

HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY

# ALMANACK

## Newsletter of the Huntingdonshire Local History Society

New Year 2026



Martinvl, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia

*First, let me wish you a very Happy New Year. Inside is our programme for the rest of the Winter and Spring 2026 with more detail than previously circulated. I hope you will find it interesting, and that you will join us for some or all of the events listed.*

*Philip Saunders, Chairman*



[www.huntslhs.org.uk](http://www.huntslhs.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 290741

## ***Happy New Year and Subscription Reminder***

I hope you are having or have had a restful and enjoyable Christmas, particularly if you missed those wishes given at the talk and social at beginning of December. Several of you have commented on how interesting Chris Clover's talk on Christmas Past (i.e. the Middle Ages) was; hopefully we shall see her again sometime. Thanks are also due to David, Caroline and Nick for organising the refreshments and to Alan for opening up the church despite having to miss out on the party. Please continue to give feedback on where and what you wish for this event. If we are to return to 'musical evenings', regardless of venue, we need to book soon.

Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup> January, £10 single, £15 double, indisputably good value. If you have internet banking, you can transfer this money direct to the society's *NatWest* bank account, **Huntingdonshire Local History Society, sort code 60-18-17, account number 72654848**, identifying the payment with your surname+2026. Better still, set up a standing order. Alternatively, please send a cheque to the treasurer David Smith at **16 Dovehouse Close, Godmanchester, HUNTINGDON, PE29 2DY**. However you pay, please renew promptly and make his job a bit easier. If, regretfully, you do not wish to renew, please let him know, [info@huntslhs.org.uk](mailto:info@huntslhs.org.uk).

If you are a UK taxpayer, David can arrange a Gift Aid declaration, thereby increasing the society's income. Conversely, please tell him too if you have made a declaration in the past but no longer earn enough (£12,570) to pay income tax.

## **Programme Winter/Spring 2026**

***All meetings in person are at the Methodist Church, High Street, Huntingdon. Limited car parking at church. Please use public car park at Malting Close PE29 3AR if you can. Links for Zoom talks will be circulated a few days in advance.***

**7.30 p.m., *Thursday 15<sup>th</sup>* and 11.00 a.m., *Friday 16<sup>th</sup>* January**

### **Short Zoom talk and visit to King's College Cambridge**

King's College Chapel is one of the world's most famous buildings, visited annually by thousands. The exterior will be familiar and acts virtually as an unofficial logo for the City, and the interior is truly breathtaking. But how many nowadays come from the immediate vicinity? Its very popularity may act as a disincentive. We have arranged this tour at this time of year to provide an opportunity to experience the Chapel when at its quietest.

On the Thursday evening Philip Saunders will give a short talk on medieval Cambridge at the time of the foundation of the College to set the background for the guided visit the following morning. Philip was previously Principal Archivist for Cambridgeshire County Council and *inter alia* looked after the archives of the medieval borough. On the Friday we shall have the guided tour with Matthew Saunders (no relation!) provided by *Cantab Tours*.

**Please book** by email to David Smith, [info@huntslhs.org.uk](mailto:info@huntslhs.org.uk) **by Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> January.**

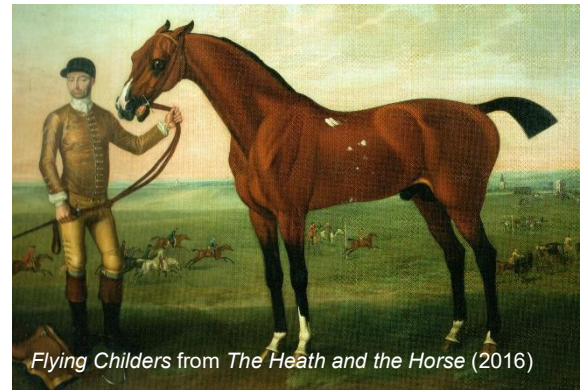
Numbers are strictly limited to 20 (the maximum group size allowed by the college). There is a charge of £24.00 per person to cover entrance & tour. Either pay by bank transfer (details above – identify payment as Kings College) or bring a cheque payable to *Huntingdonshire Local History Society*) or correct cash on the day. The *Zoom* talk is of course open to all members without need to book.

Please note this was provisionally dated for Wed.14<sup>th</sup> and Thurs.15<sup>th</sup>, but unfortunately we hit upon one of the few days in January when the college will be closed to visitors and had to change the date.

**7.30 p.m., Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> January**

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

No-one would question the primacy of Newmarket as the centre of English racing. It has enjoyed the patronage of monarchy from James I onward and become the location of both the Jockey Club that governs the sport and the National Stud. 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, peculiarly equipped to understand the history of the place and its effect upon topography and society locally and further afield. We hope this whet the appetite for a society visit to the museum (and maybe more) next summer.



**7.30 p.m., Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February and 2.30 p.m. Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> 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 Philip will concentrate on what is now available online and on the following afternoon illustrate what is available at Huntingdonshire Archives.



O.S. Hunts. 1:2500 XIII.5 surveyed 1885-7  
Steeple Gidding village

For the visit to Archives please book by email to David Smith, [info@huntslhs.org.uk](mailto:info@huntslhs.org.uk), by Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February. Numbers will be limited; please book early.

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March**

**Paul Stamper: *The Decline of the Great Estate and the 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. He has a particular interest in the relationship of the great country house to agriculture and the landscape. As recently as the last war Huntingdonshire had many of these, but today out of town only Abbots Ripton and Elton remain in use as private homes and several of the others have disappeared entirely. To what extent is this the consequence of changing society, taxation, farming or tastes in field sports? These are some of the questions Paul will address.



Diddington Hall, early 1950s (from Sam Malt's Pictorial History of Huntingdonshire (Facebook))

**News: The Abbots Ripton Railway Disaster.** An exhibition drawing on collections and research of railway historian Chares Saunders will be in **Huntingdon Town Hall**, Mon.19 11.00-4.00, Tues-Thurs 20-22 January 10.00-4.00, to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disaster.



## **Wednesday 8th April**

### **Keith Alexander and David Hand: *The Nene Valley Railway***

The Nene Valley Railway is more than just another tourist attraction, important though that has become, but has had a remarkable operational history, being a section of the first railway into Peterborough, from Northampton to the former Peterborough East station (see Fletton blog below). It was important commercially as a link for the Midlands to Norwich, and was one of the last of the Beeching cuts, in 1966. Restoration of the NVR began within a decade, and it continues to expand its role in preservation of the railway heritage, making it an appropriate subject for the society in this *Rail 200* year. Keith is curator and David one of NVR's many volunteers. An excursion to see what they will tell us about is planned for the summer.



## **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> 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 in 2025. We will be selling our own publications and a quantity of local history books of our late member David Viles, but more than seeking income we aim to engage with people interested in the society. Offers to help welcome. For information on the event itself see <https://www.facebook.com/groups/rufhsstives2026/>

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

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

Details to be circulated with the summer excursions *Almanack*.

### ***Goodliff Awards 2026***

Do you or a group you are associated with need financial help to complete a local history project? You can apply to our **Goodliff Award Scheme**. We provide funding to individuals, societies, schools and groups who need support. Over the past 25 years, the Society has contributed more than £150,000 to over 250 projects. Funding may be given towards research expenses and publication costs for books, leaflets or display panels; the purchase of equipment; conservation or purchase of artefacts or documents, etc.

For more information and application form, visit the Goodliff Awards section of the Huntingdonshire Local History Society website [www.huntslhs.org.uk](http://www.huntslhs.org.uk) or email [goodliff.awards@gmail.com](mailto:goodliff.awards@gmail.com) The deadline for receipt of applications is 31st March.

**More News: Cromwell Museum.** Cromwell's watch, for which the society gave a Goodliff award to assist in its acquisition by publication of a booklet, is now on permanent display.

**Huntingdonshire Archives** and **Cambridgeshire Archives** will be closed for stocktaking 19-30 January.

The latest **Fletton blog** at <https://www.flettonparish.co.uk/blog-1> is about the Jeffs Family, emigrants to Canada. The previous blog is about the arrival of the railway in Peterborough.