

THE SOCIETY'S PROCEEDINGS & PUBLICATIONS 1845 - 1963

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From its beginnings the Society had to meet several needs on behalf of its members. Some were collectors of coins and miscellaneous antiquities, some ecclesiologists - church restorers often driven by religious preconceptions - and yet others local historians. All were amateurs of wide interests which, for many, embraced every aspect of antiquity and the host of exciting new prospects opened up by the rapidly developing science of archaeology; all were aware too, of the contemporary controversies relating to Gothic architecture, both about its religious significance and how it should be repaired or restored. Few sources of information were then generally available. So far as British antiquities were concerned, the *Gentleman's Magazine*, hitherto the principal source of information and the avenue of publication for the informed amateur, was in decline; a number of periodicals such as the *British Critic* published informative articles about Gothic architecture but usually from the standpoint of what was most appropriate to the religious concerns of the day; there were books, still few in number and expensive, dealing with these matters; while for one or two people in most localities fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries of London or membership of the nascent Archaeological Institute and British Archaeological Association gave access to current research. The flavour of this period when virtually nobody was engaged professionally in archaeological or historical research and very few even had specialised interests is well conveyed by Henry Nicholson's (chap 1) certificate for election to the Society of Antiquaries; he was, in the terminology of the day, 'a Gentleman well versed in the History of this and other Countries', a well-read and even learned amateur seeking to join the fellowship of others of his kind. In this situation its members looked to the newly formed Architectural Society for the most varied kinds of information, and the Society was fortunate, through its nearness to London and the membership of a few people eminent in these developing branches of knowledge, in being able to supply it. Lectures by men of national fame were frequent in the early years and, besides satisfying curiosity, provided the wider background to local researches.

How many of the early lecturers were members and how many visitors, drawn by ties of common fellowship of the London-based archaeological societies, is now impossible to know, but they included some people important in their day. Charles Boutell's chequered career (chap 2; DNB) should not obscure the fact that his five lectures in 1846 on Anglo-Norman architecture, monumental brasses and armour were based on original

work. In the same year that high level was maintained, perhaps even improved on, by the eminently respectable Matthew Holbeche Bloxam (DNB), author of *The Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture* which ran from modest beginnings in 1829 to a three-volume eleventh edition by 1882, who spoke on 'Head Crosses and other Churchyard Monumental Memorials', a topic on which he was a pioneer. The seventh of that year's lectures, 'On the Progressive Development of English Church Architecture', was given by another leading authority, Joshua Arthur Brandon (DNB), whose book, with his brother John Raphael, *Open Timber Roofs* (1849), is still a useful source. Not surprisingly, a year in which so many lectures were given by a national authority has hardly been matched since.

On 7 April the following year appeared a subject central to the Society's concerns and indeed its foundation, in the form of three papers relating the abbey to the general architectural background: J Brandon spoke from a national perspective on 'Assimilation in Gothic Architecture as exemplified in St Albans and Westminster', a speaker whose name is not recorded (no doubt Dr Nicholson) on 'Restorations and improvements', and Boutell on the suitability of the abbey for a cathedral. Archaeology in the modern sense of excavation made its appearance in 1848, when R G Lowe reported on the recently discovered Roman theatre, on the same day as did John Evans (chap 4, DNB) on the coins found at Verulamium. Nor did the Society's name preclude an interest in local history; indeed, the first address by the moving spirit in its foundation, Dr Nicholson, was on 'Sir Edward Grimston's Account of His Escape from the Bastille....' in 1559. But in the course of its history the St Albans Arch & Arch Society heard fewer papers not related to material culture than other similarly named societies or than, for example, the Sussex Archaeological Society, to the loss of local history which has always lacked a satisfactory focus and outlet.

The blend of national and international topics with local ones on which members mainly spent their energies set the pattern of the Society's indoor meetings for a long time to come, with a gradual diminution of the wider ranging papers, as archaeological discovery and theorising were published in more journals and, increasingly, in more specialised ones. In the late 1840's and 50's some eminent figures in antiquarian circles read papers. One was Nicholson's brother-in-law Thomas Leverton Donaldson (DNB), who was educated at St Albans School and became the first Professor of Architecture at University

College. He spoke on 'The Subterranean Structures of Egypt'. Also Albert Way (DNB), a wealthy amateur archaeologist who was for some years Director of the Society of Antiquaries of London and a founder member of the (Royal) Archaeological Institute, on a bone seal found in the abbey - this on the same day as Nicholson on St Alban relics in Cologne and John Evans on local tokens; while James Fergusson (DNB), a prolific writer on the architecture of India, Nineveh and Jerusalem, spoke on 'Assyrian architecture'. Not surprisingly, (Sir) George Gilbert Scott addressed the Society three times on his work in restoring the abbey, and only a few months after his death his son J Oldrid Scott spoke on the fifteenth century nave roof which was shortly to be destroyed in favour of one of steeper pitch. The author of an address on the medieval press in St Albans and its productions given in 1858 whose name is given by Society librarian Wilton Hall as Arthur Ashpital was probably the architect, collector and 'dilettante in literary work' Ashpital (DNB).

In these same years researches began to develop, with John Evans becoming a national figure in part through his local work on Roman villas and ancient coins, work which was reported to the Arch & Arch but published in national journals such as *Archaeologia* and *Numismatic Chronicle*. Then in the 1870's appear the names of two men of deservedly high reputation, the Rev Henry Fowler and Ridgway Lloyd - the first two members who, though confined to working on local matters, can be described as scholars in the field of local history and archaeology. Fowler produced a very thoroughly researched account of 'The Boundary Wall of St Alban's Monastery' and Lloyd another on the recently discovered paintings on the choir vault in the abbey, the two forming the staple of the Society's first attempt at a published journal, *The Three Papers*, in 1876. Fowler, in an obituary of Lloyd, described his method as 'cautious accuracy of statement and rigid exactness in description' (Trans 1884, ii), words equally applicable to himself.

It is an indication of the weakness of the Arch & Arch compared with, for example, the Surrey and Sussex Archaeological Societies, that it did not begin publication until long after its foundation and even then, when printing was very cheap, its lack of financial realism precluded an annual journal; for it was surely that, not helped by the first secretary's personal failings, that stultified the instruction to him to prepare Part 1, Volume 1 of the *Transactions* as soon as possible. That weakness is attributable in considerable part to the geographical division of a small county between the the St Albans-dominated west and the Hertford-dominated east, with the north part of the county looking more to Cambridge - a handicap still felt. But the Society also lacked, in its early days, the cachet acquired by some similar societies which had strong associations with the nobility and the country gentry; this, despite Bye-law No 1 of the Constitution: 'that any Peer of the Realm, or any of their Lordships the Bishops, who may signify their desire to become members of the Society, be placed upon the list of Patrons, without ballot'. Although for example the Marquess of Salisbury was a Patron he does not appear

to have attended meetings or played any part in the Society's activities. Nor did there exist the cachet of learning, whether of the classical or religious kind provided by a cathedral chapter, or scientific, such as might emerge among industrialists and their professional staffs. These factors also combined to make the actual and potential membership small. Growth was slow, so that by 1888 Ordinary and Life Members numbered no more than 85 and Honorary Members 12. Ordinary and Life Members rose to 145 by 1902.

This meant that some good work was buried in summary reports in newspapers - often the *Herts Advertiser* - or, at best, appeared in journals not seen by most Society members, such as the *Church Builder*, in which, in 1876, James Neale published a paper on the architecture of the abbey in advance of his book the following year, and the Rev (later Canon) Davys, rector of Wheathampstead, one on the choir. Fortunately, Ridgway Lloyd's paper on a medieval pilgrimage to St Albans appeared in a journal of wider circulation, *The Antiquary*, in 1880. But Fowler on the abbey's cell at Tynemouth or the *Liber Benefactorum* of St Albans are examples of contributions that, printed in a society journal, might have prompted others to emulate. Nevertheless, in 1884 the first series of *Transactions* was begun and it extended to nine volumes by 1894. From the first volume it is apparent that serious research went into the addresses delivered during excursions: Fowler on Royston church and J G Hale, Rector, on Therfield church and the medieval rectory, are still useful. A classified Index of all the papers in the *Transactions* is given in Chapter 7.

About the time the series of *Transactions* began, some widening of members' interests, hitherto largely concentrated on churches, appears. In 1886 R T Andrews, a Hertford member, spoke about the history of navigation on the river Lea, (Trans 1887, 97-100, and 1888, 51-55) and there were papers on almshouses at Hitchin, Flamstead and St Albans, the two latter by a local architect, S Flint Clarkson (Hitchin unpublished, Trans 1887, 88-90). Clarkson is interesting for the unusual breadth of his sympathies in an era when Gothic was thought the only proper style for a church: speaking at St Pauls Walden (Trans 1888, 19-33), he praised the remodelling of the chancel in 1727, saying it was 'a piece of history, a veracious witness to the aims and likings of our countrymen 150 years ago; and I venture to hope that no one will destroy the record' - that of a chancel with a 'gorgeous, if decidedly worldly' screen (Pevsner, *Hertfordshire* 2nd ed., 329). Houses, too, began to receive some attention, although one notable record of a medieval timber-framed hall was published by Canon Davys in the belief that it was a chapel (Trans 1888, 9). Fowler collaborated with the owner, R L Howard, in an account of Mackerye End which, most unusually then and in most accounts of houses long afterwards, and not only in Hertfordshire, was complete with a ground plan differentiated by phases (Trans 1889, 22-27).

By 1903 the first volume had been completed of a new series of *Transactions* covering the years since 1895.

Besides a paper on an Italian financial house in the 14th century (Trans 1901/2, 320-34) by Charles Johnson, who later occupied the position of Assistant Keeper of Public Records with distinction (DNB), it included several important ones on St Albans. F G Kitton combined medieval beginnings with comparatively recent history in writing of the old inns of St Albans (Trans 1899/1900, 233-261), and in the same volume his account of the Clock Tower and its origins (Trans 1901/2, 298-319) was one of his best pieces; Flint-Clarkson wrote about the gateway at the Pemberton almshouses (Trans 1895/96, 20) and endeavoured to dispel some myths surrounding it; and W Carey Morgan assembled valuable information about St Peter's church as it had been before Lord Grimthorpe rebuilt much of it (Trans 1897/98, 135-173). Still in the same volume appeared one of only two contributions to the *Transactions* of someone who was certainly one of the more notable members, the architect A Whitford Anderson; his short paper on 'The lesser Domestic Architecture of Hertfordshire' (Trans 1901/2, 357-374), the forerunner of many valuable contributions to the Hertfordshire volumes of the *Victoria County History* on what is now called vernacular architecture, demonstrated a level of scholarship rarely found in that field for many years afterwards and certainly not in Hertfordshire. All these papers, and others by F Kinneir Tarte and Victor T Hodgson (both architects), mark a shift in emphasis appropriate to the beginning of a new series of *Transactions*.

But the last decade of the nineteenth century had seen a widening of interest in other directions, a lessening in the flow of church descriptions and the final abandonment of the earlier kind of lecture on major archaeological discoveries abroad. William Page (DNB), a professional record searcher, future editor of VCH Hertfordshire and later General Editor of the series, who was a Society member from the time he moved to St Albans in 1891, was a notable contributor, writing about the Marian Survey of St Albans (Trans 1893/4, 8-24) and, at various times, seven papers on excavations at the abbey, Verulamium and a Romano-British pottery kiln at Radlett. One or two historical papers hardly bearing on buildings or artefacts were read to the Society, reviving an interest demonstrated early on by Henry Nicholson: speakers include the record searcher W J Hardy (Page's partner) on some old lawsuits connected with St Albans (Trans 1892, 10-24) and on Lady Cathcart (Trans 1897/98 119-128), and by Mrs Knight on the Black Death at St Albans (Trans 1899/1900, 262-276) and on Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester (Trans 1903/4, 51-86). The most striking omission is of papers dealing with any pre-Roman antiquities other than coins.

A less obvious failing is the paucity of contributions relating to east Hertfordshire. In fact the membership in 1888 was concentrated almost exclusively around St Albans, with only two names from the east of the county - Ware and Watton-at-Stone - and only one, albeit a distinguished one, from the north; that notable exception was the historian Frederic Seebohm (DNB), famous for his book *The English Village Community*. Despite an

increased membership by the end of the century and the addition of Hertfordshire to its name, and despite having the very active brothers R T and W F Andrews of Hertford as members, the Arch & Arch remained ineffective in the eastern half of the county. As R T Andrews put it, the Society 'might have done very much better work if it had stretched out its hand to those in this part of the county' (*Trans East Herts Arch Soc* 1, 1899, 3) and it was undoubtedly this feeling that led, in 1899, to the foundation of the East Herts Archaeological Society, in which the brothers were leading lights. The new body and its journal greatly stimulated archaeological and architectural study in what had been virtually an untilled field, although the result was to be two small and comparatively weak societies, neither of which could long maintain the standard of learning and publication set years earlier by Fowler and Ridgway Lloyd.

A lecture to the Society that appears to have borne little fruit except from the lecturer himself was given in 1909 by E Stanley Kent, entitled 'A walk round old St Albans showing the desirability of photographic work', but it was a reminder of the rapid change taking place in the town, accompanied by the alteration or destruction of many old buildings. Only two papers from the Edwardian era deserve mention: Ashdown produced a useful paper - perhaps his best - on the Great Gateway of St Albans Abbey, with plans of all floors (Trans 1903/04, 88-104), and the polymathic Page presented a report on Kingsbury Castle complete with what was then unusual in local archaeological work anywhere, a drawn section through the earthwork (Trans 1905/6, 149-157). But the general picture of the Society's activities from about 1905 to 1915 shows a decline in the amount of original research, a fact of which H R Wilton Hall was aware when he compiled lists of the lectures and publications arising from sixty years of the Society's proceedings (Trans 1903/4, 104-14, and 1905/06, 123-46). Wilton Hall, a man whose accurate and painstaking examination and transcriptions of records was in the Fowler mould, albeit he published little, noted of the papers read: '....few of them, from the circumstances under which they were compiled, add materially to facts already chronicled Local Archaeology would be more usefully served by the publication of particulars respecting finds' (Trans 1907-14, 173). The point found application in a report by G E Bullen, Society librarian and local museum curator, on recent archaeological finds in Herts (Trans 1907/14, 194-200), in which he described a number of medieval objects - in itself a notable emphasis in a city largely preoccupied with either its Roman precursor or the abbey.

Not until the mid-1920's did the *Transactions* recover some of their earlier quality. This time the standard was set, initially at least, by people whose main research interest was wider than St Albans or Hertfordshire, and this was in part the beneficial outcome of being so accessible from London. A notable series of papers were submitted by the historian G R Owst who was an authority, on among other things, late-medieval preaching: his subjects include the Franciscans in

Hertfordshire, a fifteenth-century manuscript in St Albans and daily life in St Albans based on wills proved in the archdeaconry court 1415-70. Ernest Woolley FSA contributed several purely descriptive papers so plentifully illustrated with his own excellent photographs as to retain their usefulness today; in *Trans* 1928, 163-75 he depicted in detail the brass of Thomas de la Mare, supplemented by a study of his character based on the British Museum manuscript of the *Gesta Abbatum*. A paper opening with the words 'In the course of my work at Cambridge' came from John Gladstone - evidently an historian there - on Hemel Hempstead market 1620-60 (*Trans* 1928, 196-213); it is one of the few serious contributions to economic history found in the *Transactions*. This, with Woolley's two papers, one by Owst on fifteenth century books and book owners in St Albans (*Trans* 1928, 176-195), and another by F E Croydon, 'The Edwardine Reforms ...' in Baldock, based on churchwardens' accounts of 1548 (*Trans* 1928, 135-144), made 1928 a high peak in the *Transactions* comparable to the issues of 1898-1903 and one of more permanent historical value.

A few years earlier four speakers, three of them of national standing, had been invited to celebrate the sixth centenary of the election as abbot of Richard of Wallingford, who built the celebrated clock. They were R T Gunther (DNB) who devoted his last twenty years to the preservation of scientific instruments and, as a matter of local interest, ensured that the Lewis Evans collection of them went to the university of Oxford; and R P Howgrave Graham, an electrical engineer and eminent horologist; H H Turner (DNB), Savilian professor of astronomy at Oxford and FRS, and the Rev W A Ingrams who spoke on Richard the abbot (*Trans* 1926, 221-239).

Contact with these distinguished people failed to produce any upsurge of local work. Little of value appeared in the 1920's with the exception of a painstaking and thorough account of Watford parish church by Helen Rudd, a resident there (*Trans* 1926, 207-220), and another of Woolley's admirable photographic studies, this time of the timber-built Watching Chamber in the abbey. By 1930, though, the situation was improving with the first publications of two people, each of whom was remarkable in different ways. John C Rogers, the cathedral architect, described his restoration of the crossing tower and provided excellent drawings, and Norman Davey, in the days before he became an authority on ancient building materials and wall-paintings, published the first neolithic site (at Bushey) to be recognised as such in the county (*Trans* 1930, 65-68). Rogers continued the architectural scholarship displayed by Fowler and others with notable papers on the wooden vault of the abbey choir (*Trans* 1931, 122-136) and the houses at Gorhambury (*Trans* 1933, 35-112), and Davey provided the Society with its first illustrations of Roman pottery drawn to the best contemporary standards (*Trans* 1931, 137-140).

Generally, though, the 1930's were characterised by a concentration on Romano-British themes and particularly Verulamium. In 1930 Tessa Verney Wheeler gave the first

interim report on the excavations that she and her husband R E Mortimer Wheeler (DNB) were conducting there (*Trans* 1930, 15-24); further reports followed under their joint names. They were the first excavations in the county to be done to modern standards and mark the beginning of the collective involvement of Arch & Arch members with excavation that continues today. Another archaeologist destined, like (Sir) Mortimer Wheeler, for international eminence was Kathleen Kenyon (DNB), who reported on her excavation of the theatre at Verulamium (*Trans* 1934, 133-142), whilst A W G Lowther, who became well-known for his pioneering studies of Romano-British flue-tiles, described his successive explorations of Insulae XVI and XII-XIII (*Trans* 1934, 166-172 and 1935, 311-316 respectively). All this professionally-conducted work drew only interim or summary reports to the *Transactions*, whereas the locally supported work led by Norman Davey on the cemetery at St Stephens produced the final report (*Trans* 1935, 243-275). One of the all too few contributions from the north of the county was a report on excavations at Baldock (*Trans* 1932, 244-258) by Erik S Applebaum; this was the forerunner of the studies that led up to a chapter on Romano-British agriculture in the *Cambridge Agrarian History* (I, ii, 3), by which time the author was Professor of Classical Archaeology at Tel Aviv. An interesting exception to the Roman emphasis was provided by W Percival Westall, curator of Letchworth museum, in his report on the excavation of a motte, Sandon Mound, which proved to contain the sinking for a post mill of the late 14th or early 15th century (*Trans* 1934, 173-83). The pottery was dated and discussed by the young Gerald Dunning, who, after World War II virtually created the archaeological study of medieval pottery in England.

The Society's good fortune in attracting papers from people who later rose to eminence extended to other areas of interest too. A paper on the goldsmiths of St Albans abbey (*Trans* 1932, 215-236) came from Charles Oman who became a distinguished Keeper of the Department of Metalwork at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In the architectural field Margaret Wood described and analysed what is now the Tudor Tavern in George St, with plans and a cross section of the earliest (15th century) part (*Trans* 1937, 99-104) and Hugh Braun, at the outset of his career as an architectural writer, wrote about the castles of Hertfordshire (*Trans* 1938, 193-213). That good fortune extended to a contribution by Edward Miller, a purely historical paper on the estates of St Albans abbey (*Trans* 1938, 285-300) that was the forerunner of several notable studies on similar themes and stands out, like Gladstone's paper a decade earlier, as a contribution to economic history.

World War II dealt a heavy blow to the Arch and Arch. On its outbreak all activities were suspended and circumstances when peace returned did not allow of resumption until 1951, but when it was revived it began in some style: eleven lectures in two years rivalled 1846 in introducing to the Society speakers who were either nationally eminent or were on their way to becoming so.

Archaeological excavation had pride of place: P K Baillie-Reynolds, who gave the Presidential Address, was Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments; Sir Mortimer Wheeler spoke about his recent work at Verulamium and W F Grimes, destined to become (as Wheeler had been) Director of the Institute of Archaeology, about his in Roman London; while Nicholas Thomas, who was to do distinguished work in Wiltshire, lectured on archaeological fieldwork. W G Hoskins, the pre-eminent figure in the study of local history during the succeeding thirty years, took that as his subject. On local topics Clive Rouse, who dominated the conservation and recording of wall paintings for a generation to come, considered their meaning and purpose, and two people who are still members made their Society debut: Lionel Munby, under whose inspiration several extramural classes in Hertfordshire produced town histories, took Sir Thomas Meautys as his theme, and the first post-war Secretary Rowland Mainstone, now a leader in the study of cathedrals and other great buildings of the past from an engineering standpoint, gave an address with the intriguing title 'Solomon's Temple and St Albans Abbey' - a title reminiscent of those wild flights of the imagination sometimes found a hundred years earlier, though certainly soberly based in fact. Only (Sir) Basil Spence (DNB) on his newly completed Coventry cathedral represented the broad interests so conspicuous in that earlier period.

Yet, as in the Society's beginnings, financial restraints hampered publication and negated the invigorating effect of this parade of first-class speakers. The first post-war *Transactions* (1953) were notable for a long report by Molly Cotton and Mortimer Wheeler on the Verulamium excavations (Trans 1953, 13-97), but otherwise contained only a short factual paper by Clive Rouse - the substance of a lecture - and the President's inaugural Address (Trans 1953, 1-12). Eight years elapsed, years marked, again, by addresses from many eminent lecturers, until the

Transactions died in 1961 in a final flourish of good papers on local subjects. That year they included an account of the first twenty-one years of Verulamium Museum by its curator Ilid Anthony (Trans 1961, 1-4), who also contributed reports on three small Roman excavations (Trans 1961, 31-35 and 36-43); three short articles on medieval and earlier pottery found around Watford and Radlett (Martin Biddle, Trans 1961, 70-89); and a report by Ernest Greenfield, one of the small team of peripatetic archaeologists employed by the Ministry of Works to excavate threatened sites, on a Bronze Age barrow at Codicote (Trans 1961, 5-20). But the most notable papers dealt with timber-framed buildings: a detailed account, by the then City Engineer, Albert Moody, of the restoration of the Christopher Inn (Trans 1961, 50-64), a paper marred only by the confessedly inadequate historical analysis by Baillie-Reynolds(!), still President; and an excellent description and analysis of the former Crown and Anchor Inn by O J Weaver and D Poole (Trans 1961, 44-49). These are contributions of enduring usefulness for the study of inns generally as well as those of St Albans.

In retrospect the Arch and Arch was unusually fortunate during the two decades after the war in being able to concentrate on Verulamium. That meant that, whatever its financial straits and the limits they imposed on publication, the Society did not suffer the fate of a number of its counterparts who saw the formation of rival offshoots devoted solely to archaeological excavation, which in some instances published their own journal or newsletter. But by 1963 it was clear that publication of a journal, particularly one to the higher standards and in the larger format generally recognised as desirable, was no longer possible for the Society on its own. Negotiations with the East Herts Archaeological Society resulted in the establishment of the joint journal *Hertfordshire Archaeology*, which is a story for some future chronicler.