

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY

ALMANACK

The Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Local History Society Autumn 2024



*Great Staughton: Sir James & Lady Margaret Dyer – see November talk;
Also Records of Huntingdonshire vol.2 no.7*



Inside is our programme for Autumn 2024 to Early 2025, 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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Lectures, etc., Programme Sept. 2024 – March 2025

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 our projected excursion in September has been put off till next year, we have arranged a talk and are grateful to Ian Mason for agreeing to do this at short notice, and for a variety of reasons have decided to use *Zoom* for this. We are also sticking to *Zoom* for the talks in January and February, complemented with some daytime activities. A further *Almanack* is planned for January with more information on these and on the March to May meetings and, we hope, a weekend away.

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

Thursday 26th September, by Zoom

Ian Mason: *Treasures of Ramsey Abbey*

Ramsey Abbey was one of the great monasteries of medieval England. Although there are few building remains besides the gatehouse and infirmary (now the parish church) there are significant other artifacts, notably the censer (illustrated) and incense boat that once adorned the high altar of the abbey church. Ian will tell the story of their discovery and look at other associated treasures. *Zoom link will be circulated a few days before meeting.*



Wednesday 16th October, 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 and don't be late as meeting is upstairs.

Goodliff Awards Presentation Evening

Once again, an amazing variety of projects, popular and academic, spanning many centuries, types of history, covering the length and breadth of Huntingdonshire. Come to hear and see about the successful projects and congratulate the successful applicants. Refreshments.

Our President, Julie Montagu, Viscountess Hinchingsbrooke, will present the awards. Afterwards she will give us some update on her researches into on a previous American member of the family, under the title:

The Unknown American Heiress, Alberta Sturges, 9th Countess of Sandwich

Julie writes: *In the gilded corridors of early 20th-century high society, Alberta stands at a crossroads between societal expectations and personal enlightenment. Born into an era marked by the transatlantic marriages of American heiresses—like Consuelo Vanderbilt to the Duke of Marlborough or Helena Zimmerman to the Duke of Manchester—Alberta faces her own pressures to conform. Yet, her personal journey is one of profound introspection and spiritual discovery, influenced by her deep engagement with the teachings of Swami Vivekananda. As she corresponds with George, a potential suitor and later her husband of 46 years, her letters reflect a struggle to reconcile a life pre-ordained by social duty with a path of spiritual authenticity she yearns to follow. Alberta's story is a compelling exploration of identity, duty, and the pursuit of a life led not by societal norms, but by the quest for personal truth and spiritual integrity.*



Alberta's archive of letters, journals and diaries is stored at Mapperton House, Dorset, principal home of the Montagus since 1955. Julie's research has given birth to the 'Alberta Research Project', engaging 30 volunteers worldwide formed into teams named after *White Star* liners transcribing scanned copies of the letters, 4,000 of which have now been done. The project has been distinguished by its innovative adoption of new technologies, including the creation of an 'Alberta AI' whereby she answers questions about her life. This AI technology will be a part of the presentation. In June the project was awarded the 2024 Archives and Records Association's national Archives Volunteering Award. For the awarding committee's report follow the *Read More* link from <https://www.archives.org.uk/news>.



Wednesday 13th November, Huntingdon Methodist Church

Limited car parking at church. Please use public car park at Malting Close PE29 3AR if you can.

Anthony Withers: *Great Staughton and its People*

This talk takes its title from Anthony's recent book which is subtitled 'How a Huntingdonshire village made its mark on England's history'. It covers 2,000 years of English history focusing on the people from Staughton who played a role in the great events of our history. From the fabulous array of monuments in the church alone it is an impressive list, but that is just a start. Anthony will bring copies of books for sale. There will also be the usual society bookstall, journal loans and refreshments after the talk.



Wednesday 18th December, Huntingdon Methodist Church

Christmas Musical Evening and Social with *Tapestry Singers*



We are delighted once again to have [Tapestry Singers](#). They are a distinguished *cappella* choir with a widely-experienced musical director Jeremy Burrows. The abiding memory from when we had them last was that of universal praise and *Why didn't we invite more friends to come*. Well, this year make sure you bring some friends with you. Members of other Huntingdonshire local history societies also very welcome. We'd love to share more of what we are both doing. Following their performance an opportunity to get to know one another better over a glass or cup with some Christmas fare.

We are making a charge of £10.00 principally to cover costs of food, drink and choir performance fee. You can pay on 13th November or on the night (cash or card). For catering purposes, please let David Smith (email: info@huntslhs.org.uk; 01480-350127) know in advance that you are coming. Tickets will not be issued but a list will be kept at the door



Fuller Information about January-May talks will be published in the New Year 2025 of this newsletter, but put these in your new diary.

Wednesday 8th January 2025 (by Zoom)

John Broad, Affiliated Researcher, Cambridge Group for the Study of Population: *Reading and Writing in 18th-century Huntingdonshire*

11.00 a.m., Wednesday 15th January

Morning visit to Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Thursday 13th February (by Zoom)

Paul Everson, Hon. Lecturer, Keele University: *Antiquarians, Architects and Archaeologists: rediscoverers of early stone sculpture in Cambs. & Hunts.*

2.30 p.m., Wednesday 26th February

Visit to the Huntingdonshire Archives to see a selection of documents from the estate archive of the Dukes of Manchester, of Kimbolton Castle, with an introductory talk by Esther Bellamy, Collections Archivist

Wednesday 12th March, Huntingdon Methodist Church

Bridget Flanagan and Keith Grimwade: *Brampton to St Ives – identifying the watermilling landscape along the Great Ouse*

Wednesday 9th April (provisional date), Huntingdon Methodist Church

Speaker and subject to be announced.

Wednesday 14th May (provisional date), venue to be announced

Annual General Meeting with a short talk &/or display

Subscriptions

New subscriptions during Autumn 2024 cover all 2025. Renewals are due on 1st January, £10 single, £15 double, indisputably good value. Please renew promptly through our treasurer, David Smith (info@huntslhs.org.uk). 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 made a declaration in the past but no longer earn enough (£12,570) to pay income tax.

[Cambridge Antiquarian Society](#) and [Cambs. Association for Local History](#)

Members are reminded that the society is affiliated to these organisations and they can go to their meetings free or for a reduced charge. You can find details on their websites but we also try to circulate reminders of coming meetings of Huntingdonshire interest.

CALH and HLHS also support the online meetings of the **Local and Landscape History Research Group**. It has two meetings planned for the Autumn, each at 6.30 p.m.:

3 October: Oscar Aldred (Cambridge Archaeological Unit) *Digging for Northstowe*
24 October: Alan Crosby (editor of *Local Historian*) *Landscape of North-west England*

To subscribe free to this group and be notified of meetings, email Evelyn Lord, evelynlord9@gmail.com.