

## Living memories

When the SAHAAS website was relaunched at the end of May 2019, the Society decided to review whether or not to continue with the 'Living Memories' section, that was part of the previous website.

In the light of the successful launch in 2009 of [Herts Memories](#), a website for posting photos, memories and stories about Hertfordshire, we have decided not to post further contributions of this nature on the Society's website. If you would like to post recollections and anecdotes about friends and family who knew St Albans as it used to be, we recommend that you visit Herts Memories, which already includes many contributions about the city.

We will retain posts that were published on the old SAHAAS Website, and these are shown below in the order that they were posted, starting with the most recent.

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### Growing up in St Albans: Post-war England

By [John Winters](#)

How different the world was when I started growing up in St Albans. It was still a country of ration books and luxuries were very scarce.

My first school was Garden Fields, then in Catherine Street in the city. I would walk or go by bus. Walking eventually won the day as I used to return home past a bakery and spent my 1d bus fare on gingerbread!

I joined Garden Fields just at the point that Aboyne Lodge opened just down the road so missed out on that pre-school experience. Garden Fields later moved to Townsend, ironically just round the corner from where I used to live.

From Garden Fields it was St Albans Country Grammar School for Boys. I started in 1954 and left in 1960, having stayed on a year in the 6th form to retake some GCEs and wait for a vacancy to arise in my chosen career.

This was to become a journalist and I eventually joined the Herts Advertiser (H.A) in September 1960 as a trainee journalist. I was to learn much about St Albans and its surrounds during that time. I moved away from St Albans the following year to live in various parts of Hemel Hempstead and stayed at the H.A. until July 1965 when I continued to climb up the ladder in my journalistic career, which eventually ended over 50 years later when I became semi-retired and continued my career part-time, publishing a book two years later.

I revisited St Albans many times as I had two friends there - both now deceased - Beryl Carrington, who wrote a book on the history of St Albans, and James Corbett, who did the same. Both worked with me on the H.A. and then I used James as a freelance designer in the 80s so continued to pay regular visits to his home to bring and collect material he had been working on.

*Posted on 08/02/2018.*

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### Recollections of an abbey chorister

By Alan Godfrey

My parents moved to St. Albans when I was about 6 months old and, although I suppose that I was aware of the cathedral before becoming a probationer, I'm sure that I had never visited it.

I attended Fleetville junior school and I remember that, aged 8, my teacher one day introducing a, (seemingly), tall, thin sombre-looking gentleman dressed in a black overcoat to the class. The year was 1943. The gentleman, it turned out, was the cathedral assistant organist on a chorister recruiting drive. After a brief description of a chorister's duties, he asked the class if any boy thought that he might have an interest in singing. My parents, (and the family of course), were Free Church members where the congregation was encouraged to join heartily in the hymn singing, and I was no exception. However, to this day, I don't really know why I put my hand up when Mr -----? asked the question. I'm almost certain that I was the only one. I remember being given a voice test of sorts, whether it was at the school or at the cathedral, I couldn't say.

After a consultation with my parents, it was decided that I should attend Dr. Tysoe's house in Colney Heath Lane on Wednesday evenings, with a few other boys, for singing tuition. I remember the house as being large, detached and having a chamber organ in one of the rooms. On Sundays we were expected to attend the cathedral and follow the music whilst sitting in the probationers' stalls. (Perhaps it was only at Matins at that time; - no doubt somebody will correct me if wrong).

I was very impressed with the clergy. Cuthbert Thickness was Dean, Canon Feaver sub-Dean and Hugh Blenkin, Precentor. The Bishop seemed to me to be a remote figure, only rarely appearing at services. (Incidentally, when the Very Rev. Feaver died after retiring as Bishop of Peterborough, and I read his obituary in 'The Times', I was amazed to see that he was once described as 'the rudest man in the Church of England'. This was completely at odds with my, and I'm sure my contemporaries', experiences. Canon Feaver was a gentle, softly spoken man who treated the choristers with nothing but kindness.

My recollection is that Roger Clifford was then Head Chorister, with his brother, (whose name I forget), as deputy. Barry Smith was No 3 and James Finch, No. 4. In those days, the senior choristers were allowed to administer corporal punishment with a slipper in order to keep discipline; imagine that today!

In October 1944 it was finally decided that I was a suitable candidate, (along with a number of other boys), to be admitted full chorister. In those days, the demands on boys' time were quite high. In term time, we sang Evensong each Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, followed by a short practice. Friday evening was a practice night initially for the boys followed by a 'full' practice with the men beginning at about 7.30. On Saturday afternoon there was a full choral Evensong. On Sunday came Matins at 11.0 am followed by a choral Eucharist for senior boys and men on the second and fourth Sunday in the month. Evensong in the nave was every Sunday at 6.30.

I lived more than two miles from the cathedral. In winter months I was allowed to take the bus into town, but during the better weather, I was expected to use my cycle. Choristers' bicycles were parked in a rack just inside the deanery garden. On one occasion, although I had locked the front wheel to the rack, when I came out of Evensong, the rest of the bike had disappeared! The Dean kindly telephoned the police on my behalf who came and took notes, but I was never to see the cycle again.

At the end of my first full term, I was surprised to be given a small brown envelope by the senior lay clerk. It contained a half crown; in today's money, 12 ½ pence. Up to that moment I had no idea that choristers were paid and, if I managed to keep the job, that my yearly emoluments would in future amount to 10

shillings, - in today's money, 50 pence. Ever after that, the fish & chip shop in Catherine Street could expect a visit each quarter.

One of the 'perks' of being a chorister was that in most years, we were offered a conducted tour of what was loosely referred to as, 'the tower'. Here we were allowed to explore most of the galleries inside the abbey as well as the roof spaces and, of course, the tower itself with its bells and ringing chamber. I remember that, on one occasion, we were allowed down a very narrow winding staircase inside one of the pillars to where there is a small window which offered a view into the nave. Past the window, the staircase had been blocked. I wonder if the access is still there.

Once, I managed to get myself locked in the cathedral. It had been my turn to put the music away after Evensong and I had been working on my own in the old choir vestry. Having finished, I let myself out of the door under the organ to be met by complete darkness; the duty verger having gone home believing the building to be empty. In those days, (and I would guess that the war was still on), the only light left on was a small-wattage bulb hung high at the crossing. As far as I knew, there was no telephone in the building so for a while I was at a loss as to what to do. However, I made my way to the, (then), only lavatory which was, (and may still be), housed in a room off of the south aisle in the quire. The room had a small window, the bottom two-thirds of which was fixed, but with a louvered window to the top. I just managed to squeeze myself through that gap and drop to the ground.

I suppose that it was at about this time I sang my first solo. (It's what they say about buying your first car; you never forget your first one, do you?). Actually, it was only the treble line in the quartet of Walmisley in D. I was extremely nervous even at the prospect. The service was to be the last choral Evensong in the nave before the break for the long summer holidays. I took a music copy home and went through it many times whilst being accompanied on the piano by my mother. Fred Bradley sang bass, Geoffrey Richardson alto, and I forget who took the tenor line. I assume that the 'performance' went reasonably well, since Fred Bradley came to me afterwards and told me that I'd done well.

Cricket played a minor part in our physical recreation. An occasional match was convened between the choristers and a Dean's side, which consisted of some of the clergy together with lay clerks, playing the boys. Dean Thickness suffered with a leg wound received in action during the First World War which restricted his mobility somewhat. However, as a wicket-keeper he was extremely quick as I found to my cost. We played on a very sloping ground in Belmont Hill

In 1947, Dr. Tysoe resigned his post as Master, allegedly after a row with Dean Thickness. (Those who have read Alan Mould's excellent book, 'The English Chorister' will know that there is a history of Cathedral Masters of Music being at odds with their Dean). With the going of Dr. Tysoe came the appointment of Meredith Davies. In his mid-20's and a very different character, the most important thing I remember at the time was that he immediately improved the choristers' pay! He also instituted a choristers' saving scheme whereby a sum of money was also put aside each quarter the accumulation of which would be presented to the boy on leaving the choir. He also started, (or re-started?), the appointment of the award of 'Woolham Scholar'. This was a ribboned medal struck with the chorister's name and given to the four senior choristers who were also known, for obvious reasons, as 'corner boys'.

1948 also brought the celebration of the Millennium Pageant in which a number of choristers were persuaded to take part both as actors and singers. My memory of this is hazy except to say that there seemed to be endless rehearsals and that the performances were given outdoors on the 'orchard'. The only music that has stuck in my memory is 'Non Nobis Domine', - (Rawsthorne?). Also, at about this time came the inauguration of the 'Friends of St. Albans Cathedral'. I think that it was the Duchess of Gloucester who was persuaded to become the first Patron. Because I was tall, I and another tall chorister, possibly

Michael Ballard, were selected to position an oak desk in front of the Duchess so that she could sign the document. We were given dire warnings about avoiding her feet. Strangely, the Abbey archives have no photographic record of this event.

In 1949 the choir had the privilege of singing at the wedding of Meredith Davies and Betty Bates. I remember being slightly miffed because the choristers, (and, I suppose, the lay-clerks), were never offered payment. Choral weddings were rare events at the cathedral but when they occurred, choristers were paid six pence, (2 1/2p). Even rarer were choral funerals for which, for some reason, we would receive a shilling, (5p)! The local newspaper, The Herts Advertiser, printed a report of Meredith Davis' wedding in which they said that the choristers had put a notice on the back of the bride and groom's car, 'Aisle Altar Hymn'. If this happened then I deny being involved!

From time to time, Meredith Davies would ask a chorister to turn the pages of the score whilst he played the closing voluntary. On one occasion I managed to pull the book down onto his hands and there was an expletive whilst I scabbled about trying to return the book to the desk. I remember being extremely impressed by the way he managed to keep playing in spite of the disruption. The mark of a complete musician, I thought! I also had the privilege of 'turning' for someone who was then regarded as possibly the country's best trumpeter; Harry Mortimer. I think that it was possibly a performance by the Bach Choir of the 'Messiah'. Harry Mortimer and I stood on a podium in the organ loft overlooking the nave.

Another memorable event was a visit by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher. After the service, I asked the Precentor if I might go into the priests' vestry and ask the Archbishop for his autograph. He cheerfully signed on the service sheet which I kept for more than 50 years. That service sheet now forms part of the Cathedral archives.

Sometime in 1949 my voice 'broke' and Meredith Davies suggested that I might like to join the back desks as an alto. I stood next to Geoffrey Richardson, a rare talent, who became my mentor. I owe a huge debt of gratitude to him and to Meredith Davies because that action enabled me to sing alto in my local parish choir for 32 years. When Meredith Davies left and the lamented Peter Burton became Master, I sang in the choir until my parents moved to London in the summer of 1950. Although for a few years afterwards I helped Peter Burton with the annual choir camps at St. Michaels, Tenbury Wells.

My parish church choirmaster, Richard Harrison, found out that I was writing this piece and asked if he could read it when it was finished. He reminded me of an occasion when, 40 years after I had left St. Albans, Welwyn Garden City parish choir was invited to sing Evensong at the Abbey. After a rehearsal in the, (new), song room I casually mentioned that, as a chorister, I had carved my initials in the song room piano lid. I was not likely to forget it because, when Meredith Davies discovered it, he gave me a beating! I had used the point of a pair of compasses.

However, to my embarrassment, Richard called all the boys together and described my misdemeanour to a horrified gathering!

*Posted on 07/03/2017.*

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**First World War Army Remount Depots - Request for Information**



Sopwell Remount Depot

Copyright: Jacqui Banfield-Taylor

## Remount Depots at Sopwell & St Albans

By Jacqui Banfield-Taylor

Part of the research I did for my book on the River Ver\* included trying to find information on the above photo taken at Sopwell House during the First World War which became a Remount Depot for Army horses. The War Office, on behalf of the regular artillery, requisitioned horses from their owners – around £30 for a troop horse and £70 for an officer's charger. These animals played a vital role in the victory of the allied armed forces. A total of 8 million horses, mules and donkeys died during the War, around 2 million from Britain, many as horrifically as the soldiers whose life often depended on them.

Royal Engineer shoeing staff were trained locally by the Park Street blacksmith Herbert Martin during the war. Upset by the rough way the horses were sometimes treated by the soldiers he chose to join the navy. These soldiers would have been farriers to the horses of the Remount Depot at Sopwell, just down the river as well as using their newly taught skills on the battle field.

At this time, the stables behind the Red Lion Inn near the river at Park Street were used by the Army to accommodate their horses and mules and would have been connected to the blacksmiths and remount depot at Sopwell. It was a short journey along the river for the horses from Sopwell to the blacksmiths in Burydell Lane and the Red Lion.

I am looking for more information and photos of the local Remount Depots, especially Sopwell and St Albans (there may have been more in the area as the requisition of horses was country wide), also any information on the River Ver and its surroundings during the two world wars.

I can be contacted by email at [riverver@btinternet.com](mailto:riverver@btinternet.com)

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\* *The River Ver, a Meander through Time*, by Jacqui Banfield-Taylor (2012). Signed copies of this book with a free bookmark are available by contacting the author at the btinternet address above and can be delivered free locally.

Posted on 28/04/2013.

[Comments about this page](#)

Hands off our horses I'm involved in the SAHAAS First World War Project and, in searching through letters sent by the Town Clerk of St Albans in 1915, found the following gem relating to the requisition of horses. It was sent to the Officer Commanding No 3 Company, ASC, 176th Brigade, 59th (North Mid.) Division: Earmarking Horses I have submitted your Memorandum S. 2174 to the Town Council of this City who instruct me to inform you in reply that the exigencies of maintaining the city in a sanitary condition will not admit of their placing at the disposal of your Unit, the 6 horses referred to in your letter and they must therefore request you to make other arrangements. The total number of Horses belonging to the Corporation is only 11 and the Corporation are themselves having to hire horses at the present time to enable the essential work of the City to be carried out. Sue Mann

*By Sue Mann  
On 09/05/2013*

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## St Albans School of Art



Former School of Art in Victoria Street  
*Frank Iddiols*



The School of Art - Francis Bacon  
*Frank Iddiols*

**By Peter Granville-Edmunds**

How very nice it is to have found your website.

I was an art student at St Albans School of Art in Victoria Street in St Albans which was situated opposite the Library. This was during the early 50's. They were impressionable years that were not only educational, very happy memorable years under the director Mr Lismore, one of St Albans cricketers!

I imagine that art school has been demolished. "How sad!"

I used to travel by bus from Hertford where I was born, to St Albans.

I am still painting and drawing and loving every moment I spend in my studio in Cheltenham, but my home will always be in Hertfordshire.

Peter, Good to hear from a distant St Albans enthusiast. Our web editor has attached two photos taken by an Arc & Arc member. You will be glad to see the building escaped the 60s demolitions; now a medical practice. The Library is, I'm afraid, an O'Neill's pub, the former having been incorporated into The Maltings, a development behind what used to be the Chequers Cinema. Hold on to your picture of St A. You would weep at the sight of the west side of St Peter's St now! (Try Google Street map).

*By Gerard McSweeney*

*On 12/04/2013*

I was a student there in the 60's when it was the same. i have been looking for my sculpture tutor Mrs Chernovsky or Cherkovskiy - but cant find her anywhere - can you help?

*By tony webb*

*On 07/02/2016*

Can anyone tell me when they closed the art school?

*By christine basil*

*On 16/02/2016*

Closure answered by email (G McS) Best source probably Kelly's,

*By Gerard McSweeney*

*On 25/03/2016*

Good to see someone remembers the Victoria Street Art School. I have a potrait of me as a student there painted by 'Bill' mason... but it is painted over a canvas painted by Mr Lismore. Mary Hoad was principal when I was there. There were several well known and important artists who taught there and I am grateful for the excellent teaching I received there.

*By Jose Allen*

*On 19/06/2016*

Hello Tony, I was a student there in mid 60's and I think you are thinking of Peggy Chernievsky.

*By Anna Crabtree*

*On 29/10/2017*

I was at St Alban's Art School mid 1960's. Barbara Hill then. I have recently bought some lovely drawings by Maurice Feild from Sulis Fine Art - very reasonable prices. I remember so much from my years there, before I went to Falmouth. The coffee break record player- Quinten Crisp - model, and great Tutors:- Arnold Van Praag, John Mills, John Brunson, Michael Wharton, Peggy Cherniavsky( I think she has died) William Mason, Maurice Feild, Spendlove - We even had Anthony Blunt come from the Courtauld and lecture. Wonderful teaching - still treasured.

*By Barbara Sedassy*

*On 16/11/2017*

I was at St Albans 1968-70. How wonderful to read about St Albans, it was one of the happiest times of my life. Marvellous lecturers, wonderful fun.

*By Susan Goad*  
*On 25/01/2018*

So interesting to read and hear about St Albans School of Art. We should really collect all the information about it, collect items/artwork made there, make an exhibition, publish a book or at least write an article about it. There is almost nothing about this topic out there, not even a Wikipedia entry!

A wonderful early 20th c. copper plate made apparently at the school will be auctioned soon in America. We should collect such items maybe in connection with the local museum.

*By Miklos Bansaghi*  
*On 08/03/2018*

Would anyone remember a teacher at the Art School called John Dumpleton?

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 17/07/2018*

my daughter and i did a boot fair today at aylsham, norfolk (13/10/18). she knows i collect anything in art nouveau, arts & craft and folk art. she found for me a small copper pot with lid on 3 studded legs with a beautiful piece of enamel on the lid. it has st.albans, school of art on the base -i love it!!!!

*By loretta rose*  
*On 14/10/2018*

I was there on Foundation course from 1970 -71 in the 'new' building on Hatfield Road. Yes, Quentin Crisp was a model; John Brunsdon, Michael Wharton, Arnold Van Praag and Bill Pletts were some of the names and people I remember well.

I'd love to hear from some student who were also there in that year.I've got your etching, Peter Lyon!! Wonderful.

*By Maureen Hallahan*  
*On 19/02/2019*

I was at Victoria St 1968-9 and would love a photo of us all if anyone has one they would share please! Wish all my fellow students well and happy to share memories.. I have quite a few!

*By Helen Mills*  
*On 12/03/2019*

"I have just read the article written by Josie Allen about attending St. Albans Art School. I was there from 1961 to 1965 and fellow students included Chris White, Terry Quirk and John Nicholson. John Brunsdon was a great inspiration to me as were the other tutors. I remember Quentin Crisp very well. I have a photo of Josie sitting with Jackie Sowerby, Terry and myself outside the Fighting Cocks pub. If Josie would like the photo I will happily send it to her."

*By Colin Coke*  
*On 23/05/2019*

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## **Youth of the churches in the Diocese walk to St. Albans**

**By John Cox**

On the Bank Holiday following Easter Sunday in 1944, groups of young people walked to the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St. Alban for a service in celebration of the 'Risen Christ'.

They picnicked in the Abbey Orchard before visiting the Abbey and finally taking in the first service of its kind ever held in St. Albans. The purpose of the pilgrimage was stressed by Bishop Heywood, the then assistant Bishop of St. Albans, who in an address at the opening of the service said "*we are all on a*

*pilgrimage towards a goal beyond our vision, and it is not possible to make sense of this life, unless we look forward to that future life, but make no mistake that because there is a future life this one is of no importance. We are serving our apprenticeship here and I would urge you to make the utmost use of this life"*

The then Dean of St. Albans, the Very Reverend Cuthbert Thicknesse conducted the service and afterwards the youth pilgrims converged on the Abbey Institute, Romeland and the Abbey Schools, Spice Street for tea, which was served by the Redbourn kitchen. The offerings (donations) amounted to £45 and were divided between the Diocesan Council for Youth who arranged the pilgrimage and young people in the church overseas. The then Diocesan Youth Organiser - Miss Hadingham was responsible for the general arrangements.

From 1945 onwards this annual event flourished as numbers of young people, assisted by their parish clergy, youth leaders, friends and parents flocked to the Abbey over the Easter weekend. Generally they arrived in Verulamium Park and the Abbey Orchard on the morning and gathered near the Fighting Cocks hostelry at about 1.30 pm when the Lord Bishop of St. Albans, possibly the Bishop of Bedford and the Diocesan Youth Chaplain would walk down Abbey Mill Lane to lead the pilgrims up the hill to the Abbey. The procession was headed by a member of the Cathedral Guild of Servers who carried the Cathedral Cross. After walking through the Abbey Gateway the procession turned right through the "Carriage Gates" to the western precincts of the Abbey and were led into the building where they were seated on chairs in the nave and elsewhere.

In January 1964, I was left a message by the Abbey's Youth Chaplain who was moving to a new appointment in Southwark Diocese, asking me to "look after" the Abbey Youth Fellowship membership until a new appointment was made. By March the young people had begun to accept this 24 year old male and we talked about the forthcoming pilgrimage. For a few years, possibly since the departure of the former Sub-Dean, (the Revd. Canon Douglas Feaver), the Abbey Youth had taken no part in the pilgrimage, instead going for a ramble away from St. Albans on Easter Monday to Redbourn or elsewhere.

By now numbers attending had run into 3-4,000 people and so it was decided to stack all the chairs in the Nave moving them into the North and South Transepts. After Evensong on Easter Sunday evening a workforce of young people moved in and emptied the Nave of its furniture for the following day's event. On that morning the members were available to make the place for the afternoon. I attended the meeting of Deanery Youth Chaplains in the Vestry before going down to lead the procession up the hill together with taper bearers. Once in the Abbey building, the pilgrims sat on the floor standing when called upon to sing hymns and when they then went on a pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Alban, via the processional doors on either side of the High Altar. In fact at that time there was a double-headed procession as two teams of Cross and Lights headed procession from beyond the Shrine north and south through the aisles to the west-end where once again they filled the space in the Nave. After the final blessing by the Bishop of the Diocese and as all those who had been there left the building, the Abbey Fellowship swept the Nave floor and moved back chairs and hassocks into place before Evensong was said at 5.15pm in the Choir. The young people and I left quietly and were welcomed to the kitchen of the Hudson family in Gombards for a well-earned drink.

Throughout its history, all pilgrims have received a "pilgrim badge" as they past the Shrine and I well remembered seeing those who had long lines of past badges on their outer attire. Pilgrim groups from far far away in Bedfordshire may have organised coaches to take their tired people home. Others walked or caught buses or relied on friends and family for lifts in cars.

After 12 years or so, I realised I was no longer as young as I was, so I handed over my role to younger servers and successive Abbey Youth Chaplains. Within the last 10-15 years a complete re-appraisal of the Easter Monday Youth Pilgrimage took place and instead of the 1000s who attended in the 1960s – early 1990s, a new format was introduced. Its name may have changed – but the St. Albans Easter Monday Pilgrimage remains as one of the events in the Diocese of St. Albans each year. It continues to celebrate Jesus Christ's rising from the tomb having overcome death.

*Posted on 02/01/2012.*

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## **London Craft Guild's demonstrate their skills in the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St. Albans: Hands of the Craftsmen**

**John Cox**

In October 1985 the Dean of St. Albans, the Very Revd. Peter Moore staged an exhibition devoted to the work of traditional craftsmen, which was supported by the Livery Companies of the City of London.

The principal space - the Nave was cleared of all furniture and 30ft long banners in scarlet, crimson and orange were hung from above the Romanesque (Norman) and Gothic arches. Below displays were arranged to show the work of the Masons, Carpenters, Glaziers, Plumbers, Thatchers, Goldsmiths, Painter-Stainers, Wax-Chandlers and the Apothecary by the City of London Livery Companies. In addition there were demonstrations of printing, calligraphy, book-binding, embroiderers, Lace-makers, Gilding-Painters and of Heraldry. A herb garden was laid out by the Marchioness of Salisbury and there were displays from St. Albans, Vermont, United States of America of cheese boards and wooden boxes. Apprentices from the Royal National College for the Blind demonstrated how they tune and repair pianos.

Source: BJC's papers

*Posted on 15/01/2012.*

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## **My arrival in St. Albans: Recollections of a librarian**

**By John Cox**

During the academic year 1961-62 I attended the one year course in preparation for gaining the Registration Examination of what was then called the Library Association. I had decided on Librarianship as a career when I was 16 years old and was allowed to spend a week during my summer holidays at my local public library in Worthing, Sussex. Twelve months later, having applied for junior positions at all the library authorities in Sussex, in September 1958 I became the only male Junior Library Assistant at Worthing Public Library, where during my first year I received superb practical training from the experienced Librarians then in post.

Two years later, having passed my first Professional Exam, I made plans to attend a full-time course in one of the Library Schools in England. I was accepted by five schools but accepted the place offered by Loughborough's School of Librarianship. At that time Loughborough had four colleges - Further Education (which included us Library Students), a separate Art College as well as Loughborough Teacher Training College and the Technical College, up Ashby Road.

When it came to leave in 1962, I obtained the position of Senior Library Assistant at St. Albans College of Further Education which was situated just outside the city centre in purpose built buildings (built in the Hertfordshire education award winning design). Within a month of my arrival I was asked to become involved with the new Hertfordshire College of Building which was also situated on the campus. Two years later I became an Associate of the Library Association and was appointed Tutor Librarian of the College of Building. In December 1968 we moved into our own purpose built building adjacent to the FE College. For career reasons I left the College in 1969.

Nearly 50 years later, the St. Albans campus has largely been sold by Oaklands College which subsumed the FE and Buildig Colleges in the 1980s. The campus is now a housing development with purpose-built apartments. Further Education facilities are mainly based at Oaklands on the eastern perimeter of the city in what was formerly the Agricultural College and Building Students are trained nearby south of the main road from St. Albans to Hatfield.

We still live in St. Albans where we both are involved in the local community and our two children who grew up in St. Albans cannot afford to buy a property here.

*Posted on 24/01/2011.*

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## **Extracts from my memoirs – 'Glittering Shadows': Growing up in St Albans, 1931 – 1949**

**By Ron Cave**



Me on the scooter at 41 Beresford Road

I was born in 1931 at the Lemsford Road Nursing Home. at that time Mum and Dad and my sister Margaret lived at No.41 Beresford Road in the Camp district. It was a three bedroom house which Dad bought for 400 pounds on his wage of 4 pounds ten shillings a week!

We had good neighbours, the Schroeders on the right and the Bromleys on the left. I remember a 'Thor' vacuum cleaner and a 'His Masters Voice' radiogram. I also remember a Christmas present of a Royal Scot train set.

At the top of the road was 'Fred Oakley's Dairy'. he used to deliver the milk from churns on a horse drawn cart. He sometimes let me ride on the low step at the back. Fred was a genial character stocky and red faced, he always wore a brown dust coat and a bowler hat.

The baker had a very smart enclosed bread van with a high seat up at the front where he would hold the reins and occasionally administer a quick flick of the whip. the van was glossy brown with the name 'Bridens' picked out in gold. it had two large wheels at the back and two smaller ones at the front.

Teddy Crane was one of my friends at the camp Primary school, his father ran a small coach company.

When I was about 7 we moved to a new house in Brampton Road and I moved to Fleetville Junior School. I remember my first teachers name was Miss Kirby. On my first day Bobby Foster gave me a threepenny bit! My second teacher was Miss Davis and eventually I came under the steely control of Miss Purkiss. I remember the headmaster was Mr East, a friendly man who lived just up the road from us in Brampton Road.

The second World War had now started so we were in a world of ration books, gas mask cases and air raid shelters. At one time,when the sirens sounded we had to march to the underground shelters in the playing field next to the school. I can still smell the soft rubber of the gas masks!

My friend David Wade and I started making model aeroplanes out of balsa wood. Spitfires and Hurricanes hung on cotton from our bedroom ceilings, little puffs of cotton wool represented clouds (or was it anti aircraft fire?). At one time David made himself a tray on which to display some of his smaller models and walked up and down St Peters Street collecting for the war effort.

In winter we used to go sledging, or when the lake at Verulamium was frozen we'd skate. I remember eight people who had gathered in a circle falling through the ice. Fortunately it was only about 3 feet deep.

I belonged to the St Peters Church choir under our fairly severe choir master Mr Hunn, he being ably assisted by Gracie Lawrence.

As we got older David and I joined the St Peters Youth Fellowship, which undoubtedly shaped our lives.

## **Our war**

As the war progressed Sgt Hallett of the St Albans City Police Force (who lived next door at no.65) got Dad to help him dig a large hole in his garden, for an Anderson Shelter. They finished off the top with clay, which was ideal for the roses he planted there. Dad took another option and we had a Morrison or 'table shelter' installed. One of these had a few months before saved the lives of my aunt, uncle and cousins when the City of Bath was badly bombed. Our shelter was erected in the back room and doubled as a large dining table. It was a very strong structure consisting of 3/8 " steel corner posts which supported a table top of 1/8" steel plate. It had wire mesh panels which clipped on each side.

It was on the 29th February 1940 that our family of 4 became a family of 5. Our first evacuee arrived, probably just as wary of us as we were of her. Helené was from Parliament Hill Fields, adjacent to Hampstead Heath in north London; Geoff arrived a year later from Bexhill on the south Sussex coast so then we were 6! Both these places were being bombed regularly. Helené and Geoff were, like Margaret, 4 years older than me. For the next 2 years I had an older brother and two older sisters. Mum and Dad treated them as their own and they became part of our family. Their parents came to visit them as and when they could and must have missed them very much during those important teenage years. I haven't got clear memories of my interaction with them – I think they probably just tolerated me as a younger brother, but I know we were a happy family.

We personally suffered very little during the war. A house was bombed in Eaton Road just two streets away. I remember going to look at it; the whole front had gone, the bedroom floor was sloping out towards the road. The bed and some furniture appeared to be about to slide out into the front garden while the peach coloured curtains flapped gently in the breeze.

A Messerschmitt 109 was shot down one night and landed in a field at the top of Sandpit Lane. It was presumably on its way back to Germany after escorting bombers on an air raid to the Midlands. David and I cycled to see it early next morning. The pilot had long since been taken away and by the time we arrived there was one Home Guard soldier, with rifle, guarding it. He wasn't too phased by our presence and let us climb all over it, sit in the cockpit and even let us pull off a bit of wing fabric for a souvenir.

In April 1942 Dad decided to join the St Albans Special Constabulary Force (an auxiliary force to help the Regulars when necessary) and became SPC 79; I wish I had known more about what he did. All I do remember are a couple of the names of his fellow SPC's like Freddie Knight, our local butcher, and Arthur Coxall, a teacher at Beaumont Secondary School who some time later, at an evening class, taught David and me our rudimentary woodworking skills.

To stop blast from any nearby bombs and possible cuts from glass Dad had made five, fairly heavy wooden shutters for our front room bay window. Dad, Geoff and I took it in turns to fix these to the outside of each window every night for a couple of years while the bombing was at its height. I can still hear Mum's reminder when it was my turn, "Have you put the shutters up yet?" – "Yes Mum".

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At that time the greengrocer, baker and the rag and bone man did their rounds with a horse and cart. I can still hear the rag and bone man coming down the road singing out "Hany-hol-hiron!" with that musical lilt peculiar to rag and bone men.

I guess a lot of what the rag and bone man collected went towards the war effort as at that time councils all over the British Isles were being instructed by government to cut down and collect all iron railings. They were taken from parks, public buildings, schools and even private residences. For years after the war and even to this day the 2 inch stubs that remained after the cutting can still be seen in many towns where the railings had been turned into guns and tanks.

Milk was still being delivered in pint bottles. The circular cardboard tops with the press-out smaller circle in the centre (for the straw) were saved and taken to school. We either saved them as cardboard or they were used in craft classes to make pom-poms. As far as I can remember we threaded wool continuously through the centre hole round the outside circle until there wasn't room to thread any more through. When the wool was cut around the outside circle it formed a woollen ball!

When the blitz on London was over, Churchill instigated huge thousand bomber raids on Germany. The cities of Dresden, Frankfurt and Cologne were reduced to rubble, in retaliation for the destruction of Coventry and its cathedral.

On 6th June in 1944 (D-Day), we as a family, watched hundreds of Lancaster and Halifax bombers, many towing large gliders with the distinctive black and white stripes either side of the RAF roundles on wing and fuselage. They were very low in the sky and seemed to be just beyond the end of our garden, flying parallel with Hamilton Road! That part of the sky was black with aeroplanes and at a higher level were hundreds more, escorted by Spitfires and Hurricanes.

The sheer numbers heading south are still etched in my memory. It was probably 20 minutes before the last one passed by.

### **Covey Crump**

School was never at the top of my list of favorite things, nor was learning to play the piano. I was shy and blushed very easily. I loved being outside. helping Dad in the garden, cycling and playing with friends John and David; we stuck together as a threesome for many years. David stayed a friend for life. Somehow we all became members of the St.Peters Church choir from about 11years old until our voices broke. We enjoyed singing, we enjoyed the practices 3 times a week and it was fun. We weren't particularly religious but we sang like thrushes!

Our choir master Mr.Hunn, kept a strict eye on us via the large rear view mirror situated above his stool at the organ, and left us in no doubt at all when he was displeased. I think we were a good choir with probably about 12 boys, 8 men and 4 ladies. Occasionally we sang with a small orchestra led by a gentleman with the unlikely name of Covey Crump.



Gracie Lawrence - extraordinary and perceptive.

The person who literally shaped and greatly influenced our lives during that time was an extraordinary and perceptive lady named Grace Lawrence. She was charged with preparing the choirboys while in the vestry. She ensured we were dressed properly in surplus, cassock and crinkly white starched ruffle. She combed our hair and firmly but fairly whacked us over the head with the brush if we were being too boisterous while

waiting in line for starters' orders. Occasionally one of us would hide behind the curtained racks that housed the cassocks. It was David who did this one particular time - he found an ancient Roman helmet and visor which when he put it on jammed on his head. Eventually as 6.30 approached he had to come out and own up. I think a few whacks from Gracie's hair brush ensured its speedy removal. When finally in voice, we would file past the organ, mouths wide open, singing 'Lead us heavenly Father lead us', and although Mr Hunn's back would be towards us, it was difficult to escape his critical eye in his rear view mirror.

It was war time and the Air Raid Wardens would do their rounds shouting "Put that light out!" if the slightest glint of light showed through house windows. Car and bicycle lights had dimming and deflecting shutters over their lenses. Unfortunately the gravity of the situation didn't seem to have been fully driven home to some of us and we competed to see whose torch had the best beam and who could most brightly light up the clock on the church tower.

We used to walk home through the churchyard and one night one of the boys had carved out the inside of a large swede, to look like a skull with holes for the eyes and mouth. We put a candle inside it and fixed it on the top of a gravestone near the pathway and frightened the life out of any unsuspecting passersby.

### **Fleetville**

Since moving, our family had got to know our way around Fleetville and the surrounding area. I had started school just up the road from where we lived and Margaret had been at the Girls Grammar School for a couple of years. Mum had settled easily and had joined a local women's group and Dad's office had relocated from London to the countryside of Hertfordshire just outside Watford.

He bought himself a small motor to fit to his bicycle and regularly 'cycled' the ten miles to Watford. The motor, called a 'Cyclemaster' had to be specially fitted to the rear wheel, which it actually became part of. It was a 50cc two stroke and did a phenomenal number of miles to the gallon. He loved it. If it rained he dressed up in yellow leggings, a yellow cape and topped it off with a yellow 'fisherman's' hat, - nothing stopped him.

Our groceries came, delivered in a cardboard box, from the co-op (Co-operative Wholesale Society). Mum had a small notebook in which she wrote her order. It came back in the box with all the items ticked off and a numbered receipt. Our number was always the same, - one I shall never forget, 9206. We had to quote it every time we purchased anything from the Co-op and at the end of the year qualified for a dividend.

The Co-op butchers shop was next door, managed by Freddie Knight, a slim moustachioed, extrovert character who had a word for everybody. In those days there were always queues. I remember making patterns with the toe of my shoe in the sawdusted floor. When it came to my turn it was invariably, "A leg of lamb for 6, half a pound of sausages and a quarter of a pound of suet please". "That'll be two shillings and sixpence, how's your Dad, Ronnie?"

On the way home with the shopping bag over the handlebars, I would lean forward and break off a piece of the dry flaky suet, - it was as good as chewing gum.

Benningtons was our nearest greengrocer, on the corner of Hatfield Road and Woodstock Road, opposite the Ballito Stocking Factory. Ben Pelleys was the slightly upmarket garden and kitchenware shop. Ben himself was a bit chubby and, I thought, rather pompous. Next door but one was the 'corn chandler'. Dad and I would turn up with the wheel barrow and take away a sack of bran or chicken meal plus a sack of seed potatoes and chaff for the chicken house.

A favourite shop of mine was the cake shop down by the Crown public house called Maison Franke. They had really delicious cakes and the queues on a Saturday morning for things like custard tarts, swiss rolls and Vanilla cream slices had to be seen to be believed.

David and I often called into Townsends bike shop. Old Townsend was a stange character, he was tall with a mop of curly grey hair. He always seemed lost in thought and called everybody, male or female, Darling !" Hello Darling –pause – what can I do for you?" – "A 1.5 volt battery for my torch please" His hand would go up to his forehead and after about ten seconds, he'd close his eyes and then say, "What was it Darling?" I would repeat my request and he'd say "Yes, - pause - they're over here".

It was like that every time. Then he'd go back to his adjacent living room and carry on reading the paper until the bell over the door jangled again. We used to make fun of him I'm afraid. At home Mum would ask me for something. I'd come back in the room throw my hand up to my head and say, "What was it Darling – can you ask me that again".

There was Blakleys the sweet shop, Samuels the shoe shop and Spendwise the other grocer. Dad first introduced me to Lavers the wood yard and Hookers where we bought glass.

David and I had our haircut at Fleetville Saloons. One of the barbers, after he had finished cutting a gentlemans hair would use a soft brush around the neck, pull off the white sheet and give it a flick like a matadour, lean up close to the gentlemans ear and quietly say, "Anything for the weekend sir?" It was a while before we realized the significance of the small white cupboard over the sink.

Fleetville Post Office was the source of all stationery and the few magazines that were available then. I can remember 'Picture Post', 'London Illustrated', 'Womens Own' and 'Esquire'. Then of course the comics, 'Knockout', 'Film Fun', 'Eagle', 'Hotspur', 'Wizard' and the 'Boys Own Paper'.

So, Fleetville, Hatfield Road, was our 'Shopping Centre', we knew the shop keepers and they knew us.

My first visit to a cinema was in 1939 with Mum. We went to the Grand Palace in Stanhope Road to see 'Gunga Din', a rip-roaring adventure in 19th century India. This was the film adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's poem and written by Ben Hecht. It starred Cary Grant, Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Joan Fontaine. My only real memory of the film is when Gunga Din was crawling over the roof of a temple which was covered in golden tiles.

## **Jobs**

Saturday morning was 'job' morning. They had to be done *before* going out to play! I had two or three tasks; apart from tidying my bedroom, I had to clean *everybody's* shoes, clean the chickens out and collect two buckets of weeds. I probably got paid 2/6d.

We kept chickens all through the war years. My first real carpentry job was when Geoff and I helped Dad build the chicken house down at the bottom of the garden.

Our first two chickens were called 'Click' and 'Clack'. Mum named them; Click was a Rhode Island Red and Clack was a black and white Light Sussex. They were treated like members of the family. At first we were allowed to let them out into the garden – under supervision. A lettuce or cabbage would disappear very quickly once under attack so their freedom was quite short lived.

We used to save all scraps and boiled up the vegetable peelings in a large iron saucepan on the kitchen stove. The smell was a job to get rid of and eventually Dad constructed a 'hay box'. This was a wooden box with a lid. It was about 4" bigger all round than the iron saucepan with a slotted hole for the handle. With the saucepan placed in the middle of the box, hay was packed tightly under the base and around the sides to form an insulated jacket. Once the peelings had been brought to the boil the saucepan was transferred to the haybox outside in the shed where it continued to simmer for almost an hour. This not only saved money but stopped the smell from permeating through the house. When the peelings were strained it was my job to put them in the 'chickens bowl', an old enamel one, and chop them up with an old pastry cutter. I then had to mix in bran and one or two healthy additives, with a wooden spoon.

Click and Clack were eventually joined by friends, Whitey, Blacky, Speckle and Stripes and from then on we always had eggs. In the summer, Mum would preserve some of the eggs for the leaner winter months. I remember a large earthenware pot, which she filled with eggs and then covered the lot with a transparent jelly-like substance called Isinglass. This must have formed a seal around the shells and somehow they lasted for months. Sometimes the young chickens would fly out of the run and into the neighbours gardens. To stop them doing this, we clipped two inches off the wing feathers of one wing. The result was that if they tried to fly they would go round in circles! To give them extra exercise we often hung a cabbage from the branch of a tree just out of their reach. We loved watching them jump. They did, and very soon all that would be left would be the stalk and roots.

As they matured, at certain times, they went 'broody'. When they did, they were put into solitary confinement! For up to two weeks they suffered, in a very small box with a slatted, draughty floor. Sometimes they were ready to get back into egg production within a few days. We did let them follow through their motherly instincts from time to time. We brought a dozen fertile eggs for them to hatch and, as a bonus, allowed them the run of the garden for a while. It was great fun to see the chicks hatching and to follow their progress around the garden. Sometimes they would all vanish for a while when we would discover them resting under a bush in a different part of the garden. As they grew we kept a few to keep Click and Clack company.

We did keep a few cockerels to fatten up for Christmas. Mum wasn't too happy about killing them so Dad and I attended to that, although we weren't too happy about it either. Mum and Margaret joined in with the feather plucking and they did a good job preparing them for the oven and of course we all enjoyed the resultant roast.

We kept ducks for a while but they turned the run into a mudbath, which became too much for everyone – particularly the chickens!

### **Washday**

Every washday, which must have been at least twice a week, Mum would get me to help her get the washing out of the 'copper' into a large galvanized tub. Between us we would carry it to the garage where the heavily geared mangle resided. She would feed the wet washing in between the heavy wooden rollers while I turned the large iron hand wheel. We pre-wrung the sheets onto the lawn, Mum held one end of a sheet, I held the other end, and we pulled against each other and twisted in different directions

As time went on I needed to earn more money, so I searched further afield. I delivered newspapers for the Fleetville Post Office which meant getting there very early, writing the house numbers on each paper from a long list of streets, putting them in order and setting off on my bicycle with a heavy bag over my shoulder!

### **Black buttons**

Later I had a Saturday job at the local pet shop in London Road. I had to clean out the puppies, kittens, guinea pigs, mice, budgies and gerbils, and avoid getting my ears nibbled by the squawking parrot that flew around the shop! Mrs. Blower and her daughter Clare owned the pet shop and in the yard they had an ancient Austin Seven. One time they went out for an hour or two and I couldn't resist a sit in the drivers seat. There was a small, black button on the extreme right of the dashboard which I felt just had to be pressed. Unfortunately it started the engine and as the car had been left in gear it shot forward and knocked over a bin of chicken feed, thankfully stalling at the same time! It took me a very worrying ten minutes to clear up the mess and it was a long time before I pressed any more small, black buttons!

### **"Who'll start at fifteen pounds?"**

The St Albans Cattle Market was a real draw on a Wednesday morning during school holidays. I used to get there early and watch the cattle trucks arrive. There was always a possibility that cattle would escape by jumping over or rushing the portable fences. Once a bull had escaped, ran through the market into St.Peters Street and terrorized the shoppers before being caught. The truck drivers and farm hands were none too gentle with the animals and seemed to delight in making the pigs squeal.

I loved listening to the auctioneer and hearing the muttered wisdoms of the farming fraternity, while they watched a high stepping gelding circling the ring. The noddors and winkers quietly raised the ante until the auctioneer said "Going once, going twice, going three times,", brought down the gavel onto its sound block and proclaimed "the gentleman with the bone handled walking stick – thank you sir".

On the road along the side of the shops that led to the cattle market was the Civic Restaurant. I believe most towns had their civic restaurants during the war. They were somewhere you could buy a good basic meal cheaply. Ours was a barn of a place; long trestle tables, and a simple serving counter. You bought three tickets at the door. A threepenny orange ticket for the main meal, a yellow twopenny one for the sweet and one penny blue one if you wanted a cup of tea. You then joined the queue and for your money enjoyed meat and two veg with gravy which was put, slapped or poured onto your plate as you moved along the counter. I'm sure the ladies behind the counter doing the putting, slapping or pouring must have been called Vera, Gladys or Flo!

It was probably around the same time that somebody dared me to jump out of an upstairs window with an umbrella as a parachute. It didn't work very well and I was lucky to land on a fairly soft flowerbed, badly winded and with only a sprained ankle.

One of David's more innocuous tricks was to tie an old wallet to a length of thread, put it on the pavement and pass the other end through the hedge. When an unsuspecting passerby bent to pick it up he would jerk it back through the hedge and run off laughing! We also used to tie two opposite door knockers together, across the street. When one door was opened it pulled the knocker on the other one. When there was seen to be nobody there the door closed but of course knocked the other one, which was then opened, and so on. Must have been very annoying but it made *us* laugh.

We seemed to have a fair at least once a year, somewhere off Hill End Lane. A fair was always exciting. Fair people always seemed different. There kids were always scruffy. We enjoyed our visits and usually won a coconut or something off the second shelf. The rides were fantastic and the bumper cars fun but best of all was the 'Haunted House'.

Traffic in those days was very much less than now. On our way home from school we played marbles along the gutter, we spun tops along the crown of the road and kicked a football across the road from one pavement to the other.

## **Tandem**

Our bicycles were our pride and joy and figured a lot in our adventures. Dad bought me my first real bicycle for my 13th birthday. It was second hand, came from Timpson's in London Road, had been painted green and had dropped handlebars. The mile from St Peters Church to where I lived in Brampton Road was a very gentle downward slope most of the way. We would allow ourselves 6 pedals and from then on tried our hardest to freewheel all the way home. One major challenge was the York Road pedestrian bridge, especially as the down side involved bumping down about 7 steps! I don't think we ever accomplished the full distance but we tried it time and time again.

We were always modifying things, and one time, tried to make our two bikes into a tandem – we never quite got over the problem of the centre of the tandem steering as well as the front end!

Another memory from our cycling days is of the 'pea –souper' fogs we used to suffer, well before the clean air act of 1956. At that time, factory chimneys, coal fires and the local brickworks consistently pumped out huge amounts of smoke. The cold damp air we experienced each November returned the smoke to earth, usually around 4 o'clock in the afternoon. This quickly built up into a fog. Traffic crawled silently along, one behind the other. Headlights were invariably turned off because the reflection on the fog just increased the problem. It was not unusual to see the driver of a car driving one handed, with his head out of the window just to gain a little more vision. Sometimes a passenger would stand outside on the running board giving instructions.

It was a night such as this when David and I, cycling home from choir practice one Friday night, lips still coated in the grease from 6d worth of chips, came across a stranded double decker bus. The driver had 7 passengers on board and had been trying to negotiate the notorious 5 exit, Crown roundabout. We could see much further having no steamed up windows to contend with and so volunteered to lead him round the roundabout and on down the Hatfield Road and to Fleetville, another mile or so.

So there we were two 13 year old boys, our lights already hooded to comply with wartime regulations, in the pitch black, seeing about 4 feet in front of our faces leading a red double decker bus, itself followed by more assorted cars, a lorry and another bus on certainly one of the foggiest nights I remember. What they did when they got to Fleetville I've no idea – we went home!

It was at this same notorious corner where tragedy nearly struck the writer of this missive. David and I were on one of our 'free wheel' record breaking, down hill, runs along the Hatfield road from town. We were side by side and just leaning in to the left hand bend at the roundabout when our handle bars touched! David veered to the right and tumbled fairly safely onto the roundabout. I cartwheeled to the left into the gutter and must have hit my head, fortunately, fairly lightly on the pavement.

A couple of hundred yards further on was our local 'tuck' shop run by a venerable old gentleman, affectionately known as 'Bish' (Mr Bishop). He sold soft drinks, chocolate, sweets, crisps and cakes. He was a favourite of all the lads, especially from our school just around the corner in Brampton Road. If you happened to play football you were in heaven and 'Bish' could hold a crowd enthralled with stories from the field. So that was where I came 'to', lying flat on my back, on a wooden form with a sea of faces looking at me. I could hear murmurs of sympathy such as "It's Cavey", "Is he dead?", "Who's having his bike?" It was probably the orange juice or more likely the Mars bar that brought me back to life, - and I did have a certain scar-related respect for a while after that!

## **Movies**

Going to the 'pictures' was an important part of our lives at this time and TV was still many years away. Our love of the cinema probably started when we were allowed to go to the special children's shows on Saturday mornings. The show always started with a sing-a-long. The theatre organ would rise through the large trap door in the floor at the front of the stage. The words to the song were projected onto the screen, and a magic white ball bounced along the top of the words, in an attempt to keep us all singing together.

I only remember a couple of words from one song, which was probably the introduction:-

Is..... everybody happy?

Yes, yes, yes!

We loved watching the little ball bounce and gave the 'Yes, yes, yes' everything we'd got!

The cartoon was next and was inevitably Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck or Goofy followed by something mildly educational.

During the break we bought ice creams and chocolates as the excitement rose. Then Roy Rogers, Gene Autry or maybe Sherlock Holmes would burst onto the screen amidst the shouts and whistles of some 300 children. We booed the baddies and cheered the goodies, and what a noise when the cavalry arrived over the hill.

Later we graduated to evening movies and had a choice of three cinemas. The Grand Palace was our nearest, the Capitol in London Road was the biggest and best, and then there was the 'flea pit', the Chequers. The Chequers very often had the best films so we ignored its reputation and went anyway.

Queues in those days were 'par for the course' and often would go right out of the cinema and around the outside, especially on a Saturday night. Most of the films were in black and white but often we would see a musical, which apart from being in 'Cinemascope', would always be in colour.

It was at the Grand Palace in Stanhope Road, where in the dark winter evenings we would go up the passageway at the side of the cinema and toss a coin to see who would be hoiked up to climb in the toilet window. Once in, who ever it was would push up the long bar on the emergency exit doors and let the others in! Then we would innocently go into the cinema one at a time making sure we avoided the usherette and take a seat.

The stars of those days are now either very old or have passed away. A few I can remember are John Mills, Dirk Bogarde, James Mason, Gregory Peck, James Coburn and Humphrey Bogart. Of the ladies, Ava Gardner, Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall, Jean Simmons, Jane Russell, Elizabeth Taylor and my favorite at the time Jean Crain.

Looking back I would guess 50% of cinemagoers smoked; there was an ashtray in the back of every seat and the air was always thick with smoke. The beam from the movie projector cut a path through the continually rising smoke and during the break the 'sales girls' walked up and down the aisles selling ice creams, chocolates and more cigarettes!

Before the main film we always saw the news. It was either the British Gaumont News or Pathe Pictorial – apart from the newspapers – the Express, the Mirror or the Sketch it really was the only way we got to know what was going on around the world, apart from magazines such as Picture Post, Illustrated or the London Illustrated News.

The way the showings were organized meant that you could, if you wanted to – stay seated and watch the whole programme through again, which we often did. One memorable time, when I had gone to see a film

on my own, I decided to watch it again and promptly fell asleep! There couldn't have been too many people there as they all left at the end and apparently nobody noticed me. I was rudely awakened, by the light from a torch, held by the cinema manager and the rather severe voice of my father. It took a while to live that down.

## **Neighbours**

When mum died in 1990 at 93 years old, part of the eulogy at her funeral read "... was devoted to her family but she was also concerned about other people...always ready to help where needed....thought of others before herself....she was only a little person but had a big heart."

Next door at number 69 was Mr and Mrs Goddard with their children, Audrey, twins John and Arthur and later, Christine; at one stage Christine seemed to spend as much time in our house as she did in her own.

Opposite us during the war were the Bennetts, Mr and Mrs Bennett with four sons, Jim, Tom, John and Norman who was about two years younger than me. When they left, in moved the Carters.

As well as being a horticulturist, Fred Carter taught piano and was the organist at the St Albans Abbey, his wife Joan had her work cut out just being a mum. It was Fred who for two years tried to teach me to play the piano! They also had four boys who got to know Mum very well. When the boys were in their early teens they all moved to Omagh in Ireland. Years later Joan and I caught up with Fred Carter when in his late 70's he was organist at St Marys Church, Vancouver, Canada.

Incredibly when the Freemans moved in they also had four boys. John Freeman was also an organist at the Abbey and taught music. His wife Margaret arranged the flowers, made cakes and organized the ladies of the church.

Mum couldn't have been happier – all four boys loved her. Much later, Martin the youngest, eventually a priest, and, in 2005 a .....monk, officiated and read the eulogy at my sister Margaret's funeral. If she could have known, she would have been thrilled. She would also have been thrilled if she could have known that Christine at some stage had had leanings toward the church and in the year 2005 Christine applied for the post of Archdeacon of Northampton and became only the 7th woman archdeacon in the Church of England and Canon of Peterborough Cathedral.

## **Peaks Park & Faircross Way**

Two areas of rough ground that were within cycling distance of home, we considered our own – Peaks Park and Faircross Way. When we were around 11, 12, & 13 years old, we knew every track, tree, ditch and pond. David and I collected bird's eggs and had wonderful collections of thrushes, blackbirds, wrens, tree pipits, doves, hedge sparrows and many others. We knew where all the nests were, could climb trees like monkeys and knew no fear.

Although we were constantly bruised, grazed and bandaged we suffered no major injuries. I do remember some near misses like the time I fell thirty feet or so through a horse chestnut tree. As I crashed through the branches they also slowed me down and helped to break my fall. When I arrived eventually on the leafy ground beneath I was no more than scratched and winded!

David, John and myself were very fit and always seemed to be running, usually from something or somebody. With others we regularly played a marvelous game we called 'relieve – o'. One person was given a count of 50 to run away. The simple rules were that you stayed within the perimeter of the 'park'.

You could run, climb or hide. If you were touched by any of the chasers you were considered caught. If you got back to base you were allowed a short rest and a second go. There were many variations of the game. We ran like the wind, we became masters of camouflage and disguise, we crept on our bellies through bushes, climbed trees and became part of the environment. I remember being chased one time, leaping over a bush and landing straight in a hidden pond but hardly noticed it! We usually arrived home late for lunch, tired and bruised but with a very healthy glow!

Sometimes we were out all day and nobody seemed to particularly worry about us; we had nothing much to worry about either. If there was a worry it was 'the black hawk gang'. Occasionally, on 'our patch,' there appeared a group of lads who we didn't know. They always seemed to be fairly menacing and in fact used to chase us from time to time. One day I was caught. They tied me to a tree and threatened me with all sort of nasty things but eventually let me go telling me never to go anywhere near their camp again. I didn't!

### **Tramp Dick**

Through Peaks Park, over Marshalls Drive and a piece of waste land was a dirt track known locally as Tramp Dick's Lane. Tramp Dick lived in a small shack made of wood, tree branches and odd sheets of corrugated iron. He had a bed of rough timber and sacking plus a few scruffy blankets and not much else. He looked like a dirtier less colourful version of Father Christmas. He had a long white beard and a red face. He always wore boots and a long brown coat tied round the middle with a length of string. He mumbled a lot and shouted at us kids. He had a brown bag and walked with a stick.

Rumour had it that his name was Richard Whiting, brother of George who in 1922 had earlier been the driving force behind the construction of the Grand Palace Cinema, his wife had died, he had gone to pieces and never recovered. I'm sure we didn't know that at the time as we used to delight in throwing stones at his tin roof until he emerged shouting to chase us across the stubble of the adjacent corn field. About fifteen years later, Tramp Dicks Lane was to be absorbed into the Sandpit Lane Housing Estate where our first house was built. It was actually about 300 metres from Dick's old shack and on that very same cornfield!

We often got holiday or weekend jobs on local farms, especially around harvest time. Potato picking was very hard on the back. We had to follow the tractor as it went along turning the rows of potatoes over. We picked up the exposed potatoes, put them into wicker skips, which we dragged along with us. When full they were tipped into the following cart. Not a job for the faint hearted.

### **Deep in the heart of Texas**

Harvesting had much more a sense of occasion. Watching the tall golden wheat being cut, rolled, tied and dropped off the binder in straight rows was almost poetic in comparison. Our job was to pick up two sheaves at a time and with two others, form an upright 'stook'. The fields seemed huge and the insides of our arms quickly became very scratched and sore.

The field of corn was always cut in a spiral and the dogs usually walking with us would become increasingly excited as the spiral neared the centre. When the center stand was about thirty feet in diameter the tractor stopped, the dogs went in and out came the rabbits, some to be shot, others to run, leap and tumble to the safety of a far off hedge.

I remember all three of us returning to the farm sitting on the broad orange mudguards of a Fordson tractor singing:-

'The stars at night are big and bright, - deep in the heart of Texas!' - the dogs running along at the side barking!

At a later date the stooks would be collected in a deep cart with its capacity extended by adding 'fences' at either end. There was a real skill in the placing of the sheaves to ensure a safe load and an equal skill in building the stack when we unloaded.

### **Fellowship**



St Peter's Youth Fellowship - about 1947

By the time our choir boy voices had broken, Grace Lawrence had set up the St Peters Church Youth Fellowship, which would further and irreversibly affect our course through life. Gracie was probably about 35 years old. She stood no nonsense but possessed a fine sense of humour. She had tolerance and endless patience. She understood every one of us. over the years some of these qualities rubbed off on her 'children'!

We were a mix of up to 50 boys and girls, and met for loosely religious Sunday afternoons. Our vicar, the Reverend Alex Fergusson was probably a little jealous of Gracies sway with us. Around the age of 14 'dancing' was a word being nonchalantly bandied about. Those in the know talked about the Saturday night dances held at the Falkner Hall above the Co-op at the top of Victoria Street. Sounds like fun we thought and probably got a group together to try it out. I think the music came from a record player, through an amplifier to speakers high on the walls. It was fun and probably accelerated the liaisons beginning to form between the girls and boys of the St Peters Church Fellowship.

### **Still Waters**

Later, Saturday nights at the Waterend Barn became the place to be; it catered for all ages and I'm sure was responsible for cementing further budding liaisons. These dance evenings were our first steps into the world of sophistication. Clothes became increasingly important as a personality statement. The right shoes, dress and handbag; shoes, jacket and well pressed trousers said a lot. We eyed each other up and down, excited by the music and each other. The laughter and fun of the hikes and socials were taken over by the close contact, scents we hadn't noticed before and an excuse to hold hands.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the Waterend Barn. We bring you once again the music of 'Still' Waters and the Commanders. Have a fabulous evening."

'Still' Waters and his five piece dance band became well known (to us), we occasionally won spot prizes, had Happy Birthday sung when appropriate and got used to the 'excuse me' tap on the shoulder that relieved us of the girl we were just beginning to call our own!

We could buy sandwiches and cakes in the interval and by then knew who we wanted to dance with next and possibly walk home; it was just a question of plucking up the courage to walk across and utter the words, "May I have this dance?" Yes, there was much heart pounding on Saturday nights at the 'Barn' .....

"And so Ladies and Gentlemen we would like you to take your partners for the last waltz. We hope you've had a wonderful time and look forward to seeing you next week, dancing to the music of 'Still' Waters and the..... Commanders"

We always ended with the Whiffenpoof Song (Galloway-Minnigerode Pomeroy), the chorus of which, some of you will surely recognise!

We are poor little lambs who have lost our way... Baa ,Baa, Baa!  
We're little black sheep who have gone astray.....Baa, Baa, Baa!  
Gentleman songsters off on a spree,  
Doomed from here to eternity,  
Lord have mercy on such as we .....Baa, Baa, Baa,!'

"Goodnight everyone, see you next week"

## **Treason**

Meanwhile, in spite of myself, I was progressing through the St. Albans Boys County Grammar School, regularly getting low marks in exams but somehow hanging in. I was a regular attendee at 'Solo' Solomon's tea parties (detention). I had learnt to stuff 3 or 4 handkerchiefs down my pants when it was my turn for the cane, from the headmaster, Mr. Bradshaw. They were mainly for minor offences but the time I got 'six of the best' (choose your own cane from a glass fronted cabinet) - was a bit different. It was still war time and I guess the offence was only a whisker away from treason!

Myself and three other lads (two from another school) were roaming the countryside one Saturday afternoon, when we decided to climb up on to a haystack. One side was conveniently sloping at a shallow angle so we took it in turns to ride a sheave of corn down to the ground. Apparently some other lads had been doing this regularly and had destroyed many sheaves so a trap had been set. Right in the middle of our enjoyment we realised we were surrounded by farmworkers with pitch forks and broom handles. We came down and surrendered with our hands in the air, much to the delight of the farm workers and particularly the farmer who told us, colourfully, what he thought of us. Our names and addresses were taken and unfortunately for us, passed on to our parents and to our headmasters.

I suppose I must have been at the school in Brampton Road for at least 5 years. My first class was '1 Alpha', and I can still repeat the names in the class Register which I think was called twice a day. Arthur, Barnard, Belton, Blow, Caswell, Cave, Clarke, Clements, Cross, Danziger, Freeman, Hanks, Helm, Jenkins, Moss, Newberry, Perry, Rippon, Scarfe, Thomas, Udell and Wilson!

So I did learn something! I think the approved reply was "Present Sir" and heaven help the lad who forgot and said, "here"!

## **Soapy**

My favourite subjects were Art, Woodwork and Science.

The woodwork master was 'Soapy' Hudson who kept order with a piece of 4 x 2. He was a stickler for accuracy with his dovetails and mortice & tenons. If you messed up with the glue you were really in trouble. 'Johnny' Roscoe kept us enthralled in the science lab, - we always had an experiment on the go. Bunsen burners, litmus paper, pipettes and crystals of all colours flood my memory, as does something with pins, mirrors and cotton!

Johnny Roscoe was a real character, - he drove a large, dark green, open- topped Alpha Romeo, with huge headlights and running boards. He wore a corduroy jacket, deer stalker hat, a long scarf and smoked a 'Sherlock Holmes' pipe.

'Juicy' Bateman, our English and drama teacher, was definitely one of a dying breed. His habit of frequently saying, after a particular edict, "D'you see?" earned him his nick name. He looked like Punch of Punch & Judy fame, had a rather red face, a hooked nose and an upper crust English accent. He was an eccentric, travelled everywhere by train or bus and finished his journey to school by walking down the centre of Brampton Road swinging his umbrella. The traffic went around him.

I came to his attention one summer afternoon during one of his dramatic renderings of Julius Cæsar. He was just launching into, "Friends, Romans, countrymen lend me your 'yers' (as he pronounced it) when the inkpot, normally quietly at rest in the hole made for it, jumped out of the desk top and tipped ink all over *my* 'Shakespeare'. It was something to do with the connection between the elastic band round the rim and my finger. It was all sorted out quite quickly by the head master and me, with three whacks from the cane.

Years later when I was taxi driving I had to pick up a gentleman from an address in St.Albans. At first he didn't recognise me, but I knew the voice; it was 'Juicy'. He sat quietly beside me but about five minutes into the journey, turned and said, "Cave, have you got the ink out of your Julius Cæsar yet?!"

Sport wasn't really my forte. I ran, long jumped, high jumped and threw the javelin but team sports were not for me. I had to play rugby but made sure I kept well out of the way of the ball. If I picked it up I knew I would end up getting hurt!

School dinners were 6d and I seemed alternately, to be custard monitor or gravy monitor. There was a period, presumably when Mum wasn't teaching, when I went home to dinner, which always seemed to be cold meat with 'bubble and squeak' (fried potato and cabbage) plus plenty of home made chutney.

I didn't have many close friends at school; my best friend was David Wade who was in the same year, but in a different stream. Other friends were Peter Clarke, Gerald Blow and Peter Freeman. I sometimes went to Radlett for the day to be with Peter Freeman. I remember crossing many fields to get to a particular stream where we had a lot of fun building dams, climbing trees and chasing cows! Peter was a great mimic and when a teacher had to go out of the room for any reason, he would dash up to the front, pick up a piece of chalk and carry on as if he were that teacher. He kept us in fits of laughter and only got caught once by Juicy who came in quietly and sat at one of the desks and said, "You might as well carry on Freeman – you're better than me!"

I don't remember any tears when I left school, (the only tears I do remember were those of our art mistress Miss Dora when she 'accidently' got locked in the attic cupboard where our works of art were kept - but that's another story.)

My first job on leaving school was on Brunt's farm off the Watford Rd at Chiswell Green, outside St.Albans. Charles Brunt was a wealthy man running two farms, a successful stable of 20 racehorses at Royston and a fleet of coaches in Hatfield. We didn't see much of him as he was always somewhere else.

It was 1946 but there were still many German prisoners of war who had elected to stay in Britain. A large number had got used to working on farms all over the country and enjoyed the English way of life. One such was ex Wermach gunner Eric Zeibell. Strong, handsome and tanned from 3 years of working in the open air, Eric was probably about 25 years old.

When Mr Brunt was away, Eric was left virtually in charge but worked closely with Mrs. Brunt. I cycled the 4 miles from home in St.Albans, very often in the rain, and from time to time arrived later than I should have. My first job on arrival was to hand pump water to the tank in the roof. This was via a wall mounted, wooden handled lever in the large bare kitchen. I had to pump a few hundred times and after about 20 mins the muscles in my right arm knew all about it. Fortunately that usually coincided with Mrs.Brunt ringing the breakfast bell. I was allowed to join the early starters around the large scrubbed table. Large plates of egg, bacon, sausage, tomato and mushroom washed down with mugs of strong, sweet tea set us up well for the day ahead. I loved listening to the strong Hertfordshire accents of the old hands.

I worked with Eric most of the time and managed to upset him on a few occasions. After some very brief instruction he allowed me to drive the orange coloured Fordson tractor. A regular job was to 'muck out' the stables at the farm; we had to load the long low trailer, drive it to 'Thompson's' field, where we set the hand throttle to take the tractor and trailer in a straight line at a snails pace from one end of the field to the other. This meant we could both jump up onto the trailer and shovel the manure off as we went along. One day Eric sent me to load up on my own. I did that OK but had a little trouble doing a tight turn out of the stable area. Unfortunately I backed the trailer up to its axles into the duck pond! He took it all rather seriously, I thought.

Another time he sent me to find a drum of diesel for the tractor, "It's under some straw in the big barn", he said. I found the drum and tipped it into the fuel tank. Unfortunately for me it was the wrong drum and happened to be full of water! When Eric found out he chased me around the farm with a pitch fork yelling "I keel you, I keel you" - some how I survived and things got better.

One night there was an unexplained fire in the stables and all the horses had to be very quickly released. Next morning 10, still exciteable horses had to be rounded up. Normally this wouldn't have been too difficult but on this particular morning it was very foggy and quite scary, with horses galloping through the fog from all directions.

We often had to do small jobs at the stables in Royston and I enjoyed the 20 mile ride in a horse box. One of these excursions probably led to the next phase in my life. Eric had been a bricklayer before the war and Mr.Brunt asked him if he would be prepared to build a small extension to one of the Royston stables. I enjoyed the creative side of this as his mate. I mixed the mortar, got to read the plans and even laid a few bricks. I was also introduced to carpentry, roofing, hanging doors and putting in windows.

### **Mr Minchin**

This introduction to building must have stirred a latent calling as after a few more months I left the farm and started an apprenticeship with St.Albans builders 'Hammond and Sons'. Wally was my mentor and taught me to dig holes, push wheel barrows and make tea. He also, on a serious note taught me to lay bricks, use a spirit level, lay concrete pads and set foundations. I was soon allowed to carry out small maintenance tasks all around St Albans some of which still bear witness today!

The most exciting project was being part of a team building a rather controversial house in Cunningham Hill Rd. Mr Minchin was an architect with some unusual ideas. All his window frames had to be made of concrete (so I learnt a lot about special mixes, how to make wooden moulds and reinforcing). He wanted a flat concrete roof and at the side of each front window he included a projecting plinth with a statue on it. I'm sure a lot of what I was allowed to do on that project gave me the confidence and skills which have stood me in good stead ever since.

I attended Further Education Classes one day a week for a year. I learnt about 'running bonds', Flemish bond' and other bricklaying styles. I also learnt that building wasn't much fun in the winter when everything was frozen solid, even the sand. Fingers, ears and feet suffered and even warming them in front of a brazier only made things worse with terrible tingles!

## **Ted**

I don't really remember the reason I gave up my building apprenticeship half way through, but leave I did. I think I must have been a bit of a disappointment to my parents at that time but they seemed to go along with my vicissitudinous career path.

Somehow I started a job at the North Mymms Poultry Farm. The farm was bounded on one side by the Hertford Rd just short of the Rookery Cafe and on the other, by Mowlems Lane. Along the lane were six farm cottages, the entrance to the farm on the right, then further along a disused nursery. A fine group of characters made up the small workforce; 'the boss' Dick Canham, Ted Saltmarsh, young Sid, 'the girl', 20,000 chickens and the new boy, me.

'The girl' didn't have a name, she was a member of the Women's Land Army and was just 'the girl'. She checked, sorted, weighed, stamped and packed the eggs. Sid was a scrawny village lad about the same age as me. Ted was about 40. He and I worked well together. Ted called me Lofty (at 17 I was 6' tall), he had a stutter and a good sense of humour. His stock answer to anything that went wrong was " it's the b-b-b-bloody R-R-R-Russians L-I-I-loft, they're t-t-t-to b-b-b-bloody b-b-b-blame" (it was still 12 years before the first sputnick!)

As time went on one of my jobs was to fetch 'Peggy', a fairly old, gentle carthorse from Mowlem's field up the lane and harness her into the cart. I would sit on the 5 bar gate call her over, slip the bridle over her head, the bit into her mouth and cross from the gate to her broad back. She would then take me down the lane and into the farm where she would stop right by the cart - tipped backwards with its shafts in the air. I remember on one trip back up to the field turning right round on her back and riding all the way backwards - a very tolerant horse! Sadly, one sunny morning we found poor old Peggy upside down in a ditch. She had apparently had a heart attack and just collapsed into the ditch. The horse that Peggy was replaced with was younger and far less amenable.



20 and rarin' to go!

The farm consisted of narrow dirt roadways linking a dozen chicken runs each with a large wooden hen house. There were wooden feed troughs to be kept clean, water troughs to be cleaned and disinfected, regular culling to be carried out and buckets full of eggs to be collected twice a day. Ted and I spent our days cleaning out chicken houses, transporting manure to a huge heap from where it was periodically collected by a local nursery, culling chickens, collecting eggs and setting up new pens of pullets. We also transported large 2cwt sacks of bran and corn to bins all around the farm; it's difficult to believe that I used to carry those sacks from the cart to the bin on my back!

It was now 1948, the war had been over for 2 years but food was still rationed. Because I was a farm 'worker' I was entitled to an extra ¼lb of tea, 1lb of sugar, butter and a dozen eggs each week. I'd stuff it all into the saddle bag on my Hercules tourer and cycle the 6 miles home.

I learnt a great deal of the commonsense approach to life from the boss, which I really believe stood me in good stead, particularly over the next 5 years of my life. Dick Canham was probably about 60 years old, weatherbeaten, serious but with a dry sense of humour. One of the boss's first edicts to me was, "I don't ever want to see you walking anywhere emptyhanded - always think ahead. There's always something that needs to go somewhere. If not for today for tomorrow." A valuable lesson that has remained with me to this day. He wore the same beige cord trousers & ginger brown sports jacket and cap every day of the week. My first task on every second day was to go to the corner store and buy 100 Player cigarettes. He was

never without one and would often light a new cigarette from the old one. At 65 years old he died from lung cancer.

While working at the poultry farm I bought my first motorcycle. It was a 1947, 350cc single cylinder Ariel and I felt like a millionaire. It was now 1949 and at eighteen I knew National Service was looming. When it happened I actually signed on for 5 years and became a Wireless Fitter – but that's another story!

### Extracts from 'Glittering Shadows'

*Posted on 31/10/2011.*

### [Comments about this page](#)

Wonderful memories! We lived in Lattimore Rd. from 1942–51 and so many things bring those happy days back. We are trying to put something together about our times and adventures. I remember those planes!

*By Lilian Coverdale(nee Dorward)  
On 02/01/2012*

Thanks for this! I thoroughly enjoyed reading your memories.

*By catherine  
On 08/01/2012*

I remember the cattle market and visiting relatives in Fishpool St and Ver Rd. Was there a Co-op boot repairers somewhere in Fleetville?

*By jan bradbury  
On 08/02/2012*

As I read your comment Jan I seem to remember a boot repairers next to Spendwise, the grocers on the Balitto side of Hatfield Road going towards Hatfield!

*By Ron Cave  
On 21/02/2012*

Thanks Catherine and Lilian for your comments - it was great fun writing my story although it took about ten years. I'm always amazed at all those memories which are there and only need a little teasing to surface! Keep going Lilian!

*By Ron Cave  
On 21/02/2012*

Born 1933 Spencer Street shop Co-op number 9212 one at the end of Cambridge Road. There were two butchers, one with puffy eyelids, knew Teddy Crane, went to Camp Junior Mixed with my brothers Tom and Harry then St Albans Girls Grammar School. The Messerschmitt passed just above the tree tops on a foggy morning just above my head when I was walking to the grammar school -frightening- I can still remember the pilot looking down and wondered if he'd kill me. He was hedge hopping on the way to Hatfield aerodrome. We were bought new bikes from Timpsons, shiny black. I usually walked down Wellington road, I had a friend who lived here whose parents were teachers. We too were registered poultry keepers and used isinglass and also kept rabbits. Didn't you play milktops in the playground at school, and did you buy your chips from Catherine street? I went to Dagnall Street Baptist Church also knew the tramp, our boys stole his rations and cooked them and the bacon smelled lovely, then he chased us to my house and demanded that my mother pay for them. Thanks for the whiffenpoof song I had forgotten it your story went on sooooo long I only have time to briefly sketch my thoughts here.

*By Gladys  
On 28/02/2012*

Thanks Gladys, you may have known my sister Margaret Cave - at one time she was head girl. I remember names such as Jean Warner, Jean Shallcross and Gwen Wade. (and of course the head mistress - Gart)

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 02/04/2012*

Great memories, I recognise a lot of those people and places even though I came to St Albans in 1957, living opposite the Palace Cinema (then the Geaumont) and moved to 110 Brampton Road. Great memories thank you so much Raff [@StAlbansHistory](http://www.StAlbansNostalgia.co.uk)

*By Raff Cirillo*  
*On 02/10/2012*

Hello Ron, you were a couple of years ahead of me at school but I remember you. My Dad was the manager of the Camp Coop Grocery Shop, so your write up rang many bells for me. I had forgotten Tramp Dick but remember one of his favourite spots was outside the Post Office opposite Ballito. Also remember the Goddard twins who were in the same year as me.

*By Stewart West*  
*On 31/12/2012*

Thanks Stewart, always good to get feedback especially when you know there are fewer and fewer people who are going to know what we're talking about!! Our last UK visit was in 1996 but I'd love to go back and check out some of the old haunts.

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 12/02/2013*

Hi there, My Grandad's shop was Hooker's Glass which you mention, off Hatfield Road. My mum and Dad met at the Fellowship. Regards, Jackie McAll

*By Jackie McAll*  
*On 28/03/2013*

Further to my comment above, I am researching EE Hooker and Co (later Hooker's glass), who did restoration work on the windows of Coventry Cathedral, amongst other places. I would be grateful if anyone with any memories of the firm would contact me: [jackiemcall@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:jackiemcall@hotmail.co.uk)

*By Jackie McAll (nee Hooker)*  
*On 08/04/2013*

Jackie, what were your mum and Dad's names? Also to Stuart West, suddenly seeing your name again I think I remembered you - you were pretty skinny and fair haired :) ?

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 08/04/2013*

Hi Ron, My Dad is John Hooker (lived in Charmouth Road) and my mum's maiden name was Christine Dockree (she grew up in Dalton Street). They married at St Peters in March 1957. They still live locally. Re my comment above, you will see that I am conducting a piece of research on E Hooker (St Albans) Ltd and I wonder whether you have any memories you can add to my research or any further contacts. Many thanks. Jackie

*By Jackie McAll*  
*On 08/04/2013*

Hello Ron, I came across your story by accident, and have loved reading it. I am not from St. Albans originally but we bought our first house (47 Beresford Road) in 1978 and lived there for eight years, then moved to Sandpit Lane. I recognise many of the places you mention, and many are obviously long gone. Thanks for your story. Anita

*By Anita*  
*On 23/04/2013*

Hi Jackie, the name Dockree really rings some bells - possibly school days. I seem to remember red and black when I think of Hooker's shop on a corner. Thanks for your comments Anita - good memories!

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 05/05/2013*

Wonderful read.i came across this by accident but want to read much more about memories of my home town.fascinating.

*By Angelalumsdon*  
*On 08/05/2013*

Hi Ron, Yes, my mum remembers you! She has a picture of her with the Fellowship and you are in it. She had a twin sister Pauline. Hooker's headed paper from 1956 has a picture of a red and black rising sun and bird - so you remember well!

*By jackie mcall*  
*On 12/05/2013*

Hello Ron. I saw on the guestbook page for the Canal Zone website that you had written about your time in Egypt at RAF Fayid. My father was stationed there and my sister was born in Ismailia. I was about three or four when we came back on a Hastings. We went out there on the Windrush. My dad was Alf Brittain in Signals Section and he was from Dublin. His good friend was Mick Waters. I would love to read the excerpts from your book about those days. Where can I find them? Your website doesn't seem to exist anymore...All the best, Des Brittain, Kilburn, London....desbrittain@hotmail.com

*By Des Brittain*  
*On 24/11/2013*

I was born in 1940 at 46 Royston Road.

So many of the places mentioned I remember so well. I was taught English by 'Juicy' Bateman and had Johnny Roscoe as another teacher. I delivered newspapers for Stan & Ken Hill's shop opposite Oakley's Dairy. Left the Grammar School in 1957 and went to de Havilland as an engineering apprentice. Wonderful days in St. Albans.

*By Peter Valentine*  
*On 10/10/2014*

Hello Ron,

I have just come across your page by accident , and was delighted to be reminded of the nearly forgotten days in St Albans in the forties and fifties.

I was born in Ely Road in 1939 ,and went to Fleetvile School , and the County Grammar in Brampton Road as you did , And I remember most of the teachers mentioned in your book .

It was wonderful to remember all of those local characters, and tradesmen in that area at the time.

I lived in St Albans , both in Ely Road , and Roland Street until moving to Wheathampstead in 1950 ,where my parents ran a Pub.

Regards, Donald Marshall.

*By Donald Marshall*  
*On 11/01/2015*

Thanks for your comments Pete and Don. These days we seem to do a lot of reminiscing - I'm glad I wrote down my memories when I did, I'd never remember all that stuff now!!

I enjoy looking on Google Earth around St Albans too. Would love to hear of some of your memories too.

Ron

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 05/03/2015*

What a wonderful read! I'm a child of the 60's but found your memories of growing up through the war fascinating. I liked the description of the bombed house and your father in his yellow waterproofs riding his modified bicycle best.

I came across the article whilst trying to trace an old school teacher of mine called David Wade. I was taught by him in Oldham, Lancs through the 70's. Could it be the same chap? I do know he came from your way.

*By Anthony Hall*  
*On 31/03/2015*

Two of my friends were Dennis Corley & Arthur Blenkinsop. Dennis lived in Camp Road and I recently met his younger brother Jim and Jim's daughter Elaine. Jim is now Mayor of St. Neots and Elaine's son Lewis is learning to fly at the gliding club of which I'm a member near Ramsey, Cambs. Small world really and quite a coincidence.

I'm also in touch with Tina Bedford, now Tine Dye, who lives in Southend-on-Sea, but who used to live at 8 Campfield Road.

My Grandparents lived at 32 Camp View Road.

*By Peter Valentine*  
*On 16/10/2015*

Glad you enjoyed my reminiscing Peter. Didn't know any of those names. I didn't realise how much interest my ramblings would generate but glad they have. Those days seem so far away now (another lifetime) I'd love to have a wander around the Camp area :) All the best, Ron.

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 05/11/2015*

Hello, You brought back so many wonderful memories. I was your neighbour at no. 37 the other side of the Bromley's. Parents purchased the property in 1930. I was born March 1932 Twin brother Bryan. Moved to Colney Heath 1945. Regards

*By Basil Stoker*  
*On 08/12/2015*

I'm transcribing a hand written diary of a cousin who visited St Albans in 1952 on tour from London. She wrote that she "had tea in a quaint little restaurant called the "Sully/Sally Runner/Ruins" via Fishpool Street. The title is very hard to make out. Any ideas??

*By Denise Bosse*  
*On 03/01/2016*

Hello Ron,

My grandparents, Frank and Mary Thompson, owned the confectionery and tobacconist shop at 45 Hatfield Road, St Albans. It was originally numbered 111 but was renumbered 45 in about 1932. They ran the shop (quite successfully, I think) from about 1920 until about 1946 after which time they retired and purchased a bungalow at 39 Napsbury Lane. The shop is no longer a confectionery and tobacconist business, as you may know, although it was certainly still ongoing well into the 1980's.

I have never yet come across anyone who recalls the shop at all - do you remember it from your younger days, by any chance?

Incidentally, my parents briefly lived at 'Airlie' 49 Beresford Road in the late 1940's. My late father, Douglas Frank Thompson, born in January 1917, certainly attended Fleetville School in his early days!

*By Peter Thompson*  
*On 07/02/2016*

Denise Bosse - I think the quaint little restaurant you are thinking of was Sally Lunn's. It was in St Michael's village at the bottom of Fishpool Street and survived until the early 80's. Not there now unfortunately

*By Christine Fry*  
*On 16/05/2016*

Denise Bosse was looking for the name of a restaurant near to Fishpool Street. This would have been Sally Lunn's Teashop in St Michael's village. I used to go there for a hot drink and a tea cake after my riding lesson at the stables in Blacksmith's Lane.

*By Joan Johnson (nee Allen)*  
*On 16/05/2016*

Peter Valentine mentioned that his grandparents lived at number 32 Camp View Road. I lived at number 14 and knew every family on our side of the street. By my reckoning number 32 would have been home to the Whittons and I was a friend of their son John. I would be pleased to hear if this information is correct, Peter.

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 16/05/2016*

I currently live in one of the staggered terraced houses where Sutton Road meets Campview Road. The houses would have been directly opposite the Co-op. I believe that the adjoining building on Campview road was a stable (now a garage and a flat). I would love to know if anyone remembers who the occupants of the terraces were and what animals were kept in the stable.

*By Allan Clayton*  
*On 07/06/2016*

In reply to Allan's comments about the property at the junction of Camp View Road and Sutton Road, during the time that I lived in Camp View (1946-1966) the building was occupied by Warwick's Butchers. I can only remember the adjoining building as being a garage/storehouse belonging to the business, but it could well have been a stable prior to this. Joan Johnson (nee Allen)

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 27/06/2016*

I can't answer either of your specific questions but I did have a sudden recollection of a high wooden fence on the corner of Sutton Rd and Cambridge Rd behind which were a couple of fierce sounding bull dogs! I'm talking of around 1938

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 21/07/2016*

Thank you very much for your answers. I will continue my investigations!

*By Allan Clayton*  
*On 24/07/2016*

Born 1937:- Ely Road, Camp school and S.T.A.G.G.S. I was looking for a photo of the grammar school when I came across your page. We are now HISTORY. I'm writing my 'memoirs' for the family and you have just provided an extra spur. Is your book still in print? Joan nee Miller

*By Joan Miller*  
*On 13/08/2016*

My mother lived at 173 Hatfield Road, corner or Harlesden Road.

Her father owned a bakehouse. I don't know if it had a name.

Mother is nearly 100 years and reminiscing. She would have been living in the area from about 1922 or 1923 and started at Fleetville infant and primary school. She remembers Mr East the Headmaster.

If anyone can remember anything about the shop, this would be most appreciated

*By Kate Start*  
*On 21/08/2016*

Further to my previous memories living in the Camp area of St Albans , I just wonder if anybody remembers St John's Preparity School for boys, in Brampton Road , during the war.

I have tried to look it up on the net , but there seems to be no mention or recollection of it at all. I can remember attending there in around 1944 , wearing a Mauve Blazer , and mauve and silver tie. That is where my memory ends ,after which time I was at Fleetville School from then on until going to the County Grammar School In 1951.

Did it close down ?

Donald Marshall..

*By Donald Marshall*  
*On 04/09/2016*

This was so interesting to read. I was born in 1948 and lived in Castle Road, Fleetville. I remember so many of the places you talk about as they were still there and some still are. We also had a bomb shelter in the back yard which I discovered when I was digging the garden years after the war. Saturday mornings at the Gaumont cinema were much as you describe. I went to Fleetville school too. When about 15 we used to go to dances at the Ballito social club and got to dance to bands who later became famous. At intermission we would go to the Rats Castle pub for refreshments but I had to hide in case any of the neighbours saw me because I was underage.

*By Joan Bolton*  
*On 10/03/2017*

Sadly my story is out of print, but I could send you a chapter from time to time.

Ron

*By Ron*  
*On 22/04/2017*

Thanks for your comments Joan. I published my book in 2009 and had been writing it since about 1989. When I pick it up now for an occasional read I realise how the memory fades as you get older, I would never remember half of the detail now! I all seem like a life time ago now!

All the best Ron

*By Ron*  
*On 22/04/2017*

Thank you! What a delight to read about your life in St. Albans. I was born October 1950 in a small terraced house on Church Street, near to Grange Street. I attended Garden Fields and went on to Sandfield School for girls. My father was a soccer player, a very good player and seemed to know everyone (i was young so it may have just felt that way) In 1980 I moved with my husband and children to the USA. You took me back to my childhood which was a wonderful place to be. Thank you!

*By Margaret Osborn (Sperrin)*  
*On 26/05/2017*

Joan, Sorry to be so long replying. My grandparents were Mr. & Mrs. Billington who lived at 32 Camp View Road. I also remember John Whitten and he lived at No.34 I think.

I wonder if you remember Gordon Enstone who lived just up the road from Hathaway's butchers shop.

In 1965 I moved to Hitchin when I married and my parents left Royston Road in 1973 and 'emmigrated' to Great Yarmouth. Before she retired my mum ran the dry cleaners at the top of Beech Road opposite the King William.

*By Peter Valentine*  
*On 18/09/2017*

Hi All, I am researching S W Morley Bakery or W S Morley Bakery which was located in Fleetville in the 1940s & 50s. I was wondering if anyone knew anything of it, i.e. the owners, workers, or what happened to it, maybe someone might have some old photos or information. I would be grateful if anyone with any memories of the Bakery could contact me: [ipjs70@hotmail.com](mailto:ipjs70@hotmail.com)

*Query answered privately by Mike Neighbour*

*By Ian Streeter*  
*On 22/09/2017*

Hello again Peter. Yes, I do remember your grandmother Mrs Billington in Camp View Road and also Gordon Enstone who lived on the opposite side. I remember him being one of the very few car owners in the street during the early 1960s. Your mention of Arthur Blenkinsop and Dennis Corley rang a bell with me. My father had a work colleague at the GPO sorting office in Beaconsfield Road. His name was Arthur Blenkinsop and he lived in College Road and I am wondering if your friend Arthur might have been his son. He had a daughter Elizabeth who I was friendly with. I had two older brothers, Ken and John Allen (born 1937 and 1938) who you might possibly have known and I think they knew Dennis Corley. We had our daily newspaper delivered by Ken Hill's shop, so could you possibly have been our delivery boy? Joan Johnson (nee Allen)

*By Joan Johnson (Nee Allen)*  
*On 28/09/2017*

Hello,

I am trying to find out if there was a 'spot' or 'shot' restaurant in London Colney in 1932. i have just found my fathers birth certificate and his father Ernest Saunders and mother Alice stated that he was born there on 21 Aug 1932.

If anyone can help I would really appreciate it.

*Query answered privately.*

*By Kate*  
*On 11/10/2017*

Has anyone any leads to St Albans police history? I'm trying to find detail about Sgt. Hallet who lived next door to me during the war - say 1937 to 1945.

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 08/03/2018*

Trying to locate info about my uncle Leslie Pell who died aged 18 in a motorcycle accident. Also trying to trace what church he could be buried in. Any help gratefully received.

*By Michael Pell*  
*On 11/09/2018*

Hi folks,

My mother lived at 102 Cambridge Road St Albans during the war. Her father Ronald James Mitchell worked at De Haviland as an engineer.

Does anyone have any old pictures of Cambridge Road from around this time, or any knowledge of Ronald. I know a lady called Ruth Emily Billing was at 102 Cambridge Road at the time, so I suppose my mother & her parents were lodging with her. Any info would be great.

Many thanks.

Doug.

*By Doug*  
*On 21/09/2018*

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## **St. Albans Tragedy 1985: The city's worst nightmare**

**By David Lasky**



On the trip

For the 1985 Whitsun half term holiday Verulam and Beaumont Schools jointly organised a water sports trip to France with a specialist tour operator. Travel from St. Albans was by coach, then canoeing on the Ardeche followed by sailing and windsurfing in the Mediterranean.

Unfortunately, on the morning of the 29th May during the coach journey between the Ardeche and the Mediterranean the driver had a stroke and a brain haemorrhage, which resulted in the coach crashing and overturning at Egremont near Ledignan. Killed in the accident were three boys from Verulam School, Stephen Eke, Duncan Halsted and Matthias Lasky, two girls from Beaumont School, Ann Morris and Jackie Francis and a young teacher from St. Albans Girl's School, Barbara Ericsson, who was helping on the trip; the driver also died.



In the Ardeche

The majority of the children were hurt: the badly injured were hospitalised between Montpellier and Nimes hospitals. As a result of the prompt help from the local villagers and the speedy action of the local fire brigade many lives were saved.

The Mayor of St Albans at this time, Robert Donald, within a few hours managed to arrange a special flight for all the parents to travel to the children in France. While in France the mayors of towns local to the crash, such as Ales, Ledignan, Montpellier and Nimes arranged accommodation for all of the families who travelled from St. Albans.



## Stele in France

The French community erected a memorial stele near the spot on the road where the accident took place and for the following decade held an annual ceremony there. Even now the stele is still tended by the local commune.



Memorial Oak & stone in Vintry Garden

Here in St. Albans a service was held in the Abbey and a thirteen year old oak tree was planted (thirteen being the average age of the children who died) in the Vintry Gardens with a memorial plaque. This plaque has since been replaced by an inscribed granite block. Memorials have also been erected in Verulam and Beaumont schools.



Inscribed Stone in Vintry Garden  
Posted on 31/05/2011.

#### [Comments about this page](#)

27 years ago today I lost a very dear friend, RIP Ann.

*By Nick H.*  
On 21/06/2012

Went to Francis Bacon School and was 13 at the time and knew someone who survived. Found this while looking for something else. Brought back lots of memories! r.i.p.

*By Debbie*  
On 28/09/2012

We lost a beautiful and talented woman from our family and we miss her every single day. We love you and think about you always Barbara. Rest in heaven xxx

*By Ericsson*  
On 12/10/2012

Still miss my beautiful sister Jackie Francis xxxx

*By Sarah francis*  
On 29/05/2014

French local newspaper tells about the ceremony held for 31st anniversary of the tragedy: <http://www.midilibre.fr/2016/05/30/il-y-a-31-ans-l-accident-du-bus-anglais-faisait-7-victimes,1340154.php>

*By Visitor*  
*On 31/05/2016*

There is not a day that I don't remember my friends on that trip. They will always be in my thoughts.

*By Rebecca Walton*  
*On 31/05/2016*

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## **Mile House Lane**

**By Jane Cook**

Dear Mr Hanlon

I just wondered whether the local historical society has any interest in the more recent history of St Albans. Just in case they do, below is the story of what was probably the first house built in the town after WWII.

Just after the war Fred and Connie Cook were living with Fred's godparents, the Parkers, who ran the village shop in London Colney. Meanwhile they were involved in the building of their own home on a one-third of an acre site on the corner of Mile House Lane, opposite the Mile House pub. (One thing noted was a large quantity of oyster shell in the garden which, we were told, was a sign of previous Roman occupation.)

I gather they had a self-employed builder (whose name, I'm sorry to say, I've forgotten) for the actual construction, while Fred - an electronic engineer employed at Marconi Instruments - having designed the house, did the wiring, and Connie did the interior decorating.

The site on which Number Three (as it came to be known, there being no number 1 in the road) was constructed had been used during the war by the Home Guard. A brick ammo shed - and a lot of trenches! - remained from their occupation. The house was built largely from reclaimed materials, the woodwork, including the doors, being of solid oak.

Mum and Dad didn't quite manage to get the place finished by the time I was born in the January of 1947 and so my carrycot would be propped up on logs to keep me out of the snow of that famous winter while they worked on our home (perhaps the reason I'm quite fond of cold weather!) Sadly, by the time I was 8, my parents' finances forced them to sell our home, but I still remember it with great fondness. (The sale price was £3000.)

If there's anything else you'd like to know about Number Three and its environs I'd be more than pleased to try to help.

PS I have very clear memories of living at my favourite home surrounded by lovely elms (I fear probably gone by now) and also things like walking down to the stream by the old mill where Mum used to warn me not to pick the watercress because of the danger of liver flukes! Of course, in the early days food was still rationed, and Mum grew all our own fruit and vegetables, and our chickens provided free-range eggs (everything organic of course).

*Posted on 07/05/2010.*

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## **The Story of my Life: Living in St Albans in the 20th century** [written in the 1980s] Muriel Emily Ward nee Lewis (24th June 1908-February 2000)

As a child my first home was at 34 Bernard St. a very nice home. Dad had two white doves in a dovecote and a nice greenhouse with a lovely white rose. From there we moved to a shop (Ironmongers) in Catherine St. with stables at the back. There was a sweet shop next to us (Mr. Flouris) a paper shop and shoe repairs. We had our sitting room upstairs in the front and one day I saw a big white bear outside the Pineapple [public house], two men were with it.

During the 1st World War we had soldiers billeted with us. One was William Welles. He idolised me and before he went to France he gave me a silver cross as a keepsake. When he went to France etc. he always wrote to me saying "my darling little friend Sissy" I adored him, I remember eventually I received a bundle of letters marked 'Red Cross' and they had undoubtedly been in the water. After that I heard nothing but I have always remembered him. I must have been about 10 years.

We then moved to 'Sidvale' Grange St. where we lived for a number of years, we had a very nice home--carpets in the sitting room and main bedroom and walnut and mahogany furniture. There were 8 children, 7 girls and 1 boy. In those days my father was a plumber. Trained by Miskins the builders and his wage was £13.10.0 per week. We never went without. Lamb was 2/6d, iced cakes 1d, mild 1d pint, bread 2d etc.

We then moved to 101 Dalton St. My dad bought this house and it was exceptionally nice having 4 bedrooms and we were very happy there. I often wonder where he got the money from to buy it and I have since found out he had an annuity from his uncle Walter Lewis who owned a needle manufacturing firm in Redditch, Worcs. Later on he bought a piece of land in Old Harpenden Road from a Mr. Paul and he then built 8 houses on that site. He sold 101 Dalton St. for £400 but what he paid for it I do not know. Oh! No.101 was the number of the airship which was destroyed! Here we only had gas downstairs but we switched this off by a plug on the wall which my dad invented himself. What a pity he did not patent it.

Plenty of small shops were in the neighbourhood so shopping was easy and very personal touch Mrs Cooper who had a sweet shop in Catherine St. was very kind to the kids. We used to go in there to buy 'a penny worth of mixed sweets'. For this we got creams, chocolates, marzipans etc. I would reckon a good half pound, wonderful. Aunties, uncles and grandparents all lived close around. Today they are spread far afield. We used to love visiting them all.

My mother came from Thornton in Buckinghamshire and my dad from High Ruthin [Roothing] in Essex; I believe this has now been renamed. One grandpa was a bailiff and one a gamekeeper.

We then moved into one of the houses he built in Old Harpenden Rd. Then 2 sisters bought one, my Auntie bought one and my brother bought one. The others he sold. Eventually he built another 4 bedroomed house [no.14] for us. This he built entirely himself with just a mate called "Mutter" a funny little chap. Although my dad only had training for plumbing he became a master builder which included everything in the building line and he was a first class electrician. He was a very clever man. He never made a lot of money because if people were poor he would do the jobs and not charge them. This house is now valued at £190.000 [1980s].

He lived to be 91 and my mother 86. We have been to the same solicitors Clark and Clark in Victoria St. for 60-70 years and the whole family deal with them I think our family are their oldest clients. With regard to moving I think I took after my dad. I have bought and sold 6 houses in my time.

As children when we were only 2 in the family my sister and I had our clothes made by a Miss Draper who lived in Hill St. Lovely dresses and little suits.

I started work at 14 as a filing clerk earning 12/6 per week. I gave my mother 10/-, had 2/6 myself and I bought all my clothes with that. My brother, who was then only about 7 used to wait for me in Woolworths every Friday (pay day) and I would give him 2d everyone could walk about in those days without fear--in fact we never even locked doors at night or when we went out.

When my brother and youngest sister were about 2 and 4 years I used to tell them stories which I made up, real scary stories and they used to be terrified. They have always remembered this.

We all went to Garden Fields School in Catherine St. Some of my younger sisters passed for the girl's grammar school. 2 were even top of the county. My eldest sister [Ena] was brilliant. She was in the top class when she was 11 years. I remember a school inspector came to our home and asked my mother to send her to college. They could not allow her any money but they stressed how very clever she was. However my mother could not afford it. She could sing, paint, play piano and organ. What a pity she could not take all this further.

I later learned typewriting and shorthand and went into the typing pool. This was at Heath and Heather. It was a very happy firm and eventually I was secretary to 3 directors. My highest wage was £8.10.0 per week. I soon saved £500 and bought my first house for £2000. Which included 4 flats. I sold the last house recently for £63,500 so my £500 gave me a good profit.

We never had birthdays or Christmas cards. Indeed presents were few and far between. There was one small toy shop in St. Peters St. run by a Miss Allen. Everything at Woolworths was 6d and that included some clothes. One could buy anything there. We also had a 'Penny Bazaar' in Chequer St. where one could buy almost everything for a penny.

I think our weekly family food bill was about a pound a week. Rent was 2/11 so you see we really lived comfortably. We always kept chickens and had a nearby allotment. Butchers of course never had fridges so meat was sold fresh every day. I used to go to Mr. Parrott's meat shop in Catherine Street and ask for 'three-pennyworth' of beef etc.—a bag full which would last days. My mother was a beautiful cook. For a short period we had my auntie and 2 cousins staying with us and my auntie paid my mother 7/6 per week for the three of them. We knew all the neighbours for streets around, by name, and they were all friendly.

My friends all lived around but I remember their homes were poor and nothing so lovely as ours. They all had lino on the floors and wooden chairs and tables. That was about all.

The milkman used to come round with a horse and a trap holding a large churn of milk. He also had a dairy shop in Catherine St.—Mr. Soul.

I believe the population of St Albans was 1400 and now it is 60,000.

As a child I had many happy holidays away at aunties and uncles. I frequently stayed with Auntie Sue and Uncle George who lived at Brockley Rd. London. Also Auntie Ada and Uncle Albie who lived at Battersea Park. Uncle Albie was Park Superintendent.

Also Auntie 'Tits' at Fairview Avenue, Reading. She was apparently nicknamed 'Tits' at birth because she was so tiny. Her husband was an extremely clever man who died at the age of 43. I had one uncle a train driver and another a policeman and another in the Navy. How I arrived at these addresses I cannot

remember but it must have been by train. Uncle George was an RA and did beautiful painting. Many are of ships which he painted at the dockside. We still possess these. Uncle George actually painted the Lusitania at the dockside.

As children we all had jobs to do. I had to sweep the bedroom and sitting room carpets, by means of a hard hand brush and small ash pan. It took me ages but I liked doing it.

When we were young kids my dad had a big ginger moustache which he was always twirling.

I did not marry until late in life and stayed with my parents until they passed on. I had no children but a wonderful husband.

Oh! Another thing, we always went to Sunday school—first to a large hall in Bernard St. and then to St Peter's Hall in Hatfield Rd. Of course we also went to Church on Sundays. Things are different today—very few children got to Sunday school.

Getting back to grocery shopping St Albans had small shops Sainsburys, Oakleys, Liptons, Maypole, International, and Pearks. These were ample for the small population. There were two fresh fish shops, Maddox and Mrs Smith. There was plenty for everyone. Bakers were little private baker's shops Harrington's, Lees, Budgens and Thrales. Two vegetable and fruit shops, Maddox and Martins. Of course there has always been the Saturday market this was mostly on the square outside the town hall. There was a china stall run by 'Cheap Jack'. Best china, cups saucers, plates and dishes etc. all for a penny or two. Also there was another stall run by 'Buckie Lawrence'. Here you could buy anything, mostly ironmongery, but he always sold asparagus which he labelled 'sparrow grass' I expect he thought that was its real name. Stall holders then were real characters. The only thing young people had to do were church socials and dances, the police ball was particularly grand. Saturday and Sunday evening we would promenade up and down St Peter's St. One side was called 'Half-crown' side for the elite. The other side was the 'fourpenny-side' for the riffraff. This was where we met the opposite sex. My mother used to pay a hospital subscription and a doctors subscription. Indeed everyone did.

Oh! I nearly forgot my mother paid a life insurance for herself and my dad, to the Pearl Insurance. She paid one penny per week for each. I cashed these when they died at 86 and 91 but I cannot remember now how much I received. Pounds I know.

I am now very happily settled in this maisonette with my husband and I hope we have many healthy years here. My brother and sisters live around too. If I could go back to the old days I would because everyone was happy, content and had no worries or fears. Money did not mean a thing.

We have several nieces and nephews, 2 nephews emigrated to Australia and that was a big heartbreak but they are both very happy.

I have been very lucky and had many blessings. Muriel Emily Ward.

*Posted on 03/02/2016.*

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## **A defective lock at Batchwood: An anecdote from Lord Grimthorpe**

**By John Cox**

Lord Grimthorpe, formerly Sir Edmund Beckett, leased Batchwood from the Earl of Verulam in 1876 when he began to take an interest in the activities of Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) who had begun work on the restoration of St. Albans Abbey in 1856.

Following the death of George Gilbert Scott his lordship obtained a faculty from the Diocese of St. Albans (created in 1877) to repair the building using his own money. Beckett, who had been born in Yorkshire, became a leading English lawyer whose practice made a fortune. With this he developed his interest of church architecture and clock-making, to his own advantage.

He designed churches, designed the escapement for the new clock in Sir Charles Barry's clock tower of the Houses of Parliament, Westminster, which is known worldwide as *Big Ben*. In addition he designed clocks at Batchwood and one for the 2nd Earl of Verulam which was erected above the Stable Building at Gorhambury, which was set to strike only the hour and half-hour, enabled the estate workers to enjoy their lunch break in peace.

In 1878 he designed the new rectory for the Reverend, the Venerable Walter John Lawrance who had been appointed Rector of the parish of St. Alban's Abbey in 1868. The new building was designed with no bathroom!

At his own house he found one of the locks, which he himself had designed, to be 'disordered'. He sent for a locksmith who set his young man to make the necessary repair. The young man assumed that his lordship was unable to mend a contrivance of his own invention. He appeared puzzled at the lock which irritated his lordship considerably. The young man sought to justify himself pertly for which he received a boxing of his ears, and a request to 'Get out, lout - I'll do it myself'. And he did just that.

Sources of information:

*Hertfordshire Notes from the Herts. Advertiser and St. Albans Times, Saturday 2nd January 1904.*

*Chambers Biographical Dictionary, 5th edn. 1990.*

Posted on 24/01/2011.

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## **Beryl Carrington's memories of the Queen Mother: The reporter's perspective**

*"I remember several busy days I spent trotting behind those trim little high-heeled feet belonging to H.M. Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother as they tripped along over well manicured lawns, tussocks or parkland as she brought her own kind of charisma to a Royal visit in the area. She never did things by half to make her visit really worthwhile and she set a brisk pace as she led officials and the press corps on a comprehensive tour of the job in hand. She set her inimitable seal on many occasions as she twinkled her way around marquees, exhibitions and demonstrations, taking a lively interest in all and sundry."*

Before her marriage in 1923 Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (as she then was) was a Commissioner of Hertfordshire Girl Guides, and was a regular visitor to Hatfield House both before and after she became the Duchess of York. She was a regular visitor to the Hertfordshire Show and in later years to fetes and gala days held there.

In 1944 King George VI accompanied by the Queen and both Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret went to Clarence Park to inspect the Highland Division. The King took the salute at a march-past and dined in the

officers' mess. Two years earlier he had come to inspect troops who had distinguished themselves in Flanders and France before the Dunkirk evacuation in May 1940.

In happier times Queen Elizabeth attended the final performance of the St. Albans Millenary Pageant, 1948. Her visit to Verulamium was remembered by her and so many of spectators and performers for the rainbow which illuminated the final scene on the rain-soaked arena. My father, Harry Carrington, then Editor of the Herts Advertiser, interviewed her at St. Paul's Walden on her engagement, and no doubt met her at many county events. After 30 years she recognised him when she met him again at the Millenary Pageant and she made an old man very happy. That was her secret; she had the art of making people comfortable, wanted and happy-feeling which was so often sadly-lacking in life today.

Perhaps the happiest occasion was in 1961 when she visited St. Albans again during the mayoralty of Councillor Dr Elsie Toms and after signing the "Roll of Freeman" said that a visit to Hertfordshire was very much a return home, and to be in St. Albans, was, she felt to be amongst friends. Six years later she attended the first play performed at the new Abbey Theatre which was built for the Company of Ten, which was founded in 1934. In November 1977 she attended the final service at the end of the year entitled "Festalban" to commemorate one hundred years since the Diocese of St Albans was created and the Abbey given Cathedral status, in addition to the Borough becoming a City.

Several visits were made to Wheathampsted and to the Royal National Rose Society's gardens at Chiswell Green. In 1993 she was present for the re-hallowing of the shrine of St. Albans, which had been carefully taken apart and conserved whilst the site below was excavated by a team of archaeologists led by the Abbey's Honorary Archaeological Consultant - Professor Martin Biddle. This also involved the removal of a stone altar which had been on top of the shrine from the time it had been reconstructed in the 19th century but had been found to come from a different location within the Abbey.

One thing the Queen Mother could not stand was injustice: on one occasion she dished out a reprimand when an official was unpleasant to a press photographer. She said: "Please do not do that, we are old friends and we both have our own work to do".

Beryl remembered being treated to tea at Clarence House with Sir Martin Gilliat when she and Robert Richardson presented a copy of their book about St. Albans. She was very diffident when she was honoured to become a Member of the British Empire (M.B.E.) for services to journalism. She died in March 2005 at home at 26 Church Crescent, the house she had lived in since 1922. She had lunch with her live-in companion and had gone into her kitchen before starting to wash-up when her heart simply gave up. That house had been the scene of many gatherings of family, Herts Advertiser staff, past and present, as well as her many friends all over the City. She began work for the H.A. in 1935 and never really retired.

*Source: BJC's papers*

*Posted on 11/05/2012.*

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## **Little church in what is now Coopers Green Lane: what it was and where the records might be held.**

**By Keith Mardell**

My late parents always were proud of the fact that I was allegedly the last child to be baptised at this church before it was demolished due to continued vandalism. I've searched the internet to no avail and even spoken to the records department at County Hall with very little success. It is difficult explaining to

them that Coopers Green Lane was at one time called Sandpit Lane (I know this because as a child my family and I lived there). I also know for a fact that the little church stood on a triangle of land in Coopers Green Lane (then Sandpit Lane) at the junction of the road that leads up to Suttons and Fairfolds Farms. Surely someone, somewhere must know the name of the church and possibly where I can find the records. My best guess is that the church was demolished in the late 1940's because I went to St.Johns primary school in Lemsford from 1946 and have a very vague recollection of seeing the ruins on my way to school.

If anyone can help me in my quest I would be extremely grateful.

*Posted on 29/10/2011.*

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## **Memories of St Albans over the years: Specially concerning shopping**

**By Jean Brown**

St Albans is still a lovely place to dwell in, however the shops available today offer fewer opportunities to browse. Remembering the super department store Greens, Oakleys, and the excellent service one got from Home and Colonial Stores, and shops such as Donald Black.

Freemans pharmacy offered lemonade crystals in a paper cone which we bought hurriedly on our way to morning Assembly at School.

However the Cathedral, with its touch of eternity makes up for any loss of past delights.

*This page was added by [Jean Brown](#) on 08/02/2011.*

### [Comments about this page](#)

To which may be added Maddox (greengrocers). many shoeshops, MacFisheries, Butler's, with its timber-framed shop (demolished to erect the early Tesco's in brutalist 60s concrete) & Sainsbury's, with its tiled walls (hidden behind the fittings of the present company's premises). During the 50s, in Sainsbury's, one had butter for instance, made up with butter-pats before wrapping and bacon sliced to requirements. Because each counter sold a separate item, payment was made using the overhead 'railway' to a cash-desk in the pulpit at the end of the shop. Regarding Oakley's, it was what was known as an Italian Warehouse. During and after the War (II) it sold exotic items like foreign cheeses, Italian salamis, dried fruit and a lot of otherwise unobtainable products taken for granted in the supermarkets nowadays .... but they don't have the marvellous smell of an Italian warehouse, which was a characteristic of others around the country. Earlier on, of course, Woolworths.. nothing over 6d. One could go on but can only regret the loss of a traditional high street.

*By Gerard McSweeney  
On 10/02/2011*

Can anybody remember what Caters was called before it was Argos?

*By Sarah Brown  
On 14/08/2011*

I think Caters was Presto and before that it was the Green Shield Stamp shop.

*By Kevin Matthew  
On 19/09/2011*

Does anyone remember the shop that sold hay and pet food [all we bought there] in George Street [right side going down] please. I still remember the smell of Oakleys, the sugar on string and the wonderful sugar Easter eggs with pictures inside. Now you can only get similar eggs from America - I've looked [sigh]. What about Liptons too and Deverells, the toy shop in French Row. And Blundells department store in Market place, It included the old timber framed building too. The Wetheralls part of Blundells used it. I'm sure

everyone remembers Heath and Heathers, with their large warehouse too. I think my mother bought my pram in Faith Heaths, Market Place, and I bought my son's one there too. Near there was a lovely bookshop that sold bags of beads that I loved buying.

*By Sandra*  
*On 20/10/2011*

Yes Sandra I remember buying a bale of hay for our chickens from that shop but can't remember what it was called. There was a similar shop halfway down French Row that you could walk straight through from Chequer Street. Your mention of that tiny little shop Deverells in French Row reminded me of my model making days, also of the shop at the top of Hatfield Road close to the Blacksmiths Arms and my favourite, Green and Winters down an alley way off Market Place.

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 03/11/2011*

Hi I grew up on Hatfield Road in the 1970s and the 1980s and my father worked for Warwicks Fish Shop in the town centre. But then he went and bought the local fish shop which was Fleetville Fisheries and ran that for a few years. I had a brilliant childhood in those shops and can remember the takeaway on the corner, second-hand shop next door and Londis. Also the brilliant breakfasts in the local cafe. Have not been back for years but the place will always be there in me.

*By Debbie*  
*On 28/09/2012*

Can anyone remember a toy shop in Hatfield Road on the right-hand side going towards the Crown from Fleetville. It would have been almost approximately Albion Road. I can recall going in there sometimes after I had finished my ballet lesson at St. Paul's Church hall on a Saturday morning. They had a wonderful range of (pretend) miniature food products such as you would find in a grocery shop. I can remember buying a little tiny packet of twenty Players cigarettes, each one being probably no more than half an inch long, complete with a 'glowing' red tip. Does anyone remember this shop?

*By Joan Johnson (nee Allen)*  
*On 03/10/2012*

I left Hertfordshire in 1971 to move to Cornwall, where I still live today but still have many happy memories of growing up in St Albans. I was born in Oster Hills Hospital and lived in the same house for twenty years until I got married in 1966. Our family home was in Camp View Road, a terraced property of three up and three down. When I was about twelve years old we had a bathroom built on to the ground floor, a feature which I was very proud of. I attended Camp School and Sandfield Girls' School, followed by two years' full time at the St Albans College of Further Education, where I trained to become a secretary. My Saturdays then were taken up with working in British Home Stores in order to earn some spending money. For the day's work I was paid £1, plus a free lunch in the staff canteen. My first job was at Ballito Hosiery Mills in Hatfield Road. I enjoyed being there but the money wasn't good and I left after three years and went to the National Mutual Life Assurance Society, where I remained until my move to Cornwall in 1971. Life for me in St Albans was good throughout my childhood and teenage years and I have been fortunate in being able to go back there for visits almost every year since moving. Joan Johnson (nee Allen)

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 12/10/2012*

Thanks for your memories Joan. They've triggered a few more of my own. The cake shop almost up at the Crown roundabout where there was always a Saturday morning queue. Ben Pelly's where they sold crockery and some hardware. The Handy Stores near Harlsden Road, run by two (I thought) elderly ladies! Then Lavers wood yard. I can see now the stocky man with the hard leather pad sewn onto the right shoulder of his jacket as a protection from the wood he carried.

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 22/11/2012*

Before Presto supermarket the building was occupied by a printing company called Gibbs & Banforth my dad worked there in the 1960's

*By John Reeves*  
*On 27/11/2012*

My father -in law ALFRED POWELL worked for SEEBY'S TAXI'S 1947-1952 when he died,the family have no photos of him ,as he was a taxi driver we wondered if any one has him on a wedding photo,it would be wonderful if we could find one.

*By ANN POWELL*  
*On 23/12/2012*

Re the earlier queries about a corn shop. If you mean the one near St Peter's Church not far from the hospital, it was 'The Marsh Corn Stores' and the manager was a Mr Mead who lived in Folly Lane. What about Pamphillon's furniture shop?

*By Stewart West*  
*On 31/12/2012*

Stuart, I remeber that furniture shop - I bought a small carpet there for Eight Pounds and wheeled it home rolled up and tied to my bicycle! Didn't it become Tesco's?

*By Ron Cave*  
*On 08/04/2013*

Does anyone at all have any memories further back In or around the 1920's My grandmother had a small tea room in Dagnall St over the door was her name G Harrop ?

*By Sheila Poole*  
*On 01/08/2013*

Does anybody remember buttlers the butchers and tesco carpets where i worked does anybody remember tucks garage in fleetville where i also worked

*By Ken bunney*  
*On 20/08/2013*

Referring to two comments. The first Tesco's was built on the site of Butlers (butchers), a 17th (or earlier) timber-framed building regrettably demolished in the 60s (?). Butler's still operate at the rear of the premises. I am confused about a reference to Marsh Corn Stores "nr St Peter's church not far from the hospital"

*By G.McSweeney*  
*On 31/01/2014*

Yes I remember Butlers my dad work for them for years he also ran the shop at the quadrant in Marshalswick .His name was Ron Bolton .

*By Julia Davies*  
*On 17/05/2014*

How about The Pilgrim's Rest at the Top of Holywell Hill? I remember the Pamphillons, they had a house with a turret in Harpenden. Or The Lucky Black Cat Cafe. And the Old Post Office, which was Ryder's Seed Hall, all in Holywell Hill

*By Trudi litaunieks*  
*On 07/11/2016*

does anyone remember where the old Sainsbury referred to above was?

*By Isabel*  
*On 11/11/2016*

I remember the old style Sainsbury's in St Peter's Street - near to where Boots is now (or was last time I was there). It was one where you had to queue for separate counters rather than self-service. This was in the late 60s and I think it changed soon after that.

*By Amber Swift*  
*On 11/12/2016*

I remember the original Sainsbury's it used to have a butter counter where they used to use wooden paddles to turn it into blocks. It was very near the first Tesco

My family had the building company in Culver Road which started in 1900

*By Paul Dumpleton*  
*On 05/01/2017*

Does anyone remember a restaurant called Bugler's (not sure of spelling). It was in Market Place on the left-hand side going towards St Peters Street. I seem to remember it was a two or three storey building. The waitresses all wore black dresses with white pinnifores and caps and afternoon tea was served in bone china cups and the cakes were served on cake stands. My auntie took my mother and me there on Friday afternoons for a treat. It all seemed very grand to a seven year old girl.

*Editors comment: We have ascertained from Kelly's directories that Buglers occupied 25 Market Place from before 1914 to at least 1946. They were described in the directories as confectioners, and were not recorded in the 1958 directory.*

*By Jennifer Bull nee Shrewsbury*  
*On 11/02/2017*

Lived in Marshalswick in the early sixties went to Wheatfields School but we moved in 67. Remember youngsters toy shop at the top of the town and couldn't pass without going in with my parents, also remember the smell of fresh roast coffee from a shop near Simmons the bakers who I think are still in business. Visited the town recently and wonder if any of my old school friends still live in the town particularly Michael Doig and Patricia Dunn...zsoon be retired now! I Howard Goode..happy days!

*By howard goode*  
*On 25/10/2017*

Referring back to Julia Davies' comment on 17/5/2014. My Dad also worked at Butler's Butchers on The Quadrant. I remember Ron Bolton. I was in Julia's class at Wheatfields school. Am I right in thinking she had a sister called Sheila? She may not see this as her comment was almost 4 years ago. Anyway "Hi" from Steve Bradstreet.

*By steve bradstreet*  
*On 21/01/2018*

I think that this is a wonderful page with great recollections of what was once a vibrant city with many employment opportunities and low crime rate which sadly is not the case today.

*By Eric Budworth*  
*On 26/01/2018*

Just found this page and how much fun is this. I lived on Marshalswick Lane from 1962 until 1979. My dad had a dental surgery at number 66. I used to shop at The Quadrant and was thinking of all the old stores. Thrale's Bakery, Wright's Grocers, Hartsock's fishmongers, Norbury's Fruit and Veg, Victoria Wine, Blindell's Shoes, Josephine's Sweets and Newsagent, Chemist...?, Marshalswick Furniture, The Wool Shop, Kingstons Bucher, another Baker, Pearks, Bishops, Butler's Butcher, Gerrards Greengrocer, Alicia Women's Clothes, Eastman Cleaners, Andrews Menswear, Eastern Electricity. Something De Paris Women's Hairdresser, Drummonds Toyshop, Allen Hardware, Barclay's Bank.....any other memories??

*By Sally Dickinson*  
*On 28/01/2018*

Does anyone recall a grocery shop in Veralum Road, in the late 1950's, run by George and Betty Hewitt ? Betty was my father's sister, originally from Hertford. I myself regularly called in the seventies, to G Gentle in Fleetville. A plumbing trade counter.

*By Malcolm Turner*  
*On 13/02/2018*

I can add a little to the last request. The shop was I think, selling groceries. The building still exists, I believe, opposite the sweep into Is it, Dagnell Street. Same side as Pizza Express, going away from

George Street end of Veralum Road. Could have been 1960's rather than fifties. Mr. Hewitt passed away about yr. 2000. Family lived in Gurney Court Road. Although I am from Hertford, I have always visited S/A, went to college there for several years, and worked there as a contractor.

*By Malcolm Turner*  
*On 28/02/2018*

I lived in Hatfield Road, St Albans near Ettiennes sweet shop. My brother went to Fleetville infants and I went to Beaumont Girls School just up from Balito stocking factory. My Saturday job was at Liptons near St Christopher Place and my first full time job was at Greens Department Store just like 'are you bring served'? I remember Tesco and Sainsburys and the ABC restaurant where you could get high tea like Welsh Rarebit and a cup of tea very cheap. Fond memories!

*By Ruth Fowler (nee Saull)*  
*On 14/05/2018*

In reply to Ruth Fowler: I remember you from Sandfield School, Ruth. We were in the same class and my name then was Joan Allen. I have just read your comments about working in Green's Department Store and thought you might be interested in possibly joining St.Albans Past and Present Memories group on Facebook. We are currently discussing peoples memories of Green's. If you like nostalgia, then take a look.

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 15/05/2018*

I used to shop in the original Sainsbury's in St Peter's Street during the late 1960s, when I was first married. You could buy a whole rotisserie cooked chicken for 7s.6d, which equates to 37 pence in today's money.

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 15/05/2018*

Hi Joan I get confused with the name of the girls school. Were we changed to Beaumont when they opened Sandfield boy school to girls? My brother went to the mixed school and we had the same art teacher. Not sure about Facebook, will think about it!

*By Ruth Fowler*  
*On 16/05/2018*

I started work at 15 as a pre apprentice toolmaker for British Indicators under the rail bridge at Fleetville. Lived in Cottonmill Lane. We used to call into to the cafe on the Hatfield Road opposite the Ballito stocking factory on a Friday for fish and chips. I had a crush on the owners daughter who served us. Also saw Duke de Monde and the Barron Knights on Saturday nights at Ballito's. Peter Head

*By Peter Head*  
*On 26/05/2018*

As a further addition to the enquiry about the small shop in Veralum Road .run by the Hewett family, George Hewett ran a bonetted Jowett Bradford utility van. c1948, green I think, with side windows.

*By Malcolm Turner*  
*On 27/05/2018*

It struck me that people might recall the Hewitt children. These would be my cousins, and in their sixties now. Their names were Nicholas and Sally Hewitt.

*By Malcolm Turner*  
*On 02/07/2018*

Hi, can anybody recall a sweet shop/tobacconist located at 185 St Albans Rd. It was called Hall's as far as I know and was owned by my Nan and grandad in the 1950's. I have been searching for a long time for information about it and would love to find a photo of what it looked like in the day. Thank you in advance to anybody that can help.

*By Nichola Hall*  
*On 17/08/2018*

Can anyone tell me the name of the greengrocers/Petshop that was in Catherine Street back in late 60's/early 70's?

*Editors note: Having checked with my wife, it was called Pinnock's.*

*By Carmela Vokpe*  
*On 24/08/2018*

Pinnocks was my granddads business. Happy times helping out in the shop and on the market stall ??

*By Sharon Forder*  
*On 21/09/2018*

Hi, I wondered if anyone could tell me about "The Black Cat Tea Rooms" which my mother and grandmother ran during the second world war from 1942 until 44/45.

Trudi Litaunieks mentioned it in 2016 asking if anyone remembers it.

I would love to hear from anyone who remembers it or to see any photos, as today the property looks awful. The address is 26 Holywell Hill St Albans.

Thank you.

*By Judith Smith*  
*On 05/11/2018*

can anyone tell me what the place was before Nandos many thanks xx

*By Dee*  
*On 27/11/2018*

Goodies bakers and cake shop Hatfield road just over road from Crown. Brilliant cakes, I was allowed to choose one for the weekend. Usually a coffee jap 1950's.

Dixon's in George Street for seeds, pet foods, everything gardening,

*By Diana Davies*  
*On 04/12/2018*

Hi I just wondered if anybody remembers where the jazz club was held in the late 1950s early 1960s. I'm trying to find out on behalf of my mum April Blain who worked on the switchboard at Ballitos and my dad David Field

*By Louise Wembridge*  
*On 07/01/2019*

In reply to Louise Wembridge. I remember the Jazz Club being held in the Market Hall, St Peter's Street and I used to go there during the 1960s. I also knew your mum, Avril Blain, as we lived fairly close to each other in the Camp area and I also worked at Ballito, in the typing pool, between 1963 and 1966. I wonder if Avril remembers me. She was, I believe, a friend of my neighbour Valerie Folds. My surname then was Allen.

*By Joan Johnson*  
*On 08/01/2019*

Hi Joan I will ask her. Are you on Facebook. I am - under my name please ask to friend me and I can pass your details to mum if you like ??

Is the market hall still there as I can't find it on Google!

*By Louise Wembridge*  
*On 22/01/2019*

Anne powell, I saw your comment regarding "seeby'staxi" so felt intrigued to ask my Dad as seeby is an unusual name and didn't ever remember him telling me of any family business, he said there was a company operating as Seabys, so thought this may help your search :-)

*By Louise seeby*  
*On 12/03/2019*

Anyone remember down Verulam road down from Dagnell Street as you cross over on crossing, there was a corner shop, little old lady, she sold hardware washing lines etc, some small boat parts nail screws and lots more I lived in Fishpool Street with my gran and we often went to this shop for things but I can't remember her name and the shop's name.

*By Rose martin*  
*On 26/03/2019*

These memories are marvelous. My parents Gordon & Dorothy Usher owned Ushers Bakery at 59 Catherine Street from 1968 to about 1984. I was one of 4 kids and we all at one time or another worked in the bakehouse or up front in the shop. First 2 years we all lived in the flat above the shop before my parents made enough money from the business to buy our first house in Elm Drive. From 1968 to 1972 I went to Garden Fields School across the road from the shop. Other places I remember around that time in or around Catherine St. was Shorrocks on the corner of Catherine St. and Etna Road (run by dear old Percy). where I bought all my sweets in his shop, Langs Butchers next to our shop, Heading & Watts newsagent bit further up Catherine St. on same side as our shop, The Pineapple pub next to the school (who remembers one or both of the landlord's sons being killed in a terrible car crash in the early/mid 70s?), Warwicks (or Worricks?) fish & chip shop near the St. Peters Street end of Catherine St. Another memory is my frequent visits to the Library at its original site in London Road near the St Peters St. end. I've lived in America since 1988 and I remember going back one year in the (late?) nineties to visit St St. Albans and being horrified to see the old library had gone!

*By Mark Usher*  
*On 30/03/2019*

I thought the library was in Victoria Street. It was a lovely building, children's library on the right as you went in. The Police Station a little further down in a very small terrace, opposite the Fire Station. Does anyone remember the fire in Greens?

*By Val Hayes*  
*On 12/04/2019*

So much memories while reading all the comments although i didnt live in sta Albans for long.

I moved to St Albans in 1976 and after leaving St Albans to move to London I lost my diary with all the information of all the clothing factories names i had work for whilst i studied my tailoring at ST Albans college.

Could anyone remember the swimwear company in the town closest to the Aby and any clothing factory around London Rd? Anyone know where i could get info to findout about premises factories thats been around in mid 70s? Thanks Sylvia

*By Sylvia Chin*  
*On 12/04/2019*

Hi I am searching for the Burton's branch at 1, Chequers Street the current building Hampton's did it once have a conical dome on the top of a square structure? The square structure may be one of the windows on the roof?

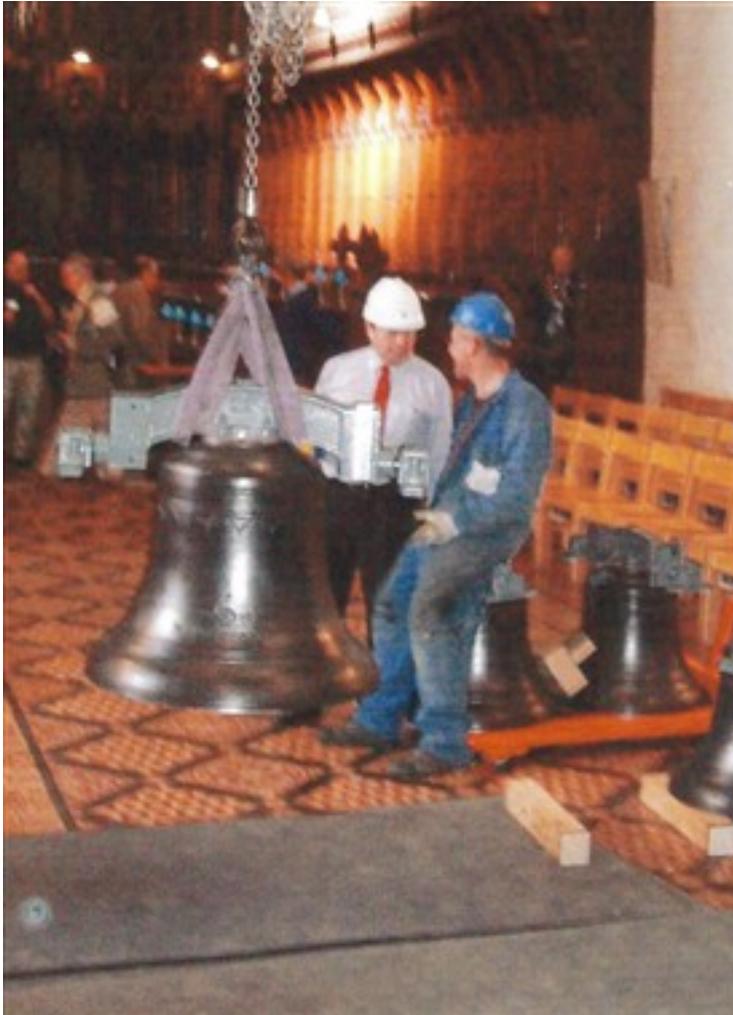
*By Dave Bean*  
*On 13/04/2019*

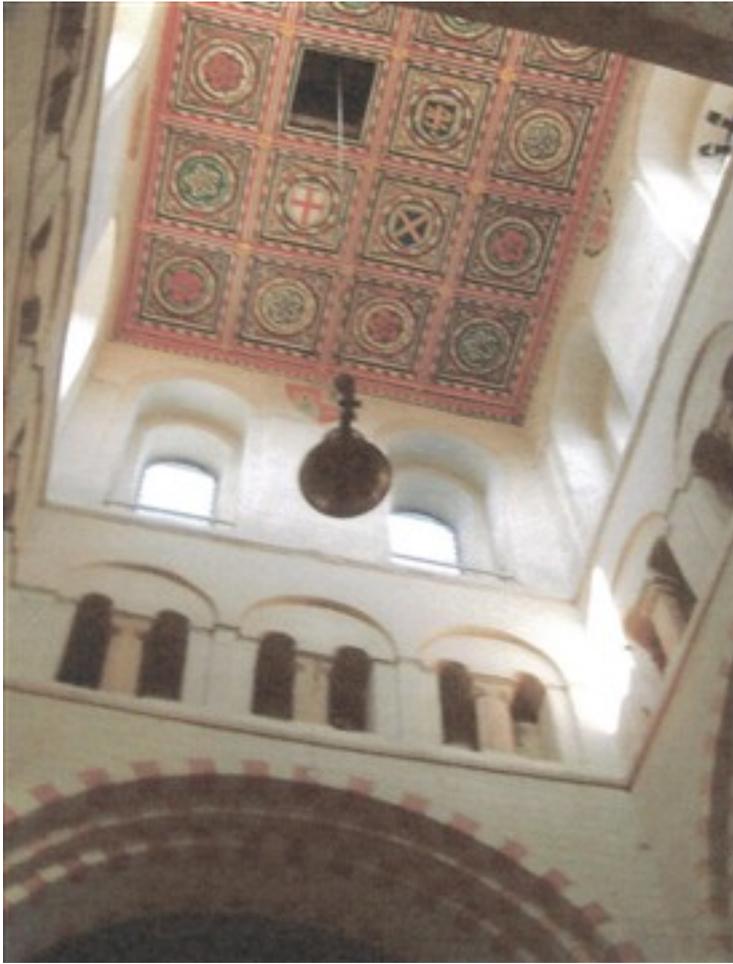
Can somebody remind me where Liptons shop used to be? My aunt worked there and I remember it being in the Market Street area. Was it where Caffé Nero is now?

*By Christopher Randall*  
*On 25/04/2019*

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## **New bells for the Abbey: Consecrated in 2010**





After more than 40 years of funding raising, the [St Albans Cathedral Society of Change Ringers](#) will soon have a new set of thirteen bells to ring. On Monday 11 October, 2010, the first bell – Jude – was hoisted from the floor under the central tower up into the belfry above the ringing chamber. A further seven bells were then hoisted during the day.

On Saturday 4 September, 2010, "The Solemn Consecration of the New Ring of Bells" was performed by the Bishop of St. Albans (The Rt. Revd. Dr. Alan Smith) before a large congregation which included the donors of the thirteen new bells, the Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire (The Countess of Verulam), people from the Diocese of St. Albans, members of the Abbey's congregation, the clergy and the Cathedral's choir, clergy, residentiary canons, the Dean and ecumenical guests.

The new "Ring of Bells" is the first for over 300 years. The new bells are tuned to E flat and include some of the metal recycled from the old bells which were taken down earlier in the year. One of the bells was donated by the Cathedral Society of Change Rings, another by the [Hertford County Association of Change-Ringers](#) as well as donors from both Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

*This page was added by [Brian Bending](#) on 21/11/2010.*

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## St Albans in the snow

Christmas 2010

photos by Sue Mann



Christmas pudding  
*Sue Mann*



St Michael's ford  
*Sue Mann*



Roman wall

*Sue Mann*

*Posted on 18/12/2010.*

[Comments about this page](#)

Thank you Sue for allowing me to see such wintry sights from the comfort of my home.

*By Michael Cooper*

*On 22/12/2010*

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## **St. Albans Music Festival: Social Guild Activity**

**By John Cox**

"The St. Albans Music Festival began in a very small way about ten years ago as part of our Saturday evening Social Guild activity. Several years later it had reached such proportions that we had to disassociate it from the life of the church, although many Tabernacle friends continued to help the Festival in many ways.

Now it has grown so big that our own schoolroom is no longer large enough to cope with the numbers competing. In a day when we deplore the lack of a right use of leisure on the part of many young people it is encouraging to know that an increasing number take an intelligent interest in music, singing, poetry, drama and other of the arts. We wish the Music Festival well in the coming years ..."

Source of information:

*Forty years ago* Marshalswick Baptist Church Magazine, 1999

recalling its inclusion of the former Tabernacle Baptist Church, Victoria Street, St. Albans, *The Messenger*, no.151, June 1959.

*Posted on 24/01/2011.*

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