic, which is good news in these straitened times. Please do go along and lend your support.

It was also good to hear that there are moves by Amgueddfa Cymru, Cadw and Newport City Council to work together at Caerleon for the benefit of the unique historic environment there, and to enhance the visitor experience for everybody – locals and tourists alike.

Staying in Caerleon, **Charles Williams Primary School** is celebrating 300 years since its founding in 1724. Congratulations to them. Unfortunately, we are unable to hold our AGM there due to building work taking place in the school, but we hope to be back there in the future. As part of their tercentenary the museum will be working with the pupils on some exciting projects. We look forward to hearing the results of their work later in the year.

Last year I visited the community of **Llanarth** near Raglan where the **Village Alive Trust** is working to restore St Teilo's Church and to improve the social wellbeing of the village at the village hall. If you have connections to this community and would like to help them, you can access a survey using this link.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LlanarthCommunitySurvey>

The Monmouthshire Antiquary

This year we welcome a new editor in the person of Rev Canon Arthur Edwards FSA. He will be supported by the retiring editor, Tony Hopkins. We thank Tony for his hard work during his tenure and know he will provide every assistance during Arthur's initiation into the mysteries of producing a journal.

The editors tell me that they are close to having enough material for the next volume; however, if anybody has an idea for an article, or perhaps has something that has sat on a shelf for a while, please do get in touch with either Arthur or Tony to discuss your idea. If you need time to refine your paper, or advice on how best to prepare it, they are willing to offer help. You do not have to be an experienced author – you just need an interesting idea and enthusiasm for your subject.

Event Programme

We started the year with two talks in February that linked together Romans, roads, and bridges. Many thanks to Mark Lewis for setting the scene with his talk about bridges and local routes across the region and elsewhere in the empire. This was followed by a talk by Simon Maddison investigating the Roman Wye crossing. In March we heard from Bridget Box of the Flat Holme Island Society. She introduced us to the history and ecology of the island. A visit might be on the cards if there is enough interest.

In April Simon Maddison lead a walk in Piercefield Park. We travelled along the Piercefield Walks which are part of the picturesque landscape park, visiting the two hillforts on the peninsular and finishing passing by the ruins of Piercefield House. Several guests with an interest in landscape and archaeology joined us, and a reciprocal visit to their region is planned for later in the year.

I have already mentioned both the AGM and the study day. The final event of the summer is a walk on Saturday June 15th. This will be held jointly with The Cambrian Archaeological Association. The walk will cover the south and west of the Caldicot Level and will visit Redwick and Goldcliff. I am in the process of finalising the route, but it is likely to be around 6 miles and will be start around 11 in the morning. There will be an option for a pub tea at the end of the walk. Transport will be arranged from

the meeting point to the walk start point. Final details will be circulated in the next few weeks. Booking is essential because places will be restricted to 20 walkers.

Future plans. The autumn program includes a visit, some talks including one from Peter Brown – The History of Shipping at Newport, and an Epiphany Carol Service, which will be held at St Teilo's Church, Llantilio Pertholey on January 5th, 2025.

Reminders of these events will be sent out nearer to the dates and will also be advertised on the website.

If you have an idea for a visit, please let me know. Planning for the 2025 programme will start in August, so ideas are welcome.

I am looking forward to a busy couple of months. I hope that you are too and that we will see you at one of the events over the summer. Your continued support for the Association is greatly appreciated.

Your secretary,

Jan

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