

August 2026



View of All Saints Church over very parched summer terrain

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Arts Society Croydon Area has enjoyed several excellent lectures since our last newsletter as well as a very enjoyable and perfectly timed Special Interest Day on the Bayeux Tapestry. We hope that the lectures we have planned for the autumn and winter months will be as enjoyable.

Several of our members also enjoyed the Society's holiday to the West Country, the last to be organised by Joe Trickey and fortunately the task of organising the next holiday has been taken up by Gillian Weaver and the destination will be Wales! May I take this opportunity, once again, to thank Joe for all the wonderful visits that he has organised over the years and to wish Gillian all the best for her endeavours next Spring.

As you will see from the many other contributions in this newsletter, that much has happened since the Spring, I hope you have all enjoyed the many events we have put on and will continue to do so in the future.

Barbara Harker



OUR AUTUMN /WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME - *Preview*

These words have been supplied by our speakers

The Rivalry Between Turner and Constable Matthew Morgan,

Thursday September 10th

Two artists developed radically opposing approaches to the emotive power of landscape painting in Britain in the early 19th Century. One was dramatic, bombastic and fiery, intending to provoke powerful emotions and elevated thoughts. The other was spiritual, heartfelt and closely observed, asking the viewer to react to an intense, inward and personal approach to nature. These two artists were JMW Turner and John Constable, the leading British artists of their day. Not only did they approach painting in different ways, but their lives were opposites as well. This lecture will explore their different approaches and their famous, bitter rivalry.

Clarice Cliff, the Doyenne of Art Deco Viv Lawes

Thursday October 8th

This lecture explores an artist whose work, inventiveness, and ability to catch the zeitgeist is still admired a century after her bold 'Bizarre' wares were launched in 1927. These Art Deco masterpieces are the products that most vividly signify Clarice Cliff's legacy. She spent a lifetime innovating. Born in 1899, she was a working professional whose lifespan covered the period in which women broke through the barriers of the art world. While the Royal Academy barred women from accessing the full training and privileges of their male counterparts, the pottery industry was one that had traditionally offered female artists the opportunities to excel.

The Brilliance of British Architecture Ian Swankie

Thursday November 12th

In the field of world class architecture, British talent has always been at the forefront, and we have much to celebrate. In this talk, Ian tours around the UK and overseas showcasing the brilliance of some of the designers who have made huge improvements to the built environment and enhanced the lives of those around them. Famous names like Lutyens, Gilbert Scott, Foster, Hadid and Rogers are joined by several lesser known but equally creative architects.

Recognise The Artist Chantal Brotherton Ratcliffe

Thursday, January 14th

This lecture takes examples of a wide range of artists from the 15th, 16th 17th and 18th centuries, and will put into words what it is that tells us a picture is by Rubens rather than Rembrandt, or even, by Rubens rather than by, say, Van Dyck, who was taught by him and painted so very much like him. The lecture uses photos of small details of paintings greatly enlarged, to demonstrate some of the distinctive quirks and give-away characteristics of artists from Mantegna and Bellini to Canaletto and Gainsborough. Tips and tricks of art-gazing will be shared to show how to have the satisfaction of looking at an unfamiliar painting and realising that the artist can be instantly recognised.

Chardin and Still Life Kathy McLauchlan

Thursday February 11th

Chardin's still-life paintings drew the astonished admiration of his contemporaries. These included the Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot, who remarked that Chardin's ability to evoke the appearance and texture of objects was akin to magic. Chardin's work was also appreciated and sought after by prominent 18th-century collectors including Louis XV of France and the Empress Catherine of Russia. And Chardin's reputation as one of Europe's greatest still-life painters endures to this day. This lecture follows the course of Chardin's career from obscure beginnings to his emergence as one of the most admired artists of his generation

Bernini's Sculptures in the Villa Borghese Hilary Williams

Thursday March 11th

Gian Lorenzo Bernini is the greatest Baroque sculptor. His work was esteemed by several Popes. However, at the start of his long career, 'he had arrived in childhood where others might glory in old age', as Annibale Carracci said of his outstanding skill. At the superb Villa Borghese in Rome, is a collection of some of Bernini's stunning figural sculptures. These include the justly famous and exquisite 'Aeneas, Anchises and Ascanius' (1618-1619); 'Pluto abducting Persephone' (1621-1622); the renowned 'Apollo and Daphne' (1622-1625) and 'David' (1623-1624) which tries to outshine Michelangelo. They all come with great stories of high drama.

REVIEW OF OUR SPRING/SUMMER PROGRAMME

We have just had a splendid run of lectures, all of which were rated excellent by you in your feedback forms. More of you are doing feedback online now but only 32% of attenders expressed an opinion in July so we need to boost this in September. Your opinions are fed back to the main Arts Society to maintain the high quality of the speakers and we pick up any local issues like sound quality to try and remedy things immediately.

Rosalind Whyte spoke about **Hans Holbein** in March, highlighting his fantastic portraits of Erasmus and Thomas More as well as the popular ones of Henry VIII.

Ronnie Ireland covered the tempestuous private life and times of **Caravaggio** in April. An artist who, despite his trials and tribulations, managed to paint such fantastic works using *chiaroscuro*, light and dark, and who inspired so many later artists and filmmakers. In May **Toby Faber** lectured about **Fabergé's Eggs**, which the Tsar started to present to the Tsarina as an Easter present each year from 1885. These Easter eggs grew more and more elaborate each year and always contained a surprise with no repetition of a theme. Toby described the eggs in great detail but he also used his talk to outline the history of Russia and to describe the decline of the Romanov Empire as the eggs became more and more spectacular.

Sarah Burles' lecture in June was about **Gustave Caillebotte** the wealthy collector who bankrolled many of his fellow painters. He was himself a superb Impressionist painter with works such as *Paris Street Rainy Day* and *The Floor Scrapers* depicting modern life in Paris. He died in his 40s having shaped the legacy of French Impressionism as well as painting masterpieces of his own.

Andrew Davies rounded off our regular programme with a great talk on **Charles Dickens** in July detailing his interesting life and extensive volume of work. Dickens wrote about the world around him and drew extensively on personal experience. His first novel "*The Pickwick Papers*" appeared in monthly serial parts in a magazine to build up his audience. Each part cost one shilling which placed it within reach of more people. The introduction of the very popular, cockney manservant, Sam Weller led to an increase in circulation from 400 a month to 4000.

Andrew mentioned all the houses Dickens lived in, including the highly recommended house at 48 Doughty Street at Kings Cross which is now the Charles Dickens Museum.

VISIT TO APSLEY HOUSE ON THURSDAY 24th SEPTEMBER

Our postponed visit will now take place on 24th September. I will email again all those who have previously signed up and if anyone else is interested, please see me at our next meeting to firm up arrangements.

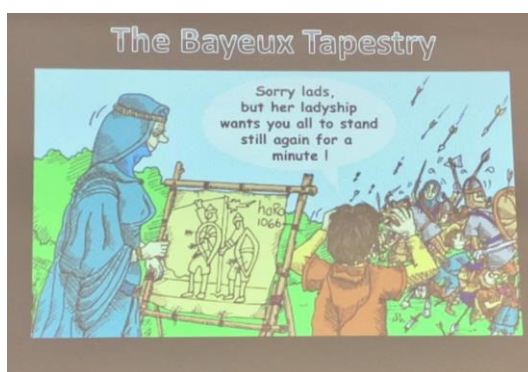
Home of the first Duke of Wellington, Apsley House stands right in the heart of London at Hyde Park Corner. The mansion shows off nearly 1,000 fine paintings, sculptures and works of art including paintings by Velázquez, Rubens, Goya, Titian, Breughel and more.

Entry is free to Art Fund and English Heritage members, otherwise cost is around £12, dependent on advance booking, concessions available. We will travel up by train at 10am, taking coffee at Wetherspoons, Victoria first, then by bus to Apsley House. Optional lunch.

Jean Aarons

SPECIAL INTEREST DAY Review of The Bayeux Tapestry lectures

Our very timely two lecture Special Interest Day on the Bayeux Tapestry took place on a very hot morning on 30th July, 2026. Our lecturer, Imogen Corrigan was a very inspirational speaker with a great sense of humour (as seen in this slide displayed before



the talk began).

She brought the topic alive and made her audience want to know more about this fascinating and important period of history. Imogen briefly outlined the history to enable us to understand the panels she presented but there are links to other useful podcasts later in the Appendix if you want more historical background.

Afterwards we had a delicious sandwich lunch with the chance to catch up with old friends.

Read my review of the two lectures in the Bayeux Tapestry Review in the Appendix at the end of this Newsletter.



NEXT SPECIAL INTEREST DAY
Thursday December 10th - Paula Nuttall
The Venice of Bellini and Carpaccio



Two lectures + lunch and tea / coffee

Venice was no less a city of marvels in the renaissance than it is today. It was the meeting-place of east and west, physically unique, enviably powerful and fabulously wealthy – qualities reflected in its art and architecture. These lectures focus on the era of Bellini and Carpaccio, whose paintings provide eyewitness accounts of life in Venice around 1500. Together with landmarks such as San Marco, the Arsenale and the Colleoni monument, and artefacts including glassware and platform shoes, they allow us to immerse ourselves in this incomparable city at one of the richest periods in its artistic life.

Jean Aarons

OUR LAST TOUR
The Houses and Gardens of Cornwall
28th April to 2nd May 2026

Twenty three members of Arts Society Croydon Area spent an enjoyable five days at the end of April, beginning of May, visiting Cornwall on a very successful and friendly trip organised by Joe Trickey through Heritage Travel, part of the Martin Randall Group. At the time, we all feared it might be our last Tour as Joe had decided to "hang up his boots". However, Gillian Weaver has volunteered "to step into the breach" and I have agreed to assist her, so we have a trip to North Wales planned for 19th to 23rd April 2027 (*see below*). Here are two accounts of our wonderful Cornwall trip, the first by Kathy Nicholls, followed by my account.

KATHY'S REPORT

Some may recall an Irish patter song about "The pub with only one bar..." (loud boos from listeners) "About a mile long!" (loud cheers). My experience of the last Heritage organised holiday, led by Joe Trickey had some issues but these were soon turned into cheers.

A 7.40am departure meant a 7am downhill walk in chilly weather (boo) but the coach was ready and waiting for passengers (cheers). Most joined the trip in Onslow Gardens. After speedy but tedious motorway travel, on more rural roads we admired tiny lambs in the fields and went slowly past Stonehenge where Chris spotted a red Kite. Our break in Sherborne was windy and cold (boo) but we enjoyed a warm welcome from the knowledgeable guides in Sherborne Abbey. (cheers). Since my previous visit, stunning stained-glass windows had been installed in the West wall, despite opposition from the church establishment. The original Saxon round arches remain. After some traffic hold-

ups, we arrived at our hotel in Redruth. An army of strong young men carried our cases up to our rooms.

On Wednesday we visited the Lost Gardens of Heligan, where we heard of the tragic injuries and loss in World War One of the gardeners and the hillside garden's subsequent rediscovery. A member of the current gardening team is a direct descendant of one of those 14 who had carved their names in the now restored 'thunder box'. Our guide showed us the grassy-haired sculpture of The Buried Giant and indicated others down the woodland path. He pointed out the largest rhododendron in Britain - the advantage of group travel is the commentary of guides. We walked through the arbour of apple trees and saw the wallflowers, planted to spare the noses of ladies from the odour of manure on the vegetables. After lunch and a visit to the shop, we had free time to explore. Being a poor map reader, I followed signposts down and inevitably uphill, discovering two more sculptures, 'The Mud Maid' and the huge metallic 'Grey Lady' as well as the pen of poultry.

In the later afternoon we arrived in Falmouth where a planned trip on the river was cancelled owing to strong winds.(boo) but Heritage Travel rearranged a boat trip later in the week at Fowey. (cheers). The Maritime Museum in Falmouth provided all we needed to know about tides and waves, ships, boats, yachts and dinghies. With time to explore, I indulged in retail therapy and bought new trainers in a sale.

St Ives was the destination that made me decide to go on this trip. There was a very, very steep hill down to the town (boo) but we followed the brown signs and found the Tate Gallery. The move from naïve paintings of observed scenes into abstract design was fascinating. By far the best part of the whole holiday, for me, was Barbara Hepworth's



studio and garden. I was overwhelmed by the beauty of her sculptures set in the garden against lilies, various leaf shapes and succulents. Most moving and illustrative of the physicality of stone carving were the blocks stored beside her workshop, showing initial ridges before shapes emerged. I recalled the Michelangelo 'Prisoners' I had seen in the Accademia in Florence. Fortunately, a bus had been booked to return us to the coach park at the top of the hill. We then visited Penlee House Gallery and Museum in Penzance. There was a new exhibition focusing on female artists. Some works seemed sentimental and the depiction of 'real life' was more

interesting but I did not share the guide's enthusiasm for the Tracy Emin line drawing which was on loan. Upstairs the local history museum collection was eclectic: pottery, bicycles, Newlyn copper and fossils.



The final day was the culmination of our Cornwall experience - a visit to the Eden Project. It was a deep descent into the quarry: first by coach in circles; then on foot to the Visitors' Centre; then on foot again down to the famous domes. Some of the more enterprising took a mini-coach and then a lift. The tropical rainforest dome was hot, wet and amazing with pairs of tropical partridges, roul-rouls. I found the rope walk near the apex terrifying but made it across, after encouragement! In the Mediterranean zone the air was refreshingly cooler and the plants familiar. I loved the willow

sculptures; there was an orangutang in the tropical jungle and deer in the temperate zone. The futuristic Core was built in 2006 and houses a teaching block and exhibition called The Invisible World. Children were chasing the smoke rings emitted from a huge model of a single cell micro-organism. Human skin bacteria and our gut biome were visually represented in exquisite sculptures - these were amazingly beautiful or rather disgusting depending on the viewer's attitude to biological sciences. A stroll back uphill was gentle through well-kept gardens with a view of the domes and the fastest down-hill high-wire

experience in England. None of us tried it! The last stop was Fowey with another steep hill or a bus charging £1.50 down and £2.50 back due to the one-way system of narrow streets. The boat trip was interesting with commentary on the owners of various houses on the banks of the estuary. We saw the now almost disused docks which once bustled with china clay ships whose cargoes turned the water white. Once back we were warned to pack for an 8am departure.

Sadly, the army of strong young men to carry the suitcases did not appear until after 8am.(boo). Those on the ground floor and stronger travellers carried their cases. Our splendidly helpful and very skilful driver Quentin valiantly stowed luggage in the hold and we finally left only 20 minutes late. (cheers). En route to Sanderstead, we stopped in Salisbury and witnessed a wedding group emerging from the Cathedral's great West doors. Once inside, there was time for a brief tour; the organ postlude was still echoing round. Highlights for me were: the glass engraving of the cathedral by Rex Whistler, which rotated slowly in candlelight; the deep blue glass of the windows dedicated to prisoners of conscience and the new altar engraved with George Herbert's poem The Altar. I did not have much time before rejoining the group for the photo in front of Mompesson House. Though similar to Chawton, Jane Austen's home, Mompesson is a more opulent four-bedroom, town dwelling. The library and small drawing room were my favourites and the wide shallow- stepped staircase, designed to allow for an elegant entrance, was also beautiful. It was raining when we got back, (boo) but good for our gardens. (cheers)

I really hope that my first trip will not be my last with TASCA. Thank you Joe and Evie. PLEASE will someone volunteer to lead another Spring holiday with Heritage (*There will now be another Tour thanks to Gillian Weaver!* **Editor**). Thanks also to the 22 fellow trippers for their companionship, knowledge, and excellent company. Cheers!

Kathy Nichols

JEAN'S REPORT

Based in the comfortable and friendly Penventon Park Hotel in Redruth, we went out each day to fabulous places like the Lost Gardens of Heligan and the Eden Project. The highlight for me was Thursday's very special "art day" when we visited the Tate Gallery St Ives and the Barbara Hepworth Sculpture Garden followed by Penlee House Gallery and Museum in Penzance in the afternoon. We all enjoyed our bracing boat trip on the River Fowey, seeing the houses where Daphne Du Maurier and Dawn French had lived as well as a house recently won (and immediately sold for £4.5 million) with a lucky ticket in an Omaze Competition. We also managed to visit Sherborne Abbey and Salisbury Cathedral on our journeys to and from Cornwall.

The biggest challenge was descending on foot down steep paths into coastal towns like St Ives and Fowey, with narrow streets inaccessible to our coach, though fortunately buses were available for the return trip! Everyone was very supportive of each other throughout the trip too, so there were always helping hands and the guides were all very mindful of those with less mobility, particularly at the Lost Gardens of Heligan.

As always on Arts Society related events we learned lots of new things. For example, in the very interesting Maritime Museum in Falmouth we were informed that Falmouth Harbour is very strategically situated in calmer waters just off the Atlantic coast and is the world's third deepest harbour after Rio de Janeiro and Sydney so this led to its great success as a port. In addition we had a working example of how tides work on our Fowey boat trip, when, after a precarious boarding, we were able to make a much easier disembarkment, right onto the jetty to smoothly exit the boat, due to the tide raising the water level by three feet over the duration of our trip.

Our excellent guides at Sherborne Abbey provided a pretty comprehensive guide to cathedral architecture as we admired the magnificent fan vaulting there. Our guide, Lorraine, at Penlee House was also excellent as she guided us through their current exhibition "Making Her Mark - A Celebration of Women in Art" and told us all about the Newlyn group and other famous Cornish painters. It was particularly lovely to see the

Norman Garstin painting *"The Rain it Raineth Every Day"*, gifted to the Gallery but not displayed immediately because it was thought it might put people off coming to Penzance! We were very fortunate to have a marvellous very helpful coach driver, Quentin. This was my first Arts Society holiday and I really enjoyed it. Sadly though after many years of organising these wonderful trips, Joe has now decided to step down. I am sure

that everyone who has enjoyed these lovely holidays will join me in thanking him and Evi for all their hard work in organising everything for us.

Photo taken by Valerie at Mompesson - Irene is hidden and Thérèse left the Tour in Cornwall



OUR NEXT TOUR

Gillian Weaver and I have now taken over the organisation of the annual tour, though Joe and Evi Trickey will be fully on hand to ensure everything runs smoothly.

For our first tour we have arranged a very interesting and picturesque trip to North Wales from Monday 19th to Friday 23rd April, staying in the superbly located 4 star seafront St George's Hotel in Llandudno. We will visit and take lunch at the splendid Chillington Hall near Wolverhampton on the way up to Wales. During our holiday, we will explore Anglesey and Plas Newydd House and Garden, Bodnant Garden and Caernarfon Castle. After a scenic trip on the Snowdonia Star steam train, passing through the foothills of Snowdon and the breathtaking Aberglaslyn Pass, we will have lunch and spend the afternoon at the beautiful Italianate village of Portmeirion,

created by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis. On our way home there will be a boat trip over the stunning Pontcysyllte Aqueduct near Llangollen, which was designed by Thomas Telford and William Jessop.

The tour has been organised through Martin Randall Travel of which Heritage, who organised last year's trip, are now part. I believe they will be using the excellent coach company, Scotland and Bates again so you never know, we may get our very pleasant, kind and efficient coach driver, Quentin, again.

Brochures and booking forms will be available at our next few meetings but check out the links below if you want to sign up before then.

Jean Aarons

VOLUNTEERS AND NEW MEMBERS EVENT

On July 9th, after the Charles Dickens talk we held our annual New Members' and Volunteers' event to welcome those who have joined Arts Society Croydon Area this year and to thank everyone who has given up a little of their time to help make our Society a nice place to belong to. A big thank you to all our volunteers and we hope our new members really enjoy our lectures, tour and outings this year.



NEWS AND EVENTS

National Gallery "Art On Your Doorstep" 3rd February to 5th July 2026

Croydon's imaginative Art On Your Doorstep collaboration with the National Gallery came to an end the weekend of 4th - 5th July, 2026 with a glorious, free, two-day celebration of contemporary circus, in High Street near Grants, honouring the extraordinary 19th-century aerialist Anna Albertine Olga Brown (1858-1945) also known as Miss La La. Of Afro-German heritage, Miss La La was famous for her feats of strength. She is immortalised in a painting by Edgar Degas which was one of the 30 reproductions on the Croydon Trail which was unveiled on 3rd February.

Many cynics predicted that the reproductions would be defaced or covered in graffiti but this was not the case. Croydon embraced the opportunities offered by the paintings with great enthusiasm to extend the scope of activity. The works inspired many innovative events and we learnt more about our town's historical past as well as about the works and artists themselves.

There were dance and theatre events themed around Henri Rousseau's exotic portrait of a tiger **Surprised!** which could be seen in the Whitgift Centre. Croydon fell in love with Stubbs' beautiful horse **Whistlejacket** splendidly on display in Park Hill Park who inspired a talk **Whistlejacket and the Croydon Races** - hands up those who knew there was a racecourse in the Woodside/ Ashburton area? There were similar talks around the works of J.M.W. Turner (on display in Purley and Coulsdon) and about the more classical paintings of Van Eyck and Gossaert (displayed near Park Hill Park and Croydon Minster respectively) as well as one about the aforementioned Miss La La by Degas who inspired the circus style finale on the last weekend.

One important outcome was the **"Croydon Masterpiece"**, now on display in Queens Gardens in Central Croydon. Created from hundreds of drawings made by more than 200 local residents during a series of workshops held earlier this year. The work was brought together by artist Rachael Gadsden and consists of contributions from people of all ages in a large scale collage inspired by The National Gallery's collection and shaped by creative responses from communities across Croydon.

OPEN CITY EVENTS 12th to 20th September

Check out the Open City website for exciting events, walks, new places to visit as London opens its doors again to the public in September. There are lots of events in Croydon. Book early! <https://programme.openhouse.org.uk>

EXHIBITIONS THIS AUTUMN

The **Bayeux Tapestry Exhibition** opens at the British Museum on September 10th for those fortunate to have secured tickets. Don't forget there is a **19th century replica "tapestry" in Reading Museum** which is "relatively " easy to reach using the Elizabeth Line from Farringdon, Central London <https://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/bayeux-tapestry>

There are several exciting exhibitions at other galleries too this autumn

Royal Academy **Painting the French Riviera** from October 10th

National Gallery **Renoir and Love** from October 3rd, **Van Eyck The Portraits** from 21st November and **German Expressionism** from March 20th, 2027

Dulwich Picture Gallery **Hokusai - 36 views of Mount Fuji** from October

Lacock in Wiltshire National Trust, Fox Talbot Museum **Exhibition of Martin Parr's work** - current

ARTS VOLUNTEERING IN 2026

Firstly, a big thank you to everyone who has donated to the **Arts Volunteering Fund** this year. At present, we have raised £500, which will be used to support art projects in our local Croydon community.



The next project we are going to support is through the **Emma Johnson Music Foundation**. The charity was founded by the internationally acclaimed clarinettist, Emma Johnson, MBE, in order to advance the understanding of music, particularly orchestral instruments, among young people in the UK. Emma, and her team of professional musicians, deliver [introductory workshops in primary schools](#) to enthuse children with music and give them a close-up view of orchestral instruments. At the

moment, the main focus of the workshops is the 'Instrument Stories' project, where a sequence of stories, with music played by professional musicians, are performed in order to introduce different instruments of the orchestra to the children and help them connect with music.

If you would like to find out more about the charity, visit their website at www.emmajohnsonmusicfoundation.org

If you would like to donate to the Arts Volunteering Fund, you can do so at the next meeting or through a bank transfer (Barclays 20-24- 61 The Arts Society Croydon Area a/c 10543993 Use reference Arts Volunteering Fund. When a payment is made please email treasurer.tascroydonarea@gmail.com Thank you again for your donations and helping children access the power of music.

Maria Keenan

COMMITTEE REPORTS

WEBSITE MEMBERSHIP AND FEEDBACK

Our website tascroydonarea.org.uk is constantly being updated with news of forthcoming lectures and details of events in and around Croydon. Above all, please try and use the evaluation button on the front page of the website to comment on lectures attended. Your opinion counts and is passed on and contributes to the general quality improvement of our lectures. The feedback code is **SunShine789**

Jennie Graham and Jean Aarons

TREASURER'S REPORT

Another good year! Membership 126, is slightly up on last year and we have welcomed many visitors some of whom have joined as members. So, do encourage your friends to come and enjoy the lectures planned for the remaining year 2026/27. We welcome them to come initially as guests to our monthly lectures. As well as ten excellent lectures throughout the year, members also receive three issues of the main Arts Society Magazine. We have just enjoyed a "Special Interest Day" held in July as our usual venue was closed for refurbishment during August. A day of 2 lectures on the Bayeux Tapestry and lunch which again was well supported.

We have also spent some of our money on equipment. We have had to replace the Projector stand after it "Fell to Bits!"

Thank you all who have made payments during the year by Card and Bank Transfer which simplifies the administration.

Part of our subscription, £17, is paid to "The Arts Society" (TAS) as "Recovery Costs" to cover their costs of providing the magazines, articles and facilities for us all.

We are thankful to those members who have Gift Aided the TAS portion of their subscriptions in the past. However, The Art Society (TAS) has decided to discontinue reclaiming the tax paid on the "recovery costs portion of our subscription in future so I shall not be asking for Gift Aid Returns anymore.

Marc Smith

BAYEUX TAPESTRY - THE REVIEW

All of the photos used in this report were supplied by Imogen Corrigan except for the ones of Edward The Confessor's death and of William setting up camp in Hastings which are from the Anglo Saxon Archeological Blog <http://anglo-saxon.archeurope.com>

Lecture 1

Charles Dickens described the Bayeux Tapestry which commemorates the events of 1066 as "the work of amateurs".

It is not a tapestry, but a very long piece of embroidery, 76 yards by 28 inches high, comprising nine long strips, sewn together. The thread is wool in 8/9 basic readily available colours and Bayeux stitch was used, a straight stem stitch.

Its aim was to tell a story. It was designed by a man but sewn by women who were competent embroiderers and were probably nuns. It was made in England in the Canterbury area probably shortly after the Battle of Hastings. The English were known for their needlework. Any restoration has been done in chain stitch. The action goes generally left to right and then it goes right to left when an important event occurs like Edward the Confessor's death *Hic defunctus est*.

The Latin captions are very basic that the "ordinary" man could understand. People pointing denotes that they were speaking. The design has been pared down. Only 60 of the 1515 figures are women.

The work was commissioned by William The Conqueror's half brother Bishop Odo who was given extensive lands in the Canterbury area. He is depicted with a tonsure to show he was a bishop.

History is there to make a moral point. The panels emphasise William's rightness.

There is lots of evidence that it was made in England e.g. the symbol 7 meaning "and" only occurred in England; one panel has men with spades with holes in which were only used in England; Æ ash was Anglo Saxon as seen in Ædward Æthelred etc.

The English have "flowing locks", whereas the Normans are clean shaven, with their hair shaved up at the back.

The Succession to the throne of England in 1066

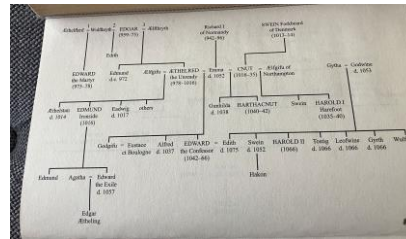
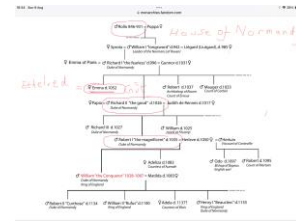
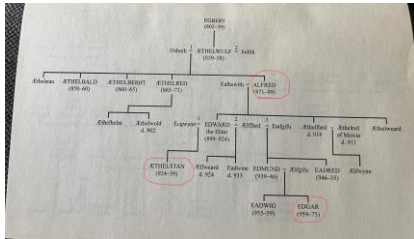
The Anglo-Saxon monarchy was elective so the English throne at the time was not decided by bloodline, though bloodline was important. Any king elected needed to be throne worthy

The Witan was a Council made up of the great magnates and bishops of England who would generally meet to approve the new king who was frequently the victor of a battle in those bloody times.

In 1066 there were four main contenders for the childless Edward the Confessor's throne, as follows

- **Harold Godwinson** Earl of Wessex had a very strong following, he was in situ, his sister Edith was married to Edward the Confessor. Other Godwin family members were earls of other areas.
- **Harald Harvada**, King of Norway, a descendant of King Cnut - who was eventually defeated by Harold II at the Battle of Stamford Bridge 25th September 1066
- **William Duke of Normandy**, allegedly promised the throne by Edward the Confessor at a time when Edward was seeking to reduce the influence of the Godwin family
- **Edgar Ætheling**, very young son of Edward the Exile (in Hungary) and a great grandson of Æthelred the Unready. He had the strongest bloodline but he was only 13.

Another key character in the story was Conan Duke of Brittany, a constant foe of William of Normandy who died of natural causes in 1066, freeing William to pursue his claim to the English throne.



FAMILY TREES

Lecture 2

Imogen then outlined the historical events leading to the Battle of Hastings and Norman Conquest and considered some of the more important panels in greater detail, picking out the key events.

In 1064 Harold goes to France from Bosham in Wessex (*Harold Mare Navigavit*) for reasons unclear but maybe to rescue important hostages from previous skirmishes. Blown off course and captured by Count Guy of Ponthieu, Harold is taken to meet William. He swears a sacred oath to William to recognise him as next King of England but maybe he does that to ensure he won't be kept prisoner in France.

There are little moral comments throughout especially in the margins e.g one has two wolves licking their paws to show Harold's deceitfulness - alludes to the Fox and Crow of Aesop's fables. There is a cockerel weathervane in the Westminster Abbey scenes- St Peter would deny Christ when the cock crows.

On 5th January, 1066 Edward dies *Hic defunctus est* (action now goes right to left to denote this important event) - on his deathbed he grants his throne to Harold.



The Witan decided that Harold Godwinson should be crowned, and his coronation took place on the same day.

This decision angered both William of Normandy and Harald Hardrada. They each decided that, since they had not been given the English throne by the Witan, they would have to invade and take over by force. This led to two important battles: the **Battle of Stamford Bridge**, and later the **Battle of Hastings**.



Harold was crowned at Epiphany 6th January, 1066

Halley's Comet 24th April 1066 - bad omen with ghostly ships at the bottom. God's hand appears in one panel - on the side of the victorious army.

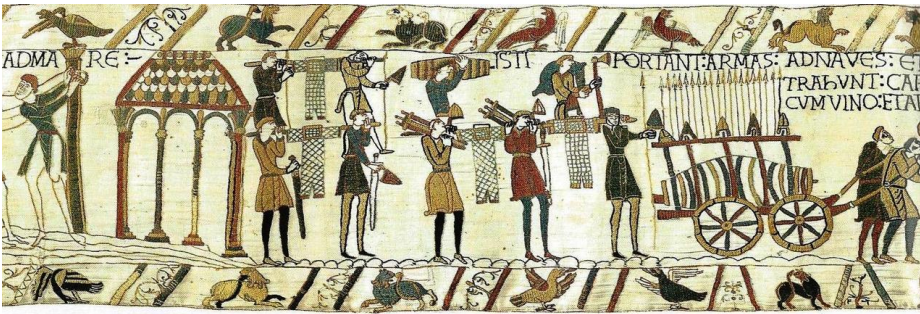


There was the possibility that King Harold II might have to wage war on two fronts. William was invading from the south and in the north on 20th September 1066 Harald Hardrada and Tostig, brother of the King were victorious against the Northumbria earls at the **Battle of Fulford**. However, on 25th September at the **Battle of Stamford Bridge** King Harold defeated and killed Hardrada and Tostig.

Harold disbanded his exhausted victorious northern army as September was normally the end of the military campaigning season so soldiers could go back to their villages and get the harvest in. Also there was stormy weather in the Channel which hampered William so Harold thought William would not invade that year.

However it was now or never for William and he took a risk. William had ordered his fleet to be assembled to invade England using Viking style boats. The Normans had a good cavalry. Harold's army was mainly infantry.

Preparations for the invasion



28th September, 1066 William landed in Pevensey

A figurehead on his boat turns its head. He makes his way to Hastings and they dig in



Castellum ad Hesting Ceastra.

Harold moves south, gathering a new army on the way arriving in Hastings on 13th October.

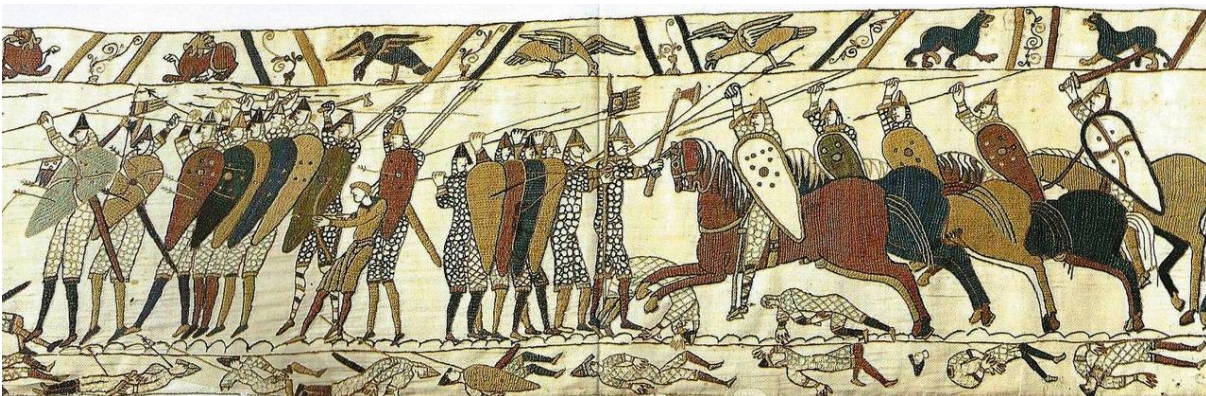
Battle of Hastings 14th October 1066 waged at Senlac Hill renamed Battle.

Imogen treated us to lots of insights about waging war -

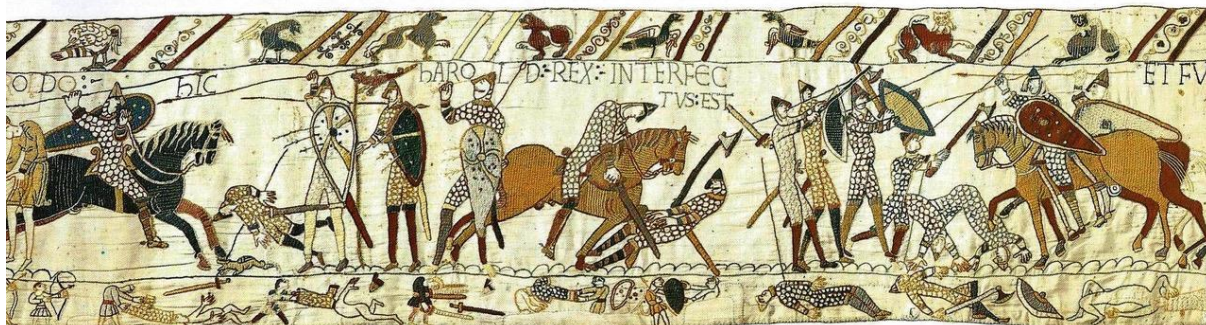
- Before mechanisation infantry would beat cavalry anytime as horses wouldn't charge where they couldn't go
- Harold had the high ground
- Harold's northern victorious army had been dispersed

BUT William had chosen the battle area and had better tactics and the Normans were extremely skilled militarily.

The battle - shorter chain mail to enable them to ride horses



Harold dies Harold Rex *Interfectus Est*



William becomes King of England and is crowned on Christmas Day 1066, echoing Charlemagne who was crowned on Christmas Day 800. The Norman Conquest marked the end of Anglo Saxon England.

Jean Aarons

For those who wish to know more about the background to the Bayeux Tapestry the excellent **Rest is History** series is very informative and is available on BBC Sounds as well as on other podcast forums. There are four programmes about the immediate events 1066: The Shadows of War which was first aired on BBC Sounds 27.5.25.

1066: Slaughter at Stamford Bridge Part 2 aired 30.5.25

1066: The Battle of Hastings Part 3 aired 3.6.25

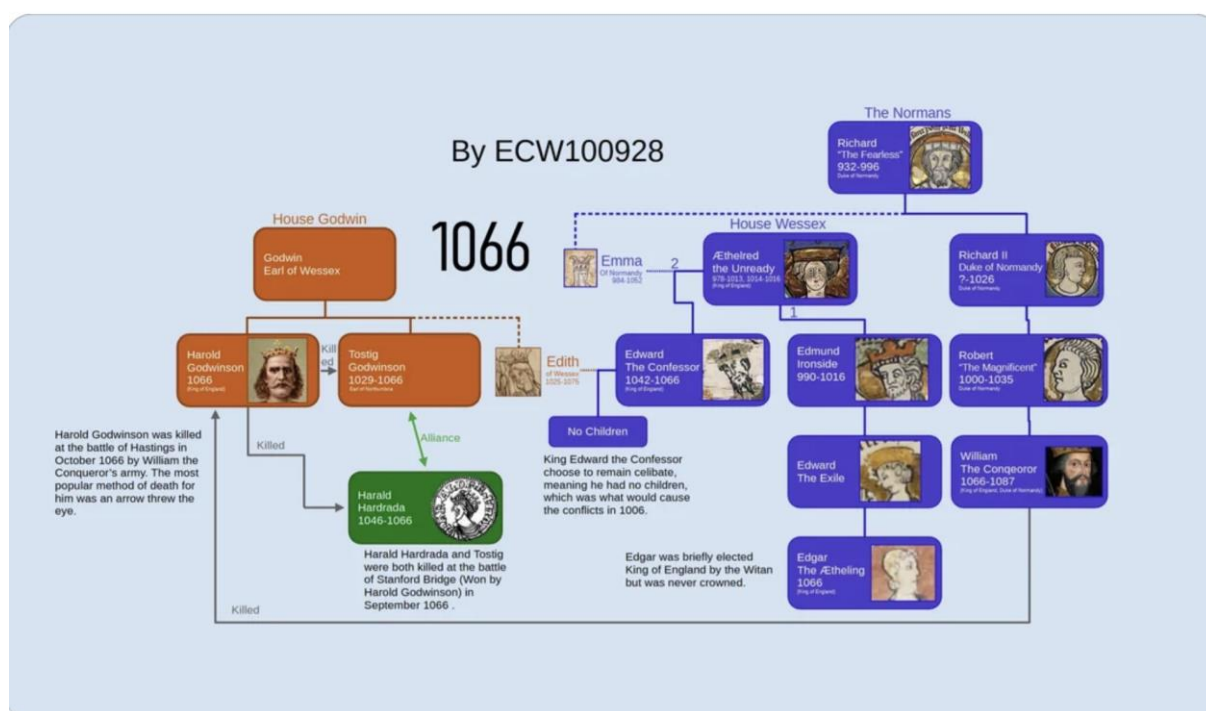
1066: The Norman Conquest Part 4 aired 6.6.25

There is also an earlier series entitled "The Road to 1066" which offers a more comprehensive account going right back to 975.

[BBC Sounds - The Rest Is History - Available Episodes](#)

A few said in the feedback forms that a "family tree" would have been useful to show who's who - **see below**.

Family Tree of the contenders to the throne in 1066



These may be helpful but as Imogen emphasised, bloodline was only one of the elements involved in the Anglo Saxon world in choosing their king as he had to be strong to survive.