



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE  
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER 214 November 2019



Projecting the Abbey's wall paintings — see pp. 20-21.  
© Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban

### Included in this issue:

**New Society Publication**  
**Possible Celtic Links**  
**Society's Seminar Programme**  
**St Michael's Street Excavation**

**Revd Henry Fowler**  
**Pageant Fever**  
**Science Exhibition**  
**The King's Painter**

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## MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members:

Paul & Sally Cartwright	St Albans	Karen Rothery	Welwyn G.C.
Rosemary Farmer	Harpenden	James Robertson	Watford
James Gaffney	St Albans	Rose Thomas	St Albans
Katherine Horner	St Albans	Derek Tynan	Harpenden
Alwyn Lewis & Penny		Julia Verney	Harpenden
Martell Jones	St Albans	Julie Vincent	Elstree
Imelda Keenlyside	St Albans	Joan & Ashley Walton	St Albans
Richard Mills	St Albans	Andrew Willbourn	St Albans
Judith Pandal	St Albans		

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Studying for my MA, I have a lot of history reading to do. It can be quite depressing when the journal articles we are asked to read are almost incomprehensible in terms of their English. So the lucid and accessible writing produced by the Arc & Arc is a diverting pleasure.

This newsletter is as well written as ever. If you have not bought our new book on architect Percival Blow, who did so much to shape the fabric of St Albans and Harpenden, hurry while stocks last – and remember that if you buy it direct from us, you get a 22 per cent discount and we get to keep all the money rather than having to share it with a commercial bookseller.

Hot on the heels of Percival Blow we have *St Albans Wills, Inventories and Probate Accounts, 1600-1615*. This is another tremendous achievement by our 17th Century Research Group and we have to express our gratitude to the Hertfordshire Record Society for publishing this 482-page volume.

As well as producing publications, our members publish as well. Fabian Hiscock's book *Passing Through* about the Grand Junction Canal in West Hertfordshire has just been published by the University of Hertfordshire Press. And Geraint John, who is President of our sister St Albans Civic Society, is co-author of an about to

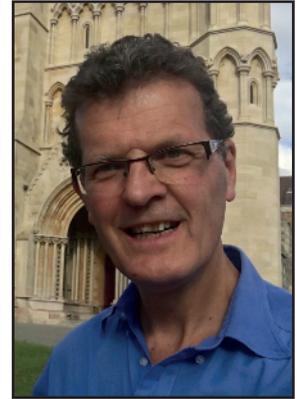
be published book on the history of *Olympic Stadia: Theatres of Dreams*.

One of the themes of our planned 175th anniversary museum exhibition

is how throughout our existence we have both directly published original research or our members have themselves made significant contributions to history and archaeology. The phrase 'It's in our DNA' can be toe-curling, but we should be proud that our rich harvest of scholarship continues.

The new exhibition at St Albans Museum + Gallery on *Science in St Albans* has just opened. Some concern has been expressed at the relative paucity of local history at the Museum. This new exhibition is splendidly 'parochial', majoring of course on Francis Bacon but highlighting other local giants from Wallingford to Hawking. Later this year there will be the exhibition on the St Albans pageants, as described by Mark Freeman in these pages. As a former Pageant Road resident, I resonate with the theme!

Our own 175th exhibition next year will also illuminate archaeology and local his-



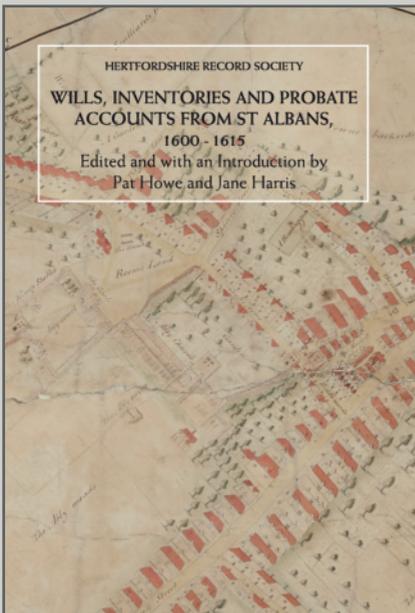
tory. These are all temporary exhibitions - one of the objectives of the new museum is to vary the offer and give an opportunity for far more aspects of our local history to be displayed. But some of our members have also been discussing with the Museum's curators how the permanent displays at the Museum might better reflect St Albans's rich history, watch this space.

Our Society was originally founded because of concern at the loss of the medieval heritage of the town – that is why architecture comes first in our title. The planned redevelopment of the city centre site to the south of the Alban Arena does not threaten the demolition of any

historic buildings but the scale of the proposed project is a concern. Let us hope that some reshaping of the project does result in a more appropriate development which really will be a conservation area of the future.

As we were going to press, we heard the sad news that Joyce Wells died on 27 October. Familiar to those of us with long memories of the Society's activities, Joyce had been a member for over 40 years serving as our Librarian for 14 of those. A fuller appreciation will follow in the February 2020 newsletter.

**Sandy Walkington**



## Hot off the Press

*Wills, Inventories and Probate Accounts from St Albans, 1600-1615*

Using transcriptions produced by the SAHAAS 17th Century Research Group, this new volume provides rich insight into daily urban life in St Albans in the early modern period.

The book includes an introduction written by Pat Howe and Jane Harris.

Published by the Hertfordshire Record Society

For more details please see the facing page.

## **HOT OFF THE PRESS: PROBATE DOCUMENTS FROM THE EARLY 17TH CENTURY**

By the time you read this, our new book, *St Albans Wills, Inventories and Probate Accounts, 1600-1615*, will be available. Published by the Hertfordshire Record Society (HRS) and based on the work of the SAHAAS 17th Century Research Group, the volume contains the transcriptions of 100 wills, 151 inventories and 20 probate accounts of St Albans residents together with a 37-page index.

As the blurb on the HRS website tells us, testators from this important urban centre include gentlemen, yeomen, husbandmen, widows, craftsmen, tradesmen and retailers, such as innkeepers and grocers. More unusual occupations include a bottle-maker (Richard Bull), a coverlet weaver (John Hodgkinson), and a musician (John Streete). The inventory of Thomas Camfeild, shoemaker, gives the contents of his shoe shop, with shoes itemised in sizes; that of Robert Woolley, draper, provides names of numerous fabrics and their costs. Values of the probate inventories vary widely indicating great contrasts in wealth at the time of death. The volume includes an introduction written by Jane Harris and myself setting the documents in the context of early modern St Albans and analysing their contents to demonstrate what they disclose about life (and death) in the town at that time.

The 17th Century Research Group, to which around 100 members of the Society have contributed at one time or another, has been researching life in early modern St Albans for nearly 30 years. Extending our publishing tradition, this book is our second major volume. The first, the landmark *St Albans: A Thoroughfare Town 1650-1700*, was produced in 2003. It received much academic praise for its contribution to the general understanding of 17th century English urban life. We have continued to publish journal articles and pamphlets since then. If you would like to know more about our work please see the Society's website or send me an email via [century17@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:century17@stalbanhistory.org).

I must thank the HRS's Heather Falvey and Sue Flood for preparing the text for publication, a significant task for a 482-page volume. Above all, I should record my gratitude to the members of the group who have spent many hours interpreting and transcribing these original documents written in 'Secretary' script: the late Sylvia Beare, Susan Bellamy, Scott Chalmers, Jane Harris, the late Gill Harvey, Ailsa Herbert, David Lasky and Carol Parker; and to Irene Cowan, Sheila Green, Frank Iddiols and Jon Mein for their editorial help.

The volume is free to HRS members as part of their annual subscription. The price to SAHAAS members is £17.60 plus any post and packing (RRP £22.00).

**Pat Howe**

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 10 September 2019 at Marlborough Road Methodist Church. 103 members attended.

- 1. Apologies were received from** Christine Aitken, Roy and Christine Bain, Peter Bourton, Roy and Doreen Bratby, Jenny Burley, Roderick and Maggie Douglas, Sheila Green, Stuart Henderson, Fabian Hiscock, Alan Hobson, Geraint John, Rosemary Knight, Richard Mein, Anthony Oliver, Liz Rolfe, David Smith, Francesca Weal.
- 2. President's comments.** The President, Sandy Walkington, welcomed members to the AGM and highlighted the 175th anniversary of the Society which would be celebrated in 2020. There will be a major exhibition at the new Museum + Gallery, and a gala lecture on 28 July by a historian of national distinction. John Morewood was thanked in particular for his work in preparing for these.

The Society has experienced peaks and troughs in its history, but the scale and quality of current activity indicates that we are very much on an upward curve at present. The President acknowledged the excellent work done by individual members to achieve this: the publication of a new book (Pat Broad); an attractive lecture programme (Gill Girdziusz); a redesigned website (Peter Bourton); interesting visits (Tony Berk, Pat Howe and Bryan Hanlon); a stimulating seminar programme (Kate Morris); an award-winning newsletter (John Humphreys and Jon Mein); a successful conference *Verulamium: The life and death of a Roman city* in conjunction with other local groups (coordinated by Jon Mein and Sally Pearson); all underpinned by an excellent library resource (Donald Munro and his team). This work is ably supported by key members of the Council (David Moore, Bryan Hanlon, Peter Burley and Sally Pearson). If approved by the meeting, the Society would soon be welcoming three new honorary members, bringing the total to eight. The ordinary membership stands at a healthy 518, and the 175th anniversary activities will provide a great opportunity for increasing that number.

- 3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2018.** These had been circulated with the November 2018 newsletter. In the absence of any questions, their adoption was proposed by Jon Mein, seconded by Peter Burley, and agreed unanimously.
- 4. Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2019.** These had been circulated with the August 2019 newsletter. In the absence of any questions, their adoption was proposed by Jane Kelsall, seconded by Pat Howe, and agreed unanimously.

- 5. Reports from Groups.** These had been circulated with the August 2019 newsletter. In the absence of any questions, their adoption was proposed by Christine McDermott, seconded by Helen Bishop, and agreed unanimously.
- 6. Election of members of Council.** The following members were elected *en bloc*, to serve until the next AGM, having been agreed unanimously by the meeting:

Peter Burley	Vice-president
Bryan Hanlon	Secretary
David Moore	Treasurer
Tony Berk	Chairman, Programme Development Committee
Peter Bourton	Website
Pat Broad	Publications Officer
Gill Girdziusz	Lecture Secretary
Pat Howe	17th Century Research Group
Caroline Howkins	Clock Tower
Frank Iddiols	Technical
Christine McDermott	Herts Archaeology and History
Jon Mein	Newsletter Editor
Roger Miles	Archaeology Group
Sally Pearson	Minutes Secretary
David Smith	Membership Secretary

All these members were thanked for being willing to serve on the Council. Two new members are sought, to cover Library and Publicity. As there were no nominations at the meeting, it was agreed that the President would follow this up with individual members.

- 7. Appointment of Honorary Members.** It was unanimously agreed that John Cox, Roger Miles and Donald Munro should be made honorary members of the Society, in recognition of their many years of service. Donald Munro thanked the meeting, on behalf of all three new honorary members, expressing their delight at this recognition. He commented on the range of talented volunteers who help make the Society so successful, and on how much he had enjoyed being part of such a positive team. He wished the Society all the very best in the future.
- 8. Election of an Independent Examiner of Accounts.** The election of Chris Hall was confirmed unanimously by the meeting.

The AGM was followed by a lecture given by Ann Dean, Tony Berk and Rob Weston entitled: *'A fiver for your vote, sir?' – bribery and corruption in St Albans 1850*

## LIBRARY REPORT

The Library continues to be productive with the team busy cataloguing and listing outstanding materials. A great deal of research is underway by members of the Society for next year's 175th anniversary. Several enquiries have been fielded from the general public about, for example, Prince Louis's stay in the town in the early 13th century and the history of Prospect Road.

Welcome to Genevieve Wilson who has recently joined the Library Team. She will be working to free up some space on the journals shelves and contributing with Frank Iddiols and David Harrold to the incipient maps project.

Many thanks to Rod Cowper for his donation of a large powered adjustable-height table. The table adds to the desk space on offer on particularly busy days.

This report is the first since Donald Munro stepped down as the Society's Librarian. To mark his 'retirement' many of the team – old and new – lunched at the John Bunyan public house at Coleman Green where we presented Donald with a bottle of a suitably Scottish beverage. With no Librarian in place currently, we are developing a structured *modus operandi* to ensure nothing falls by the wayside. We are still seeking someone to take over from Donald – it is not an exacting role – so if

you have library experience and are interested in contributing to an important local history research facility please do email us via [library@stalbahshistory.org](mailto:library@stalbahshistory.org).

## The Library Team

### Library Notes

#### Recent acquisitions

A particularly interesting addition to the Library's collection is *Writing history in the Anglo-Norman world*, edited by Laura Cleaver and Andrea Worm. Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2019. 282p., ill. It contains two substantial chapters on Matthew Paris: "Artistic patronage and the early Abbots of St Albans", by Kathryn Gerry; and "Matthew Paris, Cecilia de Sanford and the early readership of the 'Vie de Seint Auban'", by Laura Slater.

*The Pubs of Wheathampstead 1830-1914*, by Ruth Jeavons *et al.* Wheathampstead: Wheathampstead History Society, 2019. 66p., ill. Researched and written by four members of the local society, this charts the effects of the rapid rise in the number of pubs in the parish in the mid-1800s. Decline set in around 1870 and the causes of this are also explored.

*Beer & bankruptcy: The rise and fall of a family firm in Victorian Kimpton*, by Peter Hale. Kimpton: Kimpton History Group, 2019. 84p., ill. The Kingsley family's frequent resort to the courts both as plaintiffs

and defendants allows the author to uncover a rich history of a country brewery.

### Recent journal articles

In *Rickmansworth Historical Review*, no. 18 June 2019.

pp 7-10 "Freight transport by road in west Hertfordshire, part 2", by Fabian Hiscock. Weather conditions and maintenance could cause delays to canal traffic, so merchants might choose to use the roads instead. This article discusses local road problems, names some of the local carriers, and suggests what they might have carried. The coming of the railways caused a rapid decline in long-distance road freight transport, but vans and carts continued to be used for local deliveries.

Experiments were made with steam-powered wagons but these were not successful. pp 14-16 "Baedeker: around Rickmansworth", by Graham D. Martin. This is a transcription of the Rickmansworth section of the Baedeker guidebook to London and its environs for 1898. It is essentially a walking tour of a very rural area.

pp 17-22 "West Hertfordshire: in the steps of Herbert Tompkins, Part 5: Rickmansworth to Abbots Langley via Sarratt and Langleybury, 16 February 2018", by Brian Thomson. A continuation of the walk following Tompkins account in his book of 1902. (Part 4 was noted in Library Notes of February 2019.)

**Tony Cooper**

### WHERE IN ST ALBANS ... ?

... was this c.1914 photo taken? The clue lies in the two pairs of cottages. See p. 15 for the answer. (The photo is reproduced courtesy of Andy Lawrence)



## CLOCK TOWER REPORT

It seems fitting that the recent demonstrations from Extinction Rebellion and the anti-prorogation protestors were staged outside the Clock Tower. Our tower was originally built as a protest against the authority of the Abbey by the townspeople of St Albans. It was completed by 1405 only a few metres away from the pilgrims' entrance to the Abbey and was high enough to look the Abbey in the eye. The clock and the bell meant that the townspeople could regulate their own day and gain independence from the Abbey. Today the image of the Clock Tower is used as a symbol of the city's heritage and history but its origins stem from rebellion and revolution.

The Clock Tower is now closed for the season but will open for a final visit on Sunday, 17 November, from 2pm to 6pm, for the turning on of the city's Christmas lights. Visitor numbers for this year are down a few hundred on last year: 10,576 compared to 11,055 for 2018. This is partly due to having to close for three days due to the demonstrations.

We are always looking for new volunteers to join the roster of Clockateers. Manning the Clock Tower with another clockateer is a fun and interesting way to meet new people and talk to the diverse range of tourists who visit our city. This year's entries in the 'Visitor's Book' certainly shows that



Protestors outside the Clock Tower, September 2019 (© Caroline Howkins)

we have had visitors from all over the world – from Canberra, Perth, Sydney, Adelaide, Melbourne, Brisbane, the US, from Arizona to Washington, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, China, India, Mexico, South Africa and all over Europe including Worms, Germany (twinned with St Albans). Please email [clocktower@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:clocktower@stalbanhistory.org) if you would like to know more.

**Caroline Howkins**

## PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The launch on 5 September of the Society's book about local architect Percival Blow was a memorably enjoyable evening. Waterstones kindly hosted the event in their bookshop at 8 St Peter's Street, a building designed by Blow in 1920 for Oakley and Co. Ltd.

Well over 60 people came along, many of whom live or work in Blow-designed buildings. Peter Burley and Sandy Walkington presented the event. Guest of honour was Christopher Blow – Percival's grandson – who talked about his grandfather's work and legacy.

Guests were generous with their praise for the book, which is fully illustrated with original drawings, plans and contemporary and current photographs of Blow's buildings. They also enjoyed the display of some of Blow's original architectural drawings. Sales of the book are going well though we need to sell another 70 or so copies to cover the Society's share of production costs. So we'd encourage you to buy direct from us rather than a bookshop – you'll get the members' special price of £6.99 and we don't have to give trade discounts to

the bookshops. Our bookstall will be open at all talks up to Christmas and at the New Year Party. See p. 35 for other ways of obtaining the book.

As a goodwill gesture we are giving complimentary copies of the book to schools in St Albans. By coincidence this ties in with the new National Schools Programme run by the Royal Institute of British Architects, which aims to help children explore and understand the built environment.

At our committee meeting later this month we'll be discussing ideas for the next book and the new pamphlet series.

For the 175th anniversary, we are researching the history of SAHAAS's publishing activities. It's been fascinating to browse *Transactions* articles and discover that our predecessors wrote about churches and other antiquarian topics relating to some 70 localities in Hertfordshire - not just St Albans. These articles are all available online on our website. Do take there are some gems among them. Brian Moody's *A History in All Men's Lives* contains a helpful articles index organised by geographic location (pp. 53-58).

**Pat Broad**

## THE BATTLE OF STALINGRAD

We have received a formal approach from the Stalingrad Foundation, the official body in Russia which commemorates the Battle of Stalingrad (1942-3).

The Foundation is taking a travelling exhibition on the battle around Europe. It is in France at the moment, but will be coming to the UK in 2020. It will be in the Museum + Gallery here in February 2020 running alongside the Handley Page exhibition.

Many towns and companies donated equipment and materiel of various types via the Arctic convoys to help provide support to Stalingrad, and the Foundation has asked for any local information here which would help support the exhibition. (They do this in every venue they visit.) They would be very grateful if anyone could share any information they may have about support from St Albans and Hertfordshire for Russia in 1942-3, whether by contributing to fund raising campaigns or by sending equipment. (For

example, Coventry donated hospital equipment specifically for use in what is now Volgograd). They would also be interested in hearing from anyone with a family member who was awarded either a Russian or a British medal for Arctic Convoy duties in the time frame for the battle. (Peter has started the ball rolling as his father-in-law was awarded the Orlov Medal for bravery at sea by the Soviet Union for Arctic convoy service).

The Foundation is approaching de Havilland (now British Aerospace) and Marconi for any information they have about sending war materials to Stalingrad, but any information from our membership about these companies will be welcome.

If you do have any information, please can you send it to the local coordinator for the exhibition, Jack Pettitt, a teacher at Verulam School. His email address is [jack.pettitt@verulam.herts.sch.uk](mailto:jack.pettitt@verulam.herts.sch.uk), and copy us via [peterburley@btinternet.com](mailto:peterburley@btinternet.com).

**Peter Burley and Bryan Hanlon**

### THE NEWSLETTER AND THE SOCIETY'S WEBSITE

Our Council has recently agreed to change the policy about publishing current editions of the newsletter on the website. From this year, only non-current editions will be posted. Hence, this November edition will appear on the site in February 2020.

Due to the increasing costs of procuring image rights for online publication, the version of the newsletter posted on the website may differ from the printed edition. While the latter will always be complete, readers of the online version may encounter gaps where the cost of a particular image has proved to be too high.

## THE SOCIETY'S SEMINAR PROGRAMME

The 2019/20 programme is now in full swing and, as you will see from the programme, there is a wealth of topics to learn about and discuss.

Kate Morris leads the sessions on the third Thursday each month until Easter. The venue is the Society's Library at Sandridge Gate and at no cost to members. There will be an 'enews' message each month giving further details of the forthcoming topic and the opportunity to sign up for it.

If you are embarking on some research and want to sound it out on colleagues, let me know for a future session or if you just want to find out what others are doing, join us at the Library on those Thursdays at 2.30 pm. The programme is as follows:

21 November

### **Maps (event fully subscribed)**

Frank Iddiols

Maps are a snapshot in time of an area. Maps of Hertfordshire and St Albans drawn for a variety of purposes each illustrate their time. Examples will be from the SAHAAS map collection.

12 December

### **Water pumps in St Albans**

Brian Adams

Illustrations of the Clock Tower c.1800

show the town pump. It was a Braithwaite Engine. One can still be seen today on Sarratt Green and photos from the 1880s show one near St Peter's Church, perhaps the town pump removed on installation of Mrs Worley's fountain in 1874.

23 January 2020

### **Researching the early British press**

Ruth Herman

Newspapers and periodicals provide clues for history and background to events, but are transient. This seminar will look at 17th and 18th century examples, where to find them and what they can tell us.

20 February

### **The straw hat trade, c.1800-1940**

Anne Wares and Jon Mein

When did this key industry start in the town, who were the leaders and where were their factories and workshops? Original source material will be shown to tell the story more reliably than has been hitherto known.

### **Programme — March 2020**

Details will follow in the February 2020 newsletter:

19 March: The Poor Law in St Albans, 1895-1914 — *Tony Dolphin*

**Kate Morris**

kate@englishinfo.biz

## PAGEANT FEVER! ST ALBANS PERFORMS ITS PAST

The St Albans pageants of 1907, 1948 and 1953 were typical of the outbreaks of 'pageant fever' that afflicted communities across Britain at various times during the twentieth century. Hundreds of residents donned historical costumes to re-enact scenes from the city's history, ranging from Boudica's revolt to the Wars of the Roses, from the Civil War to the nineteenth century. Many more helped with costumes and props, lighting and sound, crowd management, set-building, catering, and so on. As in many other towns, civic pride and historical consciousness came together in spectacular performed versions of key moments in the story of St Albans.



One of Boudica's 'wild women' at the 1907 Pageant. (St Albans Museums)

A new exhibition, at St Albans Museum + Gallery, tells the story of the pageants, using film, sound, image, text and objects. It opens in the East and West Keeper's Galleries on Friday 15 November, and runs until Sunday 23 February. Highlights include a costume worn by one of Boudica's 'wild women' in 1907, a new recording of the post-war pageant hymn celebrating St Albans, and some of the

many souvenirs that were produced to remind visitors of their day at the pageant.

Alongside the exhibition, several events will showcase the history of pageants. On Thursday 5 December, there will be short talks on pageant history in the museum assembly room, and on Wednesday 22 January Peter Swinson, son of the post-war 'pageant-master' Cyril Swinson, will show restored colour film footage of the 1948 and 1953 pageants. Finally, a re-performance of scenes and music from the pageants is planned for the spring half-term week (beginning Monday 17 February).

The exhibition and activities are organised by *The Redress of the Past* (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council), in collaboration with the museum and Trestle Theatre Co. We hope that other local organisations will be involved as 'pageant fever' gathers momentum again. For details see [www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk](http://www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk). You can learn more about *The Redress of the Past* at [www.historicalpageants.ac.uk](http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk).

**Dr Mark Freeman**

## SCIENCE EXHIBITION AT ST ALBANS MUSEUM

*Science in St Albans: Novum Organum Scientiarum* is the newest major exhibition in the Weston Gallery at St Albans Museum + Gallery. This exhibition is one which I proposed as part of my interview for Curator at the end of 2015 and so it's wonderful to see it come to life.

I chose this exhibition because it showcases an element of St Albans history that isn't always remembered. Scientists have lived, worked and studied in St Albans for hundreds of years – from Abbot Richard of Wallingford's astronomical clock in the early 1300s to Stephen Hawking studying at St Albans School before going on to create new cosmological theories about Black Holes.

The exhibition takes its title from Francis Bacon's book *Novum Organum* in which he set out the foundations of a new scientific method. Bacon's new method brought together observation and experimentation with theory, and with it, he hoped philosophers and scientists would avoid the "Idols of the Mind" which can cloud scientific judgement and lead to bad conclusions.

These four common problems or 'idols', along with Bacon's scientific method are explored in detail through this exhibition and it's clear to see how relevant they remain, even today.

Open from Saturday 19 October until 15 March 2020 and free to visit, come and explore the city's science heritage.

**Sarah Keeling**  
Curator, St Albans Museums

### AND THE ANSWER TO THE PHOTO CONUNDRUM IS ...

Bluehouse Hill. The photo on p. 9, taken from a postcard published around 1914, shows the cottages familiar to us today although much else has changed. Planning permission for two pairs of cottages on Bluehouse Hill was granted by St Albans Rural District Council in August 1907, the applicant being 'Mr A McIlwraith'. This is most likely to be Andrew McIlwraith, the local philanthropist who lived at Campbellfield off King Harry Lane. He was the subject of an article by Susan Bellamy in the November 2018 edition of this *Newsletter* (pp. 30-31).

Many thanks to Andy Lawrence for his permission to publish this image taken from a postcard he recently acquired. The card fills a gap in his extensive collection. You can read about the collection in the May 2015 *Newsletter* (p. 29).

## NEWS ABOUT ANOTHER PERCIVAL BLOW BUILDING

Establishing a List of Works was one of the primary aims of the research project that has led to the new book – *St Albans Architect Percival Blow: From Arts and Crafts to Gothic Revival and Art Deco\** published by the Society in September.

National and local archives, planning records, Inland Revenue papers, property owners' deeds and drawings, museum and local history society collections and, of course, the internet, all helped in the compilation of this comprehensive list but inevitably, we were unable to verify every possible lead.

One of those tantalising but elusive potential Blow-designed buildings was for the Gibbs & Bamforth-owned *Luton News*. All we knew was that it involved the design of offices and a factory but we had no address or date of construction. Our searches at Bedfordshire Archives & Records Service drew a blank. However, we found other documents there that did help in our research. One of those eventually led to the evidence we sought to firmly establish that Percival Blow did indeed design a substantial, three-storey office building and print-

works for the *Luton News* in Alma Street, Luton, opened in 1913.

In the Bedfordshire Archives we found Blow's drawings for a swimming pool and gymnasium at Ashton Grammar School in Dunstable and this led to John Buckledee of Dunstable Local History Society who was able to give us a photograph of the pool and gym for our book (p. 28). John is a newspaperman and in conversation we discovered that he had not only worked on the *Herts Advertiser* but also the *Luton News*. Could he help with our search? A few days later he sent through a press cutting, including a sketch of the building with the unmistakable signature of Percival Blow (See Fig. 1). Our grateful thanks to John who provided the following description of working at Alma Street:

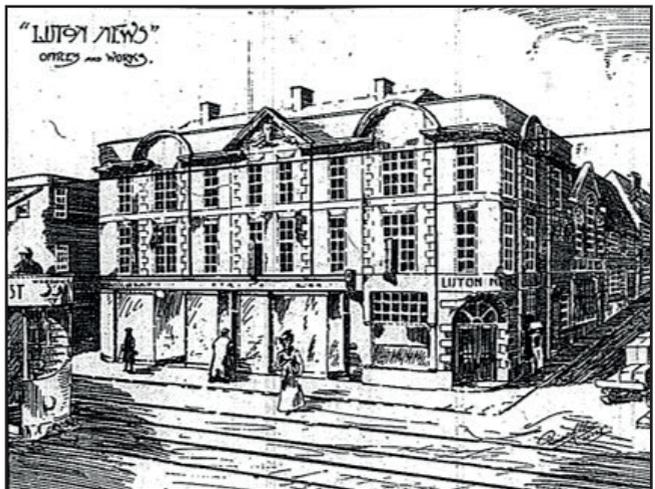


Fig. 1: Even without the signature (bottom right) this sketch has all the hallmarks of a Blow illustration, from the precise building lines to the somewhat out of scale people and vehicles!

(Source: *Luton News*, 14 November 1912)



Fig 2: Reception area

“I worked in the *Luton News* building in Alma Street while I was a trainee reporter for Home Counties Newspapers Ltd from 1956 to 1959. I was then a weekly visitor to the printing works there, putting papers ‘to bed’ when I was deputy editor of the *Bucks Advertiser* in 1963 and editor of the *Dunstable Gazette* from 1964. The Alma Street building was very impressive, with a spacious, wood-panelled entrance hall (Fig. 2) and window displays featuring newspaper photos and elaborate flower arrangements, changed every few days.

“Beyond the reception area was a confusing warren of offices leading up to a large open-plan space on the top floor where the reporters and sub-editors were situated. Stairs from this led down to the composing room where printers assembled metal type into pages. (Fig. 3) There were linotype machines setting the stories, but the headlines and some of the more-complicated advertisements were still being created,

letter-by-letter, by hand. More stairs led down to a foundry and the rotary presses. These were in use on most days, printing a range of local weekly newspapers. It was gloomy, noisy and VERY exciting.”

Blow’s association with Gibbs & Bamforth illustrates his standing as a leading architect of his day. He also designed the firm’s St Albans printworks in Spencer Street and alterations to its nearby office/shop (see pp. 33 and 36 in our book). This was where the *Herts Advertiser* was produced. Sadly, both the Spencer Street and Alma Street buildings have been demolished.

With thanks to the Dunstable Local History Society for permission to use the images.

**Sue Mann, Pat Broad and Jon Mein**

\* The new book is available to buy, price £6.99 members/£8.99 RRP. The List of Works is on [www.stalbanshistory.org](http://www.stalbanshistory.org).



Fig 3: Composing room

## A DUTCH DICTIONARY IN THE LIBRARY OF ST ALBANS SCHOOL

A pencilled comment in notes concerning the history the Free Grammar School referred to the surprising presence of a Dutch dictionary in its library, suggesting perhaps it could more likely have meant Deutsch (i.e. German).

This was during the mastership of John Fothergill (1695-1728). He was responsible for building up the school's library substantially and arranged for its cataloguing.

The time was when, after several wars between the two countries in the previous century, considerable cooperation existed between the Dutch East India Company and its English counterpart. The Dutch company enjoyed global supremacy, but the English company was not far behind and personnel moved easily between the two. Trade in textiles and spices were shared between the two, with the English dominant on the Indian subcontinent and the Dutch with headquarters at Batavia, or present day Jakarta. The Dutch controlled the necessary supply station *en route* at the Cape of Good Hope.

Seventeenth century Dutch trading and accounting methods were highly regarded and the sons of English merchants were frequently sent to the Netherlands for education. The trading connections also led to intermarriage.

John Fothergill's son, George, became an employee of the Dutch company after a spell as a mariner in the Baltic trade, whilst his daughter Anna married a merchant of the company, Sergius Swellengrebel, who became 'Secunde' (i.e. second in command) in the company's Cape Colony hierarchy. The sons of both these Fothergills attended St Albans School and would no doubt have used the Dutch dictionary in its library.

Further conflict between the two countries in the 1780s and Britain's increasing rule of the seas led to the dissolution of the Dutch company in 1799 and comparative oblivion on the international scene for the nation which, from the 1602 establishment of its trading monopolies, had played such an effective part in globalisation for the following two centuries.

**Kate Morris**

### EDISON'S PHONOGRAPH AT THE TOWN HALL

"St Albans people had an opportunity seeing and hearing Edison's wonderful phonograph on Thursday evening when Mr C.R. Girardot, of Hunton Bridge, gave an entertainment with it in the Town Hall. During the evening ... Rev. G.H.P. Glossop and Archdeacon Lawrance spoke into the instrument and the records were afterwards re-produced." (Source: *Herts Advertiser*, 18 April 1891, p. 5)

## EXCAVATION AT THE OLD BAKERY, 29 ST MICHAEL'S STREET

Some 60 years after the site was first investigated by volunteers and staff of Verulamium museum, the Old Bakery site was subject to a 'strip, map and sample excavation' in May/June 2019 which was undertaken as part of a planning condition for an extension to the existing residential property. An area of c.18 sq.m. was mechanically stripped of topsoil and 'overburden' under archaeological supervision. The site was defined on its north side by the early 1960s addition to the rear elevation of the Old Bakery, on its east side by a brick boundary wall, on its south side by the wall that once formed part of the old bake-house and on its western side by a machine cut reduced level.

The ground level was reduced by approximately 0.8m (to 81.36m AOD). This took the terrain down to the top of the residual remains of the gravel road leading to the NE gate of Verulamium which separates the 19th and 18th insulae of the Roman town. Apart from three potential cart ruts and later intrusive cuts, no other features were discernible. Ground reduction coincided with the formation level for the foundation of the new extension, which would consist



Fig. 1: looking NE across the site (© Dr J Hunn)



Fig. 2: wall and floor of the bakery (© Dr J Hunn)

of a concrete raft resting on four drilled piles.

During the ground reduction phase the remains of the Old Bakery were exposed. Apart from fragments of walls and a brick-laid floor there was little that remained of the bread ovens that were demolished in the late 1950s. The bake-house appears to have been divided in two by an E-W wall. The building was probably built in the middle of

the 19th century and its outline is recorded on the 1st series Ordnance Survey 25 inch scale map of 1879. According to the historical record, bread was being produced at least from the late 18th century until c.1937.

## **SEEING THE SAINTS IN A NEW LIGHT: THE ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL WALL PAINTINGS PROJECT**

Just how many people have sat in the nave of the great Abbey Church through the years and wondered; what did the images look like when freshly painted? It is said that the medieval pilgrims fell to their knees in wonder on entering the abbey at the end of their journey. Would it be possible to have a look back in time to see just what might have been?

That was the seed that sparked a unique project, some of the fruits of which you can see on the front cover.

On the north side of the nave are some of the Romanesque pillars that date from about 1080 when the Normans rebuilt the formerly Saxon Abbey of St Alban. These pillars provided a perfect canvas for wall paintings, as they are flat(ish) surfaces, plastered over rather than richly carved.

The aim of this project was to enhance and re-colour the paintings without damaging them, so that they can again play their original role within the modern cathedral. It was the four largest paintings, facing southwards, that were the obvious candidates for the project.

These monumental images are important for they are the only ones of their type to

survive from medieval England. Both the casual visitor and the interested expert have often speculated on how they appeared in their glory days.

They were defaced, whitewashed over and hidden from view sometime after the dissolution of the monastery by Henry VIII on 5 December 1539.

Under his son, Edward VI, in 1547 there was an unequivocal order, to be applied throughout the kingdom, to "Take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines ... pictures, paintings ... so that there remain no memory of the same in walls or window."

Here in St Albans many of these wall paintings were only rediscovered under their whitewash in the mid-1800s by the Revd Henry Nicholson. Although damaged, sufficient detail remains to identify these as the saints Christopher, Thomas Becket, Sitha and a scene of an episode from the story of Alban and Amphibalus.

In 2015 the cathedral launched on a truly wonderful collaboration of history and technology, to create a digital projection, using photography, new artwork and new technology that would unravel the images. This would be achieved by new software which effectively 'layers' the film image.

The starting point was high-resolution photography commissioned from Angelo Hornak; further detailed photographs were also taken to better understand the areas where important features had survived. In order to ensure accuracy, new measurements were taken and each layer of work was documented archaeologically. This starts with the latest activity on the surface and goes back in successive stages to rediscover the original paint surface.

In order to create the digital image of each painting, a carefully staged process was followed to record and interpret the findings resulting in six layers within the film sequence. The final 'layer' of a fully coloured image also has further layers within the colours in order to create a clear, bright image that reflects the impression that the original may once have had.

The project has a lasting legacy: not only do we now have a highly detailed record of the images but, as time passes and the images fade, we will be able to show future generations the glory of St Albans. This may be a way forward for other wall paintings in danger of disappearing.

This unique achievement could not have happened without an amazing mix of academia and technology. The consulting art historian, Professor Michael Michael carried out incredibly detailed research. The images were created over an 18-month period by Craig Williams, a senior illustrator from the British Museum. In their turn the images went to the technical wizards at two companies, Fusion and Fimgent, who brought their 21st century technology, imagery and projection to the project, installing four commercial projectors high in the triforia. All the light levels have been carefully tested to ensure there is no damage to the images.

The combined work of artists, historians, photographers and technicians have allowed us to 'lift the veil of time' and see what has not been seen in centuries

**Julia Low**

NB: The images are on view every day in the cathedral during the guided tours.

### **TREE PLANTING**

"The proposal to plant each side of St Peter's Street with trees has taken practical form this week. The Tree Committee gave the order to Mr Watson of Hatfield Road, and it being reported to the Town Council meeting on Wednesday that the necessary contract had been signed, the work has proceeded during the last few days."

(Source: *Herts Advertiser*, 3 December 1881, p. 5)

## WHO AND WHAT WE CELEBRATE

In the 1950s, this complete Terra Sigillata terra-cotta jar was excavated by Sheppard Frere at Verulamium (Insula XIV, Room 55). (Fig. 1.) A building destroyed by fire in the early Antonine period, (c.150–160 AD). This room was located in the final rebuilding of the half-timbered shops and was the terminal room of its suite which served as a store-room. The jar is of Gaulish manufacture measuring 15cm high and 10cm width. There are two face-masks, one of a bearded male possibly with hair and the other of a female with long hair, as well as an ivy leaf running around its shoulder. There are pattern-impressed, roulette decorations running around/towards the base (Fig. 2)

The jar has been classified as black Samian type 'Dechelette 74' because of its form,

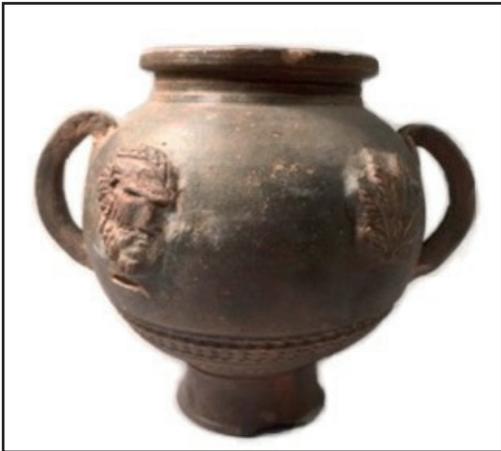


Fig. 1: Black Samian Jar, fine ware drinking vessel used by the upper class for serving wine, c.150-160 AD (© St Albans Museums)

unusual colour and applied motifs. Its black colour is because, unlike common red ware, it was fired under reducing conditions. Its motifs, unlike the common impressed or stamped types, are applied molds. The jar is a fine ware drinking vessel used by the upper class to serve wine.

The applied motifs suggest the Greek Dionysos cult of Dionysia. This cult was later assimilated by the Roman world into the Bacchus cult ('Bacchanalia'). We can recognise the followers of Dionysos and Bacchus on this jar in two ways. Firstly, the followers are represented by a Seilenos's head (Fig. 3) and a Maenades's head. These motifs may suggest the occurrence of the cult and eventually the adoption of new traditions by the local elite, to celebrate the god by intoxication and ecstasy.

Seilenoi were anthropomorphic creatures, part man and part beast; they are more ancient than satyrs. In art, Seilenoi are mostly represented as bearded and balding and with a horse tail. The Maenads were the most important female followers in the *thiasos*, (the gods' retinue), and were inspired by Dionysos into a state of ecstatic dance suggestive of possession of the god. Secondly, the ivy leaf may suggest the plant wrapped around a long stick, a *thyrsos*, which was used by the Maenads to hit the ground to get honey and milk. Alternatively, it may be one of the attributes of Dionysos found wrapped around his



Fig. 2: Pattern-impressed roulette decorations (© St Albans Museums)



Fig. 3: Probable Seilenos motif (© St Albans Museums)

wreath. By the mid-2nd century AD the Roman Bacchus cult had become popular in the Empire and, as other mystic cults, enough was known by a wide public for its attributions to have an apotropaic function (i.e. the power to avert evil influences). During cult events wine was served in fine decorated vessels which would have recalled the event of the Bacchanalian festival.

On the other hand, these applied motifs could also suggest a classical syncretism with the Celtic god Cernunnos by representing him in the guise and attributes of Greco-Roman divinities. Cernunnos shares with Dionysus and Bacchus the primary interpretation of fertility of nature and fecundity of men and animals. He also shares the horned serpent. Dionysos-Zagreus was a cult which celebrated mankind as a life force which regenerates itself

cyclically (*zoé*) and is not bound to the time limits of human conditions (*bios*).

The Dionysos cult was centered on the Thracian region. Here the Celts living on the shore of the Black Sea came in close contact with the Greeks. It is possible that the (Celtic) Cernunnos cult by its reverence of the serpent and of the snake's egg (*ovum anguinum*, as Pliny refers to it), among the inhabitants of Gaul may be an independent development. However, there is at least some possibility that their ram-headed serpent has connections with Greek mythology which in time was absorbed by the Romans. And found its way to Verulamium.

There's a fully-referenced version of this note in the Society's Library. With thanks to Simon West for his comments on an early draft.

## THOMAS KITCHIN: LOCAL MAP ENGRAVER

A chance purchase in a Kent antiques shop led us to investigate the life of 18th century map engraver, Thomas Kitchin. Having bought a copy of one of his maps of Hertfordshire, Ros returned home to research who he was. It transpired that Kitchin was one of the most productive British engravers of the time. Of more local interest, he spent the last 16 years of his life living in St Albans and was buried in the Abbey. Who was Kitchin and why did he come to live in the town?

Thanks to excellent biographical research by maps expert Laurence Worms, the first question is the easier to address. Born in London in 1719, Kitchin was apprenticed 13 years later to leading map engraver and future father in law Emanuel Bowen. Worms notes that Kitchin, working in his own right by 1741, went on to produce *inter alia* the first pocket atlas of Scotland (*Geographia Scotiae*, 1748–9); the co-published *Small English Atlas* (1749); and *The Large English Atlas*, serially produced county by county with Bowen between 1749 and 1760. In 1755 he engraved the Mitchell map of north America, which remained the standard map of the continent until 1800 or so. His output included several maps of Hertfordshire. Out of work hours, Kitchin was an active member

of Paul’s Alley Baptist Chapel close to the Barbican.

Around 1768 Kitchin and his second wife moved from London to what is now no. 7 Fishpool Street (Fig. 1). Why they did so is not clear. Just shy of his 50th birthday, the decision has no hint of retirement about it as his productivity remained high. Worms suggests that, with his son now running the business in London, Kitchin ‘felt able to distance himself from the hurly-burly and to devote himself more fully to what he later called “a constant application to geography, and the arts connected with it.”’ Perhaps there was a community of kindred spirits in St Albans who stimulated this “constant application”. Several of his former apprentices certainly followed him, living in the town for periods running from months to several years. And, as Kate Morris’s ongoing research into the development



Fig. 1: No. 7 Fishpool Street today (© Frank Iddiols)

of 18th century St Albans shows, they weren't alone in making the move.

Whatever Kitchin's reasons were, the town's increasing proximity to London must have been a draw. In the early 1760s, just a few years before he moved to St Albans, journey times to the capital by scheduled coach dropped by a third to around 3 ½ hours. So, travellers could get to London, see to some business and then be home without burning the candle at either end.



Fig. 2: Location of the Kitchins' ledger stones in the south aisle of the nave in the Abbey (© Frank Iddiols)

With our ready access to local material, we have taken the opportunity to extend Worms's biography of Kitchin. As far as we can tell, he didn't throw himself into local life. For example, although elected to the St Albans turnpike trust in 1775, he didn't attend any of the trust's meetings and, if he was involved in the borough corporation, he wasn't prominent. Nor does his name appear in the Dagnall Street Baptist Church roll. This is surprising bearing in mind his contribution to Baptist life in London and his second wife being the daughter of a leading Baptist minister. Burial in the Abbey suggests they had changed adherence. Unfortu-

nately, their adjacent ledger stones in the south aisle provide no further clues as to any religious beliefs (Fig. 2). Barely legible now, the inscriptions just record their deaths in 1784 and 1789 respectively and little else. Nonetheless the stones remind us of this important man who spent many productive years in St Albans.

Our thanks to Laurence Worms for his help with this note and for permission to deposit copies of his articles in the Society's Library. A fully-referenced version of the note is also available in the Library.

**Jon Mein, Frank Iddiols and Ros Trent**

## THE NEWSLETTER

Copy deadline for the February 2020 edition is 15 January. If you have any comments about the newsletter or wish to submit content, please email me, Jon Mein, via [newsed@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:newsed@stalbanhistory.org).

## OUR VICTORIAN PREDECESSORS

### NO. 3: REVD HENRY FOWLER — EXCAVATING THE ABBEY PRECINCTS

At the Society's AGM in 1900, reported on in October that year, Henry Fowler was one of three Honorary Secretaries; his obituary appeared at the end of the 1899-1900 volume of the *Transactions* (see our website). Included is a photo of him seated. He appears serious, tall and thin with white hair and spectacles, in thick overcoat and stout boots (see Fig. 1).

Born in 1827, Henry was the son of an architect. Educated in London, he took his MA at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1852. He was ordained in 1853 and spent nearly ten



Fig 1: The portrait of Henry Fowler printed in the Society's 1899—1900 *Transactions*

years as curate in various Wiltshire parishes, until 1862, when he married. He did not get his own parish; possibly he already had broader interests. In 1863 he arrived in St Albans to take up the post of 'second master' at St Albans Grammar School (then still housed in the Lady Chapel at the Abbey). As well as teaching, from 1865 to 1895 he was chaplain at the St Albans Union workhouse, and in 1882 became chaplain at the prison in Grimston Road. He was also secretary of the Prisoners' Aid Society. He was evidently one of those people who get asked to undertake things. To teaching and good works he added archaeology, and juggled these until his death at the age of 73.

He had been in St Albans for some years before he joined the Society, but his interest in archaeology may have been triggered by his surroundings at the Grammar School. He read work by a Professor Willis on the plan of the medieval monastery at Canterbury and was inspired to do the same for St Albans. To this end he translated a 14th century survey, and from this and other sources, including details of SAHAAS explorations, drew up a plan of the St Albans Abbey precinct at the time of the survey. It was this original research which led to a paper given in February 1876, followed directly by his admission to the Society. He was then in his forties and active enough to undertake exploration within the Abbey precinct, with his friend Ridgway Lloyd, to add detail to the

plan. During 1876 they excavated part of the cloister, and in Pondwicks Mead and Lady Spencer's Grove. In the same year various letters by Fowler on the town's archaeology were printed in the *Herts Advertiser*. After this burst of activity, however, he did little more active work. He became honorary secretary in 1884, and published 21 articles in the *Transactions* between 1884 and 1898. Many were written for Society excursions, but included an account of the 1889 work in Abbey Orchard Field which confirmed Carter's 1810 plan of this part of the Abbey buildings.

What makes Fowler's archaeological field-work stand out is his understanding of basic principles, which escaped almost all his contemporaries and many who succeeded him. In some ways he was a century before his time, in his interest in medieval monastic archaeology — although as an Oxford man in the late 1840s, he would have absorbed the concern of the Oxford Movement to

understand medieval churches, how they looked and how they operated. After him, only spasmodic work was done in or outside the Abbey church until the 1960s. But Fowler understood the importance of recording visually where investigations take place, and the difference between evidence and conjecture. His final plan is open to argument as to detail and his conclusions were by no means always correct, but by investigating, collating and recording he laid the foundation. This is why his 1876 work is important, and why it is a pity he did so little more.

At the November 2018 SAHAAS lecture on the recent Little Churchyard excavations, Ross Lane saluted Fowler as a fellow archaeologist. In his meticulous planning and recording of what would now be called evaluation trenches Fowler was spot-on in predicting the position of the medieval foundations on the east side of the south transept.

**Dr Isobel Thompson**

### **THE TALLOW NUISANCE**

“Sir, amongst all the nuisances in this town, the Candle Factory, situated at the corner of Verulam Street [now Verulam Road], is one of the worst. In all towns where sanitary laws are enforced, a factory of this kind would have been removed long before, and so it ought here. There are few mornings one can walk along the High Street without being annoyed with the awful smell of melting fat, which to most tastes is very disagreeable. I was walking along the Verulam Road and High Street towards London Road last Saturday morning and the stench was worse than ever.”

Source: *Herts Advertiser*, 5 January 1868, p.8. Note: the operation moved in the 1890s.

## REAL LIFE AT THE SCHOOL OF ART

The paintings of St Albans by Malvina Cheek in the May edition of the SAHAAS *Newsletter* reminded me of the early 1960s when I spent a year at the St Albans Art School. It was then housed in the original Girls Grammar School building in Victoria Street, opposite the old public library. Miss Cheek was a charming lady, but alas not a memorable teacher.

After A levels I left the Grammar School to go the Art School. At the time, Jackson Pollock was all the rage, and we were encouraged by most of the teachers to “express our personalities” on canvas. We teenagers had unformed personalities and were disinclined to throw pots of paint in the public’s face. The teacher

most of us preferred was Euan Uglow, a rigorously academic figure painter, who taught us Life Drawing. His classes were the most exhausting of all, because we admired him and wanted to please him. He removed our 2B pencils and gave us 2H pencils instead. “Don’t attempt fuzzy shading,” he said, “make every mark on the paper significant. Record what you see, accurately.” Oh that was hard, and so was the pencil. Our concentration focused on the reality of a naked model.

That was a problem for all us adolescents. Most of us had never seen a naked body and we were expected to stare all day at a plump naked lady, for example, cosily surrounded by electric fires, totally relaxed. A good model is one who can withdraw their personality from the pose

and leave students alone with their work. A bad model was Quentin Crisp, one of the ‘stately homos of England’, who was determined that we should make our work a portrait of him, full length. At the time homosexuality was illegal, but hey, we were art students who understood the ways of the world – so we thought. But it was impossible to disregard his personality. He wore a dodgy wig and had shaved away all his body hair and painted his body a sort of pale plum colour. His face was heavily made up with mascara and eye



The former School of Art building in Victoria Street, now the Maltings Surgery. The studio on the left of the main door, upstairs, was one of the life class studios.

(©Frank Iddiols, September 2019)

liner. We could have coped with all this if he had not spent the time looking admiringly at his own body, keeping his head still but surveying himself with admiration.

We usually had two small studios for Life Class with one model in each room. If we were drawing or painting a long pose, the time would come, after an hour, for the model to take a short break and relax. If Mr Uglow was in the other studio when the break came, it was the custom for one of the girls to mark the position in chalk on the floor of the feet of a female model and the position of the hands, say, on the back of a chair. If the model was male, then one of the boys did it. But when the time came to mark Quentin Crisp's pose, none of the boys moved an inch. The

model was not amused. Everyone froze. Then the boy next to me told me to go and do it, as I was considered brave. I wasn't. As I moved towards the model with the chalk, he glared furiously at me. I sat down again afterwards, trembling. Mr Uglow entered the studio and realizing what had happened, came over to me and asked me quietly if I had chalk-marked the position. "Yes," I said. "Sorry," he replied very quietly. And that was that. It may not sound much of an incident but I still recall it and cringe, which I wouldn't do now, of course.

Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, but to be young was to be easily embarrassed.

**Jane Kelsall**

### **'AGAINST VULGARITY': EXPLORING THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT**

This study day comprises the following three talks exploring the Arts and Crafts movement which emerged in Britain in the last decades of the 19th century.

- The Pre-Raphaelites and their artistic and social influence on the Arts and Crafts Movement — *Tim Boatswain*
- The Arts and Crafts Movement and William Morris — *Geraint John*
- Reflections of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the work of Charles Rennie Macintosh — *Chris McIntyre*

Date: Saturday 23 November. Price: £25.00. Venue: the Cathedral's Chapter House.

Organisers: the Conservation 50 group and the Cathedral.

For further details please see:

[www.stalbanscathedral.org/pages/events/category/events](http://www.stalbanscathedral.org/pages/events/category/events)

## WILLIAM DOBSON – FROM A ST ALBANS CHILDHOOD TO THE KING’S PAINTER (PART 1)

Serendipity ... a frequent phenomenon in the process of historical research. And so it was when our esteemed Newsletter Editor was trawling the Internet for an illustration he came across artist William Dobson, (1611-1646) whose father was described as a ‘St Albans gentleman’. In his *Brief Lives* John Aubrey wrote of this artist as “the most excellent painter that England has yet bred”. Sometime later in 1953, Ellis Waterhouse, a prominent art historian, described him as “the most distinguished purely British painter before Hogarth”. What evidence is there for the family’s link to St Albans?

In over 20 years of researching St Albans in the 17th century, I had not heard of the artist. Yes, we do have a Mr William Dobson in our database living in St Peter’s Street in the early years of the century who it appears was the father of this renowned portrait painter. It is documented that William’s extended family were of a high status and well-connected; his father was most likely a lawyer trained at Gray’s Inn. That the family chose to live in St Albans can be seen as the precursor to the findings of Kate Morris in studying what she terms the ‘gentry town’ of St Albans in the 18th century when successful professional people from London



William Dobson, after a self-portrait by Dobson, oil on canvas, c.1646, based on a work of 1642–1646, NPG 302

(© National Portrait Gallery, London)

chose to bring their families to live in the ‘country’. From a deed of 1627 the location of Dobson’s property in St Peter’s Street can be determined as being close to the Flesh or Butchers Shambles. These were located in the Market Place between what is now W.H. Smith’s and the new museum. In 1612 Dobson, together with Mr Roger Pemberton and Mr John Ellis, was presented for having put posts or rails in front of his house. Our research shows that these men were all men of substance.

The Dobson family tree compiled by the Society’s 17th Century Research Group shows a baptism of Frances in St Peter’s, daughter of William Dobson, in 1609.

There is then a gap until 1614 when five more children were baptised at St Peter's in the ten years from 1614. We now know that two siblings were baptised in St Andrew's, Holborn: Martha in 1608 and William in 1611. Research in the St Albans School archives also suggests that William (junior) attended the school in years prior to 1627 when Mistress Dobson, by now a widow, was paying fees for two sons.

William's mother died in 1643 leaving a very detailed will which listed all her children with bequests of clothing and household goods and cash ranging from 20 shillings to £60. The property in St Albans was left to her daughter, Marie, for the

term of seven years after her decease. At the end of the seven years it was to go to her son William but he had died in 1643. So what happened to the property? His brother, John, may have settled in the town as two of his children were baptised in 1641 and 1645 in the Abbey.

A further article exploring Dobson's career as a painter and his father's links to the construction of Francis Bacon's Verulam House will follow in the February 2020 newsletter. Fully referenced versions of both articles will be available in the Society's Library in due course.

**Pat Howe**

## **HOT OFF THE PRESS**

### ***Passing Through - The Grand Junction Canal in west Hertfordshire, 1791-1841***

Fabian Hiscock

ISBN 978-1-912260-15-7, paperback.

This book considers how western Hertfordshire experienced, and responded to, the new trade route that traversed its fields and settlements from the mid-1790s, ending in 1841 as the railway began to bite and the tithe apportionments and the census threw light on local employment and land usage.

The canal made an impact on the towns and villages, but to what extent did it live up to the promises made by the promoters? What was the impact on trade and transport? Did it create jobs and wealth for local people, or did it simply pass through, leaving those on either side (including St Albans) relatively unaffected? The author, a SAHAAS member, describes what sort of place west Hertfordshire was in the 1790s, and how this one set of circumstances contributed to its changing in the following 50 years.

Price £16.99 + £2.75 p&p from [www.uhpress.co.uk](http://www.uhpress.co.uk) or from the local Waterstones.

## WEDNESDAY MARKETS: FROM CATTLE TO CARRIAGES AND CHRISTMAS

Under the terms of the 1553 Charter, two markets a week could be held in St Albans. In the early 18th century the Wednesday market lapsed and livestock and corn were sold on Saturday. This market was found unsatisfactory, so much so that farmers in the neighbourhood sent their cattle to Hertford, Barnet, Hemel Hempstead, Watford and Hitchin markets. At the same time they sold their corn at those markets.

Why this should be so when there was no doubt there were *'Few provincial towns which possess more special advantages for holding a really good corn and cattle market than St Albans.'* (*Herts Advertiser*, 10 February 1872). St Albans was in the midst of corn and cattle country.

The market had the advantage of access by three railways, but if cattle were purchased on a Saturday, they could not complete their journey on the Sabbath, so there was extra expense for the buyer.

In the spring of 1872 Town Councillor Edwards was active in promoting the change of the cattle and corn markets to Wednesdays. Councillors and farmers all agreed. 'We the undersigned, farmers dealers and others frequenting the St Albans market are of the opinion that it would much improve the market if the

market day were altered from Saturday to Wednesday; and we request that the Town Council will take steps to bring about the proposed alteration'. Mr Slade, a butcher, grumbled that it would give him too much work to do!

The following year, stock sales did move from the Saturday to Wednesday. Messrs Harding and Eve were the auctioneers. On alternate Saturday afternoons Fred K. Gough still held auctions as he had since 1861. The corn market was likewise moved to Wednesday.

These Wednesday markets became well established as evident in an 1899 advertisement: "... ST. ALBANS WEDNESDAY CATTLE MARKET (In front of the Town Hall). MR. GIBSON Holds Sale every Wednesday, One o'clock punctually, and Store BEASTS, SHEEP, LAMBS, CALVES, and PIGS; also for HORSES, FARM IMPLEMENTS, HAY and STRAW, & ..."

The market must have looked like the nineteenth century equivalent of a used car sale yard as well a livestock market when a 'Sale of horses, carriages, carts, harness, implements was transferred to the St Albans Wednesday Cattle Market' from Harpenden [1890].

The high point of the year was the 'St Albans Christmas Show and Sale' one or two Wednesdays before 25 December.



The Wednesday stock market c.1904 (SAHAAS Library Arthur Allen collection)

Entries had to be registered the week before the sale. There were prizes to be won for the best beasts. In 1904 just some of the animals for sale were 83 fat oxen, more than 400 prime fat sheep, and more than 100 fat pigs and sows. St Peter's Street must have been full of noise and smells. Hay and straw were also entered. William Young was the auctioneer.

#### **From market to table in 1904**

'Christmas Shopping. Provisions plentiful. Purses light' the *Herts Advertiser* regretted but 'taken as a whole trade of St Albans at this most important period of the year, has reached a more satis-

factory standard than at any time since the South African War. But when one turns to the realm of things edible...the butchers and poulterers commenced their show on Tuesday, and the spacious awning erected over the footways are filled with much of the best that the farmer, the gamekeeper and the poultry farmer can produce. Many of the beasts which bore with dignity the honours transferred upon them at the recent fatstock shows now hang rigidly from beams and rails preparatory to dissection into Christmas joints ... The trade in beef is exceptionally good.'

**Julia Merrick**

## KILLED BUILDING THE RAILWAY

Lying in St Peter's churchyard is a gravestone to the memory of three young navvies killed within thirteen days of each other whilst building the Hatfield and St Albans railway line.

On Monday 22 August 1864 Edward Weston, aged 22 from Adstock, Buckinghamshire, was digging at the bottom of a 12-foot trench near the site of the new London Road station when the trench fell in and suffocated him. The body was removed and the inquest held at the Alma public house (now the Great Northern). Edward's aged mother was telegraphed and travelled the 40 miles to attend the burial in the churchyard that Wednesday evening. The funeral service was taken by the curate, the Revd Mr Kent. It was recorded that Mr Rummens, the railway contractor, bore the whole of the costs of the funeral, and also behaved "kind and liberal" towards Edward's mother.

Then on the following day, Thursday 25 August, Richard Cummins, aged 20 and also from Buckinghamshire, was crushed between two wagons near the Camp crossing. The body was removed to the Cock pub on the corner of St Peter's Street and Hatfield Road where the inquest was held.

Then, just over a week later, on Saturday 3 September, Thomas Dredge, aged 24



Location of gravestone lying flat on left-hand side of a group of six stones (© Christine McDermott)

from Shepton Mallett in Somerset, was run over by some wagons near Mr Pinnock's watercress beds – just south-west of the station site. The body was removed to another local pub, the Woolpack Tap on London Road, where the coroner's jury viewed the body. The accident happened about 11.30am and Dr W.A. Russell sent a messenger to Hatfield to get Mr Drage, a surgeon. However, Dr Drage was not at home so, at about 2.30pm, Dr Russell performed a double amputation, without anaesthetic. Soon after the second amputation, Dredge died.

Dredge was interred the following Tuesday evening in a grave close to Weston and Cummins. The burial service was conducted by the vicar, Revd H.N. Dudding, and he suggested that the navvies should get up a subscription

amongst themselves to erect a stone to the memory of their brethren; and if they found any deficiency in their subscriptions, he would help them (see wording in the box to the right).

It seems many of the navvies had worked with Mr Rummens on his previous contracts at Buckingham and Claydon. They lodged in various hostelries in St Albans to where the bodies were removed – probably kept in the cool of the cellar – and where the inquests took place. The Midland Railway contractors lodged their navvies in wooden huts in shanty towns – one of which was located at Hedges Farm, Napsbury.

**Howard Green**

To the Memory  
Of  
Edward Weston  
Who died Aug 22 1864  
Aged 22 Years  
Of  
Richard Cummins  
Who died Aug 25 1864  
Aged 20 Years  
Of  
Thomas Dredge  
Who died Sept 3 1864  
Aged 24 Years

From accidents on the works of the  
Hatfield and St Albans Railway

This stone was erected as a tribute of  
respect by their fellow workmen



Crowds leaving a 1907 Pageant performance in what is now Verulamium Park. Note the people in costume and the screens to the right erected presumably to prevent casual watchers seeing the display for nothing. (Courtesy of Ian Tonkin)

**LECTURE PROGRAMME**

19 November 2019 to 18 February 2020

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 to attend a lecture.

Tuesday 19 November

**Discovering a monumental Mycenaean tomb in central Greece**

Dr Yannis Galanakis

In 2017, the University of Cambridge in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Culture excavated one of the largest Mycenaean rock-cut chamber tombs ever to have been discovered in central Greece. With most of the tombs of the period looted in antiquity and modern times, it was therefore extraordinary to come across an intact burial dating to around 1350BC. This talk will retell the story of discovery, assess its importance and present the excavation's preliminary findings.

*Dr Galanakis was the Project Co-Director for this excavation. He is Senior Lecturer in Classics, specialising in Mycenaean archaeology, at the University of Cam-*

*bridge, where he is also the Director of Archives and of the Museum of Classical Archaeology.*

Tuesday 3 December

**Before They Fade; Recollections of Chelsea Pensioners**

Robin Ollington

Robin's involvement with the Royal Hospital at Chelsea dates back to 1979 when he was responsible for initiating the inclusion of Chelsea Pensioners in the Channel Islands celebrations of Liberation Day a continuing tradition to this day. Since 2002 Robin has carried on where Philip Ziegler left off interviewing so far more than 100 of 300 plus male and female Chelsea Pensioners whose life stories were not included in the original book entitled *Soldier*. These amazing and sometimes totally unique stories will form the basis of Robin's talk.

*Robin's first career was in teaching at art college. He later moved into the commercial world with responsibility for promoting Guernsey, Gibraltar, Italy and Egypt and in the case of Guernsey and Gibraltar also designing their postage stamps. He has been involved in exhibitions at Tate Britain on Beatrix Potter and several heritage-related exhibitions at the V&A. His published work includes Inspiring Old Albanians (2017), a record of 75 former pupils of the school, some as early as the 12th*

*century including the only English Pope Adrian IV. Recently he has been involved with his former schoolfriend, Albany Wiseman, in producing a children's history of Coram's Foundling Hospital highlighting children's rights.*

Tuesday 14 January

### **Thomas Ward Blagg**

Simon Langsdale

Thomas Ward Blagg held the post of Town Clerk of St Albans for 47 years. Yet, for much of his term he was involved in the corruption of local and national elections and the embezzlement of the Abbey Parish Endowment charities. This lecture will look at how Blagg came to control these charities, why he embezzled from them and the effect this had.

*Simon Langsdale graduated from the University of Hertfordshire with a First Class BA Hons in History in 2011. In 2016 he undertook a part-time research MA in History at the university, looking at the Abbey parish charities scandal; graduating in 2018. Simon has also undertaken research into the 20th century revival of lettering, started by Edward Johnston.*

Tuesday 21 January

### **Harold Wilson: A Reputation Revised**

Dr Martin Holmes

Hugely controversial in his lifetime as a four term Labour Prime Minister, Wilson

has been the subject of several biographies. Yet his reputation is disputed between those who regard him as a wily and cunning politician devoid of policy successes, to those who regard his administrations as an enlightened era of social progress and effective economic crisis management. In this talk Dr Holmes considers Wilson's legacy and reputation, in the process challenging conventional assessments of Wilson's long career.

*Dr Holmes is well known as an Oxford specialist in British and European Politics and History in the 20th century. A graduate of University College Oxford, he was Lecturer in Politics at St Hugh's College Oxford, 1987-2009, since when he has been an (Hon) Member of the Senior Common Room. He is author of six books on British and European Politics and the author of many articles and essays. In addition he has been the Oxford Director of the University of Nebraska annual undergraduate summer programme since 1989. He has spoken regularly at academic conferences in Britain and Europe as well as lecturing in the United States, South Korea, Australia and Malaysia.*

Tuesday 4 February

### **Heritage, Conservation and Modern Practice**

Ryan Butterfield

Through the portfolio of David Chipperfield Architects, project architect Ryan

Butterfield will discuss various approaches to conservation, changing attitudes to listed buildings and the challenges of designing contemporary architecture in historically sensitive contexts.

*David Chipperfield Architects has extensive experience working with historic buildings such as the Neues Museum on Berlin's Museum Island and the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Ryan joined the practice in 2009 and has since worked on several conservation and restoration projects, including the new entrance building and refurbishment of Selfridges department store; the conversion of Eero Saarinen's former US embassy in Grosvenor Square into a hotel; and the refurbishment of the Café Royal hotel on Piccadilly Circus.*

Tuesday 11 February

### **Lady Anne Bacon of Gorhambury**

Deborah Spring

Lady Anne Bacon (1528—1610) was a formidable and intelligent woman whose life has been largely overlooked. Though as a woman she was formally excluded from political power, her advanced education and keen intellect led to recognition outside the domestic sphere, among the political and scholarly elite of the Tudor age. Erudite and resolute, a prominent religious reformer and published translator, she was married to one of

Elizabeth's senior advisors and served both Mary I and Elizabeth I. After her husband's death, she ran the Gorhambury estate alone for thirty years and lived to see her son Francis become a leading statesman.

*Deborah Spring, a researcher, writer and former academic publisher is working on a biography of Lady Anne Bacon.*

Tuesday 18 February

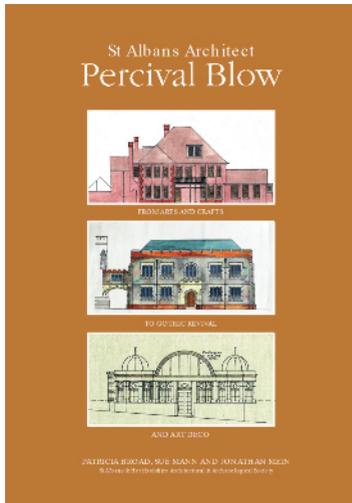
### **Maritime St Albans**

Anthony Oliver

Inspired by 2020 being the centenary of the St Albans Branch of the RNLI this talk investigates the many ways in which a land-locked city has connections with the sea and why it supports lifeboats. The city has funded three lifeboats, been home to several Admirals, had six Royal Navy ships bear its name, supported a sea cadet force and surprisingly been home to several maritime industries. These and other interesting links to the sea will be discussed and some strange stories revealed.

*Anthony Oliver has lived in Hertfordshire since 1972 and in St Albans since 2005. In his youth he enjoyed sailing and always admired and supported the work of the RNLI. Since moving to the city he has been a member of the Arc and Arc as well as a volunteer guide at the Cathedral.*

# Recent Society Publications



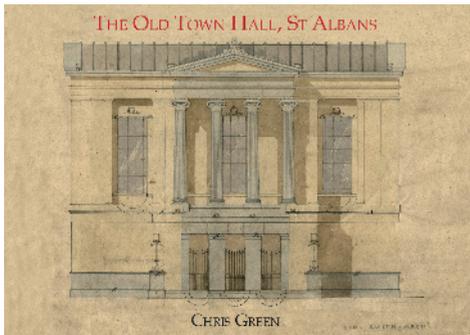
**St Albans Architect, Percival Blow: From Arts and Crafts to Gothic Revival and Art Deco**  
by Patricia Broad, Sue Mann and Jonathan Mein

Members' price £6.99 (plus £2 p&p)

This latest publication charts the major contribution of architect Percival Blow to St Albans' built landscape.

'All of us would benefit from a read of this new book 'St Albans Architect, Percival Blow'... our streetscape is the richer for his endeavour.'

Mike Neighbour, *stalbansowneastend* blog



**The Old Town Hall, St Albans**

by Chris Green

Members' price £6.00 (plus £2 p&p)

This book charts the history of St Albans iconic old town hall over almost 200 years.

'Meticulously researched, well written and attractively presented ... this book brings to life the history of an extremely important building.'

Sue Moss, *The Local Historian*

You can buy these books at our Tuesday night lectures at the church and in our Library.

Alternatively, email [publicationsales@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:publicationsales@stalbanhistory.org) or contact Pat Broad: tel. 01727 863340 or 18 Kimberley Road, St Albans, AL3 5PX. Cheques payable to 'SAHAAS'. Also available from local bookshops.

# OUR MAIN SOCIAL EVENT OF THE YEAR



## NEW YEAR PARTY

FRIDAY 10 JANUARY  
VERULAMIUM MUSEUM  
7.30 PM

Meet with fellow members and guests for Conversation, Quiz,  
Liquid refreshment and Festive food  
New members especially welcome

A finger buffet organised by Val Argue and members

Val would welcome a contribution  
of a plate of sweet or savoury -  
the Society is very happy to reimburse members financially  
Tel: 01727 853083 or  
Email: [events@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:events@stalbanhistory.org)

Tickets are available in advance at all SAHAAS lectures and the Society's Library. This year, for the first time, tickets are also for sale on Eventbrite — please see the enews message sent on 6 November for more details. To purchase tickets by post, cut out or copy and complete the following form.

Please send me the following tickets for the Society's New Year Party

..... Tickets at £8.00      Total enclosed .....

Name .....

Address .....

Post Code .....      Telephone .....

Email (in capital letters) .....

Please make your cheque payable to SAHAAS and send with this form  
and a **Stamped Addressed Envelope to:**

**Bryan Hanlon, 24 Monks Horton Way, St Albans, AL1 4HA**