

Alexander Jamieson (1873–1937)

Burnside, Church Walk, Weston Turville HP22 5SH

The artist

Alexander Jamieson was born in Glasgow in 1873. He attended Haldane Academy (Glasgow School of Art) and won a scholarship to study for a year in Paris, where he developed a style broadly impressionistic in character. He met many of the French impressionists and his future wife, the English painter Gertrude (Bidly) MacDonald; they married in 1907, and had one daughter, Katharine. He held his first show at the Carfax Gallery, London in 1912. He worked mostly in oil and painted landscapes, town scenes and occasional portraits, including Lord Kitchener inspecting the 10th battalion at Halton in 1915. After the war the family settled into life at Weston Turville, where he continued his successful painting career; to supplement his income he and Bidly taught summer schools in most years. The war had unfortunately taken its toll on his health and he died in 1937 aged 63. He is buried in the churchyard of St Mary the Virgin, Weston Turville, a short distance from his home, Burnside. His contemporary Sir John Lavery RA wrote in an obituary 'Alexander Jamieson, a great landscape painter – perhaps one of the greatest of our time'. His daughter continued to live in Weston Turville until her death in 1990 and on the death of the housekeeper in 1992 Jamieson's remaining paintings and archive were handed over to the The County Museum (S. Gray).

The house

Weston Turville is situated midway between the towns of Aylesbury and Wendover; the village of Halton is about 1km to the east. The village is set in a wide river valley close to the Chilterns, through which several water courses run. The presence of a motte and bailey in the grounds of the Manor House is evidence of an early fortified settlement (WT Conservation Areas, AVDC). The area known as Church End, which is set slightly apart from the rest of the village, was designated a conservation area in 1991 (see plan p. 8 WT report). Church Walk is a narrow lane leading to St Mary's Church (C13); the Manor House is set back from the road and Manor Cottage and Burnside are the only other dwellings.

The lane has many mature trees, giving it an enclosed feel, and offers views to the church, the end of which is situated on a slight incline (1st edn OS). The house was built in 1721 and for a time served as a small drinking house, named 'The Vine', from 1832 to 1912 (BAS Buildings Group Survey). It is a building of local note though is not listed. The Jamiesons bought the house in 1912 so they probably converted it from the pub. Burnside is situated in a rectangular plot on the south side of the road, close to the junction with Church Lane. A stream runs alongside the south-east boundary and it was probably Jamieson who gave it the name Burnside to remind him of his Scottish home, halfway along the lane the stream is crossed by a bridge.

There were several smaller buildings in the garden, one of which may have been Jamieson's studio (now gone, 2020). The house has been the subject of much alteration but maintains its original façade (Google Earth). The brick building has two storeys, an old tiled roof with two chimneys and dentilled brick eaves. The upper storey gabled windows sit within the roof line, and the decorative window frames are in keeping with the original design (Bucks Heritage Portal).

The garden

Jamieson's painting *The Artist's Garden* (Bucks County Museum Collection) gives us a wonderful impression of the gardens at Burnside. They were well stocked with cottage planting, particularly roses, the focal point being an arch/arbour covered in abundant pink roses, as well as other traditional cottage plants such as hollyhocks and irises. Photographs in the Museum Collection show the exterior of the house and the garden. The garden is accessed through double gates (painted white in photos taken in 1920s) and a gravel area to the front of the house. The 1st edition OS map shows that the garden was largely used as an orchard during the C19 and it was probably not until the Jamieson's bought the property in 1912 that a flower garden was created to the front of the house. Today there are narrow borders to the front of the house which in Jamieson's time was covered with creeper (BAS building report). The gardens are now laid to lawn with trees and shrubs (Google Earth 2020). The boundaries mainly consist of hedging and wooden fencing and the river boundary is defined by mature trees. There was a pond in the southern corner of the garden (painting *Our Pond*, 1937).

Inspiration from the garden

The garden and flora provided ample subject matter for Jamieson's painting, and he liked to use vegetation to frame a scene. A photograph in the museum collection shows Jamieson working in his studio, which had a long broad window offering views across the garden and landscape beyond as well as being a source of light. He also liked to sketch outdoors; the County Museum also holds a sketch which includes notes on colours he intended using in a proposed oil painting (Sarah Grey notes).

Writing in *The Studio*, Manson noted 'his colouration is spontaneous, rich and varied, with a tendency to exaggeration'.

Weston Turville Reservoir

The reservoir was depicted in paintings by Jamieson, notably *Skating on Western Turville Reservoir* (1929, Bucks County Museum). The reservoir was built in the C18, after the canal was had already been built, by the Grand Union Company to compensate for the loss of water supply to the mills in Weston Turville and Aylesbury. As the Grand Union Canal developed leaks during the mid C19 a link was built between the reservoir and the canal (the Wendover Arm) to try to compensate but this too was found to be ineffective. The reservoir has sailing and angling clubs and is a BBOWT nature reserve and SSSI. The Wendover Arm is undergoing restoration (2020).

Significance to Bucks

As a landscape painter Alexander Jamieson's legacy, like that of William Callow and Caroline Richardson is his numerous paintings of Buckinghamshire. He exhibited his work extensively and unlike Callow these works were clearly intended for sale (Sarah Gray notes). Like several of the artists who served during the First World War and lived in the county in the inter-war period, he found peace and solitude in the beautiful countryside. His paintings capture the lyrical mood at this time and give us a last glimpse of a disappearing life in the countryside. They are a record of a rural idyll that has now all but disappeared: '...redolent of Buckinghamshire life: they breathe the very atmosphere of a part of the English countryside which is fast passing away' (*Bucks Herald* obituary 1937).

References

1st edition OS 1876–1885

AVDC, *Weston Turville Conservation Areas* 2007

Manson, James Bolivar, *The Studio*, vol. 49 1910

The Bucks Herald, obituary 1937

Gray, Sarah Talk on Four Buckinghamshire Artists (notes)

BAS Building Group, *Public House Survey Record*

<http://www.bucksas.org.uk/documents/hbg/westonturvillepubs.pdf> (accessed 9/09/20)

Alexander Jamieson <https://www.caltongallery.co.uk/Artist.aspx?id=Artist.JAMIESON>

(accessed 13/09/20)

Buckinghamshire Heritage Portal

<https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/Monument/MBC26053>

<https://www.buckscc.gov.uk/services/culture-and-leisure/buckinghamshire-archives/online-resources/historic-photographs/> (accessed 20/08/20)

Illustrations

Jamieson's work can be found on the Art UK website

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/search/actor:jamieson-alexander-18731937/page/2#artwork-undefined>

The Buckinghamshire County Museum also holds a collection of his work at its reserve store in Halton.

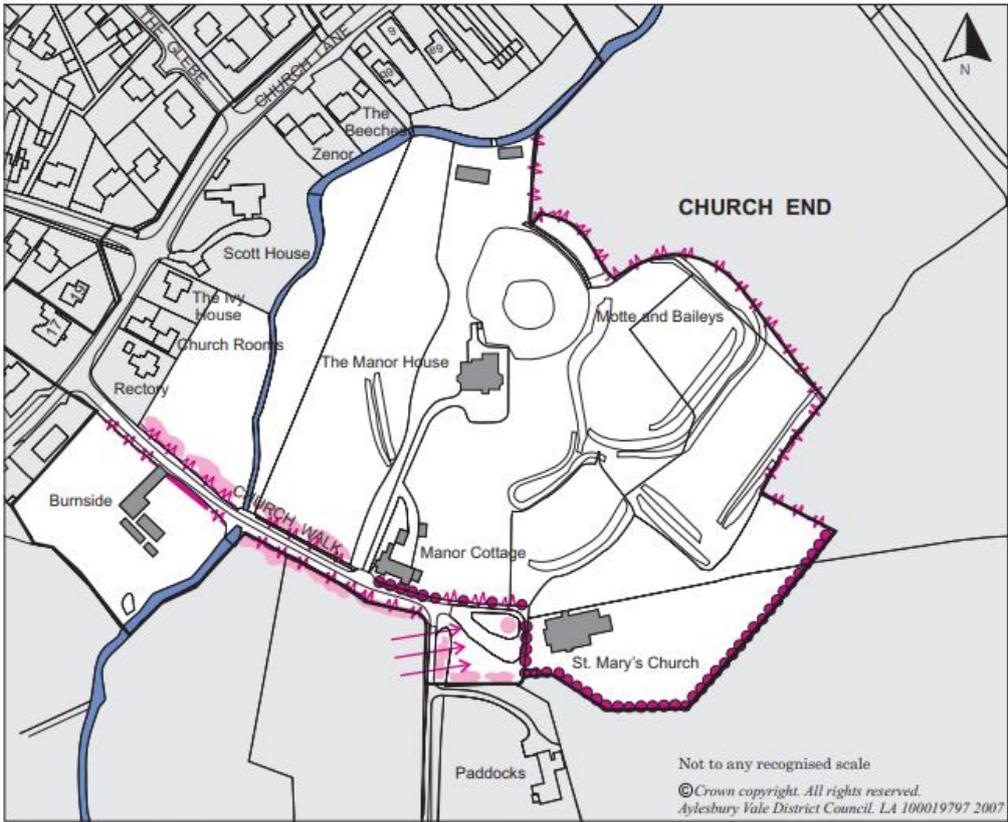
Claire de Carle October 2020



Alexander Jamieson



Burnside 2020 (photograph C. de Carle)



Church Walk Identity Area - map showing organisation of space

Visually important Boundaries			
	Walls, fences, railings		Strong building line providing enclosure
	Hedges		Trees providing enclosure
	Hedges, with railings or walls		Conservation Area Boundary
	Indicating rise in ground level		

Weston Turville Conservation Area



Katharine Jamieson (daughter) outside Burnside (1920)
(Historic photographs of Bucks)



The artist's studio, Burnside



View looking south-east along Church Walk, 1920s



Our Pond (1937),
Burnside
(Glasgow Museum
Resources Centre)



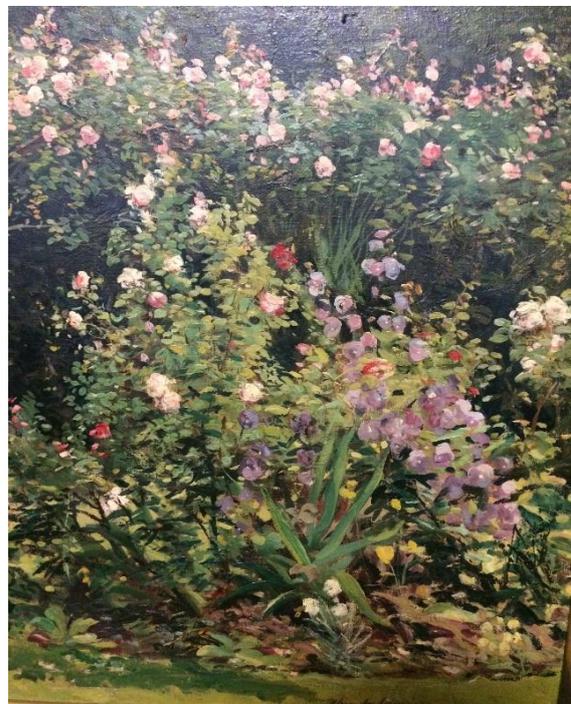
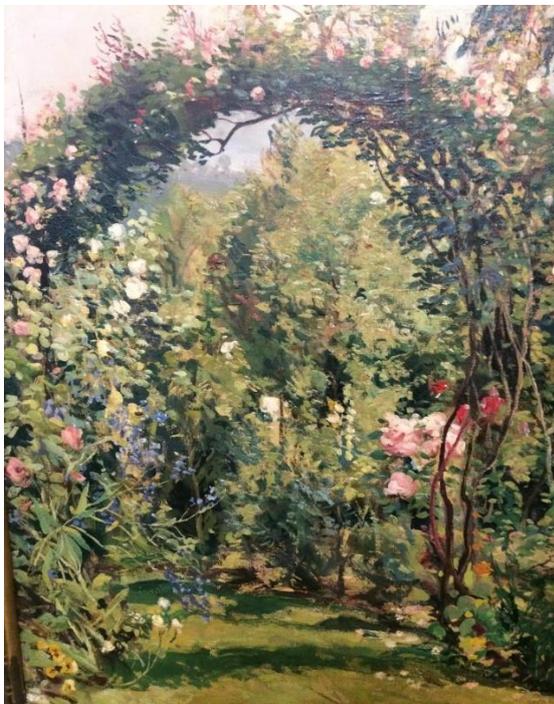
Mill Farm in Winter, 1930
(Bucks County Museum)



The artist's garden (1930)

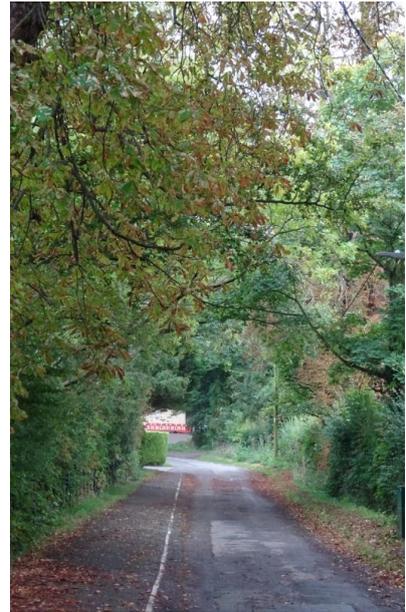
Details below show rose arch and border
(From the collection of Bucks County Museum)

The garden 2020
(photograph C. de Carle)





The stream (burn) that runs along boundary of Burnside, 2020
(photographs C. de Carle)



Church Walk, 2020



St Mary's Church and grave of Alexander and Gertrude Jamieson, 2020
(photographs C. de Carle)