

Institute *of* **Physics**

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION

Visit to Hitchin British School and Town Tuesday 24 February 2004

This visit has been organised by Bernard Hulley

Hitchin is an ancient market town with a medieval core and various features worthy of attention: St Mary's Church, the market, old hostelrys, etc. One building of particular interest is its "British School", the only remaining example of a Victorian establishment, which was run according to an educational system devised by Joseph Lancaster at the beginning of the 19th.C. Its most unusual aspect was that one teacher supervised and taught some 300 pupils in a single classroom, albeit with the assistance of young monitors. Although the classrooms are arranged as they would have been in c.1880, there are many features recognisable to those who attended school before the post-war educational revolution, so there may be a certain element of nostalgia for some of us. Our guided tour of the school will last about 2 hours, during which this system will be explained; we shall also have to attend a "lesson" with a distinctly Dickensian slant. The preservation of the British School as a museum has been a major voluntary project, for which the leader, Mr Limbrick, was awarded the OBE. Further details can be found on <http://www.btinternet.com/~skua/school/>

After lunch there will be the opportunity to explore the town. Pevsner judged that in interest, it was second only to St Albans in Herts. and devotes two pages to St Mary's church. As it is market day there will be the opportunity to do some shopping - stalls selling vegetables, fish and garden plants are recommended. <http://www.e-hitchin.co.uk/> provides a guide to Hitchin and the local scene.

Programme:

10.00-10.30 Meet at the British School.

12.30 Lunch; there is a choice of places to eat, which will be made known on the day.

After lunch the party can explore the town, either individually or in smaller groups

15.45 Back to station for train users.

The cost of the visit is £3 per person - this includes coffee and biscuits before the tour. (Maximum number is 40)

By road the recommended route is North up the A1(M), J8, direction Hitchin A602, turning off at the first roundabout, in 3 miles, to the town centre. A street map will be provided to those coming.

Parking is unfortunately a problem in Hitchin, particularly on market day. The Woodside car park (next to the Queen Mother Theatre) is recommended; this is 650 metres from the British School. For those coming by rail there is the 9.21 am from Kings Cross. Hitchin Station is rather far to walk so anyone wishing to be met should contact Bernard Hulley on 01462 730071 (or 07790211443 on the day) and if possible a lift will be provided (otherwise taxis are available).