



SEPTEMBER 2022

**AMERSHAM SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER**



The River Miskbourne at Amersham –
River Report on page 25.

CONTENTS

- 2 **Report from the Chair**
- 5 **Annual General Meeting Notification**
- 6 **The Society Committee**
- 7 **Amersham Society Outing**
To Greys Court and Thames Cruise
- 8 **Oranges and Lemons**
Report by John Catton on the talk
by Colin Oakes.
- 14 **Summer Garden Party**
- 16 **Flower Power -**
How Plants Control Animals
Report by David Cash on the talk
by botanist Brenda Harold.
- 22 **River Misbourne**
Report by Tim Harmer.
- 25 **Amersham Museum News**
Report by Briony Hudson.

Cover photograph by Elena Morgan –
Hollyhocks by the Market Hall.

Report from the Chair

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM which will be on Wednesday, 26th October is the time when the committee reviews the Society's activities and role during the past twelve months and considers what next. Although the corona virus in its various forms is still present in this country and elsewhere, most restrictions here have now been lifted and our lives with some changes have gradually returned to pre-pandemic activities. Notification about the AGM and the Agenda is on page 5.

THE COMMITTEE

I should like to thank our small committee for continuing to work hard over the past year and for keeping the Society functioning well. Their commitment has been unfailingly reliable, reports are always produced on time and attendance at committee meetings has been close to one hundred percent. I have been fortunate to have been Chair of such a group.

And I should also like to thank those members of the Society, who although not on the committee, are always ready to lend a hand on a regular basis, writing reports, examining accounts, suggesting speakers and possible outings.

Earlier this year we organised a Have Your Say Zoom meeting asking members how they would like to become more involved with the work of the Society and we were very pleased that some members came forward to offer help. And we are especially pleased that two of those have now joined the committee. They are **Carol Chesney** and **John Catton**. Welcome to both of you! Carol is taking over Planning from George Allison and John Catton is taking over as Editor of the Newsletter from me. So now we are eight.

I am also really pleased that the eight current members of the committee have all agreed to stand for election at the AGM. We would very much like other members of the Society also to come forward for election. There is room for more of you and it is vital to have new faces and fresh ideas.

I have been a member of the committee since 2011 and was appointed Acting Chair of the Amersham Society in 2018. Although I did not seek to become Chair, I have certainly found the last four years interesting and mostly enjoyable, and of course during this time I have been extremely well supported by a rather special team. After four years, however, the time has come for me to step down from this role and we are therefore seeking nominations for the next Chair. It would be difficult for the Society to function effectively for long without a Chair so please do consider whether this would be the right role for you. If you have attended any of our talks or activities during the past year or looked at the Newsletter, you will have a good idea of what is involved.

We have a Constitution to inform us of the regulations on most aspects of the committee's day to day function and if there is no absolute guidance on any one area, there is the helpful guidance at General 13 (b) "*The Committee shall be empowered to*

settle all matters not provided for in these rules". Decisions on matters concerning the Amersham Society are taken by the committee which ensures that the Chair is not alone.

ACTIVITIES

Before I comment on our activities, I should like to say that many thanks are overdue to Grant Smith for kindly allowing us to use his amazing photographs of House 19 in the May issue article and apologies for not spotting in the rush to get to press that his photo credit was missing from the final proof.

We are fortunate to live in such a beautiful area where residents have a wide choice of interesting activities to enjoy. And it is good that the Amersham Society is a part of this. We welcome the new Director of Amersham Museum, Briony Hudson, and look forward to continuing our links with this popular and lively Museum.

The present committee have taken an active interest in planning, objecting when it appears that regulations are being ignored or residents are being seriously affected. We understand that, while we might comment on and sometimes object to some planning applications, this will not necessarily change the Council's decision although taking account of our objection Buckinghamshire Council will in some cases refuse an application permission.

Our website has continued to provide timely information about both Society activities and those of other local organisations. We also issue regular e-alerts to members about local matters. Our talks for 2022 have been varied and informative with good speakers and we have planned and booked the programme of speakers and talks for most of 2023. The first two of our talks for 2022 were on Zoom and then from March it was wonderful that once again we were able to have our lectures in the Kings Chapel, where members always enjoy meeting and talking with each other over a cup of Kings Arms special coffee and biscuits.

Reports on the two talks in Kings Chapel this year, ***"Oranges and Lemons"*** in April and ***"How Plants Control Animals"*** in May are on pages 8 and 16 of this Newsletter. Both well researched subjects, one based on history the other on science. We have already explained that our next talk has had to be changed from **Wednesday 28th September to Tuesday 27th September**, when the horticulturist and lecturer, **Lindsay Engers**, will tell us about Chiltern Heritage Fruit varieties. We will be in the Kings Chapel for this as usual.

In July we were able to hold our first Party for three years and our huge thanks go to Su and Quentin Chases for very kindly agreeing that we might once again hold the party in their beautiful garden. It was a wonderfully warm evening, perfect for a relaxed outdoor gathering, our young team of helpers worked hard to ensure that guests were well served with food and drinks and despite forecasts of thunder storms, the much needed rain did not make an appearance until almost everything had been cleared away and most people were home and dry (see pictures on page 14).

The annual outing this month is to the National Trust property Greys Court in Oxfordshire followed by a Thames cruise with tea and cakes. A report on this with photographs will be in the January 2023 Newsletter.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in the Kings Chapel for both the AGM and the talk. Doors will open at 7.30pm when wine or soft drinks will be served before the AGM starts at 8.00pm. This will be followed by a talk from Buckinghamshire based doctor, Andrew Shepherd, about the Fountain of Peace Charity that cares for orphaned and abandoned babies in Uganda.

Dorothy Symes

Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Kings Chapel on Wednesday 26th October 2022 at 8.00 pm.

(Doors will open at 7.30pm when a glass of wine and soft drinks will be provided.)

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes of the 2021 Annual General Meeting and business arising.
- 3 Chairman's Annual Report.
- 4 Honorary Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts.
- 5 Election of Committee Members and Officers.**
- 6 Any other business.

The Annual General Meeting will be followed by:-

- Discussion of topics raised by members.
- TALK: '**Despair to Hope**' by Dr Andrew Shepherd
Trustee of Fountain of Peace Charity.

** Election of Committee Members and Officers.

Nominations should be sent by 15th October to the
Hon Secretary at 162 High Street, Amersham, HP7 0EG.

**The Amersham
Society Committee**

During summer 2022

Dorothy Symes,
Edward Copisarow and
Geraldine Marshall-Andrew





Amersham Society Outing to Greys Court and Thames Cruise

This year members did not have to travel far for the annual outing, which was to our neighbouring county, Oxfordshire. We have so many beautiful places on our doorstep and members on the trip will already have visited and enjoyed the delights of Henley on other occasions and probably also have been to the National Trust property Greys Court. But both these lovely areas are of course well worth many visits and we have the Thames teatime cruise on the Hibernia to enjoy.

As this Newsletter goes to print, the unaccustomed hot and very dry summer weather has given way to our more usual sunshine and showers and our green and pleasant land is starting to return.

A report on the trip and pictures will appear in our January 2023 Newsletter.

ORANGES & LEMONS



A talk by Colin Oakes, 27th April 2022

And there was me expecting a talk about the six London churches which feature in the well-known childrens' nursery rhyme "Oranges and Lemons".

**Oranges and Lemons,
Says the bells of St. Clement's
You owe me five farthings
Says the bells of St. Martin's
When will you pay me?
Says the bells of Old Bailey
When I grow rich
Says the bells of Shoreditch
When will that be?
Says the bells of Stepney
I do not know
Says the great bell of Bow
Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
And here comes the chopper to chop of your head!
Chip chop chip chop – the last man's dead.**

I couldn't have been more wrong. Why? Because Colin Oakes, a lively Blue-Badge guide, took us on a theatrical whirl-wind tour of fourteen churches! Why? Because this nursery rhyme, which originated in the 16th century (*when the Amersham Martyrs were being persecuted and put to death*) has morphed through time gaining and discarding long-forgotten verses (and churches), until we ended up with the Victorian version we know today.

The churches associated with Oranges and Lemons and the story behind it, along with its historical context has long fascinated Colin and this talk was a culmination of his research, some of which conflicts with accepted wisdom.

Such rhymes did not necessarily start out as nursery rhymes, but satirical ditties, mocking authority or containing a hidden meaning under the guise of childrens' entertainment sung in all innocence. Such was the case with Oranges and Lemons, where, in Colin's favoured interpretation, its story follows the route of a condemned man who was marched from Newgate prison, past numerous churches, in or close to the City of London, to his place of execution at Tyburn (Marble Arch).

What part do the churches play in the "story"? To the original audience they set the scene and their inclusion would have been understood. Today they still do that, but must be read in the context of when it was written as

London is now a completely different place, reshaped by the Great Fire of London, the Blitz and gentrification.

The churches have long since ceased to have the relevance they once did and synonymous trades, guilds and customs have vanished along with the social mores of the time.



St. Clement's
Eastcheap

Oranges and Lemons / Says the bells of St. Clement's:

Not, Colin assured us, the famous St. Clement's Dane in the Strand, where St. Clement's Dane school holds an annual commemoration service, but St. Clement's on Eastcheap. This St. Clement's is close to where the wharfs on the Thames were and where citrus fruits would have been unloaded before passing St. Clement's on their way to Leadenhall market. The fruit would have passed several other churches as well, but St. Clement's was perhaps chosen as it rhymes with "*lemons*", suggesting the rhyme was written to the melody "*Oranges and Lemons*" (published 1665).

**You owe me five farthings /
Says the bells of St. Martins:**

Several sources say this is St. Martin's Orgar on Martin Lane which, apart from its bell tower, was destroyed in the Great Fire of London (1666), but Colin believes it is St. Martin le Grand, a bit further north at Moorgate. A monastery up until 1599, this was a church which sounded a curfew bell each evening announcing the closure of the City gates and, crucial to our story, it had "*right of sanctuary*" (which persisted until 1629), so it would have been tempting for our convict awaiting execution, to escape to there. Had he done he would have been charged five farthings for the sanctuary.

**When will you pay me? /
Says the bells of Old Bailey:**

The bells of Old Bailey, which rang out before a hanging, are in fact those of St. Sepulchre-without-Newgate (that is, just outside the City walls) a church which stands opposite the Old Bailey on the site of Newgate prison. The accepted explanation is that the "*when will you pay me*" refers to the imprisoned debtors, but Colin's belief is far more exciting and ironical: the condemned person was allowed to stop at several Inns on the way to Tyburn for a "*final*" drink which, of course, was never paid for, but the inn-keepers knew hordes of onlookers would also come in for a drink and they would pay!



St. Martin's Orgar



St. Sepulchre
-without-Newgate



St. Leonard's Hackney

**When I grow rich /
Says the bells of Shoreditch:**

More irony here. St. Leonard's church is now in the thoroughly gentrified borough of Hackney, but back in the day it was a poverty stricken area just outside the City walls complete with a stinking open sewer (ditch), not covered over till 1760. The chances of any of the residents being wealthy enough to pay off a debt were remote! (older versions refer to St. Leonard's Fleetditch).



St. Dunstan's Stepney

**When will that be? /
Says the bells of Stepney:**

A poignant reference: The church is St. Dunstan's in Stepney, close to the Thames, with a strong connection to mariners. This line in the rhyme references the families of the sailors praying for their safe return, not knowing how long they would be away for or even if they would ever return... with their earnings.

**I do not know /
Says the great bells of Bow:**

St. Mary-le-Bow, not far from St. Dunstan's, is on the City limits with the old Essex border and another church which enforced the nightly curfew. The priests had a novel way of raising funds, Colin told us; they would waylay travellers till after dusk, then charge 6d for a night's accommodation - which could be got for 1d in the City!

As an aside, tradition has it that people born within the sound of Bow bells are considered to be "*Cockney*".

The final three lines.....

St. Mary-le-Bow
the spire



**Here comes
a candle to light
you to bed:**

It would have been a beeswax candle (as opposed to the inferior tallow – animal fat – candle). The Worshipful Company of Wax Chandlers had been based in nearby Gresham Street since 1501.

**And here comes the chopper
to chop of your head:**

Apart from being the culmination of the prisoner's journey, Colin added a frightening footnote: The executioner may have had two axes, one fully sharpened and the other not so. The condemned man had the opportunity to bribe him into using the sharpened axe promising a quicker, less painful death.

**Chip chop chip chop
(the last man's dead):**

Clearly the executioner had not been bribed and four blows were needed to complete the beheading.

It's a shame the Victorian version has discarded so many verses (perhaps to accommodate the childrens' game?) as they bring to life the daily activities around the churches. Here are some verses Colin picked from extended versions of the rhyme.



St. Peter's Cornhill

Pancakes and Fritters / Says the bells of St. Peter's:

A church on Cornhill, the site of a corn market dating back to Roman times where the pancakes and fritters, made from corn, were baked and sold.

Two sticks and an apple / Says the bells of Whitechapel:

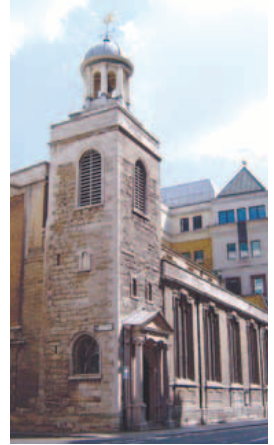
This was St. Mary's, a white painted chapel by the foundry where the bells of London were forged. The "*two sticks and an apple*" could refer to the shape of the hand bells produced there.

Maids in white aprons / Says the bells of St. Katherine's:

St. Katherine Cree is near Leadenhall market and the verse is, Colin suggests, full of suppressed irony.

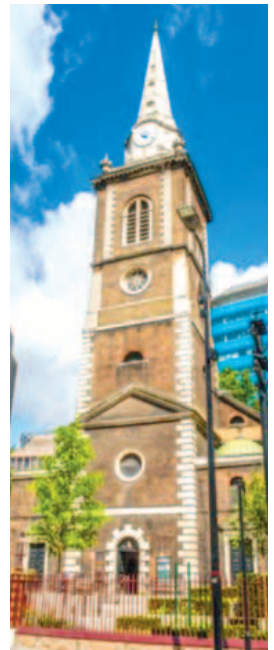
"*Maids in white aprons*" refers to unmarried, pure, working women perhaps in the market. But the nuns of St. Katherine's wore blue and their work was prostitution!

St. Katherine's Cree



Old father baldpate / Says the bells of Aldgate:

St. Botolph-without-Aldgate, on the edge of the City, which, at the time, was popularly known as the prostitutes' church. However on this occasion Colin takes a more prosaic view in that the "*baldpate*" refers to St. Botolph's lack of hair.

St Botolph
-without-Aldgate

Pokers and tongs / Says the bells of St. John's:

St. John's chapel in Clerkenwell where, Colin's research suggests, domestic ironware was made. Another aside is that the St. John's Ambulance Association was established here in 1877.

Kettles and pans / Says the bells of St. Anne's:

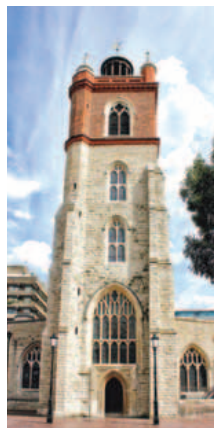
St. Anne and St. Agnes church located in Gresham street. The kettles and pans were some of the utensils produced by local coppersmiths.



St. Anne's and St. Agnes

Brickbats and tiles / Says the bells of St. Giles:

St. Giles-without-Cripplegate, just outside the City walls now within the Barbican. The first line of the verse refers to the fact that from Roman to Tudor times the local clay was used to make building materials. Another note of local interest is that John Milton (d 1674) is buried here.



St. Giles-without-Cripplegate



St. Margaret's Lothbury

Bullseyes and targets / Says the bells of St. Margaret's:

St. Margaret's Lothbury is in the heart of the City next to the Bank of England. It was burnt down in the Great Fire of London, but, like so many churches, rebuilt by Christopher Wren. The rhyme's reference here is to the fact that archery was practiced in nearby fields.

How it came to be written and why, we can only guess at and various interpretations of its story have been put forward. But what is clear is that its starting point must have been before its first recorded publication in 1744. In 1665 a dance with the same name was published, so it would have been performed well before then. As the words seem to have been written to fit the music, the rhyme could easily have started its life who knows when?

John Catton: May 2022

Garden Party

We had a three-year gap when covid prevented us from holding large gatherings. But in 2022 restrictions were lifted and we were delighted that Su and Quentin Chases so kindly agreed that the Amersham Society might once again hold a party in their wonderful garden. The date for the party was agreed for 20th July, eighty five members quickly said that they would like to join the happy gathering and preparations were made with an energetic young team who had agreed to help serve the food and drink.

The subject of weather usually looms large whenever anyone is organising or going to an outdoor event in our beautiful country. And this year was no exception as we looked forward to our first large event since 2019. Until then Buckinghamshire had enjoyed some rather good summer weather, but thundery rain was forecast for the day chosen for our party. Nothing could be done about that except to carry on and in the end the thunder and badly needed rain waited until well after most people had gone home, and most of the clearing up had been done.

As you can see from the pictures, members were able to enjoy a relaxing evening in great surroundings, getting together and in many cases catching up with each other after the enforced break.



Flower Power

How Plants Control Animals

Report on a talk by Dr Brenda Harold



Knapweed picnic -
two couriers the
six spot burnett moth
and the small
skipper butterfly.

Photograph by Dr Brenda Harold

Brenda Harold, a qualified botanist and retired lecturer from Brunel University, opened her talk in provocative style. Are plants the most powerful living things? Surely not: plants are simple things which give us pleasant scenery; animals are the actors. But no, her intention was to show that plants do in fact dominate the earth and control the animals that roam on it.

Brenda started her beautifully illustrated talk with a photograph of a grape hyacinth leaf which she had sliced through with a razor blade and then photographed with a camera attached to her microscope. A thick, waxy, protective layer covered the leaf. Beneath that layer were green fruit drops around the edge of the leaf cells. These were chloroplasts, the site of photosynthesis, in Brenda's view the greatest miracle on earth. The chloroplasts combine carbon dioxide and water to make sugar, a difficult action involving huge power, and the plant's cells then use the sugar to make carbohydrates, fats which the plant uses to make food for itself to grow. But not only food for itself but food for humans and all living things. And then there was the wonder of the cell's nuclei, which contain the plant's DNA and genes. Plants have just as much DNA and just as many genes as animals, and it was humbling to hear that humans have the same number of genes as a cabbage. Ponder that when you are feeling a bit pleased with yourself. Plants, of course, need a constant supply of water which they draw up through their roots, but this means that the plants cannot move and are seemingly an easy prey for all the animals and insects around them. And this is where the need for their manipulative behaviour in controlling animals and insects begins.

How does the countryside manage to stay green when the menace of hungry insects (a greater threat to plants than animals – think aphids and caterpillars) and animals is all around? Remember the destruction wrought by slugs. How is it that the countryside is not all eaten up? Well, plants defend themselves. There are various strategies. The vicious spines of the blackthorn mean that nothing can penetrate a thick blackthorn hedge. The prickles on a holly leaf deter any animal intent on a tasty snack, but note how it is only the lower leaves of the tree that have the prickles. We have no giraffes in this country; energy is needed to make the prickles; why waste energy unnecessarily in making prickles on leaves out of reach of grazing animals? And then there are thistles. The stemless or **Dwarf thistle**, often called the picnickers' thistle, is common on chalk grassland, but it spreads close to the ground and cannot be eaten by sheep.





Deadly Nightshade - *Atropa bella donna*.
A deadly poison also a useful drug.

Photograph by Dr Brenda Harold

Brenda showed us a greatly magnified image of what she called the original hypodermic needle – a very sharp tip, a hollow shaft and a bowl at the bottom. The bowl contains an acid and histamine. When the tip of the needle scratches animal flesh, it snaps and a drop of the liquid in the bowl is forced up the shaft and out of the tip. Brenda's photograph was of a stinging nettle hair. Rabbits, apparently, won't eat stinging nettles, and we humans, through bitter experience, know to treat them with respect, too. But the nettle's defences are no good against insects. The peacock butterfly, the small tortoise shell, the red admiral and the comma all lay their eggs on nettles and their caterpillars happily munch the leaves.

Brenda turned her attention to the use made by plants of chemicals, mostly for defensive warfare but sometimes to attract. Many plants

contain alkaloids, compounds whose properties have, over the centuries, been used by humans as both harmful and helpful medicines. Coniine, for example, is produced by Conium, hemlock, and is thus hemlock poison. Alkaloids have a bitter taste and are toxic to a greater or lesser extent. We are familiar with many of them: caffeine, nicotine, strychnine, morphine, codeine and quinine, the latter adding some zing to our tonic water. The yew tree, *taxus*, produces taxine, a deadly poison found in the leaves, bark and seed of the tree but not in the flesh of the berries, and a life threatening hazard to livestock. **Deadly nightshade, *Atropa belladonna*,** produces atropine, used in medicine to dilate the pupils in the eye, but so dangerous that only a few berries will kill a child. Henbane, a coastal plant which Brenda had photographed on Holy Island, is a member of the potato

family. It is used medicinally to relieve pain and to induce sleep, but in its natural form has no berries, a foul taste and is very toxic. The lack of berries and the horrible flavour no doubt save us all from being tempted to eat it.

The foxglove, *digitalis*, produces two cardiac glycosides, digoxin and digitalin, which are commonly used in treating heart conditions. It is not advisable however to eat foxglove leaves as this would cause vomiting, a reflex that, Brenda suggested, would probably save us from any great harm.



Bird's-foot trefoil

Bird's-foot trefoil, a common grassland plant, is another with hidden defensive properties. The chemical precursor in one part of the leaf combines with an enzyme in another to produce cyanide, a chemical which is toxic to any living thing. Animals may be tempted to take a bite, but that bite will be so distasteful that it will quickly move on to another plant for its lunch. The one exception to this scientific fact is the common blue butterfly, which alone is able to lay its eggs on the trefoil. Bird's-foot trefoil provides it with an exclusive source of food.

Another plant combining defensive qualities to deter the many and attractive qualities to encourage the few is the wild brassica, a member of the cabbage family (and remember what Brenda said about all that DNA and all those genes). Glucosinolates, a natural compound in the plant, produce the pungent smell of mustard oils when the leaves are chewed. These oils deter everything except the cabbage white butterfly. Similarly, garlic mustard, another member of the cabbage family, is the food plant for the orange-tip butterfly.

Ragwort also has two sides to its character. A notifiable weed, it contains the alkaloid, senecionine, which is very poisonous and deadly to horses if eaten. Sadly, the symptoms of illness show themselves too late for any remedial action to be taken.



Ragwort and
Cinnabar Moth caterpillars

But what is fatal to one, is life saving for another. The cinnabar moth stores the alkaloid in its body, and this gives it its distinctive red wings. Birds are attracted by red, but if they peck the cinnabar moth's wings once, they will never do so again.

So, back to the question Brenda posed much earlier: how does the countryside stay green? There are quite simply many thousands of plants, each producing its own defensive chemicals. Animals have to choose wisely what they eat. The burden of feeding the animal kingdom is shared widely across the world of plants.

Plants not only have to protect themselves from being eaten to extinction; they also have to secure the continuation of the species, and they have many different ways of doing so. Some plants are pollinated by the wind, but insects are much more efficient. Brenda likened their task to a courier service, where the courier arrives, is paid and leaves with a package. Thus, a rose needs pollinating. It advertises for a courier through the colour of its flower and the flower's scent. The rose provides a landing platform, its petals, which the courier crosses, brushing past the stamen and the stigma to get to the nectar. The nectar is the insect's payment, its covering with pollen is the package it delivers to another rose elsewhere.

Other plants have different tricks of the trade. The common mallow, for example, has a pattern on its petals

pointing the way for the insect to go. The foxglove also has spots and lines to guide bees to its nectar. Others have evolved to take advantage of the capabilities of different insects. Whereas hoverflies have a ½ cm proboscis, most flies have a very short one and are therefore poor pollinators, so to attract them some flowers have their nectar readily available at their top. Butterflies and bees, on the other hand, have long proboscises, and the **small skipper butterfly** is a good example of one needing that facility to reach the nectar in a thistle. Toadflax, a relative of the antirrhinum, stores its nectar at the bottom of the spur, accessible only through the closed lips of the flower. The nectar is difficult to reach, and this ensures that only the right insects can reach it.



Some plants rely on moths at night rather than butterflies and other insects for pollination. The nectar of the primrose is down a long, narrow tube which is difficult for insects to penetrate. Moths have long proboscises and are attracted to the flower's sweet fragrance in the evening and its pale yellow colouring. Honeysuckle also releases its scent at night, again with

the intention of attracting night-time moths. And while most orchids are bee flowers, the fragrant orchid is another one pollinated by moths, attracted again by the strong scent and pale colour.

The fly orchid has another story to tell. The lips of its flower mimic an insect. Furthermore, the flower also mimics the scent of two species of digger wasp. The male wasp, drawn by the scent of a female, comes in search of a mate. Pollen sticks to the male's back, which the male can only remove by going to another fly orchid with a receptive surface. Brenda pointed out that the fly orchid was following a risky strategy: if the digger wasp were to become extinct, the fly orchid would disappear too.

While pollination ensures the production of seeds, plants also need to ensure their dispersal. The seeds of agrimony have prickly burrs which get caught on the manes of horses, the furry coats of animals or the bootlaces of walkers. Brenda suggested that the seeds of cleavers or goose grass were the inspiration for Velcro, such is the tenacity with which they cling to anything brushing past. Oak trees have a different ploy: their acorns produce more than enough food for their own growth needs, the surplus encouraging squirrels and jays not only to eat them but also to bury them for their winter pantry. The buried acorns of course are frequently forgotten and remain to germinate.



Wikimedia Commons

As mentioned earlier, red is a colour conspicuous to birds, and many plants rely on this fact to ensure the dispersal of their seeds. Hawthorn, dog rose, honeysuckle and **black bryony** all produce berries which turn as the seasons pass from green to orange to red. The birds eat the red berries, the seed passes through the gut and the bird deposits it with a healthy dollop of fertiliser to continue the cycle of life.

So, the power of plants. A good example to end with, suggested Brenda, was the woody night shade. A member of the potato family, it produces alkaloids to protect itself, but these are not dangerously poisonous. Its purple and yellow flowers attract insects for pollination, and the plant produces bright scarlet berries. The concentration of alkaloids in the berries drops right down, so that they do not cause harm if eaten. The birds oblige and spread the seeds in their droppings. The cycle of life begins again. How wonderful.

How perfectly in control.

David Cash

River Misbourne Survey Report

Dated 21st August 2022 for the Amersham Society.

Started around 8:30 am Weather: Warm and dry.

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

In spite of the hot dry weather the river has water in it.
Area of survey from the bottom end of Shardeloes Lake
to the ford and footbridge south east of the town.

- 1** Sluice 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. The river is running well.
- 3** Copas Farm is private land, so unable to undertake survey. However, from the High Street bridge River running but there is a fair amount of weed.
- 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 there is vegetation on the cottages' side of the River. Riparian owners need to clear back a little? The fence along the path is broken and part of it is in the river. It is definitely in need of repair.
- 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 vegetation after the old brewery and up to the Museum. This needs to be cleared by Riparian owner. Note the vegetation is on the Pondwick garden side.

8 At Badminton Court the river flowing well.

9 Church Mead. There is vegetation but the river is running well.

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

However there is large amount of rubbish, beer tins etc. on the bank and dead branches in the river to make a bridge or dam? This needs clearing.

11 From the public car park to Tesco car park tree branches seen in the river. River flow very slow but water is clear.

12 The river running slowly behind Tesco car park. The overflow culvert looks OK, There is still water in the river? This area needs to be reviewed regularly by Tesco for rubbish etc.



Vegetation at Pondwick

- 13** At Station Road Bridge the River is slow flowing. There is a large amount of weed growing but flowing OK. May need clearing before Ambers.
- 14** West Arch of the road bridge to Ambers and river fork at the old Lookers (*Jaguar*) Garage slow with vegetation. There is graffiti on the bridge.
- 15** Area from the old Lookers (*Jaguar*) Garage. Slow flow needs a tidy up and vegetation removed.
- 16** From where the river emerges from the Two Arches under London Road West there is weed growth and slow flowing water.
- 17** Moving along into Bury farm field there is slow flowing water and the river is clear.
- 18** Moving under the A413 bypass going along the river towards the foot bridge, we found a clear free flowing river. Thanks to Affinity Water improvement.

Amersham Museum News



Settling into Amersham Museum



Briony Hudson

It's a great pleasure to write this piece for the Amersham Society, in only my third week as Director of Amersham Museum. I took over from Emily Toettcher in late July, and have significant shoes to fill. Emily's achievements over the last ten years have transformed the Museum, taking it from strength to strength both in terms of the building and its displays, but also the vibrant community of volunteers and supporters who enable it to carry out such an impressive and appreciated programme of work, activities and research. I'm only just starting to learn how many plates there are to keep spinning as the senior member of paid staff, but am already massively reassured by the dedication and enthusiasm of my colleagues, both salaried and voluntary. It's a fantastic place to work.



The museum physic garden

With 125 volunteers, there's lots of new people to meet, involved in every aspect of the Museum's work. If you visit, you might come across the duty managers and stewards on the front desk and in the galleries, or perhaps those that help Sarah Minty, our Learning Officer, to deliver schools and holiday events. Perhaps you've encountered the volunteers that run our Age Friendly programme of reminiscence and singing sessions, and visit care homes with boxes of handling objects to prompt memories, or met people accompanying Anthony our Mobile Museum at local events. You might not have noticed the gardening team who, especially in the recent dry weather, provide the beautiful physic garden with the TLC that it needs to

keep it looking so good, or thought about the collections and research teams who assist Emma Treleaven, our Collections Manager, to look after and delve into the history of the objects, photographs and archives that the Museum cares for. You've probably not considered that the Museum's website, its financial book keeping, ordering and stock-taking for the shop, building management and social media, are all carried out primarily by voluntary team members. And that's not to mention the Museum's trustees or the Friends organisation who provide so much support in different ways. It's a remarkable team effort, and we are always looking for new volunteers, so I hope that you might consider getting involved.

I've also had a very busy induction with lots of exciting projects up ahead. Rather than a summer holiday, the Museum has put on a summer spurt of activity. I expect many of you were involved in the welcome return of Amersham Heritage Day on Sunday 4 September as participants and visitors. As well as offering free admission for the day and having Anthony the Mobile Museum parked outside for people to enjoy, we were very pleased to partner with the cast members from the Amersham Martyrs Community Play to take a Tudor theme for the afternoon. With the cast providing music and dance, Mummers Play, and storytelling outside the Museum, inside, visitors explored our Tudor Room, dressed up and searched for healing herbs in our garden, with the help of wise woman Mother Savoury. We were also delighted to host local artist Karen Martin who was showing her artwork inspired by the Martyrs Play specially for the afternoon.

Over the summer holidays, our Create! workshops for families have enabled

people to try visible darning, screen printing, and making rag rugs inspired by our new display Make, Mend and Repair. In the 1700s, Amersham was well-known for lace-making, but making and mending clothes and hats of all sorts has been a necessary skill for centuries, as well as a job for local people – and also a popular hobby. From September to December, visit to enjoy examples on show from our collection including beautiful tambour beading, intricate straw plaiting, smocking, and delicate lace. To link with our Make, Mend and Repair exhibition, you can also explore a range of textile crafts with local crafts people in our Talk & Try sessions. From lace making to weaving and tambour beading to straw plaiting, each session will include a talk on the history of the technique, related objects from the Museum's collection to look at, and a workshop for participants to try the technique. Check our website or pop into the Museum to find out about dates and tickets.



Create Workshops

The Museum is also getting involved in an exciting project co-ordinated by Buckinghamshire Culture and the National Paralympic Heritage Trust to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the London Paralympic Games in 2012. Amersham Museum is one of ten venues across Buckinghamshire taking part in the Together We Build Stronger partnership project. A Community Curator has selected a Gravity Costume Corset – worn at the Paralympics opening ceremony – to go on show at the Museum. Displayed alongside the original designs and memories from the volunteer who wore it in 2012, this is a unique opportunity to see a piece of Paralympic history. On display from 9 September to 4 November, we hope to

invite local groups, particularly those that haven't been before or have special access or educational needs, to visit the Museum to see this special loan, and take part in a hands-on activity session.

Looking further ahead, the Museum is taking part in the Chilterns Walking Festival (15 – 30 October) with six walks based in Amersham and around. I personally find that walking through streets and countryside is a stimulating way to absorb local history, and our guides are extremely knowledgeable pointing out a building feature you may not have noticed before, the reason behind the appearance of a particular view, or a quirky fact about a specific location. I hope you might consider joining them. There are full listings



Tudor history walks, led by guides in Tudor costume



Reminiscence

of all walks in the Festival on the website: <https://www.visitchilterns.co.uk/walkingfest.html>

And of course, we're beginning to turn our thoughts to Christmas – but I won't share those details here, as it's certainly still summer. Look out for further information later in the autumn.

If you haven't visited the Museum recently, I wanted to remind you of our regular events and activities.

The Museum runs a programme of reminiscence groups and a singing group, particularly aimed at older people. Join us to share memories or enjoy singing well-loved songs from the 20th century. Check our website or get in touch to find out more.

If you missed them on Heritage Day, our popular guided walks continue to run through the autumn. Choose from routes exploring the early development of the

town, including the church, brewery, charter fair and almshouses, or the later history, including coaching inns, Brazils factory, the workhouse and hospital. If you're interested in the town's Tudor history, our walk led by guides in Tudor costume will introduce you to life and death in 16th century Amersham. Find out more on our website by clicking on Walks under the *"What's On"* tab.

If you'd like to help us further, get in touch to find out about becoming a member of our volunteer team or perhaps you'd like to join Friends of Amersham Museum to enjoy supporting our work with other like-minded people. You can find more details on our website by clicking on the *"Join"* tab.

I very much look forward to meeting you at the Museum or in the town very soon.

Briony Hudson

NOTICEBOARD

Programme of Talks and Events

Society Meetings are 7.30pm for 8.00pm
and take place in the Kings Chapel.

27 September **Chiltern Heritage Fruit Varieties**
*(NB the date for this talk had to be changed
from 28th to 27th September)*
Lindsay Engers will talk about varieties of Heritage
Fruit that have been widely grown in Buckinghamshire

26 October **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**
Followed by a talk **Despair to Hope** by Dr Andrew
Shepherd, a Buckinghamshire based doctor and
Trustee of the Fountain of Peace a Children's
Foundation based in Western Uganda, committed
to rescuing abandoned and orphaned babies.

30 November **Rediscovering William Burgess Furniture**
A talk by top cabinet maker Tom Lawrence.

2023

25 January **Bagels and Bacon**
Jeff Roselar will talk about his childhood
growing up in the Eastend of London.
A mixture of Jewish and cockney humour.

Amersham Society Officers

Chair	Dorothy Symes	01494 434858
Vice –Chair	Edward Copisarow	07932 152522
Secretary	Geraldine Marshall-Andrew	01494 433735
Trustee	George Allison	01494 725548

Website <https://amershamsociety.org>

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