

**MAY 2023**



**AMERSHAM SOCIETY  
NEWSLETTER**



Spring sunshine in church Mead, Old Amersham by Chris Ahier

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Cover photograph :

The Red Kite by Linda Witton, see article behind the picture on page 16.

# Editorial

This month we will be celebrating the Coronation of King Charles III. Amersham Town Council have organised two major events: On **Sunday 7th May**, a **“Coronation Party”** and concert by the post war style singing group, the *“Polka Dots”*, in the Memorial Gardens between 1:30 and 3:30. And on the following day, **Monday 8th**, the Coronation Bank Holiday, a **“Picnic in the park”** in the King George V playing fields between 12:30 and 5:30. The festivities will include a childrens funfair and royal fancy dress parade, food and drink stalls and lots more, all to the accompanying sound of two Big Band performances. Full details can be found on [www.visitamersham.org.uk/events](http://www.visitamersham.org.uk/events)

How did we celebrate past Coronations? On page 36 our museum director, Briony Hudson, has selected some atmospheric images which give you a flavour of the eras in which they were held - moving from the halcyon days of the British Empire before the horrors of WW1 through to the optimistic immediate post-war and the (fledgling) British Commonwealth.

But also take a look at Amersham Museum's website [www.amershammuseum.org](http://www.amershammuseum.org) where they have added a special feature on how, here in Amersham, we celebrated the last four Coronations. This project draws on the records held by the Museum, supplemented by contributions from local people who have submitted their memories and reminiscences.

Activities continue throughout the summer. Following on from the Coronation concert the Memorial Gardens play host to eight **Big Band concerts**, the first on Sunday 21st May and the last on Sunday 27th August. There is the **Festival of Arts** taking place in the Market Hall from 15th to 23rd July and the town's **Heritage Day** on Sunday 10th Sept, an ever increasingly popular event first held in 2006.

Back to atmospheric photographs: You'll find some more in the first of a series of articles by Alison Bailey, a trustee and volunteer at Amersham Museum who has been researching local history in the area for over 10 years. In it she focuses on people who have given their names to local places, roads and buildings.

To repeat what I wrote in January's editorial, Amersham is a small town full of people with many passions, that's what makes it such a vibrant town. This issue celebrates another three long-standing societies: the 50th Anniversary of the Amersham Birdwatching Club (Cover photograph and story on page 16), forty-one years since the Amersham

A Cappella evolved (page 28) and staggeringly, 180 years since the Amersham band was founded (page 6).

We also have a thriving Photographic Society which, by coincidence, held its first exhibition in 1953. You'll find three images by their members in this issue: two in the summary of our February talk on honeybees and the evocative "Springtime in Church Mead", on the inside front cover. Its origins, along with more creative pictures, will feature in our September newsletter.

We live in a lovely town, let's keep it this way; and we can make the difference. "Sustainable Amersham – act now today to protect tomorrow" (page 32) in effect picks up and expands on the article "Amersham as a Plastic Free Town" (September 2021) written by Nikki Magrath – founder member of, and now Chair, of Sustainable Amersham. In it she despairs of our plastic waste especially with single-use packaging but wrote about the ways we can help. And I am safe in saying we all despair when it is carelessly and thoughtlessly discarded on our road verges and playing fields.



Two groups of volunteers certainly agreed and joined in a community litter pick initiative on 18th March, one meeting at the Market Hall in the Old Town, the other at St. Michael's Church. Together the 75 volunteers collected over 60 bags of litter.

Another Clean-up morning is planned for the end of September.

The Amersham Society committee meets six times each year to discuss a wide range of topics relating to, as our constitution states, the "amenities and heritage of the Old Town", however, with half our membership now living in Top Amersham and Chesham Bois our focus is widening as you will be only too aware by the talks we organise and articles in this newsletter. Perhaps our main concern is unrestricted development; hence we keep a keen eye on all planning applications. The

two probably uppermost in residents' minds are the Maltings and the new Aldi store. Put briefly, no decisions have been made by the Planning Authorities since Carol Chesney, our Planning Officer, wrote her article in January's newsletter!

You'll be aware of the Town Map display board outside the Memorial Gardens. The Amersham Society is actively looking to erect another, this time detailing the history, importance, ecology, wildlife and restoration of the river Misbourne. The proposed siting will be in Church Mead.

As soon as plans are finalised we'll write about it in a future newsletter. Finally, whilst the Amersham Society aims are clear, we are keen to reflect what our members expect in an ever changing society. So, please do email us with your thoughts and any topics you'd like presented in our talks.

### Correcting An Omission

In the January issue I inadvertently omitted to "*credit*" to the musicians who performed with **Amchor** last December, so with apologies, they are: the tenor soloist **Lawrence Thackeray** and **British Sinfonietta**.



## Letters to the Editor

I'm delighted that the article about the Friend's Meeting House by Peter Schweiger in the January issue elicited this extremely interesting response.

Dear John,  
Congratulations on your January 2023 edition of the Amersham Society newsletter; it is both readable and informative. As an addicted historian I have often thought that the 17th century must have been the most turbulent in England in the last half millennium, so I was particularly interested in Peter Schweiger's article on the origins of the Quaker Meeting House in Whielden Street.

In today's troubled world of religious intolerance, it is all too easy to forget our own divisive past in which the persecution of dissenters was all too common.

As an ex officio historian of the Drake family, I was interested to see the role played by Sir William Drake in the 1667 arrest of Ralph Trumper. This Sir William Drake was the founder of the Drake family fortunes in and around Amersham. He died in 1669 without any children and the Shardeloes estate

passed to his namesake and nephew, another Sir William Drake. These two William Drakes are often confused, but the uncle was a Baronet while the nephew was a Knight. All known sources give Sir William Drake Baronet's date of death as 1669, with perhaps the most authoritative being his memorial that is extant in the chancel of St Mary's in Amersham.

On page 25 of the January 2023 newsletter it is printed that Ralph Trumper was re arrested in 1660 by James Perrot after the death of Sir William Drake. This must be a typographical error and was possibly meant to be 1670, the year after Sir William's death.

Perhaps you could copy this message to Peter Schweiger, not as a negative criticism, but just as a refinement to an excellent article.

Yours sincerely,

**Barney Tyrwhitt-Drake**

Dear Barney,

Thank you so much for taking the time to write, your kind words and on being my first ever "**letter to the editor**"!

It's awful that your remarks on religious intolerance are still relevant in so many societies in the world today. That sad observation aside, I particularly like your third paragraph which makes an interesting addendum to Peter Schweiger's article.

As you'll have imagined I have contacted Peter and here is part of his

reply: Yes it was an error and it was 1670 that Ralph Trumper was re arrested. So, thank you for picking up on this detail.

What I would like to do now, with your permission, is print part of your email in the May newsletter to not only correct the error, but add some interesting additional "background" to Peter's narrative.

With many thanks and all good wishes.

**John Catton**

# Amersham Band

## Recognised with the Queen's Award

In September 2018 Fred Harrison and Caroline Perkins came and spoke to the Society about the Amersham Band.

A tremendous amount has happened in the intervening four and a half years, so I invited Fred, the Band's Chairman, to write about the exciting developments.

In December 2022, the Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Lady Howe, presented Amersham Band with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It was a great honour for the band to receive the award which recognises outstanding achievement by voluntary groups, and is equivalent to the MBE for individuals.

Many people will have encountered Amersham Band within the local community, whether it be at a band concert, a local fete, in the Memorial Gardens, on Remembrance Sunday, or at Christmas. However, not many will be familiar with all our activities and how we have developed to be a key part of Amersham's social and cultural scene.





The band is a valued community asset; teaching music, entertaining local people, supporting civic events and bringing people together.

Our music-making is for all ages, and there is a strong focus on young people as participation in music enhances their quality of life through improved educational attainment, less mental ill-health and character formation; it can inspire them to take action to change their lives. For local people, we improve health and wellbeing, contribute to community cohesion and reduce social isolation.

The history of the band stretches back over 180 years, with a first record of the band found in a newspaper article dated 1843 with a report of a cricket match between Prestwood Brass Band and Amersham Band. The match took place just 500m from Rectory Meadow, the site in the heart of Amersham Old Town where the band has recently built a new Bandroom.

Band Chairman,  
**Fred Harrison**  
and Manager,  
**Caroline Perkins**  
receiving the Queens'  
Award at our  
Christmas Concert



Amersham Band in  
1891.  
George Ward is seen  
standing on the left.

There have been several incarnations of the band over the years, with benefactors from the Odd Fellows Society, Ancient Order of Foresters, and the Temperance movement. At the end of the nineteenth century, a local photographer, George Ward took charge of the band and this has left a rich legacy of photographs and other memorabilia. The band fell away during both World Wars but was reformed by the then Mayor of Amersham in 1977.

Recently the band has been flourishing with a pro-active management committee and under the baton of musical director Paul Fisher. The band has grown to around 180 members of all ages and abilities; over half of the members are young people. There are nine bands, including a beginner teaching group, two groups for young developing players, a community band, concert band, big band, youth band and championship-level band. A new informal day-time band has been started for people who prefer to play during the daytime, or who may not have time to attend our evening rehearsals. The band has a strategy of creating an open and inclusive environment, building up the different groups by having fun and being enthusiastic about our music-making. Links with the local community and schools have been developed to extend participation and community inclusion. We like to think that the band offers opportunities for anyone, regardless of age or musical ability.



The new Bandroom at  
Rectory Meadow

Over the years, band rehearsals have taken place in various locations, including the gas works and Market Hall (*during the George Ward period*), a hut behind The Swan pub, the Methodist Church in the High Street and until recently, the Methodist Church Hall in Winchmore Hill. In 2017 the band started a project to find a new home as it had outgrown the Winchmore Hill premises. A 70-year lease was taken on land at the bottom of Rectory Hill and, once planning permission had been granted, the band set out to raise the funds to construct a purpose designed music facility. Thanks to the generous support of many local people and grants from a number of funders, including the HS2 Community Fund, a total of £500,000 has been raised to complete the project. The Covid restrictions delayed the build, but at the end of 2020, the building was ready for occupation. Frustratingly, it was several months before the band could even start only limited rehearsals, but by late 2021, the full potential of the new premises could be realised. Today the Bandroom is in near constant use with band rehearsals, private teaching and music exams, together with third party community users, such as the U3A Orchestra, Chiltern Probus Club, several weekly Yoga and Pilates sessions, and a range of ad-hoc bookings. It is fair to say that the new Bandroom has transformed the band and provides a fantastic local facility for music and wellbeing related activities.



Photograph by Henry Manthorpe

The Band's musical activities are very broad. Each summer we put on two free concerts in the Memorial Gardens where we try to include two or more of our bands. In the last year we have also made good use of the new Chilterns Lifestyle Centre with performances from our Community and Concert Bands; a Big Band concert featuring trumpet virtuoso Mike Lovatt (who is also a vice president of the band); and a film screen performance of The Snowman with live brass band at Christmas. We have also held concerts as part of the Amersham Festival at Amersham Free Church and at The Kings Church including our highly popular Christmas Concert featuring four bands and 100 plus players. Concerts and events with other music groups help to broaden the variety of music and appeal for our audiences. The band has held joint performances with Amersham A Cappella ladies chorus, Chess Valley Male Voice Choir, Hendon Salvation Army Band, and the famous Fodens, Tredegar, and Brighouse and Rastrick Bands.

A full-house audience at our Christmas Concert

The brass band world also has a competitive element and the band enters the National Brass Band Championship each year. This is organised in sections, for different standards of bands a bit like the football league, starting in the Fourth Section and going up to the top-level Championship level. Over the years, the band has steadily improved, reaching Championship level in 2020. Our Concert Brass band is now competing in the Third Section.



One of the band's favourite activities is the biennial trip to our twin town, Bensheim, where the band features in the Winzerfest celebration, plays in several street concerts and marches in the parade. The band has been making the journey to Germany since the 1980s and a great friendship with the local Bensheim community has developed. This year we will be hosting a visit to Amersham from the Fehlheim band with a social event, a Memorial Gardens Concert and a joint performance at the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre.

Looking forward, this year we expect the band to be as busy as ever. We typically play at 30 to 40 events each year and so far our plan for 2023 includes; the brass band championship contest in March, a trip to Stockport for our Youth Band to compete in the Youth Championships, participation in the Whit Friday marches at Saddleworth, a trip to Blackpool and visits from the Fehlheim Band from Germany and Hasle Skolekorps Band from Norway. We'll also be doing many concerts and performances for local people so look out for our future events on our website, social media and posters.

The band is proud to have grown into a key part of the community in Amersham and is grateful for the fantastic support we receive from local residents. We have travelled a long way since the beginnings in the 19th Century and, to sum up, the words of The Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, Lady Howe, seem appropriate. In presenting the Queen's Award she said *"This vibrant and dynamic Brass Band has become an award winning exemplar across the country. This has been achieved through the commitment and endeavours of a dedicated group of volunteers who set out clear strategic objectives to widen local participation, improve opportunities and diversity, to raise musical standards, and establish a permanent base. All this has been achieved entirely by volunteers."*

For more information about the band and its activities, please visit our website at [www.amershamband.com](http://www.amershamband.com)

**Fred Harrison**

## PROGRAMME OF LOCAL EVENTS 2023

**21 May**  
Concert in the  
Memorial Gardens

**15 – 18 June**  
Fehlheim Band  
visiting Amersham

**17 June**  
Concert at Chilterns  
Lifestyle Centre with  
Fehlheim Band

**18 June**  
Concert in the  
Memorial Gardens

**24 June**  
Joint Concert at  
Chilterns Lifestyle  
Centre with  
Hasle Band

*The John Hampden Society is a registered charity which exists to bring together people with an interest in John Hampden and to encourage wider knowledge of this great 17th century Parliamentarian, his life and times. Accordingly, at our January meeting we were pleased to welcome Sam Hearn, the Society's Hon Treasurer, to tell us something of William Hakewill, an eminent lawyer of the time, a close advisor to Hampden who played a significant role in re-enfranchising the three Buckinghamshire Boroughs of Wendover, Amersham and Marlow by petitioning Parliament in 1624.*

## WILLIAM HAKEWILL MP

As a reference point let's start with a description of Amersham in the early sixteenth century by John Leland: "*a right pretty market town ... of one street well built with timber*". By 1601 there were around 988 inhabitants. Having previously been a notorious centre of Lollardy, Amersham retained a reputation for puritan nonconformity. In 1624 it was reported that 'the people still lie in their pews, sit with their hats on, and neither kneel at the litany nor bow at the name of Jesus', despite orders to the contrary at the last ecclesiastical visitation.

The years' between 1603 and 1714 were perhaps the most decisive in English history. During this period, modern English society and modern state began to take shape and England's position in the world was transformed. It is a fascinating period of history to explore.

James 1st ascended the throne inheriting considerable debt from Elizabeth as a consequence of the war with Spain. His high view of his royal prerogative aroused opposition from parliamentarians - financial and constitutional conflicts were many during the parliaments of his reign.





Parliament 1643

## Who was John Hampden?

Until his untimely death in 1643, Hampden had established himself as the “Father of the People” or “The Patriot”, because of his resistance to the policies of Charles the 1st. His political achievements are well documented and can be read elsewhere. He was also very wealthy. The historian Jasper Ridley has offered the following picture of John Hampden: *“His good looks and personal charm won him many friends. Unlike many of his contemporaries he was courteous to his social inferiors as well as to his equals, and was much loved by his tenants and neighbours. As a young man he was a keen*

*sportsman (riding, hunting and playing cricket and other games), and he was known for his joviality and gaiety; but he became more grave and pensive as he grew older and became involved in politics. He was generally regarded as a Puritan, though he never belonged to the more extreme sects.”*

Perhaps John Hampden was the Volodymyr Zelenskyy of his day!

When the Houses of Parliament were rebuilt after 1834, Hampden was selected as one of the most famous Parliamentary figures whose statues are positioned in St Stephen’s Hall. Memorials to John Hampden can be found locally at Prestwood and at Chalgrove.

## And who was William Hakewill?

William Hakewill was born in Exeter in 1574 to a wealthy merchant, John Hakewill and his wife Thomasina Periam, also from a wealthy Exeter family, who had sympathies with Puritanism. His mother died when he was only five, but he benefited from the care and attention of his uncle, William Periam, who had represented the city in Parliament. He was related to many members of the landed gentry. Thomas Bodley, the diplomat associated with the restoration of the library in Oxford now named after him, was a cousin and Hakewill was even a distant relative of John Hampden. It would appear that young William's intellectual abilities were spotted at an early age, and possibly with the encouragement of his uncle William, he enrolled at Exeter College, Oxford, his uncle's alma mater although he did not graduate; subsequently he went to Staple Inn and Lincoln's Inn (being bencher there for over 30 years) and it was with his uncle's help that he went into Parliament, at the age of 27, representing the Cornish constituency of Bossiney in 1601. He continued to represent two further Cornish constituencies, Mitchell and Tregony by 1624 and during that period, established himself as a skilful parliamentarian. He was a notable lawyer, historian and antiquary and an acknowledged expert of parliamentary procedure. He did not enjoy an easy relationship with the king, but the influence of his uncle may have contributed to his

appointment as deputy attorney in the Exchequer to Anne of Denmark, wife of James in 1603, a permanent position on an annual salary of £5. His rise to parliamentary prominence arose from his stance on the issue of "impositions" or monopolies - a valuable source of income for the monarch and those with court influence when he delivered a speech described as impressive for its clarity and learning.

Hakewill moved to Buckinghamshire around 1616. In 1619, he gave his address as Chequers having leased the recently rebuilt property (in 1565) for a period of 16 years. There is no evidence that he ever actually lived there. But perhaps his parliamentary activities and his involvement with Lincoln's Inn necessitated a domicile closer to London than Cornwall offered.

It was around 1624 that Hakewill's connections with Amersham became manifest. In April he was retained as counsel by the boroughs of Amersham, Great Marlow and Wendover, all of which petitioned jointly to be restored to the franchise. It may have been Hakewill who discovered that these boroughs had had parliamentary representation during the Middle Ages; the grateful denizens of Amersham returned him to Parliament in 1624 and again in 1628. John Hampden was returned at Wendover, the neighbouring constituency. (Prior to this, Hampden had also been returned to Parliament by a Cornish constituency, Grampound.) With the dissolution

of parliament by Charles 1st, his parliamentary activity ceased.

Two other facets of Hakewill's contribution were his membership of the Society of Antiquaries, until dissolved by the king, and his creation of a travelling library, since dubbed as a 17th century Kindle! It is thought that Hakewill commissioned four of these artefacts to give to friends, somewhere around the time of his marriage. By giving such a gift, Hakewill complimented his recipients' learnedness, while displaying his own inventiveness and wealth. The University of Leeds is in possession of a copy. Designed to appear, when closed, as a

large folio volume, it's bound in brown Turkey leather and contains three shelves housing some 40 odd miniature books bound in limp vellum with coloured fabric ties. Gold-tooling on the spine of each volume picks out a flower and a wreath while all the covers are embellished with a golden angel carrying a scroll that reads Gloria Deo, meaning Glory to God.

No image of Hakewill can be found. Latterly, he lived at The Hale in Wendover and is buried in St Mary's, Wendover. He left instructions that no more than £40 should be spent on his funeral.

Melissa



Jacobean travelling library from the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds

#### Attributions

Christopher Hill: *The Century of Revolution 1603 – 1714*. 1980.

Norma Major: *Chequers: The Prime Minister's Country House and its History*. 1996.

Website: <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/> 1604 – 1629.

Founder members: Richard Tomlin, David Witton and Mike Kent



# Amersham Birdwatching Club's 50<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary 2023

One of the town's longest surviving social clubs, Amersham Birdwatching Club, is celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year. Here David Witton, a founder member, and Mike Kent, a past Chairman reflect on its history and continuing appeal.

All the images in this  
article by Linda Witton





Expedition organiser Dave Witton, above, finds bird-watching a good contrast to his job in a City bank.

IT STARTED like many other coach outings, wondering if the coach would turn up on time, checking to see that everyone who should have been there was there, and counting heads once everyone was in their seats, so that no-one got left behind on the way back.

The people who gathered at Amsterdam Community Centre on a sunny Sunday morning ranged from bright young schoolboys to white-haired men and women whose school days were many years behind them. They all had one thing in common — an interest in birds and bird watching, and eager members of the Amsterdam and District Ornithological Society or its lay group for youngsters.

The target for the day was Popham Harbour, on the Sussex coast, a nature reserve with 750 acres of mudflats, where we hoped to see migrant birds, arriving from the south for the summer, as well as a variety of water birds and waders.

The expedition organizer Dave Winton of Little Chalfont, explained that society members had visited the reserve twice before, but that this was the first time they were going in the spring. We would be arriving at about 11.30 when the tide was out and it was hoped

To those who aren't involved in it, bird watching has an air of the eccentric and the vague about it, with the image of the fanatic oblivious of everything but the feathered creatures he is watching.

"It can be anything to anyone," said Mike Rosser, a member of the society's committee. "It depends what you want to make of it. Some of our members are almost totally absorbed in ornithology, taking jobs which give them plenty of time for watching birds, and on the other hand there are people who enjoy it because it is a leisurely outdoor pastime."

For Dave Wilson, who has been interested in birdlife since he was a boy, the society gives him a chance to get away from it all after his week's work in a City hall.

OW  
F

Once we had acquired the reserve the hustle and bustle of daily life certainly seemed miles away. The rustling that muffled the noise of birds in and out of the bushes.

We were away from every sense — I actually, meant

**On the train**

On the  
train

ADOS secretary Sylvia Payne explains the society was founded after a Royal tour for the Promotion of Film was shot in America, and she is interested in forming a club where they can get together. Not that a membership fee is further to enthusiasts in the junior section.

By today's standards a surprisingly expensive way of passing the time. "You can have a little or as much as," said Mike. "You don't need special trips all the time. You can watch birds in the garden and even on

Once you are in the field with basic equipment—waders, windproof walking boots and a field guide, binoculars, something to carry your gear in, the only other thing involved are in travel, which is very small changes in the reserves.

# CONDAMNED N ALONG MUDFLATS

One of the first birds was spotted at Fugham Harbour was a gullbird, Tarrago's smallest bird. Soon afterwards the distinctive call of a cliff chaff gave away its presence, and a long-tailed cat obligingly let a nearby thorn bush.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was the sighting of a pair of little terns, hovering above the shallow water of the mudflats and then diving for food. This seemed quite a sight, as the birds had arrived early from Africa where they

as by their plumage," said Richard Tenks, who took up his job as a postman to have more free time for watching birds.

The ravens had been there for some time and the tide started coming in, the weather became colder and a sharp wind gusted.

An important job on the journey home was deciding what we had seen during the afternoon, and Jay Ouster who was officially recording species spotted, conferred with group leaders Dave Ball, Richard Tomlin and Jay Elders. The grand tour of different species was

After that, talk turned to future expeditions including one to Minnesota and one to Christmas Island where a group would be going on with a qualified bird ranger — definitely a dog of a job in the hand being worth two in the bush.

AUDS members also watch birds nearer home in Chatham, Colchester, Wexham, Wendover. They also hold indoor meetings in the American Community Centre.

Reporter  
LINDY B.

spent a day in Sussex and the attraction of a popular — bird w

## BOOKING

play in  
and discovered  
tions of  
hobby  
watching

Reporter  
**LINDY BROOKLING**  
spent a day in  
Sussex and discovered  
the attractions of  
a popular hobby  
— bird watching

However, one I didn't see was a stoop. "It's so well camouflaged you can hardly see it," said someone, and I never did, despite following directions for finding it with binoculars given by those who had been able to pick it out.

**Sharp  
wind**

It obviously takes some time to become an accomplished birdwatcher. "You got to know them by their call, flight patterns and where they rise from, as well

**Mrs. Sylvia Payne,**  
author of *Sharp Wind*



It all began way back in April 1973 when an article appeared in the Bucks Examiner advertising a meeting for any people interested in birds in the area to come along to the Drake Hall at the Amersham Community Centre for a two hour discussion on local birds.

The meeting was organised by a member of the Natural History Museum in London, with a view to forming an ornithological club in the Amersham area. Some forty people attended a lively meeting and many showed an interest in forming a bird club and a small number volunteered to stand on the first committee.

Meetings took place at our houses and Jeremy Spoor became our first

chairman, Dr David Abrahams our treasurer and Sylvia Paine as secretary. Other committee members were David Bell, Richard Tomlin and David Witton.

To attract new members we decided to advertise in the local newspapers our proposed indoor and outdoor events, and the Barn Hall in the community centre was hired for monthly meetings.

As members were joining the new group from a wide area of South Bucks, the name Amersham and District Ornithological Society (ADOS) was adopted as an appropriate name. This name remained for many years until a change was made and it became known as Amersham Birdwatchers Club (ABC).



**Turnstone**

The club's first indoor meetings were organised by its members, with talks and slide shows and discussions on where to see birds locally. Outdoor meetings took place mainly walking along the River Chess at Latimer and Sarratt Bottom, through Baldwins Wood near Chenies, and Shardeloes Lake outside Amersham. In the 1970's and 1980's Kingfisher, Heron and Green Sandpiper could be

seen along the river and one could walk very closely along the banks, which has now been fenced and fewer birds seen. However, with climate change and seasons getting warmer, and with the help of the re-introduction of Red Kite, different birds are now seen in the Chess Valley namely Buzzard, Raven, Little Egret and Ring-Necked Parakeet.



**Little Egret**





With advertising and word of mouth, it was not long until we had a membership of over fifty and parents were starting to bring their siblings to the meetings. Our committee member, David Bell introduced a junior section to the club, called 'Jays' and he soon had a young membership of keen bird spotters. David Wright is still a member and Duncan Orr-Ewing is a prominent figure with the Scottish RSPB.

The indoor meetings were now being well attended and we had guest speakers from the RSPB, various local Wildlife Trusts and other birding clubs. Outdoor meetings started to venture further afield with visits to Marsworth and Wilstone

reservoirs near Tring, Stockers Lake in Rickmansworth, Spade Oak reservoir near Marlow and the Jubilee River near the Thames. Coach outings were organised to Minsmere and Lakenheath RSPB reserves and also weekend breaks away staying at the Brookfield hotel in Emsworth near Chichester and visiting Pagham harbour and Farlington marshes nature reserves. Gibraltar Point nature reserve owned by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust on the east coast near Skegness was also a favourite birding area. Sadly this reserve as we knew it no longer exists as it was swept away in the storms and gales of 2013.



Robin



Blue Tit



Twite

On one of our coach outings to Pagham, a member of the local press, Lindy Brooking, was invited to join the group for the day and we received an excellent two-page report which helped to advertise the activities of ADOS.

During the past 50 years the group has always been supported by a keen and loyal membership and very special

thanks should go to the dedicated Chairpersons and their committee members who have run the club to a high standard. Special thanks go to past Chairpersons Jeremy Spoor, John Ogle, David Bell, Mike Kent and Mary McKay. The club continues to thrive under Diana Smith, our present leader.

**David Witton**



Jay



Red Kite

As an addendum Mike Kent, who was chairman for 10 years from 1983, writes that: ....as well as talks and outings emphasises must be given to the amount of “citizen science” that the Club undertook, indeed, still undertakes: for instance Richard Tomlin surveying birds in Chesham Bois Woods and producing a yearly summary of the weather experienced and its impact on bird movements. Also John Ogle surveying the birds in Coleshill and Richard Hearn’s work on the bird ringing records carried out at St. Leonards. Other members contributed as field workers in gathering information for the book “The Birds of Buckinghamshire” published by Bucks Bird Club 1993.

*Credit for the survival of the club, bearing in mind the competition from the expanding local RSPB groups \*, the Berks, Bucks and Oxford Wildlife Trust and the formation of the Bucks Bird Club, must go to the foresight of the group of people who founded the club and to all who have served, guided and supported the club throughout the past fifty years.*

**Mike Kent**

#### **Editors Note**

\* The nearest local RSPB group, based in Chorleywood, closed last September.

## Charlecote Park and Stowe Gardens

As some members might remember in June 2020 we planned to visit Charlecote Park, a National Trust property in Warwickshire. However, as members were sending in their applications, it became clear by April that Covid was spreading through the country, lockdown was necessary and we had to cancel the arrangements. Since then we have been able to arrange two other outings, Winchester and the Ghurka Museum in 2021, and Greys Court and Henley for a Thames cruise last year. This year we have again decided that we should visit Charlecote Park and also Stowe Gardens, the National Trust property in Buckinghamshire.

Charlecote Park, on the banks of the River Avon, has been a family home for more than eight centuries and contains

collections that reflect the Lucy Family's tastes and varied fortunes. The house has been altered over the centuries and the ground floor rooms have reopened this year after undergoing extensive renovation work during the past two years. Work is continuing on the first floor, which is currently closed. The extensive parkland was landscaped by Capability Brown in the mid-eighteenth century and today fallow deer and Jacob sheep roam the grounds.

Stowe Gardens will already be well known to many of our members and of course mid-summer is a wonderful time to see them. Our visit to Stowe at the end of June ties in neatly with a talk on 5 June in Kings Chapel Old Amersham by Gillian Mason of the National Trust about some of the statues in Stowe Gardens.

### ITINERARY

We shall travel by Heyfordian coach. There are two collection points in Amersham.

**9.30am Amersham Station (Carrols).**

**9.35am The Swan, Old Amersham.**

**11.00am** Arrive Charlecote Park.

A member of the NT Team will check us in on the coach and give a brief description of the property. During this pause timed tickets for a visit to the house will be issued by a member of staff.

An electric vehicle, which seats seven passengers will be available to take members of the group from the car park to the house and cafes. Please indicate if you will need this.

**11.30am** Coffee/tea for the group in the Orangery or the Woodland Café.

*(After the refreshments, members will be free to visit the house and park and to have lunch in the Orangery Café).*

**2.00pm** The Group departs for Stowe Gardens.

**3.00pm** Arrive Stowe Gardens. The group will be free to look at the gardens.

**4.00pm** Tea for the group will be served in the café.

**5.00pm** Depart Stowe for return to Amersham.

**6.30pm** Arrive Amersham.



## AMERSHAM SOCIETY OUTING : TUESDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023



© National Trust / John Millar

### BOOKING FORM

The cost of the outing will be **£22** per person. This will include the cost of the coach journey and tea/coffee on our arrival at Charlecote Park.

*(If members would like to join a group for lunch at the Orangery or for tea at Stowe please indicate on the form below. We are still waiting for menu details of how much these will cost and, if you have opted for a group lunch or tea, we will contact you separately as soon as we know.)*

Please reserve ..... places for me on the outing on 27th June.

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

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

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

I / We would / would not be interested in having a group lunch/group tea. Yes / No

I / We are / are not members of the National Trust Yes / No

Would you like a place on the electric mini bus to

travel from the car park to the house? Yes / No

Name (s) .....

Address .....

E-mail ..... Telephone No .....

Please return your completed application form to:

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

### NOTES ON BOOKING AND CANCELLATION

We often have to make financial commitments upfront when organising a trip. For this reason we ask you to pay at the time of booking. If you have to cancel your booking before the

outing, and we understand that last minute cancellations can occur, it may be possible to refund the cost if there is a waiting list. We shall try to be flexible.





# The World of the Honeybee

Howard Pool was booked to come and talk to the Society in March 2020 but then, as we all know, Covid arrived so his talk never took place. He did however write an article for the May newsletter of that year urging us to take advantage of the enforced lockdown, get out into our gardens and allotments and spare a thought for “*our pollinating allies*” by ensuring forage was available to them “*spread out over the four seasons*”. Now, three years later, Howard came and expanded further on his passion for and the importance of the honeybee.



There are some 170 different species of bee in this country, but Howard Pool confined his talk in February to just one, *Apis mellifera mellifera*, or to you and me, the honeybee. Howard has been intrigued by and kept bees for most of his life, (which by his own admission is in excess of 70 years). During this time he has served as a Trustee of the British Beekeepers Association and Treasurer of Bucks County Beekeeper yet never once been stung! So, dressed in his bee suit, was well placed to give us an informative, yet light-hearted talk.

Howard started with a plethora of numbers: Within a hive during the summer months there is **one queen** (laying up to 2,000 eggs a day over her **three to five year life span**) heading up a colony of **50,000 workers** (infertile females bees) which **live for five to six weeks**, but just **200 drones** (male bees). On their head they have **five eyes: two compound** (which detect colour, movement and distance) and **three simple** (which control flight stabilisation, navigation and orientation). Their thorax has **six legs** and, **four**, yes, four, not two, **wings**, and finally their abdomen contains **two stomachs, eight wax glands** and **twenty spiracles** (through which it breathes; they have air sacs, not lungs) along with the all too familiar **single barbed sting!** Bees **fly at 15 mph for up to 5km** when foraging, **have been around for over 100m years** (having

evolved from the meat eating wasp during the cretaceous period) and are able to **maintain a constant hive temperature of 35°C**.

He then moved onto the life of a worker bee. Once she has emerged from her cell her life is a series of preordained tasks: **Keeping the hive clean and hygienic**, for instance cleaning out cells and removing any dead bees or larvae that did not fully develop; **drone feeding**, as Howard kept telling us, drones are pretty useless apart from siring the next generation of bees and are incapable of feeding themselves till later in their life. Then an extremely important function, **feeding and grooming the queen**, when, in doing so, they pick up the queen's pheromones and spread them around the colony which acts as a vital bond unifying the colony. Next it's **receiving pollen** and **nectar** from the foraging bees, the **nectar is converted into honey** and, along with the pollen, is **stored in cells** until required. They then move on to **comb** and **cell building** using wax secreted from their abdominal glands. To maintain the optimum temperature and humidity within the hive, the colony practices a simple method of climate control by fanning their wings to evaporating droplets of water brought into the hive by the foragers. And of course the colony must be protected against predators such as wasps and hornets, so they are detailed to **guard duty** for



several days before leaving the hive to spend (up to) the final three weeks of their life **foraging**.

Just what are they foraging for? The four necessities of their life: **pollen** (which is protein to feed to the growing grubs), **nectar**, (carbohydrates for their own energy needs), **water** and **propolis** (natural resin collected from the sap flow and buds of conifers) which, amongst other things, they use to seal up cracks in their hives and embalm dead invaders!

Why do honeybees store honey? Quite simply it's because unlike wild bees (bumblebees and solitary bees) they don't hibernate, so need a food source through the winter months when there are few, if any plants, in flower and the weather confines them to the hive for days at a time.

The major importance of bees is of course pollination, after all a third of all the food we eat is dependent on it -

there are other insects which carry out pollination, but to a lesser extent, such as hoverflies, butterflies, moths, beetles and wasps. The irony is that bees pollinate unwittingly; they don't wake up each morning and decide which plants to pollinate, each day is spent seeking out plants they can rob to feed their colony. It is the flying between flowers of the same species, accidentally transferring excess pollen between them, which trigger the pollination process.

There are threats all around the, for the want of a better word, managed bees. They are not domesticated animals; they are a managed wild insects. Beekeepers care for their bees by treating viruses, parasites, mites and fungal diseases and protect them from wasp and woodpecker attacks. Threats outside the beekeepers control come from farming practices: the use of pesticides and insecticides and the growing of monoculture crops in vast

fields. But one “threat” comes from an unlikely source, the bad beekeeper!

Whilst beekeepers have traditionally nurtured bees to produce the maximum honey yield, only to steal it and then sell it (replacing it with a sugar solution), there are a growing number of beekeepers, like Howard, who keep them purely for altruistic reasons, as part of our ecosystem, their value to the environment and the simple enjoyment of watching them. He finds their life simply awe inspiring and, whilst not wishing to anthropomorphise, full of Christian ethics. Here is a creature that lives for a matter of weeks, part of a colony which, short of predation or disease, will survive for years, yet is willing to devote her brief life to sisters and half-sisters she will never know.

Cave paintings dating back to Neolithic times show nomadic man collecting honey from wild honeybee nests and archaeologists have found evidence of Egyptians beekeeping, as we would recognise it, from around 2,400 BC. Remember, before sugar was extracted from cane and beet, the only source of sweetness was honey.

Not only is honey a source of sweetness it was used right up to the WW2 as an antiseptic on wound dressings and who doesn't still have a hot lemon and honey drink to sooth a sore throat? It is credited as being a cure for hay-fever as honey contains traces of the pollen from the flowers it

forages on. But, note of caution, it must be local honey, not the (probably) adulterated, product from several countries, cheap honey from supermarkets! Oh, and beware of (very expensive) “pure” Manuka honey. Since when have bees confined their foraging to just one plant? Again it's almost inevitable that it has been adulterated as, as Howard told us, more is sold in the UK than is produced in New Zealand!

What of the two other hive products, wax and propolis; wax from the cones has always been melted down and used for candles and furniture polish and propolis, which is naturally antiseptic, is used by the pharmaceutical industry in skin care products and even toothpaste.

Howard ended by emphasising just how important honeybees are, and they need your help. You don't have to become a beekeeper to play your part; you can create a garden with as many plants as possible in flower throughout the year. Avoid using insecticides; they are indiscriminate in killing off the beneficial insects as well as the intended bad ones. Lobby your local Council and MP to create and maintain wildlife verges. Speak to farmers to give a small percentage of their land over to set aside allowing wildflowers and wildlife to flourish. And whatever you do, *always* buy local honey!

**John Catton**



# Amersham A Cappella

## The Championship choir on your doorstep

If you fancy joining a choir, you're almost spoilt for choice in the Amersham area, with everything from rock to more traditional choral style groups not far away.

But, **Hils Apicella, the Public Relations Officer of Amersham A Cappella**, writes: if you really love singing harmonies A Cappella style, enjoy making new friends and want to see how far you can stretch your vocal skills, multi-award winning Amersham A Cappella is the must-join Chorus. And it's right here on your doorstep!

**A**t our weekly rehearsals, we have a great time singing everything from soulful ballads to high-energy pop and rock songs, plus some modern barbershop. Our inspirational Musical Director, Helen Lappert, is dedicated to helping us reach the highest standards while still making our rehearsals super fun.

Of course, it's hard to beat the buzz of performing. We're just as excited about entertaining in small groups on the streets at Christmas as we are about rocking big audiences at one of our stage concerts.

We also love to compete. We've won many national and international titles and we're delighted to be the current Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers Silver Medalists.

## Amershamly Fabulous for Forty Years

Last year was our 40th Anniversary, and we were beyond delighted to be able to celebrate it together, singing and partying live, after all the disappointments of the Covid lockdowns.

Chiltern Harmony (as we were first styled) was started in 1982 by Musical Director, Ian Stone, largely for the wives and daughters of his fellow Barber-shoppers in the male-voice Chorus, Chesham Buckaneers.

Back then, the would-be harmony Queens (two of whom still sing with us today) were still only dreaming of success.

Everything was pretty much done on a shoestring budget, including their stage costumes, which were very different to the ones we wear today - back then if you were happy to be seen out and about in it, it wasn't outrageous enough! And of course, there was always a hat made Blue Peter style: just take an old margarine tub, add some bits of fabric slapped on with PVA glue - et voila!

Still, the choir worked hard and within a few years Chiltern Harmony was fast becoming the one to watch, both on stage and in the competition rankings.

The group started racking up the Competition Medals and accolades such as Sainsbury's Choir of the Year in 1996. They even jetted off to the USA to compete in the Buckeye Invitational Annual Barbershop Festival the same year.

During the nineties, the choir moved its rehearsal home to St Michael and All Angels Church Hall in Sycamore Road, where we still rehearse today. Then in 2005 Helen Lappert stepped up to the top spot as our fourth (and current) Musical Director and Amersham A Cappella as we know it today was born.



With Helen at the helm, we've won a whole clutch of British and European medals, competing in Holland, Sweden and Spain. We even won The Good Housekeeping Choir of the Year in 2010.

Then of course there was our (literally) out of this world, space age, two-night show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2018.

As if that wasn't enough, we also formed the super-group 'A Kind of Magic' with the male-voice Cotton-town Chorus, winning a Gold medal the first time we competed as a mixed Chorus in 2019.

And of course, we're the Ladies Association of British Barbershop Singers 2022 Silver Medalists (in addition to being the current holders of the LABBS trophies for Music and Performance), having been LABBS Gold Medalists on no less than three occasions: including 2019 when we went down in history for being the Association's last Champions before COVID and hanging on to the title for an unprecedented three years!

## A Fun-filled Year Ahead

At Amersham A Cappella, we love to see our choir diary filled with a whole line up of events, concerts and competitions.

Already this year we've run our very first five-week 'Love to Harmonise' course which finished on a high in February with a Friends and Family Concert.

Since then we've had a mad day trying out Quartet singing, not one but three coaching sessions with top vocal and performance coaches (including the highly acclaimed David Wright who flew over all the way from America) and we had a wonderful time performing at the Amersham Festival of Music in April.

We've got plenty to look forward to as well. A performance workshop in May; our annual Retreat, where we get to hang out with each other for a whole weekend and are treated to more top-level coaching, then off to Killarney to compete at the Irish Association of Barbershop Singers Convention in October. And there's still the Christmas sing-out season to look forward to...

As if that wasn't enough, we're always on the look-out for exciting or extraordinary singing opportunities. We've sung pretty much everywhere, including on board a stranded plane coming back from Malaga; in an airport lounge; in Kings Cross Railway Station; in Chesham Sainsbury's for an Innocent Smoothies video as part of the launch of the Big Knit in 2012. We even entertained a packed stadium from the pitch at Twickenham before an England match wearing stripy rugby socks under our lovely red dresses!

Have pitch pipe, will travel!



## We'd Love to Meet You

We're a really friendly, fun-loving, diverse (and sometimes slightly crazy!) group of around 65 singers, we're always keen to welcome new members!

We are an auditioned choir, but don't let that put you off. You don't need any musical training or to be able to read music - you just need to be able to sing in tune, enjoy performing and want to keep on improving. You'll get all the help you need to learn our songs and we're sure that once you start, you'll be hooked! Membership is open to anyone over 18.

If you're looking for a new singing challenge, why not come along to one of our rehearsals? We meet most Tuesday evenings from 7.45pm to 10.15pm at St Michael and All Angels Church Hall. Just make sure you email our membership secretary, Jane Price, on [membership@amershamacappella](mailto:membership@amershamacappella) first so that she can arrange for someone to be on hand to greet you when you arrive.

So get in touch, we'd love to hear from you.

### Let Us Entertain You in 2023

Check out our website, [amershamacappella.com](http://amershamacappella.com) for news about our forthcoming events.

# Sustainable Amersham

## Act today to protect tomorrow

by Parker Geppert and Madelyn Postman

### Sustainable Amersham

Sustainable Amersham is a local community group deeply concerned about the devastating impacts of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss. Our volunteer members design and implement projects that address these impacts. We work together with individuals, local government, businesses, and community organisations in Amersham and Chesham Bois.

Founded in 2020, the group currently numbers more than 150 members. The more members, the louder the voice



MP Sarah Green with Sustainable Amersham members Madelyn Postman and Nikki Magrath, Community Board event, Chiltern Lifestyle Centre, February 2022

Sustainable Amersham has in the local community and with the government. Currently about a tenth of the members work on the projects of Green Energy, Repair Cafe, Plastic Free Amersham, and Learn & Act. There is also a Governance team which oversees legal and financial matters, and a Membership and Outreach team. With few

active members, many people serve on more than one team and the group is always looking for more volunteers who want to take action and make a difference.

Sustainable Amersham has participated in or held an average of one to two events per month, including Heritage Day, Chesham Bois Village Fete, Volunteering and Community Groups day at the Chiltern Lifestyle Centre, the Eco Day at the Free Church, and the Amersham Christmas Festival.

## Repair Cafe

Sustainable Amersham's most recent project is the Repair Cafe, which kicked off on 2nd July 2022 at St Michael and All Angels Church and runs every two months (see the calendar on the Sustainable Amersham website for dates). Extending the life of items keeps them out of the bin, reduces our carbon footprint and saves the planet's resources. It is a more sustainable approach that goes back to the days before consumer culture took over.



John Moroz volunteering at the Repair Cafe,  
St Michael & All Angels Church

Anyone can bring items to be repaired for free by an enthusiastic team of volunteers while enjoying a piece of cake and a cuppa.

Some examples: the 'sewing ladies' repaired the skirt of a much-loved suit. The older lady to whom it belonged

sensibly brought some new elastic with her in the hope that she would be able to wear it to a family party later that month. The ladies carefully measured her waist, sewed the elastic in, and you couldn't even tell it had been repaired.

There is a centuries-old Japanese embroidery style called Sashiko which highlights rather than hides repairs by using a contrasting patch, or large stitches. In another repair – a sort of customisation – a lady had spilled bleach onto the hem

of a denim dress. So our volunteers went round the hem making patches of bleached out material in several areas to create a new look for the dress.

A leather dining chair was fixed. Its owner had sent some pictures in the week leading up to the Repair Café to alert the team. There was some homework done by the repairers, like conferring with Chesham's Repair Café and

looking on YouTube, so they had a good idea of their approach. It took nearly three hours to carry out the repair, with a meticulous attention to detail. Clearly the repair had been made, but it made the chair serviceable again and it matched the rest of the set.

Often skills are shared like this, either among the volunteers on the day, or with other volunteers from other locations.

There was a bankers lamp a man brought in which had been his grandfather's. It was beautiful but had been out of commission for donkey's years. It was not a difficult fix, and the man was delighted to have it working again.

It's particularly rewarding to fix children's toys – they're overjoyed to be able to play with them once more.

## Green Energy

The Green Energy project team provides information and resources to Amersham residents and businesses. There are a multitude of green energy topics such as changing to a renewable energy contract, installing solar panels and heat pumps, driving and flying less, using public transport, switching to electric vehicles and insulating homes.

Last year the team held three talks at the Amersham Library at the Chiltern Lifestyle Centre:

- **Solar Panels:** from planning to power-up, 30th April 2022
- **Heat pumps,** 1st October 2022
- **Saving energy at home workshop,** 19th November 2022

With funding from the Amersham & Villages Community Board, in February 2023 the team put on a 'Leaky Homes Roadshow' together with Buckinghamshire Community Energy. For £20, anyone could sign up to get thermographic images taken from outside their home to find out where heat is escaping, followed up with a report with advice on how to remedy the leaks. The Roadshow was sold

out, with six visits on 23rd February in top Amersham and Chesham Bois, and six visits on 28th February in Old Amersham.

The Green Energy team periodically organises tours of the fascinating Greatmoor Energy from Waste facility. One took place in October 2021 and another in November 2022.

## Plastic Free Amersham

The Plastic Free Amersham project team is aiming to eliminate single-use plastics from independent businesses by 2025. This initiative follows the Plastic Free Communities campaign framework provided by the charity Surfers Against Sewage.

Though reducing plastic is a year-round aim, Plastic-Free July is a good time to get the word out about using less plastic. The book *Turning the Tide on Plastic* by Lucy Siegle is an informative read on the subject.

Plastic-free ideas are: buy in bulk; avoid packaged foods in favour of homemade (also healthier!); use a reusable coffee cup (Circular&Co. makes a good leak-proof one); say no to plastic cutlery (set to be banned in England by the end of this year); use beeswax wraps or reusable containers instead of cling-film; use loose leaf tea to avoid the plastic in teabags; get your milk delivered in glass bottles; avoid balloons, glitter, and plastic bunting.

In terms of clothing and textiles, avoid polyester, nylon, acrylic, and polyamide – for example in sportswear, fleeces, and microfibre cleaning cloths. If you do have these items, wash them in a Guppyfriend wash bag to trap microplastics.



## Learn and Act

Liaising with the other project teams and community groups, Learn & Act is responsible for Sustainable Amersham's communications and events. It manages the website and social media: a Facebook group with almost 600 members, and Instagram with almost 700 followers. Team members write articles and provide event listings for publications like *Bucks Free Press*, *Your Amersham*, *Hiya Bucks*, *Local Directory*, *Amersham News*, and *Together*. Posters placed around Amersham and Chesham Bois are also the work of this team.

The communications plan focuses on a different subject each month (starting the year with Veganuary, followed by the Green Hearts climate campaign in February) and is complemented with posts about relevant awareness days like World Environment Day on 5th June.

At the Christmas Fair, the Sustainable Amersham table had reusable fabric wraps for sale, and eco-friendly gift ideas like giving vouchers for services like babysitting, cleaning, or doing errands rather than giving physical gifts.

Learn and Act shares information on many topics. Did you know that moving personal current and savings accounts and pensions to ethical banks like Triodos can have a significant impact – up to nine times the account value?

## Would you like to help?

If you're interested in acting today to protect tomorrow, you can sign up as a member on the website, [sustainable-amersham.org](https://sustainable-amersham.org). Once you are a member,

you will receive the monthly newsletter. There is no minimum time requirement — you can do as little or as much as you would like. Most members are busy with work and family life.

The next project team to be formed is likely to be Biodiversity, and the organisation is always open to new ideas for projects.

Currently, more support could be useful for:

- **Plastic Free Amersham**
- **Repair Cafe**  
(even just to bring cake!)
- **Learn and Act** – posting on social media including reels

There is a monthly members' meeting which usually take place on Zoom, with some in-person meetings and social get-togethers. Each project team also meets more-or-less monthly, with the project lead reporting updates at the general monthly meeting.

Sustainable Amersham was just approved as an environmental partner of 1% for the Planet, so if you own a local business, ask for more information about how you could get involved. All business members of 1% for the Planet commit to giving 1% of their turnover to approved environmental partners, through direct monetary support, service or product donations, or volunteering.

All events are listed on the website on the calendar in the About section. If you're on social media, you can connect on the Facebook group or Instagram.

**Parker Geppert and  
Madelyn Postman**



Frith House, 24, the High Street.  
Decorated for Edward VII Coronation 9th August 1902.

## Three Kings and a Queen

Images from Amersham museum, with thanks to Briony Hudson

In this era of mass instant imagery, it's hard to imagine how many smartphones will be recording the events in Amersham commemorating the Coronation of King Charles III on 6th May. Cameras were once rare and expensive with no "Cloud" on which to store the pictures they took, so all that remains are grainy sepia images lucky not to be lost or thrown away. Here are just a few images from the past four coronations held by the Amersham museum.



Huge Coronation festivities for George V in Dovecote meadow 22nd June 1911.



A Weller's dray decorated for George V Coronation – on the Broadway opposite where the Memorial Gardens are now situated.



Another decorated dray ready to parade along the High Street, 22nd June 1911.



Four children in fancy dress celebrating George VI Coronation, 12th May 1937, on Barn Meadow.

"Nippy" waitresses beside their eponymous van celebrate at Winchmore Hill, 12th May 1937.



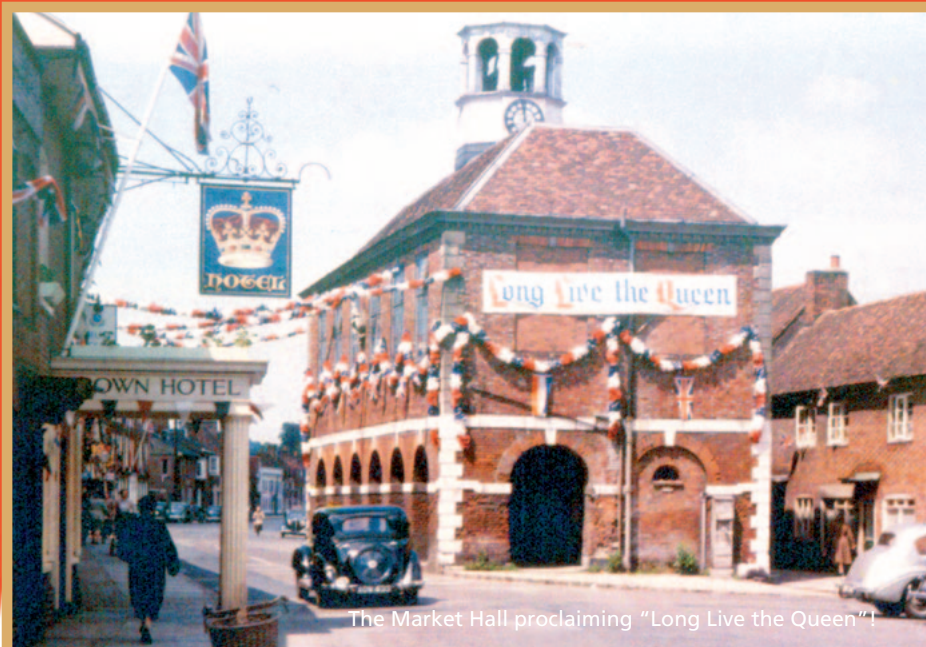
Children in fancy dress celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Coronation at Winchmore Hill, June 2nd 1953.







Haddon's, (the pharmacy), window decorated to celebrate Elizabeth II Coronation, 2nd June 1953. The site, opposite the museum, is now Gershon & Sons (a wine and cheese merchant).



The Market Hall proclaiming "Long Live the Queen"



# Amersham Place Names and their Origins

The Great and the Good by Alison Bailey

In a series of articles, we are going to look at the etymology of our local place names. Some names were evidently inspired by nature or geography, such as Cherry Lane or Station Road and others were inspired by people, whether they are the great and the good, humble farmers, or artisans. Other names were inspired by historical events and can be self-explanatory such as Lollards Close, named for Amersham's Protestant Lollard martyrs burnt at the stake in the early 16th century.

One definite myth is that Turpin Row was named for the famous highwayman, Dick Turpin. The story goes that on his way to York he escaped from pursuers by dashing upstairs in one cottage, through a row of connecting attics, and down the stairs of another dwelling before escaping out the back into Barn Meadow. In fact, Turpin never came to Amersham and the name came from an 18th century owner, Thomas Turpin.

## Origins of the name Amersham

Amersham itself seems to be derived from the name of an early Anglo-Saxon ruler. Earlier spellings of Amersham are Agmodesham and Elmodesham, after Ealmond or Ealhmund, reputed King of Kent in 784. He is thought to be the father of Egbert, the King of Wessex, who for a period was considered the 'wide-ruler' of Anglo-Saxon lands. Ham or hamm is the Anglo-Saxon word for a settlement or village in a water meadow. The first houses were on the banks of the river Misbourne and therefore the origin of the town's name is 'Ealmond's village by the water'.



Photo courtesy of Amersham Museum

An early photo of Anne's Corner in Chesham Bois but the origin of its name is a mystery

## Saints

The names of the local parish churches, dedicated to individual saints, are frequently used in place names. St Mary's Court and St Mary's Church of England Primary School are in Amersham and St Leonards Road is in Chesham Bois.

Perhaps it is surprising that Amersham's long association with St Katherine has not been recorded in a local place name. The patron saint of lacemakers, St Katherine had her own chantry chapel in St Mary's Church and an important charitable association, the Fraternity of St Katherine, established in the 15th century. Her saint's day, November 25, was a major celebration, with the statue led around the town in her finest robes.

The origin of **Anne's Corner** is a mystery. This is the name of land at the eastern edge of Chesham Bois Common, and the unusual U shaped

terrace of three cottages built there around 1910, at the junction of Bois Lane and North Road. Is Anne, St Anne, the Patron Saint of mothers, and also women in labour, and therefore connected to Saint Leonard? Or does it refer to Lady Anne Cheyne who died in 1640 and is buried in the churchyard? Or another, unknown Anne?

## Landowners

The wealthy landowning class is, as expected, well represented in local place names. Whilst the earliest Lords of the Manor of Amersham, De Mandeville and Tothill do not feature, later lords are all there. The Brudenell family gave Brudenell Close its name and Amersham School was originally known as Brudenell Secondary Modern. The Cheyne family, who followed, gave their name to Cheyne Close in Chesham Bois, where they were Lords of the Manor for over

300 years. The family also gave their name to the rather grander, Cheyne Walk, in Chelsea which was the site of Charles Cheyne's London home after his marriage to Lady Jane Cavendish. The Russells, the Earls and then Dukes of Bedford, who inherited from the Cheynes, have Russell Close and Bedford Avenue in Little Chalfont. Also there, is Cavendish Close. Cavendish was also the family name of Lord Chesham whose estates included land in Chesham Bois, the Chalfonts and Amersham Common.

Extensive land at Amersham Common was owned by the Mason Pomeroy family whose vast wealth came from slave trading and plantations in the Caribbean. This is why the Caribbean Island of Montserrat has a village called Amersham, now a suburb of the capital Plymouth which was buried by volcanic ash in 1995. There is a Pomeroy Close, off Hundred Acres Lane, and the Pomeroy Public House. This was known as the **Pineapple** for many years, a name repeated in the neighbouring Pineapple Road. The name originates from the Mason Pomeroy trade in the tropical fruit. Pineapples also decorate the gate posts at the entrance to the family estate, Beel House.

The Wellers who owned Amersham's brewery from 1775 until 1929, became an important landowning family. Weller Road and Weller Close are both close to the site of George Weller's country estate, The Plantation, on Amersham Common, which is remem-



The Pineapple Inn about 1910

bered in Plantation Road and Plantation Way. I did wonder whether The Plantation was named for the Weller family connections with Jamaica, however, early maps show that the original house, Plantation Cottage was at the edge of a wooded field owned by Lord Chesham, known as Large Plantation, so this is the more likely origin of the name.

Finally, the Drakes have been Lords of the Manor of Amersham since the early 17th century. Drakes Road is just off Quarrenden Road and I'm sure the residents of that road are delighted that the developer didn't use the later family name of Tyrwhitt Drake as that is always difficult to spell! There are also the Drake Almshouses on the High Street, founded by Sir William Drake in 1657. The ancestral home of the Drake family, Shardeloes Manor was named after the Norman, Adam de Shardeloes, who was granted part of the Amersham estate in 1308. It was later owned by the Brudenell, Cheyne and Tothill families before Joan Tothill married Francis Drake and their son, William, inherited the manor in 1626.

## The Worthies

The Worthies is a Tudor building in the High Street which is named after the wall painting in no. 56 from the 1550s of six of the Nine Worthies, from the Ancient World, the Bible, and early Christians. Local place names, however, have also been used to commemorate local citizens worthy of note. These include Ward Place, also on the High Street, named after George Ward, who lived here. He was the town's eminent photographer, the manufacturer of the 'Wizard' bicycle and the owner in 1902 of one of Amersham's first cars the 'Orient Express'.



Margaret and Ramsay MacDonald



Lindfield, Bois Lane

Macdonald Close in Chesham Bois is named for the first Labour Prime Minister, **James Ramsay MacDonald**, who rented a cottage, Lindfield, in Chesham Bois for his wife Margaret and their six children. This was a weekend

home where the family could escape the stresses of political life in London.

Milton Lawns is named for the 17th century, Republican writer, John Milton who completed *Paradise Lost* whilst living in a small cottage (now a museum, Milton's Cottage) in Chalfont St. Giles after fleeing the outbreak of the Bubonic plague in London in 1665.

Kennards Court off Woodside Road is named after John Harold Kennard, the prolific architect who designed many of Amersham Arts and Crafts houses and shops. Alfred Woodley, a local builder whose builder's yard was on Lexham Gardens, gave his name to Woodley Court. Woodley was a Liberal councillor and chairman of Amersham Rural District Council for many years. He also built and co-owned, *The Regent*, Amersham's 700 seat Art Deco cinema, which was demolished in 1962.

Gilbert Scott Court apartments are named for Sir George Gilbert Scott, the architect of the original building, the Amersham Union Workhouse. Perhaps less well known is the origin of the Henry Allen Nursery on Mitchell Walk. Henry J Allen, the Governor of Wichita, Kansas, was the President of the Californian Save the Children Federation. In 1941 Californian subscribers provided the money required to build a nursery in Amersham, to help married women work, as a way of aiding the British war effort without becoming involved militarily. Henry Allen even made the dangerous journey to Amersham to turn the first spadeful of earth on the building site.

Elangeni School in Chesham Bois has an unusual name. It was named after the home of the Colenso family which used to be on the site. Elangeni is a Zulu word (and the name of a Zulu tribe) which means “where the sun shines through”. Frank Colenso, who built the house was the elder son of Bishop John Colenso, first Bishop of Natal.

A notable omission is perhaps Amyas Connell, the architect of High and Over, which is a Grade II\* Listed architectural gem and effectively launched the International Modernist style in Britain.

## Women

It is disappointing that more women aren't commemorated in local place names. Jean Archer, Amersham's first female mayor has Archer Court on Amersham Road. Day's Almshouses are a reminder that Harriet Day built these almshouses in 1875 for “*six poor women of good character*”. However, Henrietta Busk, the first female councillor on Amersham Rural District Council who served from 1910 to 1932, when she retired because of ill-health when she was 87, is not remembered. Nor is Louise Jopling, the celebrity artist and suffrage campaigner, who lived in Chesham Bois. Abrahams Close, off Lincoln Park, is the only reminder of **Margery Abrahams**, who lived here for over 80 years. She was a pioneering dietitian at St Barts

Hospital and helped many during WWII. In addition to finding local accommodation for evacuees and refugees, she also participated in the organisation of the Kindertransport and fostered children herself. The name, Lincoln Park, which she developed in the 1960s on her estate, Chilterns, could be a pun on Abraham Lincoln. But of course, it also references Lincoln Cathedral as shown by the other roads on the estate, Salisbury Close, Canterbury Close, and York Close.

The next article will explore place names with origins in Amersham's rural past.



Margery Abrahams, who developed and named Lincoln Park and gave her name to Abrahams Close

Photo courtesy of the family



# Are you a member of the Amersham Society?



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## **Why not join the Amersham Society**

so that you can hear about and take part in future events, receive regular e-mail alerts and copies of this Newsletter and generally support our activities to preserve our heritage and improve the amenities?

The annual cost is currently £11.50, or £17 for two family members living at the same address. You can find more information, and download a Membership Application Form from our web site <https://www.amershamsociety.org/> or e-mail our Membership Secretary, at [peterborrows@cantab.net](mailto:peterborrows@cantab.net) or write to Dr Peter Borrows, Troye Cottage, 32 Whielden Street, Amersham, HP7 0HU.

# NOTICEBOARD

## Programme of Talks and Events

Talks are held in the Kings Chapel, 30 High Street, Old Amersham.  
Coffee, tea and biscuits served from 7:30pm, with talks starting at 8pm.

**Monday 5th June**

### **The Muses Garden Statuary Project at Stowe**

A talk by Gillian Mason from the National Trust.

**Tuesday 27th June**

### **Charlecote Park and Stowe Gardens**

The Amersham Society's annual outing.

**Wednesday 27th September**

### **Repton's 1794 Red Book for Shardeloes**

A talk by Barney Tyrwhitt-Drake.

**Wednesday 25th October**

### **Annual General Meeting**

Note: The meeting will start at 8pm followed by the talk at 8.30pm.

### **Buckinghamshire Search and Rescue Dogs**

A talk by Jonathan Crowther.

**Wednesday 29th November**

### **Amazon Adventure**

A talk by Dr. Jill Evers.

## **Amersham Society Officers**

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**John Catton**

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**Geraldine Marshall-Andrew**

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