

## **Louise Jopling Rowe (1843–1933)**

### **1 Woodlands, Manor Park, Chesham Bois HP6**

### **2 Manor Farm (now The Manor), North Road, Chesham Bois HP6 5NA**

#### **The artist**

Louise Jopling (née Goode) was born in Manchester, one of nine children. By the age of seventeen both her parents had died, and she married her first husband, Francis Romer. He became secretary to Baron Nathan de Rothschild in Paris and it was his wife, Emma, who encouraged Louise to paint. She studied under Charles Joshua Chaplin, who only accepted female students (American-born Impressionist; Mary Cassatt was one of his pupils). Louise was able to study life painting which would have been impossible for a woman in Victorian England.

On her return to London she became a successful painter and found herself at the centre of artistic circles, including Val Prinsep, Frederick Leighton and Princess Louise. It was rumoured that she had an affair with the French painter James Tissot during his time in London. Following an unhappy marriage and the death of Romer in 1873 she married Joseph Middleton Jopling, a watercolourist. He died in 1884 and in 1887 she married a widower, the lawyer George William Rowe.

Louise Jopling founded an art school for women in London in the late 1880s and was one of the first women to be admitted to the Royal Society of Artists in 1901. As a professional woman artist, she achieved popular and critical acclaim when she exhibited alongside professional male artists. She recorded her experiences in her memoir *Twenty Years of my Life 1867–1887*, published in 1925, and also wrote a book for amateur artists, two books of poetry and numerous articles. She was herself painted by James McNeil Whistler (Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow) and John Everett Millais (NPG). Her social circle included Oscar Wilde, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry and Lillie Langtry, some of whom sat for her alongside other prominent figures of the period. A catalogue raisonné of Louise's work is currently being compiled at the University of Glasgow (Amersham Museum).

She was a long-term supporter of the National Union of Women's Suffrage, and actively supported feminist causes. She also served as vice-president of the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union, which advocated for less restrictive clothing ('Leaving a legacy'). As a suffragist her achievements were many; she was active from 1885 onwards. She was a member of the Women's Tax Resistance League founded by fellow-artist Mary Sargent Florence, who lived at Lord's Wood, Marlow; they were both also members of the Artists' Suffrage League (Bailey). This was founded in January 1907 by professional women artists to help with the preparations for the first large-scale public demonstration by the National Union of Suffrage Societies (Spartacus Educational).

#### **The houses**

The village of Chesham Bois is situated between Amersham-on-the-Hill and Chesham in the Chiltern Hills (AONB). It now merges with Amersham, while Chesham is situated in the Chess Valley about 1km away. There is easy access to London via the Metropolitan Line, which arrived in Amersham in 1892.

Chesham Bois is largely a late 19th-century settlement, before which it had been thinly populated with a scattering of farms. The Manor estate was sold for development in 1896. Manor Farm was formerly part of the land that had belonged to the Cheyne family which they developed into a well-

organised agricultural estate during the 17th century, and at that time the farm would have supplied the house. The estate passed to the Duke of Bedford and he pulled down the Manor House in 1728 (Amersham Museum).

It is possible that Louise and her third husband William started travelling out from London to Amersham around the time of the First World War. At first, they spent weekends and holidays in the village, renting a cottage in The Woodlands, a small private close of Arts and Crafts-style cottages tucked away off Manor Park. These picturesque cottages and their gardens still survive, although several later houses have been squeezed into small plots at the far end of the cul-de-sac. In her memoir Louise expressed a love of the countryside and nature; however, for financial reasons and while she was bringing up her children her work as a portraitist kept her in London as this was where her clients lived.

In 1919 the couple finally moved to Chesham Bois permanently when they purchased Manor Farm with its attached stables (Grade II) in the Conservation Area of North Road. The house is directly opposite the common, which was used for grazing until the 20th century and was thus more open. It now has mixed woodland, with horse chestnut, wild cherries and oaks and two open areas, one of which contains the cricket field and the other Bricky Pond (Amersham Museum). Today (2020) a bench in memory of Louise's contribution to the village sits opposite her former home.

The house dates from the 18th century with an early 19th century front added to the existing building. It is constructed from brick with an old tiled roof. The stables are at a right angle to the house on its east side and are weatherboarded (HE listing). Forbes and Tate, architects, were employed to convert the timber-framed, brick-built barn a short distance from the house into a studio for Louise's use. Now known as Manor Barn (Grade II), it was converted into a weekend house by Louise's son Lindsey for his wife, the musician Joan Elwes, and was sold after his death in 1967 (Bailey). Although the intention was for Louise to retire when she settled in Chesham Bois, she probably still painted for pleasure while writing her memoirs. She also enjoyed her garden, although we do not know how actively she was involved with its cultivation.

### **The gardens**

The gardens today are laid mainly to lawn, with mature trees to the north and west, with access via a horseshoe drive from the north side of North Road. The front lawn has a sundial, and wisteria and pyracantha cover the lower walls of the house. There is a swimming pool and patio on the west side of the garden (Bucks Portal). In Louise's time the garden would have been almost twice the size, since when the Barn was sold the plot was divided.

'Oh, why do I not paint landscape instead of being a portrait painter?'  
(Jopling Rowe)

## **Chiltern Club of Arts and Handicrafts**

Louise is probably best known in Amersham for founding the Chiltern Arts and Handicrafts Society (later known as the Chiltern Club of Arts) in 1919. It became a major part of the educational and social life of the area, although its membership (see flier below) was rather elitist: its vice-presidents included Sir Henry Wood (founder of the Proms) and Bucks artist Alexander Jamieson. The purpose of the club was to encourage an interest in art, archaeology, literature, music, crafts, and members also went on outings. Later a Garden Section was added, which included practical talks both indoors and outdoors and visits to local gardens (Amersham Museum archive). It was disbanded in 2009.

### **Where to find her work**

[https://artuk.org/discover/artists/jopling-louise-18431933/view\\_as/grid/search/artists:jopling-louise-18431933/page/1](https://artuk.org/discover/artists/jopling-louise-18431933/view_as/grid/search/artists:jopling-louise-18431933/page/1)

Her 1877 painting of Sir Nathan de Rothschild can be seen at Hughenden Manor, Bucks.

See also separate reports on Mary Sargant Florence ('B' list) and Alexander Jamieson ('A' list).

## **References**

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<https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/news/18484577.louise-jopling-local-artist-painted-80s/> (accessed 13/12/20)

Bailey, Alison, *Women at War*, Amersham Museum, 2018, pp. 11–14

Chester, Austin, 'The Art of Louise Jopling', *Windsor Magazine*, 24 (September 1906), pp.369–84.

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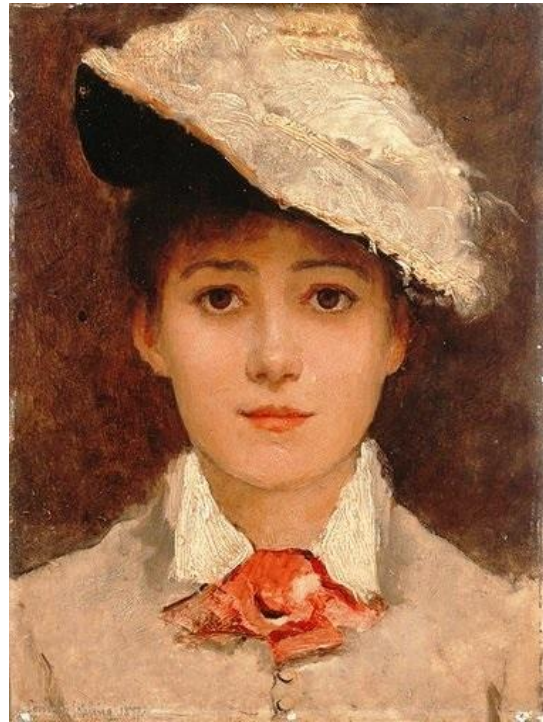
<https://www.louisejopling.arts.gla.ac.uk/catalogue/> (accessed 06/01/21)

<https://heritageportal.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/map> (accessed 14/12/20)

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1239052> (accessed 14/12/20)



Louise in the 1930s



Self-portrait 1877 (Manchester Art Gallery)



The Hon. Evelina Rothschild 1877 (Waddesdon)



Article in The Strand Magazine 1898



*Arts and Crafts Cottages, The Woodlands 2020 (C. de Carle)*



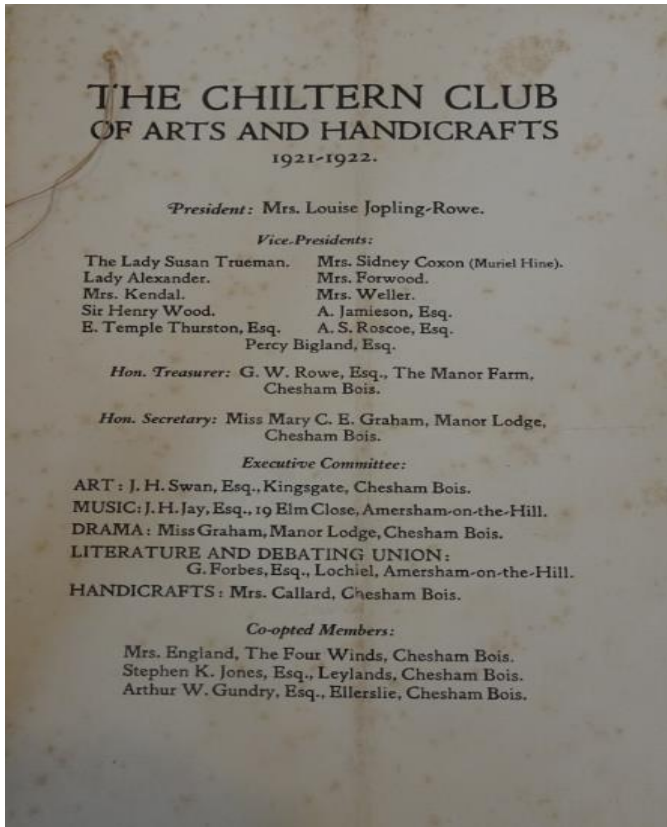
*Manor Farm, Chesham Bois 2020 (C. de Carle)*



*The Studio, Manor Farm (now in separate ownership) 2020 (C. de Carle)*



*Louise's grave in Chesham Bois Burial Ground (Chesham Bois Parish Council)*



Items in Amersham Museum



Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat 1875



Dear Lady of Disdain 1891 (private collection)

Claire de Carle 14/12/20, Clare Butler 11/1/21