



### **From the Chairman – Terry Knight**

I was brought up in a household where books were a prominent feature. Many of my father's volumes were kept in two large bookcases which stood on either side of the fireplace in the dining room. His main interest was the subject of English Literature and he corresponded with such well known authors as Henry Miller and Lawrence Durrell. When he died many of his books were sold at auction by Sotheby's and one in particular, James Joyce's *Ulysses*, went, would you believe it, for £7,000 – a far cry from the £5 he spent on it many years earlier.

I have 12 bookcases in my home, more books are stored in the third bedroom and even more in the conservatory. My main interests are Natural History – in my childhood and youth I studied birds and butterflies – and, of course, Local History,

At one committee meeting Zena Grant, our Website Editor, suggested that it could include a list of books devoted to Hitchin and its people and I volunteered to carry out the task. I have spent several hours compiling such a list. The number exceeds more than 270 although I have to admit this number does include other printed material relating to our lovely old town. The subjects are extremely varied and many of the books have been researched and written by our own members.

Among those listed are a number of guides to the town produced by the former Hitchin Urban District Council and these make fascinating reading as they show how Hitchin has developed down the years.

In addition to local books I also collect picture postcards of the town and I have quite a number dating back to the reign of King Edward VII. The street scenes are instantly recognisable in quite a number of cases as the buildings shown are still with us today. Very few postcards are printed now and any I come across I eagerly buy.

Finally may I, on your behalf, thank our former Newsletter Editor, David Dingwall, for producing past issues.

### **From the Secretary – Pamela Skeggs**

Thank you to everyone who has contributed items for this newsletter. Our society meetings and visits have continued to be well attended during 2019 and there is a lot more to look forward to in 2020.

The audio and projection set up at our open meetings rely on just two people. Should one of them be unavailable, it is tricky to get everything done; if both are unavailable, we are in real difficulty.

We are looking for one – perhaps two – people to act as a back-up for Phil and Simon. Basic computer skills and ability to plug in wires for the sound system are all that are required. Full training given!

If you have an item that you would like to submit to the newsletter or would like to produce it or information for any contributor, please email [secretary@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:secretary@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk).

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and visits in the New Year.

### **HHS Programme 2020 – David Howlett**

The back page lists the Programme for 2020. We have again aimed for a mix of meetings and visits which place interest in our local history centre stage. There are repeat visits – such as to High Down and Walsworth House - for those events in 2019 that were oversubscribed. Next year's trip to the Linnean Society reminds us of the Society's responsibility for the town's Physic Garden and our venture to Spalding recalls a key figure in Hitchin's past. As usual a Visits Booking Form will be sent to members on receipt of their subscription renewals. In addition, the Society will be organising some events for the Hitchin Festival in July so please look out for these in the Festival Programme which will be available nearer the time.

### **Reference Book Collection – Debbie Burstow**

After many temporary locations, the Society's reference book collection has finally found an appropriate home at the North Hertfordshire Museum, Hitchin. Our collection can now be accessed whenever the Local Studies Room is staffed, mostly by volunteers. Please check with the museum for opening times.

We have some interesting material, including the 1815 Robert Clutterbuck volumes of Hertfordshire history and some more unusual items, such as Hitchin's Elizabethan Pageant Coronation Programme from 1953!

The full catalogue will shortly be available on our website

## **.Publications - Mike Clarke**

There is very little to report on publications. Discovering More About Hitchin has sold out – and yes we could have had more printed! Sales of other publications continue, but slowly. There are a few thousand older books and booklets still in stock and we have been reducing the price of these to encourage sales.

If you have any thoughts about possible publications and any selling opportunities, then please let me know.

## **A Good Day Out – Hertfordshire Association for Local History - Pauline Humphries/ Bridget Howlett**

Even leaden skies didn't dampen the anticipation of Society members as they set off for Woolmer Green in November. Two cars loaded with HHS "stalwarts" and associated stall material and stock were on their way to the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of the Hertfordshire Association for Local History, the county-wide "get-together" for local historians.

The programme promised a menu of speakers in support of the theme "Local History, Landscape and Archaeology", and we were delighted to find that three of the nine were well-known to us, featuring regularly in our HHS programme and two more are due to speak to us in 2020. The opening talk by Kris Lockyear, "History, Archaeology, Local History: a strained relationship?" encapsulated the day's theme, which subsequent speakers were able to comprehensively question and demolish. Talk after talk demonstrated how vital a melding of all three fields of expertise was in understanding the significance of their particular sites.

Tom Williamson and Anne Rowe respectively delved into archaeology and garden history at Gobions and elsewhere and at Henry VIII's fishponds at Hunsdon. We discovered the Swiss Cottage in Cassiobury Park. We dug a medieval tile kiln at Puckeridge and staked out the foundations of the Old County Gaol in Hertford. Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews summed it up beautifully with his "Why Local Historians need to be archaeologically literate". The afternoon ended with a very interesting item on ethical metal detecting and the uncovering of the Kelshall Hoard by Phil Kirk.

In all, a rewarding and well-organised day, with an opportunity for local societies to get together and share their experiences, run stalls and mount displays. If this has whetted your appetite, why not join us next November in Tewin? Although the theme is yet to be announced, I'm sure that you won't be disappointed.

More details can be found on the website [www.halh.org.uk](http://www.halh.org.uk)



*The HHS Stall (Photograph Stephen Bradford-Best)*

## **Physic Garden – Gerry Tidy**

Jenny Dee and Physic Garden volunteers Nicky Nicoll, Carola Scupham and Sue Watson entered into the festive spirit with an entry at Holy Saviour Christmas Tree Festival on 7 and 8 December. Entitled The Apothecary Tree it featured a variety of dried and living plants referencing our garden. Although it did not win first prize among nearly 50 trees it was much admired. Well done for all the hard work.

## **Film Archivist - Sam Hallas**

At the HHS meeting in November I had to announce that it will be the last, for the time being, of the Old Hitchin on Film presentations. Since Richard Whitmore started the project in 2009 we have turned all of the useful material into videos. The cupboard is now bare.

However if any of our members have old cine film stored somewhere showing scenes from our town in years gone by, then the Society will be grateful for the loan of it with permission for reproduction. Similarly, videotapes or computer video files will be welcome.

Do not be put off by the 'old' in 'Old Hitchin on Film'. Anything earlier than the present will become old before you know it. I have been surprised by the changes I have seen in Hitchin since I moved here in 1977. Even as I write buildings are being knocked down or changed and new buildings are going up. We need to record the changes as they happen before it is too late.

## 2020 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. If you joined late in 2019 you should receive your new membership card with this Newsletter; **there is no need to renew.**

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@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:membership@hitchinhistoricals.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:

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 card and visits programme application sheet.

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

<b>President</b>	Robert Williams	<b>Film Archive</b>	Sam Hallas**
<b>Chairman</b>	Terry Knight	<b>Physic Garden</b>	Gerry Tidy
<b>Secretary</b>	Pamela Skeggs <a href="mailto:secretary@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk">secretary@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk</a>	<b>Librarian</b>	Debbie Burstow <a href="mailto:librarian@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk">librarian@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	John Skeeles	<b>Website Editor</b>	Zena Grant ** <a href="mailto:admin@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk">admin@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk</a>
<b>Programme</b>	David Howlett *	<b>Publications</b>	Mike Clarke <a href="mailto:publications@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk">publications@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk</a>
<b>Journal</b>	Simon Walker *	<b>Distribution</b>	Vicki Lockyer
<b>Newsletter</b>	Pamela Skeggs (Temporary)	<b>Without portfolio</b>	Maureen Sellers, Phil Rowe*
<b>Membership</b>	Peter Moss <a href="mailto:membership@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk">membership@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk</a>		

---

\* Co-opted committee members; \*\* non-committee contacts

---



## HITCHIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY – PROGRAMME 2020

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

23 January	Cold Baths Don't Might Work: another look at the history of mental health care - an illustrated talk by Dr Mike Clarke.
27 February	Verulamium: busy places and empty spaces – an illustrated talk by Dr Kris Lockyear.
26 March	<u>AGM and Members' Evening</u> – including updates on current projects.
23 April	Ethical metal detecting and the Kelshall Hoard - an illustrated talk by Philip Kirk.
28 May	Maurice Johnson, the Spalding Gentlemen's Society and Hitchin – an illustrated talk by Dr Dustin Frazier Wood.
24 September	The Eighteenth Century Principal Inn in North Hertfordshire: The Sun Hitchin and The White Horse Baldock – an illustrated talk by Annika McQueen.
22 October	Apsley Cherry-Garrard: Hertfordshire's Antarctic Explorer – an illustrated talk by Chris Bennet.
26 November	Hitchin's Times and Seasons: Daily Life in a Country Town – an illustrated talk by Richard Field.

**Visits – 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 (\*).**

Saturday 4 April at 2.00pm	Exploring Hitchin's history: North Hertfordshire Museum Local Studies Room - a visit with Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews [Limit 10 members].
Wednesday 22 April at 2.00pm	The Linnean Society, Piccadilly, London W1 – a guided visit with Dr Isabelle Charmentier [Limit 24 members]*.
Sunday 26 April at 2.00pm	Dowlands, Wymondley Road – a guided visit to an Edwardian house with Helen Frost [Limit 10 members].
Thursday 30 April at 8.00pm	The Past in Miniature – a visit to Alan Clark, Hitchin model-maker [Limit 10 members].
Saturday 30 May at 2.00pm	Gaping Hills Lane: a foot in town & country – a guided walk with Nafisa Sayany [Limit 15 members].
Sunday 31 May at 2.00pm	Almshoe Bury, St Ippolyts: a visit hosted by Chris Titmuss [Limit 10 members].
Saturday 6 June at 2.00pm	Hitchin Quaker Meeting House, Paynes Park – a guided visit hosted by the Friends [Limit 15 members].
Wednesday 24 June at 2.00pm	The Spalding Gentlemen's Society: a guided visit [Limit 20 members]*.
Sunday 28 June at 3.00pm	High Down House: a visit hosted by Mr & Mrs Tim Dye [Limit 25 members].
Sunday 2 August at 10.00am	Hitchin Priory – a guided visit with Liz Hunter and Bridget Howlett [Limit 20 members].
Sunday 20 September at 2.00pm	Saxon Hitchin and the Search for Clifesho – a guided walk with Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews [Limit 20 members].
Sunday 27 September at 2.00pm	Walsworth House – a guided visit with Tom McCall [Limit 10 members].

**Special Meetings - Starting times and venues vary. A charge applies to events marked with an asterisk (\*).**

Wednesday 8 July at 8.00pm	The Miss Lewis Lecture. Details in the Hitchin Festival Programme*
Wednesday 15 July at 8.00pm	The Scilla Douglas Lecture. Details in the Hitchin Festival Programme*
Thursday 3 December at 7.45pm	Christmas Meeting. Details provided nearer the time*

Thanks go to Messrs John Shilcock in Bancroft for providing us with accommodation for our 'overflow' publications, display boards and archive stock. Thanks also go to Jenny Alder and team for providing refreshments at our meetings.

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.

HHS website: [www.hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](http://www.hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)