

Chepstow and Environs – a quick history

Ancient: Burial chambers 5,000 years old in, and near, Chepstow.
Roman: The Roman road from Caerleon & Caerwent to Gloucester came via Larkfield, then left on Vauxhall Road to Chepstow School, down a cliff-side way to a Roman river crossing below Piercefield. A crossing or ferry at Chepstow Bridge site may also have existed.
Saxon: a Saxon hall may have existed near Nelson Street.
Norman: 1067 onwards - castle, priory, and a new town built.
Middle Ages - expansion of castle and port, new wooden bridge.
Industrial - Flourishing port. New iron bridge 1816. Railway 1850. A pioneering Brunel rail bridge of 1852 - cast iron piers still in use.
C20th - First major expansion of the town outside its walls. New ship yard, Garden City, Hardwick (1917) and Bulwark (1918) started.



Tintern Abbey and Wye Valley
 5 miles north of Chepstow. One of Britain's most famous views. Abbey founded by the Lord of Chepstow Castle in 1131. Ruins visible today are later C13th.



Caerwent Roman Town
 5 miles west of Chepstow. The south walls are the finest Roman town walls in northern Europe. Original facing stone is still in place.

Chepstow's Mega Tides - World's Fastest Rising Tides

Chepstow is one of the best places in the world to see 'mega' tides. Chepstow has the world's 3rd highest tides and the fastest rise. At times in the year, the river can rise from 1.5m to 15m deep. It can rise 13m (43 ft) in just 4 hours! Chepstow's 'reversing river' changes direction 4 times a day. It flows S for 6hrs then N for 6hrs!

Location of Grade 1 Structures in Chepstow

NW (to Tutshill)	NORTH (Downhill)	Cliffs & Gloucester Hole
Mega Tides	RIVER WYE	6. SEVERN BRIDGE →
5. CHEPSTOW BRIDGE (Old Wye Bridge)	Riverside Gardens and Bandstand	A48 BRIDGE - NORTH TO SEDBURY/GLOUCESTER
Castle Car Park	Museum & TIC	Drill Hall Car Park
1. CHEPSTOW CASTLE	Bridge Street	Lower Church Street
Welsh Street	TOWN CENTRE NP16 5LH	2. ST. MARY'S PRIORY CHURCH
Car Park NP16 5EJ	Beaufort Square	Nelson Str. Car Park
Library	High Street	Railway Station →
3. TOWN WALLS	Shopping Area	Cormeilles Square
Welsh Street	4. TOWN ARCH	3. TOWN WALLS
Bus Station	Moor Street Shops	A48 SOUTH TO M4 & NEWPORT
	SOUTH (Uphill)	Hardwick Hill

Chepstow – a Welsh Border Town

Chepstow is a Welsh border town. Walk down the High Street in Wales and the view ahead is of cliffs and houses in England!
 And if you want to have one foot in England and one foot in Wales at the same time - you can - at the middle of Chepstow Bridge - the only major border bridge in UK with the border marked at centre.



Chepstow is on: **Wales Coastal Path; Offa's Dyke Path; Gloucester Way.**
There are hotels, guest houses, and a back packers' hostel at Chepstow.

Chepstow - Britain's 'Border Bridge' Capital!

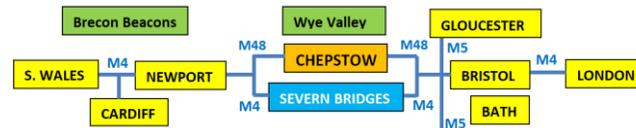
UK has 12 major 'border bridges' (across rivers over 50 metres wide).
 6 of these major border bridges are at, or near, **Chepstow**;
 3 are on the Scots border; 2 on Irish border; 1 North Wales/England.
 UK's 2 longest border crossings are over the Severn and Wye Estuaries; 3rd longest, is **Chepstow Bridge** which has a unique cross-border event.

A Border Spectacle: Chepstow's Unique Wassail

Of Chepstow's events and festivals, most unusual is the **Chepstow Wassail Festival**. The gathering of the most **Mari Lwyds in Wales** (with horses skulls!) with local and visiting Morris dancers for an afternoon/evening of festivities in **January** culminating in a unique meeting with Morris dancers from England on **Chepstow Bridge**.



CHEPSTOW – GATEWAY TO WALES AND THE WYE VALLEY



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INFORMATION LEAFLET

CHEPSTOW's Historic Structures

The 6 'Grade 1 Listed' Structures

A spectacular Castle of 'European' significance, a Norman Church, a Town Gateway and Medieval Town Walls, and two Bridges of 'world' significance.



1. Chepstow Castle (1067 - 1293) One of the oldest and most spectacular castles in the UK, and the oldest castle gates in Europe.



2. Priory Church (C11th – C19th) Superb Norman nave and west door (1071 - 1120s).



3. Port Wall / Town Wall (1272-78) Nearly 750 years old - surround the town.



4. Town Arch (1524) The only way into the town for 750 years. Rebuilt 500 years ago. It is still the main way into the High Street.



5. Chepstow Bridge (1816) World's largest iron arch road bridge built before 1830 - in the first 50 years of iron structures.



6. Severn Bridge (1966) World's first aerodynamic road deck. Now aerodynamic decks are used on all the world's main bridges.

Grade 1 Listed Buildings and Structures.

Only **2%** of UK buildings are 'Listed' as being 'of special architectural, historical, or cultural significance' - of these: 92% are Grade 2; 6 % are 2*; 2% are **Grade 1** (of which 45% are churches). Chepstow has 5 'non church' **Grade 1** structures.

1. CHEPSTOW CASTLE (1067 – 1293)

William FitzOsbern - founder of the Castle, the Priory, the Town
William FitzOsbern, joint 2nd in command of the Norman conquest of 1066 ordered work to begin on Chepstow Castle in 1067 - one of the oldest and most spectacular castles in Britain, perched high on cliffs above the Wye Valley gorge. A fine sight, and, combined with FitzOsbern's new Priory, a magnet for the growth of a new town of 'Striguil' – later called 'Chepstow' in the 14th century.



In July 2017 the 950th anniversary of the Castle was celebrated by events including a party for 300 Chepstow school children in the castle - attended by the Mayor of Cormeilles, FitzOsbern's home town in Normandy, which is twinned with Chepstow.

William Marshal - one of the greatest Medieval knights

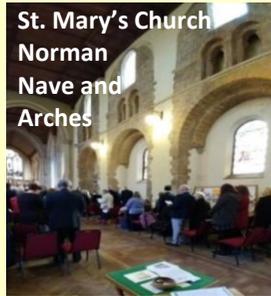
William Marshal extended Chepstow Castle, 1189-1219. He was one of the greatest knights in tournaments and in battle in Britain and France. By marrying Isabel de Clare of Striguil he gained Chepstow and Pembroke Castles and many more. His Gatehouse at Chepstow was one of the first of its type in Europe. His wooden gates (1190s), in use until 1962, still exist inside the castle, and are probably the oldest in Europe.

Marshal brokered the meeting of King John and the barons in 1215 on the Magna Carta and ensured its future after John's death. Marshal was Regent (ruler) of England, 1217-1219, for 9 year old Henry III. Marshal died 800 years ago 14 May 1219.



2. ST. MARY'S PRIORY CHURCH (1067-71 onwards)

William FitzOsbern instigated the founding of the Priory between 1067 and 1071 and linked it to Cormeilles Abbey in Normandy which he founded in 1060 and where he was buried in 1071. The Priory Church has been in daily use since the C11th. Large C11th Norman nave and splendid west doorway remain.



3. PORT WALL (Town Wall) (1272-1278)

Roger Bigod extended the Castle and built the Port Wall.

Chepstow was a very important port until the C20th and was much larger than Newport or Cardiff up until the C19th.

Domesday Book 1086 AD said that the new town of Chepstow, then 'Striguil', raised money from 'ships going into the forest'.

To protect the port trade, Roger Bigod, built the Port Wall around the town in 1272 to 1278. Large sections are visible in Welsh Street Car Park, Cormeilles Square, and Garden City.



4. TOWN GATE (Town Arch) (1272. rebuilt 1524)



One of Chepstow's most familiar sights is also one of its greatest defences - the only entrance to the town from 1272 onwards. The Arch was rebuilt in 1524.

Gatehouse (white) is 1609.

Normans revisiting Chepstow for their 950 reunion!

5. CHEPSTOW BRIDGE (1816)



John Urpeth Rastrick designed and built Chepstow Bridge.

Chepstow's elegant '5 arch' iron bridge replaced 600 years of '12 arch' wooden bridges. Chepstow's iron bridge was the world's 3rd largest iron arch road bridge in 1816. One bridge in London and one in Paris were larger but both have gone. It is now the world's largest iron arch road bridge built before 1830 - during the first 50 years (1780-1830) of the use of iron for construction in world history. Now iron and steel are in all buildings and bridges. Ironbridge (1780) is the world's oldest iron arch road bridge, and Chepstow, the largest, from that critical time. 1816 was just before the era of suspension bridges. Rastrick also built many of the world's earliest steam engines and the first steam loco to run in the USA. A critical event in world railway history was the Rainhill Steam Trials 1829 won by Stephenson's Rocket. The judging panel was chaired by John Urpeth Rastrick.

Chepstow Bridge Bicentenary (24 July 1816) in 2016

Chepstow re-enacted the opening ceremony of 1816, exactly as 200 years earlier - same day, the same time. The part of the engineer John Urpeth Rastrick in 2016 was taken by the President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Sir John Armit.



6. SEVERN BRIDGE (1966)



Sir Gilbert Roberts & Dr William Brown designed the bridge deck.

Severn Bridge road deck was assembled at Fairfield Mabe in Chepstow and was the world's first aerodynamic road deck. The 'wafer thin' road deck not only made it one of the most beautiful bridges in the world but it was much lighter, stronger, and less costly - and revolutionised long span suspension bridge building across the world. Now all the world's large suspension bridges use the aerodynamic road deck structure piloted on the Severn Bridge at Chepstow, and assembled in Chepstow.