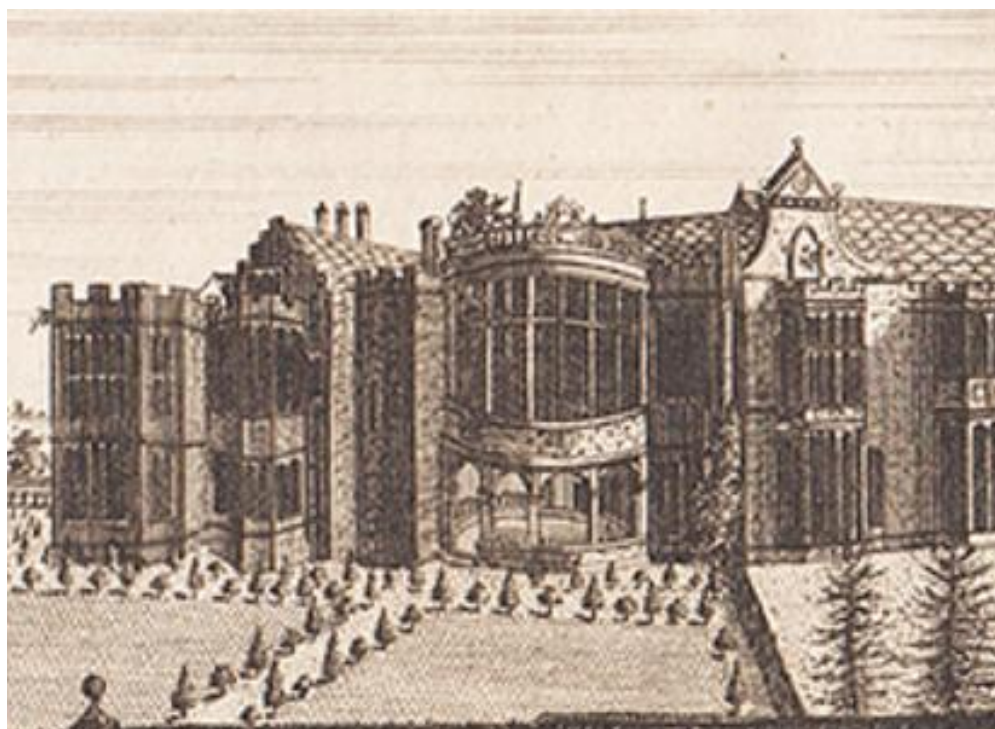


HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY

ALMANACK

The Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Local History Society Autumn 2025



*Hinchinbrooke derived from S&N Buck c.1730
(Cambridgeshire Libraries)*

Inside is our programme for Autumn 2025 to Early 2026. We hope you will find it interesting, and that you will join us for some or all of them. This issue replaces that issued a month ago in September.

*Philip Saunders
Chairman*



Lectures, etc., Programme Oct. 2025 – April 2026

In timings and format we continue the mixed theme of recent years, so pay attention to how you put them in your diary. We are sticking to *Zoom* for the talks in January and February, complemented with some daytime activities. A further *Almanack* is planned for New Year with more information on these and January to May meetings.

Unless otherwise specified, meetings start at 7.30 p.m. All meetings in person except the first are at Huntingdon Methodist Church. There is limited car parking at the church, so please use the public car park at Malting Close PE29 3AR if you can

Wednesday 1st October, Huntingdon Town Hall

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 Countess of Sandwich, will present the awards.

Anyone who follows her on *Facebook* will be aware that our president has been exceptionally busy lately, travelling in Europe, following up on some earlier Montagus, and touring historic family homes in England for her [American Countess Youtube channel](#) whilst doing her best to keep followers aware and engaged of the business of running an historic house herself with her husband at Mapperton. She is foregoing a talk this year (though may give us an update) in order to give **Stuart Orme, Curator of the Cromwell Museum**, a chance to speak to us on ...



Hinchingbrooke during the English Civil Wars

At the commencement of hostilities Hinchingbrooke was the home of the staunch royalist Sir Sydney Montagu, but by the time the Commonwealth was established it had passed to his parliamentarian son Edward, who steered an independent path as a Cromwellian general, even criticising his cousin and fellow Huntingdonshire landowner, the earl of Manchester, and eventually coming round to play a part in the Restoration of Charles II. It is a complex and intriguing story and no-one better than Stuart to guide us through this traumatic time in the house's history.

Wednesday 12th November

Roger Leivers: *Farm Hall: House of Spies*

Drawing on his second book, *Godmanchester at War*, Roger will tell us about how Farm Hall, Godmanchester, became a vital link between SIS HQ in London St James and RAF Tempsford. He will cover who ran it, who passed through on the way to occupied Europe, the story of a canine warrior, the German Nuclear Scientists incarcerated there, and one of the most amazing wartime survival stories, worthy of a film any day.



Wednesday 10th December

Briga (alias Chris Carr): *Christmas Customs of the Middle Ages: Lords of Misrule and Boy Bishops*, followed by the annual society social

Briga specialises in bringing social history to life: illustrating how ordinary folk lived, what they wore and ate, kept clean and healthy and how the major events of history changed their lives. She is also an experienced historic cook. For us she will focus on the customs that surrounded Christmas in the later medieval and Tudor period. This will be an informative but fun evening brought to you in costume complete with medieval mince pies. Feel free to wear costume too. The evening will be rounded off with our usual Christmas social. No need to bring more than yourselves, but guests are welcome.

We are making no charge this year.



Thursday 15 January 2026

Visit to King's College Cambridge

We have provisionally booked with *Cantab Tours* a guided visit to King's College, led by a knowledgeable blue badge guide. The evening before, Wednesday 14th, we hope to have a *Zoom* introduction to the history of the College, especially the Chapel. The likely cost for the visit is £20-25. The college does not release dates when it will be open more than two months in advance, so we cannot fix a date till November. Firm booking details to follow, but as our number is limited to 20 if interested please get your name on the list now by emailing David Smith, info@huntlhs.org.uk. The Chapel is a breathtaking building and has excellent displays on its history, but a guided visit is the way to get the best out of it, and this is the best time of year, without crowds of other tourists.

7.30 p.m., Wednesday 28 January

Zoom talk: Michael Sutherill: Newmarket's Place in Racing History.

Michael is a curatorial trustee for the National Horse-Racing Museum, Newmarket, and a former curator with the National Trust and inspector of historic buildings for English Heritage. We hope this will be a springboard to a society visit to the museum (and maybe more) next summer. The *Zoom* link will be circulated a few days before.

7.30 p.m., Tuesday 10th February and 2.30 p.m. Wednesday 11th February

Philip Saunders: *Zoom* talk and workshop session at Huntingdonshire Archives, *Ordnance Survey Maps for the Local Historian*

The Ordnance Survey is an invaluable tool for local history of all kinds, whether family history, history of a house or other building, landscape, agriculture or industry. It also provides the base map for many other kinds of record. In the evening talk he will aim to look at what is now available online and on the following afternoon what is at Huntingdonshire Archives.

Tuesday 10th March

Paul Stamper: *The Decline of the English Country House*

Paul worked for English Heritage for 20 years including as Senior Adviser on listing buildings. His wide knowledge has borne fruit in many academic and popular writings.

Wednesday 8th April

Keith Alexander and David Hand: *History of the Nene Valley Railway*

The Nene Valley Railway has had a remarkable history both in its operational heyday as part of the first Northampton-Peterborough line and as the successful outcome of a campaign to preserve local industrial heritage and become a preserved railway tourist attraction.

Saturday 18th April

‘Really Useful Family History Show’, Burgess Hall, St Ives

The society will have a stall at this event, organised by the East Anglian Group of Family History Societies, which was so successful this year. Offers to help welcome.

Wednesday 13th May (provisional date), venue to be announced

Annual General Meeting with a short talk &/or display

Possible Weekend Excursion 2026

Insufficient interest has been shown in a battlefield tour to WW1 or WW2 sites, as advertised in the original version of this newsletter, and we have decided not to pursue this further.

Jean Burbidge continues to investigate a group visit to **the Isle of Man**, which offers a unique blend of English, Scandinavian and Celtic heritage, with plenty to occupy a long weekend. This would probably not be a simple coach visit, but organised train & ferry using group rates, with minibus tours on the island. She is in touch with expert assistance in organising this and would be planned with tastes, abilities and access needs and abilities of those who want to go. The date is yet to be determined but Jean is looking mainly at June. Contact her if at all interested, email goslingwing@gmail.com, or phone 07798 685648.

News: Bridget Flanagan and Keith Grimwade have published their book *The Watermills and Landscape of the River Great Ouse in Cambridgeshire* which they came to talk to us about in March. To mark ‘Rail 200’ Sadie Macmullon has a new blog post on the coming of the railway to Fletton at <https://flettonparish.co.uk/>

Obituary. We note with sadness the recent deaths of Revd. David Viles, on the society’s committee 2000-2011 and author of two articles for *Records of Huntingdonshire*, in June; Pat Jones, who also served on the committee 2013-18, in August; and Professor David Yeandle, a relatively recent member but who gave us talks in 2021 (published in *Records*) and (with Charles Beresford) in 2022, in September.

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

A reminder that the society is affiliated to these organisations and HLHS members can attend their meetings free or at a reduced charge. You can find details on their websites but we also try to circulate reminders of coming meetings of Huntingdonshire interest. Journals of both organisations are also available to borrow. The most recent volume of *Proceedings of the CAS* includes reports on excavations in Buckden, Southoe and most substantially on the north-west fringe of Huntingdon (sites on Stukeley Road and the former Territorial Inn).

Subscriptions

New subscriptions during Autumn 2025 cover all 2026. 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.