



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
Architectural & Archaeological Society

May 2019 newsletter

Due to increasing costs of buying permissions to include images in internet publications, this digital edition of the newsletter does not include all the images present in the printed edition.

Moreover, as a counter to internet 'scraping', we occasionally add watermarks to remaining images.

Newsletter Editor

August 2019



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 212

May 2019



‘An old shop in Market Place, St Albans’, Malvina Cheek, c.1943.
(© Victoria and Albert Museum, London; see back cover for more about the artist)

Included in this issue:

Bricks in the Corn Exchange
Roman Conference
Mary Matilda Howard
Our Victorian Predecessors

Farm Insurance
The Roman Theatre
Miskin’s Sawmill
Newsletter Award

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SAHAAS LIBRARIAN

Can I ask please whether there is amongst you the membership someone with library and /or archival experience who might be willing to consider taking on leadership of the Society's Library? I should say that I have given notice to Council that I intend to step down from September as a result of family and other external demands, including maturity! We have a very enthusiastic and productive team, but most are relatively new to Library work. I will continue to do one morning a week as often as I can, and would of course be available for advice and guidance. I would be very pleased to talk with anyone who might consider taking up this important role. Please contact me on 01727 760808 or email djmunro0@hotmail.com.

Donald Munro, Librarian

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is a great honour to be writing an introductory message to a chart-topping publication. This newsletter has won this year's top award for local history societies, a tremendous tribute to Jon Mein, to his predecessor John Humphreys, and to the editorial team. We are off to London on 1 June to collect the gong! (See page 5)

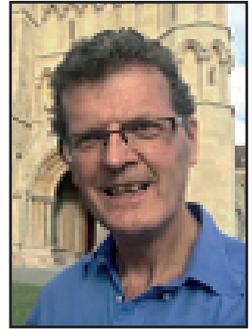
I am near the end of my second year as your President and I continue to be awestruck by the breadth and quality of everything that the Society is doing. This publication is just one example.

Our 175th anniversary in 2020 rapidly approaches. We have lots of things planned, not least a blockbuster anniversary lecture – watch this space!

But the single major commemorative event will be our exhibition in the new Museum + Gallery. I know there have been some criticisms that there is not enough history in the new museum. Well our exhibition will make up for that.

We have chosen thirty items to encapsulate the history of St Albans and Hertfordshire and with which our Society is linked. They will be displayed under the themes of 'discover, protect, innovate and

inform', since we think those four words sum up all that we are about. There will be items which have never been on display before or which have been borrowed



from national collections. We may wear the badge of a local history society, but our members have done things of national significance over the years. We have ourselves been history-makers.

John Morewood has been a brilliant co-ordinator of our exhibition plans. The exhibition will take place from the beginning of July 2020 and run through to September. It will coincide with a major exhibition on manuscripts produced in St Albans Abbey, some of which will be returning home for the first time in centuries. Many visitors are expected and we hope they will visit our exhibition as well. It will be a superb opportunity to raise our profile and attract new members.

We know what we want to display, we now have to bolt down the detail and particularly the design of the display and writing the captions for the exhibits. John will be contacting people who

have offered to help, but there will be plenty of opportunities for anyone else to be involved, both in terms of pulling the exhibition together or helping man it during expected busy times. Just drop John an email on tjjp199@yahoo.co.uk if you want to know more.

Our next year seems a long time away but we are already preparing for the AGM. You will see from this newsletter that we need a new Librarian and also a new publicity guru to take over from Donald Munro and John Cox. These roles

are not arduous, but they are both essential to our continuing success.

Finally I must apologise for the occasional audibility problems we have been experiencing at the Marlborough Road Methodist Church. We have tweaked the sound and invested in a state-of-the-art microphone headset and I hope we have resolved the issues, it certainly seemed to work fine at the most recent lecture.

Have a great summer.

Sandy Walkington

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the coming year June 2019 to May 2020 become due on 1 June 2019. The rates, which remain unchanged, 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 and standing order need take no action as payment will be collected automatically. Anyone wanting to switch to paying by direct debit, please contact the Treasurer by e-mail for the appropriate form at money@stalbanhistory.org.

Payment can also be made by cheque to the Membership Secretary by post:
David Smith, Membership Secretary, Kestrel Lodge, 32 Sutton Mill Road, Potton, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2QB

BALH NEWSLETTER AWARD

We are delighted to announce that the Society has been awarded the British Association for Local History's 'Newsletter of the Year' award for 2019. The presentation will be at the association's AGM on 1 June in London.

The association aims to promote the advancement of public education through the study of local history. This is the fourth time the Society or individual members have received an award from them. On this occasion the citation reads:

'For many ... worthy reasons this newsletter has been deemed to be the best that has passed through the reviews editor's hands this year. Firstly it records a local history society in robust good health. There are reports here on what a local history society should be doing - not just lectures and outings but, for example, maintaining its own library. Secondly the newsletter pays particular attention to

the physical reminders of St Albans' past - there are short features on the state of the Roman walls and on the clock tower and also one on an almost forgotten Second World War water tank which has survived in woodland. Thirdly, the newsletter is punctuated with photographs taken by members. There is a lot to be said for the short article: it is an encouragement for it to be read. I read this newsletter from beginning to end and, although I have only ever spent one evening in St Albans in my life, found its 35 [*sic*] pages thoroughly absorbing.'

So, hat tips to Jon Mein and Dee Drinkwater who edited and laid out the pages of the May 2018 edition, which was reviewed by the adjudicator, and especially to John Humphreys. Due to his careful nurturing of the newsletter over the previous five years we were in the right position to win.

Sandy Walkington

ST JULIAN'S – FROM LEPER HOSPITAL TO HOUSING ESTATE

Kate Morris has been working on the history of St Julian's. There is much to be explored and she invites those who have relevant skills (e.g. spreadsheets, transcription of account books, map drawing) and interest to join her.

Contact Kate on kate@englishinfo.biz or 07946 612447 for further information. Many thanks in anticipation.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will take place on Tuesday 10 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 2018/2019.
- c) Receiving reports from the President and group leaders of the Society's activities over the past year, and our plans for the future.

Although most members of Council (as shown opposite page) are willing to stand for re-election, we are sorry to say that, after years of service to the Society, both Donald Munro and John Cox have decided that – as from the AGM – they should resign as our Librarian and Publicity Officer respectively. Donald has written his own “job advertisement” (see page 2) to entice you to apply as his replacement, and of course we shall also need a replacement Publicity Officer. **We are therefore looking for volunteers to fulfil these two important roles on Council.** If you believe you could undertake one of these (not too onerous!) positions, please do discuss with either our president, Sandy Walkington, or myself.

Council also wishes to propose that Donald and John, and Roger Miles as our long standing archaeology representative, should be elected as Honorary Members of the Society.

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

SOCIETY TRIP TO WREST PARK

As a follow-up to the excellent talk we had last year about the gardens, we are organising a coach trip to the beautiful house and gardens of Wrest Park in Bedfordshire. This will be on Tuesday 11 June. Our tour will include the hand-painted wall paper collection, the English Heritage Archaeological Store with material spanning 2,000 years and the extensive gardens with the Long Water and Archer Pavilion. The cost will be around £40 per person - less for English Heritage members. The trip is limited so please email Tony Berk at tony@tonyberk.com if interested.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

As from September 2019, the positions of Publicity Officer and Librarian 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

Tony Berk - Chairman, Programme Development Committee

Peter Bourton - Website

Patricia Broad - Publications

Gill Girdziusz - Lecture Secretary

Pat Howe - 17th Century Research Group

Caroline Howkins - Clock Tower

Frank Iddiols - Technical Officer

Christine McDermott - Representative, *Herts Archaeology and History*

Jonathan Mein - Newsletter Editor

Roger Miles - Archaeology Group

Sally Pearson - Minutes Secretary

David Smith - Membership Secretary

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE NEW MA COURSES

Two new MA courses are available at the university.

1. MA in History – From the Local to the Global: this course takes “an innovative approach to the study of history ... covering the period from 1550 to the present, [and] explores the impact of big historical forces on everyday lives.”
2. MA In Folklore Studies: “for anyone curious about the traditions we follow, the customs we practice, and the legends we tell.”

For further details see www.herts.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate.

LIBRARY REPORT

Yet another busy period with visitors on most mornings in encouraging numbers.

Cataloguing proceeds apace. Beardsmore books are virtually complete. Tidying and rationalisation of the existing pamphlet stock similarly, and the cataloguing of previously uncatalogued pamphlets and those from the Beardsmore collection will begin shortly. Di Dunn, Ros Trent, Lin Watson, Caroline Howkins, and David Harrold continue their valuable contributions with great enthusiasm.

Arthur L. Cherry etchings. We are very pleased to have acquired for the princely sum of £18.16 six framed and glazed etchings of the St Albans area by Arthur L. Cherry spotted by Jon Mein in an auction house in Lincoln. This economy effected thanks to SAHAAS Member Hilary Fergusson and her Lincoln located son, for which we are very grateful.

Donations The Library continues to benefit from donation, most notably recently the **John G.E. Cox Papers**. Over several months John Cox has generously deposited eleven box files and more from his own papers. An avid collector of local materials, John's collections include many disparate and fugitive documents and photographs which might not have otherwise survived. This is another valuable resource for the city's local historians of

the future. Much of it we will keep as a personal file, but John is very happy for materials from his collections to be placed in other of the Society's research collections if they fit better there. John has also just given us the copy of the newly published third edition of Pevsner's *Hertfordshire* (Buildings of England). See note in Library Acquisitions page 9. Amongst several other smaller donations has been a clutch of archaeology books from Paul Eland. We are very grateful for all these donations

Parking at Sandridge Gate. We have had signs made and they are attached to the walls facing three parking bays near door 26 reserving them for SAHAAS visitors on Wednesday and Friday mornings. Hopefully this will improve the parking availability. Lyn Henny of SADC is still looking into allocating a disabled bay close to door 26.

Library Team Familiarisation sessions have been held for Library Team members on our Maps and the Architectural collections of J.T. Smith and Gerard McSweeney in order to enable our directing inquirers more quickly to the sources we hold. Thanks to Terry Price, Frank Iddiols and organiser Jon Mein for this. Simon West, the District Archaeologist, has run similar sessions introducing us to the work of the SADC Archaeology Unit.

Donald Munro

Library Notes

Recent Acquisitions

The life of Alice Barnham (1592-1650): wife of Sir Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St Albans, by Alice Bunton. London: Page and Thomas, 1919. 79pp, illus. "Mostly gathered from unpublished documents by A Chambers Bunton" on title page.

Hertfordshire, by James Bettley, *et al.* (Pevsner Architectural Guides: Buildings of England). London: Yale UP, 2019. 804 p., 120 col. + 80 b-w illus. ; 22cm. The eagerly awaited 3rd greatly (40 per cent) expanded edition of the classic guide to the buildings of the county. Generously donated by John G.E. Cox.

The book of Shenley, by Joyce Boswell. Buckingham: Barracuda, 1984. 116pp, illus. Gift of Paul Eland.

Recent journal articles

In *The Local Historian*, vol 49, no 1, January 2019

pp 41-50 "Timber management in South-east Hertfordshire, 1550-1910", by Peter Austin. This paper considers the management of timber in a particularly well-wooded part of the county. Evidence was drawn mostly from surviving account books in the Gascoyne-Cecil archives at Hatfield House, but also from Panshanger

estate documents in the Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.

In *Rickmansworth Historical Review*, No 17, February 2019
pp 7-11 "The New Poor Law and Hertfordshire's workhouses", by Karen Rothery. The New Poor Law of 1834 introduced better provision of care for the poor. Under the Poor Law Commission, individual parishes which had been responsible for help to those in need were grouped together into Poor Law Unions, and new workhouses were built. The author describes the establishment of the system in Hertfordshire, with a focus on Watford, with vivid details of daily life in the workhouse. The system ended in 1930. Many of its buildings have been inherited by the NHS.

pp 12-15 "Freight transport by road in west Hertfordshire, part 1", by Fabian Hiscock. Considers how freight was carried by road in this area in the later 18th century and first half of the 19th. Long distance freight used turnpikes, and a variety of wagons drawn by as many as eight horses. Limits were imposed on the loads and the horses in order to protect road surfaces. The economics of the business is detailed, with illustrations of the cost of horses and their feed, wagons and payload, speed and quality of roads all had to be taken into account. Notes on sources are provided.

pp 18-23 “Rickmansworth Manor: Barnard / Cornwall correspondence in the Rickmansworth Historical Society’s archives”, by George D Martin. Concerns the leases, ownership and occupants of the Manor from 1610 to 1670. This paper is a shortened transcription of documents made by T.T. Barnard in the 1950s. Occupants included the families of Wakering, Byng, Hewett and Bevill.

In *Herts Past and Present*, no.33, Spring 2019

p 2-5 “The truth of the matter: highway robbery and justice in 1647”, by David Pickup. This article looks at a robbery near Hoddesdon, and shows what information can be deduced about this incident from primary sources.

pp 7-12 “Farming in Hertfordshire in World War One: what the archives reveal”, by Julie Moore. Records at HALS provide much information on the state of farming in the county during the war years. Topics dealt with include the plough up campaign; women’s contribution to farming; clashes between inspectors from the War Agriculture Committee, landowners and farmers, and an airfield at Piggots Farm.

pp 13-18 “Norton’s first recorded foreigner, 1523-1552: a prosperous inn-keeper”, by David Croft and Ursula Scott. Norton had a Frenchman resident in the

Domesday survey, but this article focuses on Anthony Fankylcastell, possibly from the Low Countries. His name appears frequently in court records, being fined for offences against brewing laws. He left a will, and a transcription of his inventory is included.

pp 20-24 “Discovering a fulling mill at Wheathampstead”, by Mike Smith. Using maps from 1676 to 1898, and Environment Agency LIDAR data, the author traces the location of a fulling mill, and speculates on the duration of its occupation of the site.

pp 25-29 “Managing the poor in Hertfordshire 1635-1795”, by Carla Hermann. Despite the low level of illegitimacy, this article examines the harsh way bastard-bearers were treated by the legal system.

Tony Cooper

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to the following new members:

| | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| Peter John Aubusson | St Albans |
| Keith Brown | St Albans |
| Laurence Elvin | Watford |
| Ruth Herman | Colney Heath |
| Mark Percival | St Albans |
| Anthony Rowlands | St Albans |
| Katharine Sutton | Harpenden |

THE LIBRARY'S COLLECTION OF SALES PARTICULARS

Imagine a large suitcase filled to the brim with papers – this was the Beardsmore collection of sales and property particulars received by the society in 2018. It has proved to be an Aladdin's cave for anyone interested in the development of St Albans in the 19th and 20th centuries. Amongst the 186 documents are several which detail land sales from large estates both in and around the town. These often have fascinating colour plans attached identifying plots and locations. Tom Beardsmore's habit of attaching relevant sales notices and/or newspaper articles to his particulars add much interest to this collection.

The oldest item is for the Verulam Arms Hotel (now the Verulam House Nursing Home) up for auction in 1830 and advertised as having 19 bedrooms, stabling for 66 horses and being on the 'High Road to Liverpool'. The most recent is for the Childwickbury Estate in 1978. There are also leaflets advertising newly built houses on estates such as the Ragged Hall Estate (1938), Heritage Close (c.1972) and the Verulam Estate (1974).

Of particular interest, brochures regarding houses in Fishpool Street (1963) and Sopwell Lane (1971) provide evidence of the City Council's drive to encourage the modernisation of derelict or substandard housing. In 1971 the Council allocated two Sopwell Lane houses each to the National Coal Board, Eastern Electricity and Eastern Gas and invited them to install heating and hot water systems. These properties were subsequently opened as show houses as examples of 'what can be done to improve old houses to modern standards'. Information on improvement grants available as well as costs of works carried out was provided together with photographs showing 'before' and 'after'. These were especially interesting to me as in early childhood my family moved into an old St Albans property with no bathroom or running hot water. My sister and I remember the novelty of baths in a tin tub in the kitchen to this day!

A full list of particulars is now available on the website. As you will see, our material complements smaller collections at HALS, St Albans Library and the new museum.

Ros Trent

THE NEWSLETTER

Copy deadline for the August edition is 15 July 2019. If you have any comments about the newsletter or wish to submit content, please email me, Jon Mein, via newsed@stalbanhistory.org.

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

The annual Clockateers' Party was held again at the Verulamium Museum, which as always, proved to be a charming and atmospheric venue. Although the numbers were down on last year, the 'thank you speeches' by our president, Sandy Walkington, the Civic Society's president, Geraint John and by the Mayor, Councillor Rosemary Farmer were all warmly received by the Clockateers. The lucky winners of this year's prize draw were Ian Bower and Jim Watson, who each received a £25 M&S gift cards.

2019 marked the fourth Big Weekend for Hertfordshire with over 60 attractions, including the Clock Tower, donating free tickets for an online ballot. The Clock

Tower opened up exclusively for the winning ballot ticket holders on both days of the Big Weekend, 6 and 7 April. Along with their private viewing, all the winners were given a Clock Tower Memorabilia Goody Bag to take away with them which included a selection of merchandise, information leaflets and a set of four Clock Tower and St Albans prints. Although the tickets were popular and well over oversubscribed, only about half the winners actually turned up to claim their prize. Maybe people don't value what is given away free?

The Clock Tower was officially opened for the summer season on Good Friday, 19 April, by the Mayor. Sue Mann's exhibition of 'Poverty and Want in Past Times' will be on display on the first floor over the summer until 15 September.

We are always looking for ways of attracting more volunteers to help keep the Clock Tower open so if anyone has any ideas on how to recruit new Clockateers please do email us clocktower@stalbanhistory.org. (See also pg. 14)

Caroline Howkins



The first Big Weekend ballot winners to arrive at the Clock Tower on 6 April - Gerry and Gail Howe.

CALLING ALL RESEARCHERS

In response to recent interest from members in contributing to the new pamphlet series, we are gearing up to get the product off the ground. So it's a good moment to remind you about the series and the opportunity it allows for publishing research papers in printed form.

We are seeking contributions that contain original historical research on a subject related in some way to St Albans. The scope can extend to other areas of Hertfordshire where appropriate.

Papers should be between 5,000 and 10,000 words excluding notes and appendices. The format is expected to be A5. To keep costs down, illustrations will be black and white unless there is a special case for colour. To help establish the reputation of the series, papers will be peer reviewed. The series will soon have a name!

If you have an idea for a pamphlet, do please get in touch. I'd love to hear about it and I can tell you more about our plans and the publishing process. You can contact me via publications@stalbanhistory.org.

Pat Broad
Publication Committee

THE MUSEUM'S PICKLING PROJECT

Following a period of intense and urgent conservation, a collection of fascinating animal and plant specimens preserved in fluid will go on display in a new exhibition at St Albans Museum + Gallery from 23 May to 1 September 2019. The 'Pickling Project' explores a previously neglected part of the collection, and shines a light on the skills and processes required to look after the Museum's natural history collection.

Looking closely at conservation in a museum context, this exhibition offers a behind-the-scenes look at our activities and celebrates conservation as a profession as well as the work that Museum volunteers undertake to keep the service going. Visit and discover the weird and the wonderful in this exhibition.



Farhana Begum
St Albans Museums

CAN YOU SPARE A COUPLE OF HOURS OVER THE SUMMER?

If so, please consider becoming a 'Clockateer'. As members of the Society we take on the responsibility for keeping the Clock Tower open for the 10,000 or so visitors who climb the Tower each summer.

All we ask is that you do a 90 minute stint every so often. It is not a taxing job: just be welcoming. There are a few rules to learn which you will pick up working in the first instance alongside experienced members.

The money we raise goes in part to the Society's funds. This means we can, for example, run our extensive lecture programme yet keep the subscription at just £20 a year.

If you can spare the time, please email Caroline Howkins and Mike Carey at clocktower@stalbanhistory.org.

CLOCK TOWER CURIO NO. 4 - STRANGE INCARNATIONS

Images of the Clock Tower appear in all sorts of forms these days - on collectable plates, as jigsaws, poster sized photos in estate agents and coffee shops, adverts in leaflets and even a black and white photo covering an entire cubicle door at the Maltings ladies' toilets. But this is nothing new. There used to be a newspaper entitled *The Clock Tower*, which ran for several years from 1895. It reported in 1897 that a model of the tower was entered into a St Albans procession. The newspaper noted how it swayed and bobbed up and down as the person inside walked along the local roads.

Some 30 years later, the building was the inspiration for fancy dress at the annual staff party at J. Fisk and Son

Ltd. It can clearly be seen in the centre of the party photo printed in the *Herts Advertiser* (22 February 1929). The paper printed another representation of the tower on 25 October 1935 when Mr Sibley, of King's Road, London Colney, constructed a 12-foot-high model in his garden, complete with clock (See below).

Caroline Howkins



Sibley's Clock Tower (Photo courtesy of *Herts Advertiser* / Mike Neighbour)

THE LATER MONASTERY AT ST ALBANS - A RECENT PHD THESIS

We invited Rebecca Toepfer to write this note about her recent thesis The Abbey at St Albans and its Relationship with its Lordship in the Later Middle Ages. Rebecca was awarded her PhD by the University of Southampton.

Having grown up close to St Albans, in the village of Codicote, I visited the city regularly and appreciated the local history, wanting to explore it in more detail, therefore, it was natural to focus my PhD research on St Albans Abbey and the surrounding area in the later medieval period. My thesis examines the changing relationship between the monks and monastery of St Albans, and the townspeople and the tenants on the manors it held. It also includes a case study on the medieval manor of Codicote, where I delve into the lives of people living on the manor, how they faced the turmoil of the 14th century, and how much contact they maintained with the monks and monastery.

My research on the medieval monastery and the town has concluded that the relationship between the town and abbey

had three phases throughout its 800-year history. The first phase took place from the foundation of the abbey through to the 14th century, where the townspeople and monastery were very much interdependent. The townspeople needed the monastery for the town to grow, and the monastery needed the town for many of their economic needs. The second phase was during the tumultuous 14th century, where the townspeople fought the monastery for their freedoms; during this time the Black Death ravaged the country, leading to changes across the country, including St Albans, resulting in a revolt in the town. Fortunately for the monks, the perpetrators were caught and punished, and tensions settled. The third and final phase was from the end of the 14th century through to its Dissolution, when the town was able to function without the help of the monastery yet maintained a productive relationship that continued after 1539 when the Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII.

The thesis can be downloaded from the university's website:

<https://eprints.soton.ac.uk/422142/>

Dr Rebecca Toepfer

HELP NEEDED AT LECTURES

We are looking for members who are prepared to offer occasional assistance setting up our audio/visual system prior to lectures. Please contact David Harrold via david.harrold@hotmail.co.uk if you can help.

A WALK AROUND REPTON'S PANSHANGER

Not many motorists driving along the A414 between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford realise they are travelling on land that once was part of the Panshanger estate. But members of the Arc and Arc who went on the guided tour of the Park on Thursday 11 April certainly do.

The walk was led by Kate Harwood on a chilly, but sunny morning. The group set off across the fields, past the Osprey perch in some wetlands, looking out for the landscapes originally created by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown from about the 1750s, some of which were later changed by Humphry Repton who started work in 1799.

The park is in a valley which has the River Mimram as one of its main features and which feeds The Broadwater and a number of flooded gravel pits and reed beds. A number of weirs can be seen from the path and 'back in the day' three water wheels pumped and controlled the water flow, including to the Panshanger mansion.

The park contains the largest maiden (not pollarded) oak tree in the country, with a circumference of 7.6 metres. It is estimated that the tree is 500 years old

and there is speculation that it may have been planted by Queen Elizabeth I.

Following the death of the 7th Earl Cowper in 1905, the estate was inherited by Ethel Grenfell, Baroness Desborough. A large portion of the outlying farms forming the estate were sold by auction in 1919 for the creation of Welwyn Garden City. Lady Desborough died in 1952 with no heir, as a generation of Desboroughs had been killed in the Great War, and the estate was sold the following year. The house itself was demolished around 1954.

Some of the existing buildings on the estate are listed by Historic England including Riverside Cottage, a mid-18th century ornamental embellishment to the landscape added whilst Brown was working on the estate. A second storey



Kate Harwood leading the group
(© Sandy Walkington)

and wings were added when Repton was working there in the early 19th century.

After the 2nd World War part of the estate was purchased for gravel extraction and is now owned by Tarmac Holdings. Mineral extraction finished in January 2018 and Tarmac have gradually been restoring and re-instating the area as a country park in perpetuity, which was the legal obligation put on the purchasers in 1982 when permission was granted for mineral extraction.

The 'Friends of Panshanger' group was formed in 2013 to press the landowners to return a restored country park with a range of facilities to the general public and people of Hertfordshire.

Our thanks and gratitude go to Kate Harwood for a most interesting tour and to Pat Howe for organising it.

Guy Marshall



At the Orangery (© Guy Marshall)

SPECIAL OFFER - THE NEW 'PEVSNER'

Yale University Press is offering SAHAAS members 20 per cent off the new edition of Pevsner's *Hertfordshire*, inc. free P&P. This makes the price a competitive £28.00.

Terms: offer ends 1 July 2019; valid for UK orders only; enter promo code Y1918 at the checkout stage of your order on the Yale website: www.yalebooks.co.uk.

SEMINARS

The Society's Seminar Programme is now established and several very interesting topics have been presented and discussed. It is hoped the experience will have been an inspiration for even more research and interest in our local history.

Those with work in hand, who would like to benefit from airing their research so far, should contact Kate Morris (kate@englishinfo.biz), who is preparing the programme of topics for the next season. Don't be shy, let us know what work you have been doing!

‘VERULAMIUM: THE LIFE AND DEATH OF A ROMAN CITY’

The Society, together with St Albans Museums and Welwyn Archaeological Society, is organising this conference to mark St Albans Cathedral’s ‘Roman Festival’ and Verulamium Museum’s 80th anniversary.

The conference will provide an overview of recent research on the city and its hinterland including the extensive geo-physical survey of the city and recent excavations on the site of the Roman forum. Other papers will draw comparisons with research on other towns in the province, and re-examine some aspects of the debate about the end of towns in the province.

It is being held on Saturday 29 June at Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St Albans, AL1 3XG.

Refreshments

Coffee, tea and soft drinks will be available in the church hall during the breaks. Lunch is not provided. We invite attendees to bring their own food to eat in the hall or pop out to one of several nearby pubs and cafés (3 minutes walk). Alternatively the city centre with the new St Albans Museum + Gallery is a 5-minute walk from the venue and the Cathedral with, what will be in June, its newly

opened welcome centre just 10 minutes away.

Disabled facilities

The venue has disabled access and toilets. A loop system is available in the church. There is a small amount of roadside parking available close to the church.

Parking

There are several carparks within easy walking distance. For example, the Maltings carpark off Marlborough Road is the most expensive at £12.00 for an all-day ticket but is also the closest; in contrast, Ridgmont Road station carpark costs £2.80 for the day and is around a 10-minute walk from the venue.

Tickets

All the tickets for the conference have been sold apart from a handful we have held back. These are for SAHAAS members who are not on the ‘enews’ email system. The members’ price is £20 per ticket.

If you are not on ‘enews’ and wish to buy a ticket, please contact Sally Pearson by Friday 31 May to make the necessary arrangements: tel. 01727 812194 or email events@stalbanshistory.org.

Refunds are available up to seven days before the conference.

NB. For those wanting a brief change of theme during the lunch break, Dr Peter Burley will be leading a 20-minute walk to visit the location of the nearest surviving part of the town's medieval defences. It is also where the Wars of the Roses actually started and dramatic events unfolded in the First Battle on 22 May 1455. The walk will be limited to 25 people. Please let us know if you wish to join the walk when you register on the

morning of the conference. There will be no charge for this. Peter is co-author of *The Battles of St Albans*.

Full details of the conference are available on the Society's website. If you have any questions about the event, please email events@stalbanhistory.org.

**Kris Lockyear, Jon Mein, Sally Pearson
and Simon West**

The **conference programme** is as follows:

09.30 - Doors open

10.00 - Welcome - *Sandy Walkington, SAHAAS*

10.10 - Mapping Verulamium - *Dr Kris Lockyear, UCL Institute of Archaeology*

10.40 - Recent work in the region - *Simon West, District Archaeologist*

11.10 - Break

11.35 - St Albans Cathedral's 'Roman Festival' - *Lindsay Wong*

11.45 - Excavations at the Forum - *James Fairbairn, Oxford Archaeology East*

12.15 - Evidence for later phases - *Rosalind Niblett, former District Archaeologist*

12.45 - Lunch (*See above for details of the medieval defences walk*)

13.45 - Welcome back - *Peter Bourton, SAHAAS*

13.50 - 80 Years of Verulamium Museum - *David Thorold*

14.00 - 'My forum is bigger than your forum': responses to urbanism at Caistor-by-Norwich and Verulamium - *Dr Will Bowden, University of Nottingham*

14.30 - Revisiting "Towns and the End of Roman Britain" - *Dr Andrew Gardner (UCL Institute of Archaeology) and Dr Richard Reece*

15.00 - Break

15.25 - Life without towns: a post-Roman perspective - *Prof. Andrew Reynolds, UCL Institute of Archaeology*

15.55 - Round-table discussion - *led by Dr James Gerrard, University of Newcastle*

16.25 - And finally - *Kris Lockyear*

16.30 - Close

CATALOGUE OF GORHAMBURY RECORDS PUBLISHED ONLINE

I am very pleased to inform members of SAHAAS that HALS has recently published the catalogue of the records of the Grimston family, the Earls of Verulam, online. While catalogues for these records have long been available to consult in the HALS Archive Reading Room, they have not been made available before now on our online catalogue due to their complexity. This represents almost 10,000 catalogue entries.

Under the main reference of DE/V, the collection is in two halves:

- DE/V/1: 'Roman Numerals sequence': the first accession was listed by Revd Dr Moor at Gorhambury House in the 1920s and were deposited by Violet, Lady Verulam, in 1932. Moor used a system of Roman Numerals which the subsequent accessions could not be added to due to their complexity. We have retained them as part of the online catalogue rather than attempt to include them with later accessions.
- DE/V/2: 'Main catalogue': this consists of two further accessions made in 1962 and 2006.

To view the catalogue, go to www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/hals and click on 'search the archive catalogue.' Enter 'DE/V' in the search field and the two main collections will be visible.

Any records listed are available to consult in the HALS Archive Reading Room when we are open. Please do let us know in advance which records you would like to see. Brief entries for much of this collection have been available for several years on the National Archives' Discovery catalogue as part of the Access 2 Archives project but this is the first time they have been published online with their detailed descriptions.

I would like to thank Lord and Lady Verulam for their continued permission to deposit the records at HALS and to all the staff and volunteers who have worked on these vast and important collections over the years. I would also like to thank John Cox for his expert advice on Gorhambury records. John has been compiling a catalogue of the records of James Grimston, 5th Earl of Verulam and a sub-collection level description has been inserted while we work on editing the remainder.

Chris Bennett
County Archivist, HALS
hals.enquiries@hertfordshire.gov.uk

THE NEW LOOK ST ALBANS CENTRAL LIBRARY

The Library reopened on 25 March after a 6-month period of refurbishment, during which much local studies material was not available. I'd like to thank Society members for bearing with us during this time. I hope you'll enjoy spending time in the new space. Its increased natural light and enhanced view of the St Albans skyline have been two features of positive comment so far.



In the local studies section, some layout and storage has changed, but stock coverage remains as before, and everything should now be back. I have tried to signpost as previously, to clarify resources and how to use them, but this is still work in progress.

I have also created new printed subject indexes for illustrations and pamphlets, to be kept on their respective cabinets.

However, the best way to search for individual items remains STACLIX, the St Albans Central Library Index spreadsheet, hosted on the SAHAAS website. We are making progress on this, with half of the illustrations now individually indexed, though the Abbey is part of the territory still to be conquered!

Perhaps the biggest change is our new digital microfilm reader. This is similar to machines at HALS, and will work in the same way: i.e. as well as being printed, pages can now be saved to USB by buying a Digital Image Permit. This will be a learning curve, both for you and us, but I hope with goodwill on both sides we'll get good results out of it.

You can ask for me if you come in, but my colleagues will often be able to help, and can always take details if not. I work every Tuesday and Friday, and alternate Wednesdays and Sundays. My personal e-mail is probably better for any queries – shchalmers@yahoo.co.uk.

Scott Chalmers
Library Assistant
St Albans Central Library

THE CORN EXCHANGE – FORM AND MATERIALS

I have always been interested in the form and materials of the Corn Exchange and particularly its unusual creamy-yellow ‘white’ bricks; a heavy building material to transport before the railway arrived - much easier to use our thriving local brick industry. Local papers of the time and an excellent article in *Herts Countryside* (December 1979) by the late Dr Eileen Roberts tell us that this new Corn Exchange was built on the site of an earlier market building, demolished as part of the works and took the form shown in the 1890s photo (Fig. 1). These sources chronicle the history of the building, its considerable alteration around 1924 when the ‘fine western facade was

largely cut away below the cornice level’ and other alterations. A later, modern, remodelling brought the building back to an echo of the original as shown in the modern photo (Fig. 2).

What intrigued me was the origin of the bricks, how far did they come and where were they made? A report in the *Hertfordshire Mercury* of 5 July, 1856, mentions that tenders had been received for building ‘either in Huntingdon White Bricks with plinths, friezes, arches, &c., of Corsham Down Bath Stone; or the whole of stone.’ This is a clue to the bricks’ origin.

The British Brick Society could not specifically identify ‘Huntingdon White Bricks’, but they did mention the important brick works in Godmanchester, near Huntingdon, where, from the 1830s, white hand-made ‘gault’ bricks were manufactured using the white/cream lime-rich gault clays of the region. In 1845, Robert Beart began a more efficient steam-powered extrusion process to make these bricks more quickly and in greater numbers, particularly for the huge London market



Fig. 1. Corn Exchange, c.1895
(St Albans Museums ref PX5786)

- his works were conveniently situated close to the railway. This would have lowered the cost of these 'Beart' bricks and they were often specified for London buildings, which would have made them seem rather fashionable.



Fig. 2. Corn Exchange, 2016
(© St Albans Museums)

Why were this architectural form and materials chosen? Roberts points out that this style and colour went well with that of George Smith's early 1830s courthouse and town hall building (now the new museum) just to the north, with its painted rendered bricks and stone dressings. Perhaps use of a fashionable London brick in the Corn Exchange also played a part. These bricks are not common in St Albans, though they do appear in some house frontages.

In the 5 July 1856 report, Mr Biggs was chosen, unanimously, to erect the building for an agreed sum of £1,380 12s to include £28 for Portland stone and £8 for an oak floor. This suggests that Portland stone did in fact replace Bath stone in the specification. However, our SAHAAS library has a number of documents (Borough Records/14) relating to the Corn Exchange, including the Town Clerk, Thomas Ward Blagg's, note book. He still mentions Bath stone and white bricks.

The Godmanchester brick works were still standing in 1938. Though now demolished and the land developed as a residential housing estate, there is still a small lane called 'Brick Kilns'. This presumably recalls the place where the bricks were made, possibly carried by railway to Hatfield and thence by horse and cart to us to be built into our Corn Exchange.

Dr Tony Berk

SOCIETY'S 'ENEWS' MESSAGES

Are you a member of the Society but not receiving email messages from us? If you want to start, please send an email to:

www@stalbanhistory.org

FIRE! MANAGING THE RURAL RISK

“At St Albans, which is a market where they unload and set down their corn, every sack or load of wheat pays a pint to the Corporation.” Arthur Young

Population growth in the 18th century led to increased demand for food, particularly for wheat. Corn was brought from surrounding farms to an open sided market house in the centre of St Albans. ‘The Farmers Guide in Hiring and Stocking Farms’ printed in 1770 in London gives advice about buildings: they should be placed to enclose a farmyard, and a large farm needed two yards with the mouth of a pond inside. The barn needed to have sufficient room for the crops and the threshing floor in the barn to be large enough for several men to work at the same time. For ‘a fine, bright sample of corn’ to be had the floor of the barn should be of oak planks 2-3” thick, not of clay. The granary must have space for all the wheat and barley of two crops at least and be built to keep rats and mice out.

A considerable sum could be invested in buildings and the value of the crops and utensils therein. How did the farmer seek security for new wealth? The risk of loss from fire was real so it is not surprising that agents from insurance companies found eager clients around St

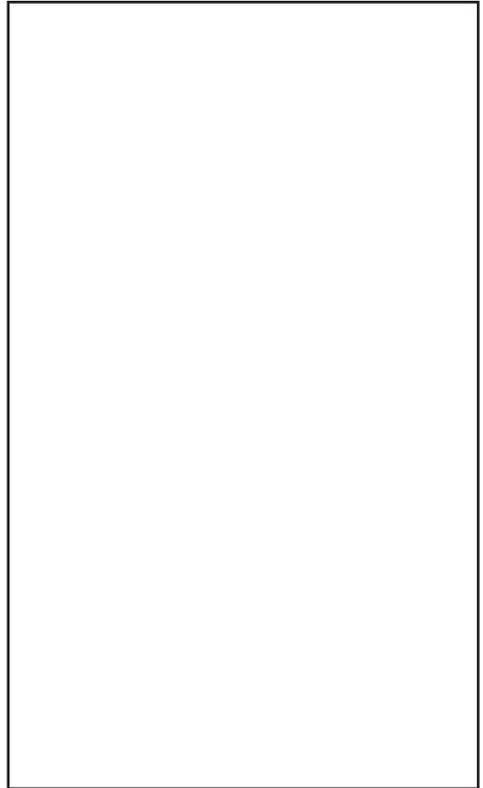


Fig. 1: Royal Exchange plaque (© Julia Merrick)

Albans. The Sun insurance company was widely used but there were also clients for the Royal Exchange company as well.

William Kinder, mindful of the value of his farm and possessions at Searches in St Stephen’s parish took out a policy from the Royal Insurance in 1805. The farm is listed by Historic England and dates from the late 15th century. In the 18th century a barn was added - with a plain tile roof, 10 bays, a gabled cart

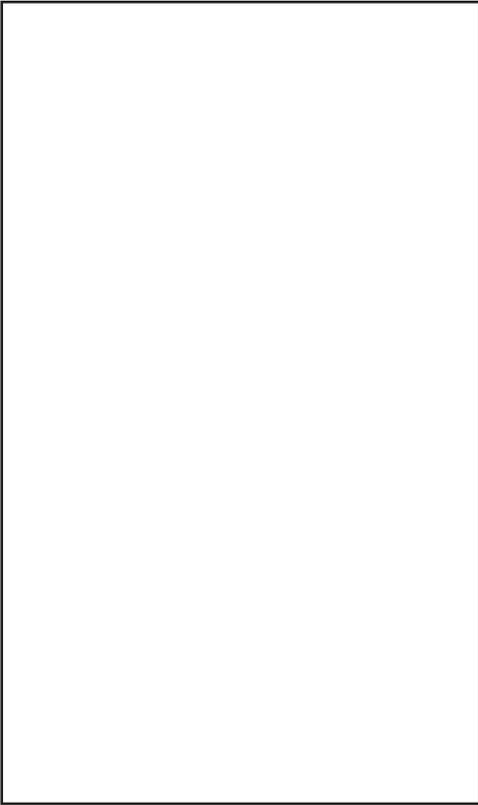


Fig. 2: Pyramid roof granary (© Julia Merrick)

entrance and two threshing floors. Added later was a granary with pyramid shape roof of red brick (per J.T. Smith; see Fig. 2).

The policy no. 217842 dated 27 September 1805 lists:

Dwelling house, fur, plate and books, brewhouse and dairy and contents, stable, carthouse, dumb barn, little stable, a granary, cowhouse, a new carthouse and rickyard, contents. Total valued at £2,600 for which a premium of £6. 19s was paid.

In St Michael's parish William Hollinshead, farmer of Kettlewells Farm, took out insurance with the Sun, policy no. 588768 on 19 Sept 1791 somewhat earlier than William Kinder at Searches Farm. From 1799 St Michael's parish map data the farm is described as 98 acres, owner Lord Grimston, tenant Wm Hollinshead. The fields are all listed as arable, wood or orchard/garden.

His policy covered:

- On his utensils and stock ... in his two barns Carthouse Cowhouse and Henhouse adjoining and situate aforesaid not exceeding £140
- Another barn stable granary and cart-house adjoining near not exceeding £220
- In the Rickyard on the said farm not exceeding £140
- Total £500

NB Free from such loss on hay or corn as shall be destroyed or damaged natural by the natural heat.

This last condition applied to all the Sun insurance policies I have seen, important because if corn or hay is stacked wet (more than 18 per cent moisture) it may heat and be liable to catch fire, a real risk when the weather is bad at harvest time.

Julia Merrick

MARY MATILDA HOWARD: AN INDEPENDENT VICTORIAN WOMAN

The centenary of publication of a Guide-book to the town, compiled by Mary Matilda Howard, was noted in the *Hastings and St Leonards Observer* in November 1945. The editor felt she was deserving of remembrance, but little was known of her.

His challenge apparently fell on deaf ears, but I can now tell her story. Mary Matilda grew up on Westfields farm in St Michael's parish, the daughter of farmer James Howard. Her mother having died in 1813 whilst she and her sister were quite young, and her father having remarried, Mary Matilda left home and became an independent woman. She supplemented a modest independence with income from writing in the manner of such as Jane Austen, Harriet Martineau and Charlotte Yonge. Writing was one of the few avenues for creativity and generation of income open to single women, though some found it necessary to publish with only initials or a male alias. Howard's works were diverse, encompassing fiction, natural history, theology and the guide-book and commercial directory for Hastings, her chosen home.

In 1841, by then aged 37, Mary Matilda was staying with sister Louisa and her London solicitor husband Alfred Bell in Gordon Square Bloomsbury and was described as 'independent'.

This independence would have come, not from her father, but her maternal grandfather Revd Randall Ekins, rector of Pebmarsh in Essex, a manor in which the Grimston family of Gorchambury had an interest. Mary Louisa had married James Howard in 1800 and her elder sister Matilda had married Joshua Lomax of the Childwickbury family, in 1798.

In Hastings, for her health, she found lodging with Dr James Mackness, physician to the Hastings Dispensary, and his wife in Wellington Square where they, as many practitioners did, provided accommodation for invalids visiting the town. She developed a close friendship with the couple, sharing interest in natural history and helping Mackness with the German language, which she took trouble to learn for the purpose. Mackness wrote on medical matters and climate. His *Dysphonia Clericorum or Clergyman's Sore-Throat, its Pathology, Treatment and Prevention* sold well. He had travelled widely and Mary Matilda accompanied the couple as they continued to do so, both in the interests of his

career and his health. She mentions in the memorial she wrote after his death in 1851, of socialising with 'Mr and Mrs Solly' in London, whose country home was at Serge Hill, near St Albans, an estate bought from Mary Matilda's grandfather, James Howard of St Julians. She even travelled with the Macknesses on a trip to the Rhine in 1847.

Encouraged in her writing by Mackness, she began publishing soon after her arrival in Hastings. In 1845 her *Wild Flowers and their Teachings* was distributed by Simpkin, Marshall & Co, at the time, the country's largest distributor of books. In her introduction she says that publication follows the good reception of her earlier but presumably unpublished volume. The first flower described is the Whitlow Grass, which she says grows abundantly on the gravestones of St Peter's Church, St Albans. This book was followed by *Ocean Flowers and their Teachings* in 1846. Both of these titles show a remarkable knowledge of the natural world and reflect a great intellect and literary interest as well as a theological inclination, though they contain more quotations than original writing. There were probably fewer than 200 copies of each title, beautifully bound and stamped and the copious illustrations are pressed specimens of the plants she described.

More mundanely, also in 1845, she had *The Handbook of Hastings, St Leonards and their neighbourhood* published by William Diplock of the Royal Marine Library in the town. It was also distributed by Simpkins. In 1845 the railway reached Hastings providing much greater access to the Regency resort of St Leonards, so the guide was timely. It went into several editions so was clearly well received. In the preface Mary Matilda acknowledges the work of Mackness as inspirational for her remarks on the study of Natural History and draws on his work on the *Climate of Hastings* for advice on specific parts of the town suitable for invalids with particular conditions.

Mary Matilda remained in Wellington Square with the widowed Mary Mackness until shortly before her death in Bloomsbury in 1893.

This remarkable lady seems to have been unrecorded in St Albans from the time she witnessed her sister's marriage at St Michael's in 1829 until the short reference to her death appeared in the *Herts Advertiser* in 1893, yet she is so clearly a daughter of the town from a family so well established in the society of St Albans at the time of her birth.

Kate Morris

OUR VICTORIAN PREDECESSORS

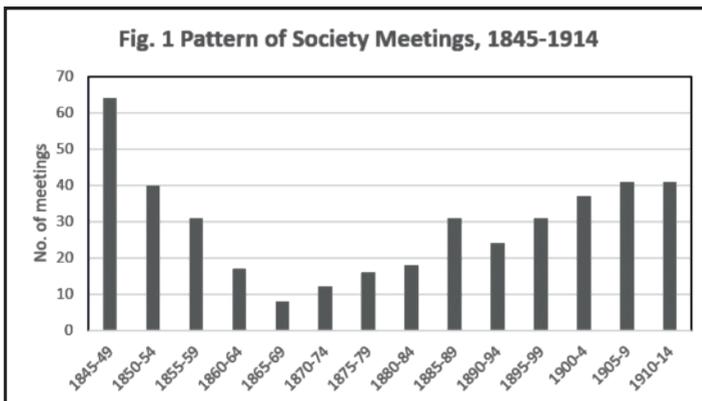
The forthcoming 175th anniversary is a chance to take stock of what the Society has achieved since it all started in what is now the Old Rectory in Sumpter Yard in June 1845. We are not the first to do this. Brian Moody's beautifully written history of the Society, *The light of other days*, was published in 1995 to mark the first 150 years of our existence. This time, rather than applying Brian's broad-brush, we have focused on our Victorian predecessors with two projects running concurrently for the last twelve months or so.

The Minute Book Transcription Project

Aided by modern technology, eight members* of the Society have worked through the winter months transcribing the Society's minutes from 1845-1915 into digital form. With this work now edited and consolidated, a second phase will start shortly to consider particular themes that have emerged. These

include the impact of new technology such as magic lanterns and the railway, the role of women in the Society and the developing practice of archaeology.

As a result of the initial phase of this project we can quickly see how activity rose and fell over the 70 years covered. This is illustrated by Fig. 1 which shows the combined number of meetings – committee and general – held in each five-year period. Clearly the Society's growth did not follow a smooth upward curve. Far from it. While there appears to be plenty of energy in the first 15 years from 1845, the next 20 years were anything but full of zest. In fact, a justifiable conclusion can be drawn that, for parts of the 1860s and 1870s, the Society was effectively moribund. This period started just as our predecessors achieved what is arguably our most significant contribution to the heritage of St Albans, that is by initiating and leading the campaign to prevent the Borough Corporation demolishing the Clock Tower.



The decline at this time can perhaps be attributed to a loss of zeal and the death of active founder members of the Society - people like Gerard Wolf Lydekker, a barrister, and the Revd Henry Nicholson, rector of the Abbey (see Figs. 2 and 3). Whatever the cause, the Society



Fig. 2: G.W. Lydekker c.1870 (HALS UDC9/10/714)

failed to find a sufficient number of men (yes, it was almost invariably men in the 1800s) with the drive to refill the tank. There were two notable exceptions, Revd Henry Fowler and Dr Ridgway Lloyd, but they appear to have had little support. It is only in the 1890s that the number of meetings reached a level comparable to the early years, and the Society took on a shape more familiar to us today. The members had to thank the likes of William Page, F.G. Kitton and C.H. Ashdown for that.

Seven Biographical Notes

Throughout our existence, even during the fallow years, members have contributed research still important to our understanding of the history of the area. The aim of the second project is to highlight these contributors not only by assessing their value but

by delving into the backgrounds of those who made them. To do this, we asked seven members of the Society to produce short articles about eight illustrious predecessors from the Victorian period. In particular we want to know how their contributions reflected the development of the study of history and archaeology at the time. This series of articles starts overleaf with Richard Grove Lowe and concludes in the November 2020 edition with husband and wife, Charles Henry and Emily Ashdown.

Jon Mein

* The transcribing team is Chris Argue, David Brine, Dee Drinkwater, Helen George, Alison Metcalfe, Diana Penton and Susan Stokes with Malcom Merrick providing the scans.

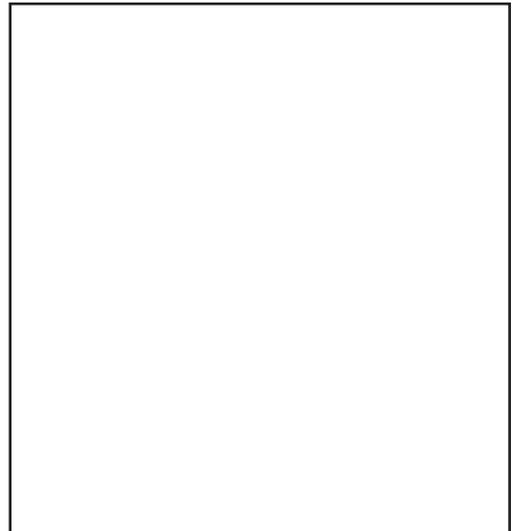


Fig. 3: Revd Henry Nicholson, c1865 (Courtesy of the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban)

THE MAN WHO FOUND VERULAMIUM'S THEATRE

Richard Grove Lowe was last of the four children of the Reverend Jeremiah and Anne Lowe, born on the 20 December 1801. In 1819 he became clerk to Thomas Witts Walford, an 'Attorney at Law and Solicitor in Chancery'. After serving his five years as clerk he became a solicitor himself, based in St Peter's Street. As befitted his station he took on various positions in the City, including becoming Mayor in 1832 and 1841, and holding the post of

Superintendent Registrar, Clerk to the Union and Coroner.

Lowe was nominated for membership to the St Albans Architectural Society on 29 December 1845, six months after the Society was formed, and elected on 15 January 1846. A special meeting of the Society's committee was held on 16 November 1847 which recorded the "new openings within the walls of Verulam" undertaken by Lowe, and voted him the sum of £3 towards the costs. What he had found was the Roman theatre, the first

example of its kind in the country. Lowe's excavations created a great deal of interest, with both the Archaeological Association and the Archaeological Institute donating funds towards the costs.

On 29 January 1848 the *Illustrated London News* published an article on the excavations along with a plan of the remains as far as was then known (Fig. 1). Lowe read a paper on the excavations to the Society on 12 April, which was then published by the Society — its first volume — later that year, along with an updated plan. The report published by Lowe received much praise at the time, for example in *the Archaeological Journal* (vol. 5, 1848, pp. 237–8),

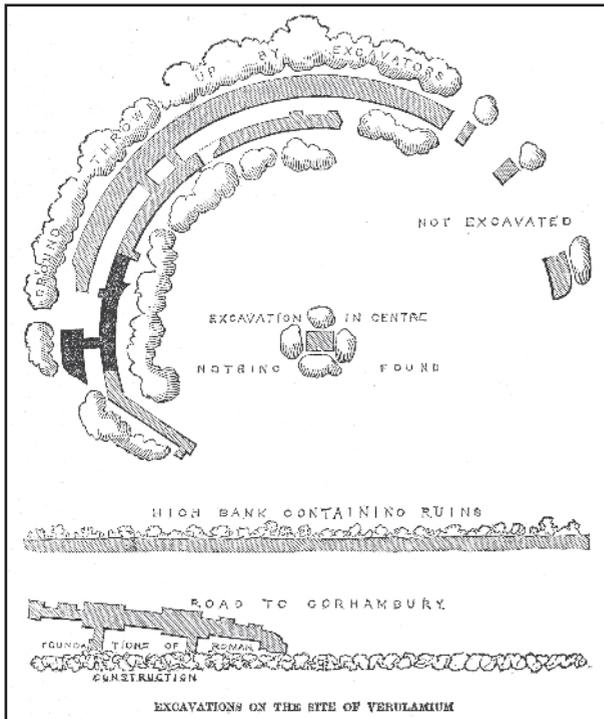


Fig. 1: plan of the excavations published in the *Illustrated London News*. (Kris Lockyear's collection)

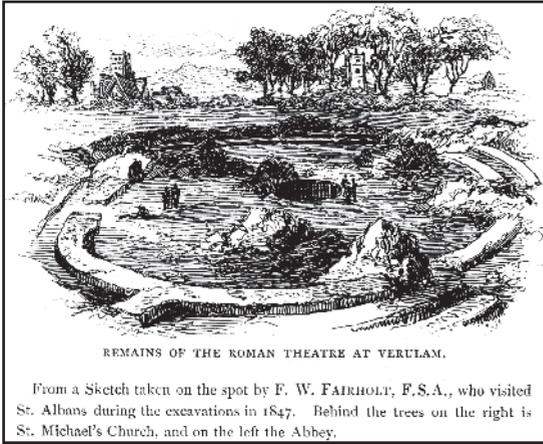


Fig. 2: excavation underway at the theatre. (From C.H. Ashdown's *St Albans, historical & picturesque*)

and especially for his care in “preserving a faithful narration.”

Subsequently, Lowe read papers to the Society on topics such as the excavations in the Abbey Orchard, the 2nd Battle of St Albans and Hertfordshire place names, but none of these was published. He was also voted 30 shillings by the Society in 1852 for an investigation of Watling Street but this does not seem to have taken place. Although notes based on Lowe's further observations at the theatre were published (e.g. *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vol. 6, 1851, pp. 91–2), or existed in manuscript form, Lowe did not publish an updated report on the findings at the theatre. He also made some useful observations on the Iron Age dykes around Verulamium, but again these remained unpublished.

The middle of the 19th century saw the foundation of many county archaeological societies, and the growth of archaeology as a subject. Although earlier antiquarians such as John Leland and William Stukeley are important sources, the spread of interest in archaeology amongst the middle classes at this time resulted in a great expansion in the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains and finds. Lowe's discovery of the theatre was important and, for someone with no training, his careful planning of the remains was excellent for the period. A more artistic recording was often employed (e.g. Fig. 2). Unfortunately, the necessity of recording stratigraphy was not commonplace at the time, despite its application to archaeology as early as 1799 by John Frere. The excavations at Silchester by the Society of Antiquaries of London, in the late 19th century, employed a similar method of “wall chasing.” It is a shame that Lowe did not publish more of his careful observations and thoughtful ideas.

Lowe never married and, when he died in 1872, his estate went to his sister, Mary Emm Searancke. He is buried, where he was baptised, at St Michael's.

Thanks to Ian Bower and Frank Iddiols for their help with this article.

MISKIN'S: VIEWS ANCIENT AND MODERN

With its base on Romeland Hill, building firm Miskin's was a main-stay of the local economy for over 100 years from the 1850s. Employing upwards of 400 hands in the late Edwardian period, the company had a good claim to be the largest employer based in the city. Evidence of their work from this time is all around us: from the original Garden Fields school buildings in Catherine Street to the Roman Catholic and Trinity churches near the city station. Recently two, roughly contemporary, photos have come to light that illustrate the development of one aspect of the business: the sawmill. These are useful as we otherwise know next to nothing about the company's early operations.

Fig. 1 is a view Miskin's wanted the world to see. Taken from the *St Albans Pictorial Record*, a promotional publication dating to 1915, it shows what the accompanying blurb describes as 'an extensive and well-equipped steam joinery'. Machines such as morticers and thick-nessers are on display.

This was an important photo to show prospective customers: as the English carpentry trade had been slow to take advantage of new technology in the last years of the 19th century, it became victim to cheaper machine-prepared timber from Scandinavia and North America. How the machines were powered is not as clear-cut as Miskin's would have us believe. If it was steam, then why aren't the visible pulleys attached to the machines? Or were they individual electric powered machines?

Fig. 2 depicts the adjacent woodyard full of reclaimed timber, the moulded pillar lying on the tip being a particular give-away. This traditional view of the sawmill provides a useful contrast to the promotional photo shown in Fig. 1. It is one that

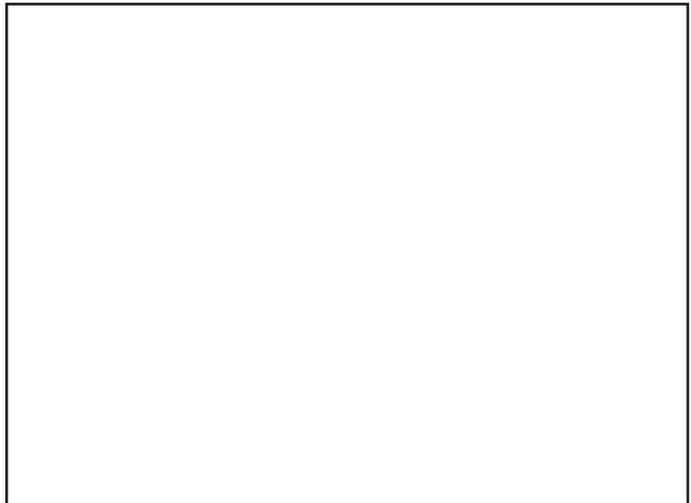


Fig. 1: Miskin's sawmill, c.1915
(Photo reproduced courtesy of HALS / St Albans Library)

would have been familiar in St Albans in the 1600s. For example, the workers are using tools such as pit saws and adzes listed in a probate inventory from 1685 of a local carpenter, the appropriately named John Chopping (HALS A25/4174). Use of the pit saw (see Fig. 2, far right) was in decline in the early 1900s as machinery took over.

The same applies to the adzes which you can see in the hands of three men (far left and centre) who, to the untrained eye, appear to be holding pick axes. The tool's purpose was to level and shape the object after it had been axed to the requisite size. (There are several types of adze in the Salaman Tool Collection at St Albans Museum – see Fig. 3.) Made to be swung in a circular motion between the legs of

the standing man, the adzes shown in the photos were not for the faint hearted. In his *Dictionary of Woodworking Tools* (1975, pp. 24-5), Ralph Salaman recorded the saying of coachbuilders in Manchester: 'The adze is the only tool the Devil is afraid to use'. Health and safety officers are no doubt pleased then that the adze is rarely used today and only then by specialists.



Fig. 3: An adze in the Salaman Collection
(© Frank Iddiols)



Fig. 2: The woodyard on Romeland Hill c.1920
(Photo reproduced courtesy of Jo Mitchell)

With thanks to Jane Harris and Liz Rolfe for their help with this article and also to Sarah Keeling of St Albans Museums for providing access to the Salaman Collection.

**Frank Iddiols and
Jon Mein**

NEW FROM THE HERTFORDSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

Hertfordshire Population Statistics 1563-1801 includes tables with population figures for 127 pre-nineteenth century Hertfordshire parishes. The data come primarily from ecclesiastical sources which counted parishioners, sometimes non-Anglicans, whilst others simply counted 'houses'. The original sources did not list individuals' names. The tables include all of the figures available from each source, but returns do not survive for every parish in every source. Introductory chapters discuss the figures in general terms, population trends in so far as they can be ascertained, Dissenters and Roman Catholics, and how to interpret and use the tables.

First published in 1964, and long out of print, the statistics have been reprinted

by the Hertfordshire Record Society (HRS), as a tribute to Lionel Munby who was a founding member of the Society and its first Honorary Secretary. All of the data are, of course, still valid, but this reprint provides the opportunity for some amendments and additions to be made: archival references have been updated, footnotes and a postscript have been added referring to recent work on the various sources, and two new appendices provide some recently-discovered data from the Archdeaconry of St Albans dated 1595 and references for some surviving hearth tax returns.

Published this month, the book is free to members of the HRS, £5 and post and packing otherwise. For further details see www.hrsociety.org.uk.

Dr Heather Falvey

MORE ABOUT MARGARET WIX: THE 'JUNIOR WIX'

The article by Anne Wares in the last newsletter about Margaret Wix, the City's first woman mayor, was of particular interest to me. As Vice Chairman of the Hertfordshire Schools' Football Association, I am familiar with an important legacy she has left. In 1929 Miss Wix accepted an invitation to become president of the association's predecessor, the Herts and Luton Schools' Football Association. That same year, true to her interests in education, she presented a trophy to be played for 'by juniors in schools'. In 1930 Fleetville School won the first competition for the 'Junior Wix', a success they followed up, after a long wait, three years ago. Perhaps some members have Wix memories or, better still, a silver medal or photo to share. If so, I would be delighted to hear from you. My email address is dmwillacy@ntlworld.com.

David Willacy

LECTURE PROGRAMME

21 May 2019 only

All lectures commence at 7.45pm.

All lectures are held at Marlborough Road Methodist Church.

Late changes will be notified on our website and via e-news.

Non-members will be charged £5 for attendance at a lecture.

Tuesday 21 May

London's Lea Valley: Britain's best kept secret?

Dr Jim Lewis

London's Lea Valley can claim to be the birthplace of the post-industrial revolution, the electronic technological revolution which began with the invention of the diode valve by Professor Ambrose Fleming. This inspired device, invented and developed at Ponders End, Enfield not only paved the way for today's multimedia electronics industry, but also created the delivery platform for space travel, e-mail and the Internet, not to mention the computer. The talk will also explain that the Lea Valley had more industrial firsts than anywhere else in the world.

Dr Jim Lewis has spent most of his career in the consumer electronics industry, apart from a three-year spell

in the Royal Air Force servicing airborne and ground wireless communications equipment. When working in the Lea Valley for Thorn EMI Ferguson he represented the company abroad on several occasions and was involved in the exchange of manufacturing technology. Currently he is a consultant to Sir Terry Farrell & Partners on the historical development of London's Lea Valley. As a volunteer, he also teaches students who have learning difficulties for local Social Services. Jim is currently Contributory International Professor to Marion University in America teaching business students.

SPONSOR A LIBRARY BOOK

The Deeds of the abbots of St Albans by Prof. James G Clark, (Boydell, 2019) 700+ pp. is due in the autumn. The pre-publication price of £81.25 represents a hefty part of the Library's annual book budget.

We would be most grateful if there is a Member or Members kind enough to consider sponsoring this edition of Walsingham's *Gesta Abbatum* for us.

Please contact Donald Munro via library@stalbahshistory.org



Clock Tower and Abbey Gateway by Cheek
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Top right: Market Place today
© Frank Iddiols.



MALVINA CHEEK

The watercolour on the front cover shows the building in the Market Place adjacent to the Corn Exchange. This is by the alley that cuts through to Chequer Street. (For the modern view see the photo above top right.) While the image itself may not be to everyone's taste, its provenance is interesting. The artist, Malvina Cheek, was one of 63 commissioned by the Committee for the Employment of Artists in Wartime to record scenes of the home front. This 'Recording Britain' programme, established by Sir Kenneth Clark, ran for three years from 1940 and resulted in some 1,500 works, many of which were subsequently exhibited in London and beyond.

Judging by entries on the V&A's online catalogue, Cheek painted three watercolours of St Albans and one of Redbourn amongst several contributions to the programme. She moved here during the war for work and by 1944 was teaching at the School of Art in Victoria Street. Cheek died just a few years ago, in 2016, aged 100.

A comparison of her Market Place watercolour with the modern photo of the same building (see top right) shows red brick replacing plate glass. With the 'high street' in sharp decline, should we expect further changes like this in the city centre?