

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY

# ALMANACK

## The Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Local History Society

Autumn 2023



*Our new President, Viscountess Hinchbrooke*

*Inside is our programme for Autumn 2023– Spring 2024, some online, some face-to-face. We hope you will find it interesting, and that you will join us for some or all of them*

*Philip Saunders, Chairman*



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# Lecture Programme 2023– 2024

In timing and venue we continue the mixed theme of last year, so please pay attention to when and where things are taking place, enter them in your diary, and leave home or work in good time as appropriate. Once again we are sticking to *Zoom* for the talks in January and February, complemented with some daytime activities. Please give us feedback on whether this formula suits you and whether there are changes you would like to see. A further *Almanack* is planned for the new year.

**Unless otherwise specified, meetings start at 7.30 p.m.**

## **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October, Huntingdon Methodist Church**

***Limited car parking at church. Please use public car park at Malting Close PE29 3AR if that doesn't present a problem.***

### **Clive Beeke: *The Ramsey Tunnels***

Few realise that until the 1850s Ramsey's Great Whyte had running down it an open river that served both as drain and navigation and that it now conceals one of the local engineering marvels of its age, comparable to the covering of the Fleet in London. Clive's talk will survey the history of the lodes that flow into these tunnels from the Middle Ages onward, their construction and subsequent history to the present day.



## **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November Huntingdon Town Hall**

***Disabled parking only on Market Hill (approach via High Street from south). Please use public car park at Malting Close PE29 3AR***

### **Goodliff Awards Presentation Evening**

It is an amazing variety of projects, popular and academic, spanning many centuries, types of history, covering the length and breadth of Huntingdonshire. Do come to hear and congratulate the successful applicants for these awards

**Our new President, Julie Montagu, Viscountess Hinchinbrooke, will present the awards and afterwards give a talk on an earlier American member of the family, Alberta Countess of Sandwich**



On 25 July 1905 Alberta Sturges, born 1877 in Chicago, made a truly life-altering marriage to George Montagu. Eleven years' later, on the death of his father, George became 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich and she the Countess. The couple moved into Hinchinbrooke House, the family's ancestral seat since 1627. Their marriage would last an impressive 46 years till Alberta's death in 1951. Yet beneath the surface intriguing questions remain. Did Alberta's heart belong in this marriage, or did she yearn for a life of contemplation as a nun? And did she compromise her own aspirations to fulfil those of her socially ambitious mother?

Alberta's story reveals a tapestry woven with threads of love, duty, and personal fulfilment, set against the rich backdrop of a storied family legacy in a period of profound societal change.

**Wednesday 6th December, Huntingdon Town Hall**

***Liz Davies: A Victorian Christmas in Huntingdonshire followed by The Society's Celebrated Christmas Social***



We have no musical entertainment planned this year (though we are still open to offers). But Liz, now retired from the St Neots Museum but Liz has offered to give us an insight drawn from her long experience as a curator there and previously in Peterborough into how our predecessors coped with Christmas before there was any royal broadcast or *Dr Who* to watch. Did they eat turkey, goose or was it just bread and dripping? Did the devout or not so devout Anglicans stagger out of the pub to the midnight mass? Did the temperate noncons look up from reading their Bibles?

We want to make this to some extent interactive. Come ready to share some family tales and recollections. Afterwards we shall join in our usual social that for many of us fires the starting pistol for the festive season.

No charge this year, but we will invite donations for drinks.



**Wednesday 10th January 2023 (by Zoom)**  
***Speaker and subject to be confirmed***

**2.30 p.m., Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January**

**Afternoon visit to Peterborough Museum to see the Fengate Archaeological Archive, with workshop presentation on Osteoarchaeology.**

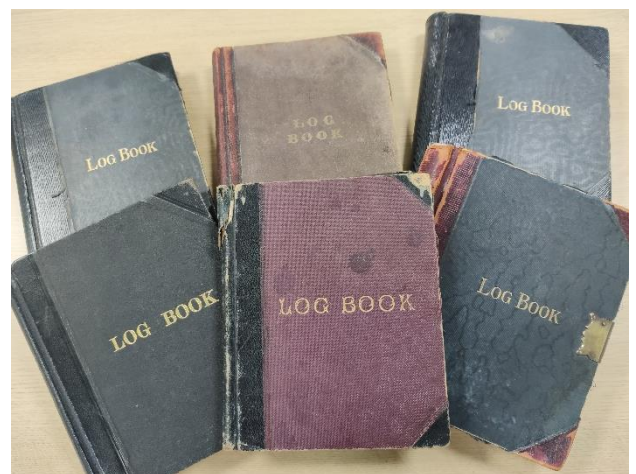
This will be a limited numbers bookable visit. Further information to follow at beginning of 2024. But if interested put this in your diary now.

**Tuesday 13th February (by Zoom)**

**Hannah Bithel-Vaughan, Collections Archivist, Cambridgeshire Archives Service: *Educating Huntingdonshire: School Records for the Local Historian***

Schools are the cornerstone of local communities and are an underestimated resource for local history. Huntingdonshire Archives has recently saved records from schools that have closed permanently. These records show a snapshot of the lives of the local young people, as well as showing how the school impacted the local community

Zoom link will be circulated to members a few days before the talk.



**11.00 a.m., Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

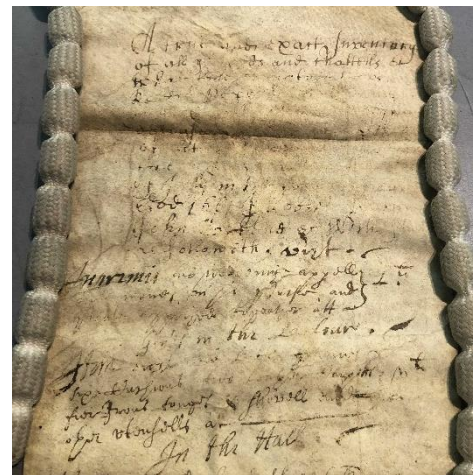
**Visit to the Pepys and Old Libraries, Magdalene College, Cambridge**

Whilst the Pepys Library contains the donor's diaries and books, the Old Library holds the Ferrar Papers, both with strong Huntingdonshire associations. This too will be a limited numbers bookable visit. Further information to follow at beginning of 2024. But if interested put this in your diary now.

## **Wednesday 13th March, Huntingdon Methodist Church**

### **Ken Sneath: *Robert Pepys and his house at Brampton: A newly discovered document.***

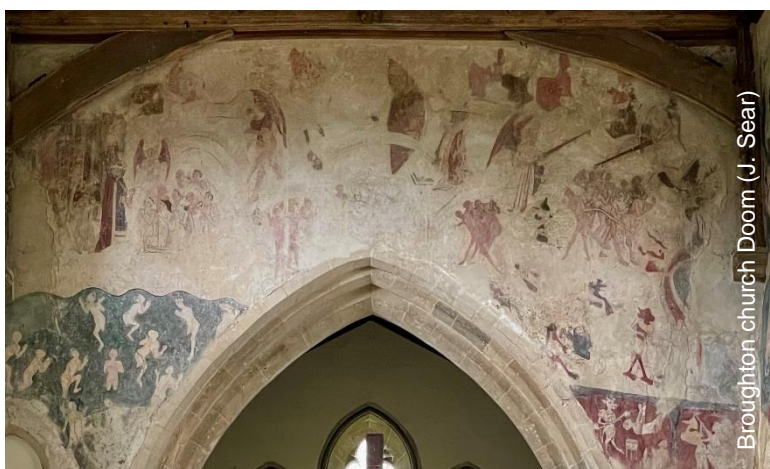
Work on Pepys House has stimulated some research into its former owner and the transcription of his particularly difficult probate inventory. A new Pepys document effectively dragged into the public domain calls for some celebration. From his expert knowledge of this type of source Ken will examine what it tells us about Mr Pepys and the people of his status in 17<sup>th</sup>-century Huntingdonshire.



## **Wednesday 10th April, Huntingdon Methodist Church**

### **Joanne Sear: *Benefitting the Soul – Life, Religion and the Church in Late Medieval Huntingdonshire***

Studies have suggested that during the Henrician Reformation, the people of Lincoln Diocese, including the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon, held firmly to the 'old Faith', and were reluctant supporters of the new form of Christianity. This talk surveys religion in late medieval society and examines the evidence suggesting Huntingdonshire people truly embraced Catholicism.



## **Wednesday 8th May (provisional date), venue to be announced**

### ***Annual General Meeting with a short talk &/or display***

Details to be circulated in the Spring.

## ***Subscriptions***

New subscriptions during Autumn 2023 cover all 2024. Otherwise renewals are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January, £10 single, £15 double, indisputably good value. Please renew promptly through our treasurer, David Smith. If you are a UK taxpayer, he can arrange a Gift Aid declaration, thereby increasing the society's income. Tell him too if you have you have made a declaration in the past but no longer earn enough (£12,570) to pay income tax.

## **David Cozens, M.B.E., 1933-2023**



As most readers will know, David Cozens, our chairman 1974-2009 and president from late 2021 until his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 11<sup>th</sup> September, died peacefully in his sleep during preparation of this newsletter. In view of his interest in Hinchchingbrooke and the Montagus it is a particular sadness that he will not see into office his successor, whose appointment he had suggested and assisted with. A fuller account of his enormous contribution to the society will appear in *Records*. Meanwhile we record the society's gratitude for a life well spent and offer our condolences to Mary and family.