

# CETG ARCHIVE

## Meeting Report

**11th November 2017**

**Speaker: Will Phillips**

**Talk: Liberty - the Bucks man, the London Shop, the global style**

Will Phillips, Keeper of Modern History (from 1500) at [Bucks County Museum](#), gave a fascinating talk on "Liberty: the Bucks man, the London Shop, the global style". While everyone is familiar with Liberty fabrics, what is much less known are the links of the founder Arthur Lasenby Liberty with our local area.

Arthur Liberty was born in Chesham in 1843 in a house next to the George Inn (now the George & Dragon) and his mother's parents (the Lasenbys) had a farm in Chartridge. After the family moved to Nottingham when he was 7, he frequently returned to visit his grandparents, and when he had made his name and fortune in London, he purchased the Manor House in The Lee. He and his wife Emma played an active part in the local community; in 1899 he was High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire, he was also a Justice of the Peace, served on the County Council and was a member of the organisation which founded what was to become Bucks County Museum. He also supported the church and cricket club in The Lee. Emma was involved with the local hospital and a leading light of the North Bucks Lace Association which attempted to revive the flagging local lace industry. Around fifty items from her personal lace collection are now housed at the museum. As an enlightened employer, Arthur Liberty organised an annual outing for all his employees to the Manor, where they and their families enjoyed tea and cakes on the lawn.

As he had no heir, Arthur Liberty chose his sister's son, Ivor, to carry on the family business after his death, on condition he took on the surname of Stewart-Liberty. He bought Ivor and his wife Evelyn a house in The Lee, called Pipers (which is now on the market for around £5 million!). After Arthur's death in 1917, Ivor took over and in 1924 opened the iconic shop on Regent Street, built in the Tudoresque style from timbers salvaged from two ships; HMS Impregnable (formerly HMS Howe) and HMS Hindustan. The figurehead of Lord Howe from HMS Impregnable remains at the gate of Pipers to this day. The family sold the Liberty business in 2010 to a private equity firm, but still occupy the Manor.

To close his talk, Will told how the Museum had not held any photographs of Arthur Liberty, despite having a series taken at Ivor's wedding in the village in 1924. However, in the conservation fridge there was a reel of cine film labelled "Liberty wedding". He took this fragile film to the National Film Archive, but when they ran it, it only showed pictures of two people

sitting on donkeys in Cairo - no doubt Ivor and Evelyn on honeymoon. But subsequently the NFA found another sequence on the film - only around 10 frames and not long enough to register movement - of the wedding party. At the far right of the picture was Arthur Lasenby Liberty - the Museum finally had its own photo of this important local figure!



Our new Chair, Liz Smith, introduced herself and reminded us that subscriptions for 2017-18 are now due. The [2018 Programme](#) is now available, as are posters featuring the bunting. Members were encouraged to distribute the posters at their local libraries, craft shops, textile groups and other suitable venues to help advertise CETG.

Dates were given for the first meetings of the new hand stitch groups, and prospective members were encouraged to take part - tea and cake will be provided! A volunteer is needed to take photographs at meetings and compile the paper scrapbook, now that Liz has taken on her new duties.

Liz also gave a reminder about the various events at [Bucks County Museum](#), including [James Fox's exhibition](#) of his residency from 4th November to 2nd December, a Christmas Craft Fair on 25th November and "Off the Wall" Art Fair with an opportunity to meet the artists. Mary drew our attention to a forthcoming exhibition of [Altered Books](#), also at the

Bucks County Museum, which includes one of her own works. Details of the next Aylesbury Vale Embroiderers' Guild meetings were available on the notice board.

Photos © Liz Smith, Luis Villa del Campo (Liberty shop).  
Portrait of Arthur Lasenby Liberty by Arthur Hacker (1913).