

Discover . Protect . Innovate . Inform



1845 - 2020

ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 216 May 2020



Children in Fishpool Street c.1905

Photo by E.S. Kent, SAHAAS member. For more about Kent see pp.14-15
(Reproduced courtesy of HALS, ref. Hrt Kent/0045/00/01)

Included in this issue:

175th virtual exhibition
Verulamium myths
17th century vintner
St Albans wine charter

William Page
Midland railway line c.1870
A new war memorial?
Blue plaques for St Albans?

Table of Contents

175th anniversary material	
A Personal Tour around our 175th Exhibition	4
Our Victorian Predecessors, No. 5: William Page	8
Before Christopher Place	11
To Boldly Go in the late Eighteen Hundreds	12
E. Stanley Kent – Society Photographer	14
Annual General Meeting notice	16
Obituaries – Norman Oldknow and Mike North	18
Blue plaques in the offing?	19
Reports	
Library	20
Clock Tower	22
Website	22
Publications Committee	23
St Albans Museums Online	24
The Kings Road Memorial: continuing a 160-year old tradition	26
An early view of the Midland Railway line at St Albans	28
Licences to print money: the St Albans wine charter	30
The wine cellars of a 17th century St Albans vintner	31
Percival Blow and his family’s association with St Albans	33
Identifying Percival Blow’s childhood house	34
From little acorns ... the Hertfordshire Public House Trust Ltd	36
The myths of St Albans and Verulamium (Part 1)	38

THE NEWSLETTER

Due to current exigencies, this Newsletter is being distributed electronically. We hope lockdown restrictions will be lifted over the next three months to the extent that August’s edition can be distributed in the normal way. If so, we will invite members who would like a printed copy of the May edition to contact us. Once numbers are known, we will order a short print run to cover their requirements as well as members for whom we don’t have email addresses, libraries for archival purposes and other societies with whom we swap newsletters.

Copy deadline for the August edition is 15 July 2020. If you have any comments about the Newsletter or wish to submit content, please email me, Jon Mein, via newsed@stalbanhistory.org.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Birthday to the Arc & Arc. This edition of the Newsletter celebrates our foundation in 1845 as one of the earliest in a mid-nineteenth century flurry of local learned societies melding post-Enlightenment approaches to our surroundings with, in our case, the contemporary interest in ecclesiastical fabric. A notable anniversary although it seems an odd time to be celebrating.

As John Morewood describes below, we have a proud history of innovation as a Society. We have had to innovate over the last few weeks: not least this first e-publication of our newsletter, but also holding our Council meetings by 'Zoom' teleconferencing, and planning to mount our Museum + Gallery exhibition on-line. With social distancing rules likely to continue for the foreseeable future, we are also getting our heads round how we restart our programme of talks and seminars electronically.

I must commend my fellow Council members and many other members of the Society for doing so much behind the scenes that we have scarcely missed a beat.

As you may know, I am currently undertaking a part-time MA in History at the



University of Hertfordshire. As with all my fellow members of the Society engaged in research, we have lost access to the university libraries, St Albans Library and the British Library, which is frustrating since not everything is digitised and inter-library loan services have also been suspended. There may be a longer term impact on the academic discipline of history if university finances are hit by a reduced supply of higher fee-paying foreign students.

My own research is on immigrants and food in St Albans including the effect on local residents. If any members reading this have memories of their early experiences of eating ethnic food in St Albans – I think particularly of the 1960s and 1970s and the Koh-i Noor in George Street or the Taj Mahal opposite the Odeon Cinema – I would be very interested to hear from you: was it your first experience of ethnic food, what prompted you to go, what was on the menu? All memories and insights gratefully received and acknowledged!

Once again my thanks for all you are doing and please keep safe. We will re-emerge in good heart on the other side and ready for our next 175 years.

Sandy Walkington
 chair@stalbanhistory.org

A PERSONAL TOUR AROUND OUR 175TH EXHIBITION

There is a story that when Harold Macmillan was asked what threw governments off course he replied “Events, Dear Boy, Events”. This may be apocryphal but is very true of where we are at the moment. When we were talking about this edition of the Newsletter no one thought that we would have to consider postponing the actual exhibition that was scheduled to run from June until September and on which so much “blood, sweat and tears” had been spilled. Nor did we expect that we would need to design a virtual exhibition which will appear on our website.

After reading this I hope from 18 June you will look at the online exhibition on our website. We have designed it to resemble one of those catalogues you buy to remind yourself of what you saw when you visited an exhibition. And Peter Bourton has done a great job in translating my ramblings into effective web material. But there is obviously nothing like seeing the real thing. There will be an actual physical exhibition, but we can't, given so much uncertainty, say exactly when it will take place.

So, let me as part tribute to all the hard work put in by many people you

know, and some you don't, take you on a tour of the physical exhibition.

Imagine you are walking down the western walkway towards the Keeper's gallery, what will you see? Well first of all there will be an explanation of our history and the themes of **Discover**, **Protect**, **Innovate** and **Inform** around which the exhibits are grouped. Do open the door to the gallery and try to ignore the sculpture in front of you. I know its eye catching but please be determined.

The first core section of the exhibition is **Discover**. Although on being formed our first aim was to protect the Abbey, soon our members were making exciting discoveries that added to our knowledge of St Albans and the surrounding area. So, you will see some of the earliest excavated artefacts from both Verulamium



Fig. 1: 1930s discoveries at Verulamium
(© St Albans Museums)

and the Abbey grounds that are not normally on public display. The ones from Verulamium were donated by Lord Verulam. His portrait is here kindly lent to us by his descendants, who are still our Patrons. Thanks to our friends at the Cathedral, on display is a copy of a 12th century ivory book cover – the original is so important, it is in The British Museum. But the monastic tile is original and so is the papal bull – no it's not one of the three relating to John of Wheathampstead, it is earlier and normally resides in the Cathedral Muniment Room.

Next to it is The Wheeler Wall. This part of the exhibition looks at the key role we played in the 1930s excavations in what is now Verulamium park. Our Secretary, Charles Jones, was indirectly responsible for the appointment of Dr Mortimer Wheeler and a meeting took place over lunch in what is now St Albans Museum + Gallery. The rest as they say is history, but we are displaying for the first-time many pictures that the excavation team took and put in scrap books. I like the 'Whoopee' one - it's so joyful. (See Fig. 1) And do pick up the audio machine to listen to our own Helen Bishop reading excerpts from Tessa Wheeler's lectures to our Society. On the other wall is a more recent picture showing Society members assisting the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group in surveying the unexcavated areas of Verulamium. You are



Fig. 2: Mystery object or vintage geophysics?"
The Martin-Clark Resistivity Meter
(© Dr Kris Lockyear)

bound to recognise someone. There is an example of less recent geophysics equipment close by. (See Fig. 2)

The next set of displays running down the connecting corridor reflect our role in **protecting** our heritage. It is no exaggeration to say that we, and our members, have contributed to the preservation of almost everything that is important in St Albans: the Cathedral and Abbey Church, the three medieval churches, the Abbey Gateway, the 1637 building in Market Place, the former Crow Inn in Fishpool Street, the former Tudor Tavern, the Roman Walls and of course St Albans Museum and Gallery itself. There is a feature on Adam and Jill Singer's amazing struggle to renovate Kingsbury Barn and let's not forget the Clock Tower. One of our greatest successes was in 1859 when we led a campaign to insist the Clock Tower be restored and not pulled down



Fig. 3: "Taking shape!" The ground floor of Beth Jones' Clock Tower model (© Beth Jones)

and we have intervened at key moments ever since. The question for the exhibition was how to commemorate this iconic building, and Caroline Howkins asked a student at the University of Hertfordshire, Beth Jones, to construct a sculpture of the Clock Tower. Work got stopped because of the Covid-19 virus but, hopefully, it will be complete when you get to see it. Here is a picture to be going on with. It's large. (See Fig. 3)

Although we were unsuccessful in preventing Lord Grimthorpe from pulling down the West front of the Abbey, our members Lord Aldenham and Dean Lawrance scored a memorable victory over the issue of the Nave Screen. Thanks to Jane Kelsall copying out the letters between all the parties, we have recorded the dialogue so you will be able to listen to some of it and how bitter it was.

We have reached the Eastern Keeper's room and we are now into **Innovate** and **Inform**. In **Innovate** we look at where our members have had a national impact. Sir John Evans and his persuading the Treasury to reward finders of precious metal objects at an amount greater than their scrap value; thereby discouraging the melting down of finds. Dr Norman Davey developing a new technique for raising and preserving intact painted Roman wall plaster. (See Fig. 4) William Page and the Victoria County History. We were one of the first societies to commission aerial photography of an archaeological site arranging this before the 1930s excavations of Verulamium. Thanks to HALS we have on display the original photographs. The examples go on.



Fig. 4: Norman Davey sorting fragments of Roman wall plaster. (© Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies)



Fig. 5: The Eleanor Cross plaque erected by the Society, 1929. At the bottom right hand corner 'StA&HA&AS' is inscribed. SAHAAS is shorter!

For the **Inform** section we have had to be selective. We commemorate the famous people who have lectured to us and all the publications we, and our members, have produced including the Fowler Map and Boutell's book on brasses – the depiction of Abbot Thomas de la Mare is unmissable. We look at the memorial plaques that we have erected around St Albans and our role in the pageants. (See Fig. 5) We have digitised the Commissioners Report on the evidence of Bribery in Parliamentary elections so you can see if someone with your name gave or received money for their votes. And yes, you are right, in the corner of the room thanks to the University of Hertfordshire is an audio recording booth so you can record today's memories to become tomorrow's history. Don't forget to pick up a membership leaflet on your way out to persuade one of your friends to join us.

So, thanks for letting me guide you around and I hope we will see you when the real exhibition starts.

It never ceases to amaze me that as a Society we have contributed so much to this wonderful city in which we are privileged to live. Long may it continue.

John Morewood

With grateful thanks to the following individuals...

Chris Bennett, Helen Bishop, Peter Bourton, Pat Broad, Peter Burley, Brian and Jan Carter, Derrick Chivers, John Cox, Ann Dean, Di Dunn, Gill Girdziusz, Mike Gray, Sheila Green, Sue Gregory, Bryan Hanlon, Andie Hill, Caroline Howkins, Beth Jones, Sarah Keeling, Jane Kelsall, Andy Lawrence, Kris Lockyear, Jon Mein, Malcolm Merrick, David Moore, Kate Morris, Donald Munro, Mark Percival, Adam and Jill Singer, David Thorold, Ros Trent, Lord and Lady Verulam, Sandy Walkington, and Simon West.

... and the following organisations:

Ashmolean Museum Oxford, British Museum, Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, the Creative Place, Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertfordshire County Council – Councillor Locality Budget 2019/2020, Institute of Historical Research, National Portrait Gallery, St Albans BID, St Albans Civic Society, St Albans Museums, St Albans School, Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies and University of Hertfordshire.

OUR VICTORIAN PREDECESSORS

NO. 5: WILLIAM PAGE – PRE-EMINENT LOCAL HISTORIAN

The handsome kindly-looking gentleman pictured here is William Page (1861–1934), historian and archaeologist. He lived only six years in St Albans, but his pioneering influence on the historiography of the city, of Hertfordshire and English local history more widely was prodigious. By some distance he was the most notable local historian associated with SAHAAS.

Born in Paddington, the fifth and last child of a merchant father, he went to Australia as assistant executive engineer to the Queensland government 1880 to 1884.

A sea-change was prompted by the marriage of his eldest sister to William John Hardy, one of a dynasty of distinguished archivists and antiquarians. Returning to England in 1884 he joined his brother-in-law as partner in the firm of Hardy and Page, record agents and legal antiquaries. Through commissions and work requiring frequent visits to the Public Record Office Page rapidly became very well connected with leading historians and researchers. Elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1887, he published the following year the first of an astonishingly long and varied stream of archival reports,

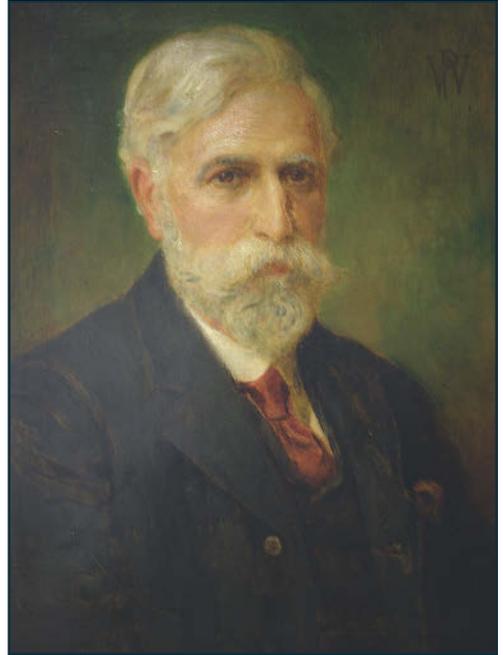


Fig. 1: William Page *aet* 64
(Courtesy University of London)

lists, calendars, editions of records, articles and other publications reflecting his extraordinarily wide interests in history, archaeology and antiquities.

Initially Page's work had a Northern focus, but Hertfordshire and St Albans where the Hardys already lived were soon major interests. He became a member of the St Albans Architectural & Archaeological Society in April 1893, delivering a paper on "The Marian Survey of the Town of St Albans" a month later; and was elected to the Committee in October 1894. In 1896 he came to live in St Albans with his wife and family at the

White House, opposite St Peter's church. In September 1897 he became an assistant Secretary of the Society.

Page was an active member, and the well organised and informative character of his papers was commended by his colleagues. He assiduously recorded the results of his documentary researches, particularly on the abbey (*The parochial chapel of St. Andrew*, etc.); documented new discoveries of Romano-British remains; led excavations in St Michael's churchyard in 1897 and at the forum of Verulamium with the Revd C. V. Bicknell 1898–1902. More widely he worked on chantries and medieval guilds in Hertford-

shire. Several of these papers appeared in the *SAHAAS Transactions* and many more were published in scholarly journals such as *The Antiquary*, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries*, *Archaeologia*, and the *Home Counties Magazine* etc.. He also wrote the first scholarly post-restoration guide to *St. Alban's Cathedral and Abbey Church* (1898) and issued an abbreviated edition of Nicholson's guide in 1900.

Page also played a major part in helping found the Hertfordshire County Museum in 1898. Our Committee Minutes in May 1896 note him as Secretary of the Archaeological section of the Committee of the County Museum reporting "on the general objects of the Scheme, and the progress which had been made, including [*intriguingly*] in arranging a Temporary Museum in rooms kindly lent by Mr R W Ellis, Market Place, St Albans".

Many readers will already know Page's most substantial single contribution to our local history - *The Victoria history of the county of Hertford*, volumes 1-4 + Index vol. (1902-23) of which he was editor, contributing himself *inter alia* the Romano-British chapter, the ecclesiastical history of Hertfordshire, sections on St Albans abbey, architectural descriptions of Shenley, Wheathampstead with Harpenden, and Redbourn; together with general topographical descriptions and (with others) manorial descents.



Fig. 2: Page at the St Michael's excavation c.1898 (Courtesy St Albans Museums)

Few will know however that the Victoria County History (VCH), a systematic pioneering project of English county history stands today as a monument to William Page himself. Whilst not the originator, he was early involved in discussions 1899-1902 setting the parameters for an ambitious project aiming to produce on a uniform plan a set of volumes for each of the 39 historic English counties. Uniformity was to be achieved by preparing instructions to authors in which the topographical sections are essentially the work of Page who “had a practical genius for organising research, allied to wide knowledge of the materials of English local history” (C. Lewis, VCH).

In 1902 Page gave up his partnership with Hardy in order to become joint editor with H.A. Doubleday of the VCH. He became sole general editor in 1904 and “presided over and articulated a hive of serious scholarly research” (C. Lewis) populated largely by young women. By 1914 the eminent Manchester medievalist T.F. Tout lauded the VCH as “the training ground for a younger generation of medieval historians”.

He remained in post until his death 30 years later, having astonishingly brought out some 89 volumes, guided the VCH through numerous vicissitudes, and assured its survival by joining it with the Institute of Historical Research, University of London.

In addition to the VCH Page was in great demand, serving also on the Historical Manuscripts Commission, and the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments for England – writing the introductory surveys to the Hertfordshire, Bucks and Essex volumes. He also found time to write monographs on other of his historical interests. A truly remarkable, industrious and talented man.

William Page played a very significant part in developing scholarly record-based historiography, particularly for manorial history. “Versatile, tactful, energetic, progressive, and scholarly” (later VCH editor) his success was in no small measure due to his equable, kindly and generous temperament. The very late academic recognition of his “Herculean” efforts (Oxford D.Litt. orator, 1932) is likely down to his being a self-taught historian and never part of the academic historical swim.

As a result of his involvement with the VCH, Page moved his family back to London in 1902 but he remained a member of the Arc & Arc with a lasting affection for the city long after he left St Albans.

He was undoubtedly one of SAHAAS’ most noteworthy luminaries with an impact so much wider than Hertfordshire.

BEFORE CHRISTOPHER PLACE ...

The Society's collection of photographs is being reviewed as part of a project to make archaeological records, collected in and around St Albans in the period 1966 to 1973, more accessible to researchers and the general public. During the review, a photograph depicting an excavation in Gentle's Yard in 1966 (see below), which is now Christopher Place, came to light. This picture is of interest to SAHAAS members, not so much because of the archaeology but more as a fragment of history of our society and participants in the dig.

This was the first excavation, a training dig, to take place in St Albans by the newly formed St Albans Archaeological Research and Rescue Group (SAARRG) formed under the auspices of the Arc & Arc. The dig was staffed by museum personnel, especially Vagn Christophers, whose day job was conservator at Verulamium Museum, and who gave up his free time to direct the dig; school students, who had responded to an appeal by the museum for volunteers who were allowed time off school after completing their GCE 'O' Levels; and SAHAAS members, who were able to use their greater knowledge and experience to provide training for the students.

Gentle's Yard was to be the first of many SAARRG activities in St Albans, which was undergoing a period of rapid redevelopment. SAARRG was an amateur, i.e. unpaid organisation, members of which would keep a watching brief of construction sites and in some cases carry out a full excavation. Under the supervision of Vagn, the finds from Gentle's Yard were cleaned and processed in the back room in the then vacant Goat public house in Sopwell Lane, and culminating in an exhibition. The experience was important for many of the participants, who still maintain contact with each other and SAHAAS and, more so, for the four members who have made a successful career in archaeology, including a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, two museum curators and two MBEs.

Denley Lane



The Gentle's Yard excavation with Dagnall Street Baptist Church to the rear, 1966 (SAHAAS Library)

TO BOLDLY GO IN THE LATE EIGHTEEN HUNDREDS

As the Society approached its 40th anniversary, members embarked on a series of excursions to places of interest in and around Hertfordshire. The leader in many instances was the knowledgeable guide Canon Owen Davys, MA, rector of St Helen's Church, Wheathampstead. The destination was frequently a church, which seems highly appropriate, as many of the members at the time had a deep interest in ecclesiastical architecture.

Such visits were seen as crucial to the purpose of the Society, as explained by the Society's librarian H.R. Wilton Hall. In a report published in the Society's 1905/6 *Transactions* covering the Society's first 60 years he wrote: "About the year 1882 began a series of Excursions to various places of interest in the County and Counties adjoining Hertfordshire. These have been most valuable, and have formed a most important part of our work. Quite early in the history of the Society a careful and exact record of the architecture of Churches and ancient buildings was put forward as one of the objectives to be attained. Until the institution of Excursions, however, very little was done in this direction."

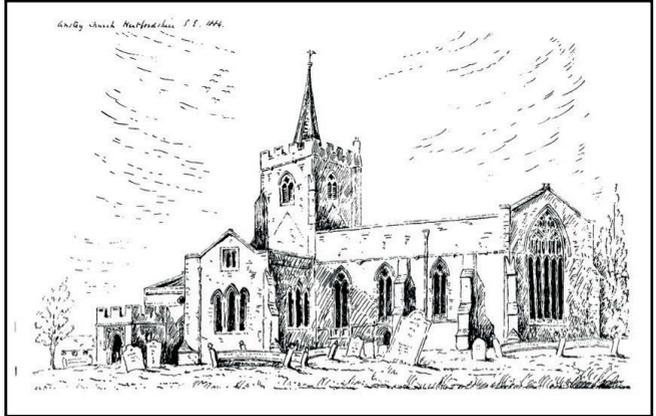
One of the first such outings was to the "picturesque ruins" of the old church at

Ayot St Lawrence, led by Canon Davys. He described how the party examined together the plan of the church and details of "what had been one of the most interesting Ecclesiastical structures in our county". It was not until 1884 that he wrote up his notes, explaining that 'it seemed desirable that those notes should take a more permanent form, and be published, with some details and a plan of the building, in our *Transactions*'.

The weather wasn't always kind, as on the day a party of some 30 members set off by train and then horse and carriage to visit Dunstable Priory church, the Downs, Maiden Bower and Totternhoe Castle and Church. The party left St Albans "amidst a heavy shower and the thick clouds which hung all around promised anything but a comfortable ramble on Dunstable Downs". After visiting the church and priory, the party walked down the high street to the Sugar Loaf Hotel where carriages were provided to convey them to the Downs. "Jupiter Pluvius now proved more kind, and for an hour or so little or no rain fell. Having driven to the foot of the knolls, the party walked up to the ancient earthworks." It was here that they learnt more about the two old Roman ways that met near the spot. The party picnicked in the carriages at Maiden Bower in a lane "hard by' where a farmer helpfully informed them that it was an old drovers" road by which the Welsh cattle were brought up.

Then, it was on to Totterhoe, whose quarries supplied the 'clunch' used in the construction of St Albans Abbey.

In 1884 Canon Davys was once again in the lead, taking a party to St George's Church at Anstey – some 15 miles northeast of Stevenage. It was a place close to his heart although he had only visited it for the first time just a few weeks earlier. His grandfather had been Rector there for 21 years and it was the birthplace of his mother. In addition, St George's was, and still is, very similar in style to St Helen's, and described by Canon Davys as 'a miniature minster, perfect in its people's nave and aisles, its chapels in the transepts and its ancient choir' – see sketch above.



Sketch of Anstey church by Canon Davys.
(Source: SAHAAS *Transactions*, 1884, p. 28)

These excursions were clearly valuable in sparking members to research the places they were to visit. There was a second enduring benefit. At long last and for the first time the Society found the means to publish the resulting papers in the first series of *Transactions*. They record scholarly works describing buildings and places in great detail and even in the early 1900s

were considered to be documents of 'Antiquarian and Historical' value. The reports of those early, intrepid members who ventured forth, come rain or shine, to visit churches and ancient Roman sites, by train and horse-drawn carriage, make excellent reading. They are a collective reminder of the many ancient wonders the county of Hertfordshire has to offer.

For those ready to leave the comfort of their armchairs, the Society continues to organise excursions, or 'outings' as they are called today.

Many thanks to Pat Broad for her research contribution to this article.

Sue Mann

BARBARA BILLINGS

We are sorry to say that Barbara, a long-standing member, died in April after a long struggle with diabetes. Her funeral took place at Garston crematorium on 29 April. Our thoughts are with her husband, Tony.

E. STANLEY KENT – SOCIETY PHOTOGRAPHER

We are dedicating the front cover of each Newsletter in our 175th year to a prominent artist or photographer who was also a member of the Society. Edward Stanley Kent, more familiarly ‘Stanley’, is a most appropriate choice. Several hundred of his own photographs of St Albans in the early 1900s survive to form an incomparable record of the city at the time.

Kent was not a professional photographer, his family’s prosperity allowing him time and money to dabble. In reality, he was no mere dabbler: the photos show he took this pastime seriously and had a good eye. His other hobby was the study of the city’s history. This happy coincidence is to our benefit as many of the photos capture long-gone buildings and architectural features. Figs. 1 and 2 below are good examples.

His collection is largely only available at HALS. However, the Society possesses an album of 90 or so photos Kent donated in the 1930s – it is one of our treasures. He chose the contents to support a talk he gave to the Society about the town in the early 1800s. (The paper was subsequently published in the 1929 *Transactions* – see the website.) Some of the photos are not in the HALS collection.

Portraits of any description are a rare find in his collection so the photo on the front cover is unusual. I imagine Kent was out with his camera and the children demanded to be recorded. If so, it was another happy coincidence.

Jon Mein

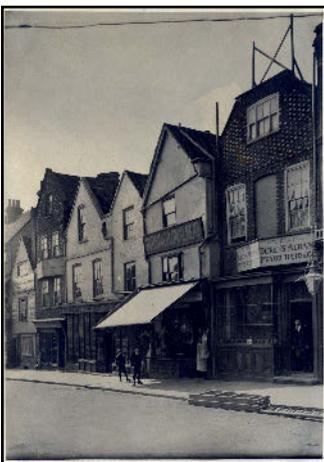


Fig. 1: west side of Chequer Street c.1900; buildings demolished c.1912 (SAHAAS Library)



Fig. 2: no. 1 St Peter's Street, 1909. This was altered to shops and offices c.1924. (SAHAAS Library)

MORE E. S. KENT PHOTOS – SHEEP IN ST ALBANS



Fig. 3: Fishpool Street, c.1910; cropped. Shepherds and sheep just passing the Lower Red Lion (SAHAAS Library)



Fig. 3: the stock market in St Peter's Street, c.1898; cropped (SAHAAS Library)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Society is expected to take place on Tuesday 8 September, with the main objectives of:

- a) Electing a new President
- b) Electing a new Council.
- c) Receiving a report from the Treasurer and presentation of the accounts for the financial year 2019/2020.
- d) Receiving reports from the President and group leaders of the Society's activities over the past year, and our plans for the future.

After three years of service as our president, it is now time for Sandy Walkington to stand down, so we shall be seeking nominations for a new holder of this essential position.

All other present members of Council (as shown opposite) are willing to stand for re-election, but **we are looking for volunteers to fulfil the important roles of Publicity and Publications officers 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. My email address is admin@stalbanhistory.org.

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

JOHN THOMSON

It is with sadness that we record John's death in April from the Covid-19 virus. He had served as the Society's Treasurer for ten years until he stepped down in 2014. John continued to take an interest in our activities both as a Society member and also as treasurer of the Clock Tower Joint Committee, run in tandem with the Civic Society.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

As from September 2020, the positions of Publicity Officer and Publications Officer 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

Gill Girdziusz – Lecture Secretary

Pat Howe – 17th Century Research Group

Caroline Howkins – Clock Tower

Frank Iddiols – Technical Officer

Heather Jardine - Librarian

Christine McDermott – Representative, *Herts Archaeology and History*

Jonathan Mein – Newsletter Editor

Roger Miles – Archaeology Group

Sally Pearson – Minutes Secretary

David Smith – Membership Secretary

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members:

William Batchelor	St Albans	Marisa Laycock	St Albans
Katherine Booth	St Albans	Patricia Lloyd	St Albans
Dr David Bushnell	St Albans	Eugene McLaughlin	Redbourn
Viscount and Viscountess Grimston	Gorhambury	Christopher and Rebecca Shepherd	St Albans
Geoffrey and Ann Hollis	Hatfield	Dr Valerie Shrimplin	St Albans
Bud Hudspith	St Albans	David and Amy Spencer	St Albans
Heather and Ian Jardine	St Albans		
Jonathan Kiek and Lynda Mountford	St Albans		

OBITUARIES

Norman Oldknow

I first met Norman when I was invited to join the 17th century Research Group. With J.T. Smith he was a founder member of that group in 1991. He was not only an avid researcher into 17th century St Albans but also an active member of what was then the Architectural and Local History Group which arranged the Tuesday evening lectures until 2009.

As I became more involved in the 17th Century Group, I was always coming across Norman's writing or typing which I was soon able to recognise. He must have searched every record office within a day's journey of his home. Some of his findings can be found in the Society's Library. Much of it comes from the record office in Hertford, but he also made numerous visits to the old Public Record Office in Chancery Lane. Norman was a valued contributor to the *Thoroughfare Town* book.

We have missed his attendance at lectures in recent years when he found it more difficult to get around. He always had a question for the speaker.

Our sincere condolences to Carole, Norman's widow.

Pat Howe

Mike North

Sadly Mike died in April. Interest in the history of the area was personal as his family had lived in St Albans from the 1800s, perhaps earlier. He had many of the attributes of an excellent local historian. A voracious reader he was a regular at both the Society and Central libraries. Mike also had the necessary patience to be an accurate transcriber, to which his work on the lengthy Abbey parish poor rate assessments of 1655-72 pays testament.

His skills were brought to bear with particular success on two Society projects. For the 1914-18 group, not only did Mike establish a data classification system for our 1911 census work but he then coded software to analyse large sets of data at the click of a button. As a result, reports underpinning several sections of the Home Front book that would have otherwise taken weeks to produce, instead took just a few minutes. Moreover, his quietly expressed views about the project invariably proved of great merit.

J.T. Smith, leader of the 17th century project, held him in high regard. Their names appear as joint editors on the spine of the *Thoroughfare Town* book, a permanent reminder of Mike's contribution to the Society.

Jon Mein

BLUE PLAQUES IN THE OFFING?

St Albans, unlike many other historic towns and cities, has rather a dearth of 'blue plaques'. Yes, of course, we have a few (Queen Eleanor and Duke of Somerset to name perhaps the most obvious, although not exactly "blue"), but there are a variety of other 'worthies' of whom there is no obvious visual record.

The Arc & Arc has therefore joined forces with the Civic Society / Conservation 50 / Abbey Precincts Association / St Albans Guides / the Abbey/ BID with the aim of rectifying this omission, and we are joined by Cllr Mandy McNeill - Business, Culture and Tourism Portfolio Holder for SADC. English Heritage plaques are restricted solely to London, so we shall have to be

resourceful, and provide our own. A circular design in St Albans blue and yellow would seem to be a good start. Could I therefore please ask you to let me know who you would like to see so commemorated – and, just as importantly, where such a plaque should be placed.

This will be an expensive and no doubt slow long-term exercise with a phased introduction, so if you can identify sources of funding (other than 'the Lottery') please do contact me with details of any suitable contact via

admin@stalbanhistory.org.

Many thanks for all the help you can give.

Bryan Hanlon

HERTFORD MUSEUM IMAGE LIBRARY

Easier access to research material is always welcome, especially if searchable and online, like the Hertford Museum's Image Library which has just been launched on the museum's website – www.hertfordmuseum.org/page72.html. The online picture library contains their collection of over 15,000 images covering Hertford and east Hertfordshire from the 1860s to present day. The collection is composed of postcards, slides and photos of events, people, places and local industry but does not include the museum's books, manuscripts, newspaper cuttings or objects.

Although obviously Hertford-centric, if you search for 'St Albans', over 400 images can be viewed and purchased. Further searches will find images for other places in the district such as London Colney and Wheathampstead. Searching can also be undertaken through over twenty categories, such as buildings, the two world wars, people, pubs, streets, beyond Hertford etc. Sadly, you won't find photos of their archive of the largest collection of toothbrushes in the UK, for that you will have to make an appointment.

Caroline Howkins

LIBRARY REPORT

First of all, let me introduce myself as your new Librarian. My name is Heather Jardine and I come to the Society after a career working as a professional librarian, chiefly in public libraries – this includes 23 years working in bibliographical services in the City of London Libraries, based on the lower ground floor under Guildhall Library. When I retired in 2013, I then took the opportunity to work as a volunteer at St Bride Library, doing all sorts of duties necessary to keep the library open and the collections accessible to researchers. And there I remained until February this year when I came to join the Society. I look forward to meeting and working with you all.

It has been a strange time to take up a new role, with the library closing only a few weeks after I arrived. It is hard to get your feet under the table when you can't get to the table to put your feet under it. However I can see that the library is in good shape and for that I am indebted to my predecessors and the whole library team. Although the library is closed at the moment, work goes on at home as far as is possible and we have many plans for the future. I hope that by the time of my next Newsletter report we will have better news about the library re-opening and the progress we have been able to make.

New acquisitions

The library has been blessed with a number of new and significant acquisitions during the last couple of months. The first of these is the deed of sale of the White Hart Inn, and four acres of land, on Holywell Hill, in 1792. We are indebted for this to the family of the late Clare Marion Seeley, who lived for many years in New England Street. It has been added to the Society's collection of property deeds and, like all our acquisitions, will be accessible to members and researchers when the library re-opens.

We have also acquired, for a very reasonable price, a collection of 300 architects' plans of local properties. You may have seen coverage of this in the *Herts Advertiser* in March. The plans shed light on the development of housing and commercial property in St Albans between the 1870s and the 1940s, and include plans of a hosiery mill, the Marks & Spencer building and Mallinson House in the city centre, and domestic properties around the city. Such documents are rarely available for the public to study and we are lucky to have them and to be able to make them available for research.

Equally valuable in demonstrating changes in the city over the years are about 30 black and white photographs from the estate of the late John Rudling.

These date from the 1980s and feature what were once familiar local buildings then on the point of demolition or repurposing. Subjects include the water tower behind Sandridge Road, the Ballito factory on Hatfield Road and the railway control centre at Bricket Wood.

Last but by no means least... we received the donation of an invaluable collection of books and pamphlets from the Abbey as part of the Beardsmore Gift in 2017; the books are already catalogued and work is well-advanced in adding the pamphlets to the online catalogue as well. Now, thanks to Caroline Howkins and Andy Lawrence who provided the transport, we have taken possession of 56 (yes, 56) albums of postcards, about 4,500 in total, as part of the same donation. These have come to the library since its closure and I haven't been able to see them myself yet, but I am looking forward to it and I am sure that other members are as well!

Heather Jardine

Recent Journal Articles

Harpenden & District Local History Society Newsletter, no. 139, December 2019.

pp. 9-13 "Rothamsted, the bee and me", by Peter Tomkins. The author was an apiarist at Rothamsted from 1946. The work of the Bee Department is described with emphasis on his time there.

pp. 19-22 "Brocket Hall" a report by Jean Gardner of a talk given by Andy Chapman.

The history of Brocket Hall is explored through its occupants including the Brocket, Melbourne and Cowper families. pp. 25-26 "The Cross Keys: formerly the White Hart", by Rosemary Ross. A brief history of this Harpenden hostelry.

Herts Past and Present, no 35, Spring 2020. pp. 2-7 "The miracles of King Henry VI. Part 1, The miracles recorded in Hertfordshire, 1489-1500", by Heather Falvey. After his death in 1471 at least 368 miracles were attributed to Henry VI. Three miracles were recorded in Hertfordshire. One man survived a sword wound in Barnet, another saved from a fire in Berkhamsted and a third recovered from the plague in Elstree.

pp. 9-14 "Life between the wars at Boarscroft Farm, Tring: The significance of ephemera", by Shelly Savage. The household, personal and business history of the farm, run by the Bunker family, is told through a collection of accounts (some illustrated) dated 1922-1946.

pp. 25-28 "Managing the poor in Hertfordshire, 1635-1795: Part 4, Bastardy – 'Losing' the child", by Carla Herman. Many women accused of infanticide were acquitted due to difficulties proving there was a live birth. Those found guilty often faced the death penalty. Records are few for the period and most examples are drawn from earlier years.

Lin Watson

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

Oh, how embarrassing! Not only did I drop an H, but there was a photo of it in the *Herts Advertiser*. I had carefully typed up a 'Clock Tower will be closed ...' notice, printed it off, laminated it, driven in to St Albans and attached the A4 sign to the Clock Tower door. Only when I got home to review the photo of it, did I notice that I had dropped an H. Instead of "The Clock Tower will be closed until further notice", I'd typed 'furter'. Within 24 hours I had replaced the sign, but alas within that day the *Herts Advertiser* had obtained and published a photo of the original sign. My spelling mistake has been immortalized in the press!



Life in St Albans, like everywhere else, seems to be on hold. We have little idea when the Clock Tower door will open again to visitors but we certainly hope that we can have a Clockateers' Party and an Official Opening this season. The last time the doors were closed for a whole season was back in 1986 when the Tower suffered from death-watch beetle and wet rot. Over its 600 years the Clock Tower has seen war, storms, plagues, fire and famine and has stood all these tests of time and this too will pass so the Clock Tower, and St Albans, will open its doors again.

Caroline Howkins

WEBSITE REPORT

With lockdown still underway at the time of writing, we're adding new topical content to the website, as well as some ideas about pursuing your own interest in history from home.

A new section of the website explores the times when St Albans and its environs have had to deal with epidemics and isolation. You'll find articles about the Black Death, the Great Plague of 1665, and the Spanish Flu epidemic of 1918, amongst others. One of the interesting themes is how quickly societies emerged from periods of what must have seemed like cataclysmic change. And if you're feeling somewhat isolated, spare a thought for the anchoresses who chose

to be walled up for life in a cell attached to St Peter's Church.

You'll also find ideas for historical podcasts and online photo galleries you might like to sample, as well as researching historical newspaper collections, and photographing the changing scenes in towns and villages on your permitted excursions.

Even better, let us have your own ideas via projects@stalbanhistory.org, and we'll pass on the best to other members. Meantime, if you'd like to read more about aspects of the history of St Albans and its environs, do take a look at the Society's online bookshop on the website.

Peter Bourton

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE REPORT

The main news this month is our progress on the Society's new pamphlet series, which is finally taking shape. The series, 'St Albans Concise Histories', will publish original work about aspects of the history of St Albans and surrounding areas. The publications are intended to be compact but authoritative and informative, and the series will cover a wide range of topics.

The first pamphlet in the series is by Kate Morris, on the history of St Michael's and its community in the early modern period. Ideally we would like to keep to our

original plan of launching the series and Kate's pamphlet this autumn. However the Covid-19 lockdown and all the related uncertainties are making it hard to finalise production and publishing plans. We are still grappling with these challenges and will give you details of the publishing plans as soon as we can - via enews and the August Newsletter.

Book sales are quiet at the moment. You can continue to buy our books by ordering online via our website, emailing publications@stalbanhistory.org or by phoning me (01727 863340). We'll do our best to get your order to you.

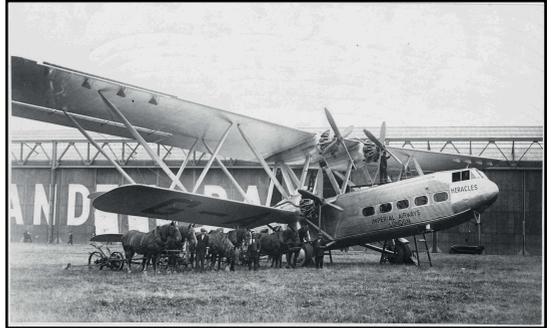
We are busy on Twitter, which is a great way to communicate short stories to a wide audience. We recently ran a story about the beautiful art deco bus station built in 1936 in St Albans by the London Transport Passenger Board. Somewhat to our surprise the story has now been viewed 5,000 times.

After four years of leading the publication committee team I've decided not to stand for re-election to Council this year. If anyone is interested in taking on this very interesting and busy role and wants to know more, do please contact Sandy Walkington, Bryan Hanlon or me.

Pat Broad

ST ALBANS MUSEUMS ONLINE

We had hoped to use this article to tell you all about our upcoming exhibition, **Chroniclers of History**, which we are working on with St Albans Cathedral and would have brought several manuscripts written in St Albans back to the city after a long absence. Unfortunately, Covid-19 means that we've had to postpone this exhibition but we are still determined to bring it to you, hopefully in 2021, so watch this space!



Radlett aerodrome with horse-drawn mowers
(Handley Page Association)

In the meantime, we are working to make sure that everyone can still access our collections, stories, artworks and even some events via our website and social media. We are currently adding to our online provision so do keep checking back to see what else we've been up to – or follow us on Twitter, Facebook or Instagram (@StAlbansMuseums)

Collections

You can search our collections online by keyword, subject, material or even colour! We haven't got all of our collections online yet, and there are definitely some photographs to be added, but there's still plenty to explore.

collections.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/explore

You can also see our oil paintings and sculpture collection on ArtUK's website. artuk.org/visit/collection/st-albans-museums-1178

Exhibitions

As our building is closed, we've moved our two current exhibitions online. You can explore the virtual galleries of the **Hertfordshire Open 2020** with paintings, sculpture, photography and even films available to view on both UH Arts website and our own.

stalbanmuseums.org.uk/explore/exhibitions/hertfordshire-open-2020

The **Handley Page** exhibition has also moved online with galleries telling the story of the company from its earliest days to the views of the site today. We are working with the Handley Page Association to add to the online exhibition and we were even able to hold an online paper plane challenge over Easter. You can still see the instructions online if you want to have a go.

www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/explore/exhibitions/handley-page

From the Explore page on our website (see image below) you can find other local online resources, take a look at some of our past projects and exhibitions, remind yourself of how the St Albans Museum + Gallery project took shape and even listen to the whole of our Talking Buildings project.

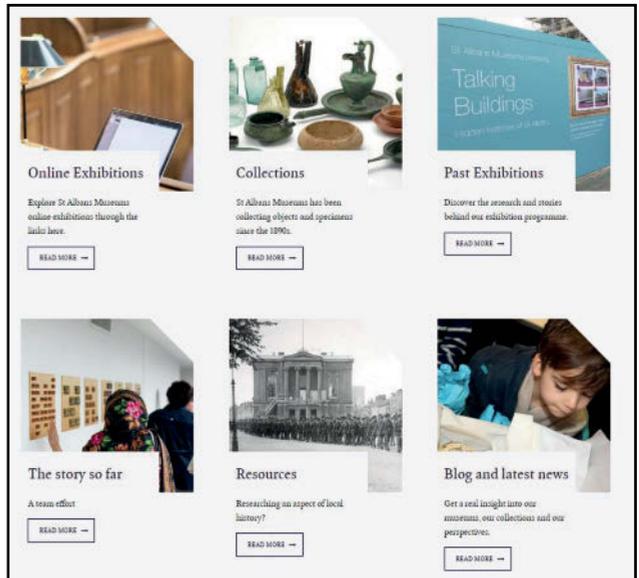
www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk/explore

What next?

With VE Day approaching fast we will be creating new pages to share stories and activities for the 75th anniversary so make sure to take a look.

We're also working hard on our future exhibition plans for when we are able to reopen and of course we're still taking care of our collections and buildings (taking all the necessary precautions).

These are strange times and as part of St Albans City and District Council, the museums team may be called on to help essential services continue running over the coming weeks. If you'd like to get in touch with the team, please email museum@stalbens.gov.uk as this inbox is always monitored.



The 'Explore' page on the Museum's website

Sarah Keeling
St Albans Museums

SOCIETY TRANSCRIPTION PROJECT

Do you enjoy transcribing historical documents? If so, would you be interested in taking part in a small project to transcribe the Society's 1915-39 Minute Books? We have a complete set of these books and the Minutes are in generally good handwriting. All we require is that you have access to the internet so we can send you digital copies of the material to transcribe using your wordprocessor and for you to return your transcripts to us. Contact projects@stalbenshistory.org if you are interested.

THE KINGS ROAD MEMORIAL – CONTINUING A 160-YEAR OLD TRADITION

Several years ago I attended a display in St Michael's Church about their Great War memorial, which had been organised by the local historian, Ann Dean. The names of those men from the parish who lost their lives in the Great War were listed, and I was struck by the senseless loss of young life from our small street, Kings Road. I was keen that the sacrifice of these 15 young men and their families should not be forgotten. In 2018, on the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, I set the wheels in motion to plan for our street to have its own memorial.

It is an idea that has certainly captured the imagination and support of many of our neighbours. Its ripples have now spread further afield. Various people and groups have offered their help and support including SAHAAS, Sandy Walkington with his county councillor's hat on, and Cllr Edgar Hill. Edgar Hill has been instrumental in getting SADC to adopt our street memorial as an 'Asset of Community Value'.

We have been in touch with several of the relatives of these men and have been given lots of information including photos, letters and pictures of their medals and graves. With the help of



Fred Henry c.1914 (Joan Stanley)

Gareth Hughes and Helen Little from the Herts at War group, we are now collating this information in booklet form. The above photo shows one of these men: Fred Henry is the great-uncle of Society member, Ros Trent. The *Herts Advertiser* reported his death as follows: Henry of 61 Kings Road "was wounded in the head and was sent to a military hospital at Boulogne. Towards the end of September Mr and Mrs Henry obtained permission of the War Office and a pass to visit their son at Boulogne, an opportunity they greatly appreciated. The young fellow died a fortnight later on October 12th."

We have been extremely lucky to have secured the help of artist Renato Niemis. You may be familiar with his 'Counting

the Cost' glass memorial at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford. He has designed a beautiful, subtle memorial made from Corten – a type of rusty metal – that represents the earth of the trenches and the ordinary nature of these men. Their jobs included: a butcher's assistant, cowman, gas worker, postman, railway engine cleaner, and a sawyer on the Gorhambury estate. Renato particularly believes that his memorial 'should be reflective of the human cost of war.'

We are now trying to raise the money needed to cover the costs of erecting the memorial, estimated to be about £5,000. Approximately £2,000 had been raised before Covid-19 hit but now all fundraising is on hold.

We do have a great fund-raising talk by Jon Mein to look forward to entitled 'The Kings Road Street Memorial – continuing a 160-year old tradition'. This has been postponed until we can all safely meet again.

You can donate via the following website where you will also find a link to an article the BBC published about our project: www.gofundme.com/f/kings-road-memorial-fund

For more information about our project, please email judy.sutton34@gmail.com.

Judy Sutton

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for the coming year, June 2020 to May 2021, become due on 1 June 2020. 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 email for the appropriate form at money@stalbanhistory.org.

Payment can also be made by bank transfer to the Society's account: sort code 309725, account number 00811696, Ref. Family name; or by cheque by post to: David Smith, Membership Secretary, Kestrel Lodge, 32 Sutton Mill Road, Potton, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2QB.

AN EARLY VIEW OF THE MIDLAND RAILWAY LINE AT ST ALBANS

The engraving of an early Midland Railway train south of St Albans City station (see Fig.1) has recently come to light in the Society's Library during the project to catalogue the John Cox collection. The image should be viewed on its artistic merits rather than its historic content. This is surprising as it was in a book written by Frederick Smeeton Williams, *The Midland Railway, its rise and*

progress, a narrative of modern enterprise published in 1877.

From the station the line proceeds due south and not south-east as in the engraving. The two-track formation is correct but the line crossed the London Road obliquely and not at right-angles as illustrated. The lattice girders are also correct – they were replaced in 1914.

The next bridge is the masonry bridge over the St Albans and Hatfield Railway

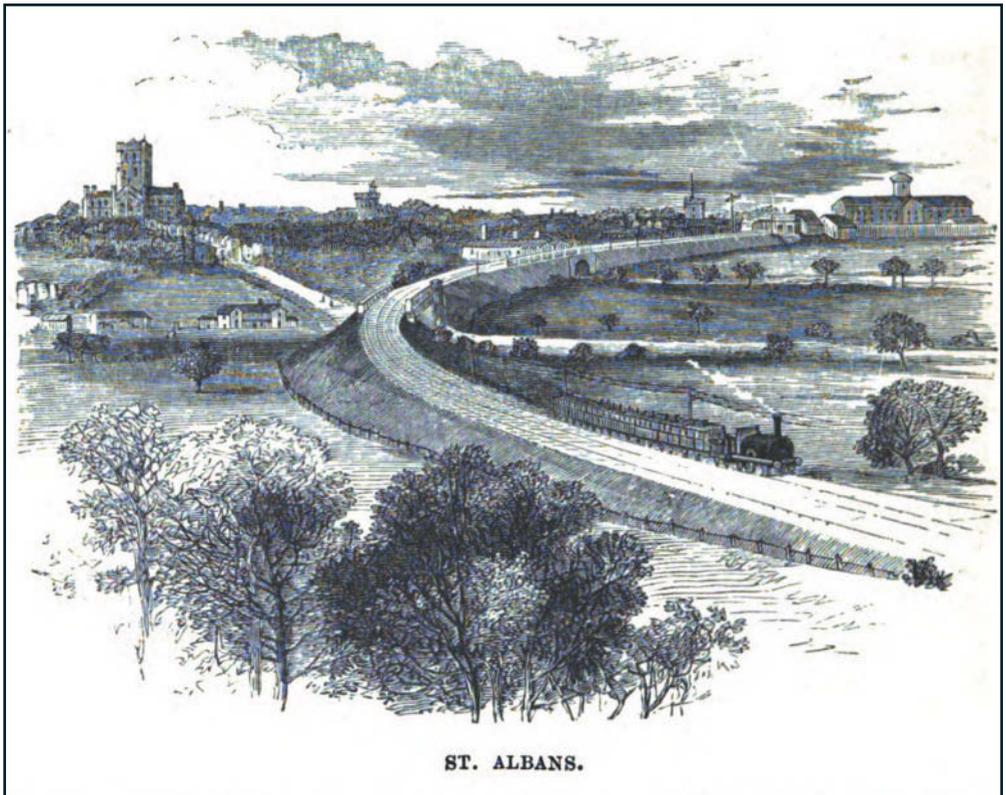


Fig. 1: View of the Midland Railway line at St Albans, published in 1877 (SAHAAS Library)

although it should be nearer to the London Road bridge. The St Albans and Hatfield Railway at this point runs in a deep cutting and not across a seemingly flat field. Further on there seems to be a double-armed signal carrying the down home signal and the up starter signal – this could also be correct.

Opposite the signal on the up (right) side of the line is the back of the brick 'engine house'. This seems to be reasonably accurate as it depicts the store and sand drier with a large water tank as a roof. The building behind is presumably the 'engine house' but it does not show the twelve funnels in the roof as they weren't installed until 1889.

The next building is the larger-than-life gaol with its very low perimeter wall – built at the same time as the railway. The gaol was probably drawn this size to balance the Abbey on the other side of the engraving. The land between the gaol and the Hatfield and St Albans Railway was a steep slope and not a flat field as shown.

The train is probably a good representation of those running at the time. The old 2-2-2 tender locomotives were transferred to the 'London Extension' from the Derby area when the line opened in 1868. The eight 4-wheel coaches with the funnels for the gas/oil lights on the roofs are also probably right.

Just behind the locomotive's chimney can be seen a couple of telegraph wires for the block signalling instruments. James Allport, General Manager of the Midland Railway, in a letter printed in the *Herts Advertiser* (4 November 1871), was very proud that the London Extension had the absolute block system of signalling in place from its opening.

Other buildings in the engraving are difficult to identify except the Abbey, the Clock Tower, St Peter's Church and the gaol. The land between the station and the Town Hall was not developed at this stage and was occupied by nurseries and smallholdings.

Howard Green

CONGRATULATIONS...

To Annika McQueen for the award of her Masters in Studies in Building History from Cambridge University. The subject of her dissertation, *Inns and Innkeeping in North Hertfordshire, 1660-1815*, is particularly relevant to our understanding of the development of the inn trade in St Albans. You can download a copy from www.hcommons.org – just search for Annika's name to find the file.

LICENCES TO PRINT MONEY: THE ST ALBANS WINE CHARTER

Anniversaries come and go all the time but I didn't want to let the 450th anniversary of the St Albans wine charter pass without comment. Actually this is the story of two charters: firstly, the 1553 borough charter that established what is now St Albans District Council. It also reconstituted St Albans Grammar School and set out how the school could be funded. However, in the absence of any significant gifts or endowments, something had to be done. That something was the 1570 wine charter.

It created a novel wine licensing system giving power to the corporation to licence two resident vintners to sell wine in the town in return for an annual payment. The money raised from the two licences was then to be paid, to the tune of £20 a year, to the schoolmaster for his "relief and support." It was an imaginative scheme. The value lay in the monopoly the charter created as no other vintners could trade in the town on pain of punitive fines. The prime mover for the charter was Gorhambury resident Sir Nicholas Bacon, then Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, one of the key offices of State. (His personal involvement in the school is

well known.) He would have been familiar with the precedent for the scheme: Cambridge and Oxford universities maintained similar systems albeit the origins of their privileges had been lost.

Interestingly, the St Albans model was not repeated elsewhere. Perhaps Bacon had recognised its flaws. When the system worked, it worked well but this was not often. The failings were plentiful and some of the blame can be laid with members of the corporation who pursued control of the system for their personal advantage. The wine charter was abolished in 1922, to general contentment.

This note is timely for another reason. It serves as an introduction to an article by Jane Harris about a particularly interesting probate inventory she is currently researching. This relates to the estate of William Hinxman, one of the vintners licensed under the charter. He died in 1627. (See facing page.)

If you want to know more about the history of the wine charter, Frank Kilvington's *A Short History of St Albans School* remains the best text on the subject.

Jon Mein

CHANGING TIMES IN ST ALBANS

"The whipping posts were all removed from the pig market on Thursday week last." (Source: *Herts Mercury*, 19 December 1840, p. 3)

THE WINE CELLARS OF A 17TH CENTURY ST ALBANS VINTNER

In the process of transcribing the probate documents of people who lived in St Albans in the early part of the 17th century, certain inventories stand out. One is for William Hinxman, a vintner, dated 1627.

Vintners were the wine merchants of the day. In St Albans, two vintners could be licensed by the borough corporation under the terms of the 1570 wine charter. (See previous page.) A third licence had been granted by the King in 1606 directly to the Wolley family on a three-life lease. All three licences had been confirmed in a 1610 charter in which the reversion of the third licence (on the death of the last of the three Wolley family members) was to go to the corporation.

We know that in 1626 the three licences were held by Anthony Selioke of the Lyon (on the corner of High Street and Market Cross), Henry Barnes (location not currently known) and Hinxman. He sub-let the third licence from the Wolley family, most probably operating from premises on the corner of Holywell Hill and High Street. (This is part of Côte Restaurant's premises.) At the time this was called the Corner Tavern, a building located in what was coincidentally known as the Vintry in the monastic period.

Stocks of drink listed in his inventory indicate he traded exclusively in wine. This is not surprising as taverns were more typically places of business where people met to drink wine and be served food as opposed to inns which provided overnight accommodation and victuals for travellers. What makes Hinxman's inventory so interesting is the detailed list of the contents of three cellars: the upper and the lower cellars and, rather strangely, 'wynes in the Lyon' cellar. Had he lent stock to Selioke at the Lyon across the road?

In the lower cellar the largest value items were:

- 4 hogsheads of 'Galliacke' wine valued at £18 10s
- 3 hogsheads of 'Graves' wine valued at £16
- 54 gallons of 'Muskedyne' at £6 10s
- 50 gallons of 'Mallingoe' at £7 5s

Other wines stored in smaller quantities were 'Cumicke', 'Rhennishe' and 'Canary'. In the Lyon cellar were more 'Graves' and 'Muskedyne' as well as 'High Country Clarett' and Sack. As those with a nose for such things will recognise, his wine came from France, Germany and Spain.

Students of Shakespeare will also have the advantage of identifying these types of wine as references to most of them can be found in his plays. Falstaff famously praises sack in a speech ending "If I had a



The site of the Corner Tavern (© Andy Lawrence)

thousand sons, the first human principle I would teach them, should be, - to forswear thin potations, and addict themselves to sack." [2 Henry IV, (4, 3, 100)]. In Elizabethan times sack was a very popular dry amber wine from Spain, which the English drank sweetened with sugar. Later it became 'sherrie sack' and today sherry.

The inventory tells us of the risks and rewards of selling wine. We can compare for example the prices of his wine stocks with a list of retail prices set by the mayor in 1629. (Claret and white wine were to be sold at no more than 8d a quart, 'sherrie wine' at 1s.) From our rough estimates, we can see that Hinxman probably made a considerable profit from his stock. Set against this is the reference to 'broken wine' to value of 10s., a reminder

of the difficulties of keeping 17th century wine.

Remembering that taverns were places to eat and relax, Hinxman's cellar contained a keg of sturgeon, seven barrels of pickled oysters and half a barrel of anchovies. Although these items were stored in the lower cellar, keeping food edible without refrigeration was a problem as shown later in the century by Samuel Pepys. He was

given some pickled sturgeon in May 1662, which he kept until an honoured guest arrived in June when "my stomach was turned when my sturgeon came to table upon which I saw very many little worms creeping, which I suppose was through the staleness of the pickle."

There is much more of interest in Hinxman's inventory – the first reference to tobacco in a St Albans inventory for example. However, it is the wine stock that needs further research in particular and I'd welcome the chance to discuss this with members who have an interest in the early modern wine trade. Please contact me via century17@stalbanhistory.org.

A fully referenced version of this note is available from the Society's Library.

Jane Harris

PERCIVAL BLOW AND HIS FAMILY'S ASSOCIATION WITH ST ALBANS

As many of you know, the Society published a book last year about the life and work of Percival Blow, the renowned local architect. The following two complementary articles discuss his early connections to St Albans.

Percival Cherry Blow was born and worked in St Albans, but though the family connection with the town goes back to 1811 or 12, his father and grandfather's careers were mostly in London, a not uncommon pattern for folk in this area.

John Blow, a currier, and Rebecca Fordham, his wife, took an 18-year lease on the College estate in Dagnall Lane and, though John died only the year following, their son George Fordham Blow continued for a number of years to support the family business there.

However, with the lease at an end in 1830, Rebecca sold the contents of the house and a period of change followed. The estate had been sold in 1824, following the death of landlord Joseph Pomfret Vandermeulen two year earlier. Half the lots, the buildings and land around present-day College Street, were bought by Rebecca's brother Edward Allen Fordham, recently withdrawn from the

Fordham brewery business in Lewisham. He came to live, probably with Rebecca, at no. 1 College Street, one of the first four houses he developed on the corner of the New Road, later renamed Verulam Road.

Shortly before his mother's death in 1836, George Fordham and his wife Dessimer, née Higden, and their family moved to London and set up business there, producing industrial leather goods, including machine straps, hose pipes and buckets in Great Dover Street, Newington (now the A2). In the 1850s they took a substantial villa in Dulwich, The Elms, now a care home. Their eldest son John George Fordham, had set up on his own, patenting his industrial belts at 23 Commercial Street. With his son, George Walter, he had, by 1871, a staff of thirteen men and three boys.

However, personal tragedies dogged the whole family. Wife of JGF Blow, Elizabeth Eady Hawes, had died in 1852, with George Walter barely seven years old. Stepmother Jane lived only until 1863, leaving the family orphaned again, by then with four young children. Sister Mary Blow and husband William Faulconbridge also met untimely deaths and left three young daughters to be brought up by grandparents George Fordham and Dessimer. The wife of brother Alfred, Caroline Hughman, died leaving two chil-

dren under five. Alfred married again, but emigrated to New York, leaving the children in the care of the wider family.

Edward Allen Fordham died in 1853, leaving the income from the now fifteen College Street properties to nephew George Fordham Blow for life, with distribution of subsequent sale proceeds to his children. On retirement a decade or so later, George Fordham and Dessimer returned, with their extended family, to live out their days in St Albans at no. 1 College Street.

Grandson George Walter had, in 1871, married Bessie Cherry at the Spicer Street Chapel the family supported. With John George Fordham apparently ready to retire, and eager to follow one of his other sons to the Antipodes or South Africa, in 1872, he and George Walter dissolved their London partnership and George Walter came to work in St Albans. Percival Cherry was born to the couple at an address in London Road in 1873.

The 1881 census saw George Walter in College Street, described as an Iron and Steel Merchant, perhaps for Bamford's, then Reads' ironworks in a part of the old College building. The family has suggested today's no. 10 was their home but, as demonstrated in the following article, this seems to have been based on the old sequential numbering, and the house in

question is no. 19 today. George Walter continued to own property in College Street (Plot 421 in the 1911 Inland Survey), but rented it out.

It was into this enterprising family situation that Percival Cherry Blow would be born, with construction and development as key to their greatest period of success. Perhaps this background influenced the young man as he trained and then found business in the continuing development of St Albans, in both replacing many of its historic buildings and building its Edwardian suburbs.

Kate Morris

IDENTIFYING PERCIVAL BLOW'S CHILDHOOD HOME

As described in his biography published by the Society and in Kate Morris's accompanying article, Percival Blow's ancestors had a long association with St Albans. His own parents, George Walter and Elizabeth Blow, are recorded as living in College Street at the time of the 1881 census and it can be shown that Percival spent most of his early years there, having been born in London Road in 1873. Although at that time censuses did not record the house numbers within the street, we believe that we can now identify his childhood home with certainty.

According to Sue Mann (pers. comm. 2020), Percival's grandson Christopher Blow remembers his aunt showing him no. 10 College Street, half of a substantial late Victorian semi-detached house, as the family's home. The register of St Albans School, where Percival enrolled in 1884, also gives that number, and it is given as the address of George W. Blow in the editions of Kelly's Directory for 1878 and 1882. Thus, the family had certainly moved here by the time Percival was five years old.

However, the first edition 50-inch version of the Ordnance Survey map of St Albans, surveyed 1872-77 and published in 1880, shows that the present no. 10 College Street had not been built at the time. Apart from the then-surviving buildings of Nathaniel Cotton's 'Collegium Insanorum', demolished in about 1920, only two other houses were shown on the west side of the street (present-day nos. 8 and 20). The street did not exist until the cutting of Verulam Road in 1826 and was first built up along the east side.

Houses were at first numbered sequentially from the northern end (clockwise numbering was usual in such circum-

stances and for cul-de-sacs). This numbering system can be demonstrated in records up to and including the 1882 Kelly's Directory, showing the occupancy by Ann Cosier of the adjacent no. 9 from 1870 to 1899 when it is finally referred to as no. 17. The clinching evidence comes from the *Herts Advertiser* of 4 August 1877, reporting on the previous day's auction of the entire College Street estate. The houses were sold in lots in the same sequence as the original numbering: Lot 6 comprising "Nos. 9 and 10 College-street, let on lease for ninety-nine years from 1834, was bought by Mr Kentish for £345". It also records the sale of undeveloped building plots on the west side of the street that clearly include the eventual sites of nos. 10 and 12 today.

This evidence shows beyond reasonable doubt that the house lived in by George and Elizabeth Blow and their son Percival, from 1878 or earlier until they moved to St Peter's Street in 1886 (when Percival would have been 13), was in fact the present-day no. 19, part of a of red brick terrace built by William Bennett from 1828 to 1834.

Peter Noble and Robert Pankhurst

BUILDING PROSPECT ROAD

"The British Land Company: this company has purchased the Bull Mead, adjoining the new [Abbey] railway station, and will offer the land in building lots early in the autumn." (Source: *Herts Mercury*, 5 June 1858, p. 3)

FROM LITTLE ACORNS ... THE HERTFORDSHIRE PUBLIC HOUSE TRUST LTD

In the February 2019 *Newsletter* (pp. 22-3), I described the Ancient Briton as a good example of ideas underpinning changes to pub architecture in the inter-war years. With the aim of attracting custom beyond the typical working-class male, these new pubs introduced for example separate rooms for their different clientele – remember saloon and lounge bars? The provision of food was a key part of the strategy as well. Brewers investing huge sums of money in the redevelopment of their estates were following a tried and tested model. In the early 1900s, two companies, neither with brewing interests, had proved that the model worked. One of these, with close ties to the St Albans area, was the Hertfordshire Public House Trust Co Ltd (HPHT).

We can see the germ of the company's ideas in the first pub in which it took an interest. This was the Waggon and Horses (see right) at the top of Ridge Hill, two miles to the south-east of London Colney. It was leased in 1903 for the

grand sum of £85 a year. Though run-down, the pub was an excellent choice as the place to launch the business. Not only was the lease suitably cheap for an under-capitalised start-up, but the location was sound with road usage again on the increase on what was to become the A6 trunk road leading from Barnet to St Albans. With the pub renovated and tea-room added, business prospered. Just three years on, the Waggon and Horses was the country HQ for 40 cycling clubs and serving 10,000 teas annually.

It is the provision of those teas that tells us about the ideology lying behind the HPHT. In essence it was a temperance organisation formed to break the stasis in the polarised debate raging about the future of beer consumption. The pub was the frontline of the battle: brewers needed to



The Waggon and Horses, Ridge Hill, c.1905
(Photo reproduced courtesy of Ian Tonkin)

sell as much beer as they could while temperance agitators campaigned to reduce consumption or even prohibit sales altogether.

Proponents of the public house trust movement were eyeing the middle ground, their intention being to make the pub a convivial and safe place for everyone to meet, eat and drink. Drunkenness was to be discouraged at all costs. To these ends, trust companies would sell beer in their pubs but not promote its consumption. Instead, good catering and recreational facilities would be to the fore and their pub managers, all of them employees rather than arms-length lessees, would be paid commission on the sale of food and soft drinks but not alcohol. This framework was in sharp contrast to the conventional model in the brewery-owned pubs that dominated the market.

The HPHT flourished at first. By 1912, having merged with other less successful companies to form the Home Counties Public House Trust Co. Ltd, there were around 30 houses in the estate. (The intransigence of the St Albans city magistrates stymied an attempt to open a 'trust' pub in Fleetville.) Typically, their new-build houses, like the Red Lion in Radlett and the Rose and Crown in Tring, offered facilities such as billiard and other function rooms as well extensive recreational facilities. These features were uncommon in brewery-owned estates.

The formative strategy had been set by local man, Alexander Francis Part. Born in London but baptised at St Michael's in 1875, he was the son of Charles Thomas Part. Charles was a familiar figure in St Albans as partner in the firm of Marten, Part & Co., owner of the bank at 3 High Street from 1898-1902. He also had form as an investor in refreshment businesses. From its establishment in 1879, he was a shareholder in and chairman of the local company running the coffee tavern in French Row. Like the HPHT houses this was a temperance pub but one that sold only soft drinks.

Alexander Part remained in control as MD of the Home Counties company until 1921 when heavy financial losses brought his time to an end. By then though, the founding temperance ideology had largely been disregarded in pursuit of higher profits. The company eventually merged with Charles Forte's catering group to become Trust House Forte.

Key national developments in pub design (as seen at the Ancient Briton), licensing and management in the earlier 20th century owe much to Part's Hertfordshire strategy. While the Red Lion in Radlett and buildings in Tring still stand as physical reminders of his ideas, the Waggon and Horses is long gone, demolished in 1984 to make way for the M25.

Jon Mein

THE MYTHS OF VERULAMIUM AND ST ALBANS (PART 1)

Having worked for the Museums Service since 1989 in a variety of capacities, latterly as District Archaeologist, I have battled the myths about St Albans/Verulamium. These keep being repeated and sometimes, because they are in print, are cited as 'facts'. Unfortunately, neither repetition nor print makes the following 'facts'.

Myth 1: Theatre not Amphitheatre

In the centre of the Roman city of Verulamium there is a theatre. It was built around AD140/150-60 with two significant phases of development when it was enlarged or re-built, before becoming a 'rubbish tip' in the later fourth century. Plays, choral events, orations, and commerce took place in this building. This is not an amphitheatre where games and executions were held. Having said that, if there was no amphitheatre, events associated with that structure could have taken place in the theatre. In the centre of the arena is a cross-shaped feature that may have been used to hold a pole or similar, allowing for gladiatorial combat (e.g. Pompeii) or executions or wild beast shows. But at best this is a secondary use and not a primary function, as the theatre is spatially associated with temples and a possible ritual route to the Folly Lane site overlooking the Roman city. Verulamium has the best-preserved theatre in the country and, as one of six, is rarer than an amphitheatre counterpart.

Myth 2: Beech Bottom Dyke is linked to Devil's Dyke, Wheathampstead

Several instances of this myth have come up and usually 'an eminent archaeologist' is quoted to prove the case. The earliest reference is in the Wheelers' *Verulamium: a Belgic and two Roman cities* (1936). They suggest that Devil's Dyke runs an extra quarter of a mile toward Verulamium (p. 16) and continues in a natural valley unseen (plate X). Secondly, a reference from *Town and Country* (1973) by Dr K. Branigan states that the new tribal capital at Wheathampstead "...was protected, at least to the west, by the massive Beech Bottom Dyke..." (p. 18). This may have been a simple error when Devil's Dyke was meant. If these theories are correct, it means that Beech Bottom and Devil's Dyke are the same structure and they run undetected for an extra 4km. Archaeological evidence shows that the northern end of Beech Bottom, on what was the old garage site, had become two smaller dykes. To the north, an evaluation along the predicted line of the dykes was blank, either suggesting they deviate (or more properly wiggle) or do not join. More interestingly, Beech Bottom links two natural valleys and where it is deepest is the highest ground.

Myth 3: Boats at Verulamium

This myth comes itself from a time of myths and dragons. In the *Gesta Abbatum* (Volume 1, pp. 24-5) remains from the River Ver were interpreted as originating from a boat; in print and now fact. There is no evidence that the sea had borne boats to Verulamium or

that remains of boats, oars and anchors were really that. In the Late Iron Age, the area was probably marsh and water channels. This may have been one of the reasons why the Catuvellauni chose this site for their new capital. Marshes and water were sacred to the 'Celts' and were a means to access the underworld. Sometime, possibly in the second century, this marshy area, in front of the early Roman city, was canalised. We know something may have happened because during the construction of the Lakes, a Roman cemetery was discovered in the area of the smaller island, now lower than the current river course, suggesting the river was moved. A similar diversion was engineered at Winchester.

As part of this process of canalisation it is entirely possible that the Causeway was constructed to block and channel the wider river valley, maybe to serve a mill. Excavation in the area in front of the Roman city has shown that waterlogged deposits do survive, and timber structures are represented, namely 'The Timber Tower'; but these are not boats. Even with the Ver full to bursting, you are unlikely to get your knees wet crossing the river! Just as an aside, Blue Peter in 1989/90 could only get a canoe into the River Colne at Old Parkbury, a deeper, darker river than the Ver at Verulamium.

Simon West
District Archaeologist

THE ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

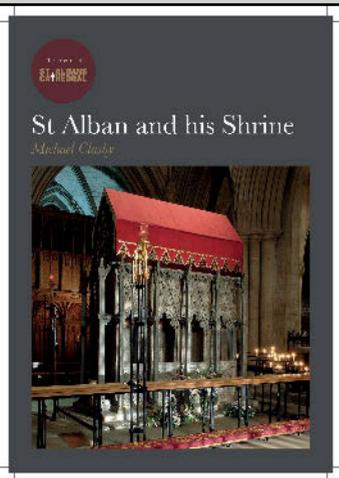
One of the pleasures and achievements of the 2019 and 2020 lecture series has been to establish a relationship with the Royal Historical Society (RHS). The RHS represents history as a discipline and historians as a group. This confirms our place as a local learned society to be taken seriously. The RHS promotes the vitality of historical scholarship through support for research and publication and advocates best practice in history teaching in universities and schools.

The link started with Prof Margot Finn giving us a talk last year in her capacity of Chair of Modern History at University College London and leader of the 'East India at Home' project there. This project explores the impact of the East India Company on the cultural life of the UK. The lecture was fascinating and it rapidly emerged that Margot also had a lot more to offer in her other capacity as President of the RHS.

We followed this up with an invitation for her to be on the panel for a discussion of 'The Future of History: the next 175 Years. She would have been sharing her personal perspective of the history of the past, present and future. Of course, the pandemic ambushed the event and it has had to be postponed. We hope it can be rescheduled and our links with the RHS continued.

Peter Burley

TWO RECENT PUBLICATIONS ABOUT ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL



St Alban and his Shrine

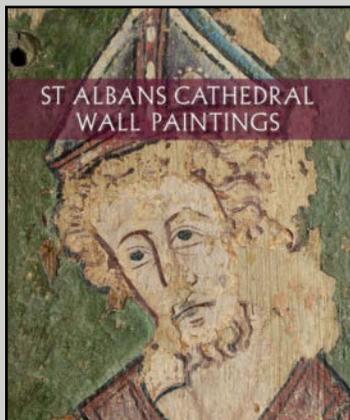
By Michael Clasby

Publisher: The Fraternity of Friends of St Albans Abbey

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Fully illustrated; includes a bibliography.

£4.95 from the Cathedral bookshop;
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Address for ordering by post: Friends Publications, St Albans Cathedral, Sumpter Yard, St Albans, Herts AL1 1BY (with cheque). Note: due to Covid-19, the bookshop is closed and postal orders are subject to delay.