



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
Architectural & Archaeological Society

ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 207 February 2018



*General View of St Albans. (See Page 3)
Courtesy of the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban*

Some of the items included in this edition

President's Message
SAHAAS New Year Party
Clock Tower
Library

Historical Pageants
County Theatre
Central Library Index
Lecture Programme

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EDITOR

This is my last Newsletter as editor. Over the many editions I have had the privilege to edit I have been assisted by a truly supportive team. I am sure I and the membership would wish to thank them for the work they have done; to provide copy, assist in proof reading and, not least, to distribute the finished article, by post and by hand. And, of course, not forgetting the many members who have sent in articles for publication. "Thank you".

John Humphreys

Cover picture. The print 'General View Of St Albans', 'Drawn from nature on stone' by J.C. Oldmeadow was printed by W. Clerk's Lithographic Establishment at 202 High Holborn circa 1838-1840. The three-horse coach leaving the town via St Stephen's Hill could have been either a private coach or perhaps 'The Times' which in 1836 travelled the 31 miles from London to Luton via Barnet and St Albans in 4 hours; it was one of the many stage coach routes which passed through St Albans and listed in the Directory of Stage Coach Services (1836). 'The Times' was a comparatively small coach with four seats inside and eight outside. The Directory has been transcribed and digitised by Friern Barnet and District Local History Society.

HAVE YOU A MINUTE?

Do you enjoy transcribing historical documents? If so, would you be interested in taking part in a small SAHAAS project to transcribe the Society's 1845-1914 Minute Books?

We have a complete set of these books and the Minutes are in generally good handwriting. For several reasons, it is desirable to reproduce the valuable contents in a more accessible format. The minutes record the many activities of our early predecessors as they became involved in church architecture, early archaeological digs, preserving the town's built heritage and generally running a small but 'learned' antiquarian society.

Whilst there is no immediate urgency, we are looking to complete the work by October 2018. All we require is that you have access to the internet so we

can send you digital copies of the material to transcribe using your word processor (e.g. Microsoft Word) and for you to return your transcripts to us. We will hold a kick-off meeting in March to establish the process and then a review meeting in April to address any questions arising from your initial endeavours.

We are also seeking a couple of volunteers to help with scanning the material using their own equipment. Thanks to the work of Malcolm Merrick three volumes are ready for transcription; there are several more to do.

For further information and / or expressions of interest please email Jon Mein at:
library@stalbanhistory.org

Jon Mein

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

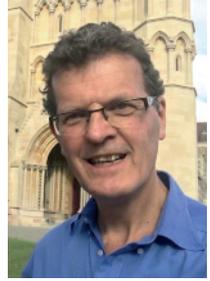
Happy New Year to all our members – and a particularly big thank you to the many people who worked so hard to make our New Year party at the Verulamium Museum such a warm and convivial occasion.

I had hoped to use this column to write about the outcomes from an Away Day of the Council of the Society planned for December. Unfortunately the proposed date coincided with the heavy snow and we had to cancel. The next time that all the key officers coincide in one place is March, so watch this space.

We will use the Away Day to do a classic SWOT analysis – our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. And then drill down into all that we do, debating how we might see the Society develop as it approaches its 175th birthday.

I am sure that one of the issues we will discuss is our branding and name. St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society is a bit of a mouthful. It does not even express the local history strand of our activity. But SAHAAS is just a jumble of letters, hard to know how even to pronounce. I am reminded of the

signs to ZSL in Regents Park that mystify almost everyone when 'London Zoo' is the obvious brand.



There have been some suggestions that we rebrand ourselves as St Albans History Society or St Albans Heritage Society. I freely confess that when I hear the word 'heritage', I reach for my gun. It has become one of those bureaucratic catch-all pieces of jargon. As for describing ourselves as a History Society, perhaps that's a bit dull. You can go to any major town in the country and join a 'history society', it's certainly not distinctive.

One of the earliest battle honours for our Society was the preservation and restoration of the Clock Tower. In the early 1860s it came close to destruction. A member of the town council described it as "our great, unsightly incubus" and "a disgrace to the Corporation and the town." Even if there were a chance of restoring it, he asked "what benefit would it be to the town? It would not bring anything to the Borough fund."

This was challenged by our Society forbears, who pledged funds for a

restoration in a motion tabled by the then Earl of Verulam, one of my predecessors as President. After some considerable discussion and the involvement of Giles Gilbert Scott, restoration began in 1866 under the personal superintendence of local architect Thomas Hill, one of Bryan Hanlon's many distinguished predecessors as Hon Secretary of the Society. The rest is history. Its signalling days over, the Tower did not and still does not, serve any functional purpose. But it is part of what makes St Albans so unique, part of our city's brand if you will.

'The Arc & Arc' as a brand is also unique. It does not immediately mean anything. Nor does 'Coke' except as an archaic fuel or dubious substance. But it is a short and snappy title. We are the only Arc & Arc in the country. Many people still recognise it as our name. We could have a strapline 'St Albans and Hertfordshire History' or similar.

THE ARC & ARC
St Albans and Hertfordshire History

As a play on words, our pamphlets and publications could be branded 'Arclight' or 'Archive'.

Of course some will say I am just being archaic! Whatever we decide, any final decision will be down to the wider membership. Perhaps we will just stay as SAHAAS.

All feedback welcome – and whatever we are called we should continue to be proud of the richness of our various activities, the lecture programme, the publications, the library, the research.

Work proceeds apace on plans for our 175th anniversary in 2020. One major strand will be an exhibition about the Society at the new Museum. John Morewood is taking the lead on this. We want it to be forward-looking and innovative as well as memorialising our past. So volunteers please to work with John on this exciting project! If you are interested, please email John at tjjp199@yahoo.co.uk

Here's to an even more rewarding 2018.

Sandy Walkington

SAHAAS NEW YEAR PARTY

Sandy Walkington, the Society's President, welcomed Cllr Jamie Day, Deputy Mayor of St Albans (standing-in for the Mayor who was unwell) as our guest of honour at the party on Friday, 5 January, at Verulamium Museum.

Cllr Day, in responding to our President's welcome, spoke about the specialness of St Albans and the growing pressures for additional residential development. He praised the 'wonderful relationship' which exists between SAHAAS and the City Council, and highlighted the work of the 'Clockateers'. Cllr Day also thanked SAHAAS members for their wholehearted support for the construction of the new museum to be opened in May 2018. We also

welcomed Doreen and Roy Bratby, the Society's newest Honorary Members.

Our Secretary, Bryan Hanlon, organised the quiz but scolded those who used 'gadgets' instead of their brains! The winner was Anthony Oliver with a very commendable 18 correct answers to the 30 fiendish questions. Tactfully, the President's wife came second with John Morewood, a previous winner, in third.

Food and drinks were provided by members. Once again, the buffet was in the very capable hands of Val Argue, husband Chris, Caroline Howkins, Ann Dean and Carol Oldknow who served the mulled wine. And many thanks to everyone else who chipped in

John G.E. Cox

MEMBERSHIP

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Mr Rod Cowper	St Albans
Mr Peter Denney	St Albans
Elaine & Martin Hudson	Croxley Green
Brian & Joanne Martin	St Albans
Mr Guy Nettleton	St Albans
Mr Peter Noble	St Albans
Mrs Diana Penton	St Albans
Mr Jeremy Wright	St Albans

David Smith
Membership Secretary



Our President welcomes our principal guest, the Deputy Mayor of St Albans, Cllr Jamie Day



Val Argue presides over the preparation of the New Year Party buffet



Hon. Sec, Bryan Hanlon presents prizes to Quiz winners

Photos. Andy Lawrence

LIBRARY REPORT

Christmas and seasonal ailments, saw the Library a little quieter in the past few weeks. Some Library Fridays have been very busy; Wednesdays less so.

Library Team. A strategic meeting was held in late January to clarify Library requirements, tasks, issues and policies. A report on developments will appear in the next Newsletter.

Requiring immediate attention is the **need for more regular hands in helping man the Library on opening days.** This partly reflects the recent expansion of the collections. But the loss of one-time team members, and recent bouts of ill health and flu epidemics have stretched our human resources; and several of us are not getting any younger! There is a need to be looking ahead and bringing in fresh staff.

If any Member, in addition to the known Library Volunteers Group, is interested in helping man the Library do please let us know at library@stalbanhistory.org or please respond to the more detailed email appeal to Members which should have reach you. Depending on

responses, we may consider changing opening days to better suit availability.

A meeting of the extended Library Volunteers Group will be held in later February to allocate library resource-discovery and other tasks.

SAHAAS Online Catalogue training has been going forward in short sessions. To draw together experience and firm up on aspects of cataloguing policy and procedure, the group learning about the Soutron system held an extended (not quite “away day”) session in later January. By the time you are reading this, we hope to have several cataloguers working independently.

In the course of training, numerous books from the Beardsmore collection have been added to the Library, and notes on some of the more notable appear below.

Eileen Roberts Research Materials

I have arranged with Jane Webster, Dr Roberts’ daughter, a meeting in February to pick up further materials from Redbourn, and to discuss possible acquisition of some major antiquarian lacunae in SAHAAS Library holdings.

SAHAAS Minutes. Malcolm Merrick has made a start on digitising the Society's Council Minute Books. See also note on page 3 (appeal for transcribers).

Sally Pearson continues busily listing and seeking to sell surplus Beardsmore stock and other library duplicates for the benefit of the Library and the St. Albans Museum project. See page 22.

Donald Munro

LIBRARY NOTES FEBRUARY 2018

NEW ACQUISITIONS

We are making progress with cataloguing books from the Beardsmore Gift, adding many more items to our collection than hitherto. Space limitations prevent listing each one in the *Newsletter*, but we will include details of those we think the most interesting. Here is a sample:

History of the ancient town and borough Hertford, by Lewis Turner Esq. Hertford: St. Austin for the author, 1830. 503pp, illus, map.

The parish registers of Aldenham, Hertfordshire, 1559-1659, transcribed by Kenneth F. Gibbs; and edited and indexed by William Brigg. St. Albans: Privately printed for the subscribers

by Gibbs and Bamforth, 1902. 210, xxx p, [4] leaves of plates : ill. Includes an appendix of notes covering people & places mentioned in the registers.

South Mymms : the story of a parish / by F. Brittain ; with an introduction by Arthur Quiller-Couch. Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1931. xvi, 176 p. : ill. A scholarly work. Includes numerous appendices: lists of vicars, churchwardens, headmasters, war memorial inscriptions for South Mymms and immediate surrounding area.

Tales for sportsmen, by Dragon. London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., 1885. viii p., [3]-164 p : front., plates, ill. Includes chapter on hunting at Bricket Wood. Illustrations by Georgina Bowers, St Albans resident.

RECENT JOURNAL ARTICLES

In *Harpenden and District Local History Society Newsletter*, no 133, December 2017

pp19-23' "Lawes and Gilbert: an unlikely Victorian agricultural partnership", by Joyce Bunting.

John Lawes collaborated at Rothamsted with Joseph Henry Gilbert, who ran the experiments. The article is concerned with the life of the lesser-known partner, born in 1817. Contains a portrait of Gilbert.

Tony Cooper

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

If you happened to pass by the Clock Tower anytime between 24 November and 4 January you probably noticed a life-sized Nutcracker soldier standing on guard outside. It was one of fifteen soldiers and a Nutcracker King that were positioned throughout St Albans, Redbourn, Wheathampstead and Harpenden as part of the St Albans Nutcracker Trail. The Nutcracker soldier placed outside the Clock Tower was appropriately named Thomas Wolvey, the Royal Mason engaged by St Albans' townspeople to build the tower. Strangely, the soldier began dressed in red but as the cold weather set in, he changed his tunic to a blue one.

Our last opening of the year was on Sunday, 26 November for the turning on of the Christmas lights when just under 250 visitors climbed the tower during the 4 hours we were open. This year the town's lights were switched on simultaneously in three different places – St Peter's Street, the Vintry Gardens and in front of the Clock Tower. Thanks to Frank Iddiols' work on the new lights and extra cabling, all the Clock Tower lights were turned on by the flick of just one switch.

Although the Big Weekend had its problems last year, St Albans District Council have decided to continue to support the event again this year, over the weekend of 24/25 March. The Big



From Red



To Blue

Weekend is about giving Hertfordshire residents the chance to discover – or rediscover – the array of fantastic things to see and do on their doorstep, and encouraging them to spread the word about their county – be a tourist in your own home town. The Clock Tower will be joining in by offering the Big Weekend Ballot ticket winners exclusive access to the Clock Tower on both mornings and a Clock Tower Memorabilia Goody Bag. For more information and to enter the ballot for a variety of attractions please go to www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk.

Preparations are in progress for the Clockateers' Party to be held in the Museum on Friday, 16 March at 7.30pm. Invitations will be posted in February to all our Clockateers but

anyone thinking of becoming a Clockateer is welcome to come along too and find out more about helping to keep this iconic building open to the public.

The Clock Tower will be opened by the Civic Society on Good Friday, 30 March 2018 for the start of the summer season and then will be manned on alternate weekends by SAHAAS and Civic Society volunteers until the close on Sunday, 30 September 2018.

As always, Mike and I would like to thank all the Clockateers for giving their time to keep the Clock Tower open for the public to enjoy and we hope to see you all at the Clockateers' Party on Friday, 16 March 2018.

Caroline Howkins & Mike Carey

ABBOT JOHN OF WHEATHAMPSTEAD

In January, a unique and remarkable discovery came to light during an archaeological dig taking place as part of the Alban, Britain's First Saint project at St Albans Cathedral. A 15th century skeleton was uncovered and, in an extremely rare development, was found to be accompanied by three papal bulls issued by Pope Martin V (1417-31), indicating that this was no ordinary burial.

The above is the prologue to Laura Bloom's interview with James G. Clark, Professor of History at Exeter University and our guest speaker on 26 January.

For the whole story see

<https://albanbritainsfirstsaint.wordpress.com/the-lost-abbot/>

OBITUARY - DAVID AUBREY

It is with sadness that we learned of the death of David Aubrey in December. Remembered for his quiet and unfussy contribution, he was Treasurer of the Society for around fifteen years from 1990 taking on the additional task of being Clock Tower coordinator for eight of these. He found time to contribute an article to Brian Moody's book, *A history in all men's lives*, to commemorate the Society's 150th anniversary in the mid-1900s. The picture was taken at the Anniversary Dinner in 1995. There was a private committal in January.



PUBLICATIONS REPORT

Sales of *The Old Town Hall, St Albans* performed well during the run-up to Christmas. Copies will continue to be on sale to members at SAHAAS talks, where we now run a small bookstall whenever volunteers are available to man the stall.

Work on Brian Adams' pamphlet on Percival Blow has now restarted. Blow was a local architect who designed many buildings in St Albans in the early twentieth century. It is hoped that the pamphlet will be published in a few months time.

It is now over a year since we joined Twitter to help promote our publica-

tions. The experience suggests that Twitter has certainly increased the public's awareness of our recent publications and articles. The effect on sales is difficult to judge. We now have over 220 followers, more than we follow ourselves, and have published over 1000 tweets and retweets since September 2016.

The Publication Committee, which includes John Cox, Ann Dean, Sue Mann, Christine McDermott and Roger Miles, have been exploring ideas for new publications and submitted preliminary proposals for a project in support of the 175th anniversary. We'll keep you posted!

Patricia Broad



Follow us on Twitter: SAHAAS@stalbanpast

SAHAAS AND THE EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES MYSTERY

We had a very interesting lecture on the tomb of Tutankhamun in October by Dr Jaromir Malek of the Griffith Institute, Oxford University. There is a very tenuous link between that Institute and SAHAAS, with a mystery attached.

In the late 19th century the vicar of Sandridge was the Revd John Griffith, a member of our Society. In 1884, his son Francis, soon after graduating from Oxford, secured a position as official student with the Egypt Exploration Fund, working with Flinders Petrie excavating in the Nile delta. The Society's *Transactions* record that at a meeting in December 1890, after several (presumably brief) papers were read, "The meeting then became conversational ... antiquities presented by the Egypt Exploration Fund through the Revd Dr Griffith and Mr Frank L. Griffith were examined with interest."

In 2015 we had an enquiry from the Curator of the Petrie Museum of

Egyptian Archaeology at University College London. She had seen the reference in our *Transactions*, and asked if anyone knows what happened to the antiquities after they were examined. The Curator explained that distributions of this type were not loans but returns for grants to the Fund for excavation work in Egypt. We could find no subsequent mention of them in the Society's minutes or elsewhere, or of any contribution to the Fund; and there is no trace of them in the records of St Albans Museum.

The fate of the antiquities remains a mystery, and if any of our readers can help to solve it we, and doubtless the Petrie Museum, would be very glad to hear from them.

Frank Griffith had a distinguished career, becoming Reader in Archaeology at Oxford in 1901, and Professor from 1924 until 1932. He left his papers, estate and Egyptological library to found the Griffith Institute in Oxford.

Tony Cooper

INTRODUCING THE ST ALBANS CENTRAL LIBRARY INDEX

I welcome the chance to give fellow Society members an update on local research resources in the public library. As well as the obvious books, these include the following list:

- telephone directories, electoral registers and older poll books;
- trade/residential directories (Kelly's & others);
- parish & St Albans Borough records (microfilm);
- illustrations (photos, drawings, prints & slides);
- the "Pamphlets" collection of miscellaneous sources - ephemera, journal/newspaper articles, themed cuttings, council & other local publications, guidebooks & directories, souvenir programmes, sale particulars, election literature etc.;
- maps - Ordnance Survey (& older), street, commercial, planning, thematic, aerial photos;
- local newspapers & periodicals (current & back runs);
- articles from the *Review* by Geoff Dunk & others (1970s/80s);

- the online reference library – a wide range of sources including Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford Reference Online, Ancestry, FindMyPast, old and current newspapers etc.

Members with past experience of the collections may recall wooden drawers, card indexes and the Brown classification system. These worked well, and have their anachronistic charm perhaps, but what to do when space is precious? Online access an expectation, but web-based professional cataloguing is not an option. A local solution was required.

Inspired by the excellent SAHAAS Journals Index, I considered transcribing the cards into spreadsheet form. If you have used this, you will know that the Find (Ctrl+F), Filtering and Sorting options can be useful tools. I hoped for a virtual "one-stop shop" where various resources could be checked easily in one file.

This is now in progress, with input from staff (like myself) and volunteers. The resulting document, available now on the Society's website, contains a separate tab for each

index; three have been fully transcribed, with further information added where possible:

Pamphlets: repackaged, easier to look through, now in an A-Z subject index.

Slides: can no longer be borrowed, but copies can be made by HALS.

Review articles: repackaged into new folders, shelved with the books.

The 4th tab (*Illustrations*) is currently just an expanded version of the previous subject index, but does contain some useful individual details. This

will be replaced by a complete index, which is now underway.

We also hope to work on remaining collections (e.g. *maps*) as time goes on. Further details and instructions can be found in the document itself – download it and have a look!

Thanks to Jon Mein & Donald Munro of SAHAAS for their advice and encouragement.

**Scott Chalmers (Library Assistant,
St Albans Central Library)**

Hot off the press!!

ST ALBANS IN 50 BUILDINGS

by

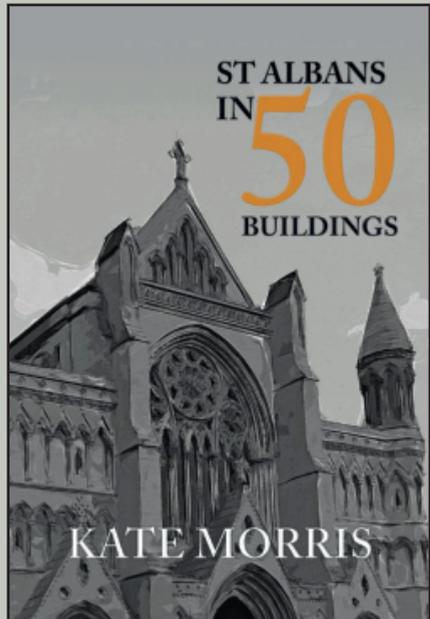
Past President of the Society

Kate Morris

Published by Amberley Publishing and heavily illustrated, it tells the story of St Albans through the built heritage, sometimes highlighting events behind closed doors of familiar buildings.

Price £14.99 from local bookshops or Amazon, or, for members, direct from Kate @ £12.00 until her stocks run out.

kate@englishinfo.biz or 07946 612447 or at Society lectures.



HISTORICAL PAGEANTS IN MODERN BRITAIN: A NEW RESOURCE

In the early twentieth century, Britain was gripped by an outbreak of ‘pageant fever’ or ‘pageantitis’. Communities up and down the country were mobilised in the production of large-scale costume dramas, usually in outdoor locations, that celebrated local and national history. The source of the outbreak was Sherborne in Dorset, where in 1905 the impresario Louis Napoleon Parker led a cast of some 800 volunteers in the production of eleven scenes from local history, and many other places followed in the years before the First World War.

The war curtailed popular enthusiasm for historical pageants, but the fever returned again in the 1920s and 1930s, and there was yet another outbreak in the 1940s and 1950s, centred in particular (though by no means exclusively) on the Festival of Britain and the Coronation of Elizabeth II. Although pageants have since declined, they have never completely disappeared: arguably, their influence can be seen in the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012, when Danny Boyle and Frank Cottrell Boyce created a dramatic re-presentation of Britain’s industrial past.



St Albans Pageant 1907: participants in Elizabethan costume as the court of Queen Elizabeth I. Courtesy of St Albans Museums

St Albans was one of the most significant centres of historical pageantry, with an early pageant in 1907, two more in 1948 and 1953, and a smaller indoor ‘pageant-play’ in 1968. Well-known figures in the city were involved, including Charles Ashdown, who wrote the script in 1907, and Cyril Swinson, who was ‘pageant-master’ in 1948 and 1953. Swinson’s brother Arthur, a radio and TV script-writer, best known for *Dr Finlay’s Casebook*, wrote and produced the 1968 pageant.

Other places in Hertfordshire staged pageants too: Hertford in 1914 (Ashdown again), Hatfield in 1927 (focusing on the Tudors), Berkhamsted in 1922 and 1966, Hitchin in 1951 (Swinson again) and Hertford again in 1973. At Berkhamsted in 1922, a key supporter of the pageant was the historian G. M.

Trevelyan, who wrote much of the script and even took an acting role, playing the part of Geoffrey Chaucer.

Pageants involved hundreds, often thousands, of people – as performers, of course, but also as costume-makers, set-builders, members of orchestras and choirs, horse-trainers, stewards, ticket-sellers and car park attendants.

Performers often purchased and cherished their costumes, which were carefully designed: at St Albans in 1907 and Hertford in 1914, the ‘chief mistress of the robes’ was Emily Ashdown, wife of Charles and a world-renowned historian of costume. All kinds of souvenirs and ephemera were produced and sold, from programmes and ‘books of words’ to ceramics and handkerchiefs, from post-cards to medallions – and even biscuit-tins!

Pageants, often staged to commemorate particular events or anniversaries, were themselves commemorated: the Pageant Gardens in Sherborne were laid out with the proceeds from Parker’s first pageant, and of course in St Albans (and in other towns) there is a road named after the pageant.

Since 2013 several colleagues and I have been involved in a project entitled ‘The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain 1905-2016’. One aim of this

project has been to collect information on the huge number of pageants held in Britain during this period, and to produce a searchable database of information. This resource, together with an interactive map, can now be publicly accessed at:

www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/

At the time of writing, there are 650 pageants in the database – this will increase in the coming months – and more than 1.5 million words of text. For many pageants (the St Albans ones are examples) there is a summary of the scenes, and a longer account of the production and reception of the pageant. For some others, there is only fragmentary detail, and we welcome additional information that members of the public are able to provide. You can contact us at:

historicalpageants@kcl.ac.uk

The project website:

www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/

also gives users the opportunity to upload images of pageants; alternatively, if you have any images or recollections, you are welcome to email us at the address above.

Mark Freeman
UCL Institute of Education
University College London

WIDENING THE HIGH STREET IN ST ALBANS

Completed in 1796, the construction of London Road bypassing Sopwell Lane and Holywell Hill was a laudable achievement. But those deserving plaudits, the local men of the St Albans Turnpike Trust, were in a pickle. As described in the August 2017 newsletter (no. 204), the new road meant that coach passengers arrived from the capital more quickly and in greater comfort; unfortunately they then joined the slow crawl down George Street fighting against the rising tide of vehicles and animals coming up the steep hill towards them.

It is clear from their minute books that the trustees had foreseen this problem when they started to plan the London Road development in the early 1790s. Unable to fund a bypass of George Street as well, their strategy had to be piecemeal: reach agreement with individual property owners to demolish parts of buildings that adversely affected the flow of traffic in the town centre. Even with these limited ambitions the results were disappointing. For example, James Bennett, then the owner of what is now the 'Thai Square' restaurant in George Street refused a deal to alter

the frontage to his building. Likewise, the owners of the house at the bottom of the road didn't sell up to the trustees until 1814 (see Newsletter 204). However, the trustees could claim two successes. One was minor, the removal of the protruding window at the George Inn (Newsletter 205). The other was work that has left a major mark on the centre of St Albans, albeit something we don't recognise as such today.

This concerns one of the foremost inns in the town, the large Red Lion, whose long frontage ran west along the High Street from Market Cross, to finish abutting 'Thai Square'. (Verulam Road didn't exist at this time.) Following a marked downturn in the local inn trade, the building was purchased in 1758 for his own residential use by surgeon Joseph Handley, a prominent and cussed local politician. From what we know of his personality, the building's prime location clearly attracted him. Indeed, it was soon colloquially known as 'Handley's Corner'.

In hindsight this label is surprising. Yes, the building was on the corner of Market Cross and High Street but today's replacement is hardly a landmark 'Corner'. Examination of Andrews and Wren's 1766 map of the town (Fig. 1) indicates why contempo-

aries perhaps described it in this way. It depicts a narrower entrance to this part of the High Street for travellers heading west than there is today. Handley’s house loomed over this ‘Corner’.

The subsequent widening of this part of the road can be attributed to the trustees. Following his death in 1782, Handley’s house was converted back into an inn trading again as the Red Lion. In 1791, to help solve the growing bottleneck conundrum, the trustees purchased the building and its yard and had a good part of it demolished to widen the road. Unfortunately no record of the dimensions of the original line has come to light. Instead Fig. 2 shows the results of our survey. On the strength of the 1766 map, we estimate that the width of the High Street outside the Red Lion was then the same as the narrowest

part of George Street, just 24ft wall to wall (see A & B on Fig. 2). It is now an acceptable 37ft (C & D).

All this work, completed in 1792, materially changed the layout of High Street to one more familiar to us today. What it did not do was materially resolve the other bottlenecks with George Street remaining steep and constricted. Coach travellers had to wait for the opening of Verulam Road in 1826 to experience the same speed and comfort that London Road had established 30 years before.

A fully referenced version of this article is available in the Society’s Library. Our thanks to Kate Morris and Alan Smith for their comments on an earlier draft.

Jon Mein and Frank Iddiols

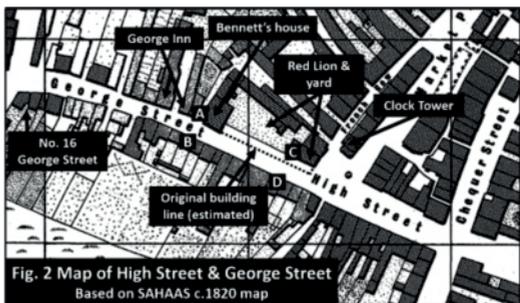
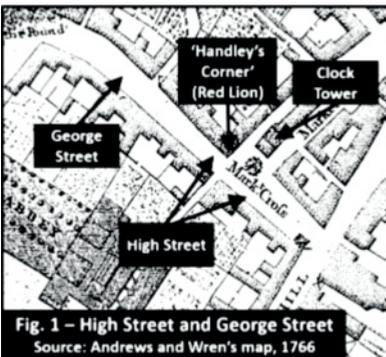


Fig. 2 Map of High Street & George Street
Based on SAHAAS c.1820 map

WHERE THE LIMELIGHT ONCE SHONE

For a period of almost 50 years the County Hall Theatre in St Albans brought professional theatre companies to the city. The final curtain fell in 1932. It appears that the theatre was losing its audience to the cinema and also to the bright lights of the West End, made more accessible by cheap evening rail travel from St Albans.

The last ever production was the 1928 Broadway musical hit comedy *Whoopee!* It must have been a fitting finale as the show featured sing-a-long, foot-tapping tunes that some of us may be familiar with today, including *Makin' Whoopee*, *My Baby Just Cares for Me* and *Yes Sir, That's My Baby*.

The theatre formed part of the County Constitutional Club, occupying a fine, ivy-covered building in St Peter's Street. Such clubs sprang up across the country as a result of franchise reform under the 1884 Representation of the People Act. Conservative party members anticipated that this would result in more supporters who would want to belong to a club. The now defunct Constitutional Club in

Northumberland Avenue, London, was the first to open its doors in 1883. The St Peter's Street premises, established in 1886, had separate rooms for reading, billiards, chess and card games. A large hall seating up to 800 was added to the rear of the property to create the County Hall Theatre. In 1903 the theatre was leased by Sidney Foster, a former actor turned impresario, who remained in charge for the following 29 years.

Access to the theatre was via a passageway to the right of the main building.

The theatre had no repertory company of its own. Instead it relied on booking touring companies from other theatres as well as hiring out or making the hall available for amateur productions during the summer months.

The building was requisitioned for a short period at the start of the First World War. Theatres and cinemas were hit by an entertainment tax levied in 1916 to raise money to help pay for the war. The cumulative impact of the war, from taxation to loss of performers, resulted in the closure of a number of provincial theatres.

The March 1917 production of *Gold and Syrup* was typical of the type of touring shows staged in St Albans during the war. It was described as having a 'full London beauty chorus, lovely girls, pretty dresses, beautiful scenery', with the added helpful information: 'It will be a full moon on these nights'. As St Albans was under curfew because of the presence of troops in the town, there was little or no street lighting allowed so moonlit nights were something of a boon to establishments offering evening entertainment.

The Christmas show in 1917 featured a popular London comedian, Jimmy Wood, in his 'screamingly funny revue in five scenes', called *Blighty*. It was stated that Jimmy was a medal-holding war veteran. His sidekick Jack

Laurie claimed to have been wounded three times in three different places – France, Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.

The show went on after the war but in January 1932 it was announced that the theatre would close at the end of the season. Although it was implied that competition from cinemas and the West End were factors, a local business directory of 1933 lists a new address for the County Constitutional Club, in Bricket Road. So it appears that the theatre may have closed because the club itself was relocating.

A fully referenced version of this article is available in SAHAAS Library.

Sue Mann



*The County Club with billboards outside; passageway to theatre visible
SAHAAS (Arthur Allen collection)*

POETRY OR ART, ANYONE?

The sorting of books donated to the Society from the Beardsmore Collection is nearing completion. Although the majority relate to local history, there are some volumes of poetry and literature, plus a few on painting, prints and sculpture. The authors and artists often have Hertfordshire connections. A list of these titles, now offered for sale, can be viewed on the Society's website. Two interesting characters who feature amongst them are:

- The poet Gerald Massey (1828-1907), born in Tring, had to earn a living as a boy, first in silk making and then straw plaiting. Remark-

ably, he managed to educate himself to later write not just poetry but also works on spiritualism and ancient Egypt. He became a radical freethinker, and a prominent Chartist.

- The artist Lucy Kemp Welch (1869-1958) specialised in painting horses, and illustrated a 1915 edition of *Black Beauty*. She studied at Hubert von Herkomer's art school in Bushey, and went on to run it from 1905 – 1926, quite an achievement for a woman at the time.

Sally Pearson

HERTFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

HALH exists to promote the study and enjoyment of local history in Hertfordshire by assisting and encouraging local history societies; co-ordinating a network of local history recorders; organising events during the year; providing 'priming' loans to societies for special projects.

KEEP THE DATE - SPRING MEETING AND AGM

Venue: Tewin Memorial Hall, 10.30 - 3.30, Saturday, 19 May 2018
 Programme will include talks by local societies, an update on Barnet battlefield survey and the annual Lionel Munby Lecture (speaker and title to be confirmed).

**BEYOND THE BATTLEFIELDS:
KÄTHE BUCHLER'S
PHOTOGRAPHS OF GERMANY IN
THE GREAT WAR**

Exhibition at the University of Hertfordshire Galleries, Hatfield.

15 March – 5 May 2018

Beyond the Battlefields presents a unique series of images made by photographer Käthe Buchler (1876-1930) in Germany before, during and after the First World War, and which are part of the collection of the Museum of Photography in Braunschweig – where Buchler lived and worked. This touring exhibition is the first time the photographs have been seen outside Germany.

Buchler's exquisitely posed portraits and landscapes are the vision of a respectable, bourgeois wife and mother, a pillar of her community, and display significant technical expertise. Through different picture cycles she examines the care of orphaned children and wounded troops, Germans at work and at leisure – including a fascinating series made late in the war entitled 'Women in Men's Jobs' – presenting the dislocations of war along with striking moments of human warmth. In so doing she offers us a fascinating

window on the preoccupations of ordinary Germans, living and working hundreds of miles away from the fighting.

Buchler's family was wealthy, well connected and related to the Voightländer family – producers of some of Germany's most advanced photographic equipment – giving her access to the best cameras of the of the day. She was an early adopter of the 'Autochrome' process (the world's first colour photographic process – manufactured by the Lumière Brothers in Lyon, France). Colour imagery, which features in the exhibition, started to appear in her work as early as 1913. The mainly private and domestic scenes she photographed using the Autochrome process represent a substantial development of her skills as a colour photographer.

Buchler's photographs offer fascinating comparisons with images and memorabilia from the same period in Britain. For further information about the exhibition please see: www.everydaylivesinwar.herts.ac.uk.

Editors' note: *This piece is inserted for the many members who have been following the researches of the SAHAAS World War One Group.*

THE RIDING SCHOOL - 1910

Amongst the research topics for 'St Albans Home Front' have been attempts to fill out the history of the Territorial Army Riding School which was established in Harpenden Road in 1910. Later evolving into the TA Centre, the site eventually became Edmund Beaufort Drive in the 1970s.

The genesis of the School is soundly documented by reports in the *Herts Advertiser*, including a plan, but thereafter there is a lack of information. The only photograph of the building that we know of, dated 1910, is shown here. There are difficulties reconciling it with the plan and its orientation to the road. Also, it is difficult to place the houses seen in the background.

Does any member have or know of photographs of the TA site at any stage in its history? It seems reasonable to assume that the School



*The newly-completed Riding School in 1910
Copyright: Illustrated London News)*

buildings(s) would have been replaced before the Second World War by the TA Hall. This latter lasted until the closure of the Centre around 1956.

It was, by all accounts, a lively social centre on Saturday nights for dances, post war, so there may well be memories to be stirred out there somewhere. However, it is the time around the First World War and after that is of most interest at this stage. If you can add something do contact me via archaeology@stalbanhistory.org

Roger Miles

THIRD 'ARCHAEOLOGY IN HERTFORDSHIRE: RECENT RESEARCH' CONFERENCE

Keep the Date: Saturday 14 July 2018

The venue will be the Rhodes Museum, Bishops Stortford.

More information will be posted at <https://wp.me/P1A1e3-5I> when it becomes available.

If you would like to submit a paper for consideration, please send a short abstract to Kris Lockyear (noviodunum@hotmail.com).

FILL UP - YESTERDAY AND TODAY



“Fill up here with Shell” (Yesterday)

This intriguing (cropped) Lilywhite postcard from Andy Lawrence's collection shows a petrol pump towards the top of St Peter's Street on the west side. (You can see the entrance to Adelaide Street a couple of doors to the left). From a quick check of trade directories we can date the photo to sometime between 1923 and 1937. The name of motor engineers ‘Palmer & Sharratt’ provides the clue. Thanks to Andy for giving us permission to reproduce this. (More items from his collection are available here <https://www.flickr.com/photos/47716665@N02/>)

“Fill up here with Electricity” (Today)



Electric Vehicle charging point in Upper Dagnall Street

LECTURE PROGRAMME

13 FEBRUARY - 1 JUNE 2018

All lectures commence at 7.45pm

Tuesday lectures will be held at Marlborough Rd Methodist Church.

Friday lectures will be held at St Albans School.

Tuesday 13 February

The M Room Trent Park

Helen Fry

During WW2, British Intelligence bugged the conversations of over 10,000 German Prisoners-of-War at three clandestine stately houses. Trent Park was reserved for Hitler's Generals who were housed in luxurious conditions in Sir Philip Sassoon's former home. By the end of the war, there were 59 of them under one roof. The Generals relaxed and became unguarded in their conversations. They inadvertently began to give some of Hitler's most closely guarded secrets, including discussions about the V1, V2 and atomic bomb programme. For over 60 years the secret

listeners who bugged the conversations, never spoke about their work, not even to their families. Having worked through the declassified files, historian Helen Fry sheds light on one of the little-known, but greatest deceptions of the Second World War.

Historian Dr. Helen Fry has written numerous books on the Second World War with particular reference to the 10,000 Germans who fought for Britain, and also British Intelligence and espionage. Her book "The M Room: Secret Listeners who Bugged the Nazis" was the subject of the Channel 4 documentary Spying on Hitler's Army. Helen has appeared in numerous TV documentaries and in live interviews with Huw Edwards in Normandy for the BBC's coverage of the 70th anniversary of D-Day. She has written over 20 books – her most recent is "The London Cage: The Secret History of Britain's WW2 Interrogation Centre". Her new research is focusing on espionage, WW2 and the Cold War. She has been engaged to write a history of MI9 – Escape & Evasion in WW2.

Friday 23 February

History & architecture of 18th century Gorhambury

Viscountess Grimston

Gorhambury House was commissioned by the 3rd Viscount Grimston and was designed by Sir Robert Taylor. Construction commenced in 1777 and was completed in 1784. It is now a Grade II listed building with significant restoration and renovation work currently in progress. Viscountess Grimston's talk will illustrate the history and development of the house and estate over the years. Her talk will include a film recently made at Gorhambury by Steph Trowel.

Rosie Grimston has always had a passion for history, historical houses and their contents. From 2004-2009 she worked in and latterly ran the Russian works of the Art Department at Sotheby's. Rosie continued to value Faberge and other Russian articles including silver, vertu, bronze and porcelain from late 18th C to the early 20th century until February of this year. An impending building project at Gorhambury has focussed all her attention on the house and its contents.

Tue 6 March

Slavery in Small Things: Slavery & Modern Culture

Professor James Walvin

Professor Walvin will explore a different approach to the story of slavery. There are so many physical objects derived from slavery that we simply take them for granted. This talk will be an attempt to illustrate slavery through the world of material culture. And the ambition is to encourage us to think more widely about the impact of slavery.

James Walvin is Professor of History Emeritus at the University of York, and former visiting Fellow at Yale University. He has published widely on slavery and modern social history. In 2008, he was appointed OBE for services to scholarship. His latest book is "Sugar. A World Corrupted. From Slavery to Obesity".

Tue 13 March

The House of Beaufort

Nathen Amin

The House of Beaufort played a pivotal role in the Hundred Years War and the Wars of the Roses, as chief supporters of the House of Lancaster and forebears of the Tudor Dynasty,

who inherited their royal claim through their Beaufort blood. Yet, their story has largely remained untold, until now. Nathen Amin will help us discover more about this incredible chapter of England's tumultuous history, as told through the eyes of one fascinating family.

Nathen Amin is the author of "Tudor Wales" (2014) and "York Pubs" (2016). His most recent book is the first full-length biography of the Beaufort family, 'The House of Beaufort, the Bastard Line that Captured the Throne', released in August 2017 and now an Amazon No.1 Bestseller. He is currently working on his fourth book, "Pretenders to the Tudor Crown", due for release in 2019. Nathen is also the founder of the Henry Tudor Society and has featured discussing the Tudors on BBC radio and television, as well as in print and online media across the UK. He has a degree in Business and Journalism and now lives in York, where he works as a Technical Writer.

Fri 23 March

Estonia: 100 Years of Independence

Neil Taylor

2018 is the centenary of Estonia's declaration of independence. The talk will explain how the country became independent and then was recolonised by the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, having had 20 successful years between the two world wars., when Britain was one of its major trading partners. The talk will then cover the 46 years of Soviet occupation and how Estonia tried to maintain its individuality during that time. Finally, the talk will explain developments in Estonia since its re-independence in 1991, its different path from that of Latvia and Lithuania and what its future might hold.

Neil Taylor has been closely involved with the Baltic countries, and in particular Estonia, since their re-independence in 1991. Being in the travel business at the time, he first took groups there in 1992 and in 1997 wrote the Bradt Guide to Estonia, now in its 7th edition. He then wrote the

Bradt Guide to Baltic Cities and in the summer of 2018 his Modern History of Estonia will be published by Hurst. This will be the first history of Estonia published in Britain since 1947. He has been involved in a number of tourism projects in Estonia and continues to take groups there every summer.

Tue 10 April

Hitler's British Isles.

Duncan Barrett

In the summer of 1940, Britain stood perilously close to invasion, and the prospect of German occupation was very much on the horizon. Thanks to the success of the Battle of Britain, it never happened – but ever since, the idea of German jackboots on British soil has continued to fascinate us, played out in counterfactual fictions such as ‘SSGB’ and ‘Dominion’. But there is no need for fiction – in the Channel Islands, more than 50,000 British subjects lived side by side with the Germans for five years. In 2017, Duncan Barrett spent three months in the islands, interviewing more than a hundred local people about their memories of the Occupation. In this talk he shares some of their incredible stories.

Duncan Barrett is a writer and editor, specialising in biography and memoir.

He grew up in London and studied English at Jesus College, Cambridge. In 2010 he edited the First World War memoirs of pacifist saboteur Ronald Skirth, published as The Reluctant Tommy. He is co-author, with Nuala Calvi, of a trio of Sunday Times Top 10 bestsellers: The Sugar Girls, which was ranked second in the history bestsellers of 2012, GI Brides, which was also a New York Times bestseller in America, and The Girls Who Went to War. His first solo title, Men of Letters: The Post Office Heroes Who Fought the Great War, was nominated for the People's Book Prize. His second, Hitler's British Isles, is scheduled for release in April 2018.

Tue 17 April

Rogues Gallery

Philip Hook

Rogues' Gallery is a history of art dealing through the ages. It reveals the surprising extent to which art dealers have influenced the history of art. The cast of characters includes Paul Durand-Ruel, the champion of the Impressionists, Kahnweiler, the high priest of Cubism, and the unscrupulous Joseph Duveen who made a fortune selling old masters to American business moguls. It's a fascinating story of human folly, greed, and

duplicity, interspersed with ingenuity, inspiration, and acts of heroism.

Philip Hook is director of the Impressionist and Modern Art Department at Sotheby's. He has forty years' experience of the art world, including a twenty-year stint as picture expert on the Antiques Roadshow. He is the author of five novels and three acclaimed works of art history, the most recent of which, Rogues' Gallery, was published in 2017.

Fri 27 April

Roy Jenkins: The best PM we never had

John Campbell

In a career stretching from Attlee to Blair, Roy Jenkins arguably did more to shape British society and politics than any individual bar Margaret Thatcher. His legacy comprises three major achievements: the liberalising reforms he pushed through as Home Secretary in 1965-67 and 1974-76; his role – second only to Edward Heath – in promoting Britain's entry into the European Community in 1973; and the creation of the Social Democratic Party which narrowly failed to 'break the mould' in 1981-3 but was the catalyst for 'New Labour' in the 1990s. In addition he was a prolific political biographer and led an active social life

at the heart of the liberal establishment over half a century.

John Campbell is one of our leading political biographers. His many books include full-scale biographies of F.E.Smith (1983), Aneurin Bevan (1986), Edward Heath (1993), Margaret Thatcher (two volumes, The Grocer's Daughter, 2000 and The Iron Lady, 2003) and Roy Jenkins (A Well-Rounded Life, 2014), as well as two books about Lloyd George (The Goat in the Wilderness, 1977, and If Love Were All ..., 2006), and Pistols at Dawn: Two Hundred Years of Political Rivalry, from Pitt and Fox to Blair and Brown (2009), about which he spoke to the society in 2016.

Tue 15 May

The Archaeology of The Old Town Hall

Karin Kaye

The talk on the Archaeology of the Old Town Hall will cover the practicalities of working within a building during extensive re-working as well as the results of the archaeological investigations.

Karin's heritage career began when she was 15 years old and given 24 hours' notice of having to give a group of German visitors guided tour of the Cambridge Colleges. Two years later

she became the youngest qualified tourist guide in the country, which allowed her interest in the built environment and past societies to flourish. When deciding on a Master's research topic, it was a close call between an aspect of early Saxon archaeology and the detailed study of a historic building – the building won. Today Karin runs KDK Archaeology with her husband David and between them undertook the archaeological investigations at the Old Town Hall.

Fri 1 June

Must Farm Excavation

Mark Knight

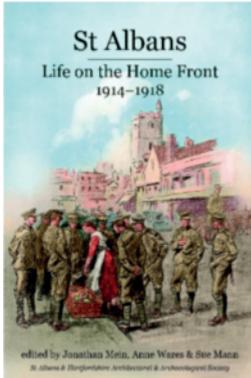
The Must Farm Bronze Age pile dwelling (aka Britain's Pompeii) was built, occupied and burnt down in rapid succession. The brevity of settlement and its catastrophic end provided a rare set of circumstances, which in turn ensured its exceptional preservation. Individual roundhouses complete with entire household inventories (whole pots, tool kits, textiles, wooden vessels, weapons,

food remains etc.) were preserved within the gentle sediments of a small river buried deep beneath the fens. This talk will present the context and circumstance of the excavation and, at the same, attempt to come to terms with the sheer intensity of materials and what they might tell us about living in Late Bronze Age Britain.

Mark's first experience of archaeology came as a result of the Manpower Services Commission, through which he spent six years working with Exeter Museum's Archaeological Field Unit. He left to study archaeology, and after completing his degree in 1995, joined the Cambridge Archaeological Unit (CAU) and began researching the pre-historic Fens. He was named Archaeologist for the Year 2017 at the Current Archaeology Awards. The excavation also won this year's Rescue Project of the Year award. He specialises in prehistoric landscapes and Neolithic and Bronze Age pottery.

Gill and David Girdziusz

SOME THINGS THAT INTEREST OUR MEMBERS



*Research, Transcription,
Publishing and Library*



Coach Trips and Excursions



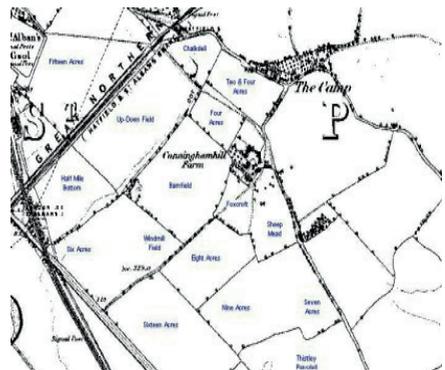
Support for local community projects



Social and Fund Raising events



Lectures, Conferences and Symposiums



*Archaeology/Architecture
and Conservation*