



**Hitchin
Historical
Society**

Registered Charity No. 280746

Newsletter

Issue number 66 – January 2026



CHRISTMAS MEETING 2025

The Society's Christmas meeting was held on the evening of Thursday 4 December at Church House. We are glad feedback has been positive.

Refreshments provided by Taste Buds were followed by the quiz devised by Josh Tidy which tested members' knowledge of Hitchin history as well as a general knowledge section with a festive theme.

This was followed by two fabulous short films showing Hitchin as it was in the early sixties. These were the end result of a large amount of work and technical jiggery pokery by Sam Hallas, who remastered the original old film and digitised the result for the electronic age. It brought a flood of nostalgia to everyone present.

The raffle raised £132 for Willow which helps seriously ill young adults to make precious memories.

MEMBERSHIP 2025

Our current number of members stands at 293.

Whilst a few members did not renew their membership last year for a variety of understandable reasons it was good to welcome some new members. Some were attracted by the interesting programme and the very reasonable yearly fee. The yearly renewal fee remains at £6, which is remarkable value. Our meetings are always enthusiastically attended as are the specially arranged visits which are allocated to members by our programme secretary. In addition, during the Hitchin Festival in July, two lectures are arranged plus some other activities (see below).

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL 2026

If you are an annually paying member, you will find a membership renewal form with this letter, and you are invited to renew your Hitchin Historical Society Membership for 2026. 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 me to let me know you have done so. Your 2026 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 self-addressed envelope for receipt of your 2026 Membership Card and Visits Booking Form.

Yours sincerely

Chris Finch

Membership Secretary

WILLIAN ROAD: AN APPEAL FOR HELP

The Society's interest in the history of Hitchin has, over the years, grown to include not just topics related to the classic 'historic town centre' but also to the development of our varied and interesting suburbs.

In light of this we have been asked for help in locating any photographs of Willian Road, especially from the 1940s-60s. These need not be full panoramic views or carefully staged pieces but could include quite small scale family garden and house pictures in the manner of those used for other areas in the Society's two publications *Discovering Hitchin* (1995) and *Discovering More About Hitchin* (2018).

Any help would be very gratefully received – please let the Secretary know of any possible leads.

THE PROGRAMME 2026

Activities for the new Programme year begin, as usual, in January with the first of a sequence of regular evening meetings in Church House. The aim has again been to have a selection of talks which feature both topics of Hitchin focused interest together with subjects of wider scope.

Also, as has become established practice, there will be a series of visits and walks between March and October; the times and venues for these vary and booking (using the form provided on renewal) is essential. Some of these activities are linked to previous events, at least two of which have not been possible for some time; others appear for the first time. In particular the London visit to The Ragged School Museum in Mile End furthers our interest in the development of education springing from the Hitchin British Schools; also Matt Platt, Senior Curator at the Museum in Brand Street, has very kindly agreed to devise a gallery-based tour there highlighting aspects of Hitchin's history which will take place on two separate occasions to allow for the small number of participants that is feasible each time.

Once again, we also plan to arrange a number of additional activities as the Society's contribution to the Hitchin Festival during July, including the annual Miss Lewis and Scilla Douglas Lectures. Details of these events will be included in the June *Newsletter* and also in the Hitchin Festival Programme; booking will be via the Festival Box Office/website.

We hope that you will find plenty of interest in what is planned for next year. As always, the Programme Secretary remains keen to receive suggestions for future meetings and events.

INDOOR MEETINGS 2026

Meetings are held in Church House – doors open at 7.30pm and talks begin at 8pm. Visitors are welcome but there is a small charge of £2.00. Tea and coffee are served following each talk.

HHS Library – A selection of mostly Hitchin themed publications, some of which have been produced by members, are generally also available at these meetings for short term loan. Doors open at 7.30 pm so come along early and browse.

THURSDAYS

22 JANUARY	Ceunis: a life in art – an illustrated talk by James Willis
26 FEBRUARY	Pritam Singh (1915-2019): Farmer, Soldier, Hitchin Incomer – as seen through the eyes of his son Jas Phugura
26 MARCH	AGM and St Mary's Hitchin: Restoration Challenges – an illustrated talk by Michael Beare
23 APRIL	The Medieval Manor and the riches of its records – an illustrated talk by Chris Briggs
28 MAY	Bulwer Lytton's Novels : the best selling author you have never heard of – an illustrated talk by Henry Cobbold
27 AUGUST	Innovation and Investigation : Hertfordshire and the Jet Age – an illustrated talk by Rudi Newman
24 SEPTEMBER	Hitchin in 50 Buildings – an illustrated talk by Paul Rabbitts
22 OCTOBER	George Orwell and Hertfordshire – an illustrated talk by Liz Wallace
26 NOVEMBER	Unending Vigil : commemorating our World War dead at home and abroad – an illustrated talk by Nicholas Lambert

Special Events 2026

Two lectures in July as part of the Hitchin Festival, will be held at the Richard Whitmore Studio, Queen Mother Theatre. Details will appear in the Hitchin Festival Programme. The Christmas Event will take place in December at Church House. A charge (*) applies to these events.

DATE	TIME	
Wednesday 8 July	8 pm	The Miss Lewis Lecture: Details will appear in the Hitchin Festival Programme*
Wednesday 22 July	8 pm	The Scilla Douglas Lecture: Details will appear in the Hitchin Festival Programme*
Thursday 3 December	7:45pm	Christmas Event: Details will appear nearer the time*

VISITS 2026

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 7 March at 2:00 pm	Hitchin's History Explored: The Museum Local Studies Room – a visit with Alan Fleck. [Limit: 8 members]
Sunday 26 April at 2:00 pm	Hitchin Cemetery – a visit with Phil Barron [Limit: 15 members]
Wednesday 27 May at 7:30 pm	Maydencroft Manor – a guided visit courtesy of the Williams family [Limit 15 members]
Thursday 4 June at 2:30 pm	The Ragged School Museum, London – a hosted visit* [Limit 20 members]
Sunday 7 June at 2:00 pm	Hitchin's Forgotten Natural History: a local walk with Nic Wilson [Limit: 15 members]
Monday 8 June at 7:30 pm	St Ippolyts Church: a guided visit with Jane Veasey and Franie Williams [Limit 20 members]
Tuesday 9 June at 2:00 pm	Hitchin's History Revealed: A Museum Gallery tour – with Matt Platt [Limit 12 members]
Monday 29 June at 2:00 pm	Wardown House Museum and Gallery, Luton – a hosted visit with a Hitchin slant* [Limit 15 members]
Wednesday 26 August at 2:00 pm	Luton Hoo Walled Garden* – a guided visit [Limit: 20 members]
Thursday 3 September at 2:00 pm	Hitchin's History Revealed: a Museum Gallery Tour – with Matt Platt [Limit 12 members]
Sunday 27 September at 2:00 pm	Nineteenth century Hitchin – a guided walk with Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews [Limit 20 members]
Sunday 4 October at 2.00 pm	Around Tilehouse Street – a guided walk with Bridget and David Howlett [Limit 15 members]

If you have any questions on what is planned, please contact the [Programme Secretary](#).

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If you have an item, you would like to submit to the Newsletter please email

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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