

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY

ALMANACK

The Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Local History Society

Autumn Edition 2020



***Leighton Bromswold Church
THE VISIT IS ON –see inside!!***

This may strike you as early for Autumn, but everything's different this year. We combine a flyer for the one excursion/visit we have salvaged from the programme this year with publicity for Zoom talks that we will provide this side of Christmas. Keep safe, and if you do not have internet access, try to keep in touch with us via members who do.

***Philip Saunders
Chairman (paksanders@talk21.com)***

www.huntslhs.org.uk

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Presidency of the Society

Following his broadcast and widely-reported derogatory remarks on black Africans, we have had to ask our president, Dr David Starkey, to resign the Presidency of the Society, which he did without demur. We took this action with much regret, especially as he had accepted the office only last year, and we were looking forward to his first lecture to us, which had had to be postponed due to the pandemic. In view of the then many demands on his time it was a generous act of his to accept the invitation to be our president, and we wish him well with his academic work in the future, but the society is one that holds people in equal respect regardless of ethnicity. We felt a sense we had to rapidly dissociate ourselves from the attitude expressed and that it would be misleading for him to continue as our figurehead.

The committee is taking a deep breath and considering what we should look for in a president. We will not rush into this. All suggestions will be considered so do not hesitate to discuss any you have with a committee member.

Visit to Leighton Bromswold Church

The visit has been rearranged for **Thursday 17th September, at 3.30 p.m.** Meet outside the church, 2 metres apart unless with a person is part of your household/social bubble. The visit is by kind arrangement with Hugh West of Leighton Bromswold, author of a new, Goodliff Award-supported, guide. Hugh will be giving us a talk and showing us round this 'wonderful church' (*Pevsner*), celebrated for its association with George Herbert and his friends the Ferrars of Little Gidding, but having much else of interest, both earlier and later in date.

At completion of the visit and tour of the church we shall be having tea in the church.

We know that many members have been isolating during the pandemic and may be wary of coming, but consider that most of us have been doing the same and we shall take all sensible precautions, so the risk is very low. Please bring with you a face mask and wear it whenever appropriate. In order to ensure social distancing within the church we have to limit places to 15 members, so act quickly to book your place now by emailing David Smith info@huntslhs.org or phoning him on 01480-350127. Deadline is Sunday 13th September. **There is a charge of £5.00. Please bring this in cash on the day so it can go straight into an envelope.**

Our apologies to those who are at work and unable to join us. We did not lightly change the timing of this from the original plan of an early evening visit followed by optional meal in the *Green Man*, but on this occasion and after a postponement to September it seemed best.

Autumn Lectures by Zoom

In view of the uncertainty caused by the pandemic and necessity of social distancing, we have decided to cancel normal meetings for the rest of 2020, with the possible exception of the Christmas Social on 4th December, about which a decision will be taken in October. Ongoing we are also looking at what we do in Spring 2021. We shall however be providing from within our own committee's members, in September, October and November, talks via Zoom. If you haven't experienced this before, it is very easy to sign up to. You have only to follow the link that we shall send all members a few days before the talk. David Smith will be in charge of letting you in to the virtual meeting room. You can choose to be visible to others if you have a camera on whatever appliance you are using (laptop/tablet/smartphone). If you do have an email address but have never told us of it, now's the time to make amends and do so.

As usual, all meetings commence at 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday 16th September

Annual General Meeting. This year we shall keep our business meeting to the necessary minimum. A separate agenda is being sent with this newsletter. We continue to welcome new blood on the committee, so if you are interested in joining us, just get someone to nominate you.

It will be followed by a talk:

Stuart Orme, Curator of the Cromwell Museum 'Mrs Cromwell's Cookbook: Food, Dining and Politics in the 17th Century'

In 1664 *The Court and Kitchen of Elizabeth, commonly called Joan Cromwell* was published, purporting to be the cookery book of Oliver Cromwell's wife as a piece of Royalist propaganda. Stuart's talk looks at this curious publication and what it tells us about politics, fenland food and 17th-century dining, as well as the Cromwell family.

A new edition of the book will be published later this year, thanks to a Goodliff Award from the Society.



Wednesday 14th October

Philip Saunders, former Principal Archivist, Cambridgeshire Archives & Local Studies *Maps and Machinery in the History of Fen Drainage*

The fens are an area stretching across several counties. They are unique in England for prompting a genre of cartographic artistry akin to county maps. But they also tell the truly heroic story of how technology has been applied to stem the floods and fulfill the agricultural potential of this fertile area.



Extract from *Regiones Inundatae* 1632

Wednesday 11th November

Liz Davies, Curator of the St Neots Museum *Magic and Folk Medicine in Huntingdonshire*

What sort of alternative medicines did people use before the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948? And what sort of medicines and charms were available from local folk healers? This illustrated talk will include the extraordinary story of the St Neots antique dealer, herbal medicine maker and road sweeper, Alfred 'Doc' Rowlett (pictured).



As usual these talks are open to non-members, who should email David Smith, info@huntslhs.org.uk requesting the link a few days before.

Cambridgeshire Local History Review

As usual, thanks to our affiliation to the Cambridgeshire Association for Local History, we have received their journal with articles on pre-1974 Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. It is a bumper issue with articles on the Chapmans of 16th-century Cambridge, early Wimpole charities, the diaries of Lady Philadelphia Cotton of Madingley, the cabdrivers of Cambridge, railways in Cambridge 1845-55 and Thriplow Daffodil Weekend at 50. If you are interested in reading any of these please email David Smith and we will get it to you by post in return for a donation towards postage sometime in the future!

Huntingdonshire History Festival

Recent contributions to the blog, both by Matt Calleway, are on Huntingdonshire Fens and the Cistercian Abbey of Sawtry. <http://www.huntshistoryfest.com>. Do take a look and share friends. We need to keep interest alive for next year's postponed Festival.



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Huntingdonshire Family History Society

The society has now been formally wound up and funds totalling £41,987 transferred to us, where for a minimum 10 years it will be kept as a restricted fund for supporting local family history projects, to be administered with the Goodliff Award scheme.

Website recommendations

Here are a couple I've been looking at and you might find interesting:

Layers of London, <https://www.layersoflondon.org/about>, is a map-based history website being developed by the Institute of Historical Research. It is a wonderful resource for anyone with interests in the history of the capital or people who have lived in it, having maps or all periods that you can superimpose one on the other, from the time of John Stow to Charles Booth's housing survey of the late 19th century, to LCC bomb damage maps. You can contribute information and stories to the site. The project also runs free webinars by local experts.

The Henry III Fine Rolls project, <https://finerollshenry3.org.uk/home.html>, ran between 2005 and 2011. It put online a full translated edition of one of the neglected sources for the reign (1216-72) and spawned research in many directions. It even featured a 'Fine of the Month'. This sounds like someone on the Huntingdon Magistrates' Bench might compete for, but was actually an academic paper stimulated by some aspect of the fines, payments made to the royal Chancery for some action or another. In 1227-8, for example, the Jews of Worcester intriguingly paid one mark (13s.4d.) to have a writ to the sheriff of Huntingdonshire to bring before the king one Christiana, a maid of a religious recluse in the Malverns, whom they had been accused of murdering, but who had been seen alive and well – in Godmanchester!

Tobruk to Trieste by the late **Bert Goodwin** of Eynesbury is a fascinating autobiographical account of a local man who served with the Eighth Army as a gunner and signaller in North Africa and Italy. As a member of the 2SAS in 1943 and later with partisans in the Apennines, he took part in successful missions behind the Gustav Line, breaking German supply routes to Cassino and the Liri Valley. He writes modestly and frankly of moments of great bravery, compassion and camaraderie amidst the action and destruction of war.

The book, which received a Goodliff award, has been prepared for the press by Bert's friends Beth and Brian Davis and is available to HLHS members for £12 inclusive of postage. Send a cheque made out to *Mrs E. Davis* to Brook House, Easton, Huntingdon, PE28 0TU.

