



# **THE ARTS SOCIETY VALE OF AYLESBURY**

**Founded in 1965**

**[www.theartsociety.org/vale-aylesbury](http://www.theartsociety.org/vale-aylesbury)**

## **Newsletter**

**February 2026**

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

## DEAR MEMBER ...

Although we have a steady influx of new members to replace those who retire, we do have the capacity to grow. To that end, we have produced a colourful flyer which advertises the season's events and gives details about how to join us. Many of you have already taken one home after lectures, but a copy has been included with this newsletter. The idea is that when you talk about us with your friends you have something that you can give them straight away, rather than hoping they will access the website when they get home!

Each year we make a charitable contribution to local arts activities. This year Susan Olding, who leads this on behalf of the society, is arranging a linocut workshop. It will be presented by Alexandra Buckle at the Discover Bucks Museum to the children of families suffering hardships. This is likely to take place in the spring. We are also renaming her activities as *Community Arts* to more fully reflect what we have been supporting.

There is still room for more people to contribute to running the society. People who can replace those of us who have served for long enough, but also have fresh ideas and different experiences to the rest of us. So your committee will continue to lobby you while you are enjoying tea after a lecture!

**Michael Brimicombe**  
**Outgoing Chairman**

## AN INTRODUCTION ...

I'm taking this opportunity to introduce myself as your new Chairman.

Having retired as a corporate accountant/statistician over 15 years ago, my wife (Jasmine) and I took the opportunity to join a number of societies, both locally and nationally, that covered our main interests of history and the arts, together with other generalist subjects. We joined this Arts Society nearly 18 months ago and were immediately impressed by the obvious quality on offer - monthly meetings, study days, trips, etc..

Such quality can only be due to a dedicated team of committee members and other volunteers. I initially volunteered to help with the IT (laptop, projector and so on) at meetings and then became aware of the further support required by the Society. Our then excellent Chair, Judy Brandis,

was retiring and her activities were being passed on to other committee members, putting too much pressure on individuals. I have volunteered to be your new Chair so that the Committee can continue to use their skills to support all of us.

Please do come and have a chat at the meetings, I look forward to meeting you all. Committees evolve constantly and will always need “fresh blood” – have a chat with myself or any other committee member about what you can offer, we will be delighted to see you.

***Simon Reeks***  
**Incoming Chairman**

## **STUDY DAY REPORT**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

**The Changing Face of Fashion: Style in a Turbulent World**

If you missed a chance to come to this Study Day given by Andrew Prince and it comes your way again – make every effort not to miss it. His first lecture was a very brief history of jewellery and how it was worn, demonstrating the wealth of the owner (who was not necessarily the wearer). He then concentrated on the period from 1890-1929, showing how the magnificent jewellery and opulent clothing were collaborations by jewellers and couturiers.

The second lecture took us from 1929 to 1959, showing the influence and impact of the silver screen and Hollywood stars on the lives on more people than just the very wealthy. Life was more relaxed and there was more leisure time. Dior’s New Look of 1947 was a triumphant success with the extravagant use of fabric, after the restrictions of the War.

Andrew Prince is not just a historian, but a craftsman of note too. He had the good fortune to have far-sighted parents and school, who encouraged his passionate interest in jewellery (from the age of 9). He made the jewellery for Downton Abbey, and Miss Piggy chose Andrew Prince to make her wedding jewellery for the film *Muppets Most Wanted* in 2014. With a light touch and plenty of humour, Andrew Prince kept us amused and entertained, and we could have stayed for more.

***Mary Wellby***  
**Study Day Secretary**

# **FORTHCOMING LECTURES**

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

**Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026**

**Troy : Myth, History & Archaeology**

*Dr Stephen Kershaw*

This lecture looks at the mythology of the Trojan war, which gave rise to some of the finest Ancient Greek literature and art, as well as the burning issue of whether Homer's Trojan War really happened.

As a Classics Tutor for Oxford University Department for Continuing Education, Professor of History of Art for the European Studies Program of Rhodes College and The University of the South, Stephen Kershaw has spent much of the last 30 years travelling extensively in the world of the Greeks and Romans both physically and intellectually. He has published *A Brief Guide to the Greek Myths* (Robinson, 2007) and *A Brief Guide to Classical Civilization* (Robinson, 2010).

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**The Mayan Civilisations of Central America**

*Duncan Pring*

Mayan civilization was at its peak from 300 to 900 AD, building enormous monuments, producing jade and ceramic items of great beauty, with an advanced understanding of mathematics and astronomy. They developed a hieroglyphic script which scholars are beginning to decipher, allowing us to understand their achievements much more fully.

Duncan Pring was Educated at Oxford (BA, MA) and London (MA, PhD) universities. His PhD thesis was on "The Preclassic Ceramics of Northern Belize". Subsequent articles by Duncan are mainly on Mayan ceramics. *The Protoclassic in the Maya Lowlands* was published in 2000 by British Archaeological Reports. He is currently involved with other North American archaeologists, pulling together different ceramic sequences in Belize.

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**200 Years of the National Gallery**

*Simon Whitehouse*

The collection dates from 1824, when the government acquired 38 paintings from businessman and philanthropist, John Julius Angerstein, for £57,000. In 1838, a purpose built building was commissioned, giving us the much loved William Wilkins building on Trafalgar Square. We look at the highs and lows of the gallery's early years, including suffragette sabotage, bombs and theft.

Simon Whitehouse is a (recovering) actor, lecturer, presenter, Alexander Technique and voice teacher and award winning London Blue Badge guide. He has worked as a guide lecturer in house at Shakespeare's Globe, the Royal Opera House, the BBC and the National Gallery guiding both public and private tours. He is on the faculty of Ithaca College and also lectures for the Blue Badge Guide training course on the performing arts and English literature.

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026**

**The Dramatic Art of the London Underground**

*Mike Grundy*

A virtual tour of the stations of the London Underground, showing the vast range of artworks that now decorate the platform and concourse walls. Ever since the 1960's, the Underground has been installing permanent, large-scale artworks for its stations, commissioning leading and aspiring artists of the day to celebrate the character, history and personalities of the area each serves.

Mike Grundy is a highly experienced speaker, having given lectures, presentations and training courses throughout his business career and latterly working as an academic lecturer. This role entailed the development and provision of study days and 7-10 week courses for the WEA, as well as providing 1-2 hour lectures to the U3A and other community organisations throughout the south-east of England.

***Sarah Grimwood & Rosemary Powell***  
**Lecture Secretaries**

# **COACH VISIT TO LONDON**

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**The Musical Museum, Brentford, TW8 0DU**

This visit comes highly recommended by neighbouring societies so do come and enjoy a fascinating day out.

The Musical Museum encompasses a wide range of musical instruments and unique inventions which tell the story of how music was recorded and reproduced through the ages. Founded by the late Frank Holland sixty years ago, the collection is now housed in a purpose-built building funded by the Heritage Lottery Grant since 2008.

The museum has two instrument galleries, a workshop, concert hall and the River View Restaurant.

The visit includes the coach, coffee or tea on arrival, and an exclusive museum tour with experienced guides. The rest of the food is split as follows. Firstly there are sandwiches and beverages, followed by silent movies accompanied by The Mighty Wurlitzer. Then the day finishes with a cream tea plus Prosecco in the River View Restaurant!

If you have any dietary requirements please mention them on your booking form.

Price per person is £59.

Coach leaves Thame at 9:15 am, and returns at approximately 5:15 pm.

**The booking form is in the centrefold.  
Guests are especially welcome.**

***Lynda Lovell***  
**Visits Secretary**

# **SELF-DRIVE VISIT IN OXFORDSHIRE**

**Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

**Stonor Park, Oxon RG9 6HF**

To save the expense of hiring a coach, this visit is a self-drive one and starts at 10:30 am.

Home to the Stonor family for over 850 years, Stonor Park is one of the oldest occupied houses in England. Behind the warm red brick facade Stonor is actually a collection of much older buildings. In fact its origins go back to Medieval times, dating from the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the chapel added around a hundred years later. Since then, a series of additions and renovations, including the adoption of the E-shape in around 1540 have evolved into the extraordinary building you can see today.

Highlights include the grand Gothic revival hall, atmospheric 17<sup>th</sup> century library and the dramatic long gallery opening on to beautiful Italianate gardens. The fortunes of the house and chapel are strongly tied to the travails of the Catholics in Britain. When Henry VIII formed the Church of England in the 1530s Catholics, including the Stonor family were forced to take a much-reduced part in public life. At Stonor there is a poignant reminder of these times in the roof space and priesthole where Sir Edmund Campion hid whilst printing the famous Ten Reasons pamphlet in the 1580s.

Our visit there includes coffee or tea, and biscuits on arrival in the old hall followed by the guided tour of the chapel and then around the house. A sit-down lunch will be served in the Medieval Hall followed by a guided tour of the garden.

The price for this is £43 per person.

Please include any dietary requests on your booking form.

**The booking form is in the centrefold.  
Guests are especially welcome.**

***Lynda Lovell***  
**Visits Secretary**

# STUDY DAY REMINDERS

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

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026**

**The Hanseatic League**

*Simon Rees*

The story of a trading enterprise in the Baltic and the North Sea, its culture and architecture in churches, guildhalls and town halls throughout Europe. Simon Rees was Dramaturg at Welsh National Opera in Cardiff, working with set, costume and props designers and giving lectures on their work in opera production. He is now a freelance writer and lecturer who lectures widely on opera, art history and literature, travelling extensively with travel companies.

**Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Istanbul: City of Faith, Power and Beauty**

*Antonia Gatward Cevizli*

Explore some of the architectural marvels, such as the Topkapi Palace, and the influence, power and place in the world of the Sultans. Dr Antonia Gatward Cevizli is an independent art historian specialising in both Italian Renaissance art and Ottoman art. Her publications focus on cultural and diplomatic exchange between the Italian city-states and the Ottomans. Antonia has lectured for a number of institutions including Sabancı University, Istanbul; Sotheby's Institute of Art; the National Gallery; the V&A Academy and The Courtauld summer school.

**Further details and the booking forms are available  
at [www.theartssociety.org/vale-aylesbury](http://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**