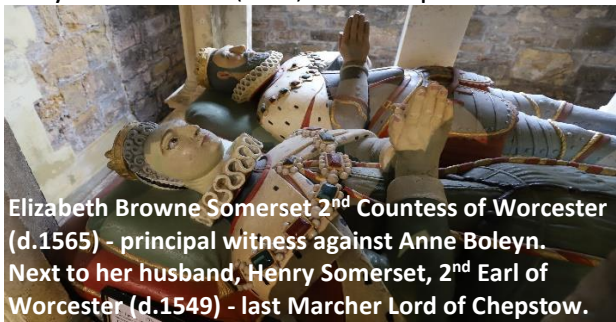


## 6. Tudor Chepstow (1485 - 1603)

**The Welsh Tudors** - The most famous dynasty in British history – the **Tudors** (1485-1603) - with **Henry VIII** and six wives; end of monasteries; break with Rome; **Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup>**; Armada; and Shakespeare – began with a **Welsh family from Anglesey**. Whilst the Town Gate of 1524 was there to keep the Welsh out of Chepstow and in *Welsh Street*, the **Crown, ruling the whole of England and Wales**, had been **taken over by the Welsh!** **Henry VII**, born at Pembroke, with roots in Anglesey, **made much of his Welsh heritage**.

**The Tudors in Chepstow** - The **Town Gate** is Chepstow's **most prominent Tudor building** but there are other signs of the Tudors in: the Castle; Church; and doorways and windows. **The tomb** of the principal witness against Anne Boleyn at her trial (1536) is in Chepstow Church.



Elizabeth Browne Somerset 2<sup>nd</sup> Countess of Worcester (d.1565) - principal witness against Anne Boleyn. Next to her husband, Henry Somerset, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Worcester (d.1549) - last Marcher Lord of Chepstow.

**The Tudors brought in:** the Laws in Wales Acts 1536/43; end of Marcher Lords; formation of Monmouthshire, and a joint agreement with Gloucestershire to maintain Chepstow Bridge.

**Dissolution of the Monasteries** - Henry VIII's suppression of the monasteries 1536 – 1542 closed **Chepstow Priory, St Kingsmark Priory, and Tintern Abbey**. **Superb Norman nave of Chepstow Priory still remains** as the nave of St Mary's Parish Church. **Tintern remains in ruins**.

## 7. The Town Gate in C20th & C21st



**A major traffic problem for South Wales**

**The main road** between England and Wales pre M4, the A48, **and the road to the ferry**, passed under the Tudor Arch. **Telford** suggested the **Severn Bridge** in 1824 but it was **Chepstow Urban District Council** in 1920s that initiated the project **to build the Severn Bridge to bypass Chepstow's 1524 Arch!** The Severn Bridge project, taken over by GCC / MCC, then by UK Govt, was completed in 1966. In WWII there was talk of removing the Arch to help military convoys – the Arch remained! Major renovation 1985/86. In 2008, **Chepstow Town Council (Mayor Cllr D. Dovey; Town Clerk Ms S. Bushell)** **bought the Arch** and the Gatehouse from MCC.

**Chepstow Society and Chepstow Museum**



In 1948, **Ivor Waters** (*far right of picture*) set up the **Chepstow Society**, and **Chepstow's first museum** which opened on **9 April 1949, 75 years ago**, in the room above the Arch – the museum, now at Gwy House, and the Chepstow Society ([www.chepstowsociety.co.uk](http://www.chepstowsociety.co.uk)) are still going strong.

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**The 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town Arch and Town Charter of 1524**

Chepstow Castle and St Mary's Priory Church were founded in the C11th. The Norman town of *Striguil* (called '*Chepstow*' by the C14th) grew up around them, and a port. A wall was built in the C13th around the town and port.

**The Town Wall / Port Wall had just one gate – the Town Gate –**

**the only way in and out of the town by land for 700 years**. The C13th Gate was rebuilt and the '**new**' Gate and Arch completed in 1524 **became the iconic image of Chepstow**.

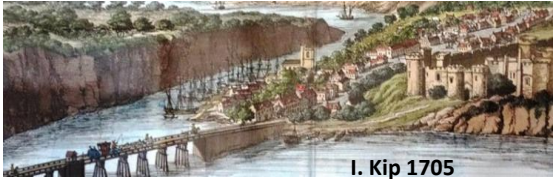
It was given to the town, **500 years ago**, along with a **Town Charter of 1524**, by the Marcher Lord, Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester.

**This Information Leaflet provides notes on:**

- 1. The Town Gate and Arch**
- 2. The Town Wall / Port Wall**
- 3. The Town Charter of 1524**
- 4. The 'Marcher Lords'**
- 5. The Somersets, Earls of Worcester**
- 6. The Tudors, and Tudor Chepstow**
- 7. The Town Arch in the C20th/C21st**

## 1. The Town Gate and Arch

The **Town Gate** was built as part of the Wall in 1272-78 and **rebuilt** in Tudor times, **1524**. **At the Gate tolls had to be paid to enter the town, and taxes on goods to and from the market and port.** On 11 May 1648 **Oliver Cromwell** and troops **stormed the Gate** and entered the Town. Castle taken 25 May 1648.



Chepstow was a major port from the C13th to C18th.

**Outside the Gate** was an Informal market in Moor Street by 'Robin Hood's Cross' to avoid taxes. The Cross was demolished in 1759.

**150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of no taxes or tolls - 2024.**

No taxes or tolls have been collected at the Town Gate since the death of Paddy Magill, the last collector of taxes, in 1874.

See Ivor Waters (1984) booklet on the Town Arch

## 2. The Town Wall / Port Wall



The Wall was built by **Roger Bigod, 5<sup>th</sup> Earl of Norfolk** (1272-78). Roger was William Marshal's great grandson (via Marshal's daughter Maud), There were no more Marshal male heirs. The Wall was 1,123m long (700m exists but only 370m is visible); 5-7m high; 2m thick; 11 towers (8 remain).

See R. Shoesmith, Chapter XIX pp 199-212 in Turner and Johnson's book on Chepstow Castle (2006) for more detail.

## 3. The Town Charter of 1524

*The Charter (2<sup>nd</sup> December 1524) begins –*

*'For the love and zeal which he has and bears to justice and the common weal of his town of Chepstow*

*and for the relief, prosperity, and love which he has to the same town which is fallen to great injuries and decay for lack of reparation and good order,*

*Charles, Earl of Worcester, Lord of Gower, Chepstow, and Tudenham, etc., grants that henceforth at Michaelmas the burgesses may have free election in choosing of their two bailiffs, that is to say, the burgesses may choose and appoint four sufficient burgesses which they shall present to the lord*

*if within the realm of England or Wales, or if beyond the seas to the lord's steward'.*

Source: National Library of Wales Badminton Manuscripts.

The Charter had **29 clauses**, spelling out the rights and duties of the bailiffs including jurisdiction of the town. The bailiffs were also made **Clerks of the Market** inspecting bread and ale and other goods and provisions. The Charter gave also **safeguards** to the burgesses of Chepstow regarding **trade with foreigners coming to the port** and the **terms of trade** through the port; and finally – *'the said bailiffs to have their*

*prison for the punishment of the said offences within the great gate which they have builded by the Earl's commandment'* (2<sup>nd</sup> Dec. 1524)

This was the last town charter issued by a 'Marcher Lord' (most Town Charters were given by the Crown). Text of the Chepstow Charter of 1524 and an article on the Charter from W.R.B Robinson (1977) NLW Journal XX pp. 85-94.

## 4. The 'Marcher' ('Border') Lords

The '**Marcher**' (or '**Border Land**') **Lords** were charged with protecting England from Wales and were **given more powers than English Earls**. **Marcher Lords** ruled the **border lands** for **nearly 500 years** as subjects of the King but with many powers of their own - some were to Chepstow's advantage as a port which could avoid the King's taxes on imports at Bristol. **Marcher Lordship powers** existed also in Glamorgan, Carmarthen, Pembroke. **Marcher Lords were abolished by the Tudor Acts of Union 1536-43**. **Charles Somerset** was the **last to exercise** the powers. Son, **Henry, 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Worcester**, the **last Marcher Lord**, is buried at St Mary's Priory Church,

## 5. The Somersets/Worcesters/Beauforts

**The Somersets** (Earls of Worcester) were from the **Beaufort** family. **From 1682** became the '**Dukes of Beaufort**.' Many titles: '**Henry Somerset; Duke of Beaufort; Marquis and Earl of Worcester; Earl of Glamorgan; Viscount Grosmont; Baron Herbert; Lord of Ragland, Chepstow, & Gower; Baron Beaufort of Caldecot'** **Charles Somerset** organised the famous '**Field of the Cloth of Gold**' in 1520 for Henry VIII. The Somersets owned **Chepstow and Raglan Castles**. Lived at Raglan to 1660 then moved to Badminton (Glos.). The Somersets / Dukes of Beaufort sold Chepstow Castle to Lysaghts in 1914 who put it in national care in 1953. **The Town Arch was given twice**. The Arch came back into Beaufort ownership, probably at the Restoration of Charles II, 1660, so on **7 October 1899, 125 years ago, the Beauforts, re-presented** the Town Arch to Chepstow!