

Hertfordshire Association for Local History

(Charity Number 280449)

News and Events

Autumn 2021



Dates for your Diary

Saturday 20 November 2021	Symposium: Hertfordshire's Waterways, Tewin
Saturday 1 January 2022	Subscriptions payable (see enclosed Membership Form)
Saturday 21 May 2022	HALH Spring Meeting and AGM, Bramfield

HALH Symposium 2021

Hertfordshire's Waterways

This year's symposium will be held on Saturday 20 November 2021 at Tewin Memorial Hall, 11A Lower Green Road, Tewin, Welwyn AL6 0JX. (Please note the date is different from that given in the Spring 2021 issue of *News & Events*.) The programme will include the talks described on page ii. Further details and a booking form can be found on page iv.

The past year has presented a formidable challenge to any organisation wanting to hold a group event. In February 2020 when the spring issue of N&E was sent to the printers, we set out as usual the arrangements for holding the November symposium at Tewin under the theme 'The Country House at War'. The Covid-19 pandemic then struck and we went into the first lockdown. By July 2020 it seemed things were looking up. The Government issued guidance for the safe use of community facilities, and the arrangements for holding a live symposium at Tewin in November were published in the Autumn 2020 issue of *News & Events*. In the event, of course, we were obliged to cancel the live symposium and we chose instead to hold the talks via Zoom on four successive Wednesday evenings during November.

Zoom has been an enormous help in allowing us to maintain some degree of contact with our members. Nonetheless, we're all looking forward to meeting up once again face-to-face. The symposium will be the first occasion in two years in which many HALH members will have had the chance to do this. We've therefore confined the programme to

just four talks, so as to give more time than usual for members to socialise.

The Government lifted most of the Covid-19 guidance and legal restrictions on 19 July. Thus at the time of going to print there are no limits on how many people can meet; the social distancing rules have been removed (except in specific places such as hospitals); and face coverings are no longer required by law. On this basis it will be possible for us to hold the November symposium in the normal way. However, the health secretary has said that people should still meet others outdoors where possible, and that people are 'expected and recommended' to wear face coverings (unless exempt) in crowded public settings such as public transport. There is, in short, still great uncertainty as to how matters will evolve over the next few months.

The most sensible approach, therefore, is for those members who wish to attend the symposium to register in the normal way, as set out on the booking form on page iv. We will keep you updated on the situation by email as far as possible, or by telephone or letter for those members who don't have access to email.

website: www.halh.org.uk

HALH Symposium 2021

Hertfordshire's Waterways

Hertfordshire's waterways have impinged on many aspects of the county's history. They provided routes for travel and sources of fish and raw materials from prehistoric times onwards, and were later used to power numerous watermills. The River Lea was always of importance for transporting goods to and from London, and its course was steadily improved through the construction of cuts and locks. In the early 1800s a wholly new canal came into being in the west of county. In addition to all this, Hertfordshire came to play a major role in the supply of drinking water to the capital.

The New River: neither new, nor a river (Alan Thomson)

Dr Alan Thomson has lived in Ware for the past 43 years and is now retired after teaching in higher education institutions in Hertford, Aldenham and Hatfield. He has written *The Ware Mutiny 1647: Order Restored or Revolution Defeated?* (Ware 1996) and *The Impact of the First Civil War on Hertfordshire, 1642–47* (Hertford, 2007). He is chairman of the Hertfordshire Record Society and the Hertford & Ware Local History Society.

The New River was built to supply unpolluted water to London. It ran from Chadwell Springs near Ware to Sadler's Wells just to the north of the City, a distance of about 20 miles. In his talk Alan will trace the history of the New River from its construction in the early seventeenth century to its role as an amenity feature in the late twentieth, with digressions into re-routing, steam power and human conflict.

Passing Through: The Grand Junction Canal in West Hertfordshire, 1791–1841 (Fabian Hiscock)

Fabian Hiscock, after careers in the Royal Navy and in industry, completed an MA by Research in History at the University of Hertfordshire in 2016. He subsequently published *Passing Through: The Grand Junction Canal in West Hertfordshire, 1791–1841* with Hertfordshire Publications. A long-standing interest in the history of the English waterways has involved him in Rickmansworth Waterways Trust. He is a member of Rickmansworth Historical Society and chairman of the Three Rivers Museum Trust.

The Grand Junction Canal was part of the growing national infrastructure which served

the manufacturing industry developing in the late eighteenth century. Connecting the industrial midlands and north to London, the canal was never intended to do much for the counties, such as Hertfordshire, through which it passed. Few histories of Hertfordshire make much reference to the effect of the canal, while histories of the canal say little about its impact on Hertfordshire. In his talk Fabian will ask whether the Grand Junction Canal really did make so little impact on the county, and how, if at all, did Hertfordshire's inhabitants benefit from it?

The venue for the HALH Symposium 2021 is the Tewin Memorial Hall. Formally opened on 23 January 1922, it stands at the corner of the village green in Tewin and commemorates the services rendered by men and women of the parish in the First World War and especially those who gave their lives for King and Country.

The land was given by the 1st Baron Desborough, William Henry Grenfell (1855–1945), who lived close by at Panshanger. The hall itself was funded by Sir Otto Beit KCMG (1865–1930), a German-born British financier, philanthropist and art connoisseur. His family were Jewish traders in Hamburg. In 1888 he came to England and joined the stockbroking firm of Wernher, Beit & Co. He became a naturalised British citizen in 1896. From 1890–96 he lived in South Africa, gaining experience in the diamond industry and also playing an active role in the development of the Rand gold mines. He then returned to England and lived in retirement at Tewin Water where he pursued a variety of scientific, artistic and cultural interests.

**Meadows, Water-Meadows
and Watercress: using
Hertfordshire's floodplains
(Tom Williamson)**

Tom Williamson is Professor of Landscape History at the University of East Anglia and has written widely on landscape archaeology, agricultural history, historical ecology and the history of landscape design. Born in Hertfordshire, he has devoted much time to studying the county's landscape, often in association with Anne Rowe. He is the author of *The Origins of Hertfordshire* and, with Rowe, of *Hertfordshire: a landscape history*.

Hertfordshire's rivers are largely contained within two systems – that of the Colne in the west and the Lea in the east. Both systems flow southwards from the Chilterns and eventually flow into the Thames. In his talk Tom will show how the valley floors of these rivers were of vital economic importance from medieval times to the last century. He'll discuss the management of hay meadows in the county, show how meadowland could be made more productive by being irrigated or 'floated', and explain how floodplains were used for growing crops such as osiers and, in particular, watercress.

**How Country Estates made
use of Waterways
(Anne Rowe)**

Dr Anne Rowe is a freelance historian of the Hertfordshire landscape. She co-ordinates research for the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust, gives talks and leads walks looking for evidence of the past in our countryside. She is also President of the East Herts Archaeological Society. As mentioned above, she has worked with Tom Williamson on a number of research projects and co-authored, with Tom and Andrew Macnair, *Dury & Andrews' Map of Hertfordshire*. Anne admits to having an obsession for parks and has written *Medieval Parks of Hertfordshire* (2009) and *Tudor and Early Stuart Parks of Hertfordshire* (2019).

Hertfordshire had its share of old landed families drawn from the nobility and gentry, but its proximity to London also made it a favoured location for men who had made their fortunes in the City and now wanted to join the landed classes. Thus over the

centuries the Hertfordshire landscape became the setting for a remarkable number of country houses which were often sited close to one of the county's waterways. In her talk Anne will examine some of the multifarious ways in which the owners of these houses made use of streams and rivers to enhance their estates and sustain their way of life.

Future Events

Winter Lecture Series 2022

As mentioned on the front page, we were obliged to cancel the live symposium at Tewin in November 2020, but the scheduled talks were nonetheless delivered to members via Zoom on four successive Wednesday evenings during November. This initiative proved very successful. The viewing figures increased steadily, the last talk, held on 25 November, being viewed from 186 terminals. In many cases, of course, there was more than one person watching, so we had far more people in our 'audience' than we can usually accommodate at a live symposium.

Following the last of the talks, we received a number of requests to stage further evening talks during the winter months. We therefore put on a 'Winter Lecture Series' with one talk a month being held via Zoom during the first quarter of 2021. A review of each of these talks is included in the Autumn 2021 issue of *Herts Past and Present*. Once again we drew in a large online audience, not only in Hertfordshire but from across the UK as well as the USA and Europe. Clearly, the Zoom option has great potential for extending the range of HALH activities and we intend to repeat the 'Winter Lecture Series' in 2022. Further details will be posted on the website.

Spring Meeting and AGM 2022

The next HALH Spring Meeting and AGM will take place on Saturday 21 May 2022 at Bramfield Village Hall, Bury Lane, Bramfield SG14 2QL. The title of the Lionel Munby Lecture is 'The Wool Merchants of Medieval Hertfordshire 1270-1370', and will be given by Brendan King of the Baldock Local History Society.

HERTFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

42nd ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

Saturday 20 November 2021

10.00 - 15.30

Tewin Memorial Hall, 11A Lower Green Road, Tewin, Welwyn AL6 0JX

Hertfordshire's Waterways

The programme will include talks on:

The New River: neither new, nor a river (*Alan Thomson*)

Passing Through: the Grand Junction Canal in West Hertfordshire, 1791–1841
(*Fabian Hiscock*)

Meadows, Water-Meadows and Watercress: using Hertfordshire's floodplains
(*Tom Williamson*)

How Country Estates made use of Waterways (*Anne Rowe*)

Tickets £15 for HALH members; £18 for non-members. Tea and coffee will be provided, but we shall not be offering lunch. Some people like to bring a packed lunch, but there are also pubs nearby.

To order tickets please complete the form below and send by 29 October 2021 with your cheque (payable to the HALH) and an SAE to:

Ruth Jeavons, 44 Necton Road, Wheathampstead, St Albans, Herts, AL4 8AU
Tel: 01582 629 516; Mobile: 07847 429492; Email: ruth.jeavons@ntlworld.com

APPLICATION FORM

Name

Address

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Email address

Telephone No.

Name(s) for badge(s)

Please reserve tickets at £15 and/or tickets at £18

Please book a display table for Society