



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
Architectural & Archaeological Society

ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 208

May 2018



Oaklands Brick Works, 1930s. See page 24
(SAHAAS Arthur Allen Collection)

SOME OF THE ITEMS INCLUDED IN THIS EDITION

The state of the Roman walls

Trip to Blenheim Palace

A century of a nursery garden

Summer social

Annual General Meeting

The Museum's first Director

Water tank on Bernards Heath

Recent planning reports

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This newsletter is under new management. John Humphreys has handed over the reins to Jon Mein. I want to pay tribute to John, he has played a huge role in the Arc & Arc, not just his editorship of the newsletter which he transformed, but also creating a project planning tool for the Society's Council and being one of the visionaries for the new Museum and Art Gallery.

We are not losing his wisdom as the main story in the Newsletter about the Roman walls bears witness. And his determination (in the company of your President and Secretary) to prove the risks associated with removing the protective railings from the wall led to an impromptu and unplanned visit to Watford General (after an admirably quick response from the ambulance service). It turned out he had managed to break his wrist and fracture some ribs but by the time you read this he should be well on the road to recovery. Our grateful thanks to Dee Drinkwater for, at short notice, taking on the DTP work for this newsletter in John's absence.

As for the new Museum and Art Gallery championed by John, it



opens its doors to the public on Friday 8 June. We should be proud of the role played by the Society in raising awareness of and funding for this iconic addition to St Albans. (I am old enough to have sat

in the Old Town Hall's ground floor council chamber before the present Civic Centre was constructed!).

Our Society was responsible for the initial collection of artefacts that formed the nucleus of the then County Museum on Hatfield Road. I know that we will continue to be closely involved. We very much value our partnership with the museum service. Indeed, one of the ways we will mark our 175th anniversary in 2020 will be through an exhibition there. I particularly want to thank Helen Bishop, my predecessor as President, for her enthusiasm and hard work in making sure that the new museum saw the light of day.

In the last newsletter, I wrote about the planned Awayday of your Council to brainstorm the Society's strengths and weaknesses and how we might develop over the next few years. It was a very stimulating day and we are planning a second session to develop a more detailed strategic plan.

There will be a full report but I wanted to highlight two areas. St Albans is quite mixed demographically but that is not reflected in our Society. I think that one of the interesting untold stories about our city is the experience of different waves of immigrants: Italians and other southern Europeans coming to work in the NHS and particularly the mental hospitals; arrivals from the 'Windrush generation'; Bangladeshis coming to work at St Albans Rubber Company; and the more recent arrival of EU nationals. In the earlier cases, we will soon no longer have the benefit of talking to people about their experiences, what they found, where they worked, language issues, pursuing their religions, getting familiar food.

We also need to reinvigorate practical archaeology (though we have had some knock-out lectures during this season). Last autumn Carezza Lewis gave a fascinating description about how she mobilised local residents across the East of England to dig trial pits to track the impact of the Black Death through pottery shards. All sorts of people who never thought of themselves as archaeologists became interested and involved as a result.

Recently I visited a resident in Beech Road who was beginning the digging out of an air raid shelter in his back garden – built apparently before the Second World War in an early example of government-inspired 'Protect and Survive' (some of you reading this will remember that theatre of the absurd).

I wonder whether there is something we could do more generally about war-time remnants in St Albans, both First and Second World Wars.

If you are interested in either of these thoughts, please contact me: chair@stalbanhistory.org. Enjoy the summer when it comes.

Sandy Walkington

NEW MEMBERS

Lorraine Beck, St Albans
David Harrold, St Albans
Fabian Hiscock, Watford
Christina Hoy, St Albans
Ian Martin, St Albans
Elizabeth Sach, St Albans
Mark Sutton, St Albans
Linda & Jim Watson, St Albans

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Tuesday 11 September, with the main objectives of:

- a) Electing a new Council;
- b) Receiving a report from the Treasurer and presentation of the accounts for the financial year 2017/18;
- c) Receiving reports from the President and group leaders of the Society's activities over the past year, and our plans for the future.

After sterling work, the First World War Home Front Group is now being wound down, and therefore will no longer be represented on Council. However, we are pleased to say that Jon Mein has been nominated to remain a Council member in his new position as Newsletter Editor.

Although most members of Council (see overleaf) are willing to stand for re-election, we are sorry that

Roderick and Maggy Douglas will be leaving St Albans, probably towards the end of the year. We shall of course be most sorry to see them go. We are therefore looking for volunteers to fulfil the important roles of **webmaster** and **minutes secretary**. If you believe you could undertake these (not too onerous!) positions, please discuss with either our President, Sandy Walkington, or myself.

Also, should you wish to nominate any other member of the Society to sit on Council, please do advise me accordingly. All such nominations must be with the agreement of the nominee, in writing, and seconded by another Society member, and must be received by me before the end of July.

If you have any other items that you wish to be raised at the AGM, could I please ask you to advise me accordingly, again by the end of July.

Bryan Hanlon
Hon. Secretary

LIBRARY BOOK SALE

We are now offering a final tranche of surplus books for sale. These relate to places 'beyond Hertfordshire', mostly in the other Home Counties. A full listing is available on the Society's website. If you have any questions please email us at library@stalbanhistory.org.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

As from September 2018, the positions of *Webmaster* and *Minutes Secretary* will be vacant, and we are therefore seeking volunteers / nominations for these two positions.

Peter Burley Vice President

Bryan Hanlon Hon. Secretary

David Moore Hon. Treasurer

Patricia Broad Publications

John Cox Publicity Officer

David Girdziusz Chairman, Programme Development Committee

Gill Girdziusz Lecture Secretary

Pat Howe 17th Century Research Group

Caroline Howkins Clock Tower

Frank Iddiols Technical Officer

Jonathan Mein Newsletter Editor

Christine McDermott Representative, Herts Archaeology and History

Roger Miles Archaeology Group

Donald Munro Library

David Smith Membership Secretary

KEEPING FIT WITH THE ARC & ARC

When Maggy and Roderick Douglas leave St Albans for pastures new later in the year, we lose their important contribution to many valuable Society tasks. One of these is delivering 85 newsletters by hand to city centre addresses four times a year. This saves us around £200 a year in postal costs.

If you are interested in taking over, then do let Christine McDermott know (at hertsarch@stalbanhistory.org).

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the coming year June 2018 to May 2019 become due on 1 June 2018. The rates are:

- a) Individual members: £20
- b) The spouse or partner of a member living at the member's address: £10
- c) Children of a member and under the age of 16 living at the Member's address: Free
- d) Students aged 16 or over who provide evidence that they are in full-time further or higher education: £10

Those already paying by direct debit need take no action as payment will be collected automatically. Anyone wanting to switch to this method of payment please contact the Treasurer by e-mail for a direct debit form at money@stalbanshistory.org

For those members who pay by standing order, please remember to contact your bank asking it to amend the payment amount to their new rate from 1 June and also ensure this is the payment due date. Your bank may require 5 working days' notice to effect this change.

Payment can also be made by cheque to the Membership Secretary by post:

David Smith

SAHAAS Membership Secretary

Kestrel Lodge, 32 Sutton Mill Road, Potton, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2QB

THE VINTRY — 10 JULY 2018

A summer social event is planned for Tuesday 10 July 2018, based on research by Kate Morris into the history of the Vintry, the eighteenth century name for the stretch of our High Street from the Peahen corner as far as Waxhouse Gate. The Vintry Gardens once belonged to the house at 3 High Street, now Côte Brasserie. A three-course dinner at Côte will be preceded we hope by the opportunity to wander in the gardens and hear about their history. There will also be presentations about the house and those who have lived in it. Any profits will support the St Albans Museums and Galleries Trust. More information will follow via enews.

LIBRARY REPORT

Following the quieter Christmas period, the Library has generally been very busy over the past couple of months with numerous visitors. One particular day saw 15 people present at some time in the session.

The Library furniture has been very handsomely and helpfully enhanced by the gift of a second plans chest of nine drawers from our President's architect wife Francesca. This is very much appreciated, and enables the safer storage of maps, plans and posters.

Library Team. The appeal for additional volunteers to man the Library hours has produced four positive responses, one of whom, with Library experience, will become available after Easter. Ros Trent and David Lasky are already helping man the Library. Progress has been made in building a separate Pamphlets (as distinct from Books) sequence. The Library Team had a useful meeting considering the potential tasks on 28 February. My absence in Scotland and recent indisposition has further delayed the follow-up meeting with all library volunteers, but it will be arranged as soon as a convenient date can be found.

Library computer hardware. We do have a real and immediate problem with the second Library PC which is grinding to a halt and is close to being unusable. Its upgrading or replacement is a matter of urgency. Jon and Malcolm have been discussing options. We will wish to have approval for a replacement very early in the new financial year. Council have been forewarned and are positive about this. The Library has been asked to draw up a scheme for upgrading the IT capability to be proposed to the next Council in May

Online Catalogue training. After a spell of leave, illness and other distractions, the guidance notes have been updated and expanded and the cataloguing is gradually gathering speed. A second separate cataloguing confab session is planned.

Eileen Roberts Research Materials. Because of the weather interfering with planned visits to Redbourn, Dr Roberts' daughter has not been over for some time. I would hope that we will have obtained all we want for the Society from the collection before the next SAHAAS Council meeting in May. These materials will be valuable additions

to the strength of our Library collection.

Transcription of SAHAAS Minutes.

Further to our call for volunteers in the February *Newsletter* to transcribe the Society's minute books (1845-1914), we have recruited well. More anon.

SAHAAS Deeds Collection. Our thanks go to Susan Bellamy who has

been making very good progress in recording the deeds in SAHAAS's possession. Jon Mein has drawn up a scheme of steps towards making these available online, leading (eventually) to their being mapped into our Soutron catalogue.

Donald Munro

LIBRARY NOTES

New acquisitions

Humphry Repton in Hertfordshire: documents and landscapes. Edited by Susan Flood and Tom Williamson. Hatfield, Hertfordshire Publications, 2018. v, 283pp, illus. Researched by members of the Hertfordshire Gardens Trust to commemorate the bicentenary of Repton's death, this book provides an overview of his landscape design in the county. He was commissioned to work at Cashiobury, Panshanger, Wood Hill, Essendon, Tewin Water, Lamer House, New Barnes and Wall Hall. Repton presented his ideas and advice to clients in Red Books, and the seven relating to Hertfordshire are transcribed, and the illustrations reproduced. The character of each place, and the extent to which his proposals were

implemented are discussed. His work on other sites for which there are no Red Books are examined. (See 'Hot off the Press' p. 34.)

Recent journal articles

In *Herts Past & Present*, no 31, Spring 2018

Pp 9–16 "The Reverend Robert Rumney: an eighteenth century St Albans clergyman and his times", by Kate Morris.

This article relates the interlinking lives of the Rumney, Cox, Cole and Rochford families, all in and around St Albans and all with close connections with the clergy. New light is thrown on the early history of Ivy House, hitherto thought to be a house for entertainment rather than a family residence. Examination of Rumney's will

shows it to have been his residence as vicar of St Peter's church.

Pp 20-25 "The lost manor of Snell's Hall: the evidence for a lost medieval farmstead", by Brian Thomson.

Development proposals near Cassiobridge prompted a study of the site. This article assesses the historical evidence for Snells Hall from the Croxley manorial records, and goes on to identify its likely location.

Pp 20-29 "Pitchforks and petitioners: Hertfordshire cases in

the Court of Chivalry, 1634-40", by Alan Thomson.

The Court was set up by Charles I to hear cases involving libel, defamation and slander, particularly against gentlemen. The Court's records are now available on the *British History Online* website, and the author draws on them to describe nine cases brought by Hertfordshire claimants. St Albans figures include Sir John Jennings, John Pemberton J.P., and Sir John Garrard of Lamer Park, Wheathampstead.

Tony Cooper

COACH OUTING TO BLENHEIM PALACE

As a result of a contact between our Publicity Officer, John Cox, and the archivist at Blenheim Palace a visit has been arranged for our Society for Thursday 4 October 2018.

The coach will leave Westminster Lodge car park at 9.00 a.m. When we arrive at the Palace we will be served coffee and given a talk about the connection between the stately home and Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. This will be followed by a guided tour of the state apartments.

Participants will then be given free time for lunch after which at 2.00 p.m. we will be given an architectural tour of the exterior of the building lasting about 40 minutes.

The inclusive cost is likely to be between £32 and £35 per person depending on numbers. If you are interested, please contact Pat Howe at: pathowe777@gmail.com

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Reviving the Occasional Notes series

Some of you will already be familiar with our Occasional Notes series. For those who are not, the series was launched in the mid-1980s and coordinated by the late David Dean, a Past President of SAHAAS. One of its aims was to improve access within the Society to unpublished transcriptions, extracts, schedules and research notes by bringing them together in one series and placing them in our library for research use.

Some twenty-six Occasional Notes have been published in the series. Sadly we no longer have a complete run and of those Notes still available, a few are out of date or have been superseded. Those with continuing value include *The Fighting Cocks* by J.E.

Albrow (No. 6) and *Holywell House: St Albans* by Dr Frances Harris (No. 17). There is also an index to the 1841 Census by D.J. Dean (No.7). A complete list of the series is available in the library.

We are now seeking to re-establish the series, which has lapsed in recent years. One issue yet to be addressed is whether new contributions should be published in digital format only or whether a print version should also be available.

If you have any material that might be suitable for the Occasional Notes series and that you would like to contribute, do please get in touch with me (via email: publications@stalbanhistory.org) or Jon Mein in the library. We would be very pleased to hear from you.

Patricia Broad

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

As well as the lectures and seminars, the Society organises occasional social events and of course the annual New Year Party at Verulamium Museum. The same people have organised this over many years and feel they have done their bit! If you would like to help with future events - and have ideas for other ones - please contact our President at chair@stalbanhistory.org.

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

Like many aspects of St Albans life, there is a flow and pattern to the Clock Tower's year. It starts with the Clockateers' Party, held at the Verulamium Museum which always has an exclusive yet inviting ambiance to it in the evening when the public has left for the day. The party was very well attended this year – Jill Singer, who organized the drinks, estimated from the use of glasses that we had over 100 guests. The "thank you speeches" by our president, Sandy Walkington, the Civic Society's president, Geraint John, chairman, Tim Boatswain, and by the deputy mayor, Councillor Jamie Day were all well received. The lucky winners of this year's prize draw were Jean Taylor and Moira Seaton, each presented with a £25 M&S voucher.

In the calendar of events, the Clockateers' Party is now followed by the Herts County Council-organized, Big Weekend (24/25 March). This event is all about giving Hertfordshire residents the chance to discover – or rediscover – the array of fantastic things to see and do on their doorstep and



Tanya Thompson with her goody bag

encouraging them to spread the word about their county – be a tourist in your own home town. Despite being a dull and dank weekend, over twice as many Big Weekend ballot winners arrived at the Clock Tower than last year. In 2017 under 25 per cent of the winners came to the Clock Tower for a free, private tour, whereas this year, over 50 per cent of the winners turned up for the exclusive opening and goody bags. The first of the ballot winners to arrive, Tanya Thompson, had her photo taken with her goody bag just by the Clock Tower door. The photo was put up on the Clock Tower's Facebook page and also later published online by the *Herts Advertiser*.

As always, the Clock Tower was officially opened to the public for



Opening on Good Friday

the start of the season by the Mayor of St Albans on Good Friday. The Right Worshipful, Mayor of St Albans City and District, Councillor Mohammad Iqbal Zia officially opened the Clock Tower on the 30 March, with the 6½lb, iron, ceremonial, replica Victorian key. The Mayor was accompanied by the presidents of the Arc & Arc and the Civic Society.

Planning for the September Heritage Open Days has, unfortunately, had to be put on hold until we hear from St Albans District Council as to the exact dates that the Clock Tower will have to be closed for repairs. As the repair work will include erecting scaffolding on the exterior, the building will have to be closed due

both to health and safety reasons and required weather conditions. This cannot wait until October when the Clock Tower officially closes.

We are always looking for new volunteers to join

the roster of Clockateers. Manning the Clock Tower for one of the sessions over Saturday or Sunday with another Clockateer is a fun and interesting way to meet new people and talk to the diverse range of tourists who visit our city.

If you would like to volunteer, please do contact Mike Carey or Caroline Howkins (email clocktower@stalbahistory.org).

The Clock Tower is now open every weekend and bank holiday until mid-September, depending on the scheduling of repairs. 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**

THE STATE OF THE ROMAN WALLS

Around 270 AD the Romans constructed a wall encircling Verulamium with a total length of 3.4 km (2.25 miles). This made Verulamium the third largest walled town by area in Roman Britain. Today, the short section of the walls, and the freestanding piece known as St Germain's Block, are all that remain. Over the past ten years the wall has been, and still is, subject to vandalism. But this is not new.

A search of our Society's minutes as well as publications of the time tells us that at the end of the 19th century there was ongoing concern over the wall by members of the Arc and Arc. Writing to the *Herts Advertiser* in September 1897, Charles Henry Ashdown said 'the

Roman wall of Verulamium had in the past 10 years witnessed more destruction than in any previous decade since the Saxon period. The cheap tripper, the relic hunter and, I regret to say, the local youth, have strewn the base of the walls with debris hacked from the solid masonry in irreverent thoughtless or deliberate mischief.' However, all was not lost. 'The area of the Verulam Estate bounded by the wall had now been let to a Mr McIlwraith who had undertaken to put an *unclimbable* fence on both sides of the remains of the wall'.

In 1898, a short piece in *Middlesex & Hertfordshire Notes & Queries* thanked McIlwraith, saying 'All who take an interest in the preservation of Roman antiquities in England should be grateful. He has placed around the portions of the, till recently, rapidly disappearing remains of the Roman walls of Verulam an unclimbable fence so that the youth



VERULUM WOODS. ST. ALBANS. 119

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Gate marking the presumed entrance to McIlwraith's property c.1910 (Andy Lawrence)

and folly of St Albans will no longer be able to spend Sunday afternoons in picking or kicking to pieces one of the most interesting relics of the Roman occupation of Britain. 'However', the note continued 'another portion of the same wall, known as the St Germain's Block, is sadly in need of similar protection, towards which the Earl of Verulam has offered to contribute; there should be no difficulty in finding the money for so laudable a work.' Indeed, there was not. A fence was placed around this section and there is still one today.

Several members of the Arc and Arc spearheaded the campaign for the wall including the local artist F.G. Kitton and Ven. Archdeacon Lawrance. In October 1897 the Society's recorded its thanks to Mcllwraith. William Page FSA, as Hon. Secretary, noted 'Every archaeologist will be highly grateful to learn that at least something has been done to preserve from further destruction one of the most valuable relics of antiquity in our midst'.

The wall, thus protected by its 'unclimbable' fence, remained



**'Unclimbable fence' c.1925
(SAHAAS ES Kent collection)**

relatively secure. Further our records show that in 1964 the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works repaired and renewed the fencing.

As we know, in the autumn of 2012, the railings at ground level were removed as a 'safety measure' during the creation of a dual pedestrian and cycle path. The railings have never been replaced and the excuse given by the Planning Department of the St Albans District Council was that 'the railings along the wall at ground level had been removed to make the Roman structure more accessible to people and that this is in line with English Heritage's

policy of opening up archaeological remains of buildings to the public’.

In Newsletter 196 (May 2015) I reported on the sad state of the wall and the damage being caused following the removal of the ground-level railings. I also noted that, in 2013, after receiving complaints, the Planning Department conceded that ‘people have been climbing up onto the wall and walking along the top’ and that the ‘Council had installed railings at both ends to prevent people causing damage to it’. In fact, the railings only enclosed a very small portion of the wall at the London Gate end and most of the wall remains unprotected.

Following representations by the Arc and Arc and the Civic Society in 2014, we were told that notices would be placed upon the wall advising that the wall was historic monument and not to be climbed on and that the Police will also be taking an interest as part of Heritage Watch.

A visit to the wall on Monday 16 April by our President, the Chairman of the Civic Society and Cllr Edgar Hill confirmed not only the continuing damage to the wall



One of several access points created by determined wall walkers
(John Humphreys)

but also the inadequacy of the quantity and positioning of the signs since they were confined to the fenced area at the London Gate.

It is both the SAHAAS and the Civic Society view that, at the very least, the fencing at the base of the wall should be restored and adequate appropriate signing displayed along the whole length of the wall and thus, as our predecessors noted, ‘to preserve from further destruction one of the most valuable relics of antiquity in our midst’.

John Humphreys

ROUNDWOOD PARK SCHOOL

Over the Christmas period to the end of January, a watching brief was undertaken by Archaeology Collective at Roundwood Park School, Harpenden, ahead of laying new sports pitches.

During the course of this work a small excavation took place because of archaeological features that were uncovered. These proved to be ditches, pits, a spread of material indicating activity and four postholes, including a possible cremation, in a rectangular pattern. The type of features would imply a low status farmstead, although only part of it was uncovered. Preliminary dating suggests a date for the farmstead is later Roman,

which is unusual as many in this area start in the early period only to go out of use in the third century, possibly due to a re-organisation of the landscape at this time.

This work confirms results from a previous watching brief/excavation in 2010 by Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd on a new sports hall in the same general area. Although not currently spatially physically connected, this uncovered a substantial ditched entrance to an enclosure. The majority of the pottery from this earlier work is dated to the mid/late-3rd to mid-4th century AD.

Simon West
District Archaeologist

REVIEW OF THE SOCIETY'S HOME FRONT BOOK

Another review of the book has recently been published, this time in the *International Journal of Regional and Local History* (February 2018). The reviewer, Dr Richard Batten of Exeter University, concentrates on the material close to his own expertise, that of food production during the war. So, the chapter edited by Julie Moore and contributed to by many members of the research group, is in the spotlight.

Batten gives the chapter and the publication in general a favourable review concluding that 'Overall, this book deserves to stand out from the sheer number of books published since 2014 on individual towns and cities across the British Isles during the First World War.'

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PLIGHT OF THE HOMELESS

Research by members of the Society into the treatment of the poor and destitute in St Albans from the medieval to the immediate post-Second World War period is due to feature in an exhibition about homelessness at the city's new Museum and Gallery.

The Heritage Lottery funded Squatlife Exhibition opens on Saturday 14 July and its main focus will be a collection of previously unseen photographs of people occupying empty properties in the city in the 1980s, accompanied by oral histories and a musical soundtrack of the period.

The SAHAAS-researched historical information will feature alongside

this, providing an interesting historical perspective on the continuing plight of the destitute and homeless down the centuries.

Squatlife runs until Sunday 26 August and is the first community-focused show to feature in the new museum in the former old town hall. There will also be a community theatre production drawing on the experiences of currently homeless people, which will be performed at the Abbey Theatre on Friday 27 July.

The exhibition is produced by the St Albans Arts Team in partnership with St Albans City & District Council.

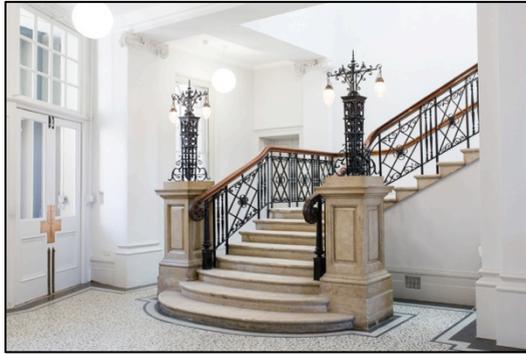
Sue Mann

THE NEW NEWSLETTER EDITOR: JON MEIN

As you may recall from the February edition, John Humphreys has retired after a 5-year stint as editor of this newsletter. I am stepping in to John's large shoes although he has agreed to carry on with the DTP work for the next few editions. No changes are planned to the format. I would like however to include more research content in the future covering all three elements of the Society's work: archaeology, architecture and local history. Clearly I can only achieve this with help from you, the members. Copy deadline for the August 2018 edition is Monday 16 July. If you wish to submit material or have any comments to make, please email me at newsed@stalbanhistory.org.

THE NEW ST ALBANS MUSEUM AND GALLERY

Doors open for the first time at the restored Town Hall on Friday 8 June 2018. An exhibition about the long history of printing in St Albans and an art display reflecting the wide scope of the museum's collections will feature from the off. Following later in the year will be touring displays from the



Staircase in the renovated Town Hall

Museum of Childhood alongside exhibitions of material from local groups like the 'Squatlife' team (*see page 18*). Keep an eye on www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk for more details of the programme.

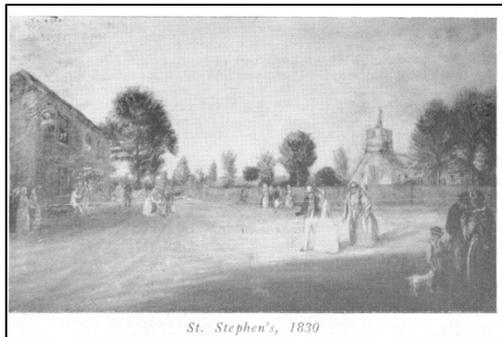
Congratulations to everyone at the museum and also the Museums and Galleries Trust.

THE KING HARRY ROUNDABOUT IN 1830

We recently came across this rather poor copy of a painting showing St Stephen's church and the King Harry pub. It is from a brief c.1960 pamphlet about the church. The authors date it to 1830.

With no attribution, we initially thought the artist was John Henry Buckingham. If it is, the published date is wrong, some time in the 1850s being more appropriate. However, after some necessarily cursory research, this appears unlikely.

Do you recognise it? If so, do let us know by contacting us via library@stalbanhistory.org.



St. Stephen's, 1830

THE WATER TANK ON BERNARDS HEATH

Within the bounds of the City of St Albans structures remaining from the Second World War are few and far between (graves and memorials excepted). Bernards Heath is the location of one in a good state of preservation.

The Heath was the site of the Ariston Company, tallow and suet manufacturers and the scene, in 1911, of what is still the largest fire to have occurred in St Albans. With the prospect at the beginning of hostilities, of bombing and in particular, incendiaries, it is not a surprise that the company should make provision for an emergency water reservoir, in the event of disruption of the public supply.

A circular, ground level, water tank of brick and concrete was erected immediately outside the main factory gates. There were similar tanks constructed throughout the country in built-up areas. Ours survives today, most probably because it is on wooded common land. It has suffered only minor damage, The Friends of Bernards Heath are currently clearing the tank of 70 years' accumulation of fly-tipping and vegetation. There



The water tank with the author providing scale

have been many and interesting finds, including an unopened bottle of champagne!

While a date of 1941 is ascribed to the tank I have not been able to get confirmation of this. It is possible that a Society member or a relative has first- or second-hand knowledge of the construction of the tank. If not that, at least a date when the tank was definitely in place/not in place. Any information will be welcomed (email archaeology@stalbahshistory.org).

Anyone supplying information leading to a reliable dating of the tank could be offered a bottle of champagne.

**Roger Miles
Archaeology Group and FoBH**

THE 'ST ALBANS LEGACY' PROJECT

A member of the Society, Andie Hill, outlines an independent project she is leading to mark the centenary of the end of fighting during the First World War.

We are running a multi-media art competition aimed at secondary school students in years 7-10, which will culminate in a three week exhibition of the finalists' work in the newly refurbished Town Hall, Museum and Gallery. The exhibition will conclude on 10 November 2018, the Saturday before the Armistice Day anniversary.

The aim of the competition is to encourage students to deepen their understanding of the social and political landscape of the present day, by studying the impact of past events on their immediate community as well as in the wider context of the world. They may wish to investigate their own family history, their school's involvement in the war, the history of the city in which they live, look at a particular section of the community or take a broader view of the conflict as a whole.

This will provide an opportunity to engage with local and national museums and archives, historical societies and other resources, with the aim of encouraging the development of independent research and presentation skills, essential for

effective and successful learning during secondary school and beyond.

The competition is open to all students, regardless of experience or ability, who wish to participate from the 20 secondary schools in the St Albans district.

Entries will be accepted in *any* creative medium, and students may work alone or in groups. Prizes will be awarded for the best three in each of the following categories, with an additional prize for the school that has shown the most overall support for its students:



- Two-dimensional: paintings, drawings, photography, collage, maps, posters, technical drawings, etc.
- Three-dimensional: sculpture, pottery, needlework, modelling, cookery, gardening, metalwork, woodwork, 3D printing, etc.
- Digital: video, photography, social media, podcast, vlog, audio recording, video game, website, etc.
- Literary: poetry, short stories, school newspapers, graphic novels, blog, etc.
- Performance: music, dance, spoken word, theatre, etc.

While this competition is based upon a historical event, the broad categories are designed to encompass all curriculum subject areas and beyond, so that students who have an interest in any subject, be it sports, cookery, needlework, engineering, ICT or science can be as expressive and creative with the resources at their disposal as those who might prefer the traditional arts and humanities subjects.

Entries will be judged on originality and expression of the chosen subject and medium, as well as the level of research shown.

Full details are available on our website www.stalbanslegacyproject.org.

MARJORIE POPE'S PLANS OF ST ALBANS

In our library we have four detailed plans of St Albans drawn to reflect the development of the town at four different phases in its history: pre-1539, early modern, 18th century and lastly 19th century. They were created in the 1960s by Marjorie Pope. We'd be delighted to know more about her.

Do any of you with long memories of the Society remember her in general and these maps in particular?

NOTE: We have five spare copies of each map apart from the 19th century plan for which we have three copies only. While they are in good condition, her material is now a bit long in the tooth but still of value. These are going free. Do email us if you would like a copy. If you do, be prepared to collect it from our library at Sandridge Gate. Contact: library@stalbanhistory.org

ST MICHAEL'S SCHOOL DIG, ST ALBANS

More than 500 hundred people attended the open day on 24 March 2018 at the school to see the archaeological features uncovered during the recent dig. We are grateful to James Fairbairn of Oxford Archaeology East for providing this short update describing the salient features of this work.

During March and early April a team from Oxford Archaeology East excavated a small area to the

south west of the existing school building in advance of the construction of a new classroom.



Queuing to see the excavation (*Frank Iddiols*)



The excavation (*Roderick Douglas*)

The excavation found the foundation of the 3rd century portico wall, a northern entrance to the Forum, part of the Basilica and Roman Watling Street. A poorly constructed late Roman or early post Roman floor was also found toward the western part of the excavation area.

Evidence was seen of subsidence beneath the floor level and along parts of the portico wall. This is thought to relate to a large Iron Age ditch that existed below the Roman settlement. Finds from the excavation included Roman building material, pottery and coins dating to the 3rd and 4th centuries.

A previous excavation overseen by Sheppard

Frere in the mid 1950s was noted on two areas of the site. This earlier excavation had found part of the Portico wall and the inscription stones that are now located in the Verulamium Museum opposite the school. These areas were re-excavated and the 1950s sections re-recorded.

A small area beneath a new classroom entrance was also excavated to the north of the school. Here evidence of a

roadside building and surfaces were recorded. Finds of tesserae and Roman pottery were discovered within these layers.

The archaeology will be preserved below the new classroom and a viewing hatch will be inserted above the Portico wall enabling the school children and visitors to see the archaeology *in situ*.

James Fairbairn
Oxford Archaeology East

THE BRICKWORKS PAINTING ON THE FRONT COVER

This image is from a painting by St Albans-born Arthur Allen (1921-2016), one of seven donated to the library by his daughter Maureen Wiesner. They depict scenes of St Albans in the 1930s, but were painted from memory after he had retired as a bus inspector. He had no training as a painter. He chose unusual subjects not often recorded in paintings or photographs, remembered from his school days and early life working on the railway, which make them interesting documents.

Notes on the back of this picture of Oaklands Brick Works tell us that it produced high-quality facing bricks, and that bricks were fired throughout the night, tended by a stoker.

The works were situated on Hill End Lane close to the point where it was crossed by the St Albans to Hatfield railway line, now the Alban Way, and were closed and demolished in 1939.

Tony Cooper

GEORGE BULLEN: FIRST DIRECTOR OF THE HERTS COUNTY MUSEUM

Although the idea of a St Albans Museum had been discussed by the Society as early as 1850, nothing was done until 1894 when a meeting was held to discuss setting up a temporary museum in the city in the hopes that people would then contribute to a more permanent one.

The idea was enthusiastically received and A E Gibbs and William Page, both members of this Society (then just 'SAAS'), were made joint secretaries of a committee to establish a museum with Henry Toulmin, Treasurer of the Society, looking after the money.

The temporary museum opened 4 July 1896 although access was limited to just Thursdays and Saturdays for the next three years, with voluntary donations requested on entry. The venture was successful and Earl Spencer generously donated the land for a permanent museum, known as the Herts County Museum, which opened 20 July 1898. The first eight curators were all Society members. One of these early curators was the Society's Librarian, George Ebsworth Bullen.



G.E. Bullen c.1914

He came from a noteworthy background. The son of Arthur Henry Bullen, an Elizabethan scholar and founder of the Shakespeare Head Press at Stratford-on-Avon, he was born 2 October 1882, in Margate. His grandfather was George Bullen, CB, one-time Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum.

When Bullen came to St Albans he already had an impressive *curriculum vitae*. From Berkhamsted School, he went to the Corporation Museum at Leicester, followed by a course at the Marine Biological Laboratory, Plymouth. From there, he went to

a similar laboratory in Jersey. He subsequently accepted an appointment as a scientific assistant on the staff of the Liverpool Free Public Museums, where he worked under Mr Montague Browne with whom he was joint author of a book on *Practical Taxidermy*.

The Society's Librarian, he started at the museum as a voluntary helper in 1903 and soon became curator of the museum and in 1918 was appointed 'Director'.

The Museum could not have done better. His obituary in the *Herts Advertiser* says

'During the long period he was in charge of the Herts County Museum, it developed amazingly and its usefulness was extended in countless directions. A new wing was added to the building and ... it underwent a complete re-organisation.'

He was a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Saddlers, local secretary for Hertfordshire of the Society of Antiquaries of London and held an appointment on the staff of the

University of London as assistant honorary curator of the Museum of Comparative Zoology. From time to time, he conducted important research into the economic aspects of certain fisheries and published scientific papers on them. He was admitted to the Freedom of the City of London on 5 May 1911.

He married Mary Jane Perkins in June 1909 in St Albans and after beginning their married life at Armlin, Worley Road, they moved to the Curator's House (known in more recent days as 'The Bungalow'). He died there on 15 March 1923 at the age of 40. He had been in poor health for some time and had had at least one heart attack but his death, due to *angina pectoris*, was unexpected. After his death his wife continued to act as Curator.

**Susan Bellamy and Anne Wares
SAHAAS First World War
Biographies Project**

Sources: Census, marriage, and probate records and Freedom of the City of London Admission Papers on the Ancestry website; Moody, Brian, 'The Museum of St Albans, a history'; Dictionary of National Biography; Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times, 17 March 1923 (obituary).

A CENTURY OF A ST ALBANS NURSERY

The growth of St Albans in the nineteenth century produced opportunities for gardeners. Richard Sprigings [d.1813] combined being publican of the King Harry opposite St Stephen's Church and a nurseryman. His son George Frederick and grandson David grew the business on land around 200 metres to the south on the Watford Road.

Business risks included too much stock, changes in fashions and late payment. Most nurseries had excess plants to sell. In autumn 1831 George put up for auction nursery stock, fruit trees, forest trees, hardy evergreens and flowering shrubs. To attract a wide range of buyers he headed the advertisement 'To Noblemen, Gentlemen, Nurserymen, and others engaged in planting'. There is an example of late payment to a competitor Watson's nursery from the Abbey Parish in 1846 three years after the invoice for:

A plant of Cedar of Lebanon – strong - Carriage and planting 12s/6d

3 Limes £1-16s.0, man planting 4s

Total £2-12-6 received 6th May 1846



Front page from David Sprigings' catalogue, late 1800s



Men at Sprigings' nursery, late 1800s

Colourful bedding became popular in the nineteenth century. Geraniums were an old favourite whereas dahlias, introduced from Mexico, were uncommon until the mid-nineteenth century. When



Miss E. Sprigings in the glasshouse late 1800s

Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and a royal party passed on their way from Cassiobury to Hatfield via St Albans in 1846 the *Hertford Mercury* reported 'on the road ... we noticed was a slight arch of laurels, ornamented with dahlias of varied hues, which was thrown across the high road adjoining Mr Sprigings' nursery'.*

Sprigings' nursery prospered as a family business. George's son Richard [b.1815], nurseryman and horticulturist, emigrated to Montreal, Canada. He laid out the plans for the Mount Royal Cemetery in 1852 and was later joined by a stepbrother William [b.1833] who became a keen member of the Montreal Horticultural Society. It was the third child, David [b.1818], who

* Family members chose Sprigings or Spriggings as their surname.



David Sprigings and family at 40 Watford Road

owned and ran the St Albans nursery in the second half of the nineteenth century. Other children and grandchildren also became gardeners.

At 67 years of age George senior was ready to retire. A sale was advertised in 1853 to dissolve the partnership (with David) and to sell the stock.

Standard and dwarf roses, fruit trees, Spruce, Scotch and Larch Firs

Evergreens: Laurels, Portugal Laurels, Arbor Vitae, Berberis, Lauristinas

Tree Box, Red Cedar, Irish and Common Yews, Holly etc

Cone-bearing plants

Pine, Cypress, Thuja, Junipers, Taxodium, Cedrus deodera, Cedar of Lebanon etc

Cedars of Lebanon were particularly popular in St Albans for their majestic shape. Many are still standing, one is to be found to the north of St Stephen's Church. The box tree is unusual, although it is found wild in the Chilterns. An example grows in the garden of St Stephen's House.

In 1883 the *St Albans Almanack* commented on the rise in population in the year and that 'plans for the erection of 114 houses had been passed by the Corporation, in addition to which 70 or 80 cottages have been built outside the City boundary'. Gardens would have needed stock. David expanded his product line to include cut flowers which were sold from the family's new florist shop at 10 Chequer Street.

When he died in 1900, his daughters Emily and Emma kept the business till 1924. By 1910 they were even advertising a gardening service 'Gardens laid out and kept in order by Day, Week, Month or Year' and all the materials necessary for a garden. From the shop in 1910: 'Cut flowers and



**Sprigings' shop at 10 Chequer Street,
c.1910**

Bouquets made to order, Memorial wreaths, Crosses etc, exquisitely made with natural or artificial flowers. Floral decorations for balls and evening parties, gents buttonholes and Dress sprays for ladies on the shortest notice.'

The photos and family history are provided courtesy of Patricia Sprigings Dominicci.

Julia Merrick

RECENT PLANNING REPORTS

Conditions are often attached to successful planning applications in the St Albans district where the application relates to areas of historic interest. Such conditions require archaeological or architectural assessments to be carried out before any development work is started. Reports of these assessments are then sent to Simon West, the District Archaeologist. Some of these reports are also published on www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk or salient details added to the Historic Environment Record (<http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway>).

Sometimes this interesting information does not reach the public domain in an easily accessible manner, unless you know the system. By including brief abstracts from them in the newsletter, our aim in this new and hopefully regular 'Recent Planning Reports' series is to highlight reports that are of particular interest. If you would like further information about any of these, please contact Simon via: simon.west@stalbans.gov.uk

Many thanks to Simon for his help with this and to the contractors for

permission to quote from their reports.

Vesta Avenue

An evaluation of land on Vesta Avenue near Watling Street revealed a series of medieval ditches that were backfilled in the 13th or 14th century. The largest is thought to have been a boundary ditch. It is also possible that the ditches were associated with a footpath that is known to have run parallel to or beneath Vesta Avenue. This is possibly a continuation of a path shown on the OS map of 1897 that ran from the site of the old gas works towards Watling Street. There was no evidence on the site of structures associated with the medieval Hospital of St Julian's, despite its close proximity. Source: KDK Archaeology Ltd (Report ref. Version 208/SAV/2.0, 2017)

Drover's Way

An excavation at Butlers Yard, Drover's Way, identified medieval and post-medieval activity. Medieval activity from the 12th/mid 14th centuries was indicated by the lower fills of large pits which are assumed to be associated with tenements fronting St Peter's Street. A large

ditch of the same period may represent a plot or field boundary.

Early post-medieval activity appears to reinforce the same land boundaries with the construction of larger ditches. Pitting continued into the post-medieval period with continual domestic dumping of cooking refuse and fuel waste. The site may also have been used for the rearing of pigs as there was a high level of juvenile animal bone present. The evidence suggests a continuum of domestic, small-scale activity associated with tenements fronting St Peter's Street from the medieval period through to 16th/17th centuries.

Later post-medieval activity is indicated by fencing which replaced the ditches. Occupation with smaller enclosed tenements was suggested by the construction of small scale brick-lined wells, possibly in enclosed back yards of an 18th-19th century date indicated by finds of glass bottles and pottery. Source: AOC Archaeology Group (Project No: 33352; 2017)

Market Place

Recording of the historic fabric exposed at 27 Market Place (currently 'Le Creuset', see photo

on back cover) has raised questions regarding the age of the building (which includes W.H. Smith's at 25 Market Place and also 2-6 Upper Dagnall Street). Though the building is no longer considered to be the medieval Moot Hall, this work raises the question as to whether the accepted dating to the third quarter of the 16th century is correct. Since this date was proposed, there have been advances in the development of typologies of decorative features as well as carpentry techniques that may give a wider date range. A date in the later 16th century is not impossible, but the features cited as evidence are now known from the later 15th century. There needs to be further work on the building as a whole to accurately elucidate its development.

A truncated bridging joist in No. 27 reveals the presence of at least 60 tree rings making this building a promising candidate for possible future tree-ring dating. Source: Archaeology Solutions Ltd (Report No: R5273; 2016).

John Ridge and Jon Mein

ARCHAEOLOGY CONFERENCE

The third *Archaeology in Hertfordshire: Recent Research* conference will be held at the Museum, Bishops Stortford on 14 July 2018. The programme includes:

- Ross Lane, *The Monks Graveyard; Finding a lost Abbot at the Abbey church and Cathedral of St Albans*
- Gary Marshall, *Unearthing a WWII legacy, discovering Ashridge's D-Day camp*
- Helen Gibson, *Hugh Myddelton and the New River*
- Caroline Baigent, Peter Baigent, Peter Alley, Ruth Halliwell, Kris Lockyear and Jim West, *From Bronze Age barrows to medieval windmills: surveys at Little Hadham*
- Richard Mortimer, *The Early Iron Age Territorial Origins of the Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire Dykes*
- Louise Bush, *Neolithic, Bronze Age and Anglo-Saxon settlement and funerary remains at Hazel End, Bishop's Stortford*
- Mark Landon, *Some thoughts on Late Iron Age coin production in Hertfordshire*
- Matthew Jones, *A Later Bronze Age - Early Iron Age Settlement and Prehistoric Precursor to Roman Ermine Street: Excavations at North Buntingford.*

Tickets will be available from the Welwyn Archaeological Society, and details will be posted on the website when they become available:
www.welwynarchaeologicalsociety.org.uk

Kris Lockyear

A REVIEW OF *ST ALBANS IN 50 BUILDINGS*

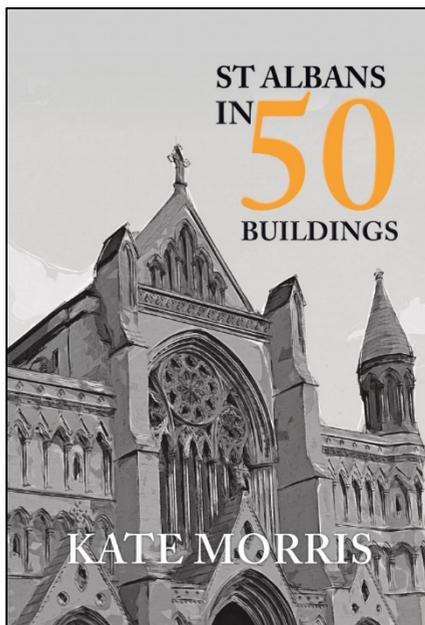
Thanks to John Cox, an aficionado of local artist F.G. Kitton, for this review of Kate Morris's new book.

Kate Morris, one of our honorary members, has compiled a book on *St Albans in 50 Buildings*, [ISBN 1-4456-0726-9, Price £14.99], one of a new series published by Amberley Publishing. Kate, who has an excellent knowledge about 18th century St Albans, provides information covering the city's construction from the building of the Roman Hypocaust to the post-war Aboyne Lodge School, the creation of the new Odyssey Cinema and the Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre.

In the chapter on "St. Albans: an eighteenth-century gentry town", Kate uses her accumulated specialist knowledge to provide information about thirteen outstanding buildings which can be found in the city-centre, from High Street which was one of the principal shopping streets to the 'grand-houses' built in Folly Lane, Holywell Hill, Romeland, and St Peter's Street. There is perhaps an over-emphasis on the retail history of High Street about shops that existed in the 1920s–1950s, but

have been replaced by more modern developments.

All the illustrations, particularly the colour photographs by Kari Langaard, are excellent. The majority of the prints and drawings reproduced from the collections belonging to St Albans Museum are well labelled with both the name and initials of the artist or engraver. There is an anomaly however, in that two drawings are labelled simply as 'Kitton'. Frederic George Kitton [1856-1904], a prolifically published illustrator and author was a SAHAAS member from 1897 until his death. He published articles in the Society's



Clock Tower and the 'Old Inns of St Albans'.

The information about 13 Market Place could be supplemented. In 1897 Jesse Boot purchased the building facing the Market Place and known as 'The Gables'. Mr Boot of Nottingham was the founder of 'Boots the Chemist'. He wanted to demolish the property

and replace it with a modern building. F.G. Kitton launched a petition and persuaded him to retain the existing building which since has been let successively to Boots, Timothy Whites, Laura Ashley and is currently occupied by Hawes, outfitters.

John G.E. Cox

HOT OFF THE PRESS!

HUMPHRY REPTON IN HERTFORDSHIRE

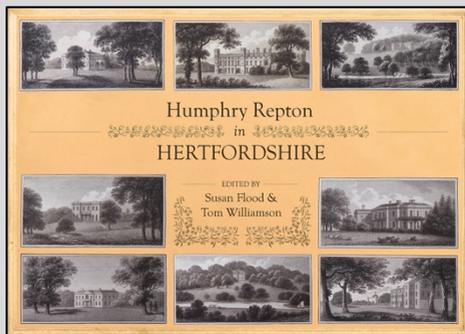
By Susan Flood and Tom Williamson (editors)

Based on research by the Herts Gardens Trust including contributions from Kate Harwood and Sally Pearson who are also members of our Society.

The book includes transcriptions of the text and reproductions of images from several of Repton's Red Books. These include Lamer House at Wheathampstead, New Barnes (better known now as the house and land around the Sopwell House Hotel) and Wall Hall.

Published by University of Hertfordshire Press under the 'Hertfordshire Publications' imprint at £25.00. Available from the publishers and also from Amazon.

We have a copy in our Library.



LECTURE PROGRAMME

Friday 1 June

Must Farm Excavation

Mark Knight

The Must Farm Bronze Age pile dwelling ('Britain's Pompeii') was built, occupied and burnt down in rapid succession. The brevity of settlement and its catastrophic end ensured exceptional preservation. Individual roundhouses with entire household inventories (pots, tool kits, textiles, wooden vessels, weapons, food remains) were preserved in the gentle sediments of a small river buried deep beneath the fens. This talk will present the context and circumstance of the excavation and attempt to come to terms with the intensity of materials and what they tell us about living in Late Bronze Age Britain.

Lectures commence at 7.45pm. Friday lectures are held at St Albans School

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

Gill and Dave Girdziusz

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE SOCIETY LECTURE PROGRAMME

Two significant changes will affect the Society's lecture programme from the start of the 2018/19 season in September.

1. All lectures will be on Tuesdays; we find Tuesday night talks attract a higher attendance than Fridays.
2. The venue for all lectures will be Marlborough Road Methodist Church, our current Tuesday night venue, so we will no longer be using the St Albans School lecture room.

No venue is perfect but the church provides easier access for members with mobility issues and is more flexible when there is a big attraction in terms of topic or speaker. It will also lessen the possibility of lectures being moved at short notice. Some people will be sad to lose the link with the school but we feel this is the right decision on balance.

GDPR – UPDATE

Either by a previous email, or by enclosure with this newsletter, you will have received a request asking you please to confirm that you are happy to receive communications from our Society by post / email / telephone / text. Could you please ensure that you reply to us soonest – if you do not do so, we shall regrettably be unable to (legally) contact you in the future, and this will therefore be the last newsletter that you will receive!

Please feel free to call me if you have any queries: 01727-851734

Bryan Hanlon
Hon. Secretary



WH Smith's and Le Creuset shops, April 2018 - see pg. 31
(Frank Iddiols)