

May 2019

A scenic view of a church with a tower, seen through a garden with a wooden bench and flowering trees. The church is in the background, partially obscured by a brick wall and lush greenery. In the foreground, there is a wooden bench on a grassy area, and a tree with white blossoms is on the left. The sky is overcast.

**AMERSHAM SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**





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Report from the Chair

THIS IS SUCH A WONDERFUL TIME OF YEAR. The explosion of spring all around us reminds me as always how very fortunate we are to live in this beautiful area. We also realise that there is of course great pressure from central government to build more homes and that it is important for us to continue to monitor planning applications and, in line with the Amersham Society aims, to comment and oppose where necessary. As the new McCarthy and Stone building emerges from its scaffolding, it is a striking reminder that however well the local Council presents its opposition to a planning application and however well the Council are supported by local organisations and individuals, the planners often win on appeal. But we shall continue to be vigilant.

Sadly during the past six months we have lost two distinguished and hard working members of the Amersham Society, Sir John Johnson in October last year whose obituary appeared in our January Newsletter, and Anthony del Tufo in January, whose obituary is on page 5 of this Newsletter. Both these members were outstanding public servants, who in their various ways and with great vision contributed so much to the well being of local residents either through the Amersham Society and the Museum, also more widely through work with the Countryside Commission, the Chiltern Society and the Chiltern Conservation Board. I wonder whether we shall see such dedicated and selfless volunteers in the future?

Six months ago at the Annual General Meeting Amersham Society members elected a new committee. I think that those of us elected believed it was well worth the effort of supporting and continuing to work with the Amersham Society if we possibly could. It was a great advantage that the five members of the new committee had already worked together for several years and were familiar with the history,

aims and activities of the Society. I am really grateful for all the support that the committee members have given me and to see how well the team is working together.

We were also very pleased to welcome Elena Morgan to the committee in January as our Website Manager. Lena is a local resident with many years experience as a web developer. Lena has wasted no time in updating our website and making it more user friendly, grouping the information clearly and adding new information that will be of interest to our members and the wider community. Many of us do not auto-matically go to a website unless we are looking for specific information, and sometimes not even then. Please do log on to: www.amershamsoiety.org and see it for yourselves.

Over the past year and a half our Membership Secretary, Peter Borrows, has carried out a very thorough and efficient review and update of our membership records. There are at present just under four hundred members. The majority of members now pay their subscriptions by standing order or GoCardless. One problem we have often had is that, whenever the membership fee has been changed, some people forget to alter their membership payment authorisations, and it often takes some time and several

reminders for them to adjust their payments to the correct subscription amount. The annual subscription remains at £17 double and £11.50 single.

As the Committee is still relatively small we have been careful not to take on new commitments that we may not have the time to fulfil. It has, however, been reassuring that several members of the Society who are not on the committee have agreed to help with some activities. Tim and Lesley Harmer continue to survey the River Misbourne regularly and prepare a report for the Newsletter. Annie Hamilton Pike has agreed to continue to liaise with Amersham Town Council on the maintenance of the Market Hall. And we were also pleased that George Allison agreed to write an article about the current situation with HS2, consulting colleagues from HS2 Amersham Action Alliance as he did so. We are indebted to Jim Conboy for his advice on the present activities of HS2 Ltd. And Joan Samwell has carefully researched and written about the work of the eighteenth century Estate Carpenter Henry Woodbridge.

We have had some interesting speakers and talks this year and the turnout of members has been good. We try to have a variety of topics with speakers, whom members have recommended or who have proved so popular in the past that we have invited them to pay us a return visit. If you have a

speaker to recommend, we are always happy to consider this. Attendance at the talks has been good with between 45 – 55 people at each talk. Members enjoy the pleasant and easily accessible surroundings of the Kings Chapel and meeting other members over coffee or tea and the ever popular Kings Arms' freshly baked biscuits. They also enjoy the different talks.

There are still a few places left on the outing on Thursday, 13th June to St Mary's Church in Fairford and the National Trust property at Buscot Park. It will be a good visit to a beautiful part of the country. If you would like to join us the application form is in the January Newsletter or on the website, or contact Dorothy Symes (01494 434858 or symes196@btinternet.com).

We are planning to hold another recruitment party in July. We shall let members have details of the date and place by e-alert. It will be along the lines of last year's successful summer drinks party. Members were invited to come provided that they brought one or two friends or neighbours, who were not yet members of the Amersham Society and who might be interested in joining.

Finally although the current committee is keeping the Amersham Society functioning well, there are still vacancies and other things that we might do, or do better. We see requests from many local organisations looking for volunteers and

obviously there is only a limited pool of residents who are interested in taking on extra responsibilities. It would, however, be particularly helpful if there were a scribe out there, who would be interested in editing the Newsletter. I have very much enjoyed editing the Newsletter but it would be right to appoint a new editor by the end of this year. Our next Newsletter is due out in September so if anyone is interested we could do it together!

I know that some of you have already done many years service or are already working on our committee or on other local committees. But we live in hope that there are other members or new residents, who support our aims, enjoy the events and would like to join the committee. Do speak to me or one of the other committee members if you are interested. The work does not have to be onerous, we are at present keeping the paperwork to a minimum and it is a friendly group. Also it would be much better to have a managed approach, gradually building up a slightly larger committee, the members of which have time to settle in and consult their predecessors.

Now as summer is close, all that is left for is me is to wish you all a very happy and relaxing time either staying in our lovely town, coming on the outing on 13th June or travelling further afield to other interesting and beautiful areas.

Anthony del Tufo

1939 – 2019

Anthony cared deeply about Amersham, the town he had decided to settle in with his family; he was interested in the history of this place and its people. In 1974 he joined the Amersham Society, our local civic society and became an active committee member.

A couple of years later he became Vice-Chairman, working closely with Eric Corns, the organisation's passionate chairman. By the late 1970s he was the convenor of the planning group, scrutinising planning applications in the old town, writing clear and succinct reports to the Council. He didn't think Amersham should be preserved in aspic but wanted to make sure the character and nature of the town was retained. During this time the Society had began to amass a collection of objects and stories about the town's local history. Like many other civic and historical groups there was an aspiration to find a permanent home to house this collection and create a museum. Very few groups manage to achieve this. Eric, Anthony and their committee did.

The creation and ongoing success of Amersham Museum is the result of hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of

many people none more so than Anthony. He was involved in the project from its inception and was still actively involved until recently when he became too poorly. I would like to share with you just how much he did for the Museum.



The importance of 49 High Street, a medieval hall house in the old town, was already known to the committee. Following the death of its longstanding occupant Mr Toovey, it eventually became possible to purchase the building in 1985. This was no mean feat for the Amersham Society; a Trust was

established – which still exists today – and the Society had to fundraise £65,000 to purchase the building and then raise around double that sum to restore it. An appeal committee was established, comprising Eric, Anthony, Brian Fuller, Chris Parrott and Philip Plumbly. Eric's vision and Anthony's business acumen and financial background was essential to the success of the project, which – after much hard work - raised the funds required. An incredible achievement. The restoration project was equally challenging; the building required significant repairs, which were undertaken by contractors

and volunteers alike, notably Jim Olney and Brian Fuller. Finally, in 1991 Amersham Museum opened to visitors. It was completely volunteer run, with Monica Mullins as honorary curator and, as is still the case today, is an independent museum, with no regular financial support from local or national government. Thousands of people visited the museum in its first year and thereafter and the committee's success was recognised with a national award of 'best museum on a shoestring'.

In 2001 the museum formally separated from the Amersham Society. Anthony stood down as Vice Chairman of the Amersham Society and became the museum's first chairman. As chair he had a calm, careful intelligent approach that his committee greatly respected. He was also a visionary – just as he'd shared Eric's vision to create the museum, he had great ideas about how to continue to involve people in their local story. He envisaged and went on to produce three editions of the Amersham martyrs community play, which involved hundreds of people in promenade theatre performances in this building.

A fundraiser will tell you that people give to people, not to organisations. In 2002 the museum was the recipient of a substantial legacy from local resident Tony Woodcock. Tony must have believed not simply in the museum but in Anthony's leadership and stewardship of the museum to make that choice, to be assured of how his legacy would be used to benefit the town. Anthony first

took on the role of executor and then managed the receipt and investment of the gift with sound judgement, careful consideration and efficient planning. For the first time the museum could employ a member of staff and move the museum on to a more professional footing. It was also as a result of that gift that we were able to purchase 51 High Street in 2013 and complete a capital project to expand the museum in 2017.

I was fortunate enough to become Curator of the museum nearly seven years ago. Anthony's immense kindness and generosity of spirit was evident in his very first communication to me; in inviting me for an interview he noted that he lived around the corner and suggested that he could give me a lift down to the museum so that he could interview me when we got there! When I started Anthony already decided to retire as chair and noted to Gary, the museum's new chair, that his role involved being the odd job man as much as inspiring leadership and providing effective governance of the museum. No job was ever too big or too small for Anthony. I'm pleased to say that Gary took that on board and still comes, screwdriver in hand, when called upon.

Indeed, retiring as chair didn't mean retiring from the museum for Anthony. He was one of most dedicated, hard working and efficient people I have ever come across. Yet, one of the most wonderful things about Anthony was how he managed to be so effective whilst always being so calm and kind. In

the last few years Anthony welcomed people to the museum and was always keen to help them in any way he could. He was brilliant with visitors – he was such a clever man with a vast knowledge but never made you feel stupid for knowing less than him. He continued to lead guided walks – peppering them with funny stories – which reflected his wonderful sense of humour. Yet he was also intuitive and sensitive and able to know how long to talk and when to move on. He took a keen interest in the collection too, particularly the large number of glass plate photographs by George Ward; it was his idea to match ward's images with all the local buildings, presenting copies to local residents and retailers to display in their windows.

Perhaps his greatest achievement of this period was the creation of the Amersham history section of the Museum website. What started with a simple discussion about presenting the history of the High Street resulted in the creation of a web site numbering over 300 pages of content that shares the history of Amersham; Anthony gathered years of research conducted by museum volunteers, organised it and published it in easy to understand sections. People can search for their street and sometimes their home and find out about its history. Anthony liked to call it a giant scrapbook. The results have been astonishing; hundreds of thousands of people have viewed our online scrapbook and we have been contacted by people from all

over the world. Some amazing donations and links have been made as a result of Anthony's work – we've connected people with their family stories and received some incredible ones in return. Perhaps the best example of this are the Shardeloes babies, the 5,200 people born there when it was requisitioned as a maternity hospital between 1939 and 1948. Through the site Anthony had gathered the names and stories of several hundred babies and helped arrange special visits to Shardeloes on several occasions over the last couple of years. There have been many lovely tributes sent to the museum about Anthony in the last couple of weeks, including many from these Babies who felt that he had done so much to help them connect with their heritage.

Anthony was immensely proud of the museum but he didn't consider that it belonged to him. He believed it belonged to us, the people in his local community. His efforts and his ability to enthuse others have created a special place where thousands of people have had enjoyable and meaningful experiences as visitors and volunteers. It's a place for making connections and friends. The ongoing success of Amersham Museum is a fitting legacy for such a wonderful man. He helped preserve and share our history and his contribution now forms part of our town's story that we shall never forget.

Emily Toettcher

Cliveden

Power, Politics and Scandal



On 27th February historian Peter Hague spoke to a packed audience at the King's Chapel about this National Trust property which has been at the centre of power for three and a half centuries – and not far from scandal for most of that time. The house is now leased out as a hotel – but as Harold Macmillan said, "*It always was*".

The house was built as a hunting lodge to entertain his friends and his mistress (*the Countess of Shrewsbury*) by George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham. He had been brought up in the court of Charles I and was imprisoned in the Tower of London on four occasions, once for fighting in the House of Lords. The Earl of Shrewsbury fought a duel with Villiers and died from his injuries. George's wife tolerated his

indiscretions but apparently became quite good friends with the mistress after his death.

The 1st Earl of Orkney then acquired Cliveden, living there with his wife Elizabeth Villiers (granddaughter of George Villiers' brother). She was the mistress of William of Orange. William's wife Mary tolerated the affair until on her death bed, when she told him stop, which he seems to have agreed to do.

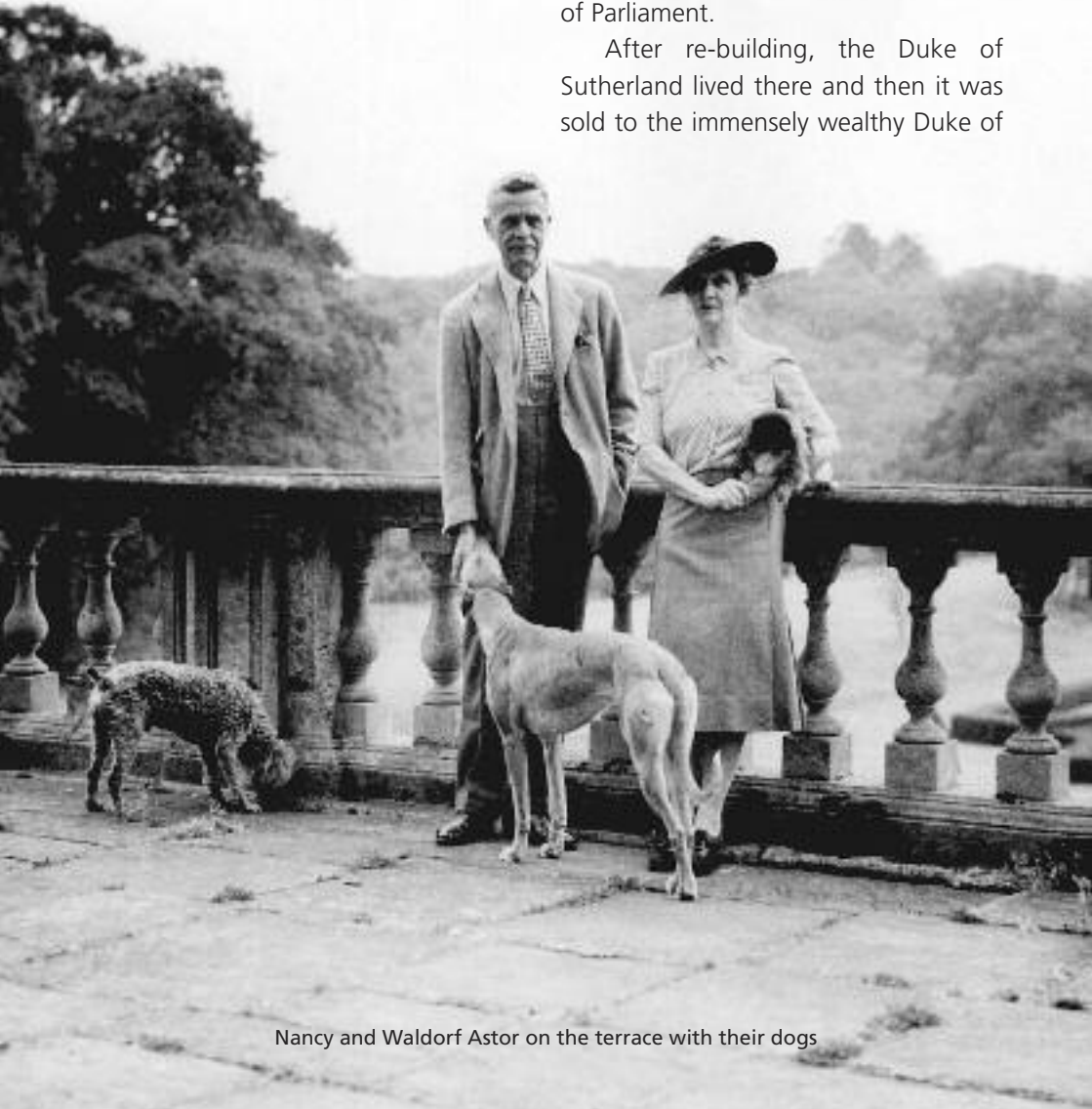
In the 18th century, the house was leased to Frederick, Prince of Wales. He was the estranged son of George II and Queen Caroline and set up an alternative court at Cliveden. The first public performance of *Rule Britannia!* took place in the grounds. When he died, at Cliveden, at the age of 44, his wife Augusta went to her father-in-law and

persuaded him to make their eldest son, George, heir to the throne rather than the king's 2nd son William, Duke of Cumberland. He later became George III.

Augusta became very interested in horticulture and was influential in the creation of Kew Gardens. However, she gave up the lease on Cliveden which was

then occupied by several successive Countesses of Orkney. Two devastating fires destroyed much of the house in 1795 and in 1849. Queen Victoria saw the smoke from the second fire from Windsor Castle and sent her fire engines to help fight it. It was rebuilt by Charles Barry, architect of the Houses of Parliament.

After re-building, the Duke of Sutherland lived there and then it was sold to the immensely wealthy Duke of



Nancy and Waldorf Astor on the terrace with their dogs

Westminster. The re-built house was extensively altered at this time, but it was sold again in 1893 to William Waldorf Astor, later 1st Viscount Astor who made further changes. Dating from the 1st Earl of Orkney is a rather unassuming building over-looking the cliffs which was built as a tea room in case those strolling in the grounds should feel thirsty (how very National Trust!) but the 1st Viscount converted it into a grand chapel, to be his lasting resting place and that of his family.

When William Waldorf's son, also Waldorf, married Nancy Langhorne in 1906, his father gave the son Cliveden as a wedding present. At the same time he gave Nancy a 55 carat diamond, now in the Louvre. Nancy had been born in Virginia, the 8th of 11 children, and had married Robert Shaw but they divorced after a few years and she moved to England.

Nancy encouraged her husband to take an active role in politics and he became MP for Plymouth. However, when his father died, Waldorf had to take his place in the House of Lords and Nancy stood for election in his old seat, entering the House of Commons in 1919, the first woman to do so. She was quite a pioneer, supporting women's rights, prison reform and raising the drinking age from 14 to 18 (she, herself, was teetotal). Cliveden was renowned for its house parties. Guests included Franklin Delano Roosevelt, George

Bernard Shaw, Rudyard Kipling, Charlie Chaplin, Lawrence of Arabia, Mahatma Gandhi

Nancy used to swim in the Thames but when the 3rd Viscount's horse won the Oaks, the prize money was used to build a heated pool. Stephen Ward, an osteopath with a practice near Harley Street, had use of Spring Cottage, and the pool, on the Cliveden estate. In



1961, Ward and some of his guests, including topless dancer Christine Keeler, went for a swim where their party met guests of the 3rd Viscount, including John Profumo, Secretary of State for War. They started an affair, often using Ward's flat in Wimpole Mews, but Keeler had had a brief affair with Yevgeny Ivanov, a Soviet military attaché, thus creating a security risk. Profumo initially denied the affair in the House of Commons but later had to admit it and resigned. Ward was charged with living off immoral earnings, which was unlikely as his work was bringing in £90 000 per year. He was being set up as a scapegoat and took his own life.

As the Cliveden hotel's motto says *Nothing Ordinary Ever Happened here ...*

The Destruction of Shardeloes

When the Events Team arrange the Amersham Society programme of talks, we realise that attendance at the January talk in particular is, in part at least, always dependant on the weather.

And this year we could relax. On a rather miserable and cold evening we were delighted to welcome to the Kings Arms a large number of members and visitors, interested to learn from an expert about another chapter in the history of our local manor house.

The Amersham Society Talk on 30th January, given by Edward Copisarow, was provocatively entitled "*The destruction of Shardeloes*".

In 1950s England, one stately home was demolished each week. Plans to pull down Shardeloes, the iconic home of the Lords of the Manor of Amersham, were at an advanced stage when the Amersham Society was formed to campaign for it to be saved. As everyone present at the Kings Chapel on a frosty evening in 2019 knew, the wrecking ball had never made it to Shardeloes but the talk opened by re-living the arguments on both sides, Peter Borrowes assisting with a most Churchillian performance of a speech given in 1956 by the Chairman of Amersham Rural District Council; forcefully advocating the demolition of the building. And so the story was told, with words from the Minute book of the Amersham Society and with images of old press cuttings recently presented to Amersham Museum, of the success of the Society's first campaign and of how Robert Adam's first country house

commission became the first such house to be saved by being turned into flats.

The binary distinction between demolition and being saved was then considered as a spectrum of degrees of destruction. The title of the talk and the structure of the rest of the presentation were borrowed from "*Destruction of the Country House*" the ground-breaking 1975 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The exhibition had charted not only the demolition of hundreds of building but also the loss of the workplaces, the picture collections, the furniture, the libraries, the parks and the gardens. From the outside we saw images of working stables, the meet of the Old Berkeley Hunt and the exercising of the racing ponies. The tour of the five state rooms inside, illustrated with 18th century drawings by Robert Adam for the plasterwork and woodwork, photographs from the 1870s to 1938 giving the impression of the furnishings, the picture hang and the other contents of the house when still a family home contrasted with those from the

National Monument Record in 1956 when the building was under sentence of demolition and more cheerful images of the restored rooms and of some of the dispersed contents Edward had been able to track down.

Shardeloes was one of the more important commissions for the firm of John Linnell, the leading London furniture maker of the 1760s: we saw his costly “coopers”- the dining room urns - most recently sold in 2002, the original design for the hall chairs, the drawing room sofas (since 1947 at Clarence House) and the pier tables and glasses sold to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in 1957.



The Shardeloes Armada Portrait

The paintings included a variety of portraits, seascapes and landscapes and the famous Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I, 350 years at Shardeloes but recently saved for the nation and now on display at the National Maritime Museum.

The busts of modern worthies in the Hall by John Cheere c1770 after Michael Rysbrack (now at Birmingham Museum) were put to the audience as a quiz, who managed to identify most of them :



The library photographed c 1870

John Milton, Inigo Jones, Alexander Pope, John Locke, Sir Isaac Newton and William Shakespeare. In the library, the most valuable books had been sold to pay death duties in the 1920s, many of these had appeared in the catalogue of the library of the old house compiled in 1728 and some could even be traced back to the collection of the Elizabethan bibliophile, Humphrey Dyson. Many of these items are now in the Huntingdon Library in California but one volume, an early Shakespeare folio with the bookplate of Montagu Garrard Drake, had recently been sold again at an auction of just four lots in London – the first four editions of the works of Shakespeare.

The majority of the books had remained in the Library throughout the second world war and, despite a campaign for them to form the basis of a special collection at the County Library, they left the house without trace in 1957.

Returning to the exterior, we saw how the 18th Century ‘pleasure grounds’ had given way to a Victorian



*Humphrey Repton's 1793 watercolour
view from Shardeloes*

flower garden and was now a mixture of lawn, shrubbery and woodland. The park by contrast retained much of the look and feel of the landscape created by Nathaniel Richmond in the 1760s and 1770s and the view from the house remains today much as Humphrey Repton recorded it his watercolours of the 1790s. But the land had been sold off in parcels in the 50's, much of it bought by John Brazil, the local butcher who had made a fortune by building a meat processing business on the site now occupied by Tesco. Some of his nephews and niece were in the audience

and between them still retained the lake and much of the land adjacent to the house, although the water wheel from the outflow of the lake no longer powers the engine which supplied spring water to the house and the residents no longer amuse themselves by boating, fishing or skating as the seasons dictate!

Whilst Shardeloes has lost its original contents and collections and much of its setting is no longer connected to the house, our 21st century eyes see this as an evolution rather than the destruction it would have been considered back in the 1970s. Robert Adam's first country house where he was able to work both inside and out still stands, the plasterwork survives and the interior layout is almost unaltered and it provides us in Amersham with a starting point from which we can scour the museums, galleries and libraries of the world to put back together, albeit virtually, Amersham's great treasure house.



The earliest engraving of the newly completed house at Shardeloes.

My Favourite Paintings

Amersham Society Talk by Joan Greening



It sounds an easy task for an art historian to select eleven favourite paintings and talk about them but as Joan said in her introduction how do you select just eleven pictures from the multitude of art stored in galleries throughout the world? Do you select a picture from each period? Do you select ones that are judged to be “masters” or do you select a picture because it means something special to you?

In reality the choice is an eclectic mixture of reasons. Joan’s selection on the evening was a snapshot from what she stated was a selection of 300 of her favourite pictures collected over her time as an art historian.

Choice number one was an exquisite picture by Leonardo da Vinci – “*La Belie Ferroniere*” painted in 1490 and presently in the Louvre in Paris. No favourite selection would be complete without a da Vinci picture. He created and was the master of sfumato, the fading out of harsh lines, beautifully executed in this picture.

Choice number two was by Pieter Bruegel the Elder executed in 1565, “*Hunters in the Snow*”. The Bruegels

were a talented family of artists who excelled at depicting snow scenes. This particular picture is often used as a Christmas card, but it is not a joyful scene as the hunters have not been successful and the village is likely to go hungry. However, for its story telling, atmosphere and skillful depiction of a snowy landscape it deserves to be in the list of favourite paintings.

Choice number three brings us to 1664 and *The Christening* by Jan Steen. Jan Steen’s pictures are always busy and full of symbolism and *The Christening* is no exception. From broken eggs on the floor to a skulking figure by the door there is no end to the story told by this Dutch artist’s beautifully painted picture.

Choice number four was by Joseph Wright of Derby. He is known as Joseph Wright of Derby because at the time there were two artists called Joseph Wright and it was necessary to distinguish one from the other. Joseph Wright of Derby was an exceptional painter and could have been recognised as one of the best portrait painters but he always painted a perfect likeness which patrons did not appreciate, especially when they were paying and

thought themselves as flawless! As a consequence while his paintings were recognized as exceptional by his contemporaries, his provincial status and choice of subjects meant the style was never widely imitated. Joan's choice "*An Experiment on a Bird in the Air Pump*" painted in 1767, is masterful in its use of light and its depiction of the people viewing the experiment. It is so skilfully painted that it is possible to look at the picture for an hour and still find something new in its composition.

Choice number five. No limited selection of paintings would be complete without including a picture by J M W Turner. Joan's choice was *Rain, Steam and Speed* – The Great Western Railway. The painting was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1844 and at the time was revolutionary in its presentation in which water, land, sky and industrialisation come together in confusion caused by lashing rain coupled with clouds of steam from the speeding train. Whilst the speeding train, a symbol of the new era, dominates the picture, closer inspection shows a more leisurely pace with two men in a boat on the River Thames, a time now being overtaken. Turner is often considered to be ahead of his time and is thought by many to have influenced later artists such as the impressionists.

Choice number six was a lady artist Elizabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, who was a prominent French portrait painter of the late eighteenth century. Her style is part Rococo, part Neoclassical. Madam Le Brun made a name for herself by serving as the portrait painter to Marie Antoinette. She had the patronage of European aristocrats and was elected to art academies in ten cities. A picture of "*Madame Perregaux*", which is in the Wallace collection, was Joan's choice.

Choice number seven was "*The Church at Auvers*". This 1890 painting is by Dutch post-impressionist artist Vincent van Gogh. "*The Church at Auvers*" was one of the last pictures painted by Vincent Van Gogh in June 1890. All of his pictures were created in the last 10 years of his life. In that time he executed around 2,100 works of art including 860 oil paintings. It was only after his death that he received any recognition and he is now seen as one of the most influential figures in the history of Western art.

Choice number eight was by Pablo Picasso and from his vast repertoire Joan chose "*Mother and Child*" which was painted in 1901 during his blue period. There are religious connotations in any painting involving a mother and child and Picasso's picture is no exception. During his blue period Picasso produced

a number of pictures entitled Mother and Child as he explored the portrayal of woman as a mother figure.

Choice number nine was by Eleanor Fortesque Brickdale. Little known now, Eleanor Fortescue-Brickdale (1872-1945) was one of the most popular artists of the Edwardian era. She became famous as an illustrator, painter and watercolour artist. Her work could be seen in exhibitions, magazines and books. Joan's choice "*The Little Foot Page*" This painting illustrates a traditional folk ballad which describes the loyalty of Ellen who is pregnant by her heartless lover. He insists Ellen serves him as a page. She is shown dressed in male clothing and just about to cut her long hair so she can pass as a boy. Allegedly the picture is credited with the introduction of the women's pageboy hair style.

Choice number ten was a composition with red, blue and yellow by Piet Mondrian (1872 – 1944). A Dutch artist, recognised as one of the most important figures in the development of abstract art. Mondrian's art was utopian and was concerned with a search for universal values and aesthetics. He proclaimed in 1914: Art is higher than reality and has no direct relation to reality. To approach the spiritual in art, one will make as little use as possible of reality, because reality is

opposed to the spiritual.

Mondrian decided to limit his "*formal vocabulary*" to the three primary colours (red, yellow and blue), the three primary values (black, white and grey) and the two primary directions (horizontal and vertical).

Choice number eleven, the final choice, "*Venus Verticordia*" by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was a poet, illustrator and painter who founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848 with William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais. Rossetti is credited to be the main inspiration for a second generation of artists influenced by the Brotherhood, most notably William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones.

"*Venus Verticordia*" ("the changer of hearts") is a beguiling, beautifully painted picture typical of Rossetti with a red headed model surrounded by roses, holding an apple and an arrow. A vision to change hearts!

Joan's varied choice made for an interesting and entertaining evening. The chosen pictures spanned the centuries and gave an insight as to how art has developed through a variety of styles and subjects but each a masterpiece that has stood the test of time.

*John Suckling and
Yvonne Suckling*

HS2 Amersham Action Group Formation in 2010 and Current Concerns

Article by George Allison



Keith Hoffmeister

HS2 Amersham Action Group (HS2AAG) was formed in 2010 shortly after the announcement by the Government that the route of the new high speed railway would be through the Chilterns, our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The cost at that time was to be £32 billion. The group was formed by local volunteers, who felt strongly that the chosen route through the Chilterns was the most damaging of the three options which were under consideration at the time. It was recognised by Government that there was a growing need to relieve overcrowding on commuter trains into

London, so it is remarkable that on the full 140 miles of the railway there are no intermediate stations between London and Birmingham!

Since it was formed, HS2AAG has energetically opposed the proposed railway, raising around £90,000 by a series of events such as barn dances, quiz nights, black tie dinners, and a 200 Club, all of which were enthusiastically supported by people who felt strongly against HS2. Information Days were held, and shops were set up in Amersham (with accommodation generously provided by local businesses) to spread the word about what was

planned in this area. Further afield, the group works in collaboration with the national anti-HS2 campaigns - Stop HS2 and HS2 Action Alliance.



As a means of 'engagement' with local individuals and groups HS2 Ltd set up a series of forums along the proposed route of the railway. These well attended meetings were chaired and headed by HS2 personnel, and we soon realised that the HS2 representatives were not well enough acquainted with the area to be able to deal with many of the questions we raised. Questions were fobbed off, and answers to carried forward questions were not brought back to the succeeding meetings. There was general dissatisfaction with the manner in which the meetings were conducted, and the accuracy of the minutes taken by HS2.

Following the unsatisfactory consultation exercise, the government presented a Hybrid Bill to the commons. The action group appeared at several sittings of the bill committee, to represent Amersham, and attempted to improve the mitigation on offer. We supported

the residents of South and Hyde Heath, who were instrumental in obtaining a short extension to the Chiltern Tunnel, so saving 3 areas of ancient woodland.

Following the passage of the bill, HS2 arranged 'drop-in' sessions for the public, and held meetings between their contractors and stakeholder communities, chaired and led by Town or District Councils. The action group participates in the meetings arranged with Amersham TC. In addition, Chiltern

DC arranges meetings between HS2 Ltd, contractors and the public once or twice a year.

These new forums are an improvement on the previous arrangements, but still not completely satisfactory. Contractor's delegates attend meetings sometimes without preparation. This leads to a lack of confidence and an impression that we are not always being taken seriously.

A recent report in the Bucks Free Press states that HS2 is not yet inevitable, and there is continuous adverse criticism in the media suggesting that the real motivation for the HS2 concept remains obscure. Independent qualified expert opinion claims that the project is flawed, and that the travelling public will gain little or no benefit. The revised estimate of the total cost is fast approaching £100 billion and who knows what the eventual finished cost will be.

Think of Crossrail!

Currently under discussion there are three main local concerns to which we are keen to have answers and projected plans from the HS2 Ltd contractors.

These are:

1. Road traffic controls during the construction of the tunnel ventilation shafts at Chalfont St Giles, Amersham and Little Missenden. (See below in the Main Works Indicative Programme.) The existing local roads are already congested, especially at peak periods. In addition to the normal day to day traffic there will be 200 HGV daily movements at times, during the construction of each shaft.

Although there is ongoing discussion about traffic controls at the Amersham shaft, no convincing plans are yet available to demonstrate that an adequate scheme has been devised. We are though assured that during construction, HGV lorries will not use the Old Town road system but will be diverted away from the town on to the A404 and A413.

2 Leading on from this there is great concern that funeral processions to and from the very busy Chilterns Crematorium will be delayed. We now know that meetings of Crematorium management and Bucks County Council are taking place.

3. For some considerable time we have tried to ascertain whether as a result of tunnelling, there might be damage to the aquifer of the River Misbourne. We

are not qualified to judge what the potential might be. Might the river bed dry up? Or might Old Amersham High Street be flooded? Enquiries at various levels have failed to produce any information. Bearing in mind that the River Misbourne is a distinct feature of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty we feel that a convincing investigation is essential and that the issue is being followed up with the Environment Agency.

The programme below is the latest information we have to hand.

Main Works Indicative Programme.
Activity Estimated Start Date

Main Compound Setup	Summer 2019
Chalfont St. Peter Shaft	Winter 2019
Chalfont St Giles Shaft	Spring 2020
Amersham Shaft	Spring 2020
Chesham Road Shaft	Winter 2020
Tunnelling	Summer 2020
Colne Valley Viaduct	Winter 2020
Little Missenden Shaft	Spring 2021
Chiltern North Portal	Spring 2022

Further information is available on:
www.hs2amersham.org.uk

HS2 Amersham Action Group continues to be actively involved in the campaign to stop HS2, and to mitigate its effects wherever possible.

We would like to thank **Jim Conboy** of the HS2 Amersham Action Alliance group for providing advice on the current state of affairs.

Henry Woodbridge

1709 – 1787

Article by Joan Samwell

AT THE MUSEUM OF AMERSHAM, historical research is on-going. Henry Woodbridge, a carpenter, came to our notice, when we were preparing for the *"Shardeloes Exhibition"* in 2018, looking for master – craftsmen from Amersham town, who had contributed to the re-building of Shardeloes mansion from 1758 –1767. A thorough scrutiny of the Shardeloes' Papers at the Centre for Buckingham-shire Studies in Aylesbury, threw light on Henry Woodbridge's work as a carpenter at Shardeloes, and also on his work elsewhere on the Shardeloes' estate, and in the town of Amersham.

Henry was the son of William Woodbridge, also a carpenter, and Susanna (Thomson). The family came to Amersham from Beaconsfield, sometime after Henry's birth in 1709. He was apprenticed to Steven Squier, an excellent carpenter, whom William Drake had chosen to work on three magnificent rooms, the parlour, the dining room and the library, during the re-building of Shardeloes. The training from Squier must have shone through, because in 1760, we find that Drake employed Henry to contribute to the repair of the Market Hall, which had been built in 1692, as a *"gift to the townspeople of Amersham"*. His work was extensive.

Bills which he presented to Drake cover operations in the *"Guard Room"*, the *"Court Room"* and the *"Turret"* which housed the Market Bell.

The part of the Hall which housed beggars and felons and nuisance makers was made good when he worked on the

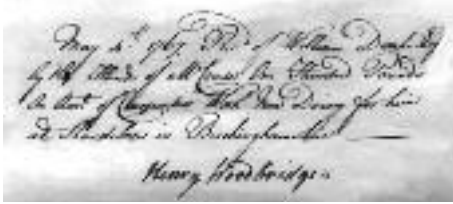


"ceiling" under the stairs by the *"cage"*. His bill also showed that *"Quartering"* had to be done over the *"cage grate"*. For this, Drake paid Henry £306-6s-0d.

< *The cage today.*

By now, Henry had married Mary Carey in 1734, and had fathered Stephen, William and Henry, the last of whom, born in 1749, was to succeed him as a carpenter. But for the moment, Henry was needed at Shardeloes mansion, where he was to upgrade the new stables and coach house between May and September 1767. Large amounts of *"deal"* (a specified length of fir or pine tree) and oak, were delivered to the Shardeloes building area, to be *"plain'd"* or *"cubed"* sometimes with the help of labourers, earning between 2d or 6d per task. Deal

“framing with bars to guard the windows” was carried out, and care was taken to make “the coach house doors dovetail”. His remuneration, even allowing for expences, for four month’s work was £216-13s-1d; high payment compared with the annual wage of £20-0s-0d, paid by Drake to his butler.



This receipt shows the first amount of £100 which Woodbridge received on account for his carpentry at Shardeloes, to which was later added £70, and then £46-13s-1d.

It is probable that he was on friendly terms with William Ayres, John Tilston, an iron monger, John King, a blacksmith, Roger Cutler, a plumber, and John Avery, who also worked at Shardeloes while living in Amersham at this time. They might have looked up to him as a man of property, because we find his name on the “List of Men who Voted in Amersham at the General Election of 1774”, - property being a pre-requisite for the vote.

Our carpenter also fashioned wooden objects and utensils. The Shardeloes papers show “Sundry goods delivered at the Rector’s” in 1777. The handsome neo – classical, rectory had been built in 1720, and the living from it was owned by the Drakes from 1753 (until 1904).

The contents of Woodbridge’s delivery show some of the contents we might expect to find inside a house of that vintage:-

- A bedwaggon.
- A deal table with draw.
- A larger wainscot salt box.
- An oak mangle exclusive of iron work.
- Three towell rollers’
- A napkin press.
- All for £14-19s-2d.



The Rectory

It is highly likely that Henry also found an outlet in Amersham weekly market for his wares. Production could have related to a high demand, as since 1770, he would have had Joe Grover as his apprenticed trainee carpenter, and since 1776, Thomas Wright.

The last sheets of bills submitted to William Drake from Henry Woodbridge are in 1785, for work done on “The House in the Park” at Shardeloes. Henry must have been less robust now, at the age of 76, because the payment is requested for work done by “Henry and Son”, and the receipt is signed by Henry Woodbridge (Senior). There is evidence

of a payment for work done at *"The Pavilion in the Park"*, but this must have been submitted by Henry Woodbridge the younger, who had been aided by *"William"*, his second son, (our Henry's grandson) and by *"John"*, who is very likely to be John Yates, whom Henry Woodbridge (father) took on as his third, and last, apprentice in 1781.

Henry Woodbridge died in 1787 at the age of 78 years.

This master-carpenter worked hard in response to the practical education which was available to him in Amersham in the 18th century. He took advantage of the prestigious work opportunities which came his way as well as the more mundane: for instance, some entries are for *"sundry farms and tenements"* found all over the landed property belonging to William Drake. A good start in life was given to Henry Woodbridge younger. After building the Pavilion in the park, he can be traced submitting bills to the Shardeloes Estate throughout the 1790's, as well as paying rent to Drake of approximately £7 per week.

Henry the younger, had his own property after 1805, when we hear that *"from the Manor of Howells in Oxon, behind the almshouses in Agmondesham, otherwise known as Amersham, with carpenter's shop and other buildings, yards garden and orchard, (there is a property) now occupied by Henry Woodbridge"*. An inspection of this area in our town strongly suggests that it has been the site of *"that"*



woodyard. There are several barn-like out-houses, some renovated, some dilapidated. A residence called *"the Barnhouse"* dates possibly from the 1920s, and has clearly stayed to the original plan of a sizable barn. In this same place, a very old cottage could possibly pre-date the Woodbridge carpenter's yard.

Henry Woodbridge's son died in 1822. His grand-daughter, Ann Woodbridge, was wealthy enough in 1844 to commission the construction of a large headstone for his grave. The embossed letters on it have defied the ravages of time. His resting place is lying horizontally on the left of the main pathway leading to the church, beside a tree.



Acknowledgements: I am indebted to Sarah Jane Barker, who kindly allowed me to use some core facts on the Woodbridges, which she found on *"Ancestry"*. Thanks also to Edward Copisarow, for his valuable advice.

River Misbourne Survey Report

Dated 6th January and 17th March 2019
for Amersham Society Committee

Started 6th January 10.00am

Weather: cold overcast.

Started 17th January 10:30am

Weather wet with hail.

March 17th *Listed in Blue.*

Revisited clean-up day March 31st,

Listed in Red.

Survey carried out by

Tim Harmer and Lesley Harmer.

Area of survey from the bottom end of Shardeloes Lake to the footbridge and ford.

(Ref track from London Road East.)

1 Grill from lake looks clear.

However new barbed wire fence fitted along the public foot path gives no clear access. Tree branches and a large amount of weed in the river behind the Cricket Club and a tree in the river near the club gate.

2 Between Shardeloes Drive and Amersham by-pass bridge and further along to Amersham High Street bridge. Rubbish around bridge needs clearing.

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. Also rubbish.

4 To 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. River running well and clean on one side but has thick vegetation on the cottages side of the river. Riparian owners need to clear.

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 and up to the council office building. This needs clearing by the Town Council and riparian owners.

8 At Badminton Court the river flowing well.

9 Church Mead. There is vegetation in the river but running OK.

10 Car park area has dead branches in the river. No supermarket trolleys found in the river. However I removed one trolley on the river bank and rubbish. There is always rubbish at the Tesco corner or the council car park.

11 Behind Tesco supermarket rubbish in the river (part cleared on clean-up day, March 31st).

12 River running behind Tesco car park and overflow culvert all OK. Rubbish part cleared on clean-up day, March 31st. However needs to keep eye on Tesco area.

13 At Station Road Bridge the River is flowing. However on the Tesco and small farm side there is large amount of weed growing but flowing OK. (Town council removed old wheels dumped into river over the bridge.)

14 West Arch or the road bridge to Ambers and river fork at the Jaguar Garage also weed needs clearing but flowing OK.

15 Area from Lookers (Jaguar) Garage to the footbridge and ford. Generally clean but with a weed growth.

16 From where the river emerges from the Two Arches under London Road West there is weed growth in the river.

17 Moving along into Bury farm field the river has fallen trees and bushes which need clearing but river running well and clear.

18 Moving under the A413 bypass going along the river towards the foot bridge, we found a number of trees and bushes that had fallen into the river and weed growing. However river running clear. Please note because of the autumn rain and summer hot weather it was very difficult to see the river condition at a number of points.

19 At the ford and foot bridge. There is a large amount of weed growth. This needs to be removed as it is across the river.

*Tim Harmer.
For the Amersham Society*

The ownership of land abutting a river or other water course is usually presumed to extend from the edge of that land to the middle of that river or watercourse unless otherwise indicated in the title deeds.

This "*Riparian Ownership*" confers rights and responsibilities.

www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse gives information about this.

Museum News



Amersham's Mobile Museum

The Mobile Museum is a newly created mobile exhibition in a retro-style vehicle which will be driven around the local area and reach out to individuals of all ages, who may not be able to visit the museum. The Mobile Museum will feature collection items and work created by local people. As well as sharing local history, the Mobile Museum will be an interactive experience where people can add their memories to our collective story of the local area.

Many local people have helped to create the Mobile Museum. Little Chalfont's Knit and Natter group has created special knitted bunting to hang on the awning of the Mobile Museum. Children from the museum's weekly after-school club for (7 – 11 year olds) have created portraits of local people to feature on a photo wall. Young people (aged 13 – 18) have helped design the

interior of the Mobile Museum and to write text for graphics. The museum's reminiscence groups have contributed recipes for a special 20th century cookery book.

The Mobile Museum will also showcase work created in partnership with local primary schools, all of which have explored elements of the 20th century history of the town. Visitors can also add to the story by adding memories to the timeline, having their photo taken on a polaroid camera for our photo wall or by recording their stories for our archive.

The Mobile Museum has been created with the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the HS2 Community and Environment Fund, Local Area Funding through Amersham Decides, Chiltern District Council, Amersham Action Group and the Friends of Amersham Museum.

Marie-Louise von Motesiczky

1906 – 1996

We are delighted to have recently been gifted three paintings by the Austrian artist Marie-Louise von Motesiczky. Marie-Louise von Motesiczky was an accomplished Expressionist artist who lived in Amersham during World War Two. An exhibition of her work was held at Tate Liverpool in 2006 which described her as *“One of the most talented and original artists of her time. The celebrated art historian, Ernst Gombrich paid tribute to her striking individuality and praised the delicacy and subtlety of her painting.”*

Several major museums possess fine examples of her work, yet she remains relatively unknown. During her lifetime, the main body of her work was kept together by the artist and then passed to the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust. It is this trust which has given the three paintings to the museum. Today Marie-Louise’s work is held in galleries and museums in Britain and across Europe, including the National Portrait Gallery and the Tate.

Marie-Louise’s Life in Amersham

Marie-Louise was born in Vienna in 1906 into a wealthy and distinguished Jewish family. As a young woman, she studied at the Städel Art School in Frankfurt with Max Beckmann (1884 – 1950), who became a life-long friend

and mentor. She is particularly known for her portraits, including compelling self-portraits and a moving series devoted to her ageing mother.

In 1938 Marie-Louise and her mother fled the Anschluss in Austria, first to the Netherlands, then Switzerland, and finally arrived in England in 1939. They initially settled in Hampstead where their circle included artists, intellectuals and other gifted émigrés such as the painter Oskar Kokoschka and the writer Elias Canetti. Marie-Louise had a turbulent relationship with Canetti for the rest of her life. When war broke out, they moved again, this time to the relative safety of wartime Amersham. Marie-Louise eventually bought Cornerways, a house on the corner of Chestnut Lane and Chestnut Close, and lived there with her mother, Henriette and housemaid and nanny, Marie Hauptmann. It had a large garden where they kept chickens and vegetables. Marie-Louise painted a number of outdoor scenes here, inhabited by the figures of family and friends.

Elias Canetti and his wife, Veza, followed Marie-Louise to Amersham where they lodged with the eccentric Father Milburn at his house, Durriss, in Stubbs Wood. Canetti, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981, wrote about these wartime years in Chesham Bois in his memoir *Party in the Blitz*.

After the war Marie-Louise moved back to London, where she lived until her death in 1996. Her mother carried on living in the house in Amersham with Marie-Louise visiting most weekends and continuing to paint there. Henriette was becoming increasingly frail however and in 1958 Marie-Louise bought a large house in Hampstead for them and Cornerways was sold soon after. By the time Henriette died in 1978 at the age of 96, Motesiczky had painted many haunting portraits of her, recording the ravages of old age.

Marie-Louise's Portraits in Amersham Museum's Collection

The three portraits that we have been given were all created in Amersham. The large portrait, *'Dorothy'*, is believed to be Dorothy (nicknamed Dary), possibly a housemaid to Marie-Louise. *'Woman from Chestnut Lane'* depicts Dorothy Sladen (born 1888), Marie-Louise's next-door neighbour.



Dorothy was a reclusive woman who rarely left her home. Through her illness she began to paint and became closer to Marie-Louise and her mother. The third painting *'Three Heads'* is a self-portrait, and depicts Marie-Louise on a Green Line bus, which ran from London to Amersham. Marie-Louise's self portrait is in the centre, possibly with a portrait of her mother on the left and a charwoman or her aunt Ilse on the right.



Portrait Workshops in the Museum

To celebrate the arrival of the paintings the Marie-Louise von Motesiczky Charitable Trust supported the delivery of a series of workshops inspired by Marie-Louise's work. During April the museum ran six workshops, two with our after-school art club and four during the Easter holidays with families. Participants worked with artist Katy Cook to create self-portraits within a still life scene which featured a special object which they had brought in from home. The results and the feedback were fantastic. During May we will be running portraiture workshops for adults, also inspired by Marie-Louise's work.

Amersham's Women at War



Over the winter we have been delivering our 'Amersham's Women at War' project. This has included extensive research into the lives of local women and their role in the campaign for suffrage and in WWI. We have drawn the research together

into a book, *'Women at War'* written by Alison Bailey, which will be published in May. Copies can be purchased from the museum.

Alongside the book we have been running talks, workshops and crate events to share the stories of our fantastic local women. During the Easter holidays children created posters and t-shirts inspired by the work of suffrage artist Catherine Courtauld, who lived locally. We also ran a series of talks, including a talk by fine art curator from Bucks County Museum, Mel Czapski on local artist Claire Leighton and a talk about the women's suffrage collection at the Women's Library at LSE.

Coming up this Summer

For the first time we have an artist in residence for Bucks Art Weeks in June. Catherine Bridget-Phillips will be exhibiting her ceramics in the museum, including a special series of pieces inspired by the museum's collection.

We are now working on the delivery of an exhibition series that looks at early 20th century architecture. This begins with social housing and in the autumn we will be launching an exhibition

about local Arts and Crafts architecture and in Spring 2020 on Modernism. Please get in touch if you have research to share or would like to help with the project.

Throughout the summer holidays there are arts and craft sessions every Wednesday (31st July – 28th August) inspired by our architecture programme. The sessions cost £3 per child after usual admissions.

Report on E-mail's and Addresses

It is very helpful to the Amersham Society if we have an up-to-date e-mail address for you. We can send you reminders about planned events and changes or additions to the published programme. We can also tell you about your subscription: unpaid, under-paid or over-paid (*yes, really!*). E-mails are usually sent about once a month. If you receive these E-alerts regularly, don't worry, we have got your e-mail address, you don't need to do anything.

If you are double members (*two family members living at the same address*) and you each have your own e-mail address, we can send our e-mails to both addresses. This can be helpful, for example, if one of the pair becomes unable to deal with e-mails, the other will still receive copies.

But if you don't see them regularly, there may be several reasons:

- You haven't told us your e-mail address.
- Your mail box is full (*you've exceeded your quota*).
- It's ending up in your spam box – make sure **info@amersham society.org** is added to your white list of safe senders or add it to your contact list.
- You've changed your e-mail address and not told us.

- Your partner has died and we sent e-mails for you both to her / his e-mail address and we don't know yours.

If you want to let us know your correct e-mail address (*or the second e-mail address for double members*) please send an e-mail to the Membership Secretary, Dr Peter Borrowas at **peterborrowas@cantab.net**.

Subscriptions

Thank you to everybody who responded to my request in the January Newsletter to pay your subscription for 2019 or to top up your subscription if you hadn't changed an old standing order. At the time of writing just 11 members have not yet paid and two more have not paid the full amount.

Please pay now – if you don't, this will be the last copy of the Newsletter that you receive. Don't make me send one last reminder. The subscription is **£11.50** or **£17** for two family members living at the same address.

Please send cheques to the Membership Secretary:

Dr Peter Borrowas, Troye Cottage, 32 Whielden Street, Amersham Bucks, HP7 0HU.

In cases of doubt please e-mail **peterborrowas@cantab.net** or phone **01494 728422**.

NOTICEBOARD

Programme of Talks and Events May to December 2019

Society meetings are 7.30pm for 8pm and take place in the Kings Chapel

- 29 May **The London Cage**
Historian Dr Helen Fry will talk about the secret history of Britain's World War II interrogation centre.
- 2 June **Memorial Gardens : Love That Jazz**
- 13 June **Amersham Society Outing**
to St Mary's Church, Fairford and Buscot Park
- 16 June **Memorial Gardens : The Fabulous Shirtlifters**
- 30 June **Memorial Gardens : TBC**
- July **Amersham Society Recruitment Party**
(details will be sent to members by e-alert)
- 14 July **Memorial Gardens : Amersham Brass Band**
- 19 and 31 July **Judging for Amersham in Bloom**
- 28 July **Memorial Gardens : Bisham Concert Band**
- 11 August **Memorial Gardens : Dixieland Swing Kings**
- 25 August **Memorial Gardens : Soundforce Big Band**
- 8 September **Heritage Day**
- 19-20 September **Amersham Charter Fair**
- 25 September **The Ascent of Everest**
Talk by Physicist and Mountaineer Dr Melanie Windridge about her summit attempt in 2018
- 30 October **Annual General Meeting**
The meeting will start at 7.30pm followed at 8.00 pm by a talk about Emergency Rider Volunteers who deliver blood and emergency supplies to hospitals
- 27 November **The Forgotten River**
Discovering the wildlife and history of the River Thames a talk by the naturalist John Tyler

Website <https://amershamsociety.org>

General Enquiries: please email info@amershamsociety.org