



AMPTHILL & DISTRICT PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Autumn 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to the 2023 Autumn Newsletter. As we reflect on a full year of activity, we look forward to the upcoming 23-24 programme of talks and activities.

At our Annual General Meeting in May, we were able to elect a new Chairperson, Sarah Wright, whom we welcome. Sarah is already bringing new ideas and suggestions to develop and enhance the Society in different ways for the future.

Sadly, we said good-bye to John Boothby, who felt unable to continue through personal commitments. John had served the society, so well through his many years of membership, including serving on the committee as Secretary and, latterly, as Planning and Countryside Officer, and we thank him for his valued contributions and support.

At our committee meeting following the AGM, we agreed to approach Kelvin Horton, who had shown interest in being co-opted to the committee, to take on the role of Acting Planning and Countryside officer. which he has kindly agreed to do. Kelvin's contact details are: horton.kelvin@virginmedia.com ; 07806 753869. We are pleased to report that we now have our very own website ADPS.org.uk and many thanks go to the expertise of John Leary, for all the hours he has spent developing the website for us.

Our events from March through to July 2023 provided some very interesting talks, Many thanks to John Hele for making our Programme of Walks such a success. These were very well received and attended. Another of the highlights of the year was the wonderful experience, shared by more than 50 members, when visiting the Avenue House Gardens; two evenings most generously offered and hosted by Todd Longstaffe-Gowan and Tim Knox. Thanks to both for their hospitality.

In March, Dr Barry Dackombe delivered a talk about Lord Holland and his various interests and links with Ampt Hill and indeed Jamaica through his wife. Bev Fowlston provided a very informative discovery talk in April, on the Geology of Bedfordshire, focusing on Ampt Hill and the Greensand Ridge and using samples for us to view. Following the AGM in May, John Pestell talked on John Bunyan and Bedfordshire. John helped us identify the places Bunyan lived and ministered in and around Bedford, and beyond. Who remembers where the Bunyan Adventure park is?

As we approach the start of the new Programme year for ADPS we look forward to some very interesting and varied talks and indeed some more walks led by John Hele.

Lecture Programme for 2023-24:

Tuesday 3rd October 2023:

Postponed Eric Houfe Memorial Lecture: English Garden Eccentrics - Three Hundred Years of Extraordinary Groves, Burrowings, Mountains and Menageries: Todd Longstaffe-Gowan

Renowned landscape architect and historian Todd Longstaffe-Gowan reveals a series of obscure and eccentric English garden-makers who, between the early seventeenth and the early twentieth centuries, created intensely personal and idiosyncratic gardens.

Tuesday 7th November 2023:

Edward Bawden and Bedford: James McGregor

Edward Bawden (1903-89) was a master printmaker, illustrator, watercolourist and designer and is today recognised as one of the most influential artists of his generation. While he is perhaps best known for his commercial work for companies such as Twinings and Fortnum & Mason, and his linocuts, there is much more to Bawden than this. On his death in 1989, Bawden left just over 3000 of his works to the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery in Bedford and there is now a permanent but ever-changing exhibition space dedicated to him there. This lecture will explore why Bawden is considered to be so influential, as well as his links to Bedford and will be delivered by James McGregor, co-author of a book on Bawden published in 2008.

Tuesday 5th December 2023:

Patience, Jigsaws and Other Games Archivists Play: Pamela Birch

Pamela is the County Archivist and will provide an entertaining talk about what archivists (and conservators) do all day, using the analogy of various games. This will be our seasonal social evening, with a chance for members to get involved.

Tuesday 5th March 2024:

How to Research your Family's Military Ancestry: Steve Roberts

Steve Roberts is an ex-serviceman who works conducting bespoke military research and tours for both individuals and for a number of television documentaries as well. He has a particular passion for the First World War and has co-authored a number of books on the subject, including *Ghosts of the Somme: Filming the Great Battle July 1916* (published in 2009) and *The Platoon: An Infantryman on the Western Front 1916-18* (published in 2013). This lecture will provide guidance as to how to carry out research into your own family's military ancestry, including what records exist, how to access them and interpret them.

Tuesday 9th April 2024:

The History of Wrest Park, covering its 800-year History and Stories: Richard Luscombe

Richard is the Volunteer Historical Records Keeper at Wrest Park, working as part of the Volunteer History Research Team. We are hoping that we can link this talk with a future visit "behind the scenes" at Wrest Park during Summer 2024.

Tuesday 7th May 2024:

Eric Houfe Memorial Lecture: King Offa and Bedford: Professor Simon Keynes

This lecture will look at the evidence which exists to support the claim made in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that the mighty Mercian King Offa (died 796) was laid to rest in Bedford. Professor Simon Keynes is the emeritus Ellington and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge University and a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. He is a world authority on the subject and has published many books and articles, including the co-author of *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* which forms part of the Penguin Classic Series.

Programme of Walks 2023-24

Whilst retaining some of the popular walks John has also introduced some new ones for next year.

Saturday 23rd September 2023: *Please note date changed from the 9th September*

Ampthill's Origins through the Park

Ampthill Park has had an enormous influence on the town, from prehistoric times to the present day. This walk around the park will highlight a whole range of historical features and why they are there, as well as piecing together how various historical events have contributed to the nation's historical past.

Saturday 11th November 2023:

Ampthill in Wartime

The Civil War and both World Wars have had a marked influence on the development of the town. We look at why Ampthill has four war memorials, as well as visiting important buildings in the town that were used for wartime activities.

Tuesday 31st October 2023 and Tuesday 16th January 2024:

Ghost Walks

Saturday 20th April 2024:

John's Pub Crawl!

Over the years, there have been at least 22 hostelries in Ampthill. These inns and alehouses have been the mainstay of quenching the thirst of residents and visitors for centuries. Although the Morris Brewery was the main producer of ale for about 130 years, there were many other small brewers in the town. This tour around Ampthill will point out where the hostelries were and how they fitted into the local community.

Saturday 11th May 2024:

St Andrews Church at 2.00pm

The church as it stands today is almost certainly the oldest building in the town, being over 500 years old. Much of Ampthill's history is contained within its walls and roof. This walk around the church will point out many of these historical features, together with some amusing stories concerning the clashes between Ampthill's nobility!

Saturday 15th June 2024:

Secret Ampthill

Similar to this year's walk

Saturday 20th July 2024:

Graveyard Tour

Similar to this year's walk

Saturday 7th September 2024:

Ampthill's Origins through the Park

Similar to this year's walk

Ampthill Past Memories Project Autumn 2023

Created by members of Ampthill & District Preservation Society, as a project sponsored by the society. This project will be delivered within the community by the community, as all involved have strong connections with Ampthill and Central Bedfordshire either through residence or family relations.

The purpose is to keep memories of Ampthill Past alive and enable elderly and long-standing residents to reminisce about their lives, through articulating and sharing their memories for posterity. This will benefit elderly persons within the Ampthill locality, especially those who are less mobile and even housebound, to feel part of the community and recognised for their contributions and the part they have played in the history of Ampthill and, importantly, contribute to their mental health and well-being.

The recordings will be uploaded and stored as podcasts and linked to our website initially, and access will be made available to the wider public, to enable those interested and researching the social history of Ampthill access.

Those wishing to become involved in this project can help in many ways, e.g. recruiting residents for interviews, interviewing residents, researching topics, and potential interviewees, writing up memories, transcribing recordings, general help, and admin and general support etc. All volunteers will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure privacy is maintained for individuals participating and all records will be centrally maintained. Initially 6 volunteers from the Ampthill locality have been involved. However, as the project is established more will be recruited to help.

One set of podcast recording equipment has been funded by Ampthill & District Preservation Society but a pc/laptop to store the recorded interviews for editing and processing is , as volunteers are having to use their own pc/laptop currently ,which is unsatisfactory.

We are very fortunate to have the expertise of Terry Lee, a University of Bedfordshire Senior Tutor in Radio & Audio who lives locally, and he has already provided invaluable assistance and advice. He has also volunteered his students to help with the editing, which is a very time-consuming part of this project.

Recognising the need for a laptop and following the preparation and submission of grant applications to seek funding towards a laptop and software: one to CBC Inspiring Volunteers fund and another to ATC Community Engagement Fund, we can report that both applications were successful, and we have received £500 from each fund. We have now purchased the laptop and software, and this will also be available for use at meetings.

The interviews will be held as podcasts initially, and store in the cloud and the Internet Archive, and therefore be available worldwide, with catalogued details made available to Bedfordshire Archives, Bedford Museum, National Archives, in addition to the links stored on ADPS.org.uk, the Ampthill and District Preservation Society website.

STOP PRESS. The Ampthill Past Memories Intro Trailer is now at
<https://open.spotify.com/show/6yPws8oBOsXf9Udpw4tZXv>

A later stage of the project will be to enrol interested volunteers in transcribing the podcasts into documents, copies of which will be lodged with Bedfordshire Archives and National Archives.

We look forward to more interviewers joining us in the Autumn and we have committed to completing 20 interviews by May 2024.

If indeed, you are interested in becoming an interviewer or transcribing interviews or indeed, being interviewed yourself, please get in touch.

For further information on any aspect of this newsletter,
please email ampthillanddistrictps@gmail.com or call 07778 876889.