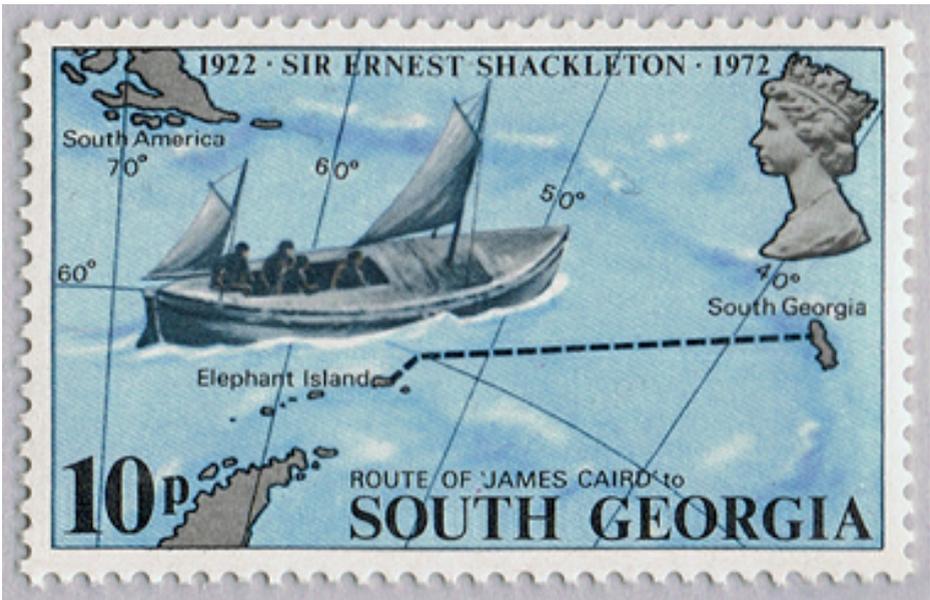




ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
Architectural & Archaeological Society

ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 206 November 2017



What has this commemorative stamp to do with St Albans? See page 22

Some of the items included in this edition

President's Message
Annual General Meeting
Clock Tower
Library

Society Visits
Museum and Gallery
Books for sale
Lecture Programme

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NEW EDITOR SOUGHT

After five years as your editor and due to other commitments, I have decided to pass the baton on after the publication of the February 2018 Newsletter (207). The Society is therefore seeking another to take over the role. Currently, I both edit the copy and prepare the Newsletter for print using basic desk top publishing software – it may be that the job can be divided into two?

If you are interested in filling this rewarding and interesting post please email me at newsed@stalbanshistory.org or Bryan Hanlon at admin@stalbanshistory.org.

John Humphreys

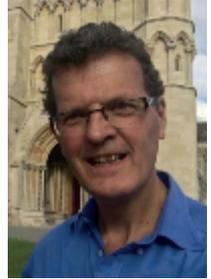
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I write this having just attended the annual civic service at St Albans Abbey in the presence of both the new Mayor and the new Lord Lieutenant for the county. Iqbal Zia is the 474th mayor of St Albans. Robert Voss is only the 27th person to have held the lieutenancy in a very similar time period. Lords Lieutenant have a greater longevity than mayors!

One is Muslim, the other is of the Jewish faith. We were in St Albans Abbey in an Anglican service presided over by Dean Jeffrey John with the Bishop of Bedford. Rather than having a traditional sermon, the Mayor's Chaplain, Imam Abdul Muhit from London Colney Islamic Centre, and the Bishop of Bedford conducted a public dialogue on Muslim and Christian interpretations of Mercy and Community. Then we all sang the National Anthem before processing out.

It could not have been a more powerful expression of diversity, completely unimaginable to our predecessors, and really rather wonderful. History is made every day in our extraordinary community. My fascinating first few weeks as President of the Society have emphasised to me what an important role we must play in tracking that

thread of history and making sure that people understand the context in which we go forward.



We have just published Chris Green's history of the Old Town Hall with its beautiful production quality and illustrations – I am hugely grateful to Pat Broad for guiding this into harbour! After a great deal of effort by our library team, our new online library catalogue has gone live – see page 10 for more details.

Dave and Gill Girdziusz' lecture programme has also had a cracking start. We've had home-grown talent – Louise Fowler was educated and brought up in St Albans, Jon Mein is of course an invaluable member of Council – and two speakers of national renown, Carenza Lewis and Christian Wolmar. So far the move of our Tuesday lectures to the Marlborough Road Methodist Church seems to have been a great success. The new venue is comfortable and accessible and has plenty of room. However, our New Year Party will, as always, be held at Verulamium Museum.

I was particularly struck by Professor Lewis's lecture. It recounted how our understanding of the impact of the Black Death has been enhanced by mobilising thousands of ordinary householders to dig trial pits (under proper supervision) on their properties and record the pottery finds, thus demonstrating the ebb and flow of population across the Eastern Region since Roman times. I would love it if we too could find a project that mobilised our wider community in a similar way.

Our light is rather hidden under a bushel! I am struck by how many people say they have never heard of the Arc & Arc and are duly astonished when I tell them about the lecture programme, the library, the clock-teers and all the projects. There is a gratifying increase in membership already this year but there is still a huge untapped market out there. We do need to think how we communicate using every kind of media. I am

setting up a Publicity Group and would be very pleased to hear of any appropriate skills among the wider membership.

In two years time we have our 175th anniversary. A small team is considering how best we mark this significant milestone. Again please come forward with your ideas – see page 5. We are looking for suggestions, big and small, from all of our wide membership.

We stand on the shoulders of giants, the Society has made an extraordinary contribution over the last 173 years. With the opportunities provided by new media, a local population amongst the most highly educated in the United Kingdom, a Council and membership brimming with knowledge and talent, it will be our fault if we don't make the most of this opportunity.

Sandy Walkington

SAHAAS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

We are very aware that new forms of social media, Facebook, Twitter and others are transforming communication and information sharing. The Society does have a presence on Facebook and Twitter but we need to be cleverer in reaching out to people who are not looking for us. We would welcome someone to lead this, please contact Sandy by email (chair@stalbanshistory.org).

175TH ANNIVERSARY

As many of you will be aware, it will be our 175th anniversary in 2020 and your Council feels that this should be celebrated in due fashion – the question is how? A ‘steering group’ (currently Sandy Walkington, Peter Burley, Helen Bishop, David Moore, Pat Broad, and Bryan Hanlon) will coordinate the implementation of any projects that we undertake, but we need suggestions as to what we shall be doing.

2020 may seem a long time away, but it is now little more than two years and we all know that projects can take a great deal of time and effort before they bear fruit. We do have some initial ideas but with over 500 members within our Society, we believe that there will be a good number of suggestions that can be put forward so, please, start thinking now.

Please send your ideas to:

Bryan Hanlon
24 Monks Horton Way
St Albans
AL1 4HA
Tel: 01727-851734
email: admin@stalbanhistory.org

Closing date: 31st December 2017 – or of course earlier!

**Bryan Hanlon
Hon. Secretary**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

The Annual General Meeting was held on 12th September 2017 at Marlborough Road Methodist Church. Eighty seven members attended.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Doreen Bratby, Jenny Burley, Romaine Byers, Caroline Howkins, Rosemary Knight, Andy Lawrence, Ian Martin, Alison Metcalfe, Beryl and Donald Munro and David Smith.
2. Helen Bishop, President 2014-2017 welcomed members to the new venue for Tuesday meetings, Marlborough Road Methodist Church, and thanked the Church for having us. She referred to the achievements of the Society over the past few years: publishing two books, moving its library to Sandridge Gate and fund raising for the New Museum and Gallery. Her speech was met with applause.
3. Election of President for 2017-2020. Bryan Hanlon referred to the August Newsletter where Council recommended Sandy Walkington as the next President. There being no comments from the floor, Bryan Hanlon proposed and Pat Howe seconded that Sandy Walkington be President of the Society. All members present voted in favour and Sandy was duly elected. He then spoke a few words on his pleasure at being elected, and the future challenges for the Society.
4. On behalf of Council, Sandy Walkington made a small presentation to Helen Bishop and thanked her for all her hard work for the Society. Geraint John, President of the St Albans Civic Society, also made a short speech thanking Helen for her work over the past three years, and her cooperation with the Civic Society.
5. Minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2016 had been circulated. Their adoption was proposed by John Cox and seconded by Jane Gardiner and agreed unanimously.6. Accounts for the year ended 31st May 2017 had been circulated. Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Helen Bishop and seconded by Gill Girdziusz and agreed unanimously.

7. Subscription Levels: The Treasurer referred to the August Newsletter where the reasons for increasing the subscription had been set out. After some discussion, Roy Bratby proposed and Roderick Douglas seconded that the annual subscription be increased to £20 for a single membership, £30 for a joint or family membership and £10 for students, with effect from 1 June 2018. This was agreed unanimously.
8. Reports from groups had been published in the Newsletter. Adoption of the reports was proposed by Ann Hobson and seconded by Jane Gardiner and agreed unanimously.
9. Honorary Membership: It was proposed by David Girdziusz and seconded by Peter Burley that Doreen and Roy Bratby be elected as Honorary Members of the Society, in recognition of their many years service for the Society, particularly in organising the lecture programme. The motion was carried unanimously and Doreen and Roy duly elected.
10. Election of members of Council: The following members were elected en bloc, having been proposed by David Lasky and seconded by Anthony Oliver and agreed unanimously.

Bryan Hanlon	Secretary
David Moore	Treasurer
Pat Broad	Publications Officer
Mike Carey	Clock Tower (jointly with Caroline Howkins)
John Cox	Publicity Officer
Maggy Douglas	Minutes Secretary
Roderick Douglas	Website
David Girdziusz	Chairman, Programme Development Committee
Gill Girdziusz	Lecture Secretary
Pat Howe	17th Century Research Group
Caroline Howkins	Clock Tower (jointly with Mike Carey)
John Humphreys	Newsletter Editor
Frank Iddiols	Technical Assistance

Christine McDermott	Hertfordshire Archaeology and History
Jon Mein	First World War Project Group
Roger Miles	Archaeology Group
Donald Munro	Library
David Smith	Membership Secretary

11. Election of an Independent Examiner: The election of Mr Chris Hall as Independent Examiner of the accounts was agreed unanimously.

The meeting was followed by a talk on *Doctors, Dissection and Resurrection Men* by Louise Fowler.

Bryan Hanlon
Hon. Secretary

MEMBERSHIP

The Society welcomes the following new members:

Stephen Irwin & Deborah Spring	Radlett
Mr Giles Harrison	Chiswell Green
Mrs Amanda James	St Albans
Mr Andrew Johnstone	St Albans
Mrs Janet Lynch	St Albans
Dr Trevor Roberts	St Albans
Dr Martyn & Mrs Jenny Stroud	St Albans
Francesca Weal	Welwyn
Dr Robert James Wiggins	Northchurch
Elaine and Martin Hudson	Croxley Green,

David Smith
Membership Secretary

PUBLICATIONS REPORT

Our public launch of *The Old Town Hall, St Albans* took place at Waterstones on Saturday 2 September in the form of a book-signing event. The response was excellent, with many customers spending a few minutes talking to Chris Green about his book. One customer said that she had known nothing about the book until she saw the publicity display in the window, and came in and bought a copy. Traditional publicity still works! We were delighted that Cllr Annie Brewster came along to congratulate Chris personally on his achievement.

A second successful book-signing event took place ten days later at the AGM, held at Marlborough Road

Methodist Church. Since then, we have been out and about at other events to promote and sell the book. These included the Civic Society's Awards Evening and the St Albans Local History Network conference. We have been pleased with the level of sales and thank everyone for their help and generous support.

A fresh supply of copies has just been delivered to Waterstones, in time for Christmas shoppers and hopefully will encourage more sales. The book can also be purchased at Verulamium Museum, HALS and SAHAAS Library (personal callers only) or direct from me by email:

publicationsales@stalbanhistory.org
or by phone: 01727 863340.

Pat Broad



Helen Littlewood discusses the book with the author, Chris Green

Photo. John Humphreys



Follow us on Twitter: SAHAAS@stalbanpast

LIBRARY REPORT

The library has been really quite busy with numerous visitors over the summer mainly, but not exclusively, consulting image collections. We have also had a considerable number of Internet and other queries which Tony Cooper has been very ably fielding whilst my own attention has been occupied by family, health and Soutron migration demands.

SAHAAS Library online catalogue

I am very pleased to confirm that, as announced to most of you in an eNews in mid-October, our new SAHAAS Library online catalogue is now live. This really is a significant development for the Library and for the Society. The online facility is a major step forward in terms of making our research resources accessible. SAHAAS members and the world in general can now look at our holdings from home on their personal computers or mobile devices.

You do this by going to the SAHAAS website (www.stalbanshistory.org) and clicking on the 'Library catalogue' link in the right hand column.

Matt Saxe of Soutron, who handled the migration, has been very easy to deal with and receptive of our sugges-

tions and corrections. Many thanks are due to our own group of data checkers, note-takers, and logo tweekers – Tony Cooper, Di Dunn, Susan Smith, Caroline Howkins and John Ridge – and Portal Page input and linking SAHAAS Library page upgrades from Jon Mein. Great Team!

The implementation took considerably longer than expected, but after the frustrating delays of a difficult summer it is very good to have it up and running and now widely accessible. The Library Team are now looking to organise volunteers in an active programme for tackling the wide range of resource discovery tasks awaiting attention. With the ability now to work on several machines at once, after an initial Library Team training period, we expect to make rapid progress over the next 12 months.

Library Tasks Volunteers

We already have a sizeable volunteer group but if any more of you, particularly amongst the members who have joined in the past year to 18 months, are interested in becoming involved in the work of the Library please do get in touch. We are particularly interested in hearing from members with experience of handling an automated Library system, but many of

the tasks needing attention do not require any particular experience, and there are plenty of jobs to do. Contact library@stalbanhistory.org.

We would like to hold a follow-up meeting of volunteers in November to firm up on a programme for tackling the Tasks identified in an earlier meeting last summer.

Other Library News

Frank Iddiols acquired and installed a large drop-down projector screen. It has already been used in meetings.

Malcolm Merrick continues his ever-useful work in optimising our ageing computer facilities. I would echo here our appeal for discarded but reasonably up-to-date computer equipment (see page 13). Malcolm has added further materials to our digitised image collections and, in the absence of prospects of a viable local internal network, he has put the main SAHAAS files on a portable hard drive which can be linked to any SAHAAS computer in the Library as and when required.

Sally Pearson has been busily listing and seeking to sell surplus Beardsmore stock and other library duplicates for the benefit of the

Library and the St. Albans Museum project. The stall at the AGM was very successful, and other lists will be circulated (see page 35).

Donald Munro

LIBRARY NOTES

New acquisitions

The Old Town Hall, St Albans, by Chris Green. St Albans: SAHAAS, 2017. 48pp, illus.

A detailed history of the Town Hall, from before its construction to the 21st century, describing its changing functions and alteration, generously illustrated. Our most recent publication. To obtain copies, see page 36.

[We will feature major acquisitions from the Beardsmore collection in the next *SAHAAS Newsletter*. DM]

Recent journal articles

In *The Alban Link*, no 87, Autumn 2017 Pp 4-8. "The Abbey's air raid precautions in World War 2", by Sheila Green.

Pp 9-13. "An Abbey parishioner travels back in time", by Peter Godwin.

The author explores how a 15th century parishioner would have experienced worship in St Andrew's Chapel and in the Abbey nave.

In *Herts Past and Present* Autumn 2017 Pp 2-7. "A happy people': a study from the early years of Letchworth Garden City", by Philippa Parker.

Julia Reckitt, a philanthropist, Sarah Birch, an artist, and Hope Rea were early residents of Letchworth, inspired by the ideals of Ebenezer Howard. Their lives, closely connected, cast light on the social life of the young garden city.

Pp 8-9. "Barnet Battlefield Survey: the story so far", by Phillip Sheail.

An account of the archaeological survey attempting to identify the location of the battle, long a matter of dispute.

Pp 10-18. "A singular friendship: a study of the letters from Charles Darwin to Sir Edward Lytton", by Jeanette Kruger.

The two writers exchanged letters for 30 years, which provide interesting insights into their curious friendship, each coming from such different social worlds.

Pp 20-26. "Exploring the medieval fields of Wheathampstead, c. 1315", by Mike Smith.

It is rarely possible to identify the medieval geography of a location with any confidence, but Wheathampstead is an exception. Using documents and

fieldwork, the author has been able to locate its medieval landscape.

SIR JOHN EVANS:

Most eminent of the Society's early luminaries

John Humphreys' interesting article on Sir John Evans in the August Newsletter has whetted appetites among our readers to know more about him. We have in the library a substantial biography by Arthur MacGregor, *Sir John Evans 1823-1908: commerce and natural science in the age of Darwin* (Ashmolean Museum, 2008), and some of his own publications which reflect his wide range of interests and expertise. He was a Fellow of both the Royal Society, and of the Royal Society of Arts, President of both the Egypt Exploration Fund and the Geological Society and for 34 years of the Numismatic Society of London, and Vice President of the Society of Antiquaries. He held many other conspicuous positions, in institutions both private and public, and in 1872 was Vice President of this Society. He formed important collections of stone and bronze implements, fossil remains, and Anglo-Saxon and English coins. Some of the implements from his collections are in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. He was a friend of Charles Darwin, and corresponded

with T H Huxley and Charles Lyell. With his friend and fellow geologist Joseph Prestwich he undertook archaeological investigations which contributed to the mid-19th century debate on the antiquity of man.

Among his works in the SAHAAS library are *The ancient stone implements, weapons and ornaments of Great Britain* published in 1872, and a number of papers by him, many on ancient coins. He delivered twelve lectures to our Society between 1848 and 1864, the texts of three of which are in the library, on coins from Verulamium, Hertfordshire tokens, and Jewish coinage. All are available for members to borrow. Some of his

lectures were published by other societies, but others from this period seem to be lost. Some of his later lectures were published in the *Transactions* once they started in 1883. He was an expert on water supply and collaborated with Joseph Prestwich in research which led to the latter's book *A geological inquiry respecting the water-bearing strata of the country around London*, published in 1851. Courtesy of the Beardsmore Gift, we now have from Evans' own library, carrying his bookplate, a handsome copy of this work bound together with several other related works by Prestwich.

Tony Cooper

COMPUTER WANTED

Do you have a newish (2-3 year old) desktop computer (Windows not Mac) that you are looking to dispose of? If so, please bear the Society's Library in mind as we are looking to replace one of our computers. Contact library@stalbanhistory.org

DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPERTISE IN OLD CLOCKS?

If so, can we interest you in looking at our small collection of photos of clocks made in St Albans in the 18th century to see what more we can learn from them? Please contact library@stalbanhistory.org

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

It was with great sadness that we learned the news of the death of Dennis Owen. From the late 1970s he was very involved with the running of the Clock Tower, becoming the Chair of the Joint Clock Tower Committee in 1981. An obituary is appended at Page 15.1.

Over the summer of 1988 a very jolly and enthusiastic Dennis was interviewed by the Editor of *Newspaper for the Blind*. I came across a recording of that interview a few months ago in the SAHAAS library and sat and listened for a full half hour to Dennis regaling the listener with story after story about the Clock Tower and revealing fact after fact.

At one point during the interview Dennis was explaining that he and an American friend of his were attempting to install a bell-rope from the Market Bell all the way from the belfry to the entrance floor. The work included drilling through the timber flooring. The following is an excerpt from the interview:

"...one evening, with an American engineer friend, I was putting this rope down, which as I said wanders all over the tower on its way down to the

ground floor and we had to drill through one of these big timbers. It was now dark and I was drilling through with a long, long, long drill to get the rope through one of these things.

We thought we had measured very carefully but unfortunately, we hadn't realised that the wall was a different thickness on the floor above and so we were just a little bit out. And, as luck would have it, I managed to hit an electrical cable and there was a great bang. I'm still alive, of course, but the whole tower went into complete darkness, you see. I then heard this voice drawling through the outer darkness somewhere, 'Well, I guess, that's time we went home.' (laughter)."

Although frail, Dennis attended the Clockateers' Party in his ninetieth year when he was thanked for all that he had done for the Clock Tower and St Albans. He, and his knowledge, will be greatly missed. It is the enthusiasm and work of the likes of Dennis Owen and Geoff Dunk in the late 1970s and 1980s that helped keep the Clock Tower open to the public. We today



Dennis Owen depicted in front of the Clock Tower

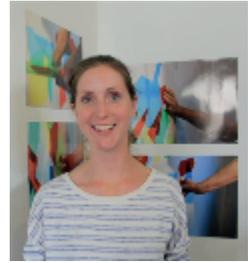
continue in their footsteps, welcoming visitors over the summer months to the tower just as they did.

2017 was another successful year: not only was the Clock Tower awarded a "Certificate of Excellence" by Trip Advisor but we also had just over 13,000 visitors, including 697 for Heritage Open Days and 784 for the Artist-in-Residence, Abi Spendlove's "Fragments" exhibition.

During Heritage Open Days the Clock Tower formed part of the Three Tower Challenge, along with St Peter's Church and the Cathedral. Participants had to climb the 93 steps to the top of the Tower, followed by the 122 steps to the roof of St Peter's Church, concluding with the 187 steps of the Cathedral. It proved to be great fun and good exercise. The successful climbers were all rewarded with a presentation of a medal at the Cathedral. The opening of the Clock Tower on the Sunday of Heritage Open Days for sunrise photography at 5.30am was not so successful though – one drunk and only one, but very keen, photographer!

Following on from the success of last year's Artist-in-Residence, the Clock Tower played host again to an exhibition by a local artist. Abi Spendlove's exhibition, "Fragments" (see photo)

at the end of September, was an interesting and beautiful display inspired by fragments of glass found in the Museum's



collection. Abi created an installation that ran for five days and was housed in the entrance room and on the first floor of the Clock Tower and played with light and colour. It was well attended both by local residents and numerous members of the artist's family.

It is with joy and great relief that the Tower clock was finally repaired a few days before the end of the season. Better late than never - but at least it should be working for the countdown to the switching on of the Christmas lights, on Sunday, 26 November. The Clock Tower will be open for the afternoon from 2pm until 6pm during which time the St Albans Christmas Lights will be officially turned on.

As always, Mike and I would like to thank all the Clockateers for giving their time to keep the Clock Tower open for the public to enjoy.

Caroline Howkins & Mike Carey

DENNIS OWEN 1923 - 2017

Dennis cared deeply for our city, its architecture and heritage. He and his late wife, Margaret, featured in many aspects of St Albans' life. With Geoffrey Trevelyan, Bernard Cox, George Atkinson and others, he supported institutions and causes which shared his concerns. Throughout his time in St Albans he was a member of our Society and a long serving Clockateer. He was, also, a member and Chair of the St Albans Civic Society and served a term as a Labour Councillor.

Dennis, the son of a London taxi driver, was born in 1923 and while at Durham University was a member of the Officer Training Corps. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1943, trained in South Africa and spent the war patrolling the skies over Egypt and Italy in his beloved Spitfire.

Dennis and Margaret were married in 1947 and in 1956, they bought a house in Woodstock Road North following a long wish to live in St Albans. In 1959, Dennis was sent to Trinidad to work as the architect in charge of a hospital building programme and the family lived there for two years.

His friend, Bernard Cox, had bought the Old Crow in Fishpool Street and was intent on saving the street from destruction, and perhaps it is no coincidence that in 1973 the Owens moved next door to number

13 with their two daughters.

He was disappointed that St Albans did not show off its heritage but concentrated on

the few centuries of the Roman occupation and he felt the small museum in Hatfield Road was inadequate. In 2007 he gathered together like-minded colleagues from both the Arc and Arc and Civic Society and began his successful campaign "A new Museum for St Albans" subtitled "the legacy of the City's history reborn". Unfortunately, he will not be with us to celebrate the opening of the new museum and gallery next summer.

A gifted artist (his painting of the Abbey at Christmas remains a best-selling Christmas card each year), a potter and researcher. His interest in all things regarding the city and its heritage was infinite., a correspondent and author, and very proud of his house at Number 13 (See Newsletter 192 page 16) to which he invited not only his friends but anyone who showed an interest was taken on a guided tour.

His passing at the age of 94 on 25th August is a sad loss for our City his family and many friends.



John Humphreys

VISIT TO SAMUEL PEPYS LIBRARY CAMBRIDGE

On a beautiful October day, 25 explorers ventured to Magdalene College to see the Samuel Pepys Library. We were greeted by the Librarian, Jane Hughes, who proved to be a most knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide and who clearly loved sharing her work with us.

Initially we were introduced to the Inner Court of Magdalene College, which opened in 1428 and is a beautiful medieval building. In the dining hall we were told that dinner is served every term time evening by candlelight as the college has, by choice, not installed electricity. Going through to the second court we were faced with the impressive neo-classical Pepys Library building; its colonnade graced with stunning hanging baskets which took our breath away.

The Library itself is housed on the first floor of the Pepys building and consists of three thousand books in twelve magnificent bookcases designed by Pepys himself and constructed by ship's carpenters. The first bookcase is reputed to be the earliest of its kind to be glazed. Each bookcase was numbered at the top in gold leaf. Pepys had no idea

at that stage that he would go on to order eleven more. All are virtually identical and are staged internally in the same way. The lowest portion of the bookcase door was designed to slide upwards to avoid obstructions at floor level and housed the largest books.

The bookcases were made from Austrian Red Oak which could be carved more deeply and ornately. Pepys would arrange books from sales in order of size so that each row was symmetrical throughout the twelve cases. Every book would include his portrait at the front and the back. His albums of manuscripts were compiled from medieval tomes from which he would cut and paste items of interest. Post Dissolution, manuscripts were frequently disregarded and recycled in bindings. It was not until the later sixteenth century that collectors began to preserve them. Amongst the Library's treasures are 60 medieval manuscripts, collections of prints, ballads, maps and calligraphy. We were amazed at the tiny, perfect calligraphy.

Of particular interest to us was a small book printed in 1486 by one 'school-master printer of St Albans' on the third printing press in the country. Although some controversy surrounds Dame

Juliana Berners as author of the “Boke of St Albans”, she does seem to have been an historical person and Prioress of Sopwell Nunnery later in her life, having spent her early years at Court where she would have learnt about hunting, hawking and arms, which are the subjects of the Boke.

Amongst its many treasures the Library includes six original bound manuscripts of Pepys’ famous diaries. These were written between 1660 and 1669 in Skelton’s shorthand and not in code as originally imagined.

An early sketch of the Library shows a unique ‘partner’ desk for two persons to share. Its large flat top enabled maps and charts to be rolled out. One, such, the ‘Anthony Roll’, lists the “ships of the line”. In 1546 Pepys, however, when Secretary to the Admiralty, had the Roll cut up and bound in

book form. It includes a beautiful coloured illustration of the Mary Rose.

Pepys was a lifelong bibliophile who carefully nurtured, catalogued and indexed his large collections. It is one of the most important surviving seventeenth century private libraries. In his time he was a Member of Parliament, President of the Royal Society and Secretary to the Admiralty. His bequest to Magdalene College stipulated that none of his books “may be sold or added to” which makes this library unique and of special interest to us all.

After the very enjoyable tour we were given free time to enjoy a leisurely lunch and the treasures of Cambridge itself. Our thanks to Pat Howe for organising a very memorable day out.

Teresa Wood

PLANNED COACH OUTING TO COLCHESTER

We are planning a coach trip on 1 May, 2018, to what is claimed to be the oldest recorded town in Britain: Colchester. As well as enjoying Iron-age and Celtic history, it was, for a time, the capital of Roman Britain. We do not have an itinerary yet but will plan for a tour guide with visits to historic sites and museums during the day.

If you would like to register an interest, please reply by email to: tony@tonyberk.com

Tony Berk

NEW MUSEUM AND GALLERY SITE VISIT

On 24th October, inside the old Town Hall for the first time since it closed its doors in November 2015, our party of four, plus Mike Gray and Caroline Eldred from the Trust and Museum Manager, Kate Warren, assembled. Once we had been kitted out with protective boots, gloves, hard hats and high visibility jackets, Robbie Hazelhurst, the site project manager, led us into the building to begin our tour.

The first impression was of space. The basement area includes a new gallery providing 180 square metres of exhibition space. This maximising of space continues throughout the site with light and airy galleries created above ground level and, unlike the old Hatfield Road Museum, has level access throughout. A lift with a capacity for up to seven passengers will make the whole of the building, from the basement to the roof galleries, accessible

to the elderly or disabled, although the original staircase remains.

Everywhere, workers were busy plastering, wiring, plumbing and painting, skilfully utilising their many trades to breathe life back into this old and much-loved building. Two pillars which had previously been covered over have been revealed and cleaned. Notices throughout the site advise workmen that this is a listed building and that care must be taken.

From the entrance hall, which will house a visitor information centre, gift shop and kitchen with servery, it is possible to walk to the Court Room, where visitors will be able to sit and enjoy a cup of coffee, or visit the learning centre. In the basement, as well as the Vault Gallery, there is access to the prisoners' cells, where old graffiti has been carefully preserved.

On the first floor light floods in through the glass walls of the connecting galleries. Views of the many roof tops of the inner



View from new glass connecting gallery on 1st Floor

Photo: John Humphreys

city give way to miles of open countryside. The Assembly Room remains intact. but with new secondary glazing on the windows and under floor heating; features which will make it comfortable for visitors to exhibitions, and events such as weddings and conferences.

This visit was reassuring. The old Town Hall has been preserved for the future and not destroyed and the Museum staff are busy preparing their first exhibitions. We

are compiling a screen show of a selection of photos we took on our tours for our members to see.

Our thanks to Mike Gray, Chairman of the Museums and Galleries Trust, for arranging the visit for two parties of four, and to Robbie, Caroline and Kate for answering our many questions.

John Humphreys

ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL DIG

Several members of the Society were interested to learn more about the recent dig at St Michael's School. Many thanks to James for providing the following short report and also to Simon West, the District Archaeologist.

"Between the 12 and 15 July 2017 Oxford Archaeology East carried out a small excavation in advance of an extension being added to the mid-19th century St Michael's Infant School in St Albans. A small north-west, south-east trench was excavated to the south-west of the school building and close to the assumed course of the Verulamium to Camulodunum (Colchester) road.

Although only 1m wide the trench was excavated to a depth of 2.2m. The lower extent of the trench provided evidence of extra-mural Roman building foundations with associated layers that contained a

late Roman coin, pottery, glass, ceramic building material and mortar. Buried soils and pits dating to the Roman period were also recorded to the north-west end of the trench.

The Roman archaeology was sealed by medieval and post-medieval layers which probably relate to the Bell inn (see SAHAAS Newsletter no. 203 p. 20) and subsequent maltings that once stood on the site. Finds of pottery, stamped clay pipe and large amounts of roof tile were recorded in these upper layers.

The overburden within the area of the new extension was removed to a depth of approximately 0.30m. This provided further evidence of post-medieval activity on the site in the form of truncated surfaces and dumps of possibly heated material."

James Fairbairn
Oxford Archaeology

MORE IMPROVEMENTS IN GEORGE STREET

In the previous newsletter we described improvements made to the junction of George Street and Rome-land Hill. Completed in 1814 these involved the demolition of what is now no. 16 George Street. The trustees of the local turnpike had originally proposed this work in 1792 but the then owners of no. 16 weren't willing to sell up. Rebuffed, the trustees focused instead on other issues including a problematic window at the George Inn. This is the building further up the street, next to what is currently the 'Thai Square' restaurant.

According to the trustees' minute book (HALS TP5/2), the kitchen window jutted into the street but by how much was not recorded. Assuming it was canted like those depicted on the first floor in Fig. 1, it perhaps had a projection of 2ft, maybe more.

According to our survey, the road at this point is, and was then, around 24ft wide measured from wall to wall. This was the narrowest part of the street making the window, even with that small projection, a significant impediment. In particular pedestrians would have to dodge it by walking in the increasingly busy and dangerous carriageway.

In return for replacing the protruding window Thomas Clarke, the innkeeper, asked the trustees to pay for the cost of bricking the front of the inn. Agreement was eventually reached for the ground floor only and the resulting brickwork is visible in Oldfield's drawing dating to around 1800 (Fig. 1). Clarke was following fashion.

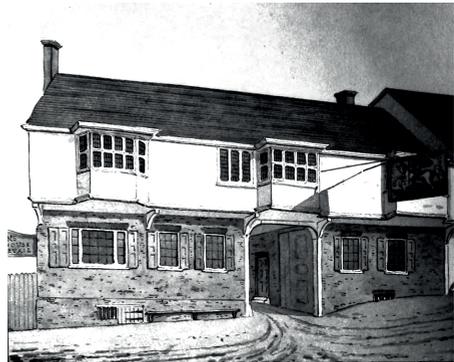


Fig. 1: the George Inn, c.1800 (Reproduced courtesy of HALS, ref. Oldfield vol. 8, p. 471)

As other Oldfield drawings demonstrate, several inns had previously been re-faced in brick to attract custom with at least an outward aspect of modernity. There are still timber-framed buildings, like the George, in the medieval core of St Albans lurking behind often impressive brick frontages.

A fully referenced version of this article is available in the Society's Library.

ST ALBANS NETWORK CONFERENCE

The Conference was held at the Verulamium Museum on 14th October. SAHAAS was represented by our Vice President, Peter Burley who reported as follows:

“We had eight full conference sessions – two of them spin-offs from the Home Front Project - and eight 5 minute “soapbox” sessions over a very full day.

We started with a comparison by Peter Burley between the very different stories of the two royal burials at the Abbey (of Humphrey Duke of Gloucester in 1447 and of Edmund Duke of Somerset in 1455).

We heard about a career in the important Fleetville coat manufacturer AJ Nicholson from Alan Cannon Jones.

Frank Brittain told us what the scouts had been doing in St Albans in the First World War, including making a feature film at Marshalswick Manor, and in which Baden-Powell took part.

Patrick McNeill told us the story of the 27 pubs in Wheathampstead from 1830 to 1915. Why did Gustard Wood need seven of them?

Kate Morris set the record straight on Ivy House, that it had been commissioned and lived in by the Rev Robert Rumney (vicar of St Stephen’s) and not Edward Strong (Wren’s master mason).

Sue Mann told us about the role of children in the First World War, especially those exempted early from full-time education, and Julie Moore presented her research on rediscovering the identities and biographies of women who contributed to the war effort but who had remained anonymous to date.

Finally, Jeff Lewis told us about the project to rescue and preserve the station at Smallford and promote the Alban Way with the tantalising prospect of a café there one day.

The soapbox sessions updated us on projects at the cathedral, the new museum and Highfield Park amongst others.

Congratulations and thanks to the Network and to the Museum for such an informative and enjoyable day.”

Peter Burley

Editor’s Note: A full report of each item on the Agenda is published on the SAHAAS web site.

SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON AND ST ALBANS

In 1914, explorer Ernest Shackleton made a third voyage to the Antarctic, planning to cross the continent via the South Pole. Early in 1915, his ship, *Endurance*, became trapped in the ice and ten months later sank, but not before Shackleton's crew abandoned the ship to live on the floating ice. In April 1916, the crew set off in three small boats, eventually reaching Elephant Island. Three days after their arrival, on the very last day before the pack ice once again, sealed them in, Shackleton, with five crew members, set sail for South Georgia in a 23-foot lifeboat, the *James Caird*, to seek help, leaving behind the remainder of the crew,

Using only a sextant and a chronometer for navigation, the six men spent 16 days, crossing 800 miles of turbulent and icy ocean, to reach South Georgia. Then, Shackleton, with two companions, trekked across the island to the whaling station. The remaining men from the *Endurance* were rescued in August 1916. Not one member of the expedition died in the South Atlantic.

The voyage of the *James Caird* from Elephant Island to South Georgia



Photograph courtesy of National Maritime Museum

remains one of the greatest journeys ever accomplished in an open boat.

Shackleton is said to have relied upon a Thomas Mercer marine chronometer, Number 5229, throughout the expedition. Mercer 5229 (photo above) is now in the possession of the National Maritime Museum.

Thomas Mercer was born in St Helens, Lancashire, in 1822 and was introduced to clock making by his grandfather. Moving to London (supposedly en-route to America) Thomas became apprenticed to John Fletcher, a well-known chronometer maker, after having seen Fletcher's work in his shop window.

In 1858 Thomas founded *Thomas Mercer Chronometers* in Clerkenwell,

and in 1874 relocated his business as Thomas Mercer & Co to Verulam Villa, a five-bedroom house at 18 Prospect Road, St Albans. As business expanded, a two-storey building was constructed in the garden to house additional workshops and machinery. The building was known as the Power House.

Ships relied upon chronometers to determine longitude. Mercer's instruments met the highest standards and Thomas Mercer & Co was contracted by the Royal Navy and commercial fleet owners to provide marine chronometers. Business was good, and in 1912 the company moved to a purpose-built factory premises on the corner of Eywood Road and St Stephen's Hill. Unused, the Power House became derelict and in 1968 was converted into housing.

Thomas Mercer & Co was family run, imaginative and prolific, a world leader in its field. Apart from over 10,000 chronometers, the company designed and manufactured instruments for customers at home and overseas; such things as telegraph tape machines, electric time keeping systems and measuring equipment. In its lifetime, Mercers manufactured 30,000 pieces of all types. As an example, all 700 clocks on the RMS Queen Elizabeth, from the captain's cabin to the cocktail bar, were Mercers.

A staff photograph of 1880 shows a workforce of 16, although much work was done by out-workers. A 1952/3 *Herts Advertiser* article 'Where St Albans goes to work' reported that Thomas Mercer & Co employed 250 workers and there were branches overseas.

In 1984, unable to compete against cheaper quartz timepieces, Thomas Mercer & Co was broken up and sold. The factory in Eywood Road/Griffiths Way was replaced with office buildings. However, the company name survived and is still trading, albeit under different ownership, making chronometers for the luxury market. (www.thomasmerc.com). In St Albans, Mercer Row, built on part of the old factory site, commemorates the name.

Recently, a Mercer chronometer was used by a Royal Navy and Royal Marines team in the *Antarctic Endurance 2016* expedition to navigate using a sextant and a chronometer alongside a modern global positioning system.

John Humphreys

References:

National Maritime Museum

Sopwell Memories

Herts Advertiser

Mercer Chronometers by Tony Mercer

ALBAN, BRITAIN'S FIRST SAINT

Update for SAHAAS Members

Many of you will have seen the archaeological work happening outside the Cathedral since December 2016. The dig is one of the first steps of our exciting Heritage Lottery Funded project, *Alban, Britain's First Saint*, which will transform the Cathedral visitor's welcome over the next few years. This project will deliver:

- A new welcome centre and cathedral entrance at the top of Sumpter Yard;
- a compelling new presentation of the story of Alban and the Cathedral;
- a wealth of interpretive materials in the Cathedral and its grounds;
- the restoration of the Shrine of St Amphibalus;
- a refreshed programme of events and activities to engage new visitors;
- a new learning space for children, families and adults in the Chapter House;
- new opportunities for volunteers to take part in their heritage;
- new improved facilities including new toilets, new retail space and refurbished and more accessible café;



Canterbury Archaeological Trust team at work

- Improved physical access throughout the Cathedral.

Archaeological work began last year when the team from Canterbury Archaeological Trust, under the guidance of Cathedral Archaeologist Prof Martin Biddle, performed a dig on the site of the new Welcome Centre. The purpose of this initial dig was to discover as much as possible about what lies there, to ensure that the archaeology is not damaged or disturbed by the building of the new Welcome Centre, and vice versa. They dug a series of trenches that brought to light an incredible amount of 20th century services as well as a good number of burials from the post-reformation parish graveyard. As many of these burials were closer to the surface than expected, it was decided that a full site excavation was needed in order

to remove and reinter these burials in the North Churchyard.

The second and full site excavation began this summer and work will continue for the next month. Most of the graves uncovered date from the 1750-1850s when the site served as the parish graveyard and they represent the full range of the town population from infants to elderly people. Some of the artefacts found dating to this period include a decorated clay pipe, ornate coffins with metal plates on top, and several coins. These items have been used as educational objects, which the team has been happy to share in conversation with visitors and over 400 school children. Earlier burials are also being uncovered; a 13th century grave was found recently and they hope to find Norman and Roman burials as work continues.

Another exciting aspect of the current dig is the uncovering of original Norman apse ended chapels projecting from the east side of the south transept. These were demolished in the 13th century and replaced by a large rectangular building. There is no existing record of this building anywhere but it may have been part of the Abbot's Quarter. The archaeologists are very excited about the opportunity to learn more about this

structure and the large apse ended Norman chapels as the dig continues. In a recent interview with archaeologist Ross Lane, he explains what the team hope to learn by the end of the dig:

“As we're going through, we hope to add to the story of how the Cathedral was conceived, altered and ultimately used during its life to date as it fulfilled its purpose as a place of pilgrimage and worship. We hope to have evidence of some of the earliest Roman graves in order to prove just how extensive the beginning of the Christian cemetery was across the hill top (Holywell Hill). All the artefacts we recover will help bring us closer to the people who made and used them and we hope to have material from the Roman through to the most recent events to have taken place at the Cathedral.”

To keep updated on all aspects of the project (and read the complete interview with Ross Lane) you can subscribe to the Cathedral's *Alban, Britain's First Saint* blog by visiting albanbritainsfirstsaint.wordpress.com or visit the Cathedral's website.

Laura Bloom
Development Administrator
St Albans Cathedral

A FIRE ON HOLYWELL HILL IN 1653

While the risk of fire to timber-built early modern towns is well-documented, we know little about fires in St Albans. This note considers the effects of the only fire in the town for which we have any idea of scale. It occurred in 1653, the same year as the so-called 'Great Fire of Marlborough', which destroyed around 250 houses, and smaller scale events at places such as Bungay and Newmarket in Suffolk.

The House of Commons Journal for 22 August 1653 recorded "... the humble Petition of Thomas Dalton, John Burton, Samuell Sureties, Thomas Briggs, Samuell Jewell, and Margaret May, Widow, of St. Albans, in the County of Hertford, who suffered Loss by Fire ... to the Value of [£1,738]; ... Collections be made for their Relief within the Counties of Hartford, Bucks, Berks ..."

Thanks to the work of the Society's 17th century group, we can quickly identify who these petitioners were. As the plan in Fig. 1 shows, they were neighbours on the east side of Holywell Hill and four of them were inn-keepers. This was, of course, before the construction of London Road.

With around 30 inns in the town it was a competitive trade at the time. This must have compounded the fire's disruption as a threat to long-term livelihoods and it is clear from the average claim per petitioner of £290 that losses were significant.

Somewhat surprisingly then, evidence from the 1655 Abbey parish poor rate papers suggests that any disruption was short lived. All four were still occupying the same properties and none of them was in receipt of parish relief. Perhaps they never had been, instead quickly securing enough capital and credit to get, and then keep, their heads above water.

This fire was not significant in national terms. Assuming it was localised to the properties of the six petitioners, it was of a lesser magnitude than the other three fires mentioned above. Compare the damage to six properties with around 250 in Marlborough or the claim for £1,738 with £6,384 at Bungay and £2,565 at Newmarket.

That alas is as much as we know about the fire at the moment. A search of other sources has not borne fruit. The late John Smith's study of the one building still surviving in anything like its original form doesn't help. This is the Swan, otherwise no. 1 Holywell

Hill, a brick-fronted, timber-framed building. Smith noted three phases of improvement but the fire doesn't obviously tie in with these.

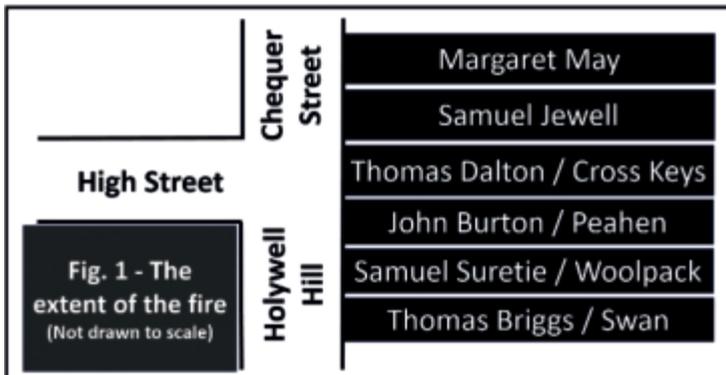
In the key source, the Borough records, there's no express indication of the fire either. But there is probably a later, oblique reference. At their meeting on 13 June 1655, around two years after the Holywell Hill incident, the Corporation agreed to the following: "Many sudden fires having hap-pened, to the undoing of some and great impairing of the estates of divers others, the sum of £40 was ordered to be collected by means of a rate ... for the buying of two substantial engines of brass and their carriages for the purpose of 'beating and drowning' of fires." The agreement to purchase these fire engines, at significant cost to a town the size of St Albans, points to the seriousness with which fire was now being treated

as well as the development of technology to contain it.

While we can't be certain that the 1653 Holywell Hill event was one of the 'sudden fires', the 1655 agreement marks a watershed in the history of fire service provision in the town. With the presence of an engine recorded for the first time at incidents at the Crow inn (Fishpool Street) and Christopher inn (French Row) in the late 1650s, the Corporation must have raised enough money to purchase at least one appliance. There appear to have been fire engines in the town ever since.

A fully referenced version of this article has been deposited in the Society's library. Thanks to Pat Howe, Kate Morris and Alan Smith for commenting on an earlier draft.

Jon Mein



HERTFORDSHIRE REGIMENT MEMORIAL

At 11:00sm on 31st July 2017 more than 200 Hertfordshire residents including many descendants of those who fought, were present just outside the village of Sint Juliaan (St Julien) in Belgium to unveil a new memorial, the first and only one to the Hertfordshire Regiment in the Great War outside the UK. This memorial, unveiled by Countess Verulam, Lord Lieutenant of Hertfordshire was unveiled at 11am local time, 100 years to the moment that the men of the 'Herts Guards' had attacked and reached that exact location. Over the next hour a century before, the Battalion, having been unable to make further advances, facing unbroken wire and withering machine gun fire, were forced to retire, leaving behind every single Officer and 75% of Other Ranks, killed, wounded or captured. Today the memorial stands in that spot, proudly remembering the sacrifice made by our own local men that day.

The memorial was designed, supported and paid for entirely by the people of the local community. From the incredibly generous donations of local companies, organisations, family and individuals, we were able to exceed our target of £5,000 to build



The Countess of Verulam, representing H.M. The Queen, lays a wreath after unveiling the Memorial on 31 July 2017

and maintain the memorial into the future. We would like to take this opportunity to offer our most sincere thanks to all of you who took part, in one way or another.

The memorial, which contains a dedication to the Battalion for the entire Great War, not just that one day, also contains a map and explanation of why it was placed where it was and of what happened to the Battalion that day.

For more information about the project see: www.hertsatwar.co.uk.

(Extract from article on **Herts At War Project** web site. Ed)

TOP HERITAGE EDUCATION AWARD FOR VERULAMIUM MUSEUM



We have received the following note from the Museum.

On behalf of our members. I congratulate Kate Warren and her team. Well done.

Sandy Walkington

Verulamium Museum has won a prestigious award celebrating the excellence of its heritage education programme for schools. The Sandford Award for heritage education excellence is presented annually to historic sites, museums, galleries, archives and collections. The award lasts for five years and follows an assessment of formal, curriculum-linked education opportunities offered to schools by heritage sites.

The award follows a successful judging day at Verulamium Museum earlier in the

summer. The visiting judge joined school children as they stepped back into Roman Britain for a range of engaging and informative sessions, praising the learning programme as 'inspiringly taught'. Schools travel far and wide to Verulamium Museum, from across the Eastern region to take part in its learning programme which supports History curricula. The museum also welcomes groups studying Latin and Classics and runs a lively outreach service taking artefacts into schools.

The award celebrates the dedication and teamwork of the whole museum team and they look forward to collecting the official certificate at an award ceremony at the Fashion Museum and Assembly Rooms in Bath in November.

Thank you for supporting us and spreading the good news!
Best wishes
Eleanor

Eleanor Payne

Learning and Interpretation Officer
St Albans Museums

DIGITISATION OF A BEDFORDSHIRE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bedfordshire Historical Record society is pleased to announce the completion of its pilot digitisation project. The Bedfordshire Bibliography and its three supplements, long out of print, are now available to view on the Society's website at www.bedfordshirehrs.org.uk under the 'Publications' tab. The Bibliography was an initiative of the Society in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. There is some useful material for Hertfordshire researchers.

LECTURE PROGRAMME

November 2017 - February 2018

All lectures commence at 7.45pm

Tuesday lectures will be held at Marlborough Rd Methodist Church.

Friday lectures will be held at St Albans School.

Late changes of venue will be notified on our web site and via e-news.

Tuesday 14 November

How Hertfordshire entered the Roman Empire

Dr Isobel Thompson

Late Iron Age Hertfordshire was an interesting place, with a 'friendly king' at Verulamium whose territory stood aside from the Roman invasion in AD 43 and was still in place when the new city of Londinium was founded in AD 48.

The great amount of excavated data from both places is beginning to make it possible to compare them and explore their relationship, both before and after the Boudican destruction in AD 60. This illustrates how gradual the transition was from being 'late Iron Age' to being 'Roman'; it was not until at least AD 70 that Hertfordshire could

be considered to be Romano-British in character.

Isobel worked for Ros Niblett at St Albans from 1995 to 1998, compiling the St Albans Urban Archaeological Database, and then went to the Historic Environment team at Hertfordshire County Council. She is now Historic Environment Record Officer but for the past two years has worked part-time, making it possible for her to do some research.

Friday 24 November

**Transforming historical buildings
St Albans old Town Hall**

Katherine Watts

Katherine will talk about John McAslan & Partners' approach to and implementation of plans for the transformation of historical buildings with particular reference to the refurbishment and adaptive reuse of St Albans Old Town Hall. Katherine will explain the process by which the project will showcase the rich history and heritage of St Albans while also helping to transform the building into a major cultural destination for the City.

Katherine is a Project Architect at John McAslan and Partners and is registered with RIBA, ARB, AABC and SCA. She is a specialist conservation architect with authoritative knowledge of conservation

practice and extensive experience in the alteration and repair of historic buildings. She was involved in the redevelopment of King's Cross Station for a number of years, taking the project from design development to completion, including working closely with the contractors for three years as their heritage advisor. She has been Project Architect for St Albans New Museum and Galleries since 2015.

Tuesday 5 December

Verulamium Revealed

Kris Lockyear

The Roman city of Verulamium was the third largest in Britannia. It is also the largest Roman city in Britain which does not have a modern settlement built over it. Since 2013 the *Community Archaeology Geophysics Group* has been conducting a series of surveys in the town. When Kris last spoke to the Society in March 2015 the group had completed the magnetometry survey of Verulamium Park. Since then, the group has completed the magnetometry survey of the Gorhambury side of the town, as well as undertaking Ground Penetrating Radar and Resistance surveys. This talk, after a brief lay-persons introduction to the techniques, will review these latest findings including the results of the surveys undertaken in August 2017.

Kris became interested in archaeology at the age of 10 when he visited Verulamium on a school trip. He joined the Welwyn Archaeological Society when he was 11, and excavated with Martin Biddle on the Chapter House site at the age of 13. Having undertaken a BA at Durham, an MSc in Archaeological Computing in Southampton, and then a PhD at UCL, Kris took up a post at UCL where he is now a senior lecturer. He returned to live in Hertfordshire in 2002, and was able to develop his love of the archaeology of the county. Since 2009 he has been director of the Welwyn Archaeological Society, and in 2013 he founded the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group.

Friday 5th January 2018

NEW YEAR PARTY –

7.30pm Verulamium Museum

Tuesday 9 January

180 Years of Policing in St Albans

Nik Pringle

Nik will cover the history of St Albans Borough Police (later St Albans City Police) from the foundation of the force in 1836, its amalgamation with Hertfordshire Constabulary in 1947 and its development to the present day.

After 30 years as a police officer in the Hertfordshire Constabulary Nik retired

from the force in October 2010. During his time with the police he worked in a number of roles and utilised his skills in some of the major critical incidents such as the Potters Bar and Hatfield rail disasters and the Buncefield incident. He has also been active in the Hertfordshire Constabulary Historical Society for many years and is currently working on a book about Hertfordshire murders since 1700.

Tuesday 16 January

Waterloo General

John Morewood

On 18th June 1815 Napoleon nearly won the Battle of Waterloo. However in 30 minutes his main planned attack was defeated as a result of the decisions made by one man, Major General Sir William Ponsonby, commander of the Union Brigade of British heavy cavalry. Sir William died during the French counter attack and his actions were subsequently criticised by armchair historians. No biography had been written about him and secondary works simply repeated the same accounts. John decided to produce a book to get closer to the truth. In this talk John will talk about the approach he followed to uncover Sir William's story and re-establish his

reputation. He will give hints and tips on writing your first book.

John Morewood read Modern History at Oxford University. He specialises in the 18th century, specifically the period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars and in particular the British cavalry and the Royal Navy. He is Secretary to the 500 strong Waterloo Association dedicated to increasing knowledge of the period and helping preserve the Waterloo battlefield. John lectures widely and guides historical tours. His first book "Waterloo General, the Life, Letters and mysterious death of Sir William Ponsonby 1772-1815" was nominated by Professor Andrew Roberts in The Evening Standard as one of his "Best Buys of 2016". He begins his PhD on "The Slavery Emancipation Act and the role of Lord Brougham" at the Institute of Historical Research in the autumn.

Friday 26 January

The People of St Albans and their Abbey

Professor James G Clark

The archives and manuscripts surviving from St Albans Abbey have provided a vivid picture of the medieval church and monastery and its artistic, literary and learned culture. Yet these

sources also have much to tell us about the people beyond the abbey precinct, the people of the town and the surrounding villages, who lived and died, worked and worshipped in the sight of the abbey, and whose contributions – and challenges – to the great abbey left as much of a mark on its history as the church community itself. Drawing from the pages of the richly illuminated books of benefactors, as well as other recently recovered sources, this talk will bring into focus the generations of men, women and children who shaped St Albans history from Saxon *Worlhamcaester* to the Reformation town of the sixteenth century.

James Clark is Professor of History at the University of Exeter. A medievalist, his research focuses on religious and cultural life in England between the Black Death and the Break with Rome. He has published widely on these topics and makes regular contributions to TV and Radio, including BBC Radio 4's Making History. He was historical consultant for the BBC TV series Tudor Monastery Farm (2013). His edition of the medieval chronicle The Deeds of the Abbots of St Albans will be published in 2018. He is currently completing a new history of the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

Tuesday 6 February

London Underground

Mark Pardoe

The history of the London Underground began in the 19th century with the construction of the Metropolitan Railway. Opened in 1863 using gas-lit wooden carriages hauled by steam locomotives, it was the world's first underground railway. This talk will deal with the first 120 years of the history of the Underground.

Mark was the Chief Archivist of the British Railways Board until he retired at the age of 49. Since then he has undertaken private work as a genealogist and historical researcher. Although he comes from Nottingham he has had a life-long interest in the London Underground and he has spent the last 45 years reading and researching (and forgetting) about the system.

Tuesday 13 February

The M Room Trent Park

Helen Fry

During World War Two, British Intelligence bugged the conversations of over 10,000 German Prisoners-of-War at three clandestine stately houses. Trent Park was reserved for Hitler's Generals who were housed in luxurious conditions in Sir Philip Sassoon's

former home. By the end of the war, there were 59 of them under one roof. The Generals relaxed and became unguarded in their conversations. They inadvertently began to give some of Hitler's most closely guarded secrets, including discussions about the V1, V2 and atomic bomb programme. For over 60 years the secret listeners who bugged the conversations, never spoke about their work, not even to their families. Having worked through the declassified files, historian Helen Fry sheds light on one of the little-known, but greatest deceptions of the Second World War.

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

a history of M.I.9 – Escape & Evasion in WW2.

Friday 23 February

History and Architecture of 18th century Gorhambury

Viscountess Grimston

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

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

Gill and David Girdziusz

MORE BOOKS FOR SALE

First, and most importantly, a big thank you to all members who supported the sale of surplus Hertfordshire history books at September's AGM. We raised just over £200, to be divided between the Society and the New Museum and Gallery project.

Further sorting of the Beardsmore Collection of books donated to the SAHAAS library has identified a number of volumes of biography/autobiography which are either duplicates or unrelated to the Society's work, and these too are now offered for sale. A full list of titles and prices can be found on the Society's website (www.stalbanshistory.org) but here is a brief taster.

They are an interesting mix! Not surprisingly, the majority describe the lives of people with Hertfordshire connections. The great and the good are there, of course, so Edward I, Lord Melbourne, and several members of the Lytton and Cowper families. A number of ecclesiastical characters too: Bishop Thomas Ken, Dr Thomas Fry, hymnwriter Isaac Watts, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce. Also, soldiers: Frank Rhodes, brother of Cecil, and double VC Martin Leake.

There's a scattering of works about artists, writers and musicians: singer



Book Sale on 12 September 2017

and composer Michael Balfe, artist Myles Birket Foster, playwright George Bernard Shaw, essayist Charles Lamb, and a reflection on his childhood by poet Herbert Palmer. A good number are about women's lives, for example: Emily Davies, co-founder of Girton College; author Mary Carbery, writing about her Victorian childhood at Childwickbury; and contemporary Victoria Glendinning reflecting on the life and death of a Quaker daughter (her great aunt).

Finally, there are a couple of quirky tales. One about Peter the Wild Boy, a feral child found by George I while hunting in Hanoverian woods, who is buried at Northchurch. And, another eighteenth-century story from the 'Library of Imposters' about the astonishing adventures of John Daniel – not sure how much truth there is in this one!

Sally Pearson

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The Old Town Hall, St Albans

Chris Green

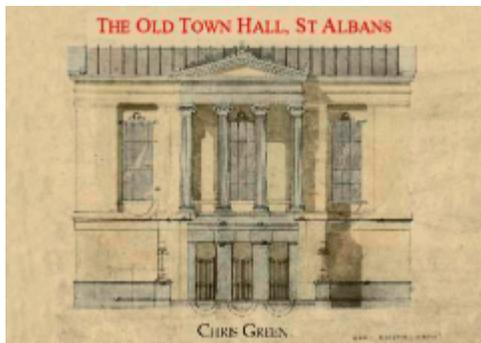
'A truly wonderful book clearly reflects Chris Green's great passion for the Town Hall ... It is a fascinating read,'

Cllr Annie Brewster, SADC

This short illustrated book charts the architectural history and past uses of St Albans iconic old Town Hall since its construction in 1832.

SAHAAS, September 2017

£6.99 (£6 to members)



Support SAHAAS with a book for yourself or the historian in your family

St Albans: Life on the Home Front 1914-1918

Jonathan Mein, Anne Wares and Sue Mann

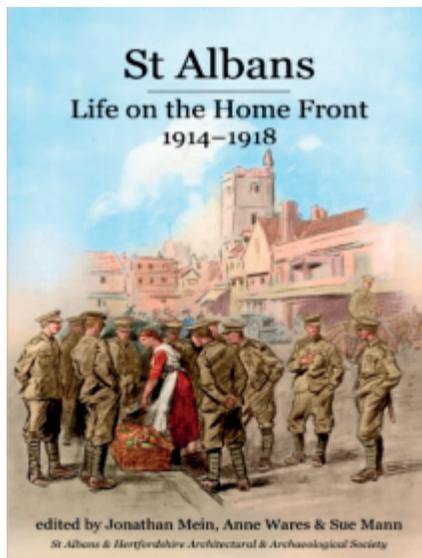
'Local historians wishing to tell the story of their area in wartime will be inspired.'

Herts Past and Present

This book explores what life was like for the people of St Albans during the First World War.

UH Press

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