

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024

Abergavenny Local History Society - January^{1st} 2024 to December 31st 2024.

The Society's **membership** continues to grow with new members joining this year bringing the total up to 275. However, there has also been an increase in our core expenditure.

The **objects** of Abergavenny Local History Society (charity registration number 1098582) are:

1. To promote the local community's knowledge of and interest in history
2. To provide local historical and general interest information for visitors
3. To support Abergavenny Museum and Castle

Achievements to meet these objects:

1. To promote the local community's knowledge of and interest in history

The Society enjoyed another excellent season of **lectures**. This year's programme has been excellent once again and our thanks go to the Talks and Visits team. The lectures included:

- Jennifer Dumbleton – "The Mappa Mundi"
- Mike Parker – "Mapping Wales"
- Andy Seaman- "Excavating Llancadle's Medieval Cemetery"
- Christopher Parry "Depression and Painting in Dowlais"
- Madeleine Gray "The tomb of Gwladus Ddu and William ap Thomas"
- Martin Papworth - "The Discovery of a 5th-century mosaic at Chedworth Roman Villa"
- Peter Wakelin - "David Jones and the Llanthony Valley"
- Alan Burge – "Minnie Pallister: Voice of a Rebel"

The **visits programme** for 2024 was fully booked and was once again a great success. The visits included a weekend trip to Dorset and day visits to:

- Avalon Archaeology in the Somerset Levels and Wells,
- Hereford Cathedral and the Mappa Mundi,
- the *Art in South Wales* exhibition at the National Museum of Wales
- St Fagan's National History Museum.

The 2025 programme is almost fully booked and the visits include a weekend trip to Lincoln and day-trips to Bath and Dyrham Park, Llanelli House and Cardiff Bay and Stokesay Castle and Ludlow.

The **monthly email newsletters** to members have continued, keeping members informed of the lecture programme and other activities. Events at historical sites and museums have also been publicized.

The Society continues to contribute to the **Abergavenny Focus Magazine**, delivered to all households in the area. The articles are linked to each month's talk that month.

The **Schools History Bursary** awarded to local students going on to study history at university has continued. Two excellent submissions were received and one bursary of £250 was awarded to a student from King Henry VIII School with a presentation at The Borough Theatre

2. To provide local historical and general interest information for visitors

A new sub-committee has been set up with a view to revive the Society's project to erect new **ceramic information plaques** around the town. This is making steady progress.

The Society's **website** has been regularly updated and the **Abergavenny Street Survey** is still reliably accessible on-line.

The Society's very active **Research Group** continues to operate successfully. This year's on-going projects include transcribing the Town Commissioner's records for the area and examining records related to Pen y Fal Asylum/Mental Hospital. The group's new e-journal, *The Gobannium Gazette*, is produced to a very high standard and has proved very popular with members.

Members of the Society continue to contribute articles in the *Gwent Local History Journal* and the *Monmouthshire Antiquarian*.

Following a review of current holdings of the Society's **publications**, free copies were given to new members and a stock of free copies of suitable books was donated to King Henry VIII School to be distributed to the Year 7 intake for the next few years. Reserve stocks of our publications are now at manageable levels and storage problems have been alleviated.

The Society continues to provide **information to the wider public** via its website and Facebook page. The public can access information about guided walks, leaflets and books, Society activities, and annual and financial reports. Queries and enquiries can also be posted and are dealt with promptly. New ventures this year include a new **Young ALHS** page on the website and Abergavenny Tales And Trails which can be downloaded from the website. A series of **Trails and Tales for Families** are available as leaflets from the Tourist Information Centre and Abergavenny Museum, or can be downloaded from the Walks page of the society's website. They include:

- Wigs, Flannels, Normans and Romans
- Parks and Gardens
- Chapels and Churches: Dissenters, Recusants and Anglicans
- The Charcoal Industry of Fforest Coalpit and the Grwyne Fawr Valley

The Society's support for the **Gwent Local History Council** and the **Plas Gunter Mansion** project continues.

The Society also continues to respond to **queries** from the public regarding different aspects of local history.

3. To support Abergavenny Museum and Castle

The Society was an active participant in the new **Inclusive History Project** led by the Museum's Community Engagement Officer as part of the Welsh Government's Anti-Racist Wales Project. The project has now been completed and was a great success.

The **Victorian Garden** in the Museum grounds continues to be maintained and enhanced by a small but dedicated band of volunteers.

The **Curator** of the Castle and Museum continues to sit as an ex officio member of the committee.

4. Officers and Structure:

President: Ken Key

Committee

There have been some changes in personnel at the committee, but former committee members are still working hard on various aspects of the Society's work, e.g.: research, website, hosting talks, publicity and ceramic plaques.

Committee Members (with their main responsibilities) were confirmed at the AGM in May 2024:

Chair: F. Olding.

Secretary, website and social media: C. Maciejewski.

Treasurer: J. Cormack.

Lecture & visits: H. Morgan, J. Zajicek, B. Emberson.

Membership Secretary: J. Patrick

Publications: Vacant

Publicity: all members of the committee

Schools Liaison: J. White

Technical Officer (talks): R. Langford-Johnson

Without portfolio: D. Morgan

Monmouthshire Museums representative: R. Rogers

The committee dealt with business via regular Zoom meetings, though 2025 and will see a return to some face-to-face meetings in the Spring and Autumn of 2025

Many thanks to all my colleagues for their hard work, support and encouragement throughout another successful year.

Frank Olding
(Chairman)