

The

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Newsletter



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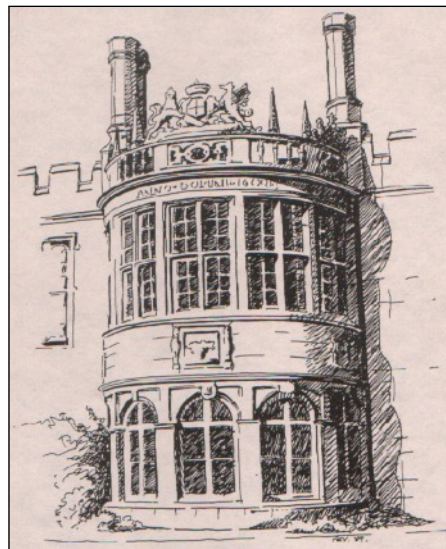
Chairman's Letter

This has obviously been a special and hyper-active year for all of us who have associations with Hinchingsbrook School and House. The articles in this newsletter give you a flavour of what has been happening and we hope that you will be able to take part in the events still to come.

One of our more mundane and routine tasks continues : we try to keep the Rose Garden under control and, as ever, I appeal for more help from younger members of the Friends. We usually meet on the occasional Sunday morning or afternoon for a couple of hours, to prune, weed and trim so it is not a highly skilled or over-demanding activity. To offer to help, please ring me on 01480 509471 or 07765 833 486.

Peter Downes

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Friends AGM - Sunday July 5th

Guest Speaker: Michael Wood (Historian and TV Presenter)

We meet for free drinks and nibbles in the Library at 6.30. There will be a short AGM at 7 p.m. after which we are very pleased to have Michael Wood as our guest speaker. Michael studied History and English at Oxford and started his career as a TV journalist. He became well known and greatly admired for his TV programmes. He has presented numerous television documentary series, including *Great Railway Journeys* (1980), *In Search of the Trojan War*, *Art of the Western World*, *Legacy: A Search for the Origins of Civilisation*, *In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great* (1998), *Conquistadors*, *In Search of Myths and Heroes* and *The Story of India* (2007). He has also written a number of books on English history including *In Search of the Dark Ages*, *The Domesday Quest*, *The Story of England* and *In Search of Shakespeare*.



Michael will be speaking about 'Making history come alive' and his talk will be illustrated by extracts from some of his programmes. All members of the Friends are invited and this may be a good opportunity to bring along others who may be interested in joining the Friends as we seek to develop our membership.

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NEW MEMBERS

We would like to take the opportunity of extending a warm welcome to the following new members:-

Mr Peter Burbridge

Mr Carl Jackson

Mrs D E Wormald

Please ask around to see if anyone might like to join the Friends. New members are very welcome. For subscription details ask our Treasurer Ian Nicholls, Tel 01480 811870 or email ij.nicholls@btinternet.com

Mapperton - House and Home

We held our Annual Dinner on February 19th 2015 and were delighted to have as our guests John and Caroline, the Earl and Countess of Sandwich and their 10 year old grandson William. Caroline was our guest speaker.



Caroline standing in front of the House at Mapperton



She talked about the challenges of owning and managing their stately home and estate, Mapperton, where you have to combine having a family life with making the property open to the public and making an income to subsidise the high costs of maintenance and development. Her talk was most enlightening and entertaining and was illustrated by photographs of the interior of the house as well as the many out-buildings and the beautiful garden and grounds.

Many of us came away from the talk profoundly impressed by the range of talents and organisational skills that you need to achieve success in the public and private aspects of the

enterprise. Living a modern domestic life in such an old house, with, among many other things, cupboards at inconvenient heights, is a huge challenge which Caroline seemed to approach with good humour and modesty.

An added complication is that the house and grounds are sometimes used as the backdrop for films or television series. Though this is a source of income and publicity, it is also very demanding in terms of day-to-day organisation. The most recent use of Mapperton is in the latest film version of Thomas Hardy's Dorsetshire novel 'Far from the Madding Crowd' (see right).



It looks beautiful and historically accurate but when you know what is going on behind the scenes to make it all happen, it makes you more appreciative of the hard work that goes in to providing us with our entertainment.

If you haven't seen it yet, by the way, the film is well worth seeing.



At the end of her talk Caroline took questions from the audience, including some challenging ones from her grandson William (who earlier in the day had been taken on a 'guided tour' of Hinchinbrooke House where his grandfather John was brought up.)

Peter Downes



The Friends of Hinchinbrooke House would like to thank Caroline for her excellent talk and wish her, John and the family the best of luck in difficult times.

Photographs from the talk kindly provided by the Earl and Countess of Sandwich

We are also grateful to the Dorset Echo for allowing us to use the photograph of the Countess outside Mapperton House.

A May weekend to remember

Hinchingbrooke House was the fitting setting for the main events celebrating this 450th anniversary of the foundation of Huntingdon Grammar School, which became Hinchingbrooke School in 1970. The original charter for the school was signed on May 2nd 1565 so this was the focal point of the exhibition held in the House on the first week-end in May. Memorabilia and artefacts were on display and there was a beautiful flower display in the Assembly Room by Brampton Flower Club, based on educational themes and school subjects. One of the most moving parts of the display of art work was some recently discovered paintings and sketches by a pupil who was in the school in the 1930s, Eric Woodward, who was killed in 1942 in World War II.

On the Saturday evening, the guest speaker was **Dame Hilary Mantel**, Booker prize-winning novelist whose books have recently been adapted for stage and screen. The demand for places at this event, staged in the Inner Hall, was so great that a video link was set up to the Library to enable more people to attend.



Hilary Mantel's talk was very well received. She linked her general topic – making history more 'human' through writing novels based on historical characters - to the setting and history of Hinchingbrooke House. The first owner of the House after the dissolution of the monasteries was Richard Cromwell whose family name was Williams but who had been adopted by his uncle Thomas Cromwell, the main character in Hilary Mantel's novel *Wolf Hall*. The third part of her

trilogy, telling of what happened to the Cromwells after the death of Thomas, is still in preparation and we await with some interest to see if part of it is set in Hinchingbrooke which belonged to the Cromwells through to 1627 when it was bought by the Montagu family.

Peter Downes

Photograph by kind permission of The Hunts Post

Other Events still to come in the 450th Anniversary Year

Wednesday, October 21st in the Performing Arts Centre: Special recognition awards will be made to individuals and groups working with young people. Details on the school web-site: www.hinchingbrookeschool.net.

Saturday, November 7th in the PAC – A joint concert with the School and Huntingdonshire Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra, featuring performances by some of the School's outstanding instrumentalists and the '*Hinchingbrooke Suite*', composed by former music teacher Barry Russell.

Friday November 27th in the PAC – a gala concert promoted by the OHA, featuring two former award-winning 'BBC Young Musicians', tickets available in September from 01480 375678.

The 450th Anniversary book is still available

The book written to commemorate the 450th anniversary of the school has been well received and is selling well. Copies (£15) are available from the school reception and can also be purchased from W.H. Smith's in Huntingdon, the Huntingdon Library, Huntingdon Town Hall, Cromwell Museum, Brampton Post office, Godmanchester Chemists, Buckden Library, Grahame Community Shop and St. Neots Museum. They will also be on sale at the Friends AGM on July 5th.

