



THE ARTS SOCIETY VALE OF AYLESBURY

Founded in 1965

www.theartssociety.org/vale-aylesbury

Newsletter

February 2025

**St Peter & St Paul Church
Upton Road
Dinton
Aylesbury
Bucks HP17 8UF**

DEAR MEMBER ...

By the time you read this winter will hopefully be behind us and spring bulbs will be beginning to burst out in gardens all over England.

We have an exciting programme ahead of us from 'How to Read an English Country Church' in March to 'The Ten Plants of Christmas' in December via The Borgias, Cleopatra, Women Artists and Churchill among others. Nobody can say we are not eclectic!

Continuing on to study days, we can look forward to Japanese Arts in March and Jewellery in November where there will be fascinating facts to discover.

Some of our visits this year, organised by Lynda Lovell, are yet to be fully decided. Lynda tells me that, if possible, she likes to incorporate more than one venue on the same day. As you can imagine this takes a lot of organising, partly because venues don't always reply very quickly.

In response to an incident at a recent lecture, four members of the committee are having a training session in basic first aid with the Red Cross.

Often individuals will carry a card on them (or on a mobile phone) on which key personal contact and other details are noted in case of emergency. The list of your ICE details is always taken to meetings by the membership secretary, but this, of course, does not include details of allergies, addresses or other personal information. Such information is useful in an emergency, but it is not a requirement for you to have on your person in a meeting.

Don't forget, this is your society. We, as a committee, try to make being a member of our Arts Society as good an experience as possible, so if you need to talk to us please let us know.

I look forward to seeing as many people as possible at our events this year. My very best wishes to you and I know you will join in with my thanks to our very industrious committee.

Judy Brandis
Chairman

STUDY DAY REPORT

Why do we go to museums, why do we go to galleries? What attracts us to peer into glass cases? Last November, Albert Godetzky gave us an insight into the Cabinets of Curiosities, with images including Rudolf II's collection in Prague, now mostly in Vienna, and Dutch display cases with their contents of the 17th Century Dutch Golden Age.

When I collected Albert Godetzky from the station he asked if it was all right to include images of my father-in-law's collection. These were shown at the end of the last lecture. I had the privilege of being able to handle these precious things at home and even use them at Christmas. But now they can be shared by everyone, albeit behind glass, in the Wellby Gallery in the Ashmolean Museum.

The Cabinets of Curiosities, have now been split into nationally owned picture galleries, natural history museums, science museums and museums of decorative art. The popularity of the most famous galleries and collections has now led to limitations on visitor numbers for some of these museums and for sell-out exhibitions. The most famous painting in the world - **Mona Lisa** - in the most visited museum in the world - the **Louvre** - is going to have a room of her own, with a separate entrance.

Mary Wellby
Study Day Secretary

POSSIBLE VISITS

These visits will (we hope) take place later this year, but have yet to be finalised. As soon as dates and costings have been fixed, you will be alerted by email. Full details and the booking forms will be on the website. In the meantime, put the dates in your diary.

Wednesday 10th September 2025

Charles Darwin House and Titsey House (Gresham family home)

Wednesday 25th June 2025

Chislehurst House in Camden Place, including the tour 'Unlocking the Secrets of Camden Place' and The Red House (National Trust)

Lynda Lovell
Visits Secretary

STUDY DAY REMINDERS

It is not too late to book places for these two events which were introduced in the last newsletter!

Thursday 13th February 2025

Food, Cooking and Dining in Georgian England

Peter Ross

A fascinating and fun day about the very broad range of foods that our Georgian ancestors enjoyed, both in and out of the home.

The first lecture uses images of paintings, prints, cookery books and objects of daily life to illustrate the often hidden domestic lives of the times. The second lecture is about eating out in Georgian London. Venues include coaching inns, Billingsgate, Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens and the East End. The final lecture introduces us to the difficult conditions of the kitchens, as well as myriads of tools and equipment available to the struggling cooks of the era.

Thursday 13th March 2025

Japanese Art & Culture, the Japanese Garden & the Kimono

Marie Conte-Helm

This study day will start by charting the development of key aspects of the Japanese aesthetic in painting, sculpture and the applied arts through different periods of history. Japan's most famous gardens provide a context for understanding the principles of Japanese garden design as it has evolved through the ages. The final lecture introduces us to the kimono, a traditional garment worn by both men and women.

**Further details and the booking forms are available
at www.theartssociety.org/vale-aylesbury.**

Guests are especially welcome.

If we do NOT receive a signed form, confirming your responsibility for your lunch and that you will remove any rubbish and food debris, we unfortunately cannot accept your application.

Mary Wellby and Rosalie Sadler
Study Day Secretaries

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

St Peter & St Paul Church, Upton Road, Dinton, HP17 8UF

Tuesday 4th March 2025

How to Read an English Country Church

Rev Dr Nicholas Henderson

A summer's afternoon walk, the typical country Church ... this lecture will help you to look at the architecture outside and inside, the furniture, those mysterious nooks and crannies - high and low. How and why did it all come to look this way?

Nicholas will take you on a fascinating journey through English History and that of its Churches, and unravel it before your eyes. "I can't make you experts" says Nicholas "but I can teach you enough to amaze your friends on that summer afternoon walk."

A graduate of Selwyn College, Cambridge, Nicholas trained for the Anglican ministry at Ripon Hall, Oxford. Inspired by a period working on the staff of Coventry Cathedral, he has gained a wide experience of international matters. He was formerly Bishop-elect for the Diocese of Lake Malawi in Central Africa (2005-2009) and undertook his doctorate with the University of Wales, Lampeter. Nicholas has a particular interest in the period of the English Reformation and the associated cultural, architectural and social changes it has produced. He lectures regularly and currently works as a parish priest in West London.

Tuesday 1st April 2025

The Borgias – the most infamous family in history?

Sarah Dunant

Murder, poison, corruption and incest: all perfect ingredients for sensational popular culture. But in an age known for its brutality and church corruption were the Borgias really so bad? This lecture reveals the real family that dominated the Papacy and Italian politics during the last decade of the 15th Century. It includes the charismatic figure of Pope Alexander VI living inside his sumptuously decorated apartments. Also the career of his son Cesare, cardinal, general, employer of Da Vinci, and the model for Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Finally, there is the journey of Lucrezia Borgia from "the greatest whore in Rome" to a devout and treasured duchess of the city of Ferrara.

Novelist, broadcaster and critic, Sarah read history at Cambridge, then worked for many years as a cultural journalist in radio and television on such programmes as *Kaleidoscope* (BBC Radio 4), *The Late Show* (BBC 2) and *Night Waves/Free thinking* (BBC Radio 3). She has published thirteen novels, taught Renaissance Studies at Washington University, St Louis and lectured around the world at festivals and conferences. Her last five novels have been set within the Italian Renaissance. *In the Name of the Family* completes the story of the Borgia family and the remarkable period of Italian history in which they lived. She is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4's *A Point of View* and these talks, alongside her series on history for Radio 4, *When Greeks Flew Kites*, are available on podcast or BBC sounds.

Tuesday 6th May 2025

Cleopatra, Ancient Egyptian Queen: An Ageless Love Story

Lucy Hughes-Hallett

This lecture will offer us a fascinating look at how artists have portrayed a powerful woman over 2,000 years.

Cleopatra, the woman for whose love's sake Antony, is imagined to have given up the chance to rule the Roman world, has been inspiring painters, poets and more recently, film-makers, for over two millennia. The gorgeous voluptuous depictions of her offer insights into changing concepts of beauty and the racial, and sexual, assumptions underlying them.

From Roman portrait busts, medieval illuminations, glorious works of Renaissance masters such as Michelangelo, Tiepolo and Gustave Moreau to 20th century film stars (Theda Bara, Claudette Colbert, Vivien Leigh, Elizabeth Taylor, and the "Carry On" team's Amanda Barry) Lucy will show us how Cleopatra became a screen icon on to which artists have projected their wildly differing fantasies about exotic danger and exotic bliss.

Lucy Hughes-Hallett is a cultural historian and biographer. Her book on Gabriele d'Annunzio, *The Pike*, was described in The Sunday Times as 'the biography of the decade'. It won all three of the UK's most prestigious prizes for non-fiction - the Samuel Johnson Prize, the Duff Cooper Prize and the Costa Biography Award. Her other non-fiction books include *Cleopatra* and *Heroes*.

She also writes fiction. Her novel, *Peculiar Ground*, is largely set in the 17th Century, and narrated by a landscape designer loosely based on the great diarist John Evelyn. It was described as 'almost Tolstoyan in its sly wit and descriptive brilliance' (The Guardian) and 'full of drama, vivid characters, wit, gorgeous writing and fascinating detail' (New York Times). In her short story collection, *Fabulous*, she retells fables from classical mythology, relocating them to modern Britain.

A Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and of the Historical Association, she has written on books, theatre and the visual arts for publications including *The Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The New Statesman* and the *TLS*. She was Chair of the Judges for the 2021 International Booker Prize.

Tuesday 3rd June 2025

Now you see us : Women artists 1520 – 1920

Ms Lucrezia Walker

In this lecture we will look at the work of and the challenges met by women working as artists in England over 400 years. Highlights include works by Artemisia Gentilleschi, Angelica Kauffman, Elizabeth Butler and Laura Knight. They paved an artistic path for generations of women and challenged what it meant to be working women of the time by going against society's expectations - having commercial careers as artists and taking part in public exhibitions.

Lucrezia is a regular lecturer at the National Gallery both in front of the paintings and in the lecture theatre. For the Tate Gallery's Development department she speaks to their corporate sponsors in their offices and at their private receptions in both Tates. She teaches US undergraduates on their Study Abroad semesters in London. She was Lay Canon for the Visual Arts at St Paul's Cathedral 2010-2014.

**Dee Blackstock & Rosemary Powell
Lecture Secretaries**

NEW VISIT

Thursday 10th April 2025

Jane Austen House & Chawton House

This year celebrates the 250th year of the birth of Jane Austen. We will be visiting Chawton House which is a spectacular Elizabethan Manor that once belonged to Jane's brother Edward and visited by her regularly. It is now home to a unique collection of books written by women in English from 1600 -1830 and a collection of fine portraits.

Coffee is included on arrival, followed by House History Tour. There is an exhibition dedicated to Mary Robinson: actress, mistress, writer and radical. She was mistress to the Prince of Wales (later George IV) – consequently from being the most famous woman in England to outcast. The exhibition explores her journey as one of the most popular and influential writers of her day.

Lunch is included and eaten in the house.

There is an option of a short walk to the church. In the grounds there is a lovely statue of Jane Austen and the gravestones of her mother and sister, Cassandra. Alternatively, you could go straight to the Jane Austen House which is a 10-minute walk away in the village.

After a short introduction at Jane Austen House, you are able to freely explore the rooms and garden where she lived and wrote her novels. You can uncover the story of her life and times and get up close to her letters, jewellery and first editions of her novels.

Please bear in mind there is some walking involved, down the drive at Chawton, and into the village to the Jane Austen House, so good mobility is required (and an umbrella!).

Prices:

Total cost of visit: £64.50 per person

Discounted entries:

Art fund members: £57.75

Historic house members: £51.50

Please remember your membership cards.

Lynda Lovell
Visits Organiser