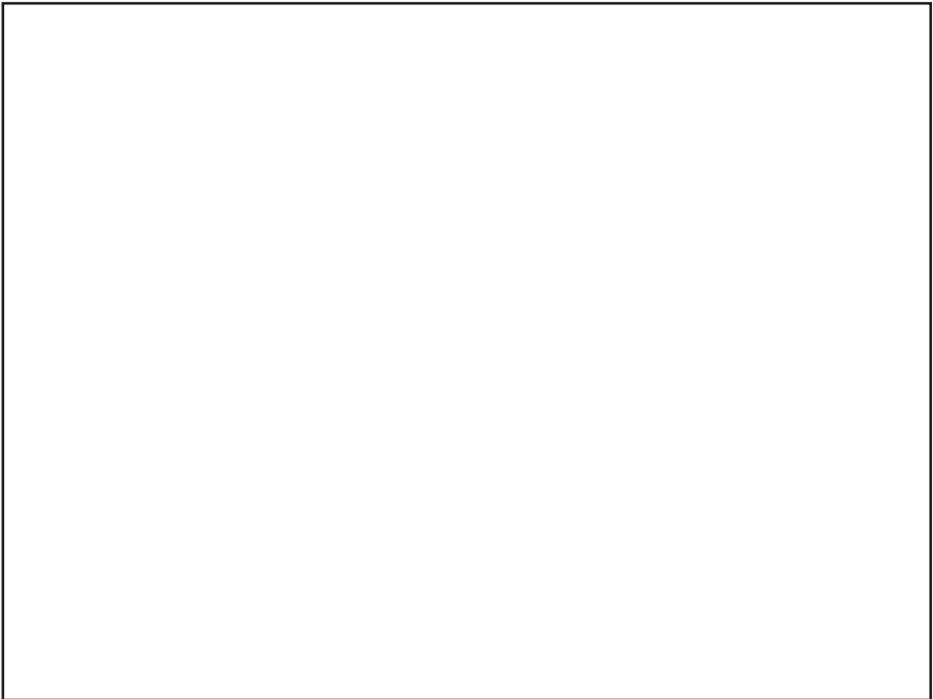




ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 226 November 2022



'St Albans Gasworks from Doggetts Way', c.1955, E.W. Tattersall. Faint SAHAAS watermark.
With thanks to Ian Tonkin for permission to publish this photo from his collection.
(© E.W. Tattersall). See p.16 for information about Tattersall's work and
pp. 26-27 for the early history of the gas works.

Included in this issue:

Civil War Fortifications
New Seminar Programme
Digitised Photo Collection
Henry Moore Exhibition

Orchard Street Origins
The Gas Works
Victoria Street Corner
The Mitchell Hall

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LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023

From March to July there will be an exhibition in the St Albans Museum on the Second Battle of St Albans, 1461. This was the first battle in Britain to feature hand-held firearms. Three further events complement the exhibition: Prof. Michael Wood will give a public lecture on Friday 2 June, probably in St Albans School (title still under discussion); the Battlefields Trust will have a study day focusing on the battle in Holywell Lodge on 3 June; and the battle will be re-enacted at the Barnet Medieval Festival on 10 and 11 June (starting at noon on both days).

Keep an eye on our website and on the following for more information:
<https://www.battlefieldstrust.com> and <https://barnetmedievalfestival.org>

Dr Peter Burley

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When you read this, it will be November and thoughts will be turning to Christmas and the New Year. But there is still much to accomplish in this 'Autumn term', although much has been done. The highlight to date has undoubtedly been St Albans first History Fair on Saturday 10 September (see p.6.) Besides the benefits it brought us directly, the Fair allowed us to promote the Society to the larger St Albans community. It showed people again that we could take the lead in organising an event from scratch and collaborate effectively with other societies. Thank you to everyone involved.

As I write, we are gearing up for co-hosting the fourth 'Archaeology in Hertfordshire: Recent Research' conference on 22 October. This should be fascinating, particularly Kris Lockyear's talk on his latest Verulamium geophys discoveries. So again, a sincere thank you to those who have got involved.

A main event next year will be our Second Battle of the War of the Roses exhibition with its associated events. The exhibition will commence on 24 March

and close on 25 June. (See facing page for further details.) Our 175th anniversary exhibition engendered a lot of work. The same will undoubtedly apply here. If you feel you can help in any way do contact Peter Burley.



To gain support for my Civil Wars research project I have written an article in this *Newsletter* introducing the Civil War defences of St Albans. Subsequent articles will give a tour of these defences. There are substantial amounts of documentation to be trawled

though to uncover this under-researched period in St Albans' history. If you are interested in helping, please let me know.

Finally, don't forget our New Year Party is on Friday 6 January 2023. Further details are on the inside back cover with the Eventbrite page for buying your tickets live on 9 November. I look forward to meeting many of you there.

Wishing you a good Christmas and a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Dr John Morewood
chair@stalbanhistory.org

ST ALBANS AND HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021/22

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 13 September 2022 at Marlborough Road Methodist Church. 45 members attended in person, with 57 members joining online via Zoom.

1. Apologies for absence were received from Christine Dunn, Mark Freeman, Ian and Heather Jardine, David and Michele Lasky, Alison Debenham, Gill Brown, Francesca Weal, Mary Ternouth, Donald and Beryl Munro.

2. President's comments. John Morewood welcomed everyone to the meeting and declared the Society to be in good shape, as evidenced by

- a) Membership figures – a 6 per cent increase in 2021-2
- b) Financial health – see later comments from the Society Treasurer
- c) Positive feedback from members
- d) How we are viewed externally – see articles in the *Herts Advertiser*, *Landscape*, involvement in the Blue Plaques project, information boards for Roman Wall, Sopwell ruins, Marlborough almshouses.
- e) Coming up is a TV interview with Ann Dean, and congratulations to Peter Bourton and all his helpers for a very successful, first ever, History Fair last Saturday.

He then went on to thank the individuals who had contributed to the Society's success, emphasizing that no Society exists without the time and commitment of key volunteers. Finally, he highlighted a number of upcoming events which the Society is helping to organise:

22 October 2022 – Archaeological Conference at Dagnall Street Baptist Church, in conjunction with Welwyn Archaeological Society

13 January 2023 – New Year Party at St Stephen's Church hall*

March to June 2023 – exhibition in St Albans Museum + Gallery on the Second Battle of St Albans, 1461

2 June 2023 – Lecture by Professor Michael Wood at St Albans School

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022. These had been circulated with the February 2022 newsletter. Their adoption was proposed by Jon Mein and seconded by Helen Bishop, then agreed unanimously.

4. Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2022. These had been circulated with the August 2022 newsletter. The Society Treasurer Tony Dolphin confirmed a current surplus of £1,767, despite considerable spending on IT. Some of this surplus is earmarked or restricted, but most of it is available for new events and projects such as the History Fair. The 2021/22 accounts had been approved by the Society's new external examiner, with some minor changes to presentation. Their acceptance was proposed by Peter Burley, seconded by Anthony Oliver, and agreed unanimously.

5. Reports from Groups. These had been circulated with the August 2022 newsletter. Their acceptance was proposed by Sandy Walkington, seconded by Val Argue, and agreed unanimously.

6. Election of members of Council. The following members were elected *en bloc*, to serve until the next AGM, having been proposed by Robert Pankhurst, seconded by Tony Cooper, and agreed unanimously.

Vice-President	Peter Burley
Secretary	Bryan Hanlon
Finance	Tony Dolphin
17th Century Research Group	Pat Howe
Archaeology Group	John Morewood, <i>pro tem</i>
Clock Tower	Caroline Howkins
Herts Archaeology and History	Christine McDermott
Lectures	Gill Girdziusz
Library	Heather Jardine
Membership	David Smith
Minutes	Sally Pearson
Newsletter	Jon Mein
Outings	Tony Berk
Publications	Pat Broad
Publicity	Tim Boatswain
Technical	Frank Iddiols
Website	Peter Bourton

7. Election of Independent Examiner of Accounts. The election of Cathy Phillips was proposed by Jenny Burley, seconded by Pat Howe, and agreed unanimously.

* Please note – the New Year Party has since been rescheduled to Friday 6 January.

THE FIRST SAHAAS HISTORY FAIR

As I mentioned in my President's Message, the highlight to date this autumn has undoubtedly been our first History Fair. This event took place on Saturday 10 September at Marlborough Road Methodist Church. Over five hours, some 200 people visited a range of stalls manned by members of SAHAAS and invited organisations such as the Battlefields Trust, St Albans City Tour Guides, the Civic Society, Welwyn Archaeology Society / Community Archaeology Geophysics Group, the Friends of the Cathedral, HALS, St Albans Museums, University of Hertfordshire Press and Wheathampstead History Society.

In addition, visitors were able to listen to a series of short fifteen-minute presentations on such diverse subjects as the restoration of St Amphibalus' shrine, pubs in St Albans, Verulamium,



Julia Low discussing the Amphibalus shrine project (© Stuart Macer)



The Clock Tower stand complete with model Clock Tower (© Caroline Howkins)

Sopwell Lane, St Albans and King Charles I, and the Clock Tower. Although exhausting for the presenters, and those who chatted to our visitors, the event was an unqualified success. We gained new members, more volunteers and sold more publications as did the representatives from other organisations. Those organisations who attended found it so beneficial they said they would attend again. So, fingers crossed for an even better response in a few years' time.

Sincere thanks to all involved particularly Peter Bourton for project managing the event so successfully and everyone who spoke, manned the stalls, served refreshments and helped in the setting up, and taking down of the stands etc at the event.

John Morewood

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

Usually, I would be reporting the visitor numbers for the season in this autumn newsletter, but as the Clock Tower's opening was delayed by repairs, it was decided to extend the season in to October. So, as I write this, the Tower is still open to the public. Our busiest weekend so far were the Heritage Open Days in September, welcoming 515 visitors over two days. Our average weekend figures this season have been about 280 visitors. This is still low compared to our pre-Covid period when in 2019 we averaged about 400 a weekend.

The 'Hunt the Golden Keys' game proved very popular over Heritage Open Weekend with nearly 120 bags of chocolate coins given as prizes. The Clock Room glass door was also opened so visitors could see the clock mechanism and Lord Grimthorpe's four-legged gravity escapement.

Gabriel, the medieval bell, stopped ringing out the hours in July and remained silent until the end of September, except for being manually tolled by some of our volunteers. On the day after Queen Elizabeth died, Gabriel was rung for one hour by a dozen Clockateers slowly and

solemnly with a muffled hammer. (See photo below.) The bell was again tolled on the day of the Queen's funeral, just as it had been over a century ago in 1901 to mark first the death and then the funeral of Queen Victoria. The occasion of Victoria's funeral was the last time that Gabriel was swung within the bell frame and the sound made by a clapper. It remains still today, with a hammer struck against the rim.

Again, I would like to thank all those Clockateers who have given their time this season to keep our Clock Tower open to the public.

Caroline Howkins

clocktower@stalbanhistory.org



Twelve Clockateers tolling ... (© Caroline Howkins)

LIBRARY REPORT

A *discovery tool*. Wouldn't you like one of those to help you find what you are looking for? Or a *portal*, a window into a world of possibilities?

You have already got one, because both are names that hi-falutin' library science nerds (and especially library software salesmen) use for the library catalogue. I will continue to call it "the library catalogue".

Like most libraries nowadays, our catalogue is online. You can find it from the Library page on the Society website (stalbanhistory.org/library). It is available all day, every day – and all night as well, so you can 'visit' the library in your pyjamas if that is the best time for you. It does not contain everything that we have in our collections (we're still working on that!) but it is growing all the time and provides an easy first step

into what we hold. Handlists of other collections are also available on the website, but most newly-acquired material is now being added to the catalogue so that there is a one-stop shop for all our stock, be that printed matter, journal articles, photographs, plans or special collections. Whatever you are looking for, it is worth looking there first. In fact, even if you don't know what it is that you are looking for, a browse through the catalogue may help.

We also have a new feature on our website in the form of a list of new additions to the library, which can be found here:

stalbanhistory.org/library/new-additions.

The list is updated monthly so that you can quickly see what is new in, and also get an idea of the spread and scope of the library.



New additions



Library Catalogue

I hope that you will find both the catalogue and the new additions list useful and that they will pique your interest to find out more, to come in to the library and to start using our wonderful collection.

For any enquiries at all, or to make an appointment, please email us. We are looking forward to seeing you soon.

Heather Jardine
library@stalbanhistory.org

Recent Journal Articles

Harpenden and District Local History Society Newsletter, no. 147, August 2022

pp.8-11 “70 years on the crest of a wave: the history of the Harpenden Gang Show”, by Joyce Bunting. This is a report of a talk given by Ewan Murray. The Harpenden Gang Show was first performed in 1949 making it the longest continuously running gang show in the world.

Herts Past and Present, no 40, Autumn 2022.

pp.2-9 “A talented but unfortunate man: the life of the Reverend James Brogden”, by Kate Morris. James Brogden was twice a clergyman at St Michael’s, St Albans and was an early committee member of the St Albans Architectural Society. His poor reputation was probably aggravated by the treatment he received from his bishop and patrons.

pp.16-22 “...to a greater enlightenment : the story of the Hertford Local Parliament, 1883-84”, by Philip Sheail. Hertford, along with many other towns at the time, set up a political debating society in which debates were conducted according to the procedures of the House of Commons with members taking on the role of Government Ministers and parliamentarians.

Lin Watson

ST ALBANS MARKET HITS THE NET!

Many of us are wondering quite what is happening with our market here in St Albans, but you may be interested to know that SADC has now made its history known to a wider community by a piece on Wikipedia – see: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Alban_Market.

It is good to see links to three of our members – Tony Berk, Mark Freeman and Julia Merrick.

PHOTOS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The Library Team is pleased to announce the completion of an extensive digitisation and cataloguing project. The result is that nearly 900 slides featuring views of St Albans can now be searched and viewed on our online catalogue. Just follow the link from our website [Note 1] to the Library Catalogue. Then simply search for 'Allen slides'. As you will find some 881 entries to choose from, narrow your search terms using the filters on the left of the screen. Many thanks to Malcolm Merrick and Ros Trent for their diligent work on the project and to Ros again for writing this brief overview of the collection.

Arthur Seymour Allen (1921-2016) has left a wonderful legacy. He combined a great love of St Albans and its history with his enthusiasm for photography to produce almost 900 images of our city. These were donated to our Society in 2016 by his daughter, Maureen, accompanied by a large red book in which he had meticulously listed all the slides in his beautiful copperplate handwriting.

There are two main parts to this collection. Firstly, Allen seems to have been on a mission to record for posterity many buildings which were being demolished mostly during the 1980s.

Hence the collection includes, for example, photos of buildings on the south side of Victoria Street prior to the construction of the Maltings; others on the north side of Verulam Road before Christopher Place was built; large houses on Hatfield Road which were demolished to make way for blocks of flats in 1988; Goodchild Undertakers on Catherine Street removed to make way for the extension of Drovers Way in 1990; and not to mention the water tower, formerly a striking landmark near the Jolly Sailor on Sandridge Road.

Some of the commercial buildings Allen captured are St Albans Rubber Works on Camp Road, Staples Printers on Grosvenor Road and the Cereals Research Building in Old London Road. These sites are all now residential.

The second part of Allen's collection consists of his slides of old postcards of



Arthur Allen (All photos © SAHAAS Library)

the city from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of these are accompanied by contemporary photos of a similar view as illustrated below. Taken together these 'before and after' images provide an interesting record of the changing face of St Albans in the 1900s.

now-demolished Art Deco bus station off St Peter's Street – Chime Square now occupies this site. As Allen had worked for many years for London Transport, initially as a bus driver and later as an inspector, these come as no surprise.

Ros Trent

One unusual part of the collection is the various images of buses and the

Note

1. www.stalbanshistory.org/library

Examples of Allen's 'Before and After' views



Demolished Blundells store c.1972...



... replaced by Heritage Close, 1988



St Michael's Street c.1898...



... and in 1976

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Sales of our Concise Histories series continue to be encouraging. Our second book – *St Michael's Village* by Kate Morris – has now sold over 150 copies, allowing us to recover most of the production costs.

Our bookstall at the Society's first History Fair on 10 September was a success. We sold 34 copies of our books and enjoyed the opportunity to talk to lots of visitors. Our stall included books published by individual SAHAAS members and our thanks go to Kate Bretherton and Mark Freeman for their help throughout the day.

We are in discussion with local shops to replenish their supplies of SAHAAS books after two years of Covid. We are also

seeking new outlets. So it is hoped that you will soon find it easier to buy our books in local shops. We are continuing to run a bookstall at our in-person lectures this year – and also at selected hybrid talks. So watch out for us! You will also find us at the HALH symposium on 19 November in Harpenden.

If by chance you are contemplating a contribution to the *Concise Histories* series and would like to have a chat, do please contact me .

Finally, to keep you up to date, here is the current committee membership: Ann Dean, Ailsa Herbert, Ruth Herman, Ian Jardine, Jon Mein, Julia Merrick, John Morewood, Polly O'Connor and Valerie Shrimplin.

Pat Broad

publications@stalbanhistory.org

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members:

Daniil Anderson	Brian Deex	Catherine Jones &
Tim Barrance	Jon Douglas	Roger Morton
Roy & Serena Bellamy	George Gillon	PJ MacSweeney
Chris Bennett	Richard Griffiths	Carol McCarthy
Dr Imogen de la Bere,	Robert Grover	Daniel Phillips
Jeremy Harding & family	Tony Houghton	John Rowan
Michelle Blake & Georg Szalai	Brian Hutton	Roy Scivyer
Diane Carpenter	Dr Barry Knight	Matthew Walton
Josephine Clifford	Patrick Lowe	Carrie Ward & Oliver
Peter Davies	Steven Miller	Lipscombe
		Roger Yapp

LOCAL HISTORY SEMINARS

The seminar series continues and will remain over Zoom for the foreseeable future, though there may be opportunities to hold some seminars in the Library at some point. Numbers will still be restricted to 25 so book early if the topic is of interest. For members unable for any reason to attend, presenters are always willing to discuss the topic if you contact them after the event. Invitations to register will be sent via enews a week before each seminar.

All seminars commence at 2.30pm and are still on Thursdays, usually the third of each month. The programme for the winter months of 2022/23 is as follows:

15 December

Our historic trees

Kate Bretherton

Kate will look into whether there is any link between the plantings of cedars in our local churchyards. The trees are so striking that they have become iconic. The questions Kate will address include whether there was a pattern to their planting, and when and by whom they

were planted. She welcomes input into her research.

19 January

Verulam, Natal – St Albans' own colonisation programme

Kate Morris

The city of Verulam in Natal was founded in 1849 by William Josiah and Theophilus Irons from St Albans. Three ships brought Wesleyan emigrants to the site near Port Natal, now Durban, which Theophilus had claimed for the new town. The population today is 59 per cent Indian, 39 per cent black and just 2 per cent classed as coloured or white. Kate explores the city's origins and history.

23 February

Sopwell Lane

Tim Boatswain

Sopwell Lane was, during the medieval period and into the eighteenth century, the main route from London into St Albans. Some of the many hostleries established at the time survive today either still as pubs or private housing. Tim will explore the road's history and buildings.

Kate Morris

THE NEWSLETTER

If you have any comments about the *Newsletter* or wish to submit content, please email me, Jon Mein, via newsed@stalbanshistory.org. Copy deadline for the February 2023 edition is 15 January.

VISIT TO COPPED HALL

Copped Hall ‘a country house with a difference’ was the billing and the house certainly lived up to it. During a morning visit on 8 September, 27 members enjoyed a guided tour of the house and gardens and learned about the ambitious community project which aims to restore both.

We approached the house close to Waltham Abbey through beautiful woodland and a narrow entrance gate, which gave our driver some anxious moments, and were met by our guides Vic and Jon. Their knowledge and enthusiasm for the project added greatly to the visit as did a fascinating array of old photographs and plans. Both were clearly committed to the



Part of the four-acre garden (© Greg Hider)

vision of the project, described by one of them as a labour of love.

The house is a Grade II Georgian mansion with Victorian additions which suffered a catastrophic fire in 1917 and was never rebuilt. The elements and nature left it a ruin, until the Copped Hall Trust bought the house and gardens in 1995 and began the work of restoration. Much has been achieved but there is at least ten years work still to do.



Former reception room in the Georgian house (© Greg Hider)

There are 24 acres of gardens set on an elevated site giving wonderful views of the surrounding countryside and, on clear days, St Albans Cathedral! Within the gardens, are the remains of the Elizabethan Old Copped Hall currently being excavated by the West Essex Archaeological Group. But for many of us, the wow factor was the 4-acre walled garden, reputedly the largest in southern England still used to grow

flowers, vegetables and fruit including heritage species.

After a welcome break for tea and home-made cakes in the former racquet court, we were given a tour of the house. Burnt beams and traces of ivy showed the state of dereliction before restoration began. Crucial was the replacement of the roofs to protect against the weather, followed by restoration of missing brickwork. Most

rooms were rather bare with exposed brickwork and donated furniture but the elegant State Hall with its plastered wall, magnificent new architrave and a floor of oak from the estate gave a sense of the interior in its heyday.

An enjoyable visit which left many of us hoping to visit again in the future to see how the work is progressing.

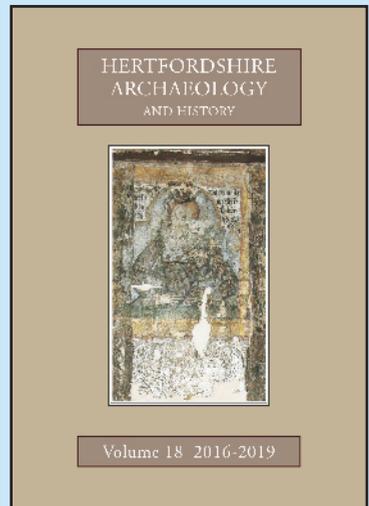
Susan Bellamy

HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY VOL. 18

The Society's journal, published in partnership with the East Herts Archaeological Society, is the journal of record for archaeological activity in the county. It also contains some lengthy history articles and is printed in colour throughout.

The current volume, no. 18, includes an article by Prof. James Clark titled 'St Albans Abbey and the People of St Albans: from the Conquest to Dissolution'. Full details of the contents of both the current and earlier volumes are available in the Publications section on the Society's website.

Each member of the Society is entitled to buy one copy for £5.00, the price otherwise being £20.00. If you cannot collect from the centre of St Albans, the cost of post and packing is £3.50 per copy. Please contact Christine McDermott via hertsarch@stalbanhistory.org for details of how to purchase.



E.W. TATTERSALL'S PHOTOS

That arresting photo on the front cover was taken by Edward William ('E.W.') Tattersall (1893-1987). His name is printed on the reverse of the photo along with a note that he was a press photographer based at 2 Lattimore Road, St Albans. The traditional view of the Cathedral to the right is another of his, the address this time being 39 King Harry Lane. Both were recently purchased from a seller who indicated that they were originally part of a 'press photo archive'.

Why Tattersall took the gas works photo is not clear. However, we do have a clue about the Cathedral photo. On the reverse of that photo is the following clipping stating that it was published in an article in the *Daily Telegraph* on 16 August 1957 forewarning of the risk of water extraction from the River Ver:

'Strong objection has been made by St Albans City Council to the Luton Water Company's application to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for powers to pump an average of 5,000,000 gallons of water per day from the valley of the River Ver. The Mayor of St Albans said – "As a result of this it is likely that the River Ver will finally dry up and there is good prospect of the lake and the paddling pool drying up



The Abbey and lake, c.1957 (© E.W. Tattersall)

and the beauty of Verulamium being gone for ever."

This is a simple reminder how photographs can improve a story. Unfortunately, collections of local press photos are few, the original *Herts Advertiser* negatives for example were skipped years ago.

Does Tattersall's archive survive? Some of his photos do. An Internet search finds eighteen in the Historic England collection although none relates to our district. Further digging reveals he was a member of Marlborough Road Methodist Church and that his wife appears to have joined SAHAAS in 1988. Do any of you recall the couple? If you do, then perhaps we can locate photos still in the family's hands and resolve copyright matters.

Jon Mein
newsed@stalbanhistory.org

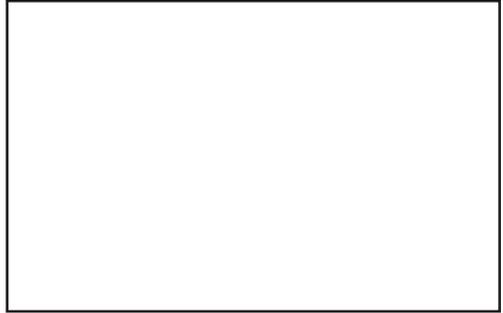
COLNEY HEATH CHRONICLES

VOLUME II – A TREAT

You may recall that the infant Colney Heath History Society (CHHS) produced a rather interesting book last year. It detailed some of the extra-ordinary things that happened in this outwardly very ordinary village. You may even have bought a copy. If you did read this quirky volume and liked it, you will be pleased to hear that we have produced Volume II.

The new book retains the same individual view of the past and people. One of the more surprising themes is the Luftwaffe navigators' poor map-reading skills which meant that they continually mistook this tiny village for much larger sites. There are heroes and villains, and some terrifying tales of the antics of wartime schoolchildren. Equally terrifying is the syllabus of the evening classes held in the village school. Everything from Shakespeare to First Aid was crammed into the few hours the students spent there.

The farm animals led equally exciting lives. The Magnificent Matilda, pictured above, had strong feelings about who she stepped out with and refused the advances of a handsome boar who lived over the river. She defended her chastity vigorously and despite half the village



The Magnificent Matilda keeps her honour intact
(© CHHS)

turning out to push her into a relationship she remained single.

Behind the book is a small team of villagers who are keen that the village acknowledges and celebrates its unique feeling of community through retelling its history in an accessible and engaging way. We are still a tiny society, and we would be delighted to welcome new members. Even if you don't live in the village – we're open to all.

The book costs £7.50 and allow £1.50 for postage where necessary. It is available from John Clemow, Colney Heath Post Office, AL4 0QS, and St Albans Museum.

Membership is free and now is the time to join a society which is willing to take history seriously but not itself. John leads this merry crew. He can be contacted via jackclemow@gmail.com.

Ruth Herman
Author, Colney Heath Chronicles

HENRY MOORE EXHIBITION – 'DRAWING IN THE DARK'

Sarah Keeling introduces this forthcoming exhibition at St Albans Museum + Gallery. Running from 16 December until 16 April 2023, the exhibition is free but the museum does encourage visitors to make a 'pay what you can' donation towards the ongoing work of the museum.

This December St Albans Museum + Gallery will be opening an exhibition of coalmining drawings by Henry Moore. Eighty years since they were completed for the War Artists' Advisory Committee, this will be the largest collection of the drawings and paintings displayed.

Following the Barbara Hepworth exhibition in 2019, 'Drawing in the Dark' is further chance to see the works of an internationally known artist in St Albans. Henry Moore has close ties to Hertfordshire. He lived most of his life at 'Hoglands' in Perry Green and this modest house surrounded by remarkable gardens are now open to the public as The Henry Moore Foundation. You can see at Perry Green some of the sculpture Moore is famous for, particularly of women and abstract forms. But it is often forgotten that Moore was the son of a miner from Castleford in Yorkshire, and as a war artist in 1942,

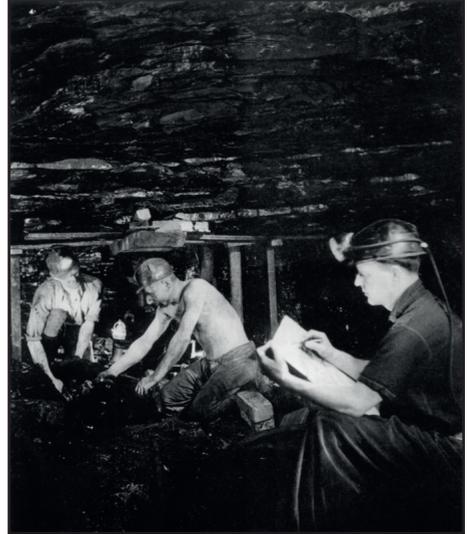


Fig. 1: Henry Moore sketches two miners at Wheldale Colliery, 1942. (Photo R. Saidman)

he developed a detailed series of drawings from sketches he made underground at Wheldale Colliery, where his father had worked (See Fig.1).

The exhibition takes inspiration from the new book, *Drawing in the Dark*, by art historian, Chris Owen, former head of Cambridge School of Art at Anglia Ruskin University. Speaking about the exhibition Owen said:

"It is hard to imagine what it must be like, to 'draw in the dark', as Henry Moore did in a Yorkshire coal mine for a week in 1940. Representing miners emerging from the dusty darkness was a real challenge. And add to that, the physical discomfort of working 1400

feet underground in conditions which Moore himself described as 'like hell'. This exhibition reveals how Moore tackled these difficulties. The resulting drawings are both powerful and haunting."



Fig. 2: 'At the Coal Face', Henry Moore, 1942
(© The Whitworth, University of Manchester)

Bringing this exhibition to St Albans has been a significant collaboration between UH Arts + Culture and the museum team working with eleven different lenders. Artworks and objects for the exhibition are coming from the Henry Moore Foundation, the Moore Danowski Trust, the Moore Family, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the British Museum, the Imperial War Museum London, the National Coalmining Museum, The Hepworth Wakefield, Leeds Museums and Galleries, Whitworth Art Gallery and Sheffield Galleries and Museums.

Together, the exhibition and book aim to reveal the importance of this very personal project for understanding Moore's life and work. Whether you're new to Moore, a life-long fan or take an interest in coalmining and the Second World War, this exhibition offers discovery, excitement and contemplation.

The drawings not only reveal insights into Moore's life and artistic process,

they also demonstrate the back-breaking labour which nearly 750,000 miners endured daily, as they made their vital contribution to Britain's war effort (See Fig. 2). Alongside the art we will also be displaying tools from the National Coal Mining Museum and talking about the role mining has had in the history of our country.

We here in St Albans have our own connections to mining through the miners' strikes of the 1980s. As with many communities across the country there were appeals to support the miners here in St Albans, including street collections right outside the Town Hall building. We also have a small collection of objects connected to the strikes in Nottingham which were donated to the museum by John Smith.

Sarah Keeling
Curator, St Albans Museums

THE CIVIL WAR FORTIFICATIONS OF ST ALBANS – AN INTRODUCTION

Earlier this year I gave a talk to SAHAAS on the impact of the British Civil Wars on St Albans (1642-1651). Attendees will remember I argued that Alex Kingston was correct when he wrote in 1894: 'Hertfordshire saw more of the organisation and movement of the Parliamentary armies and felt more of their effects within its borders upon the civil life of the people, than any of the other counties of the Eastern Association' [Note 1] – the association of six counties which provided Parliament with the bedrock of its support. More importantly, I argued St Albans was also impacted by additional factors which did not apply to other Parliamentary towns.

Towns whose allegiance lay with Parliament, particularly those in the Eastern Association, were subject to crippling demands to aid its war effort. It was not simply replacing Royalist sympathisers in local government and religious leadership with Parliamentary supporters. Demands for more recruits to join Parliament's armies were constant. Financial contributions in the form of loans, 'gifts', and taxes reached unparalleled levels. Estates of royalist supporters

were seized and pillaged. There were additional consequences for St Albans due to it being 20 miles from the seat of Parliament at Westminster, 50 miles from the Royalist capital at Oxford and having Watling Street running through it. Parliamentary armies marched through St Albans on several occasions, and one can only wonder at the impact on a town of just over 3,000 people when in September 1642 the Earl of Essex marched through with an army of 10,000 men accompanied by 60 ammunition wagons and 10 great artillery pieces. [2] Because of its proximity to both London and Oxford, it was also the headquarters of Parliamentary armies during 1642, winter 1643/4, 1645, 1647, and 1648. This meant that not only did all the major Parliamentary generals (the Earls of Essex and Manchester, Sir Thomas Fairfax and, of course, Oliver Cromwell) know St Albans well but also troops were billeted on farms and houses causing distress to the inhabitants who complained of being eaten out of house and home and having their possessions seized. [3]

There was an additional major impact. By summer 1643 Charles I was winning the war and only needed to seize London to ensure victory. To prevent this, from autumn 1642 earthwork defences were progressively con-

structed so that by autumn 1643 London was defended by more than 20 forts and batteries connected by ramparts, ditches, and trenches. Of course, Parliament hoped the king's forces would not get that close. The area to the east was pro Parliament and did not support him. The threat came from the west. Charles' attempt in autumn 1642 to seize London via the Thames valley, had been defeated at Turnham Green. Parliament prevented subsequent attempts by constructing fortifications at Reading and Uxbridge. This meant its most vulnerable area, and that closest to the Royalist capital of Oxford, was the area to the northwest.

To counter this threat, Parliament had constructed fortifications using Buckinghamshire as a buffer zone. St Albans men were sent to garrison Aylesbury and Newport Pagnell [4]. But in summer

1643, the Royalists seized Newport Pagnell and this, together with raids on the Parliamentary garrison at Aylesbury, placed St Albans literally in the firing line. To seize London, Charles I needed to move his artillery and supporting army down a paved road, and this meant Watling Street. If St Albans fell, there was every possibility London would follow, and the war would be over. Even after the threat passed, Royalist raids took place in the vicinity. Woburn was attacked and pillaged several times and in June 1644 the royalists reached Dunstable. [5] So St Albans needed to be fortified and garrisoned.

We have known for some time that fortifications were erected at St Albans. Kingston mentioned forts guarding London Road, and the Watling Street end of the town. [6] Elsie Toms referred to forts at the north end of St Peter's Street [7], and in 2007 Alan Thomson reproduced invoices from the National Archives, including the names of two engineers, showing that redoubts and breastworks were erected in St Albans in winter 1643 [8]. But to date no-one has looked at this issue comprehensively or drawn up a plan of St Albans' civil war defences. This is what I hope, in subsequent articles to achieve. I will use archaeological reports, more archival documents,



Fig. 1: The Great Court from the Hare map showing its complete state in 1634 (Reproduced courtesy of HALS)



Fig. 2: Drawing showing the dilapidated Great Court but with the King's Stables still complete, van Overbeek, c.1680 (Reproduced courtesy of the British Library, ref. Maps.K.top.15.49.a)

the 1634 Hare map (See Fig. 1), the late Eileen Roberts' work on a 1635 indenture [9] and current work on civil war fortifications. [10]

First some key places in St Albans during this period. The Christopher Inn in French Row was where the Parliamentary committee governing the town met. In the Abbey church the council of officers of the New Model Army met and royalist prisoners were held, as they would be in St Peter's Church in 1648 during the Second Civil War. Leading Parliamentary officers including Fairfax, Ireton, and Monk stayed at the Bull Inn on Holywell Hill. Cromwell, when he was in St Albans is likely to have stayed at Beaumonts to the east of the town, the home of his friend Alban Cox. [11] What had been the Great Court of the Abbey fulfilled a key role. We can see from the Hare map and from a c.1680 print by van

Overbeek that much more remained of this quadrangle than is the case today (See Fig. 2). [12] It was the most likely location of the town's powder magazine and arms which Parliament ordered to be seized in 1642. [13] The King's Stables were still intact. Alban Cox had been

appointed Master of the King's Stables in 1636 and early in the war was appointed to train up Parliamentary horse. We know he made the Abbey gateway his headquarters [14] and stationed a troop of horse there. In the seventeenth century, unlike in Napoleonic times, a troop of horse could number up to 100 men. The path leading down from the gateway to the river and across the bridge shown on Hare would allow them to be deployed to counter any royalist attack on the boundary fortifications.

The boundary fortifications were a set of earthworks protected by forts, redoubts (smaller forts), bastions, breastworks, and ditches. Stone was not used, being more expensive, took longer to erect, and coped less well with artillery bombardment. It is clear from the mayoral accounts that some of St Albans defences were constructed earlier than

previously thought. In the accounts for the mayoralty of Robert Ivory (29 September 1642 - 28 September 1643) we find the following entry: 'Item: paid to three men for six days work done at the town's end for mending up of the forts there at the rate of 10d a day .. 5s'. Research on the fortifications of London, Newport Pagnell, and Reading show they were progressively improved. It is unlikely that all our fortifications were complete by September 1643.

The example of London is instructive. Construction of small earthworks began in September 1642 with greater impetus occurring after the Battle of Edgehill (23 October 1642). In February 1643 Colonel Alderman Mainwaring presented proposals 'for the better defence and security of this city' and in March 1643 it was noted that the London authorities had 'sent to Holland for engineers'. [15] The Dutch were recognised experts in earthwork fortifications having mastered their construction during their struggles against Spain in the Eighty Years War (1568-1648). In November 1643, acting on Parliament's instructions, Jacob Culleburgh a Dutch engineer was at work at St Albans along with Adjutant-General Inglis. What they achieved we will look at next time.

John Morewood

Notes

- [1] A. Kingston, *Hertfordshire during the Great Civil War and the Long Parliament* (1894), p. 3.
- [2] Lady Sussex, whose husband the Earl of Sussex had rented Gorhambury, quoted in Kingston, p. 20.
- [3] A. Thomson (ed.), *The Impact of the First Civil War on Hertfordshire 1642-7* (2007), pp. 139-143.
- [4] *Ibid.*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.
- [5] Kingston, p. 49 and p. 60.
- [6] *Ibid.*, pp. 38-9.
- [7] E. Toms, *The Story of St Albans* (1962), p. 102.
- [8] Thomson, pp. 54-57.
- [9] Paper contained in *The Peasants' Revolt in Hertfordshire 1381* (1981), pp. 127-185.
- [10] Principally the work of David Flintham of the Fortress Study Group and Simon Marsh of the Battlefields Trust.
- [11] See my forthcoming book on the subject.
- [12] Discussed by Rosalind Niblett and Isobel Thompson in *Alban's Buried Towns* (2005), pp. 243-5. See also I. Thompson, 'Alban's Buried Towns – 15 years on', *SAHAAS Newsletter* 218 (November 2020), pp. 20-21 for the change of attribution of the drawing from Lievens to van Overbeek.
- [13] Discussion with Sue Gregory, archivist of St Albans School, 2022.
- [14] 1649 survey of the Abbey precincts.
- [15] D. Flintham, *The English Civil War Defences of London* (2014), pp. 11-15.

WHO BUILT ORCHARD STREET AND WHY?

Orchard Street, consisting of a terrace of seventeen brick and flint artisan cottages, is in some respects a little bizarre. It juts into the extensive open space known generally today as the Abbey Orchard but was never extended beyond its rather stubby extent. From the street's location it is tempting to think that the Woollam family, owners of the silk mill around 100 yards away on the Ver, was responsible for the development. With a reputation for philanthropy, this would fit with what we know of the family's attention to the well-being of the people of St Albans.

As far as we can tell, however, the Woollams had no legal interest in the houses. Instead, as shown in contemporary rate books, George Ashwell, a wealthy local solicitor, owned the freehold to all the houses as well as a large swathe of the Orchard fields. [Note 1] Little has so far come to light about Ashwell. We do know that, together with his growing family, he was living in St Albans in the mid-1830s, probably in a property in Verulam Road that bears his name even today.

The website www.ashwellhouse.org carries some interesting material about Ashwell, particularly the story of an untrustworthy executor embezzling much of the solicitor's immense £45,000 estate following his death in 1878.

Linking the rate book gleanings to data extracted from the Abbey parish vestry minutes shows that the houses had been gradually completed between 1852 and 1854. [2] Around the same time, several newspaper reports had commented on how St Albans was rising out of the economic doldrums of the 1840s with plenty of new building around the town. [3] While these unattributed reports should be treated with caution as the tone is that of a boosterish estate agent, there is good evidence



Orchard Street, 2022 (© Malcolm Merrick)

to support the observation. New workers' housing off Lower Dagnall Street had recently been built with more in New England Street in hand. The mostly 'two-up, two-down' Orchard Street cottages follow this trend.

Though not built by the Woollams, analysis of the 1861 census shows that these seventeen new houses provided suitable accommodation for their workers. Of the 75 men, women and children filling the houses, 20 worked at the mill just one hundred yards away. However, only four of these were heads of households. All of these four were silk throwsters – these are the skilled spinners who put the twist in the silk to make thread. Two more throwsters, from Marylebone and Watford respectively, boarded in houses let to a railway porter. Of nine silk winders all but one were women and aged 13 years and above. A silk spinner (how different from a throwster we wonder), a silk sorter and two silk labourers were likewise all residents.

Although the preponderance of silk mill employees was unusual, the mix of occupations in Orchard Street was otherwise typical of workers' housing in St Albans at the time. For example, the other large employer of labour in the town was the straw hat industry. This was well represented in Orchard Street with two [hat] blockers, a straw bonnet

maker and seven others involved in that trade.

Of the rest, two painters, two laundresses, a shoe maker, agricultural labourer, carpenter, gardener, and an engine driver were all heads of households. Residents in these artisan cottages also included another shoe maker, a saddler and a 16-year old in the Royal Navy. Ten were school children.

We can deduce from contemporary sources that Ashwell's speculative houses were in demand with all of them occupied as soon as they were completed. It is curious then that he didn't extend his development further into the Abbey Orchard fields. Why not? Antiquarian concerns perhaps? Topography? State of the housing market? Financial problems? Or something else? Thoughts welcome.

Jon Mein and Julia Merrick

Notes

[1] HALS, DP/90/4/1 and 2, Abbey parish church rate books, 1853 and c.1855.

[2] St Albans Cathedral Muniment Room, transcription of Abbey parish vestry minutes, 1828-67, meeting of 25 November 1852 and passim.

[3] For example, *Herts Mercury*, 'Sales of land at St Albans', 7 August 1852, p.3.

THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE ST ALBANS GAS WORKS

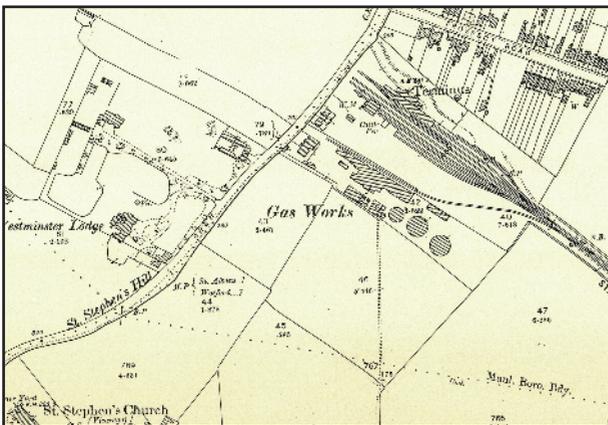
The last gasholders of the St Albans Gas Company were demolished only in 2014, ending a nearly two hundred years' provision for gas lighting and heating the town. The early success of the Gaslight and Coke Company in London from 1812 heralded many more across the country. In St Albans the story began in 1822 with authorisation to dig up roads for pipes granted to Joseph Hedley. With no apparent development by 1824, correspondence began with the General Gaslight Company. Time passed, but in 1831, a small plot of land at the foot of St Stephen's Hill was taken to progress the venture. Distanced from the town centre, foul smells generated by such works and the risks of fire and explosion could be

avoided. A fire at the site already in October 1833 was fortunately contained by the engine's prompt attendance.

With land secured, gasometers were built by gas engineer, Nathan Defries, and their substantial scale is clear from the St Stephen's tithe map of 1838. 'Gas House' fronting the street was occupied by banker Henry Edwards as undertenant from leaseholder James Matthias Gilbertson, a wealthy linendraper from Hertford. By 1841 Edward Hunt and Joseph Allen were resident 'at the gas works'.

But financial success was elusive. In the early 1840s it seems Edwards had lost interest in the venture and it was bought for the young civil engineer John Marsh Edward Stokes by his indulgent

father. However, his bankruptcy proceedings as 'gas contractor in St Albans' already in early 1844 demonstrate the challenge. The sale of his goods, in December 1843, included nearly new modern and genteel household furniture, 12 dozen of superior port wine, a neat gig, two ponies and a Shetland pony, pigs and poultry, a quantity of new gas fittings



St Albans gas works, c.1897
(Reproduced courtesy of SAHAAS Library)

and meters, tools, pipes, dung and water carts and 100 tons of coal, 30 chaldrons of coke and 60 coal sacks. Stokes' father's will described his mortgage of property to support his 'unfortunate' son – 'unfortunate' indeed, since Stokes was in 1847 sentenced to seven years' transportation following charges of larceny.

The business was continued by John Benjamin Stammers. But success eluded him too and in 1852, Stammers also had to admit failure and seek bankruptcy.

However, there was demand in the town for gas lighting and also piped water direct to domestic premises. A new company for each of these utilities was established with Richard Gibbs, otherwise of the town's newspaper and printing works, as Manager and Treasurer. The Water Company was based at Snatchup in the north of the town with boreholes on Bernard's Heath.

A major improvement for the Gas Company occurred with the arrival in 1858 of the long awaited rail connection with the London and North Western Railway at Watford. Its terminus was adjacent to the gas works. No longer need the all-important coal be delivered by cart from the canal at distant Boxmoor.

Under Gibbs the house at the Gas Works was not required and, tempted by the forthcoming advent of the railway line, Watford brewer George Fearnley Whittingstall took it on for an alehouse – the Railway Tavern. Following Gibbs' withdrawal from management of the works in 1869, so under the new manager, civil engineer, Arthur J Phillips, the company bought the freehold of the site from head landlords, the churchwardens of St Peter's parish. Nearby competition had rendered Whittingstall's public house unprofitable and its closure in 1872 vacated the house once more for the management. Phillips lived on site until his retirement to the more salubrious and newly-developed Hatfield Road, and in 1894 the 8-bedroom property with bathroom, pleasant living rooms, garden, vineries and tennis lawn was let and a resident foreman left on the site.

Manufactured gas was no longer required on the introduction of natural gas from the North Sea in the 1960s, but the site, by then too contaminated for housing, was developed as our Abbey View Retail Park for 'out of town' shopping.

Kate Morris

A TALE OF CASTLES, CORNERS AND CIVIC ENHANCEMENTS

It is rather interesting to speculate that the domed circular turret on the building at the corner of St Peter's Street and Victoria Street was the architect's homage to the legend that this was once the supposed site of the Castle Inn where Edmund Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, was killed in the First Battle of St Albans in 1455 (see Fig.1).

The architect in question was Percival Cherry Blow and he now has a blue plaque on this building in recognition of his contribution to the architectural landscape of the city from the late Victorian period to the 1930s. The historic importance of the site on the corner of Victoria Street perhaps explains why this building was so elegantly designed although its original function was quite mundane and its construction came about as a result of a road-widening scheme.

As Jon Mein explained in his talk about the architect on 26 September 2022, the previously named Sweet Briar Lane had been just a narrow track leading out of the city until the Midland railway station was built beyond its further end in 1868. Having been widened once in 1878, the increase in traffic and a desire on the part of St Albans City

Corporation to convert the re-named Victoria Street into a modern thoroughfare meant that something had to be done.

To make way for the new building and the wider road, the corporation auctioned off property it owned and/or had options on, retaining a portion of the site for the building of the new public library, which opened in 1911. The rents from a row of four rather shabby-looking shops (see Fig.2) had helped to pay for the earlier road-widening scheme and proceeds from their demolition would contribute to the cost of the widening.



Fig. 1: Nos 1-7 Victoria Street, October 2022
(© Sue Mann)

At the auction on 27 April 1910 at the Peahen Hotel it was stated that the block of property on offer would 'form, on the completion of the widening of Victoria Street, the finest corner site in the whole of St Albans'. The lot was knocked down for £3,400 to William Young, lessee of 4 St Peter's Street. Some five months later, however, it was William Samuel Green not Young's name on Blow's plans passed by the corporation for the new building. Green was a very successful draper and silk mercer whose drapery business occupied a large swathe of nearby Chequer Street.

Work began on clearing the site in May. The row of four shops fronting onto Victoria Street, a hairdresser's at 2 St Peter's Street and an old brewery building to the rear of the properties were all pulled down. Auctioneer Mr Dorant,

whose premises were at 19-21 Victoria Street, was offered 'any of the material which he may think fit for sale by public auction'. Rubbish from the site was also offered for sale 'at reasonable prices' to firms tendering to lay Folly Avenue.

The building, completed in 1911, comprised four separate shop units on the ground floor. Above 1-3 Victoria Street the two floors were laid out for domestic use, the number of bedrooms indicating that boarders were accommodated here. Green housed employees above his premises in Chequer Street at this time so this space was either additional to or a replacement for that accommodation. There were five bedrooms, two sitting rooms, a bathroom and kitchen with direct access from Victoria Street. Above 5-7 were showrooms and storerooms.

Twenty years later, 1-7 Victoria Street took on a new lease of life as a bank. A report about this development will feature in the next issue of the newsletter.

Sue Mann

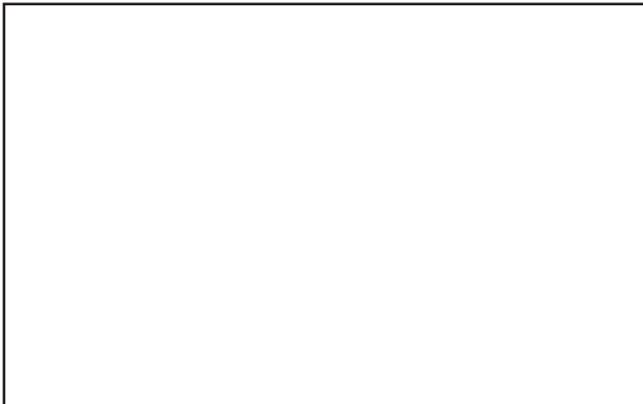


Fig. 2: Corner of St Peter's and Victoria streets, c.1910
(Reproduced courtesy of HALS)

ELSIE TOMS, ST ALBANS TOUR GUIDES, AND THE FUTURE

In 1964, a forward-looking group founded an organisation which was to become one of the jewels of our city – The Association of St Albans Tour Guides (ASATG). Instrumental as a founder member of ASATG was one of our most interesting and erudite citizens – Dr Elsie Toms. She was born in 1889 and lived to the age of 90. During a long and distinguished life, she was a suffragist, socialist and politician. She served as a city councillor, an alderman and, finally, as mayor in her '60s. But it is as an important local historian that she is best remembered now. Toms' book *The Story of St Albans* was the first publication exploring the history of the city in any depth since the 1890s; it sold thousands of copies. She is commemorated on the recently erected plaque at 11 Normandy Road, commissioned by Blue Plaques St Albans.

The association has changed much since it was founded. Today, all guides attend a very intensive course overseen and accredited by the Institute of Tour Guiding – a national body providing consistency and high standards across the country.

The Guides now have three main offerings: public and private historic walks, gallery talks in the Verulamium Museum and Power-point presentations on historic subjects for groups. One of these presentations, entitled 'The Daughters of St Albans', features Toms along with many other remarkable local women. I am sure Dr Toms would have been proud to see herself, and the others, included in a talk by the association which she helped to found.

Today, the Association forms a vibrant and important element in the offerings to tourists and locals alike. Walks and talks are provided for groups and people from all over the UK and, indeed, for many international visitors. Given by the tour guides, these are not meant to be history lectures in the sense of our Society's Tuesday lectures. Instead, they are designed to provide historical



Telling stories of our medieval heritage
(© St Albans Tour Guides)



Introducing the Roman walk
(© St Albans Tour Guides)

insight into important places along with the people who lived and worked here.

To this end, the authoritative historical knowledge and publications of the Arc and Arc, and its remarkably long term historical research, are used to provide information and to ensure accuracy. From these and other resources, the guides write walk notes and construct talks in order to ensure a degree of consistency and a high level of quality for all guides to use. The walks and talks range over many different subjects in the city itself and in the villages. Among others, there are walks covering the Roman, medieval, Tudor and Victorian periods, more general historical walks, walks exploring the city's architecture, site-specific walks such as Fishpool Street, and a very dramatic couple of ghost walks during the dark evenings of autumn and winter.

This year, the committee devoted to writing the walks and talks is revisiting the materials used by the guides. This will bring our notes up to date, changing and modifying according to the experience and feedback from the guides who experience the material on a day to day basis. The goal is always to interest and excite the interested public – those who live and work in the district and those who visit from outside and hope to learn interesting facts and listen to surprising stories of the city and district.

Guides have an important responsibility. They are ambassadors and are often the only people that visitors interact with to any great extent. If the guides can give people a favourable impression of our area and, at the same time, entertain and interest people, then visitors will either leave with a positive impression of our great city, and its district, or even realise the value of making St Albans their home.

For further information and to book a walk, please visit:
www.stalbanstourguides.co.uk

Dr Tony Berk

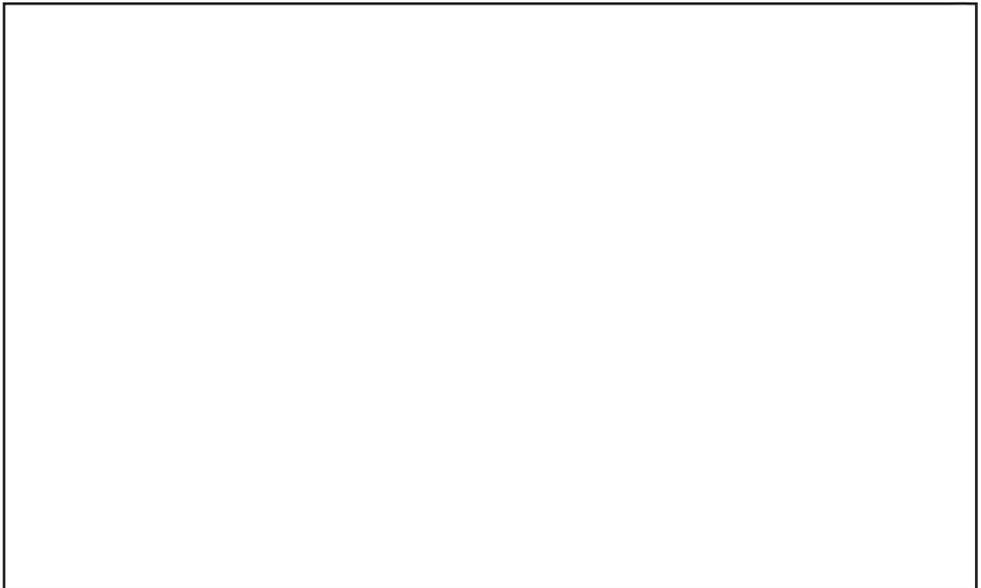
THE END OF THE MITCHELL HALL

The Mitchell Hall on Verulam Road, formerly the local headquarters of the Royal British Legion, will shortly be refurbished for residential use. The final development will include five dwellings, taking up land to the rear and require the demolition of the associated Nissen Hut. Having just passed its 150th anniversary, the hall has an interesting history.

On 1 February 1862, the newly built Christ Church school room and house, belonging to and nearly opposite Christ Church, on Verulam Road, were opened with a service of dedication. What later became the Mitchell Hall had been

erected at the sole expense of Mrs Isabella Worley of New Barnes, whose munificence had already paid for the completion of the church. This spacious site, providing an ample playground, was given by S.B. Sweetman, owner of Bleak House on Catherine Street. The property was vested in the minister and churchwardens of Christ Church, the parish recently created from land in St Michael's and the Abbey parishes. The plans for the school were prepared by the brother of Revd Henry Smith, the incumbent.

The minister took the opportunity of the opening service to praise their benefactors for a building which he said was one of the most substantial in the town



Map showing part of Christ Church parish c.1870. Plots containing the church, parsonage and school are marked in blue. (Reproduced courtesy of HALS)



The Mitchell Hall frontage to Verulam Road

– it could accommodate 150 boys and girls and 30 infants. Overall, the building was to be much more than a school. As the following list of activities shows, it was intended to be the busy venue for parish activity at the time of the significant religious revival in St Albans: a Sunday School (60 scholars already attending); the day school; an evening Mission Working Party for women; a male adult class meeting once a week, a young men's Bible class; a Sunday School teachers' prayer meeting; a mothers meeting; and a penny bank.

It was a long day. Later in the evening Mr Lloyd of London, delivered his lecture on 'India, and the overland route', illustrated by his illuminated panorama. There were several hundred people present.

It was not a free school. The governors required payment from parents of up to 2d per child per week. And, as a sign of the times, they also stated that feathers and flowers in the girls' bonnets were not permissible. The hat trimming manufacturers in St Albans, of which they were many, cannot have been pleased.

The school's fortunes waxed and waned over the next 70 years before closing in 1936 through lack of pupils. Later that year the St Albans branch of the British Legion, bought the building for £1,250, naming it the 'Mitchell Hall' in tribute to Benjamin Mitchell MC, vicar of St Michael's Church and first chairman of the Branch and a much-loved mayor. It was noted "the Branch was strictly tee-total". This was changed after the war ended!



The Hall from the rear (© Pat Broad)



The Nissen Hut to the rear (© Pat Broad)

During the war, it was a busy First Aid Post manned by the Red Cross, housed in the large Nissen Hut at the back. This became a local social centre for the residents, meetings, dances, parties, celebrations and jumble sales. The work leading up to the annual Poppy Day was massive. Serving and ex-service men and women, together with cadets from the Navy, Army and Air Force proudly

marching up to the war memorial each Remembrance Sunday was a splendid sight.

Now all is over. With an ageing membership, it became harder to find volunteers to help. So, the British Legion sold the site to developers. What happens next we are now starting to hear. The wartime Nissen Hut is still there, but for how

long? If it is to be removed, to the sadness of those of us who have memories of the war, where will it go? I hope there will be a happy ending.

But we can still remember our local, generous, under-sung philanthropists, Mrs Worley and Mr Sweetman.

Ann Dean

BLUE PLAQUES UPDATE

Blue Plaques St Albans continues its (regrettably slow) progress of installing a variety of plaques throughout St Albans to celebrate worthy Albanians.

We now have five in place, with the latest two being one for Sarah Churchill on 'her' almshouses (unveiled by David Williams, deputy lieutenant) and one for Percival Blow on the Skipton Building Society (unveiled by his grandson, Christopher Blow). Our slow progress is basically caused by the, shall I say, somewhat bureaucratic procedures that are involved, and also by the cost. Each plaque costs approximately £550 – if you do feel you would like to contribute, please feel free to send a cheque (payable to *Blue Plaques St Albans*) to me at 24 Monks Horton Way, St Albans, AL1 4HA – thank you!

Bryan Hanlon

LECTURE PROGRAMME

15 November 2022 – 21 February 2023

All lectures commence at 7.45pm unless otherwise stated.

Please note the delivery of lectures will vary between Church only, Church plus live-streaming via Zoom and Zoom only. In the New Year the aim is to build some predictability into the programme such that the first lecture each month will be held in the Church plus being live-streamed via Zoom; the second lecture each month will be Zoom only; whilst the third will be Church only. Every effort will be made to follow through with this pattern but there are many variables that may affect the order of lecture provision.

We will continue to offer occasional lectures that non-members can attend without charge e.g. Tuesday 15 November.

Any changes to the programme will be notified on our web site and via e-news.

Non-members will be charged £5 for attendance at a lecture (unless stated otherwise).

Tuesday 15 November

**Truly Iconic! Sir Christopher Wren
and St Paul's – His Life, Works and
Times**

Dr Valerie Shrimplin

Church only

2023 marks the 300-year anniversary of Sir Christopher Wren's death at the age of 90 in 1723. Born in 1632, his extraordinarily long and productive life has left a lasting legacy particularly on the skyline of London. From his early years in the village of East Knowle, Wiltshire, to his later career(s) as architect, astronomer, medic, mathematician, physicist, engineer and courtier, Wren is particularly

known for the 52 churches (including the iconic St Paul's Cathedral) that he designed following the Great Fire of London in 1666.

Dr Valerie Shrimplin, an associate of Gresham College, studied (after St Albans High School) at the universities of Bristol, Manchester and the Witwatersrand (PhD, 1991). She has lectured and published on art, architecture and history particularly of the Byzantine, Medieval and Renaissance periods.

Please note - this event will also be an opportunity for existing and particularly new members to meet various

SAHAAS Council members who will be in attendance.

Tuesday 22 November

The Future of Architecture: The Next 175 Years

Prof Geraint John (chair), Tim Boat-swain, Alison Crompton, Simon Knight and Francesca Weal

Church only

This is the third and final part of a series set up in 2020 to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of SAHAAS in 1845. Two similar events focused on history and archaeology but on this occasion a panel of eminent experts will share their perspectives on architecture in the past, present and future. Their individual presentations will be followed by a chance for audience participation.

Geraint John is a visiting professor at the University of Hertfordshire and previously at Madrid University for Sports Building Design. He is co-author and editor of a series of textbooks, the latest being Olympic Stadia: Theatres of Dreams. Geraint was awarded the Pierre de Coubertin Medal for outstanding services to the Olympic Movement. He was a Council Member of the RIBA, and closer to home, also served as chairman of the Herts Association of Architects (HAA).

Tim Boatswain is a professor of Anthropology and History. He is president of the St Albans Civic Society, chairman of Conservation 50, Blue Plaques St Albans, and the international college, TMC Academy. He acts as a lecturer and consultant, regularly gives talks at St Albans Cathedral.

Alison Crompton is a Regional Director in the Sustainability Team at AECOM, a global consultancy with a large office in St Albans. Her sustainability expertise is focused on buildings and construction, and ranges from research and policy, to early-stage design support through to post construction advice. Alison works across a wide range of building types for both public and private sector clients.

Simon Knight has led multi-disciplinary teams working with a diverse range of clients to deliver both small and large-scale projects across the country. He is currently director of Simon Knight Architects. This design-focused RIBA practice based in St Albans is involved in a wide range of projects including low energy and net zero carbon homes for private clients. Simon is the current chair of the local RIBA branch, the Hertfordshire Association of Architects and teaches at the University of Hertfordshire.

Francesca Weal studied architecture at Cambridge where she was one of the

first female undergraduates at King's College. She is a multi-award winning architect with both RIBA and St Albans Civic Society awards. She is a past chairman of the HAA and served on the RIBA national council for six years. Her passion is in combining cutting-edge design with the intelligent use, where appropriate, of traditional building materials in innovative ways.

Tuesday 6 December

Adrian IV: the only English Pope in the History of the Church

R.A.J. Waddingham

Church and Zoom

Using evidence from chronicles and medieval manuscripts this talk explores the story of Nicholas Breakspears's remarkable journey through twelfth-century Europe. His achievements outshone his contemporary, the martyr Thomas Becket. Born in poverty and probably illegitimate, Breakspears rose to become the only Englishman to ascend the throne of St Peter, ruling over the Papal States as Adrian IV.

Adrian Waddingham worked as a consulting actuary in Liverpool, Malaysia and London, and was voted 'Pension Personality of the Year' in 2010, much to the amusement of his family. He was awarded a CBE in 2012 for services in pensions. Adrian is an Honorary Fellow of Royal Holloway College, University of

London. Breakspears: the English Pope is his first book.

Friday 6 January 2023

The SAHAAS New Year Party

Please see p.39 for further details.

Tuesday 10 January

The Verulamium Survey: Latest Results

Dr Kris Lockyear

Church and Zoom

Since 2013 the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group (CAGG) have been undertaking surveys of Verulamium using a variety of techniques. In 2022 the team completed the GPR survey of the north-western half of the town that lies within the Gorhambury estate. Up until 2022 the surveys had revealed the sort of things we expected, with the city's aqueduct being one of the highlights. The results from the last season, however, have revealed a series of unexpected structures. The talk will introduce the surveys and methods, and conclude with these remarkable finds.

Kris's passion for archaeology arose from a school trip to Verulamium in 1975. Degrees from Durham, Southampton and UCL led to Senior Lecturer at UCL. An advocate of community archaeology he founded CAGG which has conducted surveys on over more than 40 sites.

Tuesday 17 January

To be confirmed

Tuesday 24 January

**100 Years at Vicarage Road Stadium
in 22 images**

Geoff Wicken

Church only

Watford Football Club celebrated the centenary of the Vicarage Road stadium in August 2022. Drawing on 22 key images from its history, this talk traces the ground's evolution from a recreation ground beside the town workhouse to a well-equipped modern stadium.

Geoff is a Cambridge history graduate and long-term Watford FC fan. He edits the Watford Treasury magazine. His first book, 100 Years at Vicarage Road, is illustrated with some 370 images, and memories from supporters and players.

Tuesday 7 February

Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Ancient Egypt

Dr Susan Walker FSA

Church and Zoom

This talk discusses the painted portraits of Roman Egypt. When the first major discoveries were made over a century ago, these were a revelation to scholars and public alike. The further discovery of a new cache of these gilded images in the late 1900s, has only heightened their mystery and appeal.

Dr Walker is an archaeologist specialising in Roman art. Whilst working at the British Museum, she curated an internationally acclaimed exhibition on Egyptian Mummy Portraits, an interest she has continued to pursue. From 2004-14 she was Sackler Keeper of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum. Dr Walker is also a specialist on gold-glass, inscriptions and sarcophagi from the catacombs of Rome.

Tuesday 14 February

To be confirmed

Tuesday 21 February

Battle of Barnet and the Barnet Medieval Festival

Hilary Harrison, Mike Noronha and Susan Skedd

Church only

The Museum of Barnet has for years been the 'custodian' of the history and educational aspects of the Battle of Barnet. In this lecture we will hear about the work done to commemorate and promote knowledge of the history and education aspects of the Battle of Barnet and the Wars of the Roses generally and how that led on to the Barnet Medieval Festival. There will also be a chance to see some artefacts found by archaeologists and metal detectorists that may relate to the battle.

OUR MAIN SOCIAL EVENT OF THE YEAR



NEW YEAR PARTY

FRIDAY 6 JANUARY
St Stephen's Church Hall [AL1 2PT]
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 fellow members

Val would welcome a contribution
of a plate of sweet or savoury –
the Society is happy to reimburse members financially
Tel: 01727 853083 or email: nyp@stalbanhistory.org
Ticket price £8.00 in advance or £10.00 at the door.

Tickets are available in advance at SAHAAS lectures at the Church.

Tickets are also for sale on Eventbrite — please see the enews message
sent on 4 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:**

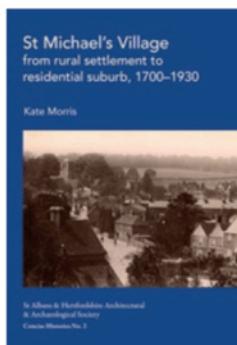
Bryan Hanlon, 24 Monks Horton Way, St Albans, AL1 4HA

"A great way to share SAHAAS
with friends and family."

**SAHAAS
Members
Only!**

Christmas Sale!

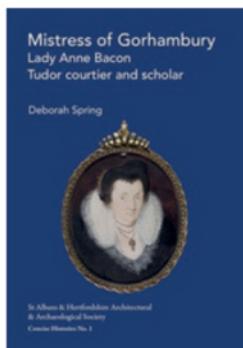
25% off these two books*



St Michael's Village, from rural settlement to residential suburb, 1700-1930

In this book Kate Morris tells the story of how St Michael's village was transformed from a thriving artisan community to an attractive residential suburb of St Albans.

Was £7.00, now **£5.25**



Mistress of Gorhambury, Lady Anne Bacon, Tudor courtier and scholar

This account by Deborah Spring describes the life of a remarkable woman who had a considerable impact on the Tudor era.

Was £6.50, now **£4.87**

Offer not available online. Please **email** your order to publications@stalbanshistory.org,
or call 01727 863340.

Offer expires 24 December 2022.

*Excludes P&P which is £1.80 per book.