

# **A HEARTY VOTE OF THANKS**

A History

of the

**Amersham Horticultural Association**

compiled

by

**Bob Beasley**

1998



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## Sowing the Seeds

Horticultural events have long been a feature of life in and around Amersham. There is a report in the "Buckinghamshire Advertiser, Uxbridge Journal," dated Saturday October 26, 1861, which gives details of the events of the "Amersham, Chesham and the Adjacent Parishes Agricultural Associations" meeting held in the Town Hall (now called the Market Hall). It appears that the Hall was "bursting at the seams" with vegetables grown by local cottagers while, at the same time, a ploughing competition was held on an Amersham Common farm. This latter contest was threatened by a "pitiless storm" which broke out after the men had already been ploughing non-stop for three hours. However they "worked cheerfully on and braved the storm with fortitude"!

The Advertiser, in an article published in 1972 looking back over its history, went on to say that the then Proprietor of the paper, William Broadwater of Uxbridge, drew a big distinction between the "gentlefolk" and the labourers and cottagers of the area. He painted a picture of the grateful "peasants" toiling all year to produce the best cabbages or turnips just for the pleasure of receiving a few pence from the village squire, T.T.Drake, Esq. After the events of the day, a Dinner was held when the local gentry and Churchman gathered together to toast each other, the Queen and the Empire, in almost an orgy of Victorian self righteousness. No women were admitted to the meeting nor were any of the ordinary people who had taken part in the day's competitions. However it was suggested by the Rev. C.Lloyd that perhaps the most successful competitors could sit at a cross table, away from the rest of the diners, and hear the words spoken of them. This, he thought, would raise them, not only in their individual habits, but also raise the tone of their minds altogether. He added that he thought it would be a difficult matter to arrange!

The earliest local copy of the "Bucks Examiner" is dated August 21, 1889 and includes a very full report of the annual Amersham fete and show of flowers, fruit and vegetables and butter in connection with the Oddfellows and Foresters Friendly Societies which had taken place the previous Tuesday "under most distinguished patronage". The report goes on to say:-

"The tradesman of the town closed their establishments at noon and the occasion was observed as a general holiday. The weather was very stormy in the fore part of the day but the afternoon and evening turned out fine and the day's doings were attended with a gratifying measure of success. The attendance was very large - much larger than usual - and the holiday was much enjoyed. The proceedings commenced as usual with a dinner in the Town Hall at half-past twelve o'clock, after which the members formed in procession, headed by the Chesham Brass and Drum and Fife Bands, and proceeded to a meadow kindly lent for the occasion by Captain Drake. The



flower, fruit and vegetable show was held here in a large tent. The Committee had made arrangements with Mr A. Montgomery of London, a fete and gala agent, to provide a first-class company of artistes, and during the afternoon and evening variety entertainments were given on stage which had been erected for the purpose. A sale of work and fancy articles was conducted by the Misses Tyrwhitt Drake in aid of the fund for the restoration of the Parish Church. Athletic sports, dancing, a roundabout, swing boats etc also figured on the programme. Tea was provided on the ground by Brother C. Toovey and other refreshments by Host Berry of the "Griffin". The duties of Secretary were very efficiently performed by Mr H. S. Wilson and the excellence of the arrangements reflected credit upon him and the Committee"

The report then goes on to detail the happenings at the dinner which had been held in the Town Hall. About a hundred local dignitaries were present including Captain T. H. T. Drake and Rev. E. B. Cooper who had been recently appointed Head Master of the Grammar School and Chaplain to the Union House (Workhouse - now part of Amersham General Hospital). Other leading citizens included Mr G. Weller (Weller's Brewery), Mr G. Darlington (Builder) and Dr F. S. Turner. Hostess Prentice of the "Saracen's Head" is reported to have "placed a capital spread on the tables". Most of the after dinner speeches referred to the "good works" of the two sponsoring Friendly Societies although in his speech Mr Weller referred to Rev Cooper saying "They were all too old to receive tuition under him in the school and, although Mr Cooper was an eloquent preacher and one they would be pleased to hear, let them hope it would never be their lot to hear him preach in the Workhouse. (Laughter)"

The exhibits for the Flower Show were staged in the marquee and prizes "to the amount of £25 and upwards were offered for fruit, vegetables, flowers, needlework, bread, butter etc." The report goes on to say that the Show "was one of the best, if not the best, yet held in Amersham. The entries were more numerous than usual and, as far as quality was concerned, the exhibits left little to be desired". Flowers and foliage plants from the gardens of the Duke of Westminster at Cliveden and of T. W. T. Drake Esq and Mrs G. Weller were displayed by their respective gardeners and there were large collections of fruit and vegetables as well as the individual classes. There were three Sections namely Section 1, competed for by benefit members only, Section 2, for mechanics and labourers of the town and parish of Amersham and Section 3, for tradesmen and amateurs of the town. In addition to the more familiar classes, there were classes for plain needlework, lace, knitting and, surprisingly, boiled potatoes! In the main, prizes were 3/-, 2/- and 1/- for 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively although Mrs Bunker received ten shillings for first prize for her butter!

The newspaper report concludes with "The prizes were distributed by Mrs T. W. T. Drake at 6 o'clock. Mrs Drake performed her task with affability and grace and at the conclusion of the ceremony hearty cheers testified to the pleasure it had afforded the company to have seen Mrs Drake fulfil the duty"

In the edition of the "Chesham Examiner, Amersham and Rickmansworth Times" of Friday August 24 1900 there is a full report of, what is by now called, "the Amersham Oddfellows & Foresters' Fete" which was held on the preceding Thursday in Duffin's Meadow. Until then the event had been staged annually on a Tuesday but



the change to the early closing day led to a larger attendance than before and, overall, the Show was deemed to be an "unprecedented success". Other changes involved the postponement of the dinner until a future occasion and ".... instead of having a variety entertainment in the afternoon, athletic sports were held and these excited great interest. Various other amusements were provided for those who attended. The Amersham Brass Band played selections during the day; their excellent efforts being much appreciated. Dancing (in a specially reserved enclosure) formed an item of the evening's amusement, the Band supplying the accompaniment".

As at the 1889 Show, this event was attended and well supported by local dignitaries with Mrs G.M.H.Weller presenting the horticultural prizes and large displays of plants and fruit were put on by Mr T.W.T.Drake and the Duchess of Westminster (or, more properly, their gardeners). Mrs Gurney ran a tea and refreshment tent in the meadow and Mr Bevis, of the Saracen's Head, also had a refreshment tent there. Many of the classes in both the horticultural and poultry sections were sponsored by well known local people. For instance, the collection of vegetables was sponsored by Mr T.W.T.Drake, the class for carnations by Dr F.S.Turner, the class for parsnips by Dr J.C.Gardner etc. In addition the Earl Howe sponsored a competition for "Best cultivated garden in Horsemore Lane Allotments". There were similar competitions for the best cultivated gardens in Amersham Horsecroft Allotments, Mill Dell Allotments and Winchmore Hill Old Allotments. The first two being sponsored by Mr G.W.Statham and the last by Viscount Curzon MP. Mr George Brazil gave a special prize "For the best bird in show exhibited by a cottager residing in the parish of Amersham".

The Athletics must have been fun for, in addition to the usual 100 yards flat races for children and adults (under 35 years and over 35 years), there were sack races, egg and spoon, half mile obstacle and potato races. The Oddfellows beat the Foresters and Messrs Weller's Brewery Employees beat Messrs Darlington's Building Employees in Tug of War contests.

These annual events continued in a similar fashion until the outbreak of the Great War. Many local men lost their lives during the War and, although the Shows started up again under the auspices of the local Lodge of Oddfellows, they were never the same with the last one being held in the early 1930s.

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### "A Very Fine Beginning"

On 1st May 1934 a Public Meeting was held in the Town Hall, Amersham presided over by Captain T.Tyrwhitt Drake and attended by interested members of the Public. The report of this public meeting is very short but it records the formation of the "**Amersham Horticultural and Allotment Holders Association**". Captain Drake



was confirmed as President with Mr E.Bryan as Hon. Secretary and Mr G.B.Newton Hon Treasurer. It was agreed that the Committee would consist of twelve members, four Donor, four Gardeners and four Cottagers (the Donors were persons who contributed 10/6d or more to the Association's funds). Subscriptions for Cottagers were fixed at 1/-d per year minimum and for Gardeners 2/6d minimum. Mr Bryan was a stalwart of the Association and held the position of Hon Secretary until 1946.

At the first Committee meeting, held at the Kings Arms Hotel on Wednesday 9th May, the Rules and Objects of the Society were agreed to:-

- 1) To encourage Allotment Cultivation.
- 2) To hold meetings of members for the purpose of Lectures, Discussions etc.
- 3) To hold Exhibitions of Horticultural produce.
- 4) To limit the radius of the Society to five miles from Amersham Town Hall and that no member of any other Allotment Holders Association be eligible for membership.
- 5) That five members of Committee form a quorum.
- 6) That all cheques be signed by the Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Secretary.
- 7) That a General Meeting be held annually within three months of the date of the Show to receive the report of the Committee and the report of the Hon. Treasurer (financial statement and audited balance sheet) and to elect officers and Committee for the ensuing year  
Annual subscriptions to become due on June 1st of each year and be paid as soon after that date as practicable.

Arrangements were then made to hold their first Show in the Town Hall on August 25th of that year (borrowing the exhibition tables from the Oddfellows and Foresters Friendly Societies). Subsequent meetings fixed the total prize money to be awarded at £30. They also agreed to be affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society at a fee of £1-1-0d and to give complimentary tickets to all members donating over 2/6d to funds.

The subsequent report in the Bucks Examiner was headed "A Very Fine Beginning" and went on to state that the first show organised by the Association was a big success. The enclosure of lower part of the Town Hall provided sufficient accommodation for the staging of the 350 exhibits. The classes were much the same as those in the current schedule but with a strong emphasis on vegetables with the organisers including classes for Best Allotment at the various locations. An interesting feature in the Domestic Classes was a dinner for a child of three years, not to cost more than 9d. The winning dinner consisted of rabbit, potatoes and beans with junket and apple to follow. A 3d dinner comprised mince, potatoes and cabbage and baked apples and custard!

## Amersham Horticultural & Allotment Holders' Association.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the above Association will be held in the Town Hall, Amersham, on Friday, November 23rd, 1934, at 8.30 p.m. when it is hoped you will be able to be present.

12, SCHOOL LANE,  
AMERSHAM,  
November, 1934

Dear Sir (or Madam),

In presenting the Balance Sheet for 1934 the Committee take this opportunity of expressing their grateful thanks to Subscribers and Members for the valuable support they have accorded the Society in its initial year.

The Horticultural Show held on August 25th in the Town Hall (very kindly loaned by Capt. T. Tyrwhitt-Drake, M.C.) was a great success, about 350 exhibits being staged.

With the kind support accorded, the Society were able to buy all necessary Tables for exhibition purposes.

The Committee's thanks are also due to the Tradespeople, who, by their advertisements in the Schedule, considerably helped towards the cost of the printing.

An increased membership is still desirable to enable the Committee to extend the various sections of the Show as occasions require.

The Secretary will gladly furnish any information in connection with the Society.

Yours faithfully,

E. BRYAN,

Hon. Secretary.



# AMERSHAM HORTICULTURAL & ALLOTMENT HOLDERS' ASSOCIATION.

## INCOME and EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT to OCTOBER 31st, 1934.

Income.				Expenditure.				
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
Subscriptions ...	50	14	0	Prize Money ...	30	18	0	
Advertisements...	4	19	6	Affiliation Fee to Royal Horticultural Society ...	1	1	0	
Dances ...	13	18	9	Cost of Equipment ...	10	0	0	
Door Money at Show ...	7	5	9	Hire of Canvas Screens ...	9	6		
Entry Fees ...	4	18	6	Haulage... ..	15	0		
				Police Fee ... ..	1	0	0	
				Luncheons and Refreshments ... ..	1	0	8	
				Printing ... ..	8	10	6	
				Stationery, &c. ... ..	19	10		
				Cheque Book ... ..	8	0		
				Postages, &c. ... ..	16	7		
				Miscellaneous Expenses ... ..	14	10		
				Cash on hand ... ..	9	1		
				Cash at Bank ... ..	24	13	6	
						25	2	7
	£81	16	6		£81	16	6	

The above Accounts have been checked by me and found correct.

October 25th, 1934.

(Signed) J. P. ROBINSON, Auditor.

## LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS.

Capt. T. Tyrwhitt-Drake, M.C.	Dr. S. H. M. Johns
Dr. J. C. Gardner, J.P.	Mr. J. H. Jacobs
Miss Abrahams	Mrs. J. W. King
Anonymous	Mr. F. Lacey
Rev. C. E. Briggs	Lloyds Bank, Ltd.
Col. & Mrs. F. E. Baker	Mr. J. H. McDonald
Mr. J. Burgess	" A. J. Nunn
Messrs. Benskins	" G. B. Newton
Mr. R. Brazil	" B. E. Pemberton
Mrs. Ashley Cooper	" F. Powlesland
Mr. C. M. Cheese	" A. W. Rich
" R. Cochran	" J. Robinson
" F. L. Cook	Mrs. Read
" F. Callard	Roylance
Miss Champion	Mr. W. F. Reeve
Mr. J. Dickson	" A. J. Side
Mrs. Dickens	Dr. R. S. Starkey
Messrs. Francis & How	Mr. J. Simmons
Dr. E. A. Green	" W. Speedy
" H. J. Henderson	Mrs. B. Schuyler
Miss Healy	Mr. J. A. Tunks
Mr. R. Hobbs	Sir Herbert Wright
" J. H. Hewett	Mr. A. Woodley
" A. W. Hall	Messrs. Wethered
Mrs. Hargreaves	Mrs. Wilkinson

also 58 Ordinary Members.

The prizes were presented by Mrs Tyrwhitt-Drake and, to conclude a successful day, a dance was held in the Church Rooms with the Blue Dominoes providing the music.

At that first Annual General Meeting held on Friday, November 23rd, it was agreed to accept the offer of a silver Challenge Cup from the Oddfellows and Foresters Fete Committee to be put up for competition at future Shows. It was originally presented to the Oddfellows and Foresters by Mr George Brazil and was first awarded in 1933. The meeting instructed the Committee to apologise to Mr Brazil for not putting the Cup up for competition in 1934 as it was not received in time and to ask him if the year could be left blank. The Cup would then be awarded in 1935 for the first time by the Association. Following the AGM, the secretary contacted Mr Brazil who said that he wished the Cup to be put up for competition each year and, should it be won 3 years in succession or four times in all by the same exhibitor, that it then became the permanent property of the winner. Mr Brazil would, circumstances permitting, present another cup, in its place, for competition. (In fact, although the Brazil Challenge Cup was won by Ron King, a past Chairman, every year without a break from 1964 to 1974, these rules were disregarded and the original Cup was retained as a permanent trophy.)

The Meeting also agreed to the Committee's recommendation that a sum of £5 be put aside for aiding allotment holders in case of sickness. However, only holders from the Horsecroft, Church Mead and Dovecots Meadow allotments would be eligible for benefit.

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## The Early Years

The first year was very busy. Dances were organised to raise funds and quotations were obtained for the supply of seeds for members. The one from Edward Webb & Sons being accepted. Prices were also sought for the supply of vases, the most competitive being that from a firm called Royal Art Pottery. The final order consisted of "5 doz 6 1/2", 3 doz 9", 2 doz 13", 7 doz Dahlia tubes and 4 doz Sweet Pea vases"! The secretary was given the power to purchase extra vases if it was found that there were not sufficient! Optimism indeed.

The trestle tables, used for the staging of exhibits and which had previously been made for the Jubilee celebrations in 1935, were given to the Association by the Parish Council subject to the Council being allowed to hire them back for any public functions free of charge. This was readily agreed. For any others who may wish to hire the tables and/or vases, the rates were fixed as follows:-

Folding Tables 6d each,



Rough Board Tables with two or three trestles 6d each,  
Flower vases 1d each.  
The hirer to be responsible for any breakage.

All the equipment belonging to the fledgling Association was stored at the Rectory (now the Old Rectory) on Rectory Hill. However, twelve of the tables were moved to the Kings Arms hotel in 1939 with the rest being looked after by Mr Mason. Canvas sheets were hired from Young & Company to enclose the lower part of the Town Hall to give more space for the exhibits. All committee meetings were held in the Kings Arms but the Town Hall was the venue for the Annual General Meeting which was always presided over by the President, Capt. T. Tyrwhitt-Drake. However, the AGM often had only a "moderate attendance".

At a committee meeting on 21 June 1935 it was reported that the Association's Chairman, Dr J.C. Gardner, had died. The minutes of the meeting note that "the committee stood in silence for one minute". Mr R.S. Cochrane took over the Chairman's duties and was confirmed in that post at the subsequent Annual General Meeting on November 21st that year. The meeting also approved an Honorarium of £5 be awarded to the Hon. Secretary, Mr E. Bryan. The Balance Sheet was presented and showed the sum of £27-0-7d to be in hand. Mr Bryan invariably finished his minutes of meetings with the sentence "A hearty vote of thanks to the chairman concluded the meeting".

The following years, up to the outbreak of World War Two, was a time for consolidation with the Association being put on a more secure financial footing. (In respect to this it should be noted that THREE persons were required to sign each cheque issued!) The continuing success of the Show was demonstrated, in 1937, by the need to arrange for the police to be on duty from 9 o'clock because of "congestion in the Hall on the morning of the Show caused by non-exhibitors". Open classes were established for exhibitors living in a ten mile radius from the Town Hall and the Cookery section was extended as well as extra dahlia and gladioli classes although the honey class was dropped. Every effort was made to ensure that the date of the Show did not clash with that of the Chesham Society (as it did in 1936). The favoured time for the Show was the third week-end in August.

Various rule changes were introduced including one which stipulated that "No exhibitor be allowed more than two assistants when tabling his exhibits"! Also a rule defining a Cottager as "...a person who is not employed as a paid gardener and does not have paid assistance in his garden".

There were two instances that occurred in 1939 that show how strictly the rules of the Association were enforced. At one committee meeting the secretary reported that "he had had an application for an exhibitor to exhibit in the Cottager's Classes from a lad who was the son of a gardener and living at home and cultivating part of his father's garden. Was he to accept the entry?" After much discussion it was decided that "the intended exhibitor might exhibit in the Open Classes and not the Cottager's". The second occasion was rather more serious.



An emergency committee meeting was called during the week leading up to the Show at which the secretary reported complaints he had received regarding a certain member's intended exhibits. After discussion, it was decided "that the various members of the committee visit his allotment to ascertain if the various exhibits at the Show conformed with the produce on his allotment". A further meeting of the committee took place on 25 August when Mr Merridan reported the conversation he had with the member on the day of the Flower Show. He stated that he spoke to him "in the early evening and asked him if he would allow three members of the Committee to view his garden at the rear of his house as the Committee did not feel satisfied that he had himself grown the produce he exhibited at the Show. He refused Mr Merridan's request". The consequence of all this was that a letter was sent to the member concerned as follows:-

"I am instructed by my Committee to inform you that they have been compelled to disqualify you from receiving any prizes awarded at the Societies Show on the grounds that you were unable to satisfy the sub-committee that the produce you exhibited was actually grown by yourself in accordance with rule one." No further reference was made to this unsavoury episode!

In these early years the keeping of allotments was a favourite pastime, if not a necessity for some families, and competition for the allotment prizes was very keen. So much so that there was an objection to the allocation of the prizes in the judging of the Horsecroft allotments in 1936. However, after the protest had been fully discussed, the committee decided that the judge's decision be final. In 1935 a letter was sent by the Secretary to the Parish Council complaining about the state of the cart road leading through the Dovecote Meadow allotments and asking for it to be repaired as soon as possible. Obviously the Parish Council was responsible for the allotments in general but the Association was much concerned with the condition of some of the plots. Indeed, in 1941 the Association wrote to the Council regarding the bad state of an allotment in Horsecroft and suggesting that it be "...taken from the member and transferred to some person who would undertake to cultivate it properly". They also complained about the bad condition of two plots in Dovecote and asking for something to be done about them. There is no record of what happened in any of these cases. They wrote to the Council again, in 1942, suggesting that more allotments be opened up of 5 poles in size (as opposed to the more normal 10 poles). It was not until long after the War that the allotment competition was dropped by the Association.

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### The War Years

In 1940 the Town Hall was not available for staging the Show and neither was the British Legion Hall for obvious reasons, so in that year it was held at St Mary's School. A marquee was erected as well and there were a number of side-shows. The Amersham Town Band was in attendance. The Show was deemed "a great success" even though the number of classes had been considerably reduced and the prize money



cut by approximately one third, for example the prizes for Six Vases of Sweet Peas to be reduced from 15/-, 10/- & 5/- to 10/-, 7/- & 4/-. At the end of the day there was a surplus of income over expenditure of £18-1-10d.

The Annual Show was continued throughout the war with increasing success in spite of the reduction in prize money and number of classes. They were held at St Mary's School because of the unavailability of more suitable venues and, at the 1943, 1944 and 1945 shows, included a "cash draw" to boost takings. Prizes in the draw were set at £4, £2 and £1 with four consolation prizes of 5/-d (in the first year it was held, a sum of £22-13-0d was realised after paying all expenses).

Committee meetings were usually held in the Kings Arms with only the Annual General Meeting being held in the Town Hall. In those days the full committee comprised the President, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, five vice-presidents, four gardeners and six allotment holders - they must have required a large room for their meetings if they all attended!

Mr E. Bryan had been elected Hon Secretary at the inaugural meeting in 1934 and he continued in that capacity until 1946. He was very highly regarded and in 1942 the President, Captain T. Twyrrhit Drake, suggested that a suitable presentation be made to Mr Bryan in recognition of his contribution to the running of the Association. This was agreed and "a handsome silver watch, suitably inscribed" was presented to Mr Bryan at a specially convened meeting held at the Kings Arms, of course. In addition to this, it was agreed, at the 1943 AGM, to pay the Hon Secretary an annual salary of £7-10-0d! Presumably, from that point, he was unable to use the prefix "Hon"! It is not known how long this salary was paid - it probably stopped when Mr Bryan stood down as there is no further mention of this in the records.

The Annual Show was always held on the second Saturday in August (only one show a-year in those days) with judging of the allotments being carried out at the beginning of July. These dates were religiously kept. When the local Home Guard had arranged their fete for August 8th in 1942, they asked the Horticultural Association to change to that date and have a combined event. However the Association "could not see its way to co-operate" and voted to stick to August 15th being the second Saturday in the month. Their decision may have been influenced by the fact that the Home Guard had failed to pay for tables hired to them for their Summer Camp and a further application for settlement had to be made!

#### 4

### Charitable Acts

It was as early as 1936 that the Association set out to help needy members. They had achieved a balance in hand on the "Potato account" of 12/9d and it was

agreed that this money should be spent on the purchase of seeds for the benefit of three members who were ill and unable to cultivate their allotments. The minutes go on to say "As the five members necessary for consenting for the same allotments be dug were present, the Secretary asked their permission to have the work put in hand at once. This was unanimously given" It was also agreed that a member who received such assistance would not render himself ineligible to compete as a cottager at the Show.

At the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 27th November 1939 (in the Kings Arms) it was agreed that "any allotment holders who were members and joined His Majesty's forces should have the same assistance on their allotments as sick members". This assistance to sick members or those in HM forces continued throughout the War.

It was also proposed at the AGM that all profits from the 1940 Show, including the sale of produce afterwards, would be given to the local Red Cross organisation. This resulted in the above mentioned sum of £18-1-10d being made up to £20 from the Association's funds and sent to Mrs Tyrwhitt-Drake "for the benefit of the Amersham Town Working Party (Branch of the British Red Cross)". The next year saw a surplus of £41-12-7d from the Show. This, also, was donated to the Amersham Town Working Party leaving a net increase in the Association's funds of 3s 4d (as reported at the subsequent AGM)!

The next year saw an increase in the amount donated to the Amersham Town Working Party (now acting for the "British Red Cross and Order of St John's War Organisation Central Hospital Supply Service") to £53-16-3d, still leaving a balance of £35-3-10d in the Association's funds. However, in 1943, it was decided to divide the Show surplus between the Amersham Town Working Party and the Association's own "Allotment Assistance Fund". Each received a total of £30-6-2d. The Allotment Assistance funds were made available to all members of the Association, either serving in H.M. Forces or incapacitated through illness, who the committee considered deserving of such help. Assistance was "not to exceed the cultivation of more than 10 pole of ground and the amount allocated for 1944 not to exceed £10." This generosity was not without its problems as, at a meeting in 1946, the Secretary reported "on his inability to find sufficient labour for the cultivation of the allotments of members in the Forces". It was suggested that Mr R. Grace be approached to do the work.

Further donations were made to the Amersham Town Working Party and the Assistance Fund in 1944. However, the "surplus" made at the 1945 Show was divided between St Dunstan's and the Assistance Fund. After the War the Assistance Fund, which now stood at approximately £48 after expenses, was merged with the Association's main account although the Association would still be responsible for giving assistance to deserving cases among its allotment holding members. There are no records of how long the Association continued to support any members in this way, but the Allotments Competition was dropped in 1957 and the Association concentrated on flower shows from then on.



### A Time of Expansion

In 1946 the Annual Show was held, once again, in St Mary's school and it was determined that it would not close until 7.00 pm followed by 30 minutes to clear exhibits before the auctioning of any surplus. The Show was much larger than previously and various medals were applied for including the Banksian, the R.H.S. silver medal and one from the Amateur Gardening magazine. The next year saw the staging of the Show combined with a Gala in Barn Meadow together with the British Legion and the Red Cross. It was considered necessary to increase the annual subscription from 1/3d to 1/4d to cover the cost of the extra prize money! However, the financial outcome of the Show was "generally agreed to be very satisfactory" and, at the subsequent AGM, the only comment on the Association's accounts was that they had too much money, amounting to £142-4-0d, at the bank!

At a committee meeting held on April 1st 1948 it was proposed the Rector be asked to meet a deputation regarding holding a Speedway in Rectory Meadow at the next Show! It was also decided to offer Chesham and District Beekeepers Association space at the Show including the use of a tent and 5% of the gate money! The "was readily accepted by them". Miss White and Miss Trotman agreed to stage a "Pony Gymkhana" in Barn Meadow for which "loudspeaking apparatus" was hired. As in previous years the very popular "cash draw" was to be held. Advertisements were to be placed in the local paper and arrangements made to engage two police constables for the day of the Show. Tables were hired **from** the British Legion and a water supply was requested from the local Water Company. More mundanely, the Secretary was asked to see one of the members about his dog damaging allotments and also to write about the gate at School End (presumably in a bad condition) and a dead tree which was considered dangerous.

The 1948 Show was such a success that further expansion was decided on for the following year. The added attractions included a Baby Show and Children's Sports which were to be run at intervals during the afternoon. Trade exhibits occupied one end of the show tent. There were refreshments and the landlord of the "Eagle" ran the beer tent. Once again, the services of two special constables were requested for patrolling the East and West sides of the field. Unfortunately it appears the Association made a loss in the region of £50 (although no actual figures are available). This was "attributed to other attractions in the neighbourhood".

In spite of the loss incurred in 1949, the Committee went ahead with an even more ambitious event in 1950. The Show was held in Rectory Meadow which was hired for the day from the Rector for a flat rate of £10 inclusive of an area for a Funfair! The Victory Tea Rooms provided refreshments including a tea for the Committee and stewards. Mr Podbury put on a display of honey and there was a composting demonstration by the Soil Association. There were three trade exhibits including one by Meredith's Rose Nursery of Potten End. Five tents were hired from Marks of Aylesbury and a "broadcasting van" was rented for the day for the sum of

## ALLOTMENTS

Entrance Fee 6d.

Class	Prizes—1st.	2nd	3rd.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
25 Best Cultivated Allotment in Amersham and Amersham-on-the-Hill ...	15 0	10 0	5 0

Open to Allotment Holders who have never previously won a 1st Allotment Prize

26 Best Cultivated Allotment in Amersham and Amersham-on-the-Hill ...	12 6	7 6	5 0
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Anyone competing in Class 25 not eligible for Class 26.

No Protest will be entertained as to the judging of the Allotments.

Allotments were judged on July 17th.

## SECTION 2

### OPEN

Entrance Fees—Members 4d. Non-Members 6d. per Class.

Class	Prizes—1st.	2nd	3rd.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
✓ 27 Six long white Potatoes ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 28 Six long coloured Potatoes ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 29 Six round white Potatoes ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 30 Six round coloured Potatoes ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 31 Six Onions ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 32 Six Beetroots ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 33 Brace of Cucumbers ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 34 Nine Tomatoes ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 35 Two Vegetable Marrows (quality)	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 36 Six long Carrots ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 37 Six short Carrots ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 38 Six Turnips ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 39 Twenty Runner Beans ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 40 Twenty Pods of Peas ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 41 Six heaviest Potatoes (total weight) ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 42 Three Cauliflowers (not less than 4in stalks) ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 43 Three Lettuce (any variety) ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
✓ 44 Collection of Vegetables (6 different kinds) ...	25 0	15 0	10 0
Prizes kindly given by Mr. A. Stevens.			
45 Brace of Ridge Cucumbers (must be grown in the open) ...	9 0	7 0	4 0
Prizes kindly given by Mr W Brunning.			

## FRUIT

Class	Prizes—1st.	2nd	3rd.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
46 Nine Cooking Apples ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
47 Nine Eating Apples ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
48 Three Dishes of Fruit (3 distinct varieties), not to include nuts ...	7 6	5 0	3 0
49 Dish of nine Plums ...	3 0	2 0	1 0

## FLORAL

Class	Prizes—1st.	2nd	3rd.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
50 Two Vases Mixed Annuals ...	5 0	3 0	2 0
51 Four Vases of Cut Flowers (distinct varieties, not to include Hardwooded Flowers) ...	15 0	10 0	5 0
52 Twelve Dahlias (mixed varieties) to be shewn on board ...	7 6	5 0	2 0
53 Bowl of Roses, fifteen blooms (mixed varieties) ...	8 0	5 0	3 0
54 Bowl of Sweet Peas, 25 sprays ...	6 0	4 0	2 0
55 Three Vases of Asters, not less than three colours, six blooms in each (mixed) ...	6 0	4 0	2 0
56 One Vase of Zinnias, 12 blooms (mixed) ...	6 0	4 0	2 0
57 Three Vases Dahlias, 9 blooms in each (4in. diam. or less) ...	7 6	5 0	3 0
58 One Vase Gladioli (three varieties) 6 spikes ...	6 0	4 0	2 0
59 One Vase Chrysanthemums, 12 blooms (mixed varieties) ...	7 6	5 0	2 0

## SECTION 3—LADIES

Open to Ladies over 16 years of age (professional Cooks excluded) within a radius of 5 miles

Class	Prizes—1st.	2nd	3rd.
s. d.	s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
60 Table Decoration (table 2ft. by 2ft.) professional Florists, excluded, flowers obtainable anywhere ...	7 6	5 0	3 0
61 Dish of Potatoes (out of their skins) ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
62 Dish or Bowl of prepared Salad (without sauce or eggs) ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
63 Fruit Cake ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
64 Plain Cake ...	3 0	2 0	1 0
65 1-lb. Pot of Jam, Stone Fruit (home-made) ...	3 0	2 0	1 0



£3-3-0d. Mrs D.R. Collins (wife of the owner of Goya's factory) loaned two ponies for children's rides. There were children's sports and a Baby Show with three classes. First Aid was provided by St Johns and a special constable was in attendance "as a safety measure".

The 1950 Show turned out to be "a sad story" due to "extremely" bad weather on the day which added to the financial difficulties of the Show. The Rector pressed for early payment of the hire charge of £10 for the field as he had to compensate his tenant for having to take his horses out of the field and for the deterioration of the grass kelp. He also requested an extra £5 to cover wear and tear made by the fair! After discussion, the Association agreed to pay this sum "as soon as the requisite money should come into their account". Actual figures are not available but it is apparent that the losses on the Show were considerable as money was also owed to the Bank. A motion was put to the Committee, at that year's AGM, "as to whether to continue with the Association in view of the difficult financial position". However, a unanimous vote was taken to "carry on". There was an offer by an anonymous member to loan the Association the money necessary to pay off the debts to the Bank and the Rector but it was decided "to work our way out and to decline this kind offer - albeit very gratefully"

This low point in the Association's history also turned out to be the turning point as much effort was put into a membership drive, the collection of subscriptions was improved and interest was stimulated by the re-introduction, in the following Spring, of a Gardening Brains Trust held in St Michael's Hall and a film show on practical gardening in the Tudor Rooms. Incidentally, the hire charges for these halls were £1-15-0d and £2-2-0d respectively and the committee voted the sum of £1 petty cash to be withdrawn by the Secretary to cover any additional expenses! In addition, it was decided to change the name to **Amersham and District Horticultural and Allotments Association**. The intention being "to give increased interest and draw new members". At the same time membership subscriptions were increased to a level rate of 2/6d for all members. The fee for each entry in Show classes was also increased to 6d. A grand raffle was organised and a number of local businesses donated money and/or goods as prizes. It was decided to continue to obtain seeds (from Unwins) and potatoes for members at discount prices.

The Committee had agreed to vary Show dates in future and so it was held on 26 July in 1951. In the six weeks leading up to the Show, the Association held a stall under the Town Hall for the sale of surplus vegetables to boost funds. This was organised by Mr Longland who reported that it "raised a reasonable regular amount of nearly £1 a week". The produce was donated by members at that time, it was only later that the idea of sales with a percentage deducted for the Association, was brought in.

The Show was a relative success but the Committee still found it necessary to call an EGM to discuss the financial situation. Only 12 members attended. However, at the end of the year it was shown that the Association had a credit balance of £6-1-3d after starting the year with a deficit of £7-8-9d (although £7 was still owed as part of the outstanding debt). The good news was that membership had increased from 61 to 131.



The 1952 Brains Trust, which was held in the Tudor Rooms, resulted in a small overall profit of £1 even though between 140 and 150 persons attended. The Show that year was held in St Michael's Hall and Messrs H.A. Saunders of High Wycombe displayed horticultural machinery in the forecourt. The sales stall was held under the Town Hall for 14 weeks prior to the Show date. There was a raffle but no refreshments. That year showed a surplus of £45-14-10d with the stall alone bringing in £33-17-8d. Also the Allotment competition was finally dropped and the name changed to **The Amersham Horticultural Association.**

The following year an agreement was made with the Squire where the AHA would lease the Town Hall as its permanent headquarters at an annual rent of £2. The Association would also pay all outgoings including rates and electricity. Note that, in those days, it cost approximately 1/-d per week to operate the clock! The agreement also covered the sub-letting of the Hall subject to the Squire's approval.

As the Association was now on a permanent footing, it was decided to increase the number of activities which could be put on in the Town Hall. With that in mind, a Christmas Dinner was held in February (5/-d per head for members), a Whist Drive in May (2/6d per head including refreshments) and a Rummage Sale in November. The number of shows was increased to three in 1954 that is; Summer, Autumn and Chrysanthemum. This latter was a new departure which was to prove very popular for many years. A decision was taken to make the Autumn Show a two day event. This was such a success that all shows were made "two day" in the ensuing years and a Spring Show was introduced in 1955. Replica cups were given if a winner had won a certain cup for three years in succession. A formal Constitution was drawn up during that year.

Membership at the beginning of 1954 stood at 280. Fifty three new members joined during the year. The stalls under the Town Hall were now in full swing with members now retaining 2/3 of the sale price of all produce sold. This encouraged many members to use this facility to the great benefit of the Association. The committee was enlarged to cope with all this new activity which was mainly down to Wilfred Fox who joined the Committee that year and went on to be Show Secretary. He brought a considerable amount of expertise and new ideas with him and was a driving force in the improvement in the Association's fortunes.

## 6

### **The Successful Years**

1955 saw a continuing increase in membership and, indeed, the Bank balance! This stood at £104 at the start of the year but improved sufficiently for the Association to invest £100 in Government Bonds at the end! The Spring Show had 64 entries from 17 exhibitors which was considered satisfactory for a new show. Both the Summer and



Autumn Shows had so many entries that the Rector gave permission for the overflow to be accommodated in the Church Rooms. At the Autumn Show there was an "all time high" of 453 entries from 63 exhibitors and over 700 people paid for entrance to the show. It was not all plain sailing though, as Wilf Fox had to put up with "foul and abusive language" in public from an exhibitor who was suspected of unauthorised selling of produce on the premises. As no apology was forthcoming from the perpetrator, his name was "expunged from the Association's records". Also, earlier in the year, only ONE member attended a fruit tree pruning demonstration apparently due to "inclement weather". However, the minutes say "nevertheless it was very interesting"!

The Association now owned seven cups and trophies (the cost of engraving that year amounted to £1-16-8d!). Printing of the Show schedule was much improved and 21 students enrolled on the new Floral Art course. That year the Christmas Dinner as held in the Council Chambers at 10/6d per head. Catering was by Black Boy Caterers and the price included entertainment and a small dance band with 103 persons attending.

Trading and Social and Show sub-committees were formed, reporting to an Executive Committee during 1956, that being the year when the lease of the Town Hall was drawn up and an annual rent of £10 agreed with the Drake estate. The Association to be responsible for all interior work including decoration, curtains etc and the Estate would look after the structure of the Hall. However, the Council increased the rateable value from £9 to £30! The Association appealed and the RV was subsequently reduced to £15. Membership increased to 415 and there was a trading profit from stalls and bargain sale of just over £70 resulting in a balance of £151 in the Bank account.

The BBC Gardener's Question Time came to Amersham on 16th March 1958 with Freddie Grisewood in the Chair. Tickets were sold for the event which resulted in a profit of £5. 1958 also saw the advent of the first Floral Art show which was completely organised by the newly formed FA section with its own Bank account and committee. It was a two day show like the others and there were 91 entries staged in the Town Hall.

By this time there were over 550 members and the stalls were bringing in over £100 per annum. Indeed, by 1960 the Committee were able to donate £41 to the World Refugee Fund. This represented ONE Saturday stall takings. The lease on the Town Hall had to be re-negotiated, this time with Amersham Rural District Council who had taken over responsibility for the Hall. It was set at £30 a year plus interior decorations and was for 21 years. 50 members attended the AGM that year.

By 1964 membership stood at 558 and fifty or more would turn up to lectures and the annual Gardening Quiz. The Floral Art section drew up their own separate Constitution and went on to be a thriving section within the Association. They had their own annual show as well as several classes at all of the main shows and floral arrangement courses were run on a regular basis and were well attended. The Floral Art ~~annual~~ show was held on a different date each year to take advantage of the various flowers and natural materials available at those times.



# AMERSHAM

THE OLD TOWN HALL "ALIGHT" WITH  
COLOUR AND QUALITY

*Amersham Horticultural Association's Record Show*

*In a Delightful Setting Showing the Results of  
Hard Work and Skill*

Autumn Show 1953



Beauty and the beast at Amersham Flower Show on Saturday.

Chrysanthemum Show 1954?





This prize-winning lily won praise from Mr. A. G. Shrimpton (left), a judge of flowers for 50 years, and Mr. G. E. Longland, Life-President of Amersham Horticultural Society. Show report page 9

1950?



SHOW Secretary, Mr. Wilfred H. Fox, shows Mr. Leonard C. Nash, his prize-winning pedestal arrangement "The Hall" in the Floral Art Show, at Amersham Town Hall, on Saturday



1964 also saw the annual dinner being held in the Council Chambers where, according to the Bucks Examiner, "local gardening enthusiasts enjoyed a sumptuous meal and the wit of the after dinner speakers". Mr J.W.Hill, the well known television personality (at the time), was the main speaker and called for a greater emphasis on the production of vegetables. He said "Grow flowers by all means but leave room for vegetables". The report goes on to say "there were shouts of 'hear, hear' at this". In his reply the Chairman, Mr Sprackling, said "I never do the garden unless I am forced to"! The evening then continued with tombola, games and dancing!

The Annual Dinner was held in March 1965, at the Crown Hotel "as an economy measure"! The members were charged £1-1-0d per ticket giving a profit to the Association of 2/-d per head. During that year the bank balance increased from £338 to £651 and concern was expressed that "it might be held that the Association has become an organisation trading for profit and therefore liable for tax". Needless to say, that point was not pursued! Five shows were staged during the year and, overall, they showed a profit of £16.

This is an appropriate time to mention Ron King who became Chairman in 1966. He was a specialist amateur grower of daffodils and, at that year's Spring Show, "swept the board" taking ten first prizes with numerous other awards as well as staging a non-competitive display of 35 different varieties of daffodils. He continued to put on such a display for many years thereafter. Ron was also an amateur grower and breeder of giant raspberries and perfected, among others, a new strain "Phyllis King", named after his wife, which was accepted by the RHS and subsequently underwent extensive trials in Kent. Unfortunately it does not appear to have been put into general cultivation although it caused considerable interest at the time.

By the end of 1966 the bank balance stood at over £1000 and the Association felt, quite rightly, that it was in a very strong position. Membership numbers were being maintained and there were NINETEEN officers and committee members. So, plenty of help at show time! Indeed, the putting up of the tables and general preparation was always carried out by the self styled "Awkward Squad" comprising half-a-dozen or so retired gentlemen, led by Fred Ruck, who were not directly involved in showing. This was the year when they were first denied use of the Church Rooms for the major shows. As in pre-war times, tarpaulin screens were provided around the bottom part of the Town Hall to compensate. This area was used mainly for the staging of vegetable classes. However, a watchman had to be employed. He was on duty for two nights from 9.00 pm to 7.00 am at a fee of 25/- per night! This was later increased to 30/-.

The following years saw fluctuating fortunes in the Association's affairs. Events such as the Gardening Brains Trust were well supported with over 70 persons attending on occasion. Also the Annual Dinner continued to be well supported being normally held at the Little Abbey restaurant. A well attended Wine and Cheese Party was held every year in the Town Hall. However, support for the Shows varied although there was always a "hard core" of regular exhibitors. Stalwarts such as D.F.(Frank) Hewitt, Wilf Fox, the Harriss brothers and Henry Hinks did not miss many chances to show their produce!



*Affiliated to:*

THE ROYAL  
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

NATIONAL DAHLIA  
SOCIETY

NATIONAL VEGETABLE  
SOCIETY

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
OF FLOWER ARRANGEMENT  
SOCIETIES



*Affiliated to:*

NATIONAL SWEET PEA  
SOCIETY

ROYAL NATIONAL  
ROSE SOCIETY

NATIONAL  
CHRYSANTHEMUM  
SOCIETY

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
ASSOCIATION OF  
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETIES

## Schedule of Shows 1975

*to be held at*

THE ASSOCIATION'S HEADQUARTERS  
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET.

<i>Spring Show</i>	-	-	-	<i>April 19-20</i>
<i>Floral Art Show</i>	-	-	-	<i>June 14-15</i>
<i>Summer Show</i>	-	-	-	<i>July 5-6</i>
<i>Autumn Show</i>	-	-	-	<i>August 30-31</i>
<i>Chrysanthemum Show</i>	-	-	-	<i>September 27-28</i>

ALL SHOWS OPEN FROM 2.00 P.M. TO 5.30 P.M.

The presentation of the Trophies, etc., will be made at the Annual General Meeting of the Association to be held at the Town Hall, on Thursday, 27th November, 1975, at 8.00 p.m.

PRICE: 10p. (to non-members)

TYPICAL FRONT COVER OF 1970'S SCHEDULE  
SHOWING NUMBER AND DURATION OF SHOWS





1975

Mrs. F. M. Mulligan, President, (second from right) with the winners of trophies at the Amersham Horticultural Association annual meeting

1964

## Flower man



MR. WILFRED FOX.

1980



● Bob Beasley, holding one of his trophies.





● Edith Hills: Keen gardener.

1980

Ron King - 1977



1980



● Betty Garland: In flower.



D.F.Hewitt, always known as Frank, was a grower of vegetables "par excellence". His name appears on many of the Association's trophies during this period. He was not limited to vegetables either. He exhibited top quality sweet peas, chrysanthemums, dahlias and pot plants as well and was always pleased to give advice to aspiring exhibitors even if they were in direct competition with him. Ron Harriss lived in Chalfont St Peter but was a regular and successful exhibitor at all Amersham shows. Once again vegetables were his main interest but he also staged excellent flowers and pot plants (remember his maidenhair ferns?) for many years until the mid 1980's. Henry Hinks was a faithful supporter of all the shows and the market stalls. He was Chairman of Chesham Horticultural Society for many years but still found time to come to Amersham with his flowers and vegetables. The writer's contributions to the show scene seem very modest compared to these men. Will we see their like again?

The early 1970s saw the Association with an exhibit at the Round Table Fair, later to become the Amersham Carnival. This always attracted considerable interest and went a long way towards maintaining membership figures at a very respectable level. It stood at 575 during 1974 and that was the year when subscriptions were increased to 40p for single members with corresponding increases for married couples.

## 7

### Notice to Quit!

It was in 1975 when the Town Council first intimated their intention of terminating the Association's lease of the Town Hall at the second fourteen year break which would be on 29 September 1977. Since the last break in the lease the Association had acted in a very responsible way with regard to lettings and up-keep of the Hall. Charges for the hire of the Hall had been kept to a minimum mainly because bookings and day-to-day maintenance had been carried out by the Association's Town Hall Warden, Teddy Hills, on a purely voluntary basis. It was feared that charges for the use of the Hall would increase substantially if and when the bookings were through the Council. During that time, the Association had had free use of the Hall for Shows, committee meetings, cheese and wine evenings and other events and it was felt the Association's funds would not be able to meet the charges which would inevitably be imposed by the Council unless their activities were severely curtailed.

Because of these concerns, the Association sought legal advice regarding the termination of the lease and had several meetings with Council officials to try to clarify the situation. However, on 22 March 1977, the Association received six months notice to quit from the Council's solicitors. This was answered with a counter notice stating that the Association was not willing to give up possession. If the Council insisted on proceeding then the Association's solicitor, Mr A. Thomas, was of the opinion that they (the Association) had a clear case for compensation for disturbance under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.



In the event the Council went ahead with the termination of the lease but they were obliged to pay the Association a total of £652 compensation out of which Mr Thomas was paid a fee of £81 for his advice. This sum increased the total assets of the Horticultural Association to £2071. However, it was estimated that it would cost approximately £400 a year if the Hall was hired for Shows and other events at the same level as in the past. Indeed, by 1979 the Council had increased the hire charges for the Hall by 29% over and above those in being before surrender of the lease.

Drastic measures were required and the schedule for 1979 reduced all Shows to one day only, with Friday evening available for the staging of exhibits as well as Saturday morning. Three Shows were held in the Market Hall (as now called) - Spring, Autumn and Chrysanthemum. The Summer and Floral Art Shows were combined and held in the Barn Hall at Amersham Community Centre "as an experiment" and to coincide with the Amersham Carnival. With these changes the Chrysanthemum and Summer/Floral Art Shows showed a small profit with only the Autumn Show showing a loss (of five pounds!). The Spring Show invariably showed a surplus anyhow - sometimes quite substantial.

Savings were also made by holding committee meetings, and other events such as talks by guest speakers, at the Hervines Park Pavilion. However, although money in the bank now stood at £1,616 it was decided to increase the annual subscription to 60p for single members with £1 for husband and wife. The list of patrons at the back of the schedules was continued with persons giving a minimum of £2.50p being included. This increase may have been responsible for the start of a decline in membership numbers which fell to 400 in 1979 and again to 336 in 1980. There had been a gradual fall since the peak in 1974 but the rate appeared to accelerate since being obliged to surrender the Market Hall lease. There was also a corresponding decrease in the number of exhibitors and entries. To cap it all, Wilf Fox retired as Chairman in 1979 at the age of 82 and after 25 years continuous service to the Association in many capacities.

## 8

### After Wilf

Further economies were made in 1980 when the Friday evening hiring of the Market Hall was stopped. However there was a very successful meeting on "Hints for Exhibitors" held in the Red Cross Hall and the Association's bank balance increased to £1,817 in 1980 and to £1,978 the next year even though small losses had been incurred at the Spring and Summer Shows.

Although the Association's financial position appeared satisfactory it was decided that a substantial balance should be maintained to cover any unexpected eventualities and to fund the Shows even if there was a steep increase in the hiring





1994

Putting the experts on the spot: Pippa Greenwood, Anne Swithinbank, Eric Robson and Geoffrey Smith are flanked by Kate Lillie (left) of the Amersham Horticultural Association and Mike Allenby of Chesham Horticultural Society.



### THE GREENGROCCERS' WORST CUSTOMER

MR. George Edward Long-land, of The Cottage, Church-street, Old Amersham.

Benevolent Committees of the local British Legion since 1927. Most of his spare time is taken up with gardening and

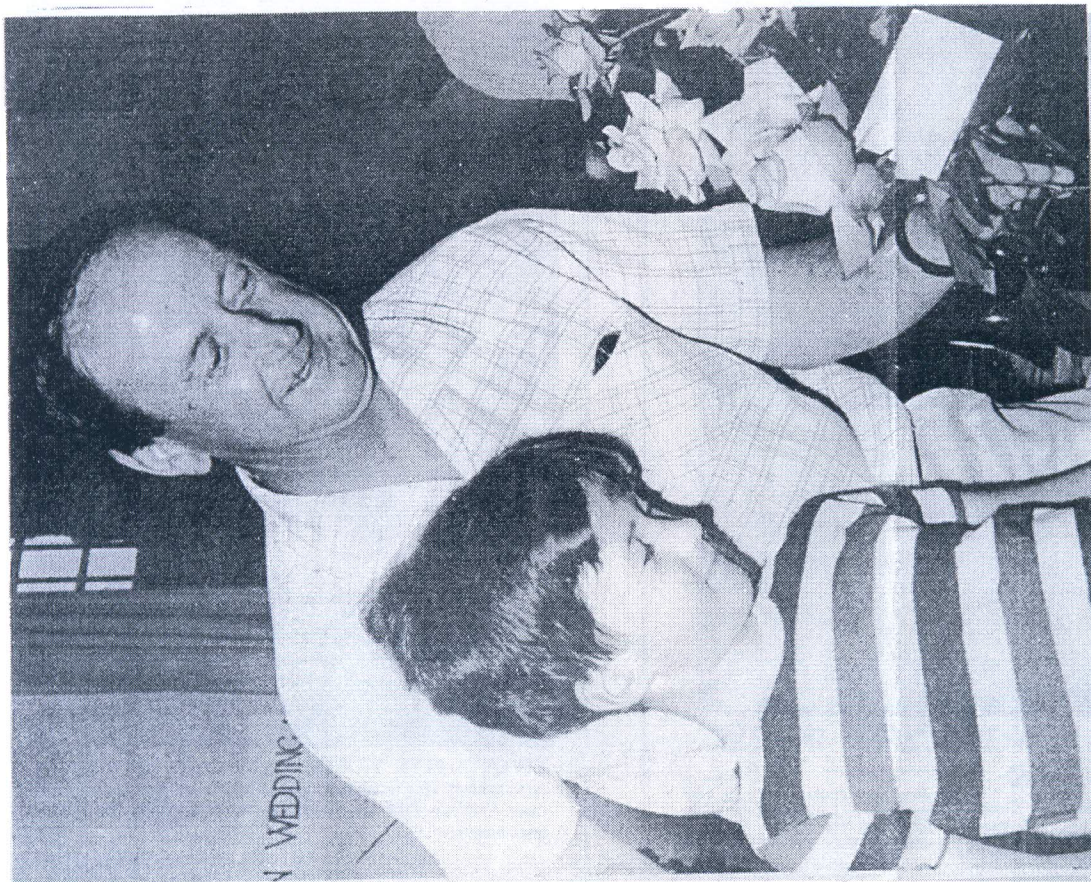
### He's still winning prizes at 82



TWENTY-FIVE YEARS' service on the committee of Amersham Horticultural Association by Chesham Bois man Wilfred Fox has been acknowledged by his fellow gardeners.

1994





Mr. Jack Shaw proudly shows his rose which was the premier bloom in the show to his seven-year-old son Peter.



There were many surprises for Mr. George Annetts when he entered his exhibits in the Amersham Autumn Horticultural Show.

1989



charges for local halls. Hence the subscriptions were increased to £1 (single) and £1-50 (double) in 1981. By the end of the following year money in the bank had grown to £2,083 but the membership had declined to a total of 315.

The Association began to experience a lot of difficulty around this time. Len Nash, a long serving and utterly reliable General Secretary, had died in 1981 and problems were experienced in finding replacements for him and other committee members and officers who had resigned for one reason or another. There was even a lack of helpers coming forward to staff the shows - the old days of the "Awkward Squad" had long since passed - so much so that only the Spring and Summer shows were held in 1983. The latter was held in conjunction with the Amersham Lions event at Raans Farm under canvas. It was a near disaster as the weather was very stormy and wet which resulted in low numbers of entries and visitors. Needless to say, the experiment was not repeated in subsequent years!

Because of all the problems being experienced, an Extraordinary General Meeting was called in the July after the Lions event, to discuss the proposition that the Association be discontinued. Membership had fallen to below 300 and the outlook was bleak. In the event, the meeting was very successful and several members volunteered for the vacancies on the committee and, for the second time in its existence, it was decided to continue with the Association! This was particularly pleasing as the next year, 1984, saw the celebration of the Association's Golden Jubilee. A tree was planted by the then Mayor of Amersham, Miss Jean Archer, outside the Library in Amersham-on-the-Hill and a Dinner was held to commemorate the event at which Miss Archer gave a talk on "old" Amersham.

Although "new blood" had been introduced into the Committee, things still did not go easily for the Association. The Town Council was particularly unhelpful when, in 1986, they doubled the rent of the stalls which were still being run under the Market Hall. The stalls were a major source of income and when, the following year, the Council followed their earlier demand with the directive that the Association had to pay for all of the pitches if they were used or not, a decision was taken to stop using them altogether as full usage could not be guaranteed. The Council did relent somewhat and allow the Association the use of one stall only but, after a year or so even this was discontinued and all links with the Market Hall and, indeed, old Amersham were broken to a very great extent. In their heyday the stalls had been very successfully manned by stalwarts such as Wilf Fox, Edith Hills and Henry Hinks among others but those days had passed and, although Edith carried on for a time, the end was inevitable.

It was not all "doom and gloom" however. There was a growing interest in coach trips and 1987 saw the inaugural Jumble and Plant Sale which proved to be a great success. However, the Floral Art section had been struggling and it was found necessary to incorporate it into the main body of the Association.

By 1988 the number of fully paid-up members had fallen to 189 but the bank balance totalled £2,417. This was due in part to a series of very profitable coach trips organised by Florence Cook and, of course, the valuable contribution from the Jumble and Plant Sale which was now an annual event. The funds continued to build even



though membership remained reasonably constant. By 1991 they stood at £2,850 with the "Jumble" sale netting £461.

The Market Hall was not being used for any of the Association's functions as the Spring and Summer Shows were normally held in St Michael's Hall and the larger Autumn Show in the Community Centre. The reasons for this change were mainly economic but led to a drop both in exhibitor and visitor numbers. However, the fortunes of the Association continued to prosper with well supported coach outings, talks given by leading experts, Quiz Suppers and, of course the Jumble and Plant Sale. The Minutes for the 1992 AGM show funds exceeding £3000 for the first time even though there was a slight reduction in membership. This overall position has been maintained up to the present day with only a modest fall in the bank balance.

It was in 1994 that Gardener's Question Time came to Amersham as guests of the Association, 28 years after the first visit! This time the team, comprising Pippa Greenwood, Anne Swithinbank and Geoffrey Smith, was chaired by Eric Robson. It was a fitting occasion as the Amersham Horticultural Association celebrated its Diamond Jubilee that year. There was also a well attended Dinner for members held, appropriately enough, in the Market Hall.

Looking back, it has been sixty years of fluctuating fortune and not without some controversy but, with the generous support of many willing volunteers throughout this time, it has provided an opportunity for local people to participate, either as exhibitors, members or merely visitors to the Shows, in a truly local organisation. Long may it continue - into the next century (and beyond?).





● Mrs. Pamela Kidd (show secretary) and Mr. Frank Hewitt (vice president) pictured with one of Mrs. Kidd's award winning entries in the Amersham horticultural show on Saturday.

1978



● Ron Harriss with his prize achemenes pot plant, one of his 26 prize-winners