



**Hitchin  
Historical  
Society**

Registered Charity No. 280746

# Newsletter

**Issue number 63 – June 2024**

## **VISITS OVER THE SUMMER**

The Society is, as usual, arranging a number of visits over the summer months (see the Programme listing on your membership card or look at the website). Allocations are normally made about four weeks before each due date; it is still not too late to send in the Visits Booking Form.

## **HHS HITCHIN FESTIVAL IN JULY**

The Society will again be contributing some events to the annual *Hitchin Festival* which will, as usual, run for the month of July.

### **The events are -**

- Sunday 14 July @ 9.30 am – Hitchin's Railway History: a guided walk with David Howlett. £5 Sponsor: Hitchin Historical Society (Limited numbers; start details with ticket).
- Wednesday 17 July @ 8.00 pm – The Miss Lewis Lecture: Miss Willmott's Ghosts- the extraordinary life and gardens of a forgotten genius – an illustrated talk by Sandra Lawrence at the Richard Whitmore Studio, Queen Mother Theatre, Walsworth Road - £5 Sponsor: Hitchin Historical Society.
- Wednesday 24 July @ 8.00 pm – The Scilla Douglas Lecture: The Lost Homestead: My Mother, Partition and The Punjab – an illustrated talk by Marina Wheeler at the Richard Whitmore Studio, Queen Mother Theatre, Walsworth Road - £5 Sponsor: Hitchin Historical Society
- Sunday 28 July @ 2.00 pm – Hitchin Priory Park: a guided walk with Bridget Howlett £5.00 Sponsor: Hitchin Historical Society (Limited numbers; start details with ticket).

### **Tickets-**

As usual tickets will be available via the booking slot on the *Hitchin Festival* website and at a manned Box Office in the Hitchin Information shop, Churchyard, Hitchin (for the opening times of the manned Box Office see the *Festival* website and the printed *Hitchin Festival Programme* available beforehand).

For the two Lectures pre-booking is strongly advised although there may be some tickets available on the two dates at the door.

For the two Walks pre-booking is essential as numbers are limited.

*David Howlett – Programme Secretary*

## **ANOTHER HITCHIN HISTORY PLAY DURING THE FESTIVAL -**

### **Elizabeth Impey: Suffragette**

The play written and produced by Kirk Foster will run from Thursday evening 11 July to Saturday evening 27 July. Tickets will be available either direct from the Market Theatre ([www.markettheatre.co.uk](http://www.markettheatre.co.uk)) or via the Hitchin Festival website and box office.

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### **AN EXTRA MEETING IN JUNE**

Please do not forget that we will, this year, be holding an extra meeting in the Spring Church House Talks series on THURSDAY 27 JUNE at 8.00pm

For this we are lucky to have Dr Heather Falvey coming to tell us about Richard III's Commissioners of Array in Hertfordshire and some Hitchin connections.

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### **AUTUMN PROGRAMME**

Meetings held at Church House, Churchyard, Hitchin, SG5 1HP on Thursdays at 8.00pm

- 26 September - Hertfordshire's Landscape History – an illustrated talk by Dr Anne Rowe
- 24 October - Stained Glass with a Hertfordshire and Hitchin Slant – an illustrated talk by Rachel Arnold
- 28 November - How Timber Framed Buildings Work - an illustrated talk by Dr Lee Prosser
- 5 December at 7.45pm – Christmas Meeting – Details provided nearer the time.

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

At the society's AGM on Thursday 23 March, Robert Williams was re-appointed President. Barry Arends Chairman, Pamela Skeggs Secretary, John Skeeles Treasurer, Chris Finch, Greg Moss, and Steve Pullinger were elected.

Following the business part of the meeting: -



President Robert Williams presented the Reginald Hine award to Bridget Howlett in recognition of her work on the book William Wilshere's Hitchin Farm and Garden, 1809-1824.



Chairman, Barry Arends presented the Chairman's occasional Award to Phil Rowe in Recognition of his outstanding work for the Society in many roles since joining the Committee in 2003



Barry also thanked our wonderful catering team for providing coffee, tea, and biscuits at members' indoor meetings.

*Left to right Bridget Howlett, Jenny Alder, Barry Arends and Pauline Humphries*

*Photographs courtesy of Ray Wilkinson*

Our two most interesting speakers were: -

Wendy Turner, Hertfordshire author spoke about her forthcoming book *An A to Z of Hitchin*, due for publication next year.

Bee Smyth Curator at The British Schools Museum spoke about the History of Grammar Schools.

*Pamela Skeggs – Secretary*

## **SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE**

As we enter a period of election fever, I was minded to dust off one of my unwritten pieces - Hitchin MPs. "They worked for us". Rather than try and do the whole thing now I will just give some teasers of MPs' past and some successful candidates who made a mark.

We start with a Baron of the Russian Empire whose ancestor inoculated Catherine the Great's son for smallpox.

A Free Trade barrister who played the organ and was the only Liberal to hold the seat.

A medical doctor from South Africa who committed suicide by cutting his throat in the bath.

A Viscount lawyer who was instrumental in establishing the League of Nations and who was rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize.

A fervent anti-communist who was the man who passed the (fake) Zimmerman telegram to The Daily Mail. He blocked Harold Macmillan from becoming Hitchin MP

Another Viscount, an Olympic skier, amateur boxer who died aged 30 years in a flying accident while rehearsing for an air display at Hendon.

A workaholic diplomat former Indian Army officer in World War One. He had some controversial views on fascism in the thirties but signed up as a RAF bomber gunner while an MP, unfortunately was killed in action.

A deputy Chairman of the Daily Telegraph who subsequently married an ex-wife of Aga Khan whose own son became Aga Khan IV.

The post war Labour victor who subsequently co-wrote the standard text on criminal law.

The biographer of Ian Macleod who on the liberal side of Tory party supported homosexual reform and opposed capital punishment. He was one of two Tory MPs who voted against the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1962 and 1968.

A life long European who made it illegal to have a tattoo under the age of 16 years went to Brighton when he lost the seat.

The first woman MP and second for Labour saw comprehensive schools through Parliament but got into a pickle with her own daughter. A long and distinguished political career albeit jumping ship.

The long serving MP who held many Government offices who wrote the definitive book on Scottish Coinage while still at Haileybury College.

Maybe watch this space

*Gerry Tidy*

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## HHS Committee and Contacts

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\* Co-opted committee members \*\* By standing invitation

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If you have an item, you would like to submit to the Newsletter please email [newsletter@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

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.

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