



Hitchin Historical Society

Registered Charity No. 280746

Newsletter

Issue number 38 - January 2013

A message from the Chairman:

Rather belatedly, I'd like to record thanks to my predecessor as Chairman of the Society, David Howlett. When I was elected Chairman back in March it was David who was able to reassure me about the task I was taking on. He was also able to pass on wise advice about balancing all the different calls on the Chairman's time.

David's is a hard act to follow. He has held just about every post on the committee, some of them more than once! His experience of things like planning applications and officialdom, and his wide knowledge on all matters relating to Hitchin's past, have been of immense value.

Thank you David for all you have done – and continue to do for the Society and for Hitchin.

Farewell To Charnwood



The Charnwood 'Blue Plaque'
(John Lucas)

Nearly 112 years ago, on Monday 18th March 1901, Hitchin's new Town Hall was formally opened by Mrs. Hudson, wife of the then Member for Hitchin. Forty years later, during those dark days of WWII, the town's museum was opened at Charnwood House. Those two events will soon come together in the form of a new museum for North Hertfordshire based in the Town Hall building and the museum has now closed (*but the Physic Garden does, and will,*

remain open) while staff work on the development of the new facility, scheduled to open in the latter part of 2014.

Naturally, since its inception in 1977, HHS has had a close relationship with the museum and in October 1987 the Students' Room was opened to provide study facilities for up to three people simultaneously. Mostly funded by HHS, the room was dedicated to Tony Foster, the founding Chairman of the Society. Unfortunately, subsequent modifications to the layout made the room somewhat cramped and large enough for just one student at a time.

Regular users of the Foster Room will be looking forward to trying out the facilities at the new museum. In the meantime, a few of the most important reference items, together with some digitized material, are available to be viewed, by arrangement, at The British Schools' Museum.

Our latest book launch...

The latest HHS book was successfully launched on Saturday 13th October at Hitchin Priory. *Maydencroft - a manor, hunting park, farm and brickworks* was in great demand from the start, with almost 200 copies sold in three hours.



A seemingly endless stream of people passed through the elegant 18th-century room in the Priory where the author, Bridget Howlett, was signing copies in company with Robert Williams, Maydencroft's owner and guardian. Robert and his wife Frances were delighted to see so many people interested in their lovely home as we gave the book a well-deserved celebratory send-off.

Top - Bridget Howlett, author of *Maydencroft*, and bottom, Robert and Frances Williams of Maydencroft Manor. Photos by Simon Walker

...and a DVD

We have released a new DVD compiled from film taken on the day of the Queen's visit to Hitchin on Thursday 14th June last year. The DVD will make a wonderful and attractive present for anyone with an interest in or connection to Hitchin. Sam Hallas, Tim Ray and Richard Whitmore - who also narrates - have put together an entertaining, amusing and beautifully-filmed DVD lasting about 11 minutes using images and film they and others, notably Terry Ransome from the British Schools Museum, took on the day. Were you in Hitchin that day? Are you on film? Hundreds are! The DVD will set you back a mere £5, so to buy your copy please contact our publications officer Vicki Lockyer (*Contact details on page 4*).



A Royal Day to Remember

Photo courtesy of Richard Whitmore

2013 Membership Renewal

Dear Member,

Subscription renewal time is here again. The rates remain unchanged - such excellent value!

£7.00 for joint membership
 £5.00 for single membership
 50p for juniors (under 18)

Please return the enclosed (*) membership **renewal form** to the Secretary's address below, together with your **payment**. Cheques should be made payable to "Hitchin Historical Society". Finally, and most importantly, please enclose a **STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE, at least 6" x 4½"** for the return of your membership/programme card.

On behalf of the committee, thank you for your support in the past, and we look forward to your continued membership of Hitchin Historical Society.

Please send the completed renewal form with payment & SAE to:

HHS Secretary

(*) If you joined late in 2012 you will not receive a membership renewal form.

HITCHIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAMME 2013

MEETINGS

Held at Church House, Churchyard, Hitchin on Thursdays at 8.00pm

JANUARY 24th	MAYDENCROFT – MANOR, HUNTING PARK, FARM AND BRICKWORKS - A talk by <i>Bridget Howlett</i> , with content from her new publication for Hitchin Historical Society.
FEBRUARY 28th	THE GREEKS IN HITCHIN – A CLOSER LOOK AT CLASSICAL GREEK ARCHITECTURE ON THE STREETS OF OUR TOWN - An illustrated talk by <i>Alan Fleck</i> and <i>Carola Scupham</i> .
MARCH 28th	MEMBERS EVENING AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - After the official business, and presentation of the Reginald Hine award, members tell of their current projects.
APRIL 25th	SIR HENRY BESSEMER: FATHER OF THE STEEL INDUSTRY - An illustrated talk by <i>John Pearce</i> and <i>Andy Gibbs</i> .
MAY 23rd	MESSERS HAWKINS & CO: THE RECORDS OF A HITCHIN SOLICITORS - A talk by <i>Gavin Henderson</i> , Archivist, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.
SEPTEMBER 26th	WHEN DOES THE ROMAN PERIOD BEGIN IN HERTS? - A talk by <i>Dr Isobel Thompson</i> of the Historic Environment Unit, Hertfordshire County Council.
OCTOBER 24th	LOTS MORE OF OLD HITCHIN ON FILM! - Presented by <i>Richard Whitmore</i> and <i>Tim Ray</i> .
NOVEMBER 28th	A TOUCH OF GLASS – A VICTORIAN MAGIC LANTERN SHOW, BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND! - A fast moving show that includes animated slides, wonderful chromotrope effects, Victorian stories, also photographic and topographical subjects as presented by <i>Tony Brown</i> and <i>Gordon Casbeard</i> .

SPECIAL EVENT

Friday 6th DECEMBER from 7.30 p.m.	CHRISTMAS PARTY - Held at Church House. Be entertained, enjoy some light seasonal refreshments and socialise with fellow members. AN EVENING OF TUDOR MUSIC, SONG AND ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDED BY LUMINA. - A period music trio who perform on recorders, dulcimer, lap harp, medieval bagpipes, rebec, gutttern, bowed psaltery, bodhran and vocals
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Thank you!

Our thanks as ever go to Messrs **John Shilcock** in Bancroft for providing us with commodious accommodation for our 'overflow' publications stock. Thanks again also to **Heather Tisdale** and **Thomas Pitchford**, who provide us so ably and good-naturedly with refreshments at member meetings and, behind the scenes, wash up everything afterwards too. We are very grateful to them for keeping things running so smoothly and 'refreshingly'.

Hitchin Historical Society visits for 2013

A REQUEST FROM THE CHAIRMAN:

Members will appreciate the incredibly hard work that goes into preparing and running the Society's outings programme. Now we have 'joint' Programme Secretaries, Church House meetings are handled by Caroline, and outings by Sue Fisher. This year, we are experimenting to make the onerous outings job more manageable. From the list of outings you will see an '**earliest booking date**' for requests to be made. This is for the simple reason that members all too often book as many as they can at the start of year, only to find by the summer their diary has a clash, and they expect the Programme Secretary to sort it out ... or they just don't turn up – hard on those who were on a waiting list and can't go. Please study the programme carefully, and do your bit in making our Programme Secretaries' lives just a little less stressful!

Tuesday March 19 or Thursday March 21, 11am Visit **Ware Museum**. To book, contact Sue Fisher from **Thursday February 28**. (Charge)

Tuesday April 16, 11am Private visit to **Denis Severs House, Spitalfields, London** (near Liverpool Street Station). This Georgian town house has been created as a theatrical set/scene from a painting and peopled with a fictional family. To book, contact Sue from **Thursday March 28**. (Charge)

Friday May 24th, 7:30pm **Maydencroft Manor**. To book, contact Sue from **Thursday April 25**. (Free)

Monday, May 20, 10:30am **Mosquito Museum, London Colney**. Learn how Hertfordshire contributed to the birth and evolution of the aircraft industry. Talk, tour, coffee and biscuits. To book, contact Sue from **Thursday April 25**. (Charge)

Thursday June 13, Noon **Octagon Tour, Ely Cathedral**. A special tour high into the cathedral - **Only for the fit** - or a general tour of the Cathedral. To book, contact Sue from **Thursday May 23 Specifying which option you require**. (Charge)

Saturday June 29, 12:30pm **Private tour of St Pancras Hotel**, next to Kings Cross Station. To book, contact Sue from **Thursday May 23**. (Charge)

Friday, July 19, 11am **Rupert Brooke Museum, Orchard Tea Rooms, Grantchester**. To book, contact Sue from **Thursday June 27**. (Free)

Tuesday August 13, 10.15am Enjoy a touch of luxury at former stately home **Luton Hoo** including talk and tour followed by coffee, pastries or crumpets. To book, contact Sue after **Thursday, July 18**. (Charge)

Sunday September 1, 2.30pm **Hitchin Archaeological Walk with Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews**. To book contact Sue after **Thursday July 25**. (Free)

September 12, 11am **The Cecil Higgins Museum, Bedford**, reopens this spring after a multi-million refurbishment. To book, contact Sue after **Thursday, July 25**. (Charge)

Booking options:

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- Leave the form at the relevant Historical Society meeting.

It will not always be a case of first-come first-served and there is a week to get your forms in after the opening date. Where demand outstrips supply, Sue will take into account which trips members have already taken that year. **Please make sure you include phone numbers and, where possible, email addresses and an SAE with letters.**



Phil writes: **Lost Property** - Occasionally, after a meeting in Church House, we find someone has left behind an umbrella, gloves, teddy bear or some other important personal item. Over the last few months, two woolly hats and a pair of gloves (the latter after the December film show) have been left behind. Please let Phil know if you want to claim one of these items. *Teddy bear? - ed.*

Left: Members enjoying a Society visit to Maydencroft Manor in 2011



The Newsletter is published twice yearly by **Hitchin Historical Society**, a registered charity dedicated to informing the public of the history of Hitchin and district, and undertaking research into the origins and development of buildings, organisations, crafts, trades and other aspects of historical interest, and to publish the results of such research.

Notes And News

Hitchin Journal On-line It is the intention of the Society to provide a fully indexed on-line version of all HHS Journals from the very first 'foolscap' double-sided issue, produced by Terry Knight back in 1977, to the present day. All of the early editions have now been scanned and text versions produced. The next stage is to edit each edition to correct scanning errors and then to create the index. If you would like to assist with this fascinating project, please contact Phil.

Churchgate: Simons have exhibited new outline proposals for Churchgate re-development, and NHDC full council meets on 31 January to make a decision about granting a requested extension to Simons' planning application deadline. Significant concerns about many aspects of the plans were expressed at a Churchgate Liaison Forum meeting on 9th January. Meanwhile, as we go to press, the present leaseholders, Hammersmatch, are due to present their own proposals to the public from 17 to 19 January. Keep Hitchin Special is holding a public meeting on the rival plans on 22 January in the Sun Hotel Ballroom at 6:30pm.

HALH Symposium

Pauline Humphries, our roving reporter, has submitted the following:

"Sport in Hertfordshire" was the theme of this year's Annual Symposium of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History, and it was hosted at a particularly interesting venue, in St. Edmund's College, Old Hall Green, near Ware.

So it was that six Society members set off early on Saturday, 10th November, loaded-up with display boards and publications stock, eager to promote our activities and to learn from those of other groups. This is always a "see and be seen" occasion for the county's local history enthusiasts. We enjoyed the programme content of 7 talks which were varied both in subject matter and Hertfordshire location. We hunted and hawked, cycled and golfed, and watched the development of the Lee Valley Regional Park.

As dusk fell, our group departed for home, having enjoyed a most satisfying day. The 2013 Symposium will be held at Abbot's Hill School, near St. Albans. The subject will be "Hertfordshire Buildings", with an emphasis on their materials, construction and conservation. We would urge other Members to join us for this, as they will be guaranteed an interesting day.

New Year Quiz

Leslie Mustoe has supplied another selection of Hitchin brainteasers (solution in the July issue):

- 1 Death race down here? Possibly. (3, 6)
- 2 Light Blues did this I hear. (9, 4)
- 3 Labrador molar nearly makes it. (8, 4)
- 4 Maybe neat Rob goes to party. (7, 5)
- 5 Peter jaws about right; it has its ups and downs. (9, 4)
- 6 Grid bent inside best right Yorkshire thoroughfare. (6, 4)
- 7 Calls after spin to North-East, then twists. (11)
- 8 Drawn by four without direction along here. (7, 3)
- 9 Inter the crooked dame. (4, 4)
- 10 Cardew Robinson not ill. (7)
- 11 Undulating hill lacked no iodine - just as well here. (9)
- 12 No special ascent needed. (6, 4)
- 13 1065 for Norman. (8, 5)
- 14 He flies an eighth of a mile - and that's straight. (4, 7)
- 15 Argument in queue, if you listen. (6, 3)
- 16 Intoxicated invader is announced. (4, 4)
- 17 Did he work at heralding in Spain? (8, 4)
- 18 LE (6, 4)
- 19 He portrayed loud class, oddly enough. (5)
- 20 Cockney bomber almost gone around Hampton. (6)
- 21 Ancient, healthy method practised here. (3, 4, 3)
- 22 Should one nearly meet Mr Bryant in Spring? (7, 4)
- 23 Fairy mollusc on petticoat, for example. (10, 4)
- 24 Footballing crooks follow horse down here. (6, 5)
- 25 How to fry your eggs - not up. (9)

HHS Committee & Contacts

President	Priscilla Douglas	Distribution	Vicki Lockyer
Chairman	Phil Rowe	Film Archivist	Richard Whitmore
Secretary	Leslie Mustoe	Librarian	Audrey Stewart librarian@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk
Treasurer	John Skeeles	Website Editor	Zena Grant admin@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk
Programme	Caroline Frith Outings: Sue Fisher**	Publications	Priscilla Douglas
Journal	Simon Walker** Peter Moss	Publications (sales)	Vicki Lockyer
Membership	membership@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk		

** Co-opted Members—David Howlett and Dr. Gerry Tidy are also co-opted members

Newsletter edited by John Lucas. If you have an item you'd like to submit to the HHS newsletter or information for any contributor please contact any committee member. Website: www.hitchinhistoricals.org.uk

Final Fact: Most people are aware of the rationing privations suffered by our parents and grandparents during WWII. Perhaps less well known is that similar shortages were experienced during The Great War, particularly in the final year when German submarines were increasingly successful in sinking British merchant shipping. There was then no formal rationing system and many basic commodities were in short supply. On the 21st January 1918, word spread that a consignment of margarine had been received by the Maypole Dairy in Market Place. Well over 3000 people queued through the day and 1½ tons of margarine had been served by the time that the queue had dispersed late that evening.