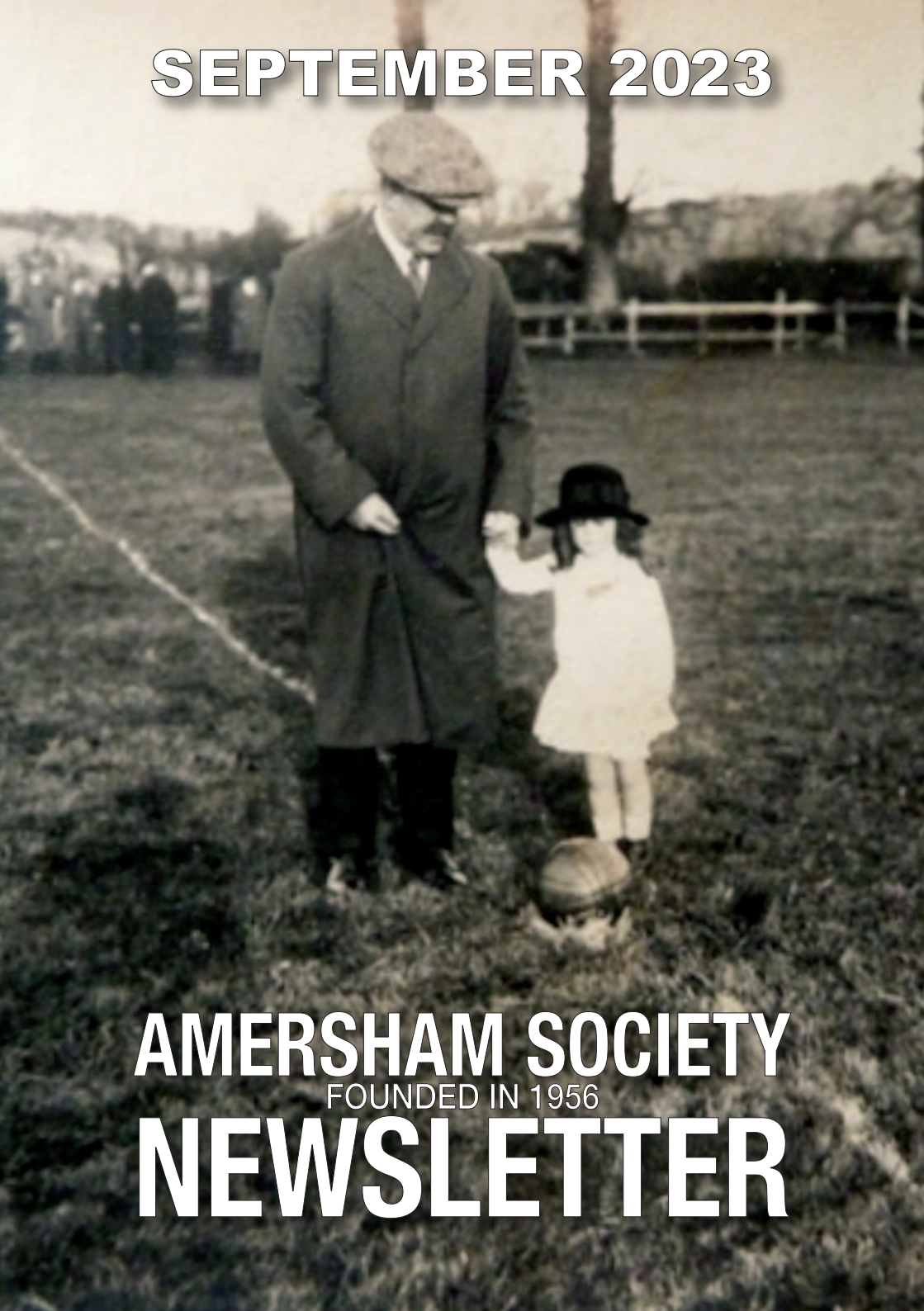


SEPTEMBER 2023



AMERSHAM SOCIETY
FOUNDED IN 1956
NEWSLETTER



AMERSHAM

Looking out from Amersham Museum
by Linda Gould.

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Cover photograph: Courtesy of Amersham Town FC.

Photograph opposite: Linda Gould - member of Amersham Photographic Society and Trustee and Volunteer at the museum.

Editorial

Welcome to this edition of the Amersham Society newsletter.

A couple of weeks after the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camila Amersham had its own, smooth, transfer of leadership when **Elizabeth Shepherd** took over the role of Town Mayor from **Mark Roberts** – and I’m delighted to record that both are Amersham Society members! Another local person and longtime contributor to this newsletter who can’t go unmentioned and congratulated is **Alison Bailey**, Amersham’s “*Citizen of the Year*” for 2023 in recognition for her work in the community. Her latest fascinating article can be found on page 44.

I must now turn to one of your committee members, **George Allison**. Sadly for us, after 15 years as a committee member, George is stepping down. He joined the committee in 2008. In 2013 he was elected Vice-Chairman and in 2014 agreed to become Acting-Chairman to help the committee through a difficult period. Throughout his time on the committee George handled all the planning issues but was always willing to help whenever or wherever needed. The committee greatly valued George for his reliability, calmness and wisdom and we wish him all the best for the future.

This, of course, leaves a vacancy on the committee. Our constitution states a full committee should comprise of up to 12 elected members, however for the past few years we’ve been functioning with fewer – this year we’ve had 8 members and the year before just 5 – plus 1, our acting Treasurer, John Morgan who is not a committee member. So with George leaving it means we have up to 4 vacancies to fill. Would *you* like to be one of them? You’d be joining a very friendly group – something I’ve discovered during my first year on the committee. If helping run this thriving society appeals to you then please do contact our Secretary, **Geraldine Marshall-Andrew**.

Three more talks are being held prior to Christmas, the second of which, in October, is also our (short) AGM. This is your chance to raise any points you may have about the Society, what you like about it or ways we could improve and evolve; please let us know! A request we do have is for one of you to step forward and join the small team (*not* all committee members) who organise our talks and outings. If you'd like to get involved, but not too involved, please speak to or contact Dorothy Symes.

A theme running through this year's newsletters has been music making in Amersham. In this issue we highlight The Amersham Concert Club whose 57th series of concerts starts on 30th September and runs through to March next year (see page 34).

Anniversaries are always good reasons to remember and celebrate events and institutions. This September two local schools, St. Mary's and Elangeni will, respectively, commemorate opening their doors to pupils 150 and 50 years ago (see page 30).

What links a one-time headmaster of Dr. Challoner's Grammar School, St. Mary's school, Barn Meadow, the Eagle, the Tyrwhitt-Drake family and the Crown hotel? Believe it or not, it's the Amersham Town Football Club, their Secretary explains how on page 20.

And what unites all the residents of the Old Town...the state of the High Street. Like most of the rest of Buckinghamshire roads it had been left to deteriorate for years and was in dire need of resurfacing. Then, after a false start, when the Council forgot to advise the residents that it was actually going to carry out the remedial work (!), it was finally carried out towards the end of May. Our website manager, Elena Morgan, has taken before and after pictures which you'll find on page 25. It is again a pleasure to drive through the Old town. However, as several residents have pointed out, this has brought with it a new problem, cars going too fast. So, the potholes were not without their use!

From potholes to sinkholes; about a week after the coronation, depending on which news source you read, a massive or huge or sizeable sinkhole appeared in the grounds of Shardeloes House. Such is the geology of our area the sinkhole could have appeared at any time, but the catalyst for its appearance at this particular time was, of course, construction of the pointless HS2. Plans are afoot to fill it in, however as we go to press it is still there, but shielded from public comment.

Finally, how often do you pop into our museum and, looking at an exhibit, wonder what on earth it is and what it was used for. Can you, for instance, identify this object?

You'll find out when you reach page 19.



Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting will be held in the Kings Chapel on Wednesday 25th October 2023 at 8.00pm.

(To be preceded by a glass of wine or soft drink at 7.30pm).

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence.
- 2 Minutes of the 2022 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: "**Buckinghamshire Search and Rescue Dogs**"
by Jonathan Crowther accompanied by his dog Ted

** Election of Committee Members and Officers.

Nominations should be sent by 19th October to the Hon Secretary at 162 High Street, Amersham. HP7 0EG.

LIBERTY.

The Bucks Man, the London Shop, the Global Style

Report on the talk by Will Phillips from Discover Bucks Museum

We were delighted to welcome Will Phillips, Keeper of Social History from Discover Bucks Museum on a return visit to the Amersham Society, this time to talk about the founder of the famous London store, Arthur Lasenby Liberty, and to explain his role in developing both the shop and the global style. Will introduced himself as the Keeper of Social History at the Museum and told us that there were now four keepers at the Discover Bucks Museum Resource Centre based at Halton, where the Museum's collections are housed. The collections date from 1500 to the modern day and the four collections are curated by the Keepers of Architecture, Art, Natural History and Social History.

Will stressed that it was important that Arthur Lasenby Liberty's connection with Buckinghamshire should not be overlooked and the impression made by the striking portrait of him that we were shown was of a gentleman that it would be hard to overlook.

It all started in 1843 when Arthur Lasenby Liberty was born above his father's drapers shop in Chesham. Arthur spent much of his early childhood at his grandfather's Chartridge home. When he was eight years old the young Arthur moved with his family to Nottingham but he returned regularly to his grandparents' Buckinghamshire home. Arthur's favourite school subjects were history and English literature and he also developed a keen interest in the theatre and creative work. He was exceptionally bright but did not go to university as he had to work to help with his family's finances.

Arthur worked first in a lace factory in Nottingham where the working practices appeared to him to be stuffy and old fashioned. He then moved to London when he was 16 years old. There he worked in an uncle's wine warehouse and, as an intelligent and hardworking young man, Arthur might have been rather disappointed at the progress of his career up to this point. However, he



Portrait of
Arthur Lasenby Liberty
by Arthur Hacker

frequented London art galleries and was particularly interested in the work of Rosetti, Burne-Jones and William Morris and he also soaked up the atmosphere of the luxury shops in Regent Street. One of these shops was Farmer and Rogers well known for the luxury goods sold in its shopping emporium, especially the beautiful shawls. Arthur was a sociable young man and good at networking and making influential friends. In 1862 he joined Farmer and Rogers, working on the shop floor with the luxury goods and many of Arthur's friends, also interested in the high-quality luxury goods, became his customers at Farmer and Rogers.

Arthur Liberty's future direction really started in 1862 at the time of the International Exhibition in Kensington. The Japanese stand there particularly

attracted him and the blue and white porcelain exhibited by the Japanese made such an impression that he bought some of it. During the period 1864-74 Arthur established himself as a connoisseur of Japanese goods and went on to build up a successful business in this field. His boss, Simon Rogers, bought an Oriental Warehouse and here Arthur's creative instincts and career flourished to such an extent that Arthur wanted to become a partner in the company. To Arthur's dismay his offer was rejected. The next step in this successful career came when friends persuaded Arthur to leave Farmer and Rogers. Arthur then moved to East India House where he sold luxurious silk fabrics with great success. These fabrics were particularly loved by artists for their colours and drape.



Arthur had become engaged to Emma Blackmore, whom he married in 1875. Arthur went on to lease half a shop in London, helped financially by Emma and her father. Friends transferred their custom to the new store and Arthur increased the range of merchandise and expanded the shop to seven departments, which included silks, porcelain, various furnishings and carpets. The store Farmer and Rogers did not make the same successful progress but filed for bankruptcy. In 1883 Arthur opened a second shop in London, which he called Chesham House and in 1894 Liberty became a public company.

The store sourced many of its luxury fabrics from overseas countries, where eastern dyeing techniques were of great importance. The London company of Thomas Warden produced its own fabric and dyes, which were especially suited to the block printing of the art nouveau period and the English designs of the time, and at this point Liberty's repu-

tation for luxury design fabrics was cemented. The famous Liberty design of Peacock Feathers was produced in 1887 and continues to this day.

At the Great Exhibition of 1851 there was reduced emphasis on the gaudiness of the mid-Victorian design and this led to artistic and philosophical aesthetic movements without moral messages. The Arts and Crafts methods and quality design became popular and Arthur Liberty's shops sold goods that espoused the theories of the Arts and Crafts movement. Arthur was a very influential and also an astute business man, with great skill at choosing his staff. One of these, Edward Goodwin, became Head of Costume Department in 1884 and Archibald Knox was the design expert in historical dress. John Llewellyn, who was made Head of the Silk Department, was responsible for the design of fabrics sold at the store. Liberty did not give the name of the designer on the fabrics, all of which were shown as Liberty design.

While William Morris did not favour the use of machinery and preferred traditional methods, Arthur Liberty used machinery sometimes, for example in making pewter items which were made to resemble a handcrafted work such the candlesticks that were produced. In this way, the creative talent and the work of the machines came together.



Arthur Liberty Memorial, St John the Baptist Churchyard, The Lee, photo by Elena Morgan

Arthur never lost his affection for the county of his birth. In 1894 Arthur and Emma moved to Buckinghamshire to their home the Manor House at The Lee and immersed themselves in the local community. Arthur became High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire and a Justice of the Peace, while Emma became involved in local crafts, especially lacemaking. She also amassed a large collection of historic

lace, some of which is in the Bucks Museum. Then followed the desperately sad time of the First World War. As Arthur and Emma had no children, Ivor Stewart, Arthur's sister's son took over some of the commitments and also changed his name to Ivor Stewart-Liberty. Ivor served with the Bucks Light Infantry during the war and was awarded the Military Cross. He was appointed a Director of Liberty in 1916.

Arthur Lasenby Liberty died in 1917 and is buried at St John the Baptist Church at the Lee.

The Liberty store carried on after the Great War and Ivor Stewart-Liberty ran the business. The new Liberty shop opened in 1924. The mock Tudor design of the new shop front did not pass planning regulations and the new Liberty's was therefore moved around the corner to Marlborough Street. The goods in this shop looked particularly eye-catching as they were displayed in small areas.

Liberty was not bombed during the Second World War and after the war there was a different atmosphere at the store where modernity was in the air. Eric Lucking was appointed in charge of window dressing, the displays were eye catching and coordinated, lines were clean and made people stop and look at them. Modern ceramics were sold, Liberty fabrics came into fashion and Liberty became a unique British brand, emphasising heritage and history.

Dorothy Symes

Buckinghamshire Spies and Subversives



Denise Beddows

On a chilly April evening, Denise Beddows came to the Kings Chapel and gave us a fascinating insight into the people of Buckinghamshire who have played a part in disrupting the life of the nation - spies and informers of all genders and backgrounds.

From her background as an Immigration Officer and Intelligence Analyst, she has researched in great detail some of the local characters in the preceding centuries - truly flinty characters formed from a land of flints. Indeed Beaconsfield was once a border town between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, and Amersham has been noted for its dissenters.

Appropriately, our first century of the talk highlighted the Amersham Martyrs, where local people who wanted to pray and read the Bible in English, were burned at the stake. Neighbours were quizzed at the behest of the Bishop to see if there was a Bible in people's homes, or if they expressed their beliefs in the common language. These were indeed some of the first informers of our talk and it is from this information that men were tried for heresy and burned at the stake.

In the 1500s Savay House in Denham was the mansion home of the Peckhams, a deeply catholic family who in the time of Henry VIII maintained their beliefs and provided hiding places for persecuted priests. Anxious to promote

Catholicism, they encouraged local people to come to see miracles, bringing people to see men 'infected by devils'. Bringing bones from the cheeks of such men (allegedly from chickens) these theatrics were effective in maintaining Catholicism in Denham. Indeed the Denham exorcisms were mentioned by Shakespeare many years later.

Similarly a century later, the Throckmortons, who owned land around Great Missenden, were involved in a plot to overthrow Queen Elizabeth I. Sir Everard Digby of Gayhurst Manor, was a member of the group of Catholics involved in the Gunpowder Plot. When the plot failed, the conspirators fled to Holbeche House in Staffordshire. Sadly their attempts at drying their wet gunpowder in front of the fire,

resulted in much damage. Digby was betrayed and hung, drawn and quartered at the Tower of London.



Sir Everard Digby



Sir Francis Dashwood

West Wycombe and the Hellfire Caves in the 1700s were the scene of much spying, where high-ranking men caroused together and used this as an opportunity to find information that might be to their advantage. Sir Francis Dashwood himself was first Chancellor of the Exchequer and spent time before the American Revolution with Benjamin Franklin, known as agent 72. Notable was Prince Frederick Louis who dressed as a woman when visiting Russia to spy initially for the French but then for the British. The church at West Wycombe is unusual, being situated high above the town with a golden ball on the top, and thus inconvenient for local people. However, it was situated on the hilltop to broadcast intelligence messages with flashing lights across great distances to other towers, such as Norris's obelisk at Camberley.

The 1800s saw anarchists within the system - the suffragettes. People were deeply shocked at the women's

activities; these members of the National Union of Women's suffrage were their wives and daughters! Many of these women were imprisoned in Aylesbury and protesters were often seen outside supporting them. Activities locally included setting fire to Saunderton station (having ascertained the location with a local policeman) and Beaconsfield Golf Club.



Prince Frederick Louis

Suffragettes often refused to have their photographs taken and prison officers resorted to surreptitious snaps from a van while the women exercised or used theatre billings for actresses. The women were often subjected to the well-known 'Cat and Mouse' game, where they were force fed until they were very weak, then sent home to get stronger, only to be rearrested again.

At the start of the 20th century Vernon Kell set up MI5, the security service, with a tiny staff, mostly administrative but also taking on policemen and special branch officers. He felt women were a wasted talent and took them on to catch spies (the infamous Mata Hari was executed in 1917).



Vernon Kell

These women studied letters to foreign countries, employing many ways to censor the post, including using lemon juice, kettles, candles and magnifying glasses to discover covert messages, even removing postage stamps to



Mata Hari

ensure they were not hiding any microdots. In the 1930s G.K. Chesterton lived in Beaconsfield, when his cousin wrote the well-known book on Oswald Mosley; Mosley used finance from Hitler

to fund libelous broadcasts about British soldiers. Afraid of the Russians, the Germans sent 200 intelligence documents to Bletchley Park for decoding to assist the British. Local film stars and movie makers supported the war effort; Cyril Mills at Denham took photographs to assist MI5 in double crossing foreign agents and Alexander Korda was given money by them to produce propaganda films.



Klaus Fuchs

During the Cold war, there were many spies with local connections. Nunn May was convicted for supplying atomic research secrets to the Soviet Union, and the physicist Klaus Fuchs passed details over from Britain and later from the USA.

Donald MacLean, member of the Cambridge Five, was brought to Penn for the burial of his ashes.



Donald MacLean

In current times we see the Islamic terrorists from ISIS, Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda, including those recent converts such as 'the white widow'. The bombings in London on the 7th July 2005 were attributed to dissidents, two of which were pupils from the local High Wycombe grammar school.

It is evident that throughout the history Denise pictured for the Society, there have been spies, informers and dissidents active in the region with colourful stories and often disastrous consequences. Her talk again confirmed that local people often display the flinty character of their native soil.

Christine Standing

Glamersham at Amersham Museum

Emma Treleaven, Collections Manger

Get your glad rags on and find your dancing shoes, it's time to go out!

From dinner dances and theatre outings, to weddings and trips to London, Amersham residents have always had plenty of occasions to dress their best.

Amersham Museum's new temporary exhibition explores how local people dressed up to enjoy themselves between 1890 and 1972 through the photographs, clothing, accessories and stories from Amersham's glamorous past. There's even a chance to try on some hats yourself, or learn the steps for the foxtrot and jive.

Of course 'glamour' means different things to different people: you can be glamorous with shined shoes and your Sunday best, or dressed up to the nines as a glamorous film star. The wide range of photos on show, in particular, provide insights into this spectrum of special occasions and outfits.



Albert and Fanny Redding
in their Sunday best clothing,
1922

An evening out at the theatre,
Beauty and the Beast at the
Amersham Playhouse in 1948

Theatre

The Amersham Playhouse opened on Station Road in 1936, and quickly became a regular evening out for the local community.

The dynamic Sally Latimer and Caryl Jenner, and later Rosa de Leon and John Ferris, directed, produced and acted in plays which included everything from pantomimes to Shakespeare, Noel Coward to contemporary theatre.

Big stars including Dirk Bogarde and Anna Wing were attracted to perform by the charismatic directors and Amersham's proximity to London. In spite of positive reviews and an excellent reputation in its heyday, its audiences dwindled in the post war world, leading to its closure in 1956.

Cinema

The Regent Cinema opened on Sycamore Road in Amersham-on-the-Hill in 1928. Built by local musician Walter R Collins and local builder Alfred Woodley, the sumptuous Art Deco building and interior was state of the art, featuring an orchestra pit, a café, and even an early vacuum cleaning system.

The Regent gave the residents of Amersham easy access to the glamour of Hollywood, showing the latest films



featuring stars like Rita Hayworth and local favourite, Dirk Bogarde. The last film shown before the cinema was demolished in 1962 was *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, a fittingly glamorous end to a much-loved local landmark.

Music

For music lovers in Amersham, there was no shortage of concerts, performances or music lessons in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Amersham Music Club hosted concerts, as did the Regent Cinema, the Town Hall, and various churches and schools. The town band, formed in 1843, also regularly performed in the local area.

Concert pianist Giorgia Pearce moved to Amersham and opened a music studio in 1936, which became an important centre for music and the arts during World War II. The music studio and its community attracted world class musicians to Amersham, including emigré musician and composer Francesco Ticciati who regularly gave charity concerts and taught lessons.

A formal portrait photograph is an obvious occasion to get dressed up. Mrs Thomas William Tyrwhitt-Drake was captured on a favourite horse by George Ward in 1889.



Wedding Bells

Weddings are always an occasion for dressing up, whether you are the bride and groom or a valued guest.

Our collection contains many stories and images of couples starting a new life together, the men in their best suits or uniforms and the women with carefully done hairdos and glamorous homemade or store-bought dresses. Guests in elaborate hats and bridesmaids in questionable or beautiful matching dresses regularly appear in photos.

Weddings also provided important income for Amersham businesses. Local couples often used local photographers, dressmakers, bakers, florists, pubs and venues, all of which helped the couples on their special day, and boosted the local economy.

A recent acquisition by the Museum is on display, a small seal which was made to commemorate the sudden death of Arthur Tyrwhitt Drake on his wedding day in 1831. Aged only

31 years old, he probably died of a stroke, heart attack or aneurism.

A heartbroken family member commissioned the fob seal, which also opens into a locket which once contained a piece of Arthur's hair. The motto 'de temps passe d'amitie reste', which roughly translates to 'time passes, friendship endures', is inscribed around the inside face.

A happier story is represented by a wedding dress worn by Delia Brown for her marriage to David Johnston in 1944. The couple met in Amersham when Delia was knocked off her bicycle by a lorry from the nearby Army base. She broke her arm, and David helped take her to the local doctor. They were married soon after and lived in the local area for many years.

Delia's wedding dress was made by her stepmother, and they collected clothing coupons from friends to acquire enough fabric during wartime rationing.

A Good Knees Up

Amersham has always had a lively nightlife, partly thanks to its many pubs and the Weller brewery being a major employer in the town. Going to the pub was an important part of community life, everyone had their favourite, and it was a regular chance to socialise.

Dinner dances were very popular in Amersham. Tickets could be bought in advance from local shops, for these regular chances to dress up, see friends, listen to music and dance. Groups like the Young Conservatives hosted more formal balls and dinners, with attendees expected to arrive in full evening dress.

From Head to Toe

Accessories have always been an essential part of a glamorous outfit. Whether it's a smart hat from London, a homemade handbag, or a well shined pair of shoes, accessories can take an outfit from drab to glamorous in a single stroke.

The Museum's collection includes men's and women's hatboxes from London outfitters Henry Heath Ltd

and Bourne and Hollingsworth of Oxford Street, alongside a black bowler hat sold by F.J. Fuller on Whielden Street.

There were various places to shop for accessories in Amersham in the 20th century. Haberdashers and general stores, like Fuller's, sold hats and other accessories, and specialist retailers in the town sold shoes and jewellery. More recently, shops like Ambers began bringing fashionable accessories for each season to town.

Shoes are a necessity, but often do much more than keep feet warm and dry. On show are two pairs of stylish black boots made during World War I which were found during the restoration of a shop in Amersham in 1990. They have never been worn, and the stamp 'War Time boots' can be clearly seen on one sole. Another pair of chic red high heels have rubber patches added to the soles. From the amount of wear on them we can tell the owner wore them often, possibly for dancing!

Wearing a suit and tie to go fishing is an alien idea to us today, but not for John Brazil posing with his catch in 1940.





All dolled up for a Goya staff party, 1960s

All Dolled Up

To most people, getting dressed up means more than just putting on fancy clothes. Personal grooming is a big part of looking your best, be it doing your hair and makeup, or having a shave and choosing the perfect cologne.

Getting ready for a party or event can be almost as much fun as the event itself, especially as retailers often use exciting packaging, scents, and products to entice us. Goya, the local perfume and cosmetic manufacturer, was especially good at this with famous brands such as Aqua Manda.

Glamersham runs until the end of the year in the Museum's Woodcock Room. Entrance included as part of general admission.

Up to London

Taking roughly an hour on the train or tube, the bright lights and bustle of London have been easily accessed by Amersham residents since 1892 when the railway arrived in town.

Getting dressed up and taking the train for the theatre, a concert or special event was perfectly possible with trains running in the late evening and affordable return tickets. Going into London to shop for an outfit for a special occasion or an accessory to jazz up an older ensemble, was also common, often followed by a meal or a cup of tea at the glamorous Chiltern Court Restaurant above Baker Street Station.

Could you identify the object from the Amersham Museum?

It was donated to Amersham Museum in 1993, having been used by the donor's great grandfather in Aylesbury in around 1900 - it's a **Straw Plait Mill**. Straw plaiting was a key local industry in this area, and the Museum has a number of items relating to its practice. Local makers would sell their lengths of plait, often through dealers, to be made up into hats in centres such as Luton.



This wooden device was used to flatten a plait once it had been made, fixed vertically to a wall or door jamb, as it is in the reception of the Museum today. As you turn the handle, the grooves on the rollers fit into each other, so that the plait is pressed flat and straightened ready for sale.

Once common in Amersham and the wider Chilterns area, straw hat making has newly been added to the Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts, meaning that it is in danger of no longer being practised in the UK:

<https://heritagecrafts.org.uk/redlist/categories-of-risk/>

The Museum has been working with Veronica Main MBE to learn more about the craft skill, and its history, and to support her efforts to encourage new practitioners. In the New Year's Honours List 2021 she was awarded an MBE for her services to Straw Plaiting for the Hat Industry and Endangered Crafts. There is much more information on her website www.hatplait.co.uk

There is also more information and exhibits relating to straw plaiting and Chiltern crafts typically undertaken by women in the current exhibition at Wycombe Museum **Hidden Hands: Women and Work in the Chilterns** on show until 10 September 2023.

<https://wycombemuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/hidden-hands>



AMERSHAM TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

Spratleys Meadow Today

Are you aware that your local football club plays in the National League System at Step 6, the 10th tier of English football?

Amersham Town Football Club play their home matches at Spratleys Meadow in School Lane, just off the High Street in the Old Town, and for this coming season are members of the Cherry Red Records Combined Counties League playing in Division 1. Their home kit is black and white and their nickname is 'The Magpies'. The Club Chair is local businessman Simon Damery and he is supported by an active Committee looking to lay the foundations for the success of the Club in the future and to raise the Club's profile within the local community.



Amersham Town during the 2022 – 2023 season.

Stuart Atkins, Manager, is second from the right and Club Chair, Simon Damery, far right.

Ever since reaching the heights of the Hellenic League Premier in the early 1960s and runners-up in the Spartan League in 1979 – 1980 the Club has been consistent under various managers in avoiding relegation without endangering the top of the league. However, this last season, 2022 – 2023, has seen a change in the Club's fortunes on the field. Under the management of Stuart Atkins, the club reached the Spartan South Midland League play-offs and the semi-final of the St Mary's Cup.

With The Football Association moving the Club sideways in the National League System from the Spartan South Midlands League to

the Cherry Red Records Combined Counties League, Stuart has complemented his coaching staff by bringing in Richard Pacquette as Player/Assistant Manager and Carlan Edgar as Coach, each of whom have played or coached at a high level. The majority of the players have been retained from last season and Stuart has made some key signings to strengthen the playing squad in readiness for the new season.

Fixtures for the season will be posted on the Club's website at www.amershamtownfc.com The Club Chair and Committee look forward to meeting and greeting you at Spratleys Meadow in the near future.



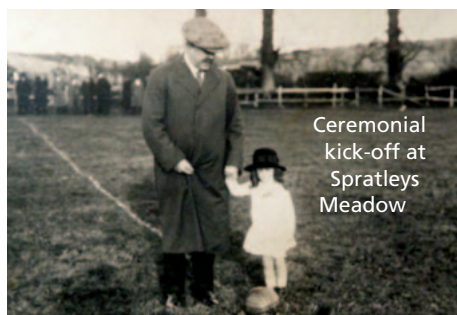
Amersham Town FC at the turn of the 20th Century

History

The Club was formed at a meeting held in The Crown Hotel on 10 October 1890 and the first General Meeting held on 13th October was chaired by The Reverend E B Cooper, Headmaster of Dr. Challoner's Grammar School. The Reverend Cooper had been recommended to the trustees of the school by Dr W G Grace the legendary cricketer. Following the general meeting, further meetings followed quickly with a Club President, vice-presidents and a committee elected and rules established. The club's first match took place at Barn Meadow in November, with Amersham losing 2–1 to Wycombe Marsh FC. The Club continued to play at Barn Meadow,

using St Marys School as changerooms and The Eagle as a base.

In 1920, Squire Tyrwhitt Drake leased the meadow known as Spratleys to the Club at a rental of £10 per year. Prior to a celebratory match one of the Squire's daughters, Diana, assisted by Dr Gardener, Chairman, performed the ceremonial kick-off.



Ceremonial
kick-off at
Spratleys
Meadow

Up to the early 1930s the players continued to use St Mary's School as changerooms. Then dressing rooms (no showers or toilets!) and a stand were added at Spratleys Meadow, the latter by Alfred Woodley a local builder and Chairman of the Club. The stand survived until the Great Storm of 1987 when the wind lifted it almost in one piece over School Lane onto the allotments. The stand was replaced in 1997 and was formally opened by Graham Taylor, Club President and ex England manager.

During the Second World War shelves were put up in the change-rooms to be used as a mortuary in the event of an air raid on Amersham, though fortunately they were never needed. In the late 1940s mains water was laid on at the ground and a communal hot bath installed.

The mid-1960s saw the Club acquire a disused timber classroom, from a private girls' school, as a clubhouse. When Amersham officially twinned with the town of Bensheim in Germany in 1977 the football Club made two visits to that town to play local teams. In 1977, floodlights were installed and the brick part of the clubhouse,



The Old Changerooms

comprising boardroom, kitchen, lounge, toilets and an extended bar was completed in 1983.

In 1995, a new 99-year lease on Spratleys Meadow was agreed to run from the expiry of the old lease in 1998 and the allotments across School Lane were converted to football pitches and opened in September 2000 for use by youth teams and in the summer months for first team training sessions.

In 2006 following a substantial grant from the Football Foundation the 11ft 4-inch slope on the pitch, touchline to touchline, was levelled and a new changeroom block constructed.



New Changerooms

Following a major fund-raising effort and significant investments by the Football Foundation and HS2 Community & Environment Fund, the wooden part of the Clubhouse was replaced in 2021 and in 2022 a new kitchen was installed courtesy of the Club winning a competition organised by Buildbase. Apart from matchday hospitality for players, spectators and officials the Clubhouse is used by fitness, trampoline and pilates classes, business meetings and is available for hire, details can be found on the Club's website at

www.amershamtownnfc.com.



The Clubhouse today

During the last year the Club has hosted a charity match in aid of the Ukrainian Refugee Appeal Fund and three matches for England Fans FC; in September for the Queen Elizabeth II Memorial Cup against Germany Fans; the John Motson Memorial Cup against Ukraine Fans in March 2023 and in April 2023, England Fans FC Lionesses against Brasil Ladies.

Bryan Fisher

Honours

- **Hellenic League**
Premier Division champions 1963-64
Runners up 1964-65, 1965-66
Division One champions 1962-63
League Cup winners 1953-54 1962-63
First Division Cup finalists 1962-63
Benevolent Cup (Reserves Section) winners 1962-63
- **London Spartan League**
Runners Up 1979-80
- **Wycombe and District Combination League**
Champions 1902-03, 1919-20, 1920-21
- **Aylesbury League**
Champions 1907-08, 1908-09, 1909-10, 1912-13, 1919-20, 1920-21
Runners Up 1907-08
- **Chesham League**
Winners 1912-13, 1919-20,
Runners Up 1907-08, 1931-32
- **Great Western Suburban League (Division 2)**
Runners Up 1920-21
- **Wycombe Minor League**
Winners 1937-38
- **Berks and Bucks Junior Cup**
Winners 1901-02, 1913-14, 1922-23
Finalists 1919-20, 1926-27
- **Berks and Bucks Minor Cup**
Winners 1937-38
- **Wycombe Challenge Cup**
Winners 1923-24
Finalists 1913-14
- **Bucks Charity Cup**
Winners 1925-26
Finalists 1919-20
- **Chesham Challenge Cup**
Winners 1931-32, 1933-34,
- **Chesham Charity Cup**
Winners 1908-09
Finalists 1919-20, 1933-34, 1936-36, 1951-52
- **Rickmansworth Charity Cup**
Finalists 1919-20
- **St Mary's Cup**
Winners 1990-91
- **High Wycombe Senior Cup**
Finalists 2012-13
- **John Hearn Challenge Cup (against Chesham United)**
Winners 1969, 1970
Shared 1965

Acknowledgements

100 Years of Club and Town, J Archer, 1990
A Brief History of Amersham Town FC, M Gahagan, 2021
Football Club History Database (F.C.H.D): Amersham Town

The High Street gets resurfaced - at last!



Before - the biggest and worst pothole opposite the Drake Almshouses



In progress - the same section after the repair work



After - the resurfaced High Street

Amersham Photographic Society



Making a Splash by Nigel Longman

Seventy years ago the Amersham Photographic Society held its inaugural exhibition in the Old Town. This year it holds its 70th in St. Michael's church, Amersham-on-the-Hill*. In this article the Society's Secretary, Christopher Read, talks about the Society's beginnings and its continuing focus on creativity as technology evolves.

Origins

Amersham Photographic Society (APS) was formed in the early 1950s. A headline in the Bucks Examiner of 27 March 1953 cautiously stated "**INTERESTING EXHIBITION**" before going on to describe the first annual APS exhibition of photography, held at the town hall in Old Amersham, as "*a success*".

Although 70 years later the technology that enables photography is not only different but widespread, the one word that summarises what APS is all about is still "*creativity*". So what do we do to encourage and nurture creative photography?

Connecting with others having the same interests... learning basic technical skills or developing an individual style of photography... taking part in competitions and exhibitions... giving and receiving feedback on images. All of that and more, so that our members can improve skills for creative expression through the medium of still photography.

With over 100 members, APS is the biggest of the 36 organisations that form the Chiltern Association of Camera Clubs (CACC). As our local organising body, the CACC provides speakers and competition judges as well as hosting the annual Rosebowl inter-club competitions.

Wide range of activities

The main programme of APS events is held at the Chiltern Lifestyle Centre on Monday evenings. We're privileged to have had a long term partnership with the Community Centre, now with access to the splendid new facilities in Chiltern Avenue.

Our Special Interest Groups are less formal evenings, held on Thursdays. These primarily give members the opportunity to share and discuss images in smaller groups, benefitting from the wealth of experience of other members. These groups currently include:

Monochrome

Originally focussed on darkroom printing, the "*mono group*", like most of APS, principally looks at digital prints, but supports and encourages members interested in all aspects of monochrome photography, including analogue (eg film). Members show and discuss their images, receiving comments and encouragement from others.

Colour

The Colour Group welcomes members who enjoy seeing, discussing and celebrating colour prints. Participants submit up to three pictures to show and talk about. The group chat about the picture expressing both appreciation and often questions such as where and how. Some authors will ask for feedback to help understand strengths, weaknesses and potential improvements.

Beyond

This group has evolved to concentrate exclusively on creative photography and photo-based art. It covers anything that requires the photographer to do more than be in the right place, wait for the right moment, before releasing the shutter. Every month photographic challenges are set to encourage members to explore new creative techniques. These may be achieved by means of software or in-camera.

Ask APS

These sessions, mainly taking the form of interactive workshops, are run by some of the club's most experienced members and cover a wide range of photographic genres and techniques. Other sessions are designed to encourage and assist members to look beyond club photography and submit work to National and International Salons, or seek distinctions with organisations such as the PAGB and FIAP.

PiC (Photographers in Camera)

The purpose of the print based PiC Group is to support, encourage, and inspire photographers who wish to work thematically, on personal projects, towards distinctions, or who produce non-competitive sets of prints. The meetings are friendly, non-critical, and facilitate the discussion and showing of prints, sharing knowledge, and providing feedback. The Group has the official recognition and support of the Royal Photographic Society.

As well as the weekly programme of evening meetings, there are also various groups where the emphasis is more on being sociable, indeed sometimes not even talking photography! These include various outings, often into London, and regular gatherings at Amersham's coffee outlets.

Celebrating success

Success for individual APS members comes in many forms. Although we have some members who make their living in photography, APS members are mostly amateurs. Distinctions come both from within the club, with our competition leagues, and from outside bodies such as RPS, PAGB and FIAP. We have members holding their own solo exhibitions in London and beyond and have even had acceptances in the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition.

Challenges met, more to come

20 years since the transition from darkroom to digital the explosion of interest in photography has led to billions of images being captured and shared on the internet each day. Digital technology has opened the door to many who would never have dreamt of spending time in a darkroom or even threading a film into an analogue camera body. APS welcomes anyone with an enthusiasm for creating images, whether that's using film, a digital camera or mobile phone. Further challenges now come from camera-free "*photography*" with artificial intelligence (AI) software capable of producing convincing pictures from the creator's verbal prompts.

Wherever the technology takes us in the next 70 years, APS will doubtless continue to encourage and support its members in the creation of photographic images.

Amersham Photographic Society welcomes new members, see our website for details : www.amershamphotosoc.com



Ball Fight by Geoff Walker

*Our **Annual Exhibition** is this month, with free entry to all.
It's at St Michael and All Angels Church in Amersham
town centre from 26th to 30th September 2023.



Photograph taken by two
of the school governors,
Ed Staite and Chris Monnington

Two Schools Celebrate Anniversaries

In 1873 Queen Victoria was on the throne and William Gladstone was in his first term as Prime Minister. Fry and Sons produced the UK's first chocolate Easter egg and Alexandra Palace burnt down - just two weeks after it opened. Vernon Kell, the founder of MI5 (see Bucks Spies and Subversives, page 10), was born and Edwin Landseer died. And on 30th September of that year St. Mary's Church of England Primary School (then known as Back Lane School) was formally opened, *"and the day was kept by the town generally as a holiday. At two o'clock divine service was held in the fine old parish church, which has so recently been restored. The children assembled at the market hall and, preceded by a detachment of their number carrying flags, marched to the sacred edifice, where a good congregation were assembled"*. (Bucks Herald, 4th October 1873)

One hundred years later, in 1973, Queen Elizabeth II was our monarch and Edward Heath her Prime Minister. VAT came into effect, Noel Coward died and the BBC documentary “Metro-Land”, narrated by John Betjeman, was first aired. Elangeni Middle School (as it was then known) opened its doors to its first pupils in September and Margaret Thatcher, the Education Secretary, officially opening the school in October. The site, on which Elangeni School now stands, and from which it took its name, was once the home of Francis and Sophie Colenso. The couple bought the land on the edge of Chesham Bois Common in 1900 and by the end of 1901 had built their new home. They called it “**Elangeni**”, a Zulu word meaning “*where the sun shines through*”. Francis’s father had been the first Bishop of Natal and it is where he had spent much of his childhood. As you walk round the school building you’ll walk over some patterned bricks; a tangible association with the building that once stood there - they were saved from the stable block when the house was demolished in 1972.

It’s difficult to talk about either school in isolation, as both were built to accommodate Amersham’s growing population. One big difference is that St. Mary’s is a Church of England Primary school with strong connections, which it retains to this day, to St. Mary’s church. As such its construction was funded by “*subscriptions from residents and grants from the Diocese of Oxford*”, whereas Elangeni is non-denominational and was built by Bucks County Council.



The original
Elangeni House



Reproduced by courtesy of Rose Hollingsworth, whose father attend St. Mary's school prior to WW1

Until comparatively recently, St. Mary's catchment area included Old Amersham and Amersham-on-the-Hill. Letters from pupils to a classmate who was in hospital after an accident in 1960 show addresses as far away as Chesham Bois. Today, St. Mary's school pupil intake is confined to Old Amersham and the residential roads leading up to Amersham-on-the-Hill, whilst Elangeni, along with the four other state Primary schools, each with much smaller catchment areas, educate children aged 4 to 11 in Amersham-on-the-Hill.

So how are the two schools marking their anniversaries? Interestingly, perhaps obviously, both have one aim in common: to celebrate and link their school's history within the wider community they serve.

In the case of the 240 pupils at Elangeni, each class has been studying every decade of the school's existence, highlighting significant social and cultural events, local and national. The results, alongside a commemorative plaque will be displayed in a mini museum which is to be created within the school. This anniversary year will culminate in an "**Open Day**" on Friday 22nd September for former pupils, parents, staff and governors.

St. Mary's has a much longer history: A "**150 Years Book**" is being compiled and, with the help of the Amersham Museum, the 330 pupils are studying the town's history over this time period. Their work is displayed in the Amersham Museum front window. St Mary's have been inviting alumni to come and explain to current pupils what life was like when they were at the school; in some cases, during the Second World War – when girls and boys were taught separately, boys were caned for misbehaving and pupils tended allotments which were directly behind the school, now a paved play area. And earlier, as you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, St. Mary's played host to the Amersham Town FC team who, up to the early 1930's played their games in Barn Meadow, by providing changing room facilities.

More tangible ways to mark the anniversary are also proposed: the restoration of some of the historic features of the Victorian building such as fireplaces, carvings, windows and stonework, along with the school bell which has not rung for many years. They are looking to the future as well, with plans already under way to plant a Legacy Orchard, a Tree Library, a Community Herb Garden and to install solar panels. The day before the official 150 Year anniversary, on Friday 29th September, the pupils will be re-enacting the 1873 first day procession from the school to the church for a commemorative service. The day will be marked on their return with the planting of the first Legacy Orchard tree and the burial of a time capsule.

I must thank **Sandra Burn**, Deputy Headteacher of St. Mary's School, along with **Alex Burns** and **Clare Prescott-Pounds**, Head Teacher and Business Manager respectively of Elangeni School for their assistance in compiling this article.

John Catton

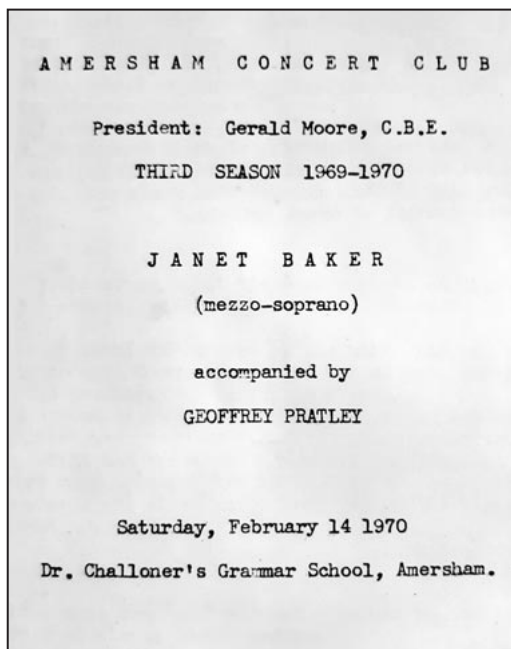


AMERSHAM CONCERT CLUB

World class musicians
performing live, locally

Could you begin to guess how many world class musicians have played in Amersham over the last 50 or so years? Amersham Concert Club is run by a group of enthusiastic music lovers and over the years we have arranged about 250 concerts with over 240 different musicians or ensembles. Some have enjoyed themselves so much that they have come back to play on more than one occasion!

In the early 1960s, the Amersham and Chesham Bois Choral Society, led by Carol Gray, began to arrange occasional orchestral or operatic concerts alongside their choral concerts and the success of these events led to the founding, in 1967, of the Amersham Concert Club. From the start, the Club has set out to bring professional musicians of the highest quality to the town and to offer a platform for talented young musicians just starting on their professional careers and these two aims are as important to us as ever.



in a smaller space and a more informal setting than a concert hall. Our musicians introduce the pieces and why they have chosen to put them together and often talk about the instruments they play.

Historically, string quartets and trios and pianists were probably the most frequent performers, but the range of small groups and flexible ensembles seems to grow each year. We are always on the lookout for something different to charm our audiences. A sextet from the National Youth Jazz Orchestra, a

In the early days of the Club, we were lucky enough, through funding from the Arts Council, local council and generous patrons, to be able to bring famous artists such as [Dame Janet Baker](#), the mezzo soprano, [Paul Tortellier](#), the cellist, the [Amadeus String Quartet](#) and pianists such as [John Lill](#), [Peter Katin](#) and [John Ogden](#) to Amersham. Sadly, those days have gone, and we have to pay our own way, so we are entirely funded by ticket sales and donations.

Nowadays we arrange five concerts each winter on Saturday evenings, usually in September, October, November, February and March. The concerts are described as 'chamber music' which some people fear may be more challenging than easy listening. We prefer to think of it as music intended to be heard

guitar quartet, programmes of words and music and groups of woodwind instruments have all proved popular in recent years.



Paul Tortellier, cello



Viv MacLean, piano and Alice Neary, cello
performing at ACC in October 2022

We are fortunate to be able to book young musicians who are supported by charitable trusts, including the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and Making Music's Phillip and Dorothy Green Young Artists Scheme. Over the years we have been lucky enough to hear some amazing musicians including **Lawrence Power**, viola, **Emma Johnson**, clarinet, **Nicholas Daniels**, oboe, and **Ashley Wass** and **Viv MacLean**, piano. Over the years, Viv has become a firm favourite with our audiences and has returned several times as a soloist and in various groups. Recently, we were delighted by a performance by the **Mithras Ensemble** (violin, cello and piano) and we are not surprised to find that they are now BBC Radio 3 Young Artists and are to be heard regularly in the Lunchtime Concerts slot.

The Club has used different venues, starting out at Dr Challoner's Grammar School, then moving to Little Chalfont to Dr Challoner's High School, and, most recently, settling back in Amersham at the Amersham Free Church in Woodside Road. This is a popular venue with our audiences because of its central location, easy parking and level access. The musicians who have played for us there have all been impressed with the sound quality and the facilities so it looks like a good move for us.

The last few years have been challenging for live performances, whether at the Royal Festival Hall, Covent Garden or local music societies and festivals and have been really difficult for musicians. We had to cancel the last concert of our 2019–2020 season and the whole of our 2020–2021 season.

When we resumed in October 2021, we were still operating under Covid restrictions and concerned about our audiences. We have now completed two seasons, post – Covid and are encouraged by the appetite for live music. We are lucky that there is a lot of live music in and around Amersham with Festivals, local orchestras and choirs and one-off events. It may, occasionally, be frustrating for organisers such as ourselves, that we are confused with each other, but I believe that we all bring different opportunities to the town and that there is something to appeal to everyone. We are pleased to have held our ticket prices at £20 for another season, in the face of rising costs and that we are able to welcome children and young people for free.

So, what do we have in store for Amersham music lovers in our 2023 – 2024 season? I am delighted to say that we think it is our most exciting season for many years! We are fortunate that many professional musicians live in the Chilterns, even if their work takes them all over the world. We are keen to build up these local links and our opening concert, on 30 September, will feature a very special local group – **Echor Music**.

They have put together a programme called *“Mozart and Mendelssohn – Musical Miracles”* featuring Schubert’s string trio No.1, Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet and Mendelssohn’s wonderful Octet. This will be the biggest ensemble we have had for many years, and we are hoping that it will be a very popular concert.

Later in the season we have glorious string quartets performed by **Brother Tree Sound**, an exciting and innovative quartet, also with local links. This is followed by a piano recital by **Cristian Sandrin**, whose planned performance for us was cancelled in March 2020, and who is now an established soloist. Our young musicians are a flute and harp duo, **Frederico Paixao** and **Milo Harper** with a lovely programme of romantic music. The season ends with **Ensemble Hesperis**, whose programme *‘Handel in the Strand’* captures the period in the early 1700s when London was the musical hub of Europe. Several of us have enjoyed Hesperis’s concerts since they first came to play in Tring in 2020, followed by a series of on-line recitals during lock-down. Their joyous music-making and enthusiasm for engaging with their audience is an absolute delight and should end our season on a high.

All the details of our concerts are on our website

www.amershamconcerts.org.uk

or come along and see us at our stall in the Old Town on Heritage Day (Sunday 10th September). You can also find us on Facebook.

Jenny Faulkner, Chair, Amersham Concert Club



Amersham Society visit to Charlecote Park and Stowe Gardens

Tuesday 27th June 2023

Tuesday 27th dawned bright and sunny, just like the preceding days, as the South East enjoyed prolonged period of hot weather. The coach bearing thirty two members and guests of the Amersham Society, dressed in their summer finery, set off promptly at 9:45am for the journey, initially to Charlecote Park and then Stowe Gardens.

As the coach headed up the M40 to Warwickshire rain drops started appearing on the windscreen of the coach raising concerns amongst the passengers as to why they had left behind their umbrellas and water proofs. However, their fears were not realised as on arrival at Charlecote Park; it was dry albeit blustery and overcast. The coach was

welcomed by an enthusiastic National Trust volunteer who had arranged transport up the long drive to the House for those needing it and was to be the guide for the first part of the visit, a cup of coffee or tea. During the refreshment break individual timed tickets for entrance to the House were distributed.

The grand Tudor house of Charlecote Park, which overlooks the river Avon on the edge of Shakespeare's Stratford, has five downstairs rooms open. In addition it is possible to visit the Scullery and Victorian Kitchen and wander across the Service Courtyard, which once hummed with the activity of a busy working estate, to inspect the Laundry and Brewhouse.

The Lucy family have been living at Charlecote since the 12th century. Wealthy country gentry. Their income came primarily from land, occasionally augmented by fortuitous marriages and is still the home of the Fairfax Lucy family.

During the Civil War Warwickshire was deeply divided, Warwick itself being a Parliamentary stronghold. Soldiers on both sides marched over the county. A Parliamentary army camped overnight in Charlecote Park before proceeding to Edgehill.

Like the country, the Lucy family was divided in their loyalties. Spencer Lucy fought at Edgehill, the first battle in October 1642. He became a colonel in King Charles' army.

His brother Richard was a local MP and at Charlecote there is a letter from Oliver Cromwell commanding his presence at the Barebones Parliament, 1653. Cromwell deliberately restricted membership to a small number of loyal, hand-picked supporters.

Support for Cromwell cost the family dear. When the Monarchy was restored in 1660 the King, Charles II, was keen to heal divisions and issued pardons to those who had supported Oliver Cromwell. But there was a price. Richard had to pay, £3,513, the annual income of the Charlecote estate. He remained an MP under Charles.

By 1823 the house was showing signs of its age. Mary Elizabeth a 20-year-old bride of the then owner of the estate, George, was appalled at the state of the house. She wrote in her diary

"Its old worn stone floor, small panes of glass, old window frames creaking and rattling with every gust of wind, and so cold!"

Over the following years the couple added a grand dining room and library.

Thomas Willement, London designer of heraldic glass, made new windows and reset the Elizabethan windows in the Great Hall. The old stone floor in the Great Hall was eventually replaced by one in marble. (The couple had it transported from a Venetian palace!!) The old flag-stones were put in the new Victorian kitchen.



The couple were responsible for the house as it is viewed today.

After the death of George (1845) and his wife (1890) the successor was the second son Henry Spencer and upon his death the estate was inherited by the eldest daughter who married a Scottish baronet, Sir Henry Fairfax. But the family fortune was diminishing as from the late 19th Century income from agriculture was falling as a consequence of cheaper imports.

The estate was acquired by the National Trust in 1945.

After visiting the house, there was the opportunity to take a look at the Scullery and Victorian Kitchen before transiting across the Service Courtyard to view the Laundry and Brewhouse.

The passage of time indicated it was time for lunch which was taken by the majority in the Orangery (opened exclu-

sively for the Amersham Society visitors) where the National Trust had made special arrangements to serve a cooked lunch as well as providing a variety of sandwiches. For the speedy eaters there was still a little time for a quick look at the gardens leading down to the Avon before undertaking the long walk down the drive to the coach.



Having accounted for all those on the outing the coach left Charlecote Park for its cross country journey to the next destination, Stowe Gardens. The exceptionally smooth journey by the driver allowed many of his passengers to explore their inner eyelids before arriving at Stowe refreshed and ready to explore the Georgian landscape.

Again for those with good mobility there was a considerable walk from the coach park to the entrance of Stowe Gardens. Those with limited mobility were able to enjoy a buggy ride.

There was then a choice - whether to combine the visit with a prearranged cream tea or forego the tea and spend more time in the garden.

Like most estates Stowe has changed over the centuries as its owner's fortunes have risen and fallen. The landscape garden as seen at Stowe was created by Viscount Cobham from 1717 and is said by the National Trust to be "*one of the most remarkable legacies of Georgian England*".

Having made a fortune from sheep farming and wool in 1589 John Temple purchased the Stowe Manor and estate. He was familiar with the house as his father had been leasing the house for 18 years. As a consequence there was little change over the following decades.

It was not until 1697 when Richard Temple became Stowe's fifth owner did changes really start to take shape.



Sixteen years after inheriting Stowe, Richard Temple was made Baron Cobham and four years later he was elevated to become Viscount Cobham. It is during this 20 year period that he employed garden designer Charles Bridgeman and architect Sir John Vanbrugh to enhance the garden.

During a period of 30 years Stowe gardens were formed initially under the guidance of Charles Bridgeman who made the transformation from formal gardens to a landscaped vista. Following his efforts at Stowe, Charles Bridgeman would go on to create the Serpentine in Hyde Park and the gardens at Kensington Palace.

The other person who kicked off the transformation of Stowe was Sir John Vanbrugh. His innovations facilitated the way for future developments. No doubt Viscount Cobham was impressed by his past work as one of the other country houses where he was influential was Blenheim Palace. Vanbrugh left a legacy that can still be seen today including the Rotunda and the Lake Pavilions.

Others, such as Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, built on the legacy of Bridgeman and Vanbrugh creating the garden as it is now.

The fortunes of those inheriting the Stowe Estate following the death of Viscount Cobham declined with the inevitable sale of the Estate, House and its contents. The estate was sold in July 1921, followed by further sales of contents and statues in 1922. In October 1921 the estate was again sold to a group that would later form Stowe School. Over the next six months, the house was adapted to include classrooms and student sleeping arrangements. There were small changes over the decades with the addition of further school buildings.

The National Trust was gifted the garden in 1989 from Stowe School.

Following renovation by the National Trust, the gardens of Stowe are worth exploring if only to appreciate the grand visions of those who helped create them.

All days out must inevitably end, so the coach bearing the members of the Amersham Society made its uneventful way back home.

Thanks must go to Dorothy Symes and Geraldine Marshall-Andrew for all their efforts in organising the transport and National Trust visits, especially for arranging lunch at Charlecote Park. A good day out was had by all and the weather was dry if a little overcast.

John Suckling

The Colenso Family Photo Album

On page 30 there is an article celebrating anniversaries of two local schools. One is Elangeni and by one of those strange twists of fate the Amersham museum has just acquired a photo album once belonging to the family whose house gave the school its name.

Briony Hudson, the Museum Director writes:

"I received an email from an antiquarian dealer asking if we might be interested in a photo album that had belonged to the Colenso family of Elangeni House. Volunteer and Trustee Nick Gammage had already carried out significant research into the family

<https://amershammuseum.org/history/people/19th-century/colenso/>



but this previously unknown album includes photos of the house, family portraits (including the dogs and ponies), and images of their close friends prime minister Ramsay MacDonald and his wife Margaret. The Amersham Society has very generously funded this acquisition, and we are excited to carry out and share further research about its contents."

The Society's Summer Garden Party



We've endured a rotten summer weather-wise this year and the 5th July, the day of this year's Garden Party, was no different, but by 6:00pm the skies had amazingly cleared allowing 75 members to enjoy a relaxing couple of hours with canapes and drinks.

The party was again held in the lovely gardens of Little Shardeloes, the home of Su and Quentin Chases – a fitting venue for our Society whose origins go back to the saving of Shardeloes House from being demolished in the 1950's; Little Shardeloes was built in 1688 as the Dower House of the Drake family.

Our thanks must go to Su and Quentin for kindly allowing us to hold the party in their garden and to Dorothy Symes and Geraldine Marshall-Andrews for so ably organising a very enjoyable event.



Amersham Place Names and their Origins

Amersham's Rural Past by Alison Bailey

For the second of a series of articles on the etymology of our local place names, I have looked at those names inspired by nature and Amersham's rural past.

As discussed in the previous article sometimes we have different versions of the origins of place names. Gore Hill is a good example of this and does suggest that Amersham perhaps had a violent past. Gore Hill was supposedly named after a 9th century battle with the Danes, so fierce that the blood ran down the hill. However, there is no record of such a battle in the area. In fact, a gor was a triangular enclosure of land between various large fields. Early maps show one triangular field, called Gor Field to the south of Bury Farm and the road follows this field boundary! Other place 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.

Many of our place names, however, are inspired by nature, such as Cherry Lane and reflect our rural past when the district was famous for its cherry trees. Other names inspired by native trees include Oakway, The Willows, Laurel Court, The Grove, Sycamore Road, **Oakfield Corner** and Elm Close.



George Ward photo of Oakfield Corner, Amersham-on-the-Hill c 1915

All photos courtesy of Amersham Museum

The origins of village names

Chesham Bois is named after the neighbouring town of Chesham which was Caesteshamm and then Cestreham. Caestel is the early word for castle, usually of Roman origin. A Roman estate ran along the river from Sarratt to Waterside and ruins were still visible in Saxon times. Ham or hamm is the Anglo-Saxon word for a settlement or village in a water meadow. Therefore, the name most likely means Roman castle in a water meadow. Bois derives from the de Bois family who were early Norman Lords of the Manor.

Chalfont was known as Celfunte in the Domesday Book which is most likely derived from the Old English for chalk spring - cealc funta.

Misbourne river

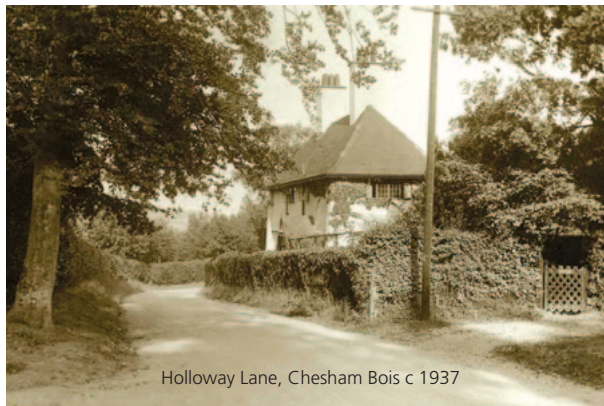
The bourne is derived from the Old English burna for stream or river, but the etymology of the first element is uncertain. It has been suggested that it comes from a lost Old English word related to English moss, and to Danish mysse and Swedish missne, which denotes water or marsh plants. Misbourne could mean river where water-plants grow. Unusually the river Chess took its name from the name of the town, Chesham, and not the other way round.



The Warren, Chesham Bois c 1910

Chesham Bois Manor

Chesham Bois Manor, the seat of the Cheyne Family was demolished in the early 19th Century but echoes of the estate remain in local place names such as Manor Farm (now The Manor) and Long Park. The early maps also shows Long Walk, a tree lined walk from the manor house to where Anne's Corner is today. By the 18th century the parkland was being farmed and known as Long Park field. A house beside the church which is believed to be the first manor house in the village is now known as **The Warren**. A warren was part of the manorial estate land, which was enclosed and set aside for breeding game, especially rabbits.



Holloway Lane, Chesham Bois c 1937

Topography

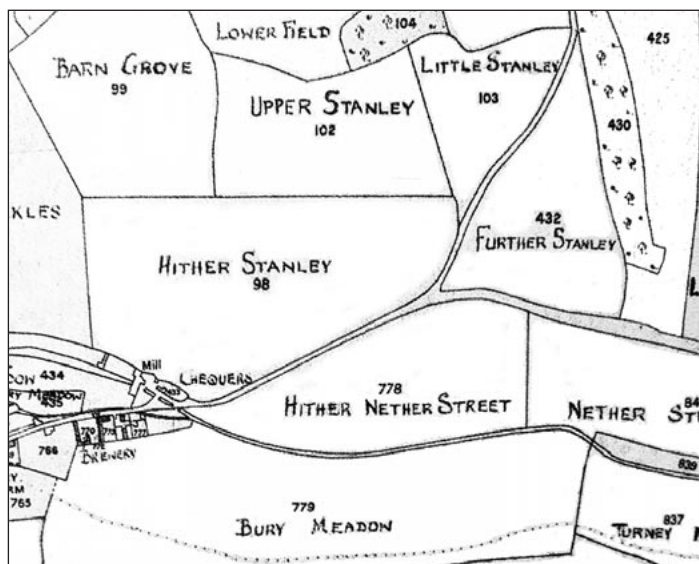
Whielden Street may take its name from the 14th century William de Whildene, but another interpretation is that the word Whielden came from the Old English hwaæl meaning curve and dene meaning valley. When Whielden Street becomes Whielden Lane it is curving away among the hills towards Penn and High Wycombe and could therefore mean a curving valley.

Holloway Lane derives from the Old English hola weg, a sunken road and usually denotes a very ancient path or track. With Bois Lane this follows the route of a pre-historic track from Ley Hill towards Amersham and Penn.

North and South Road were both named for their location to the north and south of one of the most important features in the landscape, Chesham Bois Common.

The naming of Station Road is self-evident but it also tells a story. Station Road was built on the route of the footpath from the town to Amersham

Common to give the towns folk, and particularly the horses, a gentler gradient to follow to get to the new station. The steep climb of the existing road, Rectory Hill (named of course for St Mary's Rectory located here) would have been treacherous in bad weather.



Extract from 1838 Map of Amersham, with the Chequers bottom left, showing the fields Upper, Little, Further and Hither Stanley

Yeomen Farmer

Amersham's numerous farms are another source of local place names. The farms were usually named for early yeomen farmers and kept the same name for many generations, although often with different spellings. Early maps show Hyrons Farm as Heroynes Farm and today we have Hyrons Lane. Lowdhams or later Loudhams Farm, which gives us Loudhams Road and Loudhams Wood Lane, originates from 1256, when there is a record of one hide of land in Chalfont being granted to Ranulf de Ludham. Mantles Green farm's origins could be even earlier. The 1086 Domesday Book shows that Thurstan Mantle held $\frac{1}{2}$ hide and land for two ploughs and 30 pigs in Amersham.

Quarrenden Road, Mayhall Lane, Snells Lane, Little Reeves Avenue, Burtons Lane and Cokes Lane, Woodside Road

and Chestnut Lane all derive from the names of the neighbouring farms. Many generations of the Batchelor family farmed and worked as labourers in Amersham. Whilst Batchelors Farm was on the common at Chesham Bois, Batchelors Way in Amersham takes its name from Batchelors Wood on the hill above Amersham which was later owned by the Wellers and developed after the arrival of the Metropolitan Railway.

Field names are also echoed in the place names. Piggots Orchard is derived from the earlier spelling of a field called Pightle or Pytle, an Old English word for a small field or enclosure. Stubbs Wood is derived from the field name Blackwell Stubbe which belonged to the Blackwell Hall farm estate in the valley below. Hundred Acres Lane follows the boundary of the field which had the same name.

Stanley Hill Avenue c 1950



The Stanleys

Amersham has quite a proliferation of Stanleys, from Stanley Villas on Station Road to Westanley Avenue, **Stanley Hill Avenue** and Stanley Hill. It was said that these were named by a young ambitious architect Stanley Hinge Hamp whilst he was working locally at the beginning of his career. Stanley Hamp did become very successful as a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and is perhaps best known locally for the design of Beaconsfield Golf Club, Davenies School, and for the 1930s modernist houses he designed in Windsor Road, Gerrards Cross, and Cambridge Road, Beaconsfield. However, maps of the area show that there were four large fields called Upper Stanley, Little Stanley, Hither Stanley and Further Stanley so this is probably the true origin of the road names. Stanley's daughter, Mary Christian Hamp, did give her name to Hampden Hill, her development of distinctive mid-century houses in Beaconsfield, which was built in 1963.

Artisans

Several place names also reflect the names of local craftspeople who lived or worked in a particular location. Norwood's Court, previously Norwood's Yard off the High Street was named for Richard Norwood, a currier and leather worker who lived here in the 1740s. Grimsdells Lane in Amersham-on-the-Hill was named after the many generations of Grimsdells, who were blacksmiths, and had their home and forge here on Amersham Common.

The name Bricky Pond, however refers to a local industry, brick making. The clay soil of Chesham Bois Common was frequently dug up to make building bricks in the kilns in a neighbouring field.

High & Over

More recently the 60s development Highover Park was named for the important Grade II* Listed Amyas Connell's house, High & Over which was built there in 1931. The house was commissioned by Professor Bernard Ashmole and his wife Dorothy, who named the house after a hill, near Alfriston in Sussex, known to her family.

If anyone can tell me the origins of other local place names not covered in these articles do get in touch at family.bailey@btinternet.com.

Dates for Your Diary

Amersham Heritage Day

Sunday 10th September

An annual event first held in 1997 which gets bigger and more exciting each year. This year there will be some 80 local Artisan food and craft stalls, charity stalls along with vintage cars, steam engines, marching bands and Morris dancing.

Late Night Shopping in Old Amersham

Friday 1st December

The Old Town Christmas tree lights will be turned on and The High Street will be transformed for the evening, from 5:30 to 10:00pm, into a place of entertainment; shops will be open, there'll be a Farmers Market and the chance to enjoy music along with festive wine and food.

Christmas Festival in Amersham-on-the-Hill

Saturday 2nd December

This annual event, organised by the Amersham Action Group in Sycamore Road between 12:00 and 5:00pm, aims to encourage everyone to shop locally for their Christmas gifts.

The Christmas lights will be turned on; there will be Christmas stalls along with carol singing and dancing and mulled wine to entertain everyone.

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.

Wednesday 27th September

Repton's 1794 Red Book for Shardeloes

A talk by Barney Tyrwhitt- Drake.

Wednesday 25th October

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Followed by a talk on

Buckinghamshire Search and Rescue Dogs

by Jonathan Crowther.

Wednesday 29th November

Amazon Adventure

A talk by Dr Jill Eysers.

2024

Wednesday 31st January

Our January talk has yet to be finalised; you will, of course,
be sent full details about it by email nearer the time.

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