



**Hitchin  
Historical  
Society**

Registered Charity No. 280746

# Newsletter

**Issue number 64 – January 2025**

## **CHRISTMAS MEETING 2024**

The Society's Christmas meeting was held on the evening of Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December at Church House, Hitchin.

An excellent seasonal buffet from Taste Buds was followed by mince pies and the Chairman's Quiz see page 2.

Bridget Howlett gave a most interesting, illustrated talk on 'Hitchin's Nightingale Nurses'.

The raffle raised £164 in aid of Garden House Hospice Care.

## **MEMBERSHIP 2024**

Our current number of members stands at 314.

Whilst most members live in and around Hitchin, we also have members from further afield: Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Herefordshire, Oxford, Sussex, Surrey, Yorkshire and Wales.

Our meetings are enthusiastically attended as are the specially arranged visits which are allocated to members by the programme secretary. In addition, during the Hitchin Festival in July, two lectures are also arranged.

## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2025**

If you are an annually paying member, you will find a membership renewal form with this newsletter, and you are invited to renew your Hitchin Historical Society Membership for 2025

We hope that you continue to feel that membership of the society is a worthwhile experience, and that you will wish to continue, and we look forward to receiving your renewal.

Please either:

- a. help us avoid bank charges, and pay by bank transfer, as set out on the form, and email to me to let me know you have done so. Your 2025 Membership Card and Visits Booking Form will be posted to you *or*
- b. complete the enclosed renewal form and send it with payment and a stamped addressed envelope for receipt of your 2025 Membership Card and Visits Booking Form.

Yours sincerely,

Membership Secretary

# CHAIRMAN'S CHRISTMAS MEETING QUIZ with answers

## 1924



1. What was the cost of a stamp for a letter up to 2oz in 1924?  
- 1d, 1½ d, 2d, 2½d. *1½ d, it went up in 1940 to 2½d (less than 1p)*
2. How long did it take the US army air service to fly round the world in 1924? (the first time it was done)? - 23, 57, 98, 175 days. *175 days (it took 74 stops, no radio used)*
3. Dec 1924 which future European leader was released from prison early, he served 9 months of a 5-year sentence. *Adolf Hitler*
4. 26 Dec 1924 who made her show business debut at 2½ years old? *Judy Garland*
5. What was the cost of a return fare Hitchin to Kings Cross 3<sup>rd</sup> - class in 1924? - 5s 6d; 7s 10d; 8s 4d; 9s 3d *7s 10d (about £39 now; present rush hour fare return is £32.20)*

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6. In 2017, Gary Oldman won an Oscar for portraying which real life person? *Winston Churchill (film - the Darkest Hour)*
  7. In 1963 which nation put the first cat into space? France, UK, US, USSR? *France*
  8. What amount of money was written on the label of the Mad Hatter's hat in Alice in Wonderland? *10/6d*
  9. Mince pies is cockney rhyming slang for what? *Eyes*
  10. Which country is ruled by 9 monarchs each taking 5-year terms as king? Bhutan, Sikkim, Borneo, Malaysia? *Malaysia*
  11. Which hero's first adventure concerned the Philosopher's Stone? *Harry Potter*
  12. Which Hitchin born girl was a presenter for Blue Peter from 1962 – 1972? *Valerie Singleton*
  13. Born in Hitchin in 1968, Dr Nicola Fox has achieved which position? - British Ambassador to Poland, Head of Science Nasa, Deputy Director of the V& A museum, Pulitzer Prize nominee *Head of Science Nasa*
  14. Which fictional pilot has colleagues Algy, Ginger and Lord Bertie? *Biggles*
  15. What was the name of Sooty's doggie friend? *Sweep*



Supply the missing words from these Christmas songs: -

16. *Santa Claus* is coming to Town (1985)
17. I saw Mommy Kissing *Santa Claus* (1970)
18. All I want for *Christmas is you* (1994)
19. *Santa Baby* just slip a Sable under the tree for me (1953)
20. Rockin' around The *Christmas Tree* (1958)



CPA & BA

## SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE

Here are the answers to the teasers in the last newsletter about past MPs.

We start with a Baron of the Russian Empire whose ancestor inoculated Catherine the Great's son for smallpox. *Robert Baron Dimsdale 1866-1892*

A Free Trade barrister who played the organ and was the only Liberal to hold the seat. *George Hudson 1892 - 1906*

A medical doctor from South Africa who committed suicide by cutting his throat in the bath. *Dr Alfred Peter Hillier 1906-1910*

A Viscount lawyer who was instrumental in establishing the League of Nations and who was rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize. *Robert Cecil, 1st Viscount Cecil of Chelwood 1911-1923*

A fervent anti-communist who was the man who passed the (fake) Zinoviev (sp correction) letter to The Daily Mail four days before 1924 general election He blocked Harold Macmillan from becoming Hitchin MP *Major Guy Kindersley 1923-1931*

Another Viscount, an Olympic skier, amateur boxer who died aged 30 years in a flying accident while rehearsing for an air display at Hendon. *Anthony Bulwer-Lytton, Viscount Knebworth 1931-1933*

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. *Arnold Wilson 1933-1940*

A deputy Chairman of the Daily Telegraph who subsequently married an ex-wife of Aga Khan whose own son became Aga Khan IV. *Major Hon Seymour Berry 1941-1945*

The post war Labour victor who subsequently co-wrote the standard text on criminal law. *Philip Asterley Jones 1945-1950*

The biographer of Ian Macleod who on the liberal side of the 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. *Nigel Fisher 1950-1955*

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. *Martin Madden 1955-1964*

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. *Shirley Williams 1964-1974 (seat changed)*

The MP who held many Government offices who wrote the definitive book on Scottish Coinage while still at Haileybury College. *Ian Stewart 1974-1983 (constituency abolished became North Hertfordshire)*

Gerry Tidy

## REMEMBERING CAROLA SCUPHAM



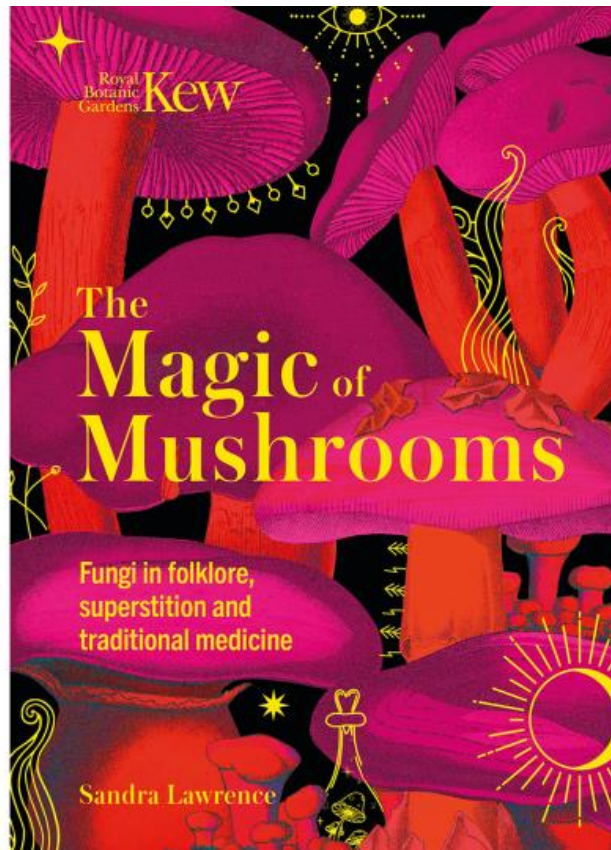
*The Physic Garden volunteers who researched and wrote the guidebook are (left to right): Carola Scupham, David McNamee and Nicky Nicholl.*

Carola Nance Braunholtz was born on 13 December 1933. She was educated at St George's School, Harpenden, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford (B.A. 1956), and Hughes Hall, Cambridge (Cert. Ed. 1957). She married Peter Scupham at St John's Church, Harpenden, on 10 August 1957; they later divorced. She taught Classics at St Christopher School, Letchworth Garden City.

Carola was a teacher, classicist, author, artist and erstwhile supporter of the garden and an expert on Latin plant names. She died on 27 October 2024.

## MISS LEWIS LECTURE

Sandra Lawrence last year's Miss Lewis speaker is returning on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2025 to give her talk "The Magic of Mushrooms" see her Kew book cover below: -



## THE PROGRAMME IN 2025

We are grateful to all those who have agreed to contribute talks and visits to the 2025 Programme. *Please note* there will not be a fourth Thursday evening Church House meeting in June but one in August instead; this fits with the previous decision to see which of these two monthly options is the most popular.

Church House meetings begin on two very local notes. Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews questions accepted notions of the history of Wilbury Hill. Next Bee Smyth, Curator at the British Schools Museum, explores Hitchin’s educational history and its key elements of wider interest. Will Fletcher, from Historic England, then talks about Wrest Park, one of our local ‘big estates’. He is followed in May by Professor Julian Hoppit putting Hitchin’s Corn Exchange, a nineteenth century icon of the town, into a broader national picture of Corn Exchanges’ significance and functions.

Church House meetings resume in late August with Dr Rudi Newman underlining Hertfordshire’s distinctive place in postwar British aviation. In September the Reverend Clifford Offer, former Vicar of St Mary’s, returns to give a compelling update on his work to establish Hitchin as a strong contender to be the ‘missing place’ Clofesho where some of the most important gatherings of the early Anglo-Saxon Church were held. Next our member Nic Garner, who is to have a book published soon encapsulating a very personal perspective on landscape history and wildlife, will delve into Hitchin’s relatively little known countryside history. The last meeting is Dr Kris Lockyear on Roman Baths in Britain with a particular look at the Welwyn example marking its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a conserved attraction beneath the A1(M).

The visits and events include the very local with offerings on sources for Hitchin history, the Cemetery, the Priory, St Mary’s, local education, Brampton Park, and Hitchin Hill. Further afield are the new Museum established by the Harpenden Local History Society and an afternoon at the Florence Nightingale Museum in London. The Society will, in addition to the annual Miss Lewis and Scilla Douglas Lectures, contribute some guided walks to the Hitchin Festival in July; details of these events will be included in the July *Newsletter* and the *Hitchin Festival Programme 2025*.

David Howlett

### MEETINGS 2025

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

<b>23 JANUARY</b>	<b>Wilbury: the Willow Fort?</b> – an illustrated talk by Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews
<b>27 FEBRUARY</b>	<b>Hitchin’s distinctive place in national education</b> – an illustrated talk by Bee Smyth
<b>27 MARCH</b>	<b>AGM and Members’ Evening</b> – including updates on current projects
<b>24 APRIL</b>	<b>The Wrest Park Story through maps, illustrations and images</b> – a talk by Will Fletcher
<b>22 MAY</b>	<b>Hitchin’s Corn Exchange in Context</b> – an illustrated talk by Julian Hoppit
<b>28 AUGUST</b>	<b>Innovation and Investigation: Hertfordshire and the Jet Age</b> – an illustrated talk by Rudi Newman
<b>25 SEPTEMBER</b>	<b>Hitchin: Closing in on Anglo-Saxon Clofesho</b> – an illustrated talk by Clifford Offer
<b>23 OCTOBER</b>	<b>Naturalists and Nightingales: Hitchin’s forgotten history</b> – an illustrated talk by Nic Garner
<b>27 NOVEMBER</b>	<b>Roman Baths in Britain and Welwyn’s Fifty Years</b> – an illustrated talk by Kris Lockyear

## VISITS 2025

*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 (\*)*

<b>Saturday 1 March at 2.00pm</b>	<b>Hitchin's history explored: the Museum Local Studies Room</b> – a visit with Alan Fleck [Limit: 8 members]
<b>Sunday 6 April at 2.00pm</b>	<b>Hitchin Cemetery</b> – a visit with Phil Barron [Limit: 15 members]
<b>Saturday 12 April at 1.00pm</b>	<b>Harpenden Museum</b> – a guided visit [Limit: 15 members]
<b>Sunday 13 April at 2.00pm</b>	* <b>Hitchin Priory</b> – a guided visit with Liz Hunter and Bridget Howlett [Limit: 20 members]
<b>Wednesday 21 May at 2.30pm</b>	* <b>The Florence Nightingale Museum, London</b> – a guided visit [Limit: 25 members]
<b>Thursday 19 June at 7.30pm</b>	<b>St Mary's Church Hitchin</b> – a guided visit [Limit: 15 members]
<b>Wednesday 25 June at 2.00pm</b>	<b>Commute Through Time: Hitchin Station's photo-panels</b> – an illustrated talk at the Museum by Matt Platt [Limit 25 members]
<b>Sunday 29 June at 2.00pm</b>	<b>Hitchin's Educational Past</b> – a guided walk with Mike Clarke [Limit: 15 members]
<b>Sunday 31 August at 2.00pm</b>	<b>Fine Dry Plots: Brampton Park and Bearton</b> – a guided walk with Pauline Humphries and Bridget Howlett [Limit: 15 members]
<b>Sunday 21 September at 2pm</b>	<b>Hitchin's Long Eighteenth Century</b> – a guided walk with Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews [Limit: 20 members]
<b>Sunday 5 October at 2pm</b>	<b>Hitchin Hitchin Hill Explored</b> – a guided walk with Bridget and David Howlett [Limit: 15 members]

## SPECIAL MEETINGS 2025

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

<b>Wednesday 9 July at 8.00pm</b>	* <b>The Miss Lewis Lecture</b> Details: see page 4
<b>Wednesday 23 July at 8.00pm</b>	* <b>The Scilla Douglas Lecture</b> Details in the Hitchin Festival Programme
<b>Thursday 4 December at 7.45pm</b>	* <b>Christmas Meeting</b> Details provided nearer the time



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## HHS Committee and Contacts

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**President** Robert B Williams

**Chairman** Barry Arends  
[chair@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:chair@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Secretary** Pamela Skeggs  
[secretary@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:secretary@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)  
[newsletter@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Treasurer** John Skeeles  
[treasurer@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Programme** \*David Howlett  
[programme@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:programme@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Journal** \*\*Simon Walker  
[journal@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:journal@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Membership** Chris Finch  
[membership@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:membership@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Film Archive** \*\*Sam Hallas  
[films@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:films@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Physic Garden** Gerry Tidy  
[physic@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:physic@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Librarian** Debbie Burstow & Maureen Sellers  
[librarian@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:librarian@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Website** Greg Moss & Steve Pullinger  
[webeditor@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:webeditor@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Publication Sales** Nora Evans & Tony Read  
[sales@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:sales@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Distribution** Vicki Lockyer  
[distribution@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk](mailto:distribution@hitchinhistoricals.org.uk)

**Facebook** \*\*Valerie Schicker

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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.

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