



# ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE Architectural & Archaeological Society

## President's Report



Donald Munro

### Positive start to the new Session

After the difficulties of the past year, it is pleasing to report a positive start to the new Session.

At the AGM, we confirmed the award of Honorary Membership to John T. Smith, our distinguished architectural historian, with Gerard McSweeney making a splendid tribute. We also announced the Mayor's Prize award for 2012 to Anne Wares for her interesting account of Isabella Worley. The process of digitising the Society's *Transactions* has been revived, and a new research project is being started based on World War I Military Service Tribunals in St Albans. The Library has been very busy on Wednesday and Friday mornings, and has had a number of notable accessions. In the first Friday lecture of the new season Prof. Clyde Binfield gave us an excellent insight into Pugin the man and his holistic approach to architecture. Hopefully he can be persuaded to return to talk in greater detail about particular Pugin buildings. We have also had an encouraging number of new members with active local history and archaeological interests. We are looking to a new survey of members' interests and capabilities during this session. Further details of some of this and much else will be found elsewhere in the Newsletter.

### Local history conferences

Also encouraging is the number of recent historical and archaeological gatherings. The Second St Albans History Network Symposium met at the end of October, with substantial Arc & Arc participation. Pat Howe and I attended the second County Societies Symposium at the University of London in September (see p. 4) which was informative about growing resources and provided some interesting exchanges of experience. Meanwhile John

Cox is busily planning the Hertfordshire Association for Local History Symposium 2013 which SAHAAS will be hosting in a year's time. There is a heartening sense of growing and co-operative research activity.

### Time called on Time Team

A less welcome development is the recent announcement that Time Team is being 'buried' by Channel 4. Over the years this programme has performed a valuable role in raising and maintaining a high profile for Archaeology. A recent revamp had failed to stem the drop in viewers, and one of the show's regular experts, Mick Aston has left, "claiming it had been "dumbed down" and there was "a lot less archaeological content and a lot more prating about.""

A spokesperson explains "Channel 4 history is all about bringing the past to life in eye-opening, entertaining and innovative ways, from the best archaeological scoops, to big factual dramas".

Hmmm! My sympathies are with Mick Aston, and it is troubling to many with genuine interests in history and archaeology how "visual" production and entertainment values, particularly in television, increasingly get in the way of and distract from genuine explanation and information. A good case is Andrew Marr's new History of the World where an interesting episode on what could be called the dark ages was followed by a dreadful programme where the points being made were largely lost amidst the welter of gore and gourmandising. It is surprising that a splendidly intelligent man like Marr allows his producers to so dominate. Thank the several hundred Indian gods for Michael Wood, and Michael Portillo, whose travels with Bradshaw eloquently illustrate that "Victorian thirst for knowledge" he so admires, and which the present world seems determined to supplant with entertainment. This infection also increasingly affects many museums.

### Hertfordshire towns

Over recent months Beryl and I have been taking a day every other week to look more widely about the county. The consequent trips have been a pleasant reminder that Hertfordshire, if it lacks a strong sense of county identity, does have a remarkable number of interesting smaller towns with well developed local market and industrial

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## President's Report (continued)

character, and a range of varied period architecture. Ware and Bishop's Stortford, where the Corn Exchange perhaps set an example for the Town Hall in St Albans, are pleasant towns. They both also have excellent centrally located old-fashioned hardware shops, providing virtually anything for the table or tool kit. We have had SAHAAS trips to Hitchin and elsewhere. Visits to Bishop's Stortford and such towns would be interesting excursions.

Finally can I draw your attention to the notice on page 6 inviting submissions for the Mayor's Prize 2013. Any member who has engaged in architectural, archaeological or historical research into St Albans and/or Hertfordshire can apply for this annual award. If you know of someone who has, please

pass on the details of the Prize. The prize is open to non-Members.

*Donald Munro*

President

### New Year's Party 2013

Discount for early booking!!

Ticket Form Attached (p.13)

## Clock Tower Report

More than 3,800 adults and 1,365 children visited the Clock Tower in the 2012 season. The trial extension of the season to the end of September does not seem to have presented any problems; the weather was kind and volunteers willing and available so it would be a good idea to continue on this pattern in future years. We all want to increase interest in the Clock Tower and bring in more people to enjoy it.

In September, Jane Kelsall received an enquiry from a visitor to the Clock Tower, about being married there. We explained



[Donato Cincolo]

that the Clock Tower isn't licensed for weddings but agreed that Claire Button and her fiancée Tom Godson could come and have pictures taken after the ceremony. They arrived in their finery and climbed 93 steps to have photos on the roof. The Herts Advertiser sent a photographer and a reporter and Donato Cincolo, well-known local photographer, also came to take pictures. A lovely picture of the happy

couple made it to the front page of the Herts Advertiser on 4<sup>th</sup> October. Claire and Tom's enthusiasm for this wonderful tower was infectious and we all thoroughly enjoyed their visit.

The Council has been developing its own ideas to increase the number of visitors to St Albans. I have attended two meetings with Charles Baker, Head of Tourism, and also met Nicole Deufel, newly appointed Audience Development Manager in the Museums service, who has promised to make the Clock Tower much more a part of Museums service publicity. She is currently looking at a programme of special events to increase visitor numbers and we emphasised the need to respect the integrity of this historic place when choosing events.

I also met with Jill Singer, Secretary of the Civic Society, and look forward to another year of partnership in 2013. The Civic Society is currently exploring the possibility of lighting up the Clock Tower at Christmas. We also discussed extra opening: on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> November between 3pm-9pm when the Christmas lights are turned on, which I am organising. We hope to share opening up on the weekend before Christmas 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> December. All this will depend on the willingness of volunteers of course and this year will be a trial run.

Many thanks to all those who volunteer to keep the Clock Tower open.

Good wishes for a happy Christmas.

*Helen Bishop*

Arc and Arc Clock Tower Co-ordinator

## NEW MEMBERS

**We are delighted to welcome the following new members to the Society:**

Barry & Linda Bateman, Riverside Road, St Albans

Sheila & Peter Burton, Sandridgebury, St Albans

Anne Clarke, Howe Dell, Hatfield

Linda Clarke, Ashwood Mews, St Albans

Caroline Howkins, Rabley Park, Potters Bar

Stephen Peters, Orient Close, St Albans

David Smart, St Peter's Street, St Albans

Brian & Valerie Tutt, Townsend Drive, Harpenden

Claire Walsh, Lindum Place, St Albans

Philip Willans, Gustard Wood, Wheathampstead

## St. Peter's Churchyard In-

On Sunday, 14 October the Bishop of St. Albans and the Mayor of St. Albans unveiled one of the new churchyard interpretation boards that were researched by the St. Peter's history group. The group includes Sheila Green, Kate Morris and David Curry. These aids to residents and visitors to St. Peter's churchyard detail some of the people who have been buried in the churchyard including Sir Richard Lee, purchaser of the St. Albans Abbey monastic buildings after the dissolution of the monasteries who built a house at Sopwell adjacent to the site of Sopwell Nunnery; Ralph Pemberton, Member of

Parliament, son of Roger Pemberton whose almshouses are still in St. Peter's Street; and Nathaniel Cotton, who had a 'college' for the insane in the area of today's College Street. The dedication took place in the churchyard where guests, and members of the St. Peter's congregation were entertained by the choir. Following prayers, the Bishop, Mayor and Vicar ceremoniously unveiled the first of the boards.

*John G.E. Cox*  
Publicity Officer

## Exhibitions

For the society's contribution to the annual Heritage Weekend in September, the library team put on an exhibition entitled '*St Albans in the early 1800s*'. Two collections of material formed the cornerstone of the display, namely our newly-acquired parish and tithe maps (see p.9) and also 25 sketches of important buildings in the town by H.G. Oldfield from around 1800.



Examining the Portland Street area in 1843  
[Peter Wares]

With the aim of attracting more visitors we held the exhibition in the court room rather than our library in the Robing Room. This change of venue was largely suc-

cessful as we had around 100 visitors over the course of the weekend. Thank-you to around twenty SAHAAS members who helped in the preparation and hosting of the event and in particular to Peter Swinson for the loan of the large screen you see in the picture.

Our next exhibition is in support of Residents First weekend on the 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> January 2013. Again we will be trying out a new venue, this time the North Transept of the Abbey. A selection of over 100 photographs of interiors and exteriors of historic St Albans buildings, some not open to the public, will form the heart of the exhibition. The photographer, Richard Darnell, is a member of the society. Expect to see more publicity about this event in due course.

*Jon Meín*

## St Albans New Museum and Gallery Project

The SADC are continuing the process of preparing an Application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and are working hard to meet a December deadline for submission.

Donald Munro has attended meetings of the Advisory Group (which includes SAHAAS, St Albans Civic Society, and the New Museum for St Albans Group, etc.), and Helen Bishop attended a workshop run by consultants Purcell Miller Tritton to discuss the *Conservation Statement* on the Old Town Hall building. The workshop discussions informed an interesting session with the consultants at the following Advisory Group Meeting discussing potential re-arrangements of the Town Hall building

The Advisory Group was unable however to consider at its recent meeting the other significant documents (in a mass of papers) that have been produced: the *Interpretative Vision* and the *Collections Conservation Statement*. This latter is very

informative about the current state of the Museum Collections, and indicates how much needs doing before informed choices can be taken about what highlights to display. SAHAAS and other members of the Advisory Group are concerned about staffing and several aspects of policy development re conservation and retention of objects and will be raising these in discussion of the document.

There is still no clarification of the situation regarding the possible sale of the Museum of St Albans site.

*Donald Munro*  
President

## County Societies Symposium

Senate House, University of London 15th September 2012

Pat Howe and Donald Munro represented SAHAAS at this one-day symposium convened by the Victoria County History in conjunction with the Institute of Historical Research, the British Association for Local History and the Royal Historical Society.

An interesting day was spent with about 40 representatives of county societies (archaeological, historical, antiquarian and natural history) and national bodies gathered to learn about and discuss matters of mutual interest, and the latest publicly available historical resources.

The day was divided into three thematic sessions on Communications, New Resources, and Publishing our research, though the boundaries were fluid. This was followed by group discussions and a panel Q&A session.

The overall impression was that there is a great deal of work going on "out there" at many different levels, and there are many inventive new ways of supplementing the traditional approaches. The most consistent theme was the need for communication and awareness – between groups, and of new developments.

From Hertfordshire's and our Society's point of view the most significant pointers were

- Communicating/networking with the county history community – archives, libraries, museums, local and topical groups
- Encourage regular "umbrella" meetings/study days of people actively researching
- Creation of new research groups
- Need for good people who do things and *communicate*
- Develop relations and encourage partnerships with (and possibly seek leadership from) local universities
- Projects in partnership improve prospects of funding
- Look to linking our datasets to larger projects
- The VCH will accept locally vetted submissions for adding to the *VCH Explore* website and *British History Online*.
- Society websites should be substantial and developing community resources, melding activities and publications [ours is well on the way]
- *Hard copy of publications is essential for security purposes*
- *Copyright of photos in digitised articles where the owner is not the Society is problematic*
- Organise a voice of groups in Hertfordshire asking access at local universities to major digitised resources, which are currently beyond the pocket of the private and amateur researcher

### Research aids and training.

For people doing historical research, the nascent IHR project *History SPOT (Seminar Podcasts and Online Training)* <http://www.history.ac.uk/projects/seminar-and-research-training> promises to be a useful aid for researchers, particularly in its online research training courses and handbooks, and its links to other related online training materials. This covers instruction on reading old documents, database design, training for database searching strategy, etc.

### Major online resources

Several were discussed including:

The **Manorial Documents Register** (MDR) <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr/> Digitisation of the MDR brings scattered information together, providing a very good opportunity for creating place-name authority records and increasing search functionality. The project is being taken forward in cooperation with several existing county manorial database projects.

**Connected Histories** : British History Sources, 1500-1900, enables cross-searching of several databases - <http://www.history.ac.uk/projects/digital/connected-histories-sources-building-british-history-1500-1900>

**Clergy of the Church of England Database** 1540-1835 (CCEd) <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk/jsp/search/index.jsp>

**VCH Explore** <http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/> is a platform, only just being developed, for involvement with the Victoria County History. It should be thought of as a book rather than a search-engine. The VCH will accept corrections and additions to existing volumes which have been vetted by creditable local researchers for inclusion in British History Online. They are also interested in moving towards a fifth Hertfordshire volume, but thinking is still very preparatory.

In several of these projects there is increasing opportunity for developing dialogue between project editors and users whose local knowledge can assist definition and identification.

There are however some caveats re digital resources. Optical character recognition software produces text that is not as accurate as it looks. There is also a growing problem of people ignoring sources if they are not in digital form.

Although there was little in the day directly relating to Hertfordshire, it was very good to hear about the different ways in which similar societies operated. From a personal point of view it was good to meet up with former professional colleagues some of whom have found themselves in similar roles to my own.

Donald Munro  
President

## Are You Getting the Latest News Broadcasts?

### A Change of Distribution List

The first broadcast of email news to members was in March 2007, since when there have been 164 messages that have proved invaluable in advertising new events, sudden changes and cancellations, and car-park problems.

The first distribution list was held in the address book of my personal computer, which meant that no one else could use it to make a broadcast in my absence, so in May 2012 I moved the list into a "Google Group".

The Group has four managers (Jon Mein, Gerard McSweeney, John Cox and myself) any of whom can send a message to the single address for the Group which automatically forwards it to all the subscribers. The Society has about 420 members and we should like to reach as many as possible. The current

distribution list includes 229 addresses, many of which represent more than one person at the same address.

When making the new distribution list I corrected a number of errors and omissions but it is still possible that you are missing. If you would like to receive up to date news broadcasts please send an email to [www@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:www@stalbanhistory.org) and I will add you to the list.

Broadcasts never include attachments; larger material is published on the website and a brief email is broadcast. There is no fixed schedule; messages are sent when there is something to say.

*Brian Bending*  
Website Manager

## Society Research Project – The Home Front in St Albans in the First World War

Most local studies of the First World War are concerned with casualty records. While these are of interest and importance, we are fortunate in St Albans to have rare records of the Military Tribunal formed in February 1916 to consider applications from over 1,000 St Albans-based men who wished to avoid conscription into the army or at least delay it.

We are embarking on a project to study the effects of the Military Tribunal on the social and economic development of St Albans during the war. From February 1916 to October 1918, the St Albans City Military Tribunal met on average once a week. There were six grounds under which men could apply; the most important being conscientious objection, infirmity, personal hardship and also that it was a matter of national importance that they remained in their current occupation. These records provide insight into the workings of the controversial tribunal system. The Herts Advertiser also reported each hearing, often in great detail. All this material combines to provide an excellent foundation from which to study the effects of the tribunal on the social and economic development of St Albans during the war.

Several key themes are starting to emerge. Those of the conscientious objectors and also the poor health of many men are generally well known. Less expected is that most of the applications were made by employers desperate to keep skilled men in production. The city's printing companies and hat and boot manufacturers, cornerstones of the local economy, were badly hit. However, even at this early stage of our research, there are several nuances to the story that need investigation, including the effect of the nascent trade unions and the changing role of women in the workplace. There is also the possibility that we could expand it to consider the effect of the war on the St Albans Home Front in general.

We hope this will interest other members of the Society who will want join us in this project. If you would like to join us, and help us gauge the level of interest, please complete and return the enclosed questionnaire. We anticipate having an initial meeting of the project group early in January 2013.

If you have other questions, do drop us an email to:

[ww1mt@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:ww1mt@stalbanhistory.org).

We also have our own project page on the society's web site

[www.stalbanshistory.org](http://www.stalbanshistory.org).



*James Flint, Mayor of St Albans & chairman of St Albans Local Military Tribunal, 1916-18*

*[St Albans Museums]*

*Anne Wares & Jon Mein*

## The Mayor of St. Albans Prize Competition 2012

The Mayor's Prize Competition 2012 was awarded to Mrs Anne Wares, a member of the Society, for her research on Isabella Worley *The Quiet Philanthropist* who was a resident of 19<sup>th</sup> century St. Albans. She lived at New Barnes House, where Humphrey Repton produced one of his "red books" on schemes for improving the gardens. She funded the building of the former Christ Church, Verulam Road and the fountain that once stood in front of the Clock Tower, now relocated in Victoria Square which was built on the former St. Albans Prison site.

The presentation was made in September, prior to a full Council Meeting, by The Mayor of St. Albans, Councillor Eileen Harris. Anne, who is a member of the Society's Library team, is well known to many as she was formerly employed in St. Albans Central Library. She received a framed certificate and a cheque for £100 and her work will be published in 2013.

In an effort to encourage local history researchers from elsewhere in Hertfordshire a leaflet has been produced giving details of requirements for entering the 2013 competition: entries close on 30 April 2013. The new leaflet will be available at lectures, in the Arc & Arc Library, as well as Museums, Libraries and through other local societies. [See below]

We have to thank one of our former presidents, Kate Morris, now an Honorary Alderman of the City and District of St. Albans and former Mayor in 2007-2008, who has raised capital funds from which each prize-winner receives £100 and a certificate.

*John G.E. Cox*  
Publicity Officer

### The Mayor's Prize, 2013 An invitation to enter

**The deadline for applications is 30 April 2013**

This annual prize, currently £100, is offered for an outstanding piece of work which makes an important contribution to the history of St Albans or Hertfordshire. Applicants must be either in full-time education or working as amateur historians. The prize is administered by the Society on behalf of St Albans City and District Council.

Applicants are expected to demonstrate the originality of their work and critical usage of primary sources. Submissions can be in the form of an essay of between about 5,000-10,000 words, including any illustrations. The Society recognises the growing use of IT as an aid to research and will accept submissions with fewer words and various digital images and other data when appropriate.

Full details of procedures, instructions and guidelines, and application forms are available on the Society's website at [http://www.stalbanshistory.org/page\\_id\\_309\\_path\\_0p30p113p.aspx](http://www.stalbanshistory.org/page_id_309_path_0p30p113p.aspx)

Any questions about the prize should be sent to the President:

**Donald Munro, MA, FRHistS**  
68 Meadowcroft St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 1UF  
01727 760808 Email [chair@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:chair@stalbanhistory.org)

## Transactions Project Update

As you may well have seen progress is underway again placing digitised copies of the society's Transactions and early publications on the society's web site. The late Mike Cooper was the driving force behind this project and, during his protracted illness, it stalled. However, restarting the project has been a relatively straightforward task as Mike left his paperwork in good order.

Progress is good. We anticipate publishing all pre-1915

material by the end of the year. This represents over half of the volumes included in the project. We have also added to the web site an interesting article by JT Smith that assesses the value of society's early publications.

*Christine McDermott*  
Representative, Herts Archaeology & History



## Library Notes and Queries

**A selection of new journals in the library with some interesting articles.**

**Alban Link** Autumn 2012.

*Fourteenth Century Grand Designs: The Royal Heads*, by Stephen Potter, pp 4-9.

Current research suggests that the carved heads in the reconstructed south nave of the Abbey are unlikely to be portraits of Edward II and Queen Isabella. Who then, are they?

*Royal Connections*, by Pam Martin, pp 10-13. Royal links to the Abbey: a tour prepared for the Jubilee.

**British Archaeology** Nov/Dec 2012./

*Inside the Medieval Great Barn at Harmondsworth*, by Justine Bayley, pp 36-38.

Harmondsworth's Great Barn built in 1426, is one of the best preserved buildings of its type. It was recently bought by English Heritage,

**Current Archaeology** July-October 2012.

*The Iceni under Rome*, by William Bowden. Sept.2012.

Caistor is traditionally seen as a town imposed on the Iceni by Rome following the Boudiccan revolt, but new research suggests the story was somewhat different.

*Last word*, by Andrew Selkirk, Oct 2012, p.48.

The author asks whether the days of excavation without a grant are behind us, and casts an eye over official guidance.

**Harpenden and District Local History Society Newsletter** Sept 2012.

Insanity in Harpenden and District, by John Wassell, pp 24-26. James Quilter Rumball and the treatment of insanity in Harpenden in the nineteenth century.

**Hertfordshire Past and Present** Autumn 2012.

*Begging Letters from Hertfordshire Paupers Living away from Home*, by Carla Herrmann, pp 3-14. This includes a number of references to the Abbey parish. Examines begging letters sent to their home parishes by 50 Hertfordshire paupers in the late 18th early 19th centuries.

*The Manors of Watford*, an introduction, by Gordon Cox pp 15-24. The importance of manorial records for local and family historians.

**Hertfordshire People** Sept 2012 no.122.

*What's New at Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies ?* by Sheila White? pp10-11.

Among the indexes recently added to Hertfordshire Names Online are: Victuallers' Recognizances for the Liberty of St Albans, late eighteenth early nineteenth century;

St Albans Workhouse Registers 1835-1854,1900-1902.

**Local Historian** August 2012.

*Opinion Identity and Place*, by William Evans, pp 236-242.

How do local historians explain what makes one place different from another?

**London Archaeologist** Autumn 2012 vol.13

*Supplement – London Fieldwork and Publication a roundup of 2011*, by Cath Maloney.

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### New Books – a Selection

Barbara Tearle, *The Accounts of the Guild of the Holy Trinity Luton 1526/7,1546/7*. Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 2012. Contains many St Albans entries.

Jacqui Banfield-Taylor. *The River Ver, a meander through time*. Halsgrove, 2012. Our review of this interesting book has been delayed and will appear in the next Newsletter.

Eric Vickers, ed. *Some Account of the Typography of St. Alban's in the Fifteenth Century*. Polytechnic of North London, 1976.

*Kelly's Directory of St Albans, 1964*.

Among the many initiatives the library is undertaking at the moment some of the most important have to be the publication on the website of our *Map catalogue* - see other articles for how our map collection has improved recently - and the *Index to our miscellaneous collection of newspaper cuttings, pictures, notes etc. : subjects A-R*. These are important steps on a long journey to make this extremely valuable collection of material available, and are of some significance. Very grateful thanks are due to our team of library volunteers who have made this happen, in no particular order : Tony Cooper, Sheila Green, Frank Iddiols, Marion Delaney, David Laskey, Anne Wares, and of course Jon Mein. We will also put a *Guide to the St Albans City Archives*, held at HALS and not currently very accessible, onto our website, to make their use easier, and this, as with many things is a "Mein " project!

We continue to field a wide range of enquiries. Among recent "asks" have been requests for information on buildings in Sandridge Road, and Holywell Hill, the Searancke family of brewers, and the Abbey South Transept.

Do put the date for *Residents First Weekend* in your diaries now - 26-27th January 2013.

There will be a library exhibition featuring the stunning photographs of many buildings in St Albans taken by one of our members, Richard Darnell, supplemented by material from the library. It will be available from 10-4 on Saturday, 1-6 p.m. on Sunday, probably in the Abbey North Transept, but watch the website, and other publicity. Do try and come; it will be a sight worth seeing, and the buildings are certainly one of the greatest glories of our city.

*Gill Harvey*

**Library Representative**

## Gifts to the Library

Over the past 50 years I have amassed books and pamphlets on local topics – St. Albans Abbey, St Albans etc. and as I get older I have begun to give thought about the disposal of them.

I worked for Chas. E. Goad Ltd in the 1980s and was going to do some research of St. Albans' shopping history with the Museum Director, Sam Mullins. He moved on before we got started but I was able to obtain copies of Goad Shopping Plans from 1964-1984, which I have had rolled but were lying among other "treasures" in the loft.

I have now presented these to the Society's Library where they may be used by members and outsiders.

*John G.E. Cox*  
Publicity Officer

## Library - Map Collection

Over the last six months the Library has considerably extended its map collection. We previously noted our acquisition of a full-scale copy of the Abbey parish map (1818). We now also have copies of both the St Michaels (1799) and the St Peters (1826) parish maps too. (The reproduction of the former leaves something to be desired but we expect to obtain a better copy next year.) The originals of these three maps are held in different archives so our library represents the only place you can access them all at the same time.

What's more, we have added digital copies of the early Victorian tithe maps for the Abbey, Ss Michaels, Peters and Stephens as well as Sandridge parishes. A rare map (digital copy) of the town in the 1850s is another good acquisition.

Finally society member John Cox has recently deposited a fine run of Goad maps covering St Albans town centre in the 1968-84 period. (See above)

*Jon Mein*

## Book Review

**Sandy Norman, *Sopwell: A History and Collection of Memories* (St Albans: Kate Bretherton/Sopwell Residents Association, 2012)**

This historical tour through Sopwell contains a wealth of detail on the buildings, industries, farms and some of its people. It is well presented, and based on detailed documentary research as well oral histories carried out by the Sopwell Residents Association. It was funded by the Hertfordshire County Council Locality Budget, and is one of a number of collaborative local history initiatives that have produced some excellent publications in recent years – Marshalswick and Fleetville are two other examples. This is an extensive project, with further material available at [www.sopwell.org.uk](http://www.sopwell.org.uk).

## THE LIBRARY TEAM

**Gill Harvey 01727-853415**

**Anne Wares 01727-860705.**

**Donald Munro 01727-760808**

**Jon Mein 01727-865514**

**We also have a number of volunteers, who are equally part of the team, but would perhaps not yet feel very confident about fielding enquiries.**

**The library is open on Wednesday and Friday mornings from 10.a.m. to 12 noon in the former Judges' Robing Room in the Old Town Hall. Access through the Tourist Information Office.**

**You can email us via the Society's website  
[www.stalbanshistory.org](http://www.stalbanshistory.org)**

## Book Review (continued)

The book is not a chronological history, but is organised by building, street and topic, though there is a separate chapter on 'Sopwell at War'. There are interesting accounts of some well-known places – including the nunnery and Sir Richard Lee's house, the gasworks and the Cottonmill swimming baths – as well as some less prominent but often equally interesting landmarks, such as Pearce's scrap yard, post-war prefabs and Sportsman's Hall. One landmark that was planned but never built was the 'Sopwell canal' (pp. 44-6). There are many fascinating details, which may not be known even to those with a wide knowledge of local history. For example, there is a picture and description of the arched chapel from Lincoln's Inn, removed to a back garden in Prospect Road by the builder William Longmire (p. 66). Some less happy features of Sopwell's past also appear: we read of anti-social behaviour on the early post-war housing estates (p. 92), the persistent vandalism and underfunding of the youth club (pp. 122-3, 127), and the unsolved murder of Stephen Varley in 1948 (appendix 2).

There are some interesting maps in the book, many of them in close-up, but I felt that the book would benefit from a single key map, showing the Sopwell boundary, the main streets and at least some of the landmarks. At £15, the book is not competitively priced, but is an enjoyable read, with plenty of interest for local historians and residents.

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Sopwell-Collection-Memories-Sandy-Norman/dp/0956739911>

The ISBN is 978-0956739919

*Mark Freeman*

## St Albans Local History Network Conference, 27<sup>th</sup> October

The second St Albans and District Local History Network conference was held at Verulamium Museum attracting over 50 attendees. An extensive and varied agenda included introductions to two SAHAAS projects, one by Jane Harris on the 17<sup>th</sup> century group, the other by me on the First World War project (*see separate article*). Other members of the society spoke in their own right: for example, Chris Green covered the history of the Town Hall, Sandy Norman on the Sopwell Residents Association's 'Sopwell' book (p.9) and John Cox discussed the Hertfordshire Association for Local History (HALH).

One of the strengths of the conference is the chance to hear

about the work of other organisations. Isobel Cranmer talked about the hard work and creativity needed to run Redbourn's museum. All this is in front of the Smallford Residents Association whose project to develop as an attraction the Grade 2 listed Smallford railway station is just starting, albeit with the announcement at the conference of their recent good news of lottery funding to encourage them.

Perhaps the highlight of the day, for me anyway, was district archaeologist Simon West's talk about the newly-discovered Roman gold coin hoard. The images of the still-bright coins emerging from the ground were breath-taking.

*Jon Mein*

## HERTS ADVERTISER: Local History Articles

In my role as Publicity Officer I have taken over the organisation of the "Herts Advertiser project" from Gill Harvey. Final details have now been sorted with the editor of the paper.

All articles for publication are to be of 700 words and accompanied by at least two illustrations (which must not be photocopies). During a previous visit to the Arc & Arc Library I had solicited members of the Library team to each produce one feature article, which is set out in the table below. As you will see we have 6 features covering the months from November 2012 until April 2013. I am about to send the schedule to Matt Adams at the *Herts Advertiser*.

At the recent St. Albans and District Local History network conference I invited others to contribute material for future articles from May 2013. All those who have agreed to write for this feature will be asked for a title and given the information about content etc. All material will come to me initially and I will forward them on a monthly schedule to the *Herts Advertiser* with the contributor's e-mail address should there be any query.

This initiative was begun by the President and the Hon. Secretary (currently away until early in 2013 - Pat Howe acting). Together with the new house-style and the display board in St. Albans Central Library this enables us to publicise the "Arc & Arc" more effectively and some of the interests of members. If you would be willing to contribute a future feature or would like help in learning how to use all the relevant resources with which to develop a research topic, please talk to me: John Cox

Email address [johnge.cox@btinternet.com](mailto:johnge.cox@btinternet.com) and home telephone no. is 01727 857827.

Nov—Sue Mann—Eleanor Ormerod  
Dec—Jon Mein—Photographs of St Albans  
Jan—Gill Harvey—Walter J Lawrance  
Feb—Sheila Green—Nathanial Cotton  
Mar—John Cox—Herts College of Building  
Apr—Anne Wares—Sopwell Manor Hotel

*John G.E. Cox*  
Publicity Officer

## Kilgannon Notebook

### Do you know anything about...

...Military wireless systems? Back in the summer, contractors for Garden City Carpentry renovating the first floor of 2 Holywell Hill uncovered the three items you see in the picture. The most enigmatic is the notebook which the owner of the property, Graeme Eastham of Townstone Ltd, has asked us to provide some context for.

The following details, 'James P Kilgannon, No. 964615, 382 Battery, 96 Fld Regt, RM' are inscribed inside the front cover. Amongst other things, the notebook includes "Field Discipline Orders", instructions for Visual Telephony as well as diagrams of equipment. Our hunch is that it relates to the Second World War rather than the First.

If you can help interpret this item, do send us an email to [library@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:library@stalbanhistory.org) or, better still, come and have a look.

*Jon Mein*



Kilgannon  
Notebook  
[Jon Mein]



## Hertfordshire Heritage Fund and a Visit to see The Great Bed of Ware

On 24 October I attended the annual meeting of the Hertfordshire Heritage Fund and, with others, visited Ware Museum which has within one of its rooms (on loan for 12 months) "The Great Bed of Ware". The Curator, Elizabeth Barrett told us that the bed was made about 1590 and over the next three hundred and forty years or so, was housed in various inns in Ware. It is made of oak, richly carved and has a tester (roof) which is of a Victorian date. The headboard has two panels which are of a lighter wood, also decorated. It is mentioned in Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" when Sir Toby Belch talks about "The Great Bed of Ware" which was so substantial to enable up to 4 or 6 people to comfortably lie side by side in it.

Ware Museum opened in 1986 and contains information and objects of Ware's long history from ancient Britain up to the present day. In 2005 Phase II of the Museum's planned extension was built and the chairman (Kenneth Weekes) wrote to the Victoria and Albert Museum with a request to borrow the Great Bed for display in the Museum. Years of negotiation resulted finally in 2011 with the V & A's decision to lend both the bed and its coverings. In March 2012, the Great Bed was crated up in London and brought to Ware, where the gallery's roof had to be partly removed so that sections of the bed could be lowered into position. Once the roof was closed and made secure, the hangings etc. arrived, and since Easter 2012, 18,000 people have visited this temporary exhibit. [They had 8,000 visitors in 2011; and 10,000 in 2010.]

From there the group walked the length of the High Street, a mixed of old and new building, to visit Place House Hall, a building which is owned by the Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust. The Hall was built about 1295 and was part of the Manor of Ware which was owned by members of the aristocracy. In 1690 and the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was owned by Christ's Hospital as a place to educate boys who lived in a house built in the yard out-

side and later had commercial owners. In 1970 HBPT purchased it and had the Hall, which has a Crown Post dated to 1295, restored and let it. However in 2006, the Trust decided to manage the property themselves and it is used for lettings.

It was there that the Hertfordshire Heritage Fund held its Annual Meeting which was attended by some of its Patrons, some of the Museum curators whose collections have benefitted from its donations to their collection, as well as members of Hertfordshire societies concerned with local history. Established in 1988, at a time when many Hertfordshire treasures were being sold outside the county and even abroad, the HHF was established to assist the Museums, Record Offices and Specialist Libraries to purchase items relating to Hertfordshire's past and to make them available to the public. Helped by grants and special appeals it has in its first 21 years (to 2009) acquired sixty items for the recipients (listed above). The Trustees consider applications and respond quickly, enquiring about provenance, present location, the significance and other available funding. Currently North Hertfordshire Museums (in Hitchin and Letchworth) are raising £10,000 to purchase an oil painting by William Ratcliffe (1870-1955) of "The Mill at Ickleford", which is currently owned by a private collector. They have already £15,000 promised!

Our Museums have benefited from help with the purchase of two pictures and a silver-gilt button of the period 1550-1640, found with a metal detector near Wheathampstead; and a medieval brooch which was also found by the same method in the south of the district. In addition Verulamium Museum was helped to acquire and conserve 150 objects found near Wheathampstead.

*John G.E. Cox*  
Publicity Officer

## LECTURE PROGRAMME 2012-13

**Tuesday 13 November 2012**

***The Delme Radcliffe's of Hitchin Priory***  
**Sue Flood**

The Radcliffe family arrived in Hitchin before 1538 and acquired the Priory buildings on their Dissolution by Henry VIII in which Ralph Radcliffe ran a school. Using the family's archive collection held by HALS this talk follows the family from these humble beginnings to the creation of a fortune from the Levant Trade in the eighteenth century, when Hertfordshire MP John Radcliffe was able to marry a daughter of the Earl of Carlisle, rebuild the Priory and live the life of a country gentleman.

Sue Flood, a native of County Durham, began her professional career as an archivist working in the London office of the National Playing Fields Association. After three years at the

Greater London Record Office, in 1978 she joined the Hertfordshire Record Office (now known as Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies). Since 2001 she has held the post of County Archivist. In 1997 she obtained a Master of Studies in Local History from the University of Cambridge. Her previous publications include: *St Albans Wills, 1471-1500* (HRS vol IX); *Hertfordshire Lay Subsidy Rolls, 1307 and 1334*, co-edited with Janice Brooker (HRS vol XIV); and *Two Nineteenth Century Hertfordshire Diaries, 1822-1849*, co-edited with Judith Knight (HRS vol XVIII). Sue has been a member of the Hertfordshire Record Society committee since 1992 and has served as General Editor since 2000. In addition she is a former chair of the East of England Regional Archive Council and sits on committees for both the British Records Association and the British Record Society.

## Lecture Programme 2012-13 (continued)

**Tuesday 20 November 2012**

### ***A History of Britain in 20 Places***

**Dr Dave Musgrove**

Dave Musgrove will be talking about his recent book, *100 Places That Made Britain*. He asked foremost British historians to nominate the sites they believed to be the most important in British history and then travelled the length and breadth of the British Isles to each place to provide a visitor's point of view alongside the captivating stories that make each one great – from Swansea's White Rock Copper Works and the Tower of London, to Derry's City Walls and Stirling Castle. His talk he will take us on a tour through British history, visiting some of the key sites in the nation's story.

Dave Musgrove has been the editor of *BBC History Magazine* for the past eight years, prior to which he edited *Living History Magazine*. He has a doctorate in landscape archaeology, for which he spent three pleasant years tramping over the Somerset Levels investigating the medieval landholdings of Glastonbury Abbey. He lives with his wife and three small children near Cirencester in Gloucestershire.

**Friday 30 November 2012**

### ***Samuel Pepys – Man and Myth***

**Dr J D Davies**

Pepys is one of the best-loved characters in British history, primarily because of the revealing and often searingly honest diary that he kept between 1660 and 1669. But Pepys is much more than the subject of bawdy jokes. His account of the Great Fire of London is a literary masterpiece, while in his 'day job' as a naval administrator he was largely responsible for significant reforms to the service. Pepys was also an amateur scientist of some distinction (ultimately becoming President of the Royal Society), an avid theatre-goer and music lover who composed a song of his own, and above all an intensely curious observer of all that happened around him. His life was also full of drama – including imprisonment in the Tower – and personal tragedy.

Dr David Davies won the Samuel Pepys prize 2009, for *Pepys's Navy: Ships, Men and Warfare 1649-89*, has written extensively on aspects of the history of the sailing navy, and is also the author of both *Blood of Kings: the Stuarts, the Ruthvens and the Gowrie Conspiracy* and 'the journals of Matthew Quinton', a series of naval historical fiction set in the seventeenth century. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Chairman of the Naval Dockyards Society, Vice-President of the Navy Records Society and a member of both the Council of the Society for Nautical Research and the committee of the Samuel Pepys Club.

**Tuesday 4 December 2012**

### ***The Life and Work of John Henry Buckingham - 19<sup>th</sup> Century St Albans Artist***

**Ann Dean**

John Henry Buckingham, born 1800, was a local artist, water colourist, political cartoonist, and local character (some



Dr Matthew Symonds ,  
Editor of 'Current Archaeology',  
giving his talk on  
'Titanic - Archaeology of an  
Emigrant Ship'  
to members of the Society on 26  
October 2012  
[Frank Iddiols]

might say eccentric). His legacy is a large collection of delightful watercolours and political cartoons dating from the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup>C. They show a rural St Albans and environs at a time when we still had long hot summers and idyllic green fields reached within a stone's throw from the centre. He recorded a small market town, in which blatantly corrupt parliamentary elections caused a national scandal. His private life was pretty colourful too.

Ann Dean has been a member of the Society since the 1970's and for a time served as Publicity Officer on Council. She transcribed the St Michael's Parish Registers and Church Warden's Accounts as part of the research for 'St Albans 1650 – 1700' and was a member of the team which produced 'St Albans Quarter Sessions Rolls 1784 – 1820' (ed David Dean. Herts. Record Society 1991). She contributed to 'Community Life in Hertfordshire 2000' (ed Dr Gillian Gear - HALH Recorders Group); 'St Albans Today - A Personal View' (ed Donald Pelletier 2004). Ann is the Hon Archivist for St Michael's Church and a St Albans Blue Badge Guide.

**Tuesday 15 January 2013**

### ***Number One Market Place, St Albans. Life and work next door to the Clock Tower, from 1550.***

**Chris Green**

This talk traces the changing fortunes of One Market Place, which abuts the Clock Tower and is the only double-jettied house in St Albans. The archaeology of the standing building shows that it became an important bakery, though the documentary evidence remains silent at the moment. The surviving bread oven is a rarity, and the house also covers the unseen north side of the Clock Tower.

Chris Green is a freelance curator, archaeologist and historian, and was formerly Director at St Albans Museums. He first looked seriously at One Market Place in the first week of his retirement in 2011, when coincidentally the building became empty and available for study.

**Friday 25 January 2013**

### ***Gaudi: Inhabited Sculpture***

**Rev Iain Lane**

The work of Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí i Cornet is well known, but not often understood. Even in his domestic buildings Gaudí sought to express his profound Christian faith, and in all his work there is a sustained attempt to embody



his cultural heritage. However, the roots of his distinctive style are to be found in the work of Viollet-le-Duc, John Ruskin and the Arts and Crafts movement. This lecture will explore both the inspiration for Gaudi's distinctive style and, briefly consider his legacy in the work of important, contemporary Iberian architects such as Santiago Calatrava.

Rev. Iain Lane is Administrator of St Albans Centre for Christian Studies, an Anglican priest and a Franciscan. He has served previously in parish ministry in south London and the north of England, and as Education Canon at the Abbey. He has a particular interest in the expression and exploration of Christian faith in and through the visual arts, including architecture.

#### **Tuesday 5 February**

#### ***"The Everyday Life of a London Shopkeeper in the Eighteenth Century"***

**Mike Rendell**

The talk covers the life of Mike's 4x great grandfather Richard Hall, who was born in 1729 and died in 1801. Initially apprenticed as a hosier in Southwark, Richard progressed to opening a haberdashery shop at One London Bridge in the 1760s. He married an heiress, and after a family row with his grown up children gave up work and retired to the Cotswolds where he lived the life of a gentleman farmer. The story is based on a wealth of his written records (diaries, accounts, even shopping lists) and is illustrated by contemporary paper cut outs made by Richard.

Mike spent 30 years as a lawyer in Bristol before retiring in 2003. He has spent his retirement researching his considerable hoard of family papers (some of which go back to the 1650s). His researches led to the publication of *The Journal of a Georgian Gentleman* in 2011. Promoting the book has involved Mike in giving talks all over the country, and has led

him to writing a more or less daily blog on life in Georgian England. He spends most of his time in Spain with his wife, but returns at regular intervals throughout the year to his home on the edge of Dartmoor. He has 2 daughters and 5 grandchildren.

#### **Tuesday 12 February 2013**

#### ***An Anatomy of the British House – Looking at Architectural Detail***

**Philippa Lewis**

Philippa looks at not only the stately and the grand, but also the ordinary – the houses that most of us live in and see around us on a daily basis. By observing architectural details – doors, windows, chimneys, front steps, roofs etc – we can deduce much about the period, style and status of the original owners and builders. Sequences of photographs showing the same feature from 16<sup>th</sup> to 21 centuries tell the story. There will also be diversions into building materials and a historical look at the perennial British obsession with alterations and improvements.

Specialising in social history, decorative art and architecture Philippa's early career was as a picture researcher for books and television documentaries. In parallel she started taking photographs and set up the Edifice Photo Library, a visual resource of everything built. She has written and compiled a number of books but the ones that she is most proud of are *Dictionary of Ornament (with Gillian Darley)* published in 1987 and still in print; *Details, A Guide to House Design in Britain* and the expanded version *House* which combined her passion for detail and domestic architecture, and her most recent book *Everything you can do in the Garden without actually Gardening* which looks at the social history of how gardens have been used.

## **The Alban Link:**

## **Newsletter of The Fraternity of the Friends of St. Albans Abbey**

As the years go by I have decided to review the books, pamphlets etc. I have acquired during the 50 years that I have lived in St. Albans. To this end I am donating my file of *"The Alban Link"* to the Society's Library. I was its first and third editor, producing issues 1-5 and 9-28 between 1973 and

1989. Many of the articles contain insights to the long history of our Cathedral and Abbey Church. It is yet another useful source of information.

*John G.E. Cox*  
Publicity Officer



**PLEASE JOIN US!**

**NEW YEAR PARTY!**

**Verulamium Museum**  
**7.30pm Friday, 11th January 2013**  
*Mulled Wine & Festive Food*  
*New Members Welcome*

A finger buffet will be organised by Doreen Bratby (01727 858050). She would welcome offers of party food: sweet or savoury, the cost of which will be reimbursed.

**Tickets** £7.00 Discounted price **£6.00** in advance

**Please send me the following tickets for the  
Society's New Year Party on Friday, 11 January 2013**

..... Tickets at £6.00

Total enclosed .....

**Please make your cheques payable to SAHAAS and send with this form and a STAMPED  
ADDRESSED ENVELOPE**

**To: Pat Howe, 7 Cranmore Court, Avenue Road, St Albans AL1 3QS**

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Post Code ..... Tel:.....

Email.....