

A photograph of a stone church with a tall spire, partially covered in snow, with snow-laden evergreen branches in the foreground. The church is made of dark stone and has a prominent spire with a cross on top. There are arched windows and a circular window on the facade. The scene is set in winter, with snow on the ground and on the branches of the trees in the foreground.

January 2020

**AMERSHAM SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**



Dr Melanie Windridge
on the summit of Everest.
See article on page 8.



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Cover photograph by Elena Morgan
Inside cover photograph courtesy of Dr Melanie Windridge.

Report from the Chair

This is the time of year when the Committee is able to spend some moments reflecting on the Amersham Society activities of the past twelve months and considering our plans for 2020.

AGM and Committee

The AGM in October 2019 was calm and constructive. I was really pleased that all seven committee members agreed to stand again at the AGM for another year. The committee was duly elected and we look forward to continue working together during 2020. The present committee is listed on the 2020 Programme enclosed with this News letter. It is a good team and, as always, I should like to thank the members for their hard work and support.

Edward Copisarow remains Vice-Chair and his advice on local history and suggestions for interesting speakers has always been valuable. We have also been fortunate to have David Atkinson's professional advice on our finances. Geraldine Marshall-Andrew continues to fulfil her role as Secretary and member of the Events Team with great commitment and good ideas. All our members have benefitted from the professional way in which Elena Morgan continues to publish items on our

Website, and to make the site really clear and user friendly. Elena also organises the issue of e-alerts, which inform members of imminent events, such as a Council initiative that might require a response from residents or a Society talk.

Peter Borrows has with his usual efficiency completed his work on updating the Membership Records as far as possible. We do, however, depend on members to keep us informed when they change their residential or email address. We have just under 400 members. And we are delighted that George Allison has resumed his role checking and commenting on planning applications. There are also two other valuable members of our team who are not on the committee but contribute well to the Amersham Society. Yvonne Suckling as the third member of the Events Team is an invaluable source of ideas as we put the programme together. And Tim Harmer who reports regularly on our river.

There are still spaces for others to join the committee. This year we need to identify new committee members, who would be willing to share the work and give the membership the benefit of their talents.

Programme and Events

The first of our eight talks next year will be held in St Mary's Church. The remaining seven talks will be in the Kings Chapel as usual. Please see the enclosed 2020 Programme. We are very fortunate that we continue to be able to meet in the comfort of the Kings Chapel and to enjoy the friendly service of the staff there.

After some consideration we have decided that there should be an outing this year (see pages 16–18). We have selected two owner occupied National Trust properties in Warwickshire, one of which is only open to the public on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons, so it may be new to our members. Both have beautiful grounds landscaped by Capability Brown. This year we have ensured that our outing does not clash with that of the Arts Society.

The two outdoor parties that we held during 2019 were much enjoyed and well attended. We reported in the September Newsletter on the recruitment party in Su and Quentin Chases' lovely garden last summer. The second party was in the Amersham Museum garden. It was sponsored by the Amersham Society and organised by the Friends of the Museum and the Amersham Society Committee. It was held to celebrate the launch of Alison Bailey's book *"Women at War"* Alison Bailey spoke about her work and Peter Borrowes also

spoke about the Amersham Society Heritage Project (see article on page 5).

Members clearly enjoy meeting each other at social gatherings, especially when there is a particular purpose. We are therefore considering organising one or two other parties during 2020.

The Old Amersham Business Association together with the Amersham Society promoted the Magical Christmas Evening in early December in support of the charity Scannappeal. This evening was well attended by the different generations.

Market Hall

Annie Hamilton Pike remains in touch with the Town Council about the Market Hall, both about essential repair work and also about the longer term refurbishment plans for this iconic listed building. The Town Council submitted in August 2019 an application for repair work to be done to the clock tower, but at the time of this Newsletter going to print, there has been no response to the application.



Alison Bailey at the celebration launch

Parking Review

Some residents in the High Street, but not all, were notified about the Council's Parking Review and the two connected drop in exhibitions that took place in early December. The advance publicity for the Review was poor and the timing of this Review was not good, bridging as it did Christmas and the New Year. Details of the Review were published on our website and residents were encouraged to submit their comments before the deadline of 14th January.

River Misbourne

The Town Council has informed us that Affinity Water plan to carry out some restoration work on the stretch of the River Misbourne along Barn Meadow. The work is designed to improve the habitat and structure of the river. It is expected to start during January or February.

Finally after a busy twelve months, I hope that you have all enjoyed a peaceful and happy Christmas and wish everyone a happy New Year. We look forward to seeing you on 29th January in St Mary's Church for our first talk in 2020.

Dorothy Symes



Front Door Competition Winner

Sundari Ferris of Whielden Street

The judges found it really difficult to choose just one winner from the selection of beautiful and creative wreaths that they saw on so many residents' doors and would like to thank everyone who took part in helping make Old Amersham more festive and colourful over the Christmas period.



Welcome to Amersham



The Notice after cleaning and conservation.

The year is 1811.

- We have been at war with France – on and off – for 18 years;
 - War costs money – taxes are high;
 - Trade has suffered;
 - There are rapid fluctuations in the demand for labour and goods;
 - The price of wheat has increased three-fold;
 - The poor can't afford bread – they have to go 'on the parish';
 - The enclosure of common land is causing families to lose their rights of pasturage for pig and cow, for fuel and food;
 - The factory system is beginning to take off;
 - In Nottingham, the Luddites are beginning to meet.
- Imagine a soldier, wounded perhaps in the Peninsular War, landing at Gravesend or Rochester, and trudging to his home in Bicester or Birmingham.
- He's tramped through London, through Uxbridge, passed the hamlet of Bury End;
 - Passed Bury Farm, once the Manor House of the Borough of Amersham;
 - He reaches the outskirts of Amersham;
 - He's hoping for charity, for poor relief, for food and shelter;
 - And he comes to a large **Welcome to Amersham** sign on the wall of the first house, what we now call No. 60 Broadway.

Actually, it doesn't say Welcome at all but he can't read so he doesn't know how unwelcoming it really is:

24th June 1811 – The Magistrates acting for this Hundred have given peremptory orders to the Constables and other Peace Officers to apprehend all Common Beggars, Ballad Singers and other Vagrants so that they may be dealt with according to law.

Amersham is in the Burnham Hundred. The Vagabonds and Beggars Act 1494, in the reign of Henry VII stated that:

Vagabonds, idle and suspected persons shall be set in the stocks for three days and three nights and have none other sustenance but bread and water and then shall be put out of Town. Every beggar suitable to work shall resort to the Hundred where he last dwelled, is best known, or was born and there remain upon the pain aforesaid.

There were further Acts over the next 300 years (and indeed the next 500 years) all saying much the same thing, tightening up loop holes, tweaking the details, stocks were replaced by other punishments (although our soldier might have welcomed the bread), but the message was "If you don't come from here, go away, we are not paying to look after you."

The opposition to ballad-singers may seem more surprising but the Broadside ballads were sung on street corners, giving news of events. Printed ballads might be pinned on the walls of alehouses and other public places and would be sold to travelling ballad singers. They told not only news, but histories and political arguments and sold in large numbers. They had been popular from mid-17th century.

They were twitter and facebook - and clearly subversive.



Paul Britton and Peter Borrows about to reattach the Notice.



The Notice
back in place.

This notice is certainly of great historical interest. No. 60 Broadway is a listed building and the notice is part of the listing. In 2018 one or two members of the Amersham Society commented that the sign appeared to be deteriorating and becoming illegible. According to a rather cryptic note in the Minutes of the Society for October 1956 a Mr Norman offered to repaint signs in Amersham. More clearly, the Minutes report that in 1994 the Amersham Society paid to do some conservation work on it. There were various false starts but Monica Mullins wrote about the work in the September 1994 Newsletter. She emphasised it was not the aim of the restoration to produce a new board, but to slow down further deterioration with preservative treatment and make the wording legible without destroying its 'ageing charm'. The work was carried out by Martin Cook from High Wycombe, a specialist in carved lettering and restoration work on

lettering. He found in the cleaning process that there were signs of other repaintings of the lettering, not as accurate as they might have been, but he was able to work to the still visible outline of the original.

As its heritage project for 2019, 25 years after the previous conservation work, the Amersham Society again commissioned Martin Cook (<http://martincookstudio.co.>) to carry out further work. This was the same craftsman who remembered doing the work in 1994. We took the notice down in August and Martin discovered some woodworm, which he treated. After cleaning and some repainting we were able to replace it in September, good for another 25 years, when Martin's son (who has now joined the business) will be able to continue his father's work. And the 200-year-old notice can continue 'welcoming' visitors to Old Amersham.

Dr Peter Borrows



LOCAL PHYSICIST AND ADVENTURER

Dr Melanie Windridge, made a welcome return to the Amersham Society in September, this time talking about her ascent of Everest (8848 m) in 2018 and the science behind it. The audience were not disappointed – she had some stunning photographs, a wealth of human interest stories, simply explained science and all presented with confident clarity.

Dr Windridge emphasised that the main reason that Everest was successfully climbed in 1953, and many

times since, but not in the 1920s or '30s was because of scientific developments – better weather forecasts, better communications, a better understanding of high-altitude physiology, better clothing, and now the possibility of helicopter rescue (although helicopters can barely fly at that height). The jackets worn in the 1920s were a very tight weave and quite wind-proof which was fine when you were walking but not when you stopped because they were not well insulated. Chemist George Finch first

used a down jacket on an Everest expedition in 1922. Your body heat is quickly conducted through solids but the down feathers trap a huge amount of air which is a poor conductor of heat so you stay warm – and similarly in your down sleeping bag. Some 5000 people have climbed the mountain, with 1 or 2% dying in the attempt (comparable to open heart surgery). The main cause of death is exhaustion leading to falls, etc but the death rate is reducing, is the same for women and men and there are some strategies for reducing the risk.

It takes 2 months to climb Everest because of the need for acclimatisation, for your body to make the gradual changes so it can breathe the much thinner air. Your heart beats faster to increase the blood supply and over time you slowly increase the amount of red blood cells to carry the oxygen around the body. You cannot just stop at increasing heights to acclimatise gradually because you need to stay fit. So, you go up from Base Camp (5500 m) to Camp 1 – and back. And from Base Camp to Camp 2 – and back, perhaps 2 or 3 times. Base Camp, ‘home’ for 6 weeks, is pitched on a glacier. It is constantly moving, changing every day. Even after acclimatisation, there is a lot of waiting at Base Camp, waiting for 4 to 6 days of clear weather for the final ascent. The 4-day forecast is now as accurate as the 1-day forecast was 30 years ago.

This is because of the huge increase in computing power – the computer used 30 years ago was about as powerful as your smart phone is now. The science is explained in more detail – along with some stunning movies of Everest – on a series of Institute of Physics YouTube videos, most easily accessed from her website, <http://melaniewindridge.co.uk>.

Scottish physiologist Alexander Kellas (1868 – 1921) had written a paper in 1920 on the possibility of climbing Everest without oxygen but he died in 1921 and copies of the paper resided in the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society, unread for decades. Griffin Pugh experimented with oxygen sets, making calculations about the balance between the advantage oxygen gave you against the physical cost of carrying the extra weight. Melanie used supplementary oxygen from Camp 3 upwards (7500 m). Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler were the first to climb Everest without oxygen in 1978, proving Kellas’s prediction, but only some 200 people have climbed without oxygen – its use doubles your chance of success but it’s difficult to sleep with an oxygen mask on. Women tend to benefit more from supplementary oxygen because of their generally lower body weight but it’s not like scuba diving, you can take the mask off and survive – as our speaker had done at the summit.

To climb Everest on the Nepalese side you fly from Kathmandu to Lukla



and trek 65 km from there to Base Camp, first through forest but before long through dry stony mountain valleys. You then climb up the Khumba Icefall to Camp 1. This is exhausting, with a constant risk of avalanches, using ladders (builders' ladders) across

the crevasses. The first time Melanie did it, she took 9 hours and towards the end realised she was walking in a trance because she had not eaten or drunk anything. After that she transferred some food and drink from her back pack to her pockets, so she



demoralising knowing you will then have to go back down and up several times. Once acclimatised, you go straight from Base Camp to Camp 2 in groups of four. You start at 5.30 am, in a slow-moving train of climbers. From Camp 2 you head up the Lhotse Face, a sheer wall of ice, to Camp 3, then to Camp 4 at the South Col. You are now in the Death Zone. On her push for the summit, Dr Windridge set off from Camp 4, accompanied by a Sherpa, at 9.0 pm in order to get there by dawn. She was lucky. The weather was good, it was only -25 (trekking across Svalbard in the Arctic had been much worse), there was nobody else there but she was then keen to get down as quickly as possible. By 8.30 am she was resting at Camp 4 but set off again at 2.0 pm for Camp 2.

Dr Windridge makes a fine role model for girls but, as she said, Everest is awesome and awful. You are in constant pain for 2 months – your feet hurt from the walking, you have a dry cough, your head aches like a hangover from altitude sickness, your shoulders are sore from the heavy pack you carry, you are constantly tired and you have to poo in the snow, but at least she didn't have to do what her friend Bruno did – retrieve his spectacles from the communal poo barrel.

could snack whilst waiting for others to cross a crevasse. Climbing on to Camp 2, you pass through the Western Cwm, a glacial valley where the problem is heat; the highly reflective ice walls make it into a solar furnace. The camp is very unpleasant – and it's even more

Dr Peter Borrows

Blood Bikes

Amersham Society Talk Wednesday 30 October 2019



On a dank October evening there were some in the gathered, Amersham Society, audience who were a little apprehensive about what to expect from the post AGM presentation entitled *"Blood Bikes"*. Those present were about to learn about a little known charity that provides an essential service to the NHS hospitals in the area.

A Blood Bike is a motorcycle, ridden by a volunteer, used to courier urgent / emergency blood supplies usually overnight or at weekends between healthcare facilities. During normal working hours the Blood Transfusion

Service provides an excellent service but at night or at weekends there is none which is why there is a need for an alternative facility.

The first blood bike volunteer group to be established was the Emergency Volunteer Service (EVS), formed in 1962 in Surrey by Margaret Ryerson and her husband. In 1969, the Freewheelers youth community action group formed in Stevenage which initially served hospitals in Stevenage, Luton, Dunstable, Bedford and Hitchin. These original groups are no longer operating, but other groups have emerged that provide a service across the English counties.

Service by Emergence Rider Volunteers (SERV) is the name used by a number of Blood Bike Charities. And the presenter on this evening was Captain Kamran Irani Chairman of SERV Ox Bucks Berks N'hants Blood Bikes. (SERV OBN). This volunteer organisation supports NHS Hospitals in the Oxford, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Northamptonshire area by using its dedicated fleet of motorcycles and 4 x 4 vehicles to provide a rapid response out of hours service delivering blood products to the point of need.



The service may be run by volunteers, but they pride themselves on providing a professional service. Trained to a very high standard there is continuous monitoring of the activities to ensure standards are maintained.

SERV OBN is operational from 7pm to 6am Monday to Friday and for 24-hours throughout the weekend (7pm Friday – 6am Monday) and can be called out in all weathers. Every shift has a designated controller/despacher, usually working from home as there is no

central control room. The controller will be contacted by the hospital requiring a delivery or collection and they will then contact the on duty volunteer bike rider, who have at their disposal one the charities specially prepared and equipped motor bikes. At any one time there are three riders on standby throughout the night and 24/7 at weekends.

The controller will liaise with other Blood Bike groups if the delivery involves a relay, and with the hospitals and the riders as required.

To be a blood bike rider requires the volunteer to have an approved advanced qualification. If they have an advanced bike qualification they can ride for SERV OBN (after an assessment). After joining the volunteer will attend an induction course and further training comprising:

- GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) which describes how to handle blood products correctly. It also provides an initial introduction to the duties, to the fleet and to the rota system.
- Three hospital familiarisation runs during which the volunteers visit our main collection and delivery locations and are shown where to pick up and drop off their consignments.
- A hands-on session with a fleet vehicle to reinforce the GMP information, highlight the 'marked vehicle' effect and undertake an assessed ride using a fleet vehicle.



Once training is completed and the volunteer has been issued with a Blood Bikes Hi Viz jacket and receipt books, they are free to go on the duty rota.

Volunteers are expected to do at least one shift a month and would typically do several.

It is best to do around three shifts in a row in order to avoid the overhead of too many vehicle transfers between volunteers. The rota manager will assign one of the fleet bikes to the volunteer, who will arrange to collect it from the previous volunteer.

A personal bike cannot be used to carry blood products: this must be done on one of the fleet bikes, which has been approved by the manufacturer to carry the load and has appropriate racks and straps in place.

Cars have to be used when the temperature is too high or too low to transport blood by bike and SERV OBN have fleet vehicles for this purpose.

And what does it cost? To be a volunteer with SERV OBN there is an annual membership fee of £10 and a returnable deposit of £20 for the Hi Viz jacket that riders and drivers are required to wear. Other than that there are no further charges.

The SERV training is free and SERV pays for the fuel used in fleet bikes and cars.

SERV OBN does not provide advanced rider or driver training. This must be undertaken with the IAM or with RoSPA and paid for by the volunteer, although both organisations often offer a discount for volunteers.

The success of the *“Blood Bike”* service has resulted in another invaluable service coming into existence. Support for the neonatal units collecting and delivering human milk to give premature babies the best start in life.

Sick or Premature babies are at risk of suffering from a fatal bowel condition; Donated breast milk can increase their chances of survival by a factor of 10. So as and when required the Blood Bikes become Milk Bikes delivering much needed human breast milk from the Milk Bank to the neonatal wards of hospitals.

And finally the vehicles. SERV OBN utilises a fleet of dedicated response vehicles to be able to provide the service; Each of their fleet vehicles carries the names of women known for their contributions to medicine. Whilst primarily a motorcycle service – when there is a large consignment, poor weather conditions (when it would be dangerous to use a motorcycle) or the temperature is outside the permitted range to transport Blood Products via motorcycles, their four wheeled vehicles come into play.

Renault is a supporter of SERV OBN and provides two 4 wheel drive vehicles on permanent loan. Bikes used are specifically equipped Yamaha FJR1300 and BMW's F800GT.

SERV OBN, together with other Blood Bike groups, provide a unique and valued service to the NHS that can be life-saving. And it is all provided free by volunteers supported by charitable giving by the general public.

The nationwide association of Blood Bikes has currently 31 member groups comprising of over 3,372 unpaid volunteers and in 2017 they responded to over 73,617 requests for support from hospitals in the UK saving the NHS hundreds of thousands of pounds.

It was an entertaining and absorbing presentation which ended with a video which provided an apt summary of the talk.

John Suckling



To view a video of SERV OBN made by National Geographic go to
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_X5pykFy2w

To donate to SERV OBN go to
<https://www.justgiving.com/servobnbloodbikes/Donate>

SOCIETY OUTING 2020

Charlecote Park and Farnborough Hall

Wednesday 17th June

ITINERARY



© National Trust / John Millar

We shall travel by Heyfordian Coach. Our first pick-up point will be **Amersham Station (Carrolls)** at **9.30am** and the second pick-up point will be the **Swan Inn in Old Amersham** at **9.35am**. We shall then drive direct to Charlecote Park arriving there at about 11am, depending on traffic.

On arrival at Charlecote Park the group will be allocated timed tickets for a visit to the house in groups of ten. Members are then free to have coffee, visit the house at the time allocated, visit the grounds and have lunch. If the majority of the group would like to have lunch together, we can arrange this for

them with the Orangery Restaurant for about 1pm (*see the booking form*).

We shall leave Charlecote Park for Farnborough Hall at 2pm. On arrival you will be free to visit the house and grounds. There is no restaurant at Farnborough Hall. We shall therefore board the coach again at 4.15pm and travel to Farnborough Village Hall. There the Women's Institute members will provide us with tea and cake to set us up for the return journey to Amersham.

We shall give you this itinerary timetable when you board the coach on the day of the outing.

SOCIETY OUTING 2020

Charlecote Park and Farnborough Hall

Wednesday 17th June

BOOKING FORM

The cost of the outing will be **£20** per person. This will include the coach journey and the WI tea at Farnborough Village Hall.

*(If members would like us to arrange a group lunch at Charlecote Park in the Orangery Restaurant we can do that, provided there is a minimum number of 25 people who would like this. The cost of a two course hot lunch will be £14 a head. The restaurant would provide in advance a menu with choices of food if there is interest in a group lunch.**

Please reserve places for me the outing on 17th June.

I enclose a cheque for £ made payable to the Amersham Society.

I / We shall join the coach at: **Amersham Station (Carrols)** at 9.30am Yes / No

I / We shall join the coach at: **The Swan, Old Amersham** at 9.35am Yes / No

*I / We WOULD / would NOT be interested in having a group lunch at Charlecote Park.

Name(s).....

Address.....

.....Telephone number.....

Email.....

Are you a member of The National Trust? Yes / No

(If you are not a member there will be a charge for entry to each of the National Trust properties. These prices will be confirmed next year).

Please return your completed application form and cheque to:

Dorothy Symes 160b High Street, Amersham, HP7 0EG 01494 434858

NB: Because it was not initially clear whether members wanted an outing in 2020, we were unable to plan the outing until last November / December. We visited the two properties in December and have spoken with the managers. We may have to make minor changes to the itinerary when we visit the properties again in April to complete the arrangements and we shall let you know if there are any.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON BOOKING AND CANCELLATION

Day Trips As you will understand we often have to make financial commitments upfront when organising a trip. For this reason we always ask you to pay at the time of booking. Refunds may be given for cancellation up to 5 weeks before the trip unless part of the payment has to be committed in advance e.g. payment for the coach or entrance fees and only the balance will be refunded.

We will be as flexible as possible because we realise that for all sorts of very good reasons last

minute cancellations can occur. Wherever possible we will refund any monies which we have not paid in advance. The element for the coach and any admission fees etc that have to be pre-paid cannot be refunded for cancellations less than five weeks from the trip.

In case of cancellation in the period of less than 5 weeks, and there is a reserve list, we shall try to arrange a refund by putting you in touch with someone on the list.



SOCIETY OUTING 2020

Charlecote Park and Farnborough Hall

Warwickshire
Wednesday 17th June

Our Outing this year will be to two National Trust properties, Charlecote Park and Farnborough Hall. Both houses are family homes and have been occupied by the descendants of the original families for centuries.



© National Trust / John Millar

CHARLECOTE PARK

Charlecote Park, on the banks of the River Avon, has been owned by the Lucy family since the thirteenth century. The land was bought by the family in 1247 and the present house was built in 1558. Now after many alterations over the years, the property can be seen as it would have looked a century ago. It has a Victorian kitchen, a brew house and a number of family carriages. The collections on display in the house reflect the Lucy family's varied tastes over the centuries.

The extensive parkland was landscaped by Capability Brown in the mid eighteenth century. Today Jacob sheep and fallow deer roam the grounds.



© National Trust / Nicholas Jackson

FARNBOROUGH HALL

This property is a half hour's drive from Charlecote Park to the border with Oxfordshire. It has been the Holbech family home for three hundred years. It is a classical mid-eighteenth century stone house with some notable plasterwork on the interiors of the property. Major works were carried out on the property between 1743 – 50, but since then it has been little changed. During both World War 1 and World War 2 the house was used as an auxiliary hospital.

The grounds include some charming gardens, landscaped by Capability Brown and which contain a mile long terrace walk and several interesting seventeenth century temples.

River Misbourne Survey Report

Dated 24th November 2019

Started around 10.30 am.
Weather: cold overcast and damp.

Survey carried out by
Tim Harmer and **Lesley Harmer**

Area of survey from the bottom end of Shardeloes Lake to the old Lookers (Jaguar) Garage.

1 Grill from lake looks clear. River running well and the river behind the Cricket Club looks clear and is running well. However there is weed.

2 Between Shardeloes drive and Amersham by-pass bridge and further along to Amersham High Street bridge. River running well.

3 Copas Farm is private land, so unable to undertake survey. However from the High Street bridge, heavy vegetation was seen in the river on this farm land. There is dead weed in the farm fence that runs across the river and may form a blockage in the future.

4 Mill Lane. The river is locked behind gates giving very little visual access.

5 The stretch of river immediately downstream from Mill Lane to the corner of Barn Meadow is running well and clear on one side but has thick vegetation on the cottages' side of the River. Riparian owners need to clear back a little.





The river behind Tesco

6 The Barn Meadow reach is clear and flowing well.

7 We did not have access to the river between the culvert and Pondwick. At Pondwick the river has thick dead vegetation after the old brewery and up to the Museum. This needs clearing by the Town Council as the vegetation is on the Pondwick garden side.

8 At Badminton Court the river flowing well.

9 Church Mead. There is vegetation in the river.

10 Car park area has dead branches in river. No supermarket trolleys found in the river.

11 From the public car park tree branches seen in the river. River flow very slow.

12 The river is dry and not running behind Tesco car park. The overflow culvert looks OK, but there is no water in the river. However need to keep eye on Tesco area for rubbish etc.

13 At Station Road bridge the river is dry and not flowing. There is a large amount of weed growing.

14 West arch of the road bridge to Ambers and river fork at the old Lookers (*Jaguar*) Garage is dry.



15 Area from the old Lookers (*Jaguar*) Garage is dry. However it needs weed removed.

16 From where the river emerges from the two arches under London Road West there is weed growth and very little water.



17 Moving along into Bury Farm field there is little water.

18 River not inspected after the garage as it is dry.

Tim Harmer Amersham Society

Note "The river fills underground natural aquifers as it moves along. So the water goes underground until the aquifer is full before moving on down the river."

And the Town Council have commented: "*Affinity Water is planning to undertake some river improvement works on the stretch of the River Misbourne between Mill Lane and Pondwicks. The works, which are due to begin in early spring, are aimed at improving the morphology and ecology of the river. Affinity Water have asked that we do not remove any of the vegetation until the work has been undertaken.*"

The Forgotten River



John in his coracle on the
Thame at Chearsley

Report on the talk by naturalist **John Tyler**

AS EXPECTED THERE WAS A GOOD attendance at the end of November for the Society's last talk for 2019. Members who had heard John speak to the Society three years ago, remembered his easy style of speaking and knew that his talks were illustrated by some amazing photographs. On this occasion John came to tell us about the River Thame,

and the detailed descriptions of the pictures that we saw demonstrated his deep knowledge of the insect and plant life along the river.

John explained to us that the River Thame had always been dwarfed by its much better known relative, the River Thames. The source of the Thame is near Tring in Hertfordshire in a rather muddy

valley park. From Tring the Thame meanders gently along, parallel to the Chilterns, for 26 miles to Dorchester on Thames. It was fascinating to learn what a lot goes on along this relatively short stretch of river and for the observant, what a lot there is to see.

On its journey the Thame is joined by various tributary streams such as Thistle Brook on the Buckinghamshire / Hertfordshire border. These streams form a huge area of wildlife and plant habitat. There are a number of insects, trees and plants that do particularly well in the valley.

John mentioned three trees that grow widely in the area and until recently all of which flourished in the

habitat. One of these trees, the Black Poplar, is at present being attacked by the bark leaf beetle. It is a spectacular tree and grows up to 120 feet tall. But sadly at present there are thought to be only a few thousand of these trees left in Britain. The Alder also grows well along the Thame. It is a rather nondescript tree that has purple buds and the seeds survive and germinate despite being dropped into the water.



Backswimmer



Female banded demoiselle (a type of damselfly)



Puss moth caterpillar



Two other plants that thrive in the Thame habitat are the horsetail (*see photo*), which has spores that leap into the air during dry weather, and the Yellow Water Lily with its bottle shaped pods that have the smell and taste of alcohol. The large amount of old wood that is found along the river banks is good for fungi, also for the damsel flies with their ink coloured blue wings. Also the keen walker might spot the water cricket, which feeds on the surface of the water and is a back swimmer rather like a water boatman. Many of these insects found in or by the river have ingenious protection against predators.

There are also various species of Willow that grow along the Thame. The Willow Tree will withstand flooding and it has to be pollarded as its boughs grow heavy. The Osier, another member of the Willow family, also grows well as does the White Willow, so named because the underside of the leaves are white. The Cricket Bat Willow was the main material used to make the coracles of the bronze age. The willow trees are all fantastic for wildlife and John showed us a picture of the puss moth caterpillar, which feeds on the willow and has feet that enable it to cling on tightly.

For example the caddis fly makes a protective case for itself of pebbles bound together with silk.

People have lived along the Thame for centuries and the area has sustained human habitation in a variety of ways. The tributary streams formed the Saxon boundary of the forest at Ealdi Mererithi, where there was hunting. And here John invited us to look at a prehistoric flint stone that he had found in the area. Also along the Thame valley, as the stone age was followed by the iron age, there was farming and this continued for over a thousand years. Pike were in the river.



Giant horsetail
at Saunderton

John in the coracle he made himself,
using willow for the frame, hazel for the
rim, and pine, oak and ash for the seat.



The roots of one plant, Butter Burr, that grows by the river, were dried and mixed with wine and then used to wrap butter. The Norfolk reeds continue to grow in the area and have been used for hundreds of years for thatching. Birds such as reed warblers nest in the reeds. A visible sign of human habitation over more recent centuries has been the

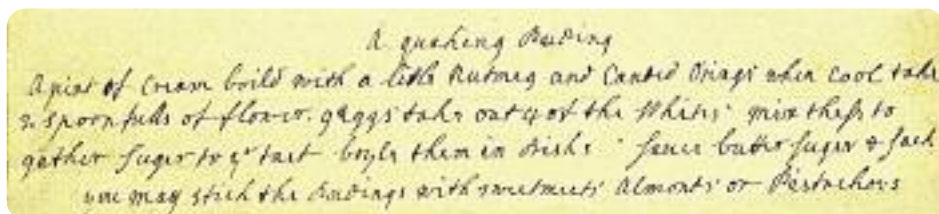
building of more than 40 churches along the valley.

The Thame joins the River Thames at Dorchester. John told us that this junction formed one of the best areas for access to the valley of the River Thame for those who would like to explore along the forgotten river.

Dorothy Symes

Recipes (receipts) – Remedies and Receipts (bills)

A domestic view of Shardeloes



The above recipe for Quaking Pudding, or receipt as it was called at the time, was for an intriguing pudding from the kitchens at Shardeloes. I became interested in the domestic arrangements at Shardeloes when I found a small booklet *Feeding the Upper Crust* published by the Record Office in 1995. It contained historic receipts from various local estates, including Shardeloes. My curiosity was aroused and I ordered up the bundle D/DR/5/148 of original documents. When the box arrived, I found it consisted of 58 receipts, including the above, on various scraps of paper. On the outside it stated A. M. or Memorandum delivered to Mrs Wroughton 4th July 1793, 54 family receipts delivered by me William Drake. I presume Mrs Wroughton was the Cook or Housekeeper at Shardeloes but this needs confirming. This inevitably lead to speculation about the lives and working environment of the servants and staff who were needed to run a grand house. Incidentally, in the

Amersham Museum, there are copies of a collection of these recipes from Shardeloes dated 1616 – 1617, given by W Tyrwhitt-Drake in 2001 and also the *Feeding the Upper Crust* booklet.

The title of the booklet refers to the Tudor practice of giving the crusty top of the loaf to the guests, the softer middle to the family and the burnt bottom to the servants. This happens because the early bread ovens were heated by lighting a fire in the oven (imagine a pizza oven). When the wood had burned down, it was raked out, the loaves were placed directly on the ash-covered floor and the door sealed. The baking of the bread depended on the skill of the baker.

The receipts covered anything from dressing a carp to fattening one for Mrs Mildmay, sham or mock turtle soup (no turtles harmed) and how to dry walnuts and make walnut ketchup (Mrs Troggles). There were numerous cake and biscuit receipts, using large quantities of eggs, cream and butter. As a little taster here is a receipt for a sack of posset for Miss Hicks' wedding.

A Sack Pudding for Miss Hicks Stepping
 Take 10 Eggs beating out of the Whites, beat them well & strain they
 put to them a pint of Sack a little grated Nutmeg for hair, and
 put it into y^e dish, set it over a very gentle fire on a stool or Clefated
 keeping it stand one way till it grows a little thick
 take a pint of Cream and a pint of milk to gather and now with a
 long hot dry y^e Sack & eggs hold it up high to make froth
 dont stir it after the milk is in let it stand about 2 minutes over
 the fire till it begins to lower round the edges & take it down with Straws
 or with out its good either way the former is the proper

Bread was made with potatoes so it would keep longer and there is even a receipt for French bread from Mrs Vogano. A giant pudding 8 ft in circumference was made with 60 lb flower (flour), 42 lb currants, 20 lb suet. It weighed 147 lbs – that must have been quite a celebration!

Many of the recipes have a person's name attached to them, so I presume it was the custom for cooks from large estates to exchange recipes. From the evidence of the recipes it would seem

local food, in season, was served not only to guests and the family but also to servants and workers on the estate. Now, one for you to try. According to the chef Heston Blumenthal, Quaking Pudding was a great favourite with Victorian high society and all the great houses had their own version of the recipe. Here is his more modern version. When your spoon is inserted, the outside is meant to be firm and the inside softer and stickier, hence the name Quaking Pudding. Enjoy!

A QUAKING PUDDING

1 pt cream or milk

1 tablespoon flour

1 tablespoon breadcrumbs

4 eggs

Glass of dry white wine

Sugar to taste

Cinnamon, nutmeg

Mace

Mix all ingredients together. Bake in a dish in boiling water. When cooked, decorate with almonds, sweetmeats or pistachios. Serve with sauce made from butter, sugar and wine.

Now we come to the Remedies. This bundle contains about 60 items, some seem almost medieval, with very unusual ingredients, bullock's gall for example. They range from a 'plaister' for a sore throat, a treatment for the bite of a mad dog to a remedy for the treatment of Mr Drake's gout (13th August 1724).

A Plaster for a sore Throat

*A Quarter of a pound of Mutton suet taken from the L'Drums - 3 Ounces
of fresh Butter - 2 Ounces of Clove - 1 Ounce of half of yellow Bees Wax -
cut the Mutton suet in small pieces and put it in a clean earthen Pan,
melt it down upon a slow Fire, then strain it off to clear it from the skin,
put it again into the Pan with the Butter & till it is about full it is melted.
Then add the Clove & Bees wax, & keep stirring till all is melted & well
incorporated, then pour it off into Gallipots for use.*

*To use it, spread it pretty thin upon a Linen Rag about 3 Inches wide
& long enough to reach from Ear to Ear, put over it a Rannel: change
the Plaster in 24 Hours: two or three will cure it, often one -
NB. it will to some People raise heats & inflammations round the Throat
which is a sign it takes Effect - it is likewise good for any outward sore*

Not only are family treated but also servants. Possibly a herbal was kept in every kitchen for common ailments. Here is the remedy for a cough. Warning: do not try this at home – ‘spirits of vitriol’ is sulfuric acid.

For a Cough

*Take 4 ounces of Raisins of the sun Stoned the same of Conserves
of Roses two ounces of white sugar Candy & 16 Drops of Spirits
of vitriol beat it very fine & take a little when ever the Cough
is troublesome,*

The receipts or bills consist of two lots. Frustratingly, there are names but no addresses. Trade directories might help here. The bills range from personal items, such as collars or shoes, to a bill from Eeles, the tailor, for mending the footmen's trousers (4d). There's a bill for physic from Mr Manly for bleeding the gardener and all the servants (£22-13-6). There are bills from ironmongers, chandlers, saddlers, blacksmiths and from a Widow Clark for the mending of the carriage wheels (pot holes?). There are food bills, including one from a familiar local name, Darvell, for

bread. There are many bills for the upkeep of the house and garden – glaziers, painters and woodworkers. In the Drake archives we have a unique record of the importance of the Shardeloes estate to the growth of Amersham and the surrounding area. In studying these documents we have a direct link to the countless workers and tradesmen who made it all possible. Their stories are as important a part of the history of Shardeloes as those of the grand family who lived above stairs.

Marian Borrows

Museum News

It's been another enjoyable and very busy year in the museum. As I write, we're in mid-December and we're still welcoming visitors to the museum, including local schools, parents celebrating their children's work at our art club, teenagers visiting through our Young Curators programme and adults coming for Christmas reminiscence, singing and wreath making. We will be close to our record-breaking year of 2018 when the year finally comes to an end. Here are some of the highlights of 2019 and a look ahead to 2020 :



Anthony, the Mobile Museum

In April we launched Anthony, a mobile museum. He is named Anthony after our former chairman, Anthony del Tufo, who helped set up the museum.

The Mobile Museum is a mobile exhibition, housed in a retro-style vehicle, which tells the story of Amersham in the 20th century. The Mobile Museum showcases a range of mixed media work, including oral history, film, photographs, documents and objects. The design and fit-out were created with the help of local people.

We have made multiple visits with Anthony across the local area this year,

including to primary schools, fetes and festivals and to care homes. We hope to take Anthony out as much as possible in 2020, so do let us know if you would like to be involved with Anthony as a volunteer or would like to receive a visit from him.

Support for the Mobile Museum has come from the National Lottery's Heritage Fund, the HS2 Community and Environment Fund, Amersham Local Area Forum through Amersham Decides, Chiltern District Council, Amersham Action Group and the Friends of Amersham Museum.

Women at War

Our Women at War project finished this autumn. Through the project we've researched the lives of local women and their role in the campaign for suffrage and in WWI. We published and launched the Women at War book this summer and have now given away copies to local secondary schools, along with a new

resource pack for teachers at Key Stage 3 aged children. This is also available on our website. In addition we have sold over 100 copies of the book in our shop. Alison Bailey, who coordinated the research, continues to give talks about our local Women at War. Do get in touch if you would like her to talk to your group.



20th Century Architecture

This year we've been researching local, 20th century housing. Through the project we have created exhibitions – the Arts & Crafts Architecture exhibition can be seen in the museum until spring 2020 – as well as delivered walks and talks. Through this programme people have shared more information with us about their homes and the people who lived in

them. We've also raised the profile of 20th century architecture in our local area, encouraging people to better appreciate and value some of our best architecture.

We will be running a programme of architecture themed talks in the new year and will be running our popular walks again in the spring.

Understanding the Central Chilterns

Understanding the Central Chilterns is part of the Chiltern's Conservation Board five year Chalk, Cherries and Chairs project, which began earlier this year. In partnership with Wycombe Museum, the museum is delivering an education programme for Key Stage 2 aged children at schools in the project area. It will teach children how the Chiltern's natural resources have

supported local industry and communities and impacted on the location, type and development of settlements. We have appointed Maddy Baskerville to help deliver the project. She has started to make links with local schools, to deliver teacher teaching and assemblies and to pilot school visits.

If you're interested in Maddy delivering a visit at your school, email understandingthechilterns@amershammuseum.org

Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Programme

At the beginning of this year we unveiled three wonderful mid-century paintings, from Austrian artist, Marie-Louise von Motesiczky. Marie-Louise lived in Amersham during WWII. During this time she produced many paintings of local people and her home and garden on Chestnut Lane, Amersham. The Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust gifted the paintings to the museum and supported a programme of activities for families and adults. Around Easter time we worked with local artists to deliver portrait painting workshops to people of all ages, inspired by Marie-Louise's work. They were really well attended with excellent feedback.

This autumn we applied to the Trust for a second programme of activities and were delighted to receive support for a programme of activities in 2020, which looks at the wider émigré community in



Amersham and the local area in WWII and artists of Marie-Louise's genre. The programme will include an adult art and art history course and a programme of workshops for families and children. Details will be posted on our website in early 2020.



Takeover Day

This year we've delivered more school visits than ever before. This autumn, in particular, we have been visiting schools throughout Amersham and Chesham and welcoming children to the museum.

One of the highlights was our annual Takeover Day project. This is a national scheme, designed to encourage initiatives between schools and museums, giving children the opportunity to 'take over' a museum space. This is our fifth consecutive year of a successful partnership with St Mary's Church of England Primary School, working with 90 children from years 1 and 2.

This year the children explored old buildings in Amersham and food in the past. The children learned about the museum's medieval building and explo-

red buildings in the old town. They produced some wonderful drawings and then learned about life in Victorian Amersham, particularly the jobs children did before they went to school including lace making and straw plaiting. After half-term the children learned about food in WWII and rationing. They found out about the different shops you visited before supermarkets and created artwork to create 'shops' of their own.

All their work was displayed on Takeover Day on Friday 20th November, when their family members were invited to visit the museum. The feedback was really positive and Takeover Day was particularly successful with the children enjoying manning their shops and sharing details of their work. One of the best Takeover Days yet – we're already looking forward to 2020!

Age Friendly

The second phase of our Age Friendly programme has been going really well. Through the new project we're running sessions, led by an artist, to make memory boxes in local care homes in the local area. So far we have completed sessions at two care homes with one planned for 2020.



The second strand of the project is the Reminiscence at Home project, where we're recruiting and training volunteers to visit people at home and talk to them about their lives (over six to eight sessions). The volunteer then writes their life stories into memory books. So far we've matched up volunteers with 16 older people, with nearly half of their visits and booklets already completed. If you're interested in volunteering for this project, please do get in touch.

The project has been supported by the Paradigm Foundation, Chiltern District Council, the Shanly Foundation, W G Edwards Charitable Foundation, Waitrose and Barnett Waddingham.

For more information email Jane@amershammuseum.org

Coming up in 2020

Here are some of the exhibitions, events and activities that you might like to join in 2020:

- 8th May 2020 will be the 75th anniversary of VE Day. To celebrate this we're planning a special month of activities in May next year. We've begun by asking people old enough to remember VE Day about their memories of the event. We're also interested in gathering information about people living in Amersham in 1945. If you have a VE Day memory or something to share about 1945, please send it in to us at emily@amershammuseum.org
- We're working to gather memories of shopping before plastic and we hope to use our Mobile Museum to deliver a programme of activities about pre-plastic food shopping in 2020.

Please share your stories with us at emily@amershammuseum.org

- Many of the projects mentioned above will continue in 2020 so do get in touch if you would like more information or would like to get involved as a volunteer.

To find out more go to www.amershammuseum.org or email: Emily@amershammuseum.org

The museum currently has a short winter closure and re-opens on Saturday 15th February 2020.

I wish you all the best for 2020 and hope to see you at the museum in the new year.

NOTICEBOARD

Programme of Talks and Events in 2020

Society meetings are 7.30pm for 8pm and take place in the Kings Chapel except the January meeting.

- 29 January *(NB in St Mary's Church)*
The Drakes of Amersham
Barney Tyrwhitt-Drake will talk about 400 years of the Drakes' impact on local, national and international history.
- 26 February **The History of Pinewood Studios**
A talk by historian and author Mike Payne.
- 25 March **The World of the Honey Bee**
A talk by local apiarist Howard Pool.
- 29 April **Metroland**
A talk by historian and President of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society Julian Hunt.
- 27 May **Black Propaganda Radio**
A talk by Bletchley Park Guide Mike Kushner about a fake British Radio Show that helped defeat the Nazis during World War 2.
- 17 June **Society Outing to Charlecote Park and Farnborough Hall**
Two National Trust properties in Warwickshire.
- 30 September **A history of the Seaside Postcard**
A talk by John Storr.
- 28 October **Annual General Meeting**
Followed by talk on the Horse Trust, Speen by Libby Surman.
- 25 November **With the Gurkhas on the North East frontier**
A talk by former Chairman of the Amersham Society Martin Brooks about his recent visit to the North East Frontier.

Website <https://amershamsociety.org>

General Enquiries: please email info@amershamsociety.org