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Butts Close



This public open space in the centre of the Butts Close Conservation Area has been used for parades, demonstrations, sports, fairs and festivities for centuries, a tradition that continues today.

The celebration of Edward VII's Coronation ended here with a bonfire and fireworks. The avenue of trees on the central path and the limes along Bedford Road were planted in 1937, to commemorate the Coronation of George VI.

This site has been Common Land for perhaps a thousand years. In 1363 a Royal Statute required common land to be used for mandatory practice with the longbow; the first local record - in 1492 - of the name 'Butts' refers to the proper name for archers' targets. Hitchin men served in the armies of Henry IV, V & VI.



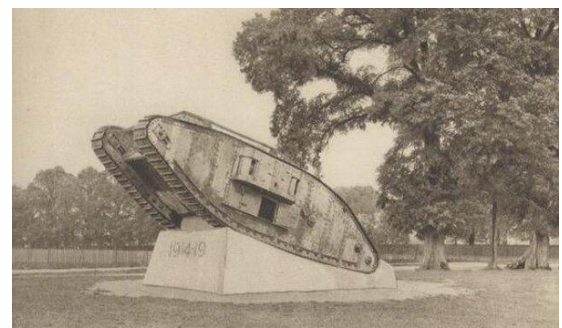
This modern funfair is a regular visitor



In 1466 Cecily Duchess of York added land specifically for the townsfolk's recreation. Games, sports and exercises, formal and informal, have long been a feature on the Close.



The largest spectacle seen on the Close was probably Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in 1904, with 800 people and 500 horses. They arrived at Hitchin Station on three special trains. The local press reported that some 24,000 people attended the event.



Military parades massed here between the two World Wars. A First World War tank, the 'Fearless', was presented to Hitchin in 1919 and was mounted on Butts Close. While it was being restored, it slipped from its pedestal and a live shell was found inside! The tank was melted down for scrap in 1937.



Joseph Arch



Alfred Ransom

In 1873 there was a major demonstration on the Close for the rights of agricultural labourers, addressed by Joseph Arch, a campaigning orator. The demonstration was supported by Alfred Ransom, a Quaker and enlightened local employer.

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[for more information contact...XXX]