

The

FHH

Newsletter



The newsletter of the Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House • December 2014 • Issue 24

Chairman's Letter

We are once again indebted to Geoff and Ann Gardner for editing and printing this Newsletter and I am sure you will find much of interest.

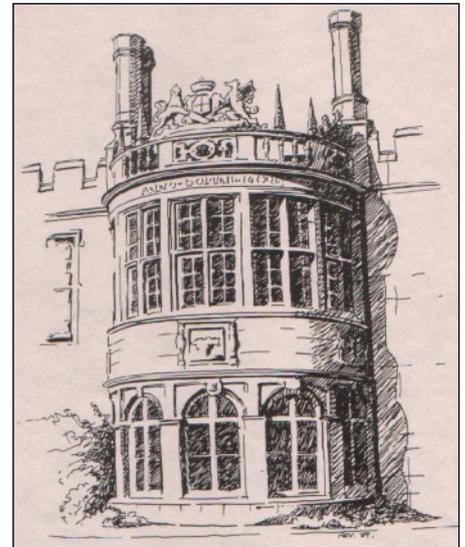
In addition to being involved in special events described elsewhere, the Friends support the school by gardening in the area of the Rose Garden and herbaceous border. Alas, the number of volunteers has declined and the age of those still willing to help has, not surprisingly, risen so we have not been able to achieve the standard we would like or which is appropriate to the splendid setting of Hinchingsbrooke House. However, we have managed to keep the Rose Garden in a reasonable condition and we are grateful to those who have 'sponsored' a rose in memory of a loved one. The school has managed to fund the restoration of one of the gates.

Now that the maintenance of the grounds is 'out-sourced', this means that the paths get mown (very regularly) but very little work is done on the beds. The FHH Committee is in negotiation with the School Site Manager to see if a special effort, supported by funds from the Friends, could be made to improve the setting in time for the 2015 events, especially the reunions during the summer months. The Site Manager is hoping to get the steps up to the Pepys Terrace repaired (they are currently fenced off as being unsafe) and there is the intention to restore the cherub statues at the entrance to the Rose Garden. Restoration work is also being carried out on the bay windows of the House.

As ever, I would be pleased to hear from anybody who can spare a couple of hours from time to time. We usually meet at a weekend so please get in touch with me on 01480 398082.

I hope to see you at one or more of the events in 2015.
Peter Downes

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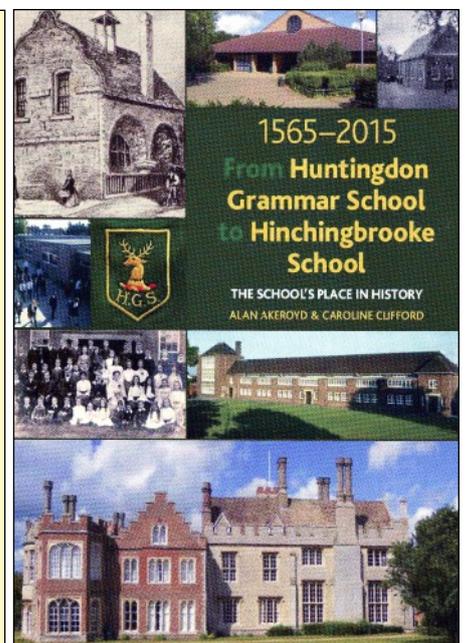
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2015 - the 450th Anniversary of the Foundation of Huntingdon Grammar School

Hinchingsbrooke School, the successor school to Huntingdon Grammar School, celebrates 450 years of existence in 2015 and there will be a number of events and activities. The Old Huntingdonians' Association (for former pupils and teachers) has already commissioned and published a new book which relates the story of the schools and sets their development on the context of social changes in Huntingdon and the surrounding area. It has been written by two local historians, Alan Akeroyd and Caroline Clifford, and first reactions to the book, which was launched in October, have been very enthusiastic. The book costs £15 and will be available for purchase at the Friends' Dinner. If you can't wait until then, you can order it by phone from the School on 01480 420502 and it will be sent to you by post (£4.50 for postage and packing).

On Saturday May 2nd (the actual date on which the original charter setting up the school was signed) School will be hosting a guest lecture by **Dame Hilary Mantel** whose prize-winning novels based on the Cromwell family need no introduction. The arrangements for that event are being made by the school and ticket sale arrangements will be published on the school web-site: www.hinchingsbrookeschool.net.



The Thinking Soldier

“To the men of 1914-1918 who wrought mankind a great deliverance”



The Thinking Soldier memorial overlooks the historic centre of Huntingdon from its prominent position on Huntingdon Market Hill. Unveiled on Armistice Day 1923, it represents a WW1 Soldier with a haunting expression of determination and a suspicion of agony as from the trenches he looks towards the enemy. He is half supporting himself with left knee bent, right hand on his rifle and his left supports his chin. The rifle is perfect in detail and the tin hat without its chin strap as a soldier in the trench always wore his chin strap under his helmet. Mud covers his right foot.

The statue is the work of sculptor Mrs Hilton Young (formerly Lady Kathleen Scott), wife of Scott of the Antarctic. Her signature is on the statue. After the war, the Council proposed a Memorial Hall but funds could not be found. However, the Womens' Institute had raised £355.4.0d for the Fund. Their President, Lady Sandwich of Hinchingsbrooke House was a friend of Lady Scott and she agreed to design and execute the bronze memorial, foregoing her fees.

An estimated 3,000 people attended the unveiling by Lord Sandwich, the Lord Lieutenant of the County. The event was reported widely in the local papers and Lady Scott in her diaries eloquently spoke of the occasion. *“Sunday, it was a lovely experience. The unveiling on a glorious, cold, sunny morning done with beautiful solemnity. There was the Last Post and the Lord Lieutenant in a scarlet coat and apple-faced boys singing in the open air ‘Oh, God our help in ages past.’ The church bells were ringing, and in the two minutes’ silence, little, grey women were weeping and my brooding soldier was looking down kindly on all. It was terribly moving. I never dared to hope my Soldier would look so fine and have such a beautiful birth”.*

Maintained by Huntingdon Town Council, the statue is now a memorial to the fallen of all wars since WWI. There are no names listed on the memorial, these are to be found in the Town Hall. In its simplicity yet incredible accuracy it continues to provide a moving memorial for Huntingdon and has in 2014 been recognised by English Heritage as one of the first of their memorial listings.

Ann Colbert

References: Huntingdon War memorial, A History by Pauline Hornsby; Extract from The Huntingdonshire Post, 15 November 1923; Extracts from Self Portrait of an Artist by Kathleen Kennet, copyright Lord Kennet, Published by John Murray, London 1949
For more information see Huntingdon's Great War History Trail, published by Cambridgeshire County Council, available from Huntingdon Town Council.

Visit to Mapperton, Dorset

The Committee had hoped to have a group visit to the home of the Earl of Sandwich, Mapperton, in June but unfortunately it is too far to go there and back in one day. However, we (Peter and Pamela Downes) were having a weekend away in the South West so we managed to get there and were welcomed and shown round by John Sandwich. It made us realise what a lot of work there is in maintaining house and gardens, but we thoroughly enjoyed our time there.



The Earl of Sandwich showing us round the house and gardens at Mapperton, his home in Dorset

The King's visit to Hinchingsbrooke in 1906



In 1906 the 8th Earl of Sandwich invited King Edward VII to visit Hinchingsbrooke House. His nephew, George Montagu, later to become the 9th Earl, wrote down his recollection of the occasion in a document called "Reminiscences", part of which is reproduced here.

In 1906 King Edward was invited by my uncle to pay a visit to Hinchingsbrooke, and I was included in the party. Other guests were Mrs Keppel, Agnes and Fanny Keyser, whom the King had met at Homburg where he had taken the waters. It was these two sisters who founded the famous hospital for officers at the time of the Boer war in Grosvenor Crescent, which the King was accustomed to visit from time to time. Lord Rivensdale was another of the guests. During the King's stay we went over to Kimbolton, another seat of the Montagu family. I shall never forget His Majesty's remarkable memory of people that he showed on that occasion. He was looking at some old photograph books at the time of the 70's, when he used to stay there. These contained groups of members of the cabinet and junior officials, and there was hardly one that he could not put a name to, until he turned over a page and saw the figure of a dark elderly woman. He turned to my uncle and said "Who is that, Hinch?" And when he answered "Oh Sir, that is Queen Emma of the Sandwich Islands who came over to visit your mother." he replied, "Oh yes, of course, I remember her now."

Another day we drove over to Ramsey Abbey, the home of Lord de Ramsey - for some years now a school - for a luncheon party. On starting, I was somewhat horrified to hear my uncle, instead of accompanying the King in his car, suggesting that he should go ahead on his own and show His Majesty the way. In those days before tar was used on the roads, they were extremely dusty. My uncle's chauffeur scorched ahead, and when the King, who had followed some distance behind, arrived at the front door, where we were all waiting to receive Him, my uncle said "I showed you a clean pair of heels, Sir." To this King Edward replied quite angrily, and rightly so, "Yes Hinch, and you gave me all your damned dust."

The concluding episode of his visit occurred when Agnes and Fanny Keyser had to leave, just before the end of luncheon, earlier than the King's departure. I can see Agnes now, making her curtsy, backing to the door lifting her finger, saying, "Now, you be a good boy Teddy while I'm away." His Majesty roared with laughter. I remember looking across the table where Mrs Keppel was sitting; she took it extremely well and smiled.

The Huntingdonshire Post as it was then called, published a very detailed account of the whole visit which includes one or two items which may be of particular interest to "Friends." The King arrived by train at 5.08 pm and was taken by carriage to Hinchingsbrooke House.

One of the first of the pleasing ceremonies which took place after His Majesty had partaken of tea, was the planting of a young cedar on the west lawn by His Majesty as a memento of the occasion. The operation was watched with much interest by the members of the house party and Mr Barson, the head gardener, had the honour of being presented to His Majesty by the Earl of Sandwich. We understand that His Majesty strolled around the delightful gardens which it goes without saying were in splendid condition and as Lord Sandwich has had much to do personally with their extension and arrangement he is not a little proud of them.

Later on we read that ...The King wore a buttonhole of Lilies-of-the valley on Sunday and a "Malmaison" carnation

on Monday, all of course, grown in the gardens. The lawns were perhaps never looking better, the Japanese garden, of which his Lordship is naturally very proud, coming in for special attention. Lord Redesdale, we hear, expressed his delight with this garden and described it as an almost perfect reproduction and one of the best he had ever seen.

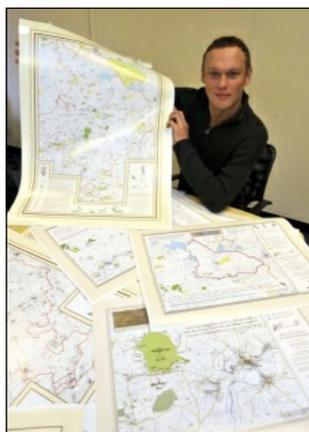
What to many will be regarded as a happy and well-merited souvenir was the conferring of the bronze Victorian Order by His Majesty upon Mr H.Cooper, butler at Hinchingsbrooke. Necessarily much of the responsibility for the ensuring of the smooth working of the arrangements in the house depended on Mr. Cooper, and all hands agreed that everything passed off splendidly and His Majesty was charmed by the visit. Mr. Cooper is an old retainer of the family, having filled a similar position under the late Earl, his period of service extending over more than 30 years.

The photograph was included by David Cozens in his book "Huntingdon, a pictorial history". He notes that Mr. Hinde declined to work on a Sunday and this photograph was taken by Alfred Hendry of Godmanchester whose work delighted His Majesty.

Geoff Gardner

Photograph and comments see Huntingdon, A Pictorial History, David Cozens, Phillimore, 1995. Extracts from "Reminiscences" by kind permission of the Earl of Sandwich.

The lost landscapes of Huntingdonshire



This was the topic for our summer meeting in 2014 and the speaker was Jason Peters, a former Hinchingsbrooke pupil whom we were pleased to welcome back. Jason was in no way put off by having his former geography teacher in the audience.

Jason has had an interesting and varied career in this country and abroad, looking at history from a geographical perspective, a kind of geographical archaeologist and landscape architect. He told us about the way the landscapes in this area had changed over time and how the landowners, including of course the Montagu family, had affected that.

There were a number of aspects that we 21st Century people overlook. Jason made me realise the importance of forests and of the hunting of wild animals for food.

Jason has developed fascinating techniques for re-creating what the landscape would have looked like in earlier periods and he has made Huntingdonshire one of his special projects (he comes from a local farming family).

You can read more about Jason's work on his website but be careful to go to **jasongpeters**. If you simply google Jason Peters, you will get hundreds of articles about a very rich Philadelphia Eagle! You can also find out more about his published work at www.posthumousplans.co.uk or <http://www.jasonpeters.co.uk>

Peter Downes

Friends Annual Dinner 2015

In 2015 the dinner will be on **Thursday, February 19th**. Our guests will be The Earl of Sandwich and Lady Sandwich. On this occasion the speaker will be Caroline and she will talk about **'Mapperton – House and Home'**. John and Caroline came to live in Mapperton in the 1980s and took over full responsibility for the family estate in 1995 when John's father, Victor Montagu, died.

Some Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House may not be aware that the Montagu family went to live in Mapperton after they sold the Hinchingsbrooke estate in the 1960s. Victor had renounced his title but John took this up again when his father died. John sits as a cross-bencher in the House of Lords and is particularly valued for his expertise and experience in international development. He was one of the hereditary peers elected to retain his place when the House of Lords was reformed in 1999. Lady Sandwich is a former business journalist and policy expert at the European Commission, specialising in the Middle East. She is a senior adviser for Women in Business International and is active in a number of organisations in Dorset, including Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society.

The format of the evening will be as usual, i.e. people arrive from 6 p.m. for a 6.30 start in the Library, followed by Dinner at about 7.30 in the Assembly Room. Tickets cost £23 and a cash bar will be available to allow people to drink or not as they feel inclined.

Tickets can be obtained from the Treasurer, Ian Nicholls, by e-mail at ij.nicholls@btinternet.com or by post to Ian Nicholls, 9 Glebe Road, Perry, Huntingdon, PE28 0DG. Please send cheques payable to 'The Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House'.