



Founded 1845

ST ALBANS AND HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY
www.stalbanshistory.org



NEWSLETTER

No. 157

April 2005

Registered Charity No. 226912

Hon. Sec: B.E. Moody, 24 Rose Walk, St Albans, Herts AL4 9AF

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Currently we should be feeling in a reasonably buoyant mood. Last autumn we were informed that the District would be selling Kyngston House and we would thereby lose our HQ and library accommodation. Whilst this remains the case, by the time of our AGM it may be possible to announce a solution which we can adopt to general advantage.

Hertfordshire Archaeology (now with History added to its title) has been our flagship academic publication for a number of years. Two or more years ago Chris Green, our Museums Director, resigned as its Editor due to pressure of work. He did so having brought volume 13 to the threshold of publication and with volume 14 well advanced. *Hertfordshire Archaeology* has had a chequered career, passing through more than one financial crisis. As a short term member of the Editorial Committee I thought it prudent to find out what we were all supposed to be doing. It turned out that the constitution had never been ratified and that the document which did exist threw all duties, including that of securing grants, on the Editor's shoulders. No wonder he was overworked. The situation is good because we have several options. We can pull out, put everything on hold, move forward, reassess our role, publish something different or seek appropriate funding. At least we know what was wrong. Until we decide our future, Bill Martin is competently moving things forward as an editorial coordinator and technical adviser.

Also within the year, Clare Ellis and Pat Howe have added to our publication list with a interesting booklet on the Pemberton Almshouses. Well done.

Our society has had its highs and lows according to chance circumstances, not least of which are particularly energetic and conscientious officers, group leaders, researchers and volunteers. Over the past one or two years, a number of experienced members of Council have retired or announced their intention of retiring. We treasure each of our 500 or so members, but particularly miss those with whom we have worked closest.

Brian Moody is now retiring as Hon Sec, an office he has held with distinction since 1989. His unflinching energy and courtesy in replying to research enquiries has been impressive. He spearheaded our participation in the campaign to stop destructive deep ploughing on the western half of Verulamium, as well as coordinating our New Year party. Joyce Wells, our librarian, is also retiring this year. As a professional librarian she cared for books and historic archives in the City Library. From this she retired and made the city's loss our gain. Megan Atton is retiring as Membership Secretary. Her contributions as a member of Council kept some of our wildest excesses within sensible bounds. Joyce Winn is retiring as Minuting Secretary. I have always said that there are no bad minuting secretaries, only bad chairmen. Not strictly true of, course, because minuting is a skilled task. But, where would my campaign for "If it ain't in the minutes, it didn't happen" be, without her attention to detail? Finally, Brian Bending, Pat Howe and David Willacy will be standing down on completion of three years. Thank you all.

So why should I feel optimistic? Whilst we still have a few vacancies, good candidates have come forward for a number of posts. Our Treasurer has had a chance to get to know us and can give us advice. Our Newsletter Editor is innovative and energetic. We have at last entered the 21st century with a website (and prospective IT manager). For the forthcoming AGM we have excellent candidates for President, Secretary, Membership Secretary and Clock Tower organiser. The Society will be in good hands.

Finally, thank you all for your support. I had the great privilege of representing you as President for three years back in the 1990s. The past year has been a bonus.

David Dean

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**TUESDAY 10TH MAY 2005****VERULAMIUM MUSUM AT 8.00PM****AGENDA**

1. Apologies for absence
2. To confirm the minutes of the previous AGM held on 11th May 2004
3. To adopt Reports from the following Officers, and the Accounts for the year to 30th September 2004:

Hon. Secretary
 Hon. Treasurer
 Hon. Lecture Secretary
 Group Chairmen and Project Leaders

4. To elect a President. Mr David Dean retires from office, and **Mrs Clare Ellis** is nominated to succeed him
5. To elect Officers and Vice-Presidents:
Mr Bryan Hanlon is nominated to succeed Mr Brian Moody as Hon. Secretary
Mr Peter Jeffreys is nominated to succeed Miss Megan Atton as Membership Secretary
 The Hon. Treasurer, Lecture Secretary and Publicity Officer are proposed for re-election
 There are vacancies for Librarian and Excursion Secretary
Mr John Brodrick, Mr David Dean, Mrs Kate Morris and **Mrs Margaret Taylor** are proposed for re-election as Vice-Presidents

6. To elect five members to fill vacancies on Council., viz **Mrs Jill Bennett, Mr Gordon Brown, Mrs Gill Charles, Mr Paul Harding** and **Mr Peter Jeffreys**

7. To confirm the nomination of Group Representatives, viz:

Archaeology	Mr Roger Miles
Architecture & Local History	Dr Gerard McSweeney
Property Research	Mrs Kate Morris
17th C. Population Research	Mrs Pat Howe

8. To confirm the reappointment of **Mr J R West** as Independent Examiner
9. To transact any other competent business

B E Moody
 Hon Secretary

**After the AGM there will be a lecture
 Verlamio-Verulamium**

by Mr Simon West, St Albans Museum Keeper of Field Archaeology

FROM THE HON SECRETARY

It seems a long time since I was elected Hon Secretary, but to our venerable Society 16 years is just a flash in the pan. So perhaps I may be allowed to stretch things to the year of my birth, when the Society was exactly half its present age. Mrs Charles Ashdown was then the Society Secretary, having stepped into the breach when her eminent husband died in office in 1922 (he had been Secretary for seventeen years!). It was not long afterwards that I was able to see for myself how the Romans apparently lived in underground houses by the lake, disposing of a large number of oysters and several Christians. I probably bought a Verulamium guidebook from the next Secretary, Charles Jones, who was always busy raising funds for the Wheeler excavations.

It has been an honour and a privilege to follow in the footsteps of so many illustrious people, and I would like to thank all those colleagues who, with their enthusiasm and ever-ready collaboration, made my task so easy. Together we have managed to keep the Society moving on, and to solve most if not all of the problems. One outstanding question is where shall we find an eleventh home for our library and archives. There is an intriguing possibility that they may return to exactly where they began in 1845, in the old Court House (then a nearly new building).

I am most grateful to my successor, Bryan Hanlon, who will be standing for election at the forthcoming AGM, for enabling me to retire from office, and my best wishes go to him and to all others who are starting new jobs for the Society. I hope they will feel, as I do, that we owe it to all our predecessors to try our best to carry on the good work they have done, so as to be able to leave our future members with a fuller understanding of our long history.

Brian Moody

ARCHAEOLOGY GROUP ANNUAL REPORT

In 2004 further work on the Amwell Villa site extended our knowledge of what remains of it. Geophysical surveys were carried out in two other locations.

Aerial photographs of the Wheathampstead/Harpenden area held in the NMR collection at Swindon were examined on a visit in the autumn.

Some members of the Group participated in the further excavations at Turnershall Farm in the summer.

Work was begun in the winter (and still continues) at Kyngston House to order and consolidate the finds we have there. This is in preparation for the threatened move out of the building.

In February 2005 all of the pot from the Amwell site was taken for examination by an expert in the Roman period, the findings to go in our eventual report.

Roger Miles

TREASURER'S REPORT

This is my first report to you, the members, linked to the accounts for the year to 30 September 2004, which are before you for the forthcoming AGM at the end of this newsletter. I took over this role from David Aubrey at last year's AGM after his many years of service. I am extremely grateful to him for the smooth transition and the Society as a whole owes him an immense vote of thanks for his stewardship over those years and the state of affairs which he left on his retirement.

The accounts on the following pages show slightly less income and surplus than the previous year. This is largely due to the fall in interest rates that reduced our income. Additionally, income from gift aid tax relief is down, and I would urge all those who can to arrange for their subscriptions to fall under this scheme. Expenses also show a slight reduction, which gives an overall surplus of £667 against that of £749 for last year.

One of the highlights of the year was the publication of *Hertfordshire Archaeology*, volume 13. The printing costs amounted to £4,585, which was found from funds kept aside for that purpose. There was therefore no additional cost to the Society.

Finally my thanks to John West who has assumed the role of Honorary Auditor, and is willing to continue should the AGM approve.

I shall be glad to answer any questions on the accounts.

John Thomson

LIBRARY REPORT

We have enjoyed the hospitality of Kyngston House for some years. First we occupied a corner of the first floor, before moving up to a small room which not only housed the library but was also available for small meetings – always remembering that there were only six chairs! I should like to thank Ros Niblett and Simon West for all their help and friendship.

Once more the future of Kyngston House is uncertain, so it looks as if we shall be on the move once more, possibly to the Town Hall. Looking through the minutes, I was surprised to find the following from a meeting on 24th January 1846, only three months after the Society was founded: "The Chairman reported that, on his application, the Magistrates had granted permission for a bookcase containing the Books, Prints, Papers etc relating to the Society to be placed in the Tiwn Hall." This certainly looks like a case of history repeating itself!

We can assume that the erudite gentlemen who formed the Society would have had their own libraries. In those days one had to be nominated and approved before being accepted and many members, in gratitude for the privilege, donated a book to our library: several of these are still in stock.

This is perhaps a suitable time to thank all those who have given us books over the years, especially those of their own authorship. In this category is the latest work by Vic White, who has gone back to the early years of the 15th century and translated the Account Rolls of Wheathampstead, 1405-6.

I hope to continue at Kyngston House on Wednesday mornings until a new Librarian is appointed or the move takes place.

Joyce Wells

17TH CENTURY POPULATION RESEARCH GROUP REPORT

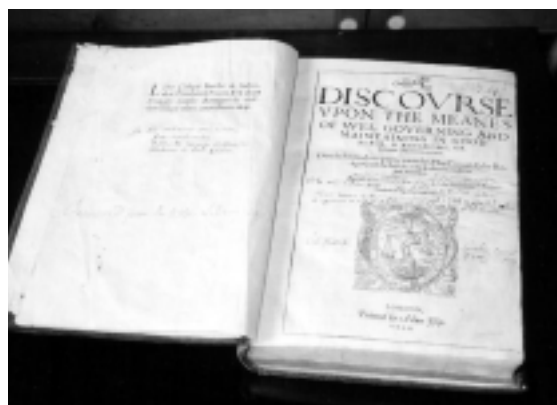
Our work has continued to flourish over the past year. Since the publication of *St Albans 1650-1700*, apart from a continuing need to maintain and improve the database, we have taken the opportunity to investigate families in more detail. Our display last year was on the inventory of John Carter, carpenter, and we have continued this work, intending to publish an article.

Discovering the will of Roger Pemberton, the founder of the almshouses in St Peter's Street, stimulated the production of the well-received publication, *The Pemberton Almshouses*, which has now sold 200 copies.

Our third worthy is not strictly of St Albans, but a bequest to the Abbey led us on an exciting voyage of discovery which took us to Hemel Hempstead, Abbots Langley, Bricket Wood and not least Trinity College, Oxford. We were able to examine books (*pictured*) which Francis Combe bequeathed to that College in 1641 and also a register showing the date he entered the college, the deposit he paid and the date he left.

Transcription of the records of the overseers of the poor in St Peter's is nearly complete and we hope to start amalgamating the information with the database in the coming year.

Pat Howe



'CLOCKATEERS' NEWS

Despite the weather, a good number of 'clockateers' came to the Clock Watchers Party on 4th March, and there was a promising huddle of volunteers around this season's rota sheets. Thanks to all those who have already signed up.

Thanks also to those who brought contributions to the party. I was unable to speak to everyone at the time, but if anyone wishes to be reimbursed for their contribution, would they please get in touch with me.

Two 'clockateers' had not received a party invitation because they had changed address since last year, and whilst their new address was held by the Membership Secretary, the change was not noted on the Clock Tower list of volunteers. If anyone else has recently moved, and think their details may be out of date, perhaps they could let me know. We don't want to lose you!

I thought it might be useful for all 'Clockateers' to publish the dates when the Arc & Arc is looking after the Clock Tower - so you can consult your diaries, and see which dates are convenient. Anyone wishing to sign up could contact me - or better still just pop into the Clock Tower on one of the Arc & Arc weekends and add your name to the rota sheets.

Jill Bennett.

Clock Tower Co-ordinator,
29 Cornwall Rd, St Albans.
Tel/Fax: 01727 867685.

E-mail: jill.bennett@waitrose.com



ARC & ARC CLOCK TOWER DATES

Apr.17th	July 16th
Apr.30th (Bank Holiday weekend)	July 17th
May 1st	July 30th
May 2nd (Bank Hol. Monday)	July 31st
May 14th	Aug. 13th
May 15th	Aug. 14th
June 4th	Aug. 27th (August Bank Holiday)
June 5th	Aug. 28th
June 18th	Aug. 29th (Bank Holiday Monday)
June 19th	Sept. 10th and 11th
July 2nd	(Heritage Open Days, free entry)
July 3rd	

PROPERTY HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP REPORT

The Group made its first presentation on March 22nd, to the A&LH's Tuesday evening meeting. The methodology behind the database compilation was explained and two case studies presented on sections of St Peter's Parish (in the Borough). Gerard McSweeney presented his research on Bowgate – that is, the area between the old Vicarage (now Kingston Smith, chartered accountants) and the Pemberton Almshouses; and Wendy Klein presented hers on Adelaide Street, from its birth to its demise. Highlighted were the importance for posterity of continuing local site research in this way, and the need for further volunteers to undertake research, especially those with particular expertise, such as architectural knowledge.

Kate Morris

NEW COUNCIL MEMBERS URGENTLY NEEDED

We still have vacancies for volunteers to help run the Society. These posts are not particularly arduous or time-consuming, and offer a great opportunity to get involved in the work of our Society.

MINUTES SECRETARY

Sits in on five Council meetings per year spread fairly evenly and take notes of the proceedings. Shorthand would be good, but is not essential, as written notes would do. Transcribes a draft for the Chairman and the Secretary, who make whatever amendments they feel necessary or fill in background before returning for editing and production. Types up the agenda for the next meeting for Verulamium Museum who do the printing, collating and despatch. Time needed is three hours for each Council meeting, a couple of hours to transcribe and about the same for editing. A word processor of some sort is essential but these days it seems most everybody has a PC. Joyce Winn, who has worked as Minutes Secretary alongside Secretary Brian Moody since 1988, says: "It's not very difficult and I have found it an interesting way to see behind the scenes and watch the workings of Council."

LIBRARIAN

Since 1845 the Society has been the fortunate custodian of a unique collection of library books and archives, some going back to the 17th century, which is a valuable source of information for members and other historical researchers. Successive Librarians have taken excellent care of this, and we urgently need a new recruit to take over from Joyce Wells, who will be very happy to help a newcomer to settle into the job. The general requirement is to become generally aware of what the library contains and hopefully to continue the indexing, to absorb gifts of new books if appropriate, and to review what purchases might be considered to fill the gaps. Several senior members of the Society will be keen to help in various ways, and they are among the many people who ask to borrow books on occasion.

The Library is at present located at Kyngston House in Inkerman St, but we hope to acquire a more accessible site in the foreseeable future.

ESSEX SOCIETY FOR ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY

We have received from this Society a copy of their Occasional Paper no 1, on Field Systems in Essex by John Hunter. This is a well-illustrated book of 41 pages, in which the author considers the age and character of the Essex landscape, and outlines its prehistory and history. This is followed by detailed case studies of four different types of Essex landscape, concentrating on the medieval and Tudor periods, and particularly on the evolution of land boundaries.

One of the author's aims is to encourage others to join in this type of work, and much of the background information he gives is just what a newcomer would need, in Essex or elsewhere.

If you are interested, copies of the book can be obtained from the Essex Society's President, Dr Chris Thornton, 75 Victoria Rd, Maldon, Essex CM9 5HE, enclosing cheques for £5.95 each, including p&p.

Joyce Wells

SOCIETY PUBLICATION REVIEWED AS "A CLASSIC"

St Albans 1650-1700: A Thoroughfare Town and Its People was recently reviewed very positively in the journal *Vernacular Architecture* (vol 35, 2004).

The reviewer, Arnold Pacey, wrote: "The social history of building is a topic that merits more attention than it usually gets and, although it is not fully treated here, it provides just one example of how valuable this book is in suggesting links between vernacular architecture and other aspects of history. It should be widely read by all those concerned about how vernacular studies might develop, and it deserves to become a classic in the field of urban history."

The book is available in most local bookshops, price £16.
St Albans 1650-1700: A Thoroughfare Town and Its People, edited by J.T.Smith and M.A.North (2003), 280pp, 43 illus. ISBN 0 9542189 3 0

HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY - AND HISTORY

Members should remember that at our last AGM Roger Miles proposed successfully that the words '*and History*' should be added to the title of the journal we publish jointly with the East Herts Archaeological Society. It has never been the editors' policy to exclude papers on history, but it was felt that more encouragement should be given to authors of historical papers. This proposal has now been examined by the Joint Editorial Committee ... and agreed!

So Volume 14ff will look slightly different, and we hope that potential historical authors will respond.

For those who do not already have a copy, Volume 13 of *Herts Archaeology* is now available on request.

Brian Moody

OBITUARY LES GRAY

We recently lost a member in the person of Les Gray, a local amateur archaeologist of very many years standing and deserving of more than a short obituary.

Les moved to Hertfordshire (Leverstock Green) from Surrey in 1961. Towards the end of the 60s he discovered the opportunities for amateur archaeologists and worked for David Neal on the Gadebridge Villa. St Albans was another centre of archaeological activity within easy reach and it did not take Les long to become involved here. Digs, at that time almost entirely manned by amateurs, were directed by Dr Ild Anthony of the Verulamium Museum. Westminster Lodge, Netherwyld Farm and the second Museum car park are a few of the campaign medals that Les could claim. At Gorhambury he once again worked for David Neal.

In 1978 Les moved to St Albans (Sandridge). When not actually digging Les would range the local countryside, prospecting for any signs of archaeological significance. It was he who alerted Ros Niblett to archaeological features being uncovered by topsoil stripping for quarrying, at Old Parkbury. This led to the discovery of the Bronze Age boat burial. He would not turn up any chance to look into an open utility trench that he happened to pass.

Les shared his interest in archaeology with his good friend (and work colleague) Des Gray, also a Society member. They travelled in Egypt together, where Les had first had his appetite for the past whetted while serving there for part of his time in the RAF in the Second World War.

I first met Les on the King Harry Lane cemetery dig in 1989 and later introduced him to the excavations at Piddington Villa, Northants, where he became a regular and well-known participant each year. Les was probably at his happiest when working on Roman sites, where he had begun.

Les was 83 and over his long life of archaeological activity must have contributed countless thousands of hours of work of the sort which typify the really dedicated amateur. Cancer diagnosed in 1995 was successfully controlled, but more recently he was treated for heart disease and diabetes. Luckily he was able to work in the field up until relatively recently, feeling the frustrations of willing spirit, but weak flesh, only in the last few years.

Les was fortunate to be in on the peak of archaeological activity which ran from the 60s to the 80s, an ideal time for a real enthusiast for archaeology.

Roger Miles

ARCHITECTURE AND LOCAL HISTORY LECTURE GROUP

Simon West of Verulamium Museum, the archaeologist in charge of the excavations at Turners Hall farm near Wheathampstead, gave us an update on cremation burials found on the site. The two main burials are now treated as one item and a glass jug from among the many artefacts found there date the burials to about 150 AD. The nearby house appears to have been destroyed by fire at about the same time – a plate of Samian-ware providing a similar date. A bathhouse has also been unearthed but as it is 50 metres from the house it is unlikely that it was used by the occupants. It would probably have been provided for servants and slaves. However, Simon appears to be more delighted with the unique find of 35 different arrow heads designed to hunt various animals. It is amazing what can be learned from “muddy holes in the ground” and Simon will continue the story after our AGM on April 19th.

On 8th February our speaker was **Alice Dowswell** from Tring Museum. She related a most fascinating history of Walter Rothschild who, from a very early age, had an incredible interest in natural history. He established a museum in a garden shed from age seven. By the time he was 12 he was a ‘walking zoological encyclopaedia’. His interest never wavered and his 21st birthday present from his father was a purpose built museum. The subsequent Tring museum was opened in 1892. Alice gave details of the varied and remarkable animals, insects and birds which Walter collected over the years. Today, to give just two examples, the museum holds 2 million butterflies and moths and some 200,000 birds eggs. During his lifetime Walter and his fellow curators discovered 5,000 new species – a remarkable achievement.

A successful double-bill was presented by a member, **Tony Billings**, and the Group Chairman, **Rob Weston**. The first outlined the rise and fall of Thomas Fowler, Abbey organist, whose dramatic story appears on pages 8 and 9.

As Tony’s interesting and rather sad story ended, the door was flung open and there entered Lord Grimthorpe

(deceased since 1905), in the person of Rob, resplendent in top-hat, side whiskers and frockcoat. Noted for his lack of false modesty, ‘Lord Grimthorpe’ traced his career as lawyer, horologist, architect and letter-writer to *The Times*. His most famous clock was Big Ben, his most notable architectural achievement the Abbey restoration. Briefly acknowledging the work of Gilbert Scott, whom he succeeded, he explained how he obtained a faculty from church authorities for complete control of the work, financed entirely by himself, saying that, without him, the audience would have a heap of stones instead of a living Abbey Church. On a lighter note he mentioned one of his inventions, a lavatory door-lock which would open only when the toilet was flushed (causing some embarrassment to a visiting leading cleric!). Rob concluded his bravura performance and swept out to the applause of his surprised and delighted audience.

Jeremy Ingham, a materials scientist, gave an enthusiastically-received talk on the place of lime in construction: from the earliest days, when the need to bind building materials together became apparent, to modern times, when old techniques are being used to restore historic sites. He illustrated the manufacture of lime, the different forms in which it can be produced, the many ways the resultant mortar, plaster or rendering are used and are in fact necessary for strength, weatherproofing and long life. What emerged was the fact that from prehistoric times, through the Roman era to the relatively recent past, a

sophisticated process has been employed to make products, each suitable for a specific purpose, and yet it was not until recently that the science underlying the resultant materials has been unravelled. The speaker gave a lucid account of the analytical methods employed, their application in the restoration and upkeep of historic buildings and their use in more familiar archaeology, illustrated by recent work on the Verulamium hypocaust,

Elizabeth Buteux returned to give the results of one of her studies on Hemel Hempstead. This time, from a wide variety of sources, she described, with illustrations, the large number of inns that used to line the High Street, only four of which survive. The figure was comparable with that of St Albans, although Hemel was not on a major through-route. Billeting returns indicate the large stabling capacity. The reason for the large number was the importance of the market, which served London.

Portraits on coins and medals was the subject of a lecture by **Richard Abdey** of the British Museum. Admirably illustrated with examples from a recent exhibition, it traced the history of such portraits from the introduction of coins in Asia Minor to the present day. It was a way in which a ruler could express his authority, either actual or aspirational, designs often referring back to figures such as Alexander or to deities.

Rob Weston, Betty Ewens & Gerard McSweeney

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

We welcome those who have joined recently:

Dr Ann and Mr S Brooks	Salisbury Ave, St Albans
Phil Escrit	St Stephens Ave, St Albans
Mrs Ann Layzell	Caledon Road, London Colney
Dr Kris Lockyear	Lamer Park, Wheathampstead
Mrs Jan Porter	Digswell Rise, Welwyn Garden City
David Turner	Spooners Drive, Park Street
Mrs May Waters	Forge End, Chiswell Green
Mrs Carole D Wilson	Palfrey Close, St Albans

THE FIRST BATTLE OF ST ALBANS

On 22nd May this year we will celebrate the 550th anniversary of the First Battle of St Albans in the Wars of the Roses. A re-enactment of the battle is planned, taking place in St Peter's Street and involving a mock battle between Yorkist and Lancastrians, staged by a special group called Livery and Maintenance (*pictured*). They will start at one end of St Peter's Street and hurtle up Victoria Street into the market place, where the actual battle will be fought. As in 1455 the actual battle will last approximately half an hour!

On the Saturday before (21st May) the Battlefield Trust will be running a workshop all day in the Jubilee Centre. They will be demonstrating costume and battlefield techniques and the military history of the period. After the workshop there will be a walk around the battle area in the centre of town.

On Sunday, City Tour Guides will also be running walks. Look out for the publicity about this major historical event, and get to the barricades early on the day to witness this significant moment in the town's history.



A LITTLE MORE LIMELIGHT

Jeremy Ingham's recent lecture on the role of lime in buildings (which I am happy now to admit having suggested) exceeded my hopes in the way it was received. I thought I might add some comments relating to it, for those that were there.

The illustrations of microscopic 'thin sections' that Jeremy showed were colourful, but those not familiar with this technique of examining mineral or geological samples might have been puzzled as to how, for instance, a material like chalk or lime appears brown. A technique using polarized light to illuminate the slide imparts the false colours seen. Without it, the extremely thin and thus transparent specimen would exhibit little colour and it would be difficult to identify the constituents. The phenomenon is related to the coloured patterns visible in old-style toughened car windscreens when wearing Polaroid sunglasses. In that case the colours relate to stresses in the glass.

The decline in this country in quarries that produce lime from limestone or chalk was mentioned. Until the late 1960s the St Albans district had its own local limeworks at Redbournbury. This was the Anglo-Roman lime-works at the chalkpit which is now the site of the Onyx waste processing plant. It can be seen on the right, just on the far side of the Ver, midway from St Albans to Redbourn. The Ver walk passes directly in front of it. Two limekilns were built into a steep slope and remained for many years

after the closure, but a recent visit showed that they are now demolished. However, I have a photograph of them when they still stood, and one of them burning at night, plus the machinery used in the slaking process. I would be interested to know of anyone else who has any knowledge or information.

The Anglo-Roman name derives, I understand, from the belief that the pit started life as a source of chalk for the undoubted huge quantities of lime which would have been required for constructing buildings in Verulamium.

A minor sensation was caused when our speaker said that, on admittedly casual examination, he had been unable to see any Caen stone in the Cathedral structure. He thought this might be because of different stone being used for repairs over the long history of the building. However, were he to look longer and more closely it is possible some fondly held beliefs might be demolished.

Jeremy has become something of an authority on limestone and its sources. He did not have time to mention his involvement in the brouhaha which arose from the recent Great Court project at the British Museum. When called in, it only took a visual inspection for him to determine that the stone used was not that which was intended. Hence the colour mismatch.

Roger Miles

TRIFELS CASTLE VISIT

Many of you will remember the fun we had with our German visitors from Worms last July. Key to their visit was the exhibition at Verulamium Museum on the world of Richard the Lionheart. He was imprisoned in the Imperial Castle at Trifels (not so far from Worms, and also Trier). There is, annually, a medieval festival at the castle and this year friends made in St Albans are invited to visit Trifels for their festivities.

The St Albans Museum Service will be producing an exhibition to run parallel with that on Richard Lionheart and the supporting group visiting from St Albans will be coordinated by the St Albans Worms Partnership.

A preliminary meeting of those interested in going will be held at the District Council Offices (Civic Centre) at 7.30 pm on Monday 18th April. Do come along there if you are interested in joining the trip, which will leave St Albans Thursday 4th August. We could return on the following Monday, or possibly include a short visit to Worms at the beginning of the week to meet old friends again there. If you are unable to attend the meeting, but would like to express interest, give Kate Morris a ring on 01727 868434.

THOMAS FOWLER

ELOPEMENT, BANKRUPTCY AND SUICIDE, THE DRAMATIC STORY OF THE FIRST ORGANIST OF THE ABBEY'S SMITH-BYFIELD ORGAN

This article is a shortened version of the lecture presented by Tony Billings to the Society recently. The original research was conducted in the 1990s by Anthony Nixon, a Society member at that time. He seems to have disappeared from view around that time and his current whereabouts are unknown. If any member has any news of him, the Council would be delighted to hear this.

In 1726 Frederick Vandermeulen, a rich Dutchman, lived in the newly-built Romeland House. His garden covered a whole block and his estate included land off Dagnall Lane and in St Michael's, as well as the King Harry pub. In 1739 Frederick was made a naturalised British subject by Royal Assent and later that year he married Elizabeth Pomfret in London.

Frederick was a popular man. Having served as Alderman in 1760, he was invited to be Mayor of St Albans in 1762, declining on the grounds that he was not English by birth. In 1770, Frederick died and was buried in the family vault in the Abbey. His property passed to his only son, Joseph Pomfret Vandermeulen, who remained at Romeland House and, in 1775, married Susannah Hitch of Cambridgeshire by special licence. Their first child was born in the same year and they had eleven more children, including Elizabeth who was baptised in 1786.

Opposite Romeland House stood cottages known as Blue Row (pictured), one of which was occupied by George and Sarah Fowler. In 1785, they had a son, Thomas. He was the '& Son' of George Fowler and Son, builders. He was a talented young man, 'a great man for music ... and could be quite the gentleman when he liked'. Thomas probably spent a lot of his youth in and around the Abbey, interesting himself in the building and the organ.

Nobody knows how Thomas Fowler and Elizabeth Vandermeulen met: perhaps in the Abbey, their parish church, or at Romeland House, where George Fowler and Son carried out building alterations in the early 1800s. However they met,

Elizabeth 'fell in love with [Thomas's] singing'. Their friendship grew, much to the disapproval of Elizabeth's father, who had served as Mayor of St Albans in 1793 and 1794.

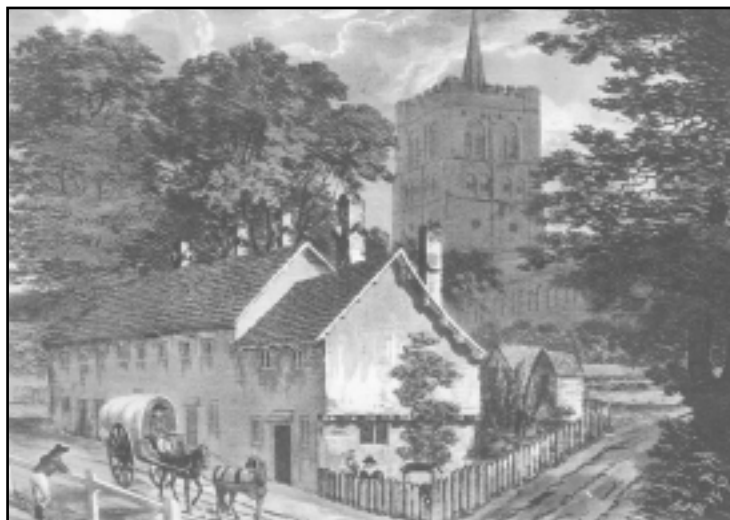
At midnight one night in 1812 Elizabeth let herself out through a small wooden gate in the garden wall of Romeland House, to elope with Thomas. (The garden gate is still there.) Presumably the couple married – they certainly returned to set up home in Blue Row, almost immediately opposite the front door of Romeland House. Soon after the elopement Joseph Pomfret Vandermeulen moved his family away to Cambridgeshire.

The Fowlers' fortunes waxed. They had seven children; Thomas continued in the building business and indulged his interest in music. In 1819, according to The Organs of St Albans Abbey, the St Albans Corporation 'concurred on the application of the Reverend Mr. Small, Rector', in an effort to provide an organ for the Abbey Church by subscription. They subscribed £20 towards a second-hand organ by Father Smith and John Byfield, at a total cost of £450. When the Smith-Byfield organ was first used in 1820, and at its public opening, the organist was Thomas Fowler, who was appointed organist to the Abbey in

1820 'at £31-10s-0d a year'. For the first public performance, Thomas was paid an extra guinea.

To celebrate the commissioning of the new organ, Thomas prepared a little book, entitled A Selection of Psalms, and Hymns Adapted for the Use of the Abbey Church, St Albans, 1820. The churchwarden's copy can still be seen in the furthestmost glass case in the north aisle of the Abbey.

In 1822 disaster struck the Vandermeulen family, as recorded by the Cambridge Chronicle. "On Friday last, in the 72nd year of his age, Joseph Pomfret Vander Meulen, Esq., of whom it may be truly said that he never made an enemy or lost a friend". Joseph died from injuries when he was thrown from his gig at a horse fair. His body was brought back to St Albans and buried in the family vault, the mayor and aldermen of St Albans acting as pallbearers. The bulk of Joseph's property was left to his daughter Eve, provided "that my said daughter shall remain



unmarried at the time of my decease". Much of Joseph's freehold property was sold at auction at the Angel Inn in St Albans in 1824. It may have been then that Thomas and Elizabeth purchased some of Joseph's estate to the north of Dagnall Lane as building land.

In 1823 Thomas and Elizabeth moved from Blue Row to Holywell

Hill. The following year, Thomas bought land at Oyster Hills and Key Fields on the new London Road. He built houses on both sites, using part of the Oyster Hill site as a brickfield, exploiting the excellent local brick earth. It may have been Thomas's houses which caused the Boundary Commissioners in 1831 to redraw the town boundary to take in the houses on Key Fields, 'many of which were very respectable'. The new boundaries increased the population in the Borough from 4772 to 5771.

By 1826, Thomas and Elizabeth were living in Fishpool Street, in a house which Thomas owned at least until 1829. Thomas's house building became more speculative; he was not perhaps a good businessman and unsuccessful property deals led, in 1828, to the collapse of his business. In the same year, Elizabeth died, shortly after the death of their two-year-old son, Frederick James.

In 1829 Thomas was made bankrupt. William Leworthy, a vicar married to Charlotte Hitch, Joseph Pomfret Vandermeulen's sister-in-law, and paid Thomas five shillings for the Oyster Fields and London Road sites, covenanting with Eve Vandermeulen (Joseph's daughter) and a Reverend Mr. Goodenough of Bristol to continue building the houses on those sites.

As a result of his problems, Thomas resigned as organist in 1831, only to find himself reappointed two years later. He stayed in the post for four more years, during which period his only daughter and his father died. In 1837 William Leworthy, who had acquired Thomas's building land for next to nothing, died, leaving his

property to his wife Charlotte, who in turn made everything over to the Reverend Mr. Goodenough of Bristol. Thomas absconded from his post as organist when a court case, possibly related to the repossession by him of the Oyster Field brickyards, went against him.

In November 1838 Thomas returned to St Albans. He probably had no property left in the town, as he took lodgings. Thomas found that another organist, Thomas Brooks, had taken his place. On 20th November, Thomas went to the Cloisters, the public passage which, until the removal of the walls which blocked off the Lady Chapel and the Saint's Shrine, ran right through the Abbey. The County Press takes up the story. 'At the White Hart Inn, St Albans, on Tuesday evening week, on view of Thomas Fowler, until lately for many years organist at the Abbey Church. The unfortunate man was found lying in the cloisters of that building with his throat dreadfully cut.'

John Richardson deposed that about 7.00 a.m. he was going to work through the cloisters when he saw a dark puddle across the passage, traced it back to someone lying in the cloisters and sent to the police station. John Lacy, a police officer, found the deceased sitting with his back supported against the door of the schoolroom. On searching, Lacy found a hat, umbrella, and neck-handkerchief belonging to the deceased, along with a razor.

The inquest jury took just five minutes to return a verdict of 'temporary derangement', on the evidence that Thomas had 'appeared a little low-

spirited and complained of the ill treatment he had received in some law business in which he was engaged'. On the death certificate, the coroner stated the cause of death to be 'suicide being temporarily deranged'.

In those days, suicide was a crime; it was not until 1961 that the Suicide Act was repealed. Until then, a suicide was to be denied a Christian service and buried in non-consecrated ground. Thomas did not suffer this fate. On 26th November 1838, the Rector, Dr. Nicholson, in a courageous gesture, arranged for Thomas to be buried in the nave of the Abbey, though no stone marks his grave.

Though he is without a proper memorial, Thomas may have left an enduring mark on the Abbey: on the south wall to the east of the Abbot's door near the organ, above a small ledge, cut into the wall are the initials T.F. and the date 1806. If these are Thomas's, he would have been twenty-one.

Is a single graffito a fitting epitaph for a man who was twice organist to the Abbey and whose building of 'respectable' houses caused the town boundary to be redrawn? It surely cannot be, not least because the graffito is unattributable. On a panel in St Michael's Chapel are carved the names of those organists who are buried in the Cathedral. Thomas's name is not among them. Should that panel not include Thomas Fowler – 1785 to 1838?

LANDSCAPE HISTORY COURSE

If you are interested in understanding the way in which the English man-made landscape has developed, this may be the course for you. The University of Cambridge, through the Institute of Continuing Education, is running a certificate course in landscape history and field archaeology in Hertfordshire for the first time, beginning in September 2005. It will be held at Letchworth Settlement on Wednesday afternoons from 2 until 4 p.m.

The certificate is comprised of four 12-week modules covering prehistoric and Roman landscape, Saxon and

medieval landscape, landscape from the Black Death onwards, and sources and methods for landscape history. These modules are free-standing and can be taken individually or combined with modules from other disciplines. At present this is the only daytime landscape history certificate course being offered by Cambridge.

If you would like details contact Helen Hofton, on helen_hofton@hotmail.com or ring Mrs S. Carrick of Letchworth Settlement on 01462 682828. Brochures will be available in June.

ANCIENT TECHNOLOGY

John Brodrick, formerly President of SAHAAS, gave a lecture on this topic to the Society in March, and we are grateful to him for allowing us to include this summary for members who were unable to attend

In the field of technology each generation stands on the shoulders of its forebears. While Romans are applauded for their skill in supplying water to their towns, they drew upon techniques developed by the Greeks and Etruscans centuries before. In medicine, the first well known doctor is the Greek Hippocrates, c. 500 BC, who used Egyptian medical and pharmaceutical knowledge from a thousand years before. John mentioned very early examples of medical knowledge: a Neanderthal skeleton (18,000 BC) that had had surgery to the arm, a 4000 BC trepanned skull from Britain where the patient survived to be buried with the large circle of bone removed from his skull. Surgical tools are illustrated on an Egyptian tomb of 1500 BC and evidence survives of the use of opium and other narcotics as early as 1500 BC in the Middle East and South America. Although most operations would have taken place without anaesthetics, powerful anaesthesia was available from plant products but these were very dangerous to the

patient and only used when essential.

Turning to trade and transport, traders from the Indonesian archipelago travelled in catamarans to sell spices in Madagascar around 1500 BC – traces of their words are found in modern Madagascan. Much of Rome's increasing prosperity from 200 BC arose from the application of technology to ocean-going ships and river craft which gave them very low transport costs across the Med and on Europe's large rivers. The Romans also knew of the economic advantages flowing from splitting productive tasks down into individual acts that could be performed repetitively by semi-skilled labour. They knew that higher productivity arose from large scale production in industries like grain milling, shipping, pottery and arms manufacture.

Why did the Romans not experience an Industrial Revolution 1500 years before Britain? In the 17th and 18th centuries Britain had an expanding trade with colonies and third countries; it had a large merchant

fleet and a very effective navy. There was a large number of very wealthy people to supply capital, and an increasingly effective banking system to finance international trade. Pre-industrial Britain had highly skilled craft-based production, knew how to apply water power to production, had wide technical skills in mining, metallurgy and textiles. All these attributes were present in Rome c.150 AD and they also had low tariffs against exports (which Britain did not), a currency common to the empire and widely accepted in third countries and Roman law accepted throughout their Empire.

Despite this no Industrial Revolution occurred, perhaps reflecting a lack of parallel thinking in the Roman world so that the successful application of water power or scale to one industry was not seen to be likely to yield gains in other industries. Probably the biggest barrier to progress was the separation of the ownership of capital from detailed knowledge of the problems and opportunities that industry involved. This arose because no wealthy Roman would engage in practical work and, when they did provide finance, it was as loans rather than as risk capital.

BRITONS IN POST-ROMAN HERTFORDSHIRE: PLACE-NAME EVIDENCE

Dr John Baker, who lectures at Birkbeck College and the University of Leicester, was our guest speaker in March, and we are grateful to him for this synopsis of his paper.

The St Albans area, and the Chiltern zone generally, has long been of special interest to students of the immediately post-Roman and early Anglo-Saxon periods. In the fifth and sixth centuries, much of lowland Britain, and in particular the south-east, came to be dominated by a new, Germanic culture. Material evidence of this culture, such as furnished burials and new ceramic forms, is virtually unknown in the St Albans area before the seventh century, while work at various sites, most notably the former Roman town of Verulamium and its suburbs, has shown that there was activity of some kind in this area during this period. It

is possible that this represents a British community, retaining its own culture while surrounding areas became culturally Germanic.

Place-names can be used to shed further light on the fate of the British population after the end of Roman control. The Germanic settlers of the fifth and sixth centuries brought with them the Old English language, the ancestor of modern English, and the language in which most place-names were coined. Some place-names, however, contain elements which were coined in one or other of the languages used in Britain before the arrival of Old English, and these may demonstrate some kind of contact

between Old English speakers and the native population of Britain in the fifth century or later.

In the St Albans area, a number of these survived into the Anglo-Saxon period, including the Romano-British name of the town itself, Verulamium, which Bede records in the eighth century as Uerlamacaestir. The survival of these names tells us that there was some kind of contact between Old English speakers, and people who knew the British place-names of the area. This may mean that British communities survived in the St Albans area up until the arrival of the first Old English speakers, but the size of these communities, and the precise process by which their place-names were preserved is open to debate.

THIS SEASON'S LECTURES

TUESDAY 19TH APRIL

**Archaeology and Local History Group AGM
Our evolving view of the Romans
Simon West**

Keeper of Field Archaeology for St Albans Museums

Simon's interest was stimulated at an early age when he was taken by his parents to visit castles and sites. He had further advantage as his aunt lived opposite Hadrian's Wall. He studied History and Archaeology and later did a Diploma in Scientific Methods in Archaeology. He is currently doing his MA at University College Winchester. He has worked in the St Albans District since the 1989 and has excavated with Dr Rosalind Niblett on prominent sites.

FRIDAY 29TH APRIL

**The strange story of the Metropolitan Railway
Dr Clive Foxall**

We shall hear how the mercurial Victorian entrepreneur, Sir Edward Watkin, used the embryonic Metropolitan Railway – then confined to central London – as a Trojan horse to further his ambitions to link Manchester to Paris by train. He nearly achieved his objective and in doing so built the last main line in Britain, as well as creating Metro-Land. However, he bequeathed a complex railway system that still has ramifications today

As a boy, Dr Foxell watched trains at Harrow and in his holidays worked at Neasden Locomotive shed. After training as a research physicist, he became Managing Director of a semiconductor company before joining the Post Office and retiring as a Managing Director and Board Member of BT. He has been President of the Institute of Physics, Vice-President of the Institution of Electrical Engineers and served on numerous academic and government bodies. His latest book is Memories of the Met & GC Joint Line

TUESDAY 10TH MAY

**SAHAAS Annual General Meeting at
Verulamium Museum
Verlamio-Verlamium
Simon West**

Keeper of Field Archaeology for St Albans Museums

We are transported back in time through the Iron Age to the second century AD. Simon will touch on the social and political upheavals before the third century when society settled into a Romanised way of life and will illustrate the wider theory about how Roman Britain came out of Iron Age society.

TUESDAY 17TH MAY

**Our past: treasure finds from England and Wales
Richard Hobbs**

Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum

FRIDAY 27TH MAY

**Indian influences on 18th century English gardens
Kate Harwood**

A very fitting subject as we turn our attention to gardens in the warmth of the summer season. Kate Harwood, one of our members, and will explain that the beginnings of English interest in India with the East India Company led to adoption and adaption of Indian customs, vocabulary, and ideas. She will explore how India influenced our gardens, from the plant introductions in the 16th and 17th centuries through to the gardens of the eighteenth century, many of which were financed by the huge fortunes made from India. Gardens of Hertfordshire with strong Indian connections will be illustrated. Kate is involved with the Garden History Society, the Georgian Group and Hertfordshire Gardens Trust. She holds an MA in Garden History and is engaged in researching and writing on historic gardens.

Tuesday meetings are held at St Albans School and start at 8.00 p.m.

Friday meetings are at the College of Law, Hatfield Road, and start at 7.45 p.m.

They are open to all members of the Society. Non-members may attend two meetings as guests.

The SAHAAS Newsletter welcomes your comments, ideas or contributions, which may be edited; please send to deedrinkwater@beeb.net or to 35 Portland Street, St Albans, AL3 4RA.

Our next issue will be in July 2005 and the closing date for contributions is Friday 17th June.