



Newsletter

Issue number 52 – January 2019

From the Chairman – Terry Knight

First of all I would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody for their loyal support during the past twelve months and to wish you a Happy New Year.

Mike Clarke our Publications Officer writes elsewhere in this issue about the highly successful book entitled “Discovering More About Hitchin” which sold out very rapidly before Christmas. My congratulations go to those concerned in the monumental task in order to bring it to fruition. This fascinating volume was produced in memory of our much late lamented President Scilla Douglas. There’s no doubt in my mind that she would be very proud of the efforts put in to produce such an excellent work.

A number of our members may be well aware that 2019 marks the 150th anniversary of the opening of the doors of Benslow House in Hitchin as a College for Women. Four years later a move was made to a new building at Cambridge called Girton College. A visit to this now famous seat of learning has been arranged for May by David Howlett our Programme Secretary. However what members may not know is that Mary Ann Kingsland who won a scholarship to the College in 1871 was the Great Aunt of John Turner, former Assistant Programme Secretary of our society. She together with another student were the first women to take the Natural Science Tripos and she gained a second class honours in 1873. John who lives on Brampton Park Road has Kingsland as one of his four names.

A well-researched book “Pioneering Women The Origins of Girton College in Hitchin” has been written by Val Campion, a former member of our society and one time committee member.

The Programme for 2019 - David Howlett

The Society Programme for 2019 is on page 4 of this Newsletter. This year sees a particular focus on the 150th anniversary of the foundation, in Hitchin, of Girton College, Cambridge – a visit to the College in May, its featuring in the Scilla Douglas Lecture in July (details later) and a Benslow walk in September.

In April two visits need special mention. The trip to Two Temple Place in London was prompted by a member suggestion and a John Ruskin exhibition: the famous annulment of Ruskin’s marriage had an odd Hitchin connection. The visit to the de Havilland Museum follows on Alistair Hodgson’s very popular talk in February 2018. Otherwise, we have again attempted to arrange a mix of meetings and visits which will appeal to a range of member interests – we hope!



A look back at HHS Visits summer 2018; from left to right: Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews gave a tour on Hitchin’s industrial history, middle: visit to Hitchin Lavender, right: visit to Potton station, Bedfordshire.

All photos by Bridget Howlett.

Discovering More about Hitchin – Triumph! Mike Clarke (Publications Officer)

Having reported on the progress in the last newsletter, with the finishing post in sight, we did complete the job... well apart from underestimating the demand! The editors slaved away to top and tail all of the chapters, the designer picked out a front of cover photo, the printers were lined up and it was all ready by October 20th. Phew!! There were a few hitches, but the late design of a study version of the maps added a welcome finishing touch.

The launch at the large classroom of the British Schools Museum went well. Sam Mason and Yvonne Limbrick ensured that the museum was ready, HHS volunteers did all the necessary with sales and food and drink. Terry Knight and Bob Williams provided greetings and thanks to the assembled crowd (200 attended). Pauline Humphries gave an excellent account of Scilla's work and their editing of the book's predecessor from 1995 – "Discovering Hitchin".

We sold about 150 books by the end of that first day, and sales continued. Merryfields of Sun Street were very helpful in offering help with that and the Initiative office in Churchyard sold many books. Waterstones did eventually stock it and we hope they will continue to have it on their shelves. David's Bookshop in Letchworth have also had healthy sales and we are very grateful for their support. The problem has been, of course, that we sold too many! After a little bit of dithering, it did become obvious that we should print some more. 500 sold quickly and the feedback has been very positive – interesting content and beautiful illustrations and a good price. The reprint of 300 was too late for Christmas but we expect that it will continue selling through the coming years.

We felt Scilla's words in our ears as we put it together – she had many firm views on how things should be done! We hope that she would have been pleased with the result and do feel that it is a fitting memorial for all that she contributed to the Historical Society and its many publications.



Some photographs from the Discovering More About Hitchin book launch event on Saturday 20th October

2018. From left to right: 1. Three speakers: Bob Williams, Terry Knight and Pauline Humphries, 2. Bridget Howlett presents a copy of DMAH to the family of Scilla Douglas, 3. Mike Clarke giving one of the presentations at the event, 4. Some of the attendees at the DMAH book launch. *All photos by Simon Walker.*

Intrepid eight seek historical enlightenment - Pauline Humphries

It was that time of year again (November) when a band of Society members traditionally brave the open road and follow the trail to the Hertfordshire Association for Local History's Annual Symposium. To the un-initiated, this event is the highlight of the local history calendar. Local Societies from all over the county attend to listen to themed talks and to run stalls selling their publications and promoting their new research. It is also a marvelous opportunity to "see and be seen", to gather ideas, and to catch-up with old friends. This year we were heading for Lemsford, a village not far from St Albans, to listen to talks relating to "Hertfordshire's Development – from Roman City to New Towns". One of our party, HHS author Audrey Stewart, was contributing an item on "Hitchin in the 19th century", and we were also running a stall selling our publications, including our new book, hot off the press.

Once there and fortified by coffee, we joined a packed hall for a wide range of talks, beginning in Verulamium and progressing through the centuries by way of medieval market towns, and the Chartist Land Colony, to Hertford, St Albans, Hitchin and Lemsford itself. The latter was useful, as it detailed the location and characteristics of local historic hostelleries to which the audience could repair for lunchtime food and drink! The break also gave opportunities to browse stalls and discover what others were researching. Our smart new display material commanded attention! The afternoon session introduced us to writers and thinkers of the Garden City Movement, followed by an Industrial history of Letchworth Garden City, and to end, a visit to the first post-war New Town of Stevenage. All in all, a fascinating journey through time, with some excellent speakers and new insights.

If anybody fancies a day of interesting talks and an opportunity to explore what other Societies are "up to", a trip to the Symposium is well worth considering. Next year's venue is close to home (at Woolmer Green), on Saturday 9th November. Details and theme nearer the time.

2019 Membership Renewal

Dear Member, subscription renewal is here again. **It would help the Society greatly if you were to renew by Bank transfer.** This ensures you receive confirmation and the annual visits programme quickly and saves us bank charges when processing a volume of cheques.

We now offer Life Membership which you might wish to consider thus saving you renewing every year. The details are below.

There is no increase in the **Annual Membership fee.**

single membership £6.00 or £6-60 if paying by Bank transfer
joint membership £9.00 or £9-60 if paying by Bank transfer
juniors (under 18) £1.00

Life membership can be taken out at the following rates:

Single life member (Under 60 years old) £130
Two life members same Household (both under 60) £230
Single life member (over 60) £80
Two life members in the same household (at least 1 over 60) £140

Details for Bank Transfer are on the back of the renewal form. If you renew by bank transfer let the Membership Secretary know by emailing - membership@hitchinhistorical.org.uk. Please also ensure that any changes of email, phone or home address are notified to the Membership Secretary.

If you choose to renew by post please return the enclosed membership renewal form (*) to:

(*) If you joined late in 2018 you will not receive a membership renewal form.

HHS Membership Secretary,

Cheques should be made payable to "**Hitchin Historical Society**".

Please ensure you enclose a STAMPED, SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE, at least 6" x 4½" for the prompt 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 the Society.

HHS Committee and Contacts

President	Robert Williams	Film Archive	Sam Hallas**
Chairman	Terry Knight	Physic Garden	Dr Gerry Tidy
Secretary	Pamela Skeggs secretary@hitchinhistorical.org.uk	Librarian	Debbie Burstow librarian@hitchinhistorical.org.uk
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Journal	Simon Walker *	Distribution	Vicki Lockyer
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* Co-opted committee members; ** non-committee contacts

Thank you!

Thanks go to Messrs **John Shilcock** in Bancroft for providing us with accommodation for our 'overflow' publications stock and the archive. Thanks also to our refreshments team, led by **Jenny Alder**, who provide the refreshments at all the member meetings. Thank you to all those who have contributed items for this edition of the newsletter.



HITCHIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY – PROGRAMME 2019

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

JANUARY 24	The History of Hertfordshire's Police – an illustrated talk by Andy Wiseman
FEBRUARY 28	Hertfordshire in the Wars of the Roses – an illustrated talk by Hugh Bicheno
MARCH 28	AGM and Members' Evening –the AGM will include an update on current projects
APRIL 25	Orchards East: the economic, social and cultural history of Hertfordshire fruit growers - an illustrated talk by Professor Tom Williamson
MAY 23	Hertfordshire's Vernacular Architecture – an illustrated talk by Dr Lee Prosser
SEPTEMBER 26	In Search of Clofesho: an aspect of Hitchin's Saxon History – an illustrated talk by Clifford Offer
OCTOBER 24	The Battle for Female Suffrage: Mary Augusta Ward and Lady Constance Georgina Bulwer-Lytton – an illustrated talk by Elizabeth Eastwood
NOVEMBER 28	Old Hitchin on film: another selection – compiled and presented by Sam Hallas and Tim Ray

Visits programme for 2019

Starting times and venues vary. A Booking Form (supplied on membership renewal) **must** be returned to the Programme Secretary in advance. Places are normally allocated about a month prior to each visit. A charge applies to visits marked with an asterisk (*).

Wednesday 10 April 1.45pm	Two Temple Place, London WC2 - a guided visit of its architecture, artworks and the Astor family history and access to the John Ruskin exhibition [Limit 25 members]*
Sunday 28 April 2.00pm	Walsworth House – a guided visit with Tom McCall [Limit 10 members]
Tuesday 30 April 2.00pm	The de Havilland Aircraft Museum, Salisbury Hall, London Colney – a guided visit [Limit 25 members]*
Tuesday 21 May 2.00pm	Girton College, Cambridge – tour, the archive and the museum; a guided visit [Limit 20 members]
Sunday 26 May 2.00pm	The William Ransom Physic Garden – a visit hosted by the Hitchin Physic Gardeners [Limit 12 members]
Sunday 2 June 2.00pm	Gaping Hills Lane: A Foot and in Town and Country – a guided walk with Nafisa Sayany [Limit 15 members]
Saturday 8 June 2.00pm	Queen Street Grace Baptist Church – a guided visit courtesy of Pastor Tom Forryan [Limit 15 members]
Sunday 30 June 3.00pm	High Down House – a guided visit hosted by Mr and Mrs Tim Dye [Limit 25 members]
Sunday 4 August 2.00pm	' Fine Dry Plots for Better Class Houses ' – a Brampton Park Estate Walk with Pauline Humphries and Bridget Howlett [Limit 15 members]
Sunday 1 September 2.00pm	Our Lady Immaculate & St. Andrew: Hitchin's Catholic history - a guided visit courtesy of Father Tom O'Brien [Limit 20 members]
Sunday 8 September 2.00pm	Hitchin's History: A favourite selection – a guided walk with Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews [Limit 20 members]
Sunday 29 September 2.00pm	Benslow, the Ransoms and 150 years of the College for Women – a guided walk coordinated by David Howlett [Limit 15 members]

Special Meetings for 2019 (A charge will apply to all events listed below)

Wednesday 3 July 8.00pm	The Scilla Douglas Lecture. Details in the Hitchin Festival Programme
Wednesday 17 July 8.00pm	The Miss Lewis Lecture. Details in the Hitchin Festival Programme
Friday 6 December 7.30pm	Christmas Meeting. Details provided nearer the time.

This newsletter is published 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.

If you have an item that you would like to submit to the newsletter or information for any contributor please email newsletter@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk, or contact any Committee member.