



ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE  
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER 228

May 2023



Verulam Hills Farm, c.1940. From Ian Tonkin's collection. See p.36 for more about the farm.  
(With thanks to Malcolm Merrick for scanning the original slide.)

### Included in this issue:

SAHAAS 2nd Battle Exhibition  
Michael Wood talk  
Cathedral's Medieval Summer  
Pemberton Almshouses

Christopher Webb  
Pubs everywhere  
The White House  
Fresco Seminars

## Table of Contents

Celebrity Lecture. Prof. Michael Wood: 'Why the Anglo-Saxons matter'	5
A Major Exhibition: 'The Forgotten Battle of St Albans'	6
The St Albans Timeline Project	9
Library Report	10
Recent journal articles	11
Transcriptions of early PCC wills	11
Clock Tower Report	14
Update on the St Julian's Project	15
'Time for Tea' at St Albans Museums	16
Seminars: The development of ancient fresco	17
Blue Plaques Latest	18
News from Wheathampstead History Society	19
The Barbican: not just Neo-Brutalism	20
Adding to the legend of stained-glass artist Christopher Webb	22
Pubs everywhere	24
"Welcome Strangers": How mid-Victorian St Albans hotels attracted new trade	26
History and all that	28
Notes on the history of the Pemberton Almshouses	30
Genteel St Albans Restored II	32
New Publication from the Herts Record Society	34
The Medieval Summer at St Albans Cathedral	35
The early days of Verulam Hills Farm	36
Lecture Programme	37

### THE COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY GEOPHYSICS GROUP

CAGG is a friendly group of volunteer archaeologists founded ten years ago. We undertake surveys on sites across Hertfordshire and beyond. Our largest survey is that of Verulamium, although most are much smaller. Our working days are 10am

to 4pm. If you would like more details, please send Kris Lockyear an email on [hertsgeosurvey@gmail.com](mailto:hertsgeosurvey@gmail.com). No experience necessary, training given on the job!



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year has seen much activity. The first ever exhibition on the Second Battle of St Albans from the War of the Roses has opened at St Albans Museum + Gallery. It is the second major exhibition we have instigated in the last few years and of course raises our profile as Hertfordshire's leading historical society. Peter Burley and I have been delighted by the positive comments we have received from members and non-members alike. It has involved much 'burning of the midnight oil' to achieve this result and the goodwill shown, and help given, by our friends at The Barnet Festival and Museum, the Battlefields Trust, St Albans Cathedral, and the Museum + Gallery has been greatly appreciated.

Fewer members of the Society offered help than was the case with our 175th anniversary exhibition, but those that did gave invaluable assistance. Grateful thanks are due to Brenda Bolton for persevering in translating fifteen pages of Abbot John of Whetamstede's complex Latin prose and poetry covering the events of 1461. This provided us with previously unknown insights into what happened to the abbey and town after

the battle. Many thanks also to Mark Percival for his work on the audio and video for the exhibition and its promotion, to Malcolm Merrick for voicing a splendid John of Whetamstede, and to Professor Tim Boatswain for his ceaseless promotion of the exhibition.



Our emphasis now moves to the work needed for Professor Michael Wood's lecture on 2 June. Further details are contained in this *Newsletter*. You will see that Michael's lecture will focus on some of the great stories

from the era colloquially known as 'The Dark Ages'. He also tells me he will be giving his view on 'Why the Anglo-Saxons matter'. Although this will be a 'Face to Face' lecture, not a hybrid one, this will, for various reasons, be complex to deliver. Already I wish to express my thanks to Professor Anne Curry and The Battlefields Trust, Sue Gregory and St Albans School and Helen Bishop and Lady Verulam for their help.

It was very pleasing to note the good attendance on our Library open afternoon. Many thanks are due to Heather and her team for enabling this event to take place and their ceaseless work to

make this a great place of research. Also grateful thanks to Pat Howe and Pat Broad and her publications team for bringing 'St Albans Wills 2' book closer to completion. I hope to write more about this and the debt we owe Pat Howe next time.

I am conscious that with a Society now approaching 700 members, more work seems to be falling on fewer shoulders. In some areas we are very dependent on

key individuals, and this was brought home to me again by an event that occurred on Easter Monday that needed immediate intervention. Please write to me if you feel you can assist in any way. Whether it is proof reading, setting up equipment, or project participation/management, all help is most welcome.

**Dr John Morewood**  
**chair@stalbanhistory.org**

### **CAN YOU SPARE A COUPLE OF HOURS OVER THE SUMMER?**

If so, please consider becoming a 'Clockateer'. As members of the Society we have the pleasure and responsibility for keeping the Clock Tower open for the many visitors who climb it each summer.

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

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

If you can spare some time, please contact Caroline Howkins and Mike Carey via [clocktower@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:clocktower@stalbanhistory.org).



### **THE HERTS 'BIG WEEKEND'**

Running over the weekend of 24 and 25 June 2023, the 'Big Weekend' is a county-wide venture where you can win free tickets to visit attractions throughout Hertfordshire – see [www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk](http://www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk) for further information.



## **CELEBRITY LECTURE BY PROF. MICHAEL WOOD – WHY THE ANGLO-SAXONS MATTER**

**St Albans School, St Albans, AL3 4HB  
Friday 2 June 2023, 7.30pm-9.15pm**

This is a unique opportunity to hear one of the UK's most celebrated historians. Michael Wood is a historian and film maker and Professor of Public History at the University of Manchester. He is well known for his books and television series covering the history of countries as diverse as China and India, and his portraits of personalities as different as Alexander the Great and Shakespeare. Among his many honours, he has received the British Academy's President's Medal for services to history and outreach, and in 2021 he was awarded an OBE.



For many, his seminal work is his book *In Search of The Dark Ages*. To celebrate the fortieth anniversary of this classic account, he released a revised edition in 2022 with five new chapters reflecting exciting recent discoveries, especially in women's history. In this illustrated lecture Michael will give his view on 'Why the Anglo-Saxons Matter'.

Thanks to St Albans School we will be holding the event in their Hall. The lecture will start at 7.30pm and last approximately 50 minutes followed by Q and A. Afterwards there will be a drinks reception and an opportunity to buy some of Michael's books.

St Albans School have very generously agreed not to make a charge for the hire of their hall. To coincide with both Michael and our aims of appealing to as diverse a population as possible, we as a Society are not receiving any financial benefit for this event. Tickets are £10 each to cover the cost of the reception, with surplus proceeds donated to a local charity looking after the homeless in St Albans and district, sponsored by our patron Lady Verulam.

For details of how to buy your ticket visit the Forthcoming Events section on the Society's website.

**John Morewood**

## A MAJOR EXHIBITION: 'THE FORGOTTEN BATTLE OF ST ALBANS'

When I said I was off to see 'The Forgotten Battle Exhibition' I was asked, 'Who forgot it?'

The answer partly lies in that the First Battle of St Albans in 1455 seems to have eclipsed the Second Battle of St Albans, fought in 1461. This is odd because the Second Battle was fought on a larger scale and had more dire consequences for the town.

As you enter the exhibition from the west end of the Keeper's Gallery at St Albans Museum + Gallery, the brutality of the battle and the subsequent sacking are explained through a recording of the eyewitness account of Abbott John of Whetamstede, alongside a photo of his reconstructed face and life-size cut-out.



Fig.1: Models and banners



Fig.2: Reproductions of contemporary arms

The focus of the exhibition is to explain its location through maps and photos, as well as the events of the battlefield with models of the soldiers and their positions (Fig.1). There are also helpful timelines for both the battle and the events of the Wars of the Roses. There are lists of the nobility of both sides, an explanation of the women involved in the campaign and a case with memorabilia from the 1907 Pageant along with modern literature about the battle and the period.

As virtually nothing has survived from the battlefield, many of the exhibits are



Fig.3: The second oldest cannonball

replicas and modern reproductions of the period, like a sword, a longbow, model sets of armour and banners of the various noble families involved (Fig.2). The star of the exhibition is an authentic cannonball, thought to be the second oldest ever found in England (Fig.3). It is in such a good state because it was never fired. We learn two things from this: the first is that cannons, alongside handguns, were beginning to

play an important part in wars at that time and, secondly, that the Yorkist batteries probably never got the chance to fire as they were surprised from behind by the Lancastrians. Archery, however, was still important as the model of the Clock Tower is a reminder that at one stage of the fight, the Yorkist archers, firing down, were able to check the Lancastrians from entering Market Cross.

Overall the exhibition draws you into a sense of another less well-known piece of the marvellous heritage of St Albans. Next time I go up Sandridge Road along the 'Wastes' and admire the white and red blossom of the cherry trees (originally planted in 1935, for George V's Silver Jubilee) I will recall the, now not-so-forgotten, Second Battle of St Albans.

The exhibition runs until 28 June 2023.

**Tim Boatswain**

## THE NEWSLETTER

If you have any comments about the *Newsletter* or wish to submit content, please email me, Jon Mein, via [newsed@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:newsed@stalbanhistory.org). Copy deadline for the August 2023 edition is 15 July.

Please note: while the *Newsletter* is generally 40 pages in length, the next three editions will be 32 pages each. This is due to pressure from other work. Please remember that submissions should be no more than 660 words.

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS NOW DUE

**Subscriptions for the coming year, June 2023 to May 2024, are due on 1 June 2023**

Payment can be made by:

- Direct Debit\*
- Those already paying by direct debit need take no action as payment will be collected automatically.
- Bank transfer to the Society's account: sort code 309725, account number 00811696, Ref. Family name.
- PayPal via the website accessed by the 'Join us and take part' button.
- Cheque by post to: Tony Dolphin, Treasurer, SAHAAS, 79 The Park, St Albans, AL1 4RX.

\*Anyone wanting to switch to paying by direct debit, please contact the Treasurer by email for the appropriate form at [money@stalbahshistory.org](mailto:money@stalbahshistory.org) or one is available on the web site. This is the Society's preferred option.

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

David Smith  
Membership Secretary  
[membership@stalbahshistory.org](mailto:membership@stalbahshistory.org)

Tony Dolphin  
Treasurer  
[money@stalbahshistory.org](mailto:money@stalbahshistory.org)

## THE ST ALBANS TIMELINE PROJECT

The rich history of St Albans has many strands – social, religious, architectural, military and economic, amongst others. In the Timeline Project, we want to capture as many important and/or interesting events that have affected St Albans and show them in their wider context.

The Timeline will have themed strands (e.g. religion, architecture) to make it easier to see how related events unfolded. For example, the religious strand will seek to show how national decisions made during the Reformation impacted the Abbey and local churches. As we identify more events, it will become easier to see how best to group them in appropriate strands.

The Timeline will be published on the Society's web site as soon as we are able, and will evolve as new facts come to light. The aim is to allow users to search the Timeline using key words, and to choose which strands to display. In many cases, users will be able to find out more about events by following hyperlinks to articles on the website, or elsewhere.



We'd like your help in identifying events that are important or interesting in the history of St Albans. No one knows everything, but between us, the Society can draw on considerable expertise. Perhaps you're well versed in the history of the sixteenth century, or knowledgeable about the development of the railways in St Albans.

As you'd expect from a learned society, we want to make sure that each event is properly documented, ideally from primary sources, otherwise from reputable secondary sources. We'll also be seeking advice from subject matter experts within the Society.

If you'd like to find out more, including how to submit proposed events, please follow the links on the website homepage to the project page. We look forward to hearing from you via the following email address.

**Peter Bourton**  
**[timeline@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:timeline@stalbanhistory.org)**



## LIBRARY REPORT

The theme for this month's piece is 'Innovate' – and it is worth remembering the old adage, 'Adapt or die'. Like everything else in this world, libraries must change in response to the changing circumstances around them and I can report on two initiatives, one which has already happened and one which is to come.

The first was our Open Afternoon in March and it was lovely to see so many of you there. Whether you came for the displays, for the book sale or just to have a look around, I hope you all enjoyed yourselves and that we showed you that we are welcoming and always willing to help if we can. It has been gratifying that some of you have already been back to explore the collection further and to pursue your interests in local history. It is your Library and we often learn as much from you as you do from us.

The second initiative is a trial opening of the Library on Saturday mornings. We know that for those of you with work or other commitments during the week, it can be difficult to get in to see us during our usual opening hours. For that reason we are proposing to open on three summer Saturday mornings, from



Open Afternoon – things to see

10.00am until 12 noon. The dates are 17 June, 15 July and 12 August.

Our Sandridge Road site is locked at weekends and therefore access to the Library will be by appointment only – simply so that one of us can be outside and ready to open the gates for you when you arrive. Please don't come without an appointment or you will be stuck staring at the big locked metal gates and have a wasted journey.

There is no commitment at this stage to carry on opening on Saturday mornings after these three dates – we are testing the water to see how much of a demand



Open Afternoon – books to buy

there is and whether it is worth continuing on a regular basis. It may be something we do only in the summer, or just a few times a year, or not at all. We want to be as accessible as possible but equally we don't want to be sitting there on our lonesome ownsome if there is no need for the extra hours.

For the Open Afternoon, for the Saturday opening, and of course for keeping the library going all the rest of the time, I am dependent upon the goodwill and enthusiasm of our team of volunteers, and my thanks go to them all.

For any enquiries at all, or to make an appointment, please email us at [library@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:library@stalbanhistory.org). We look forward to seeing you soon.

### Heather Jardine



Open Afternoon – and people to talk to

### Recent Journal Articles

*The Alban Link*, no 98, Spring 2023.  
pp.7-9 “Burials in the Presbytery”, by Michael Graham. A description of burial

plots located in front of the High Altar of the Cathedral dated between 1302 and 1555. These have recently become visible as a carpet has been taken up and the area cleaned.

*British Archaeology*, no. 189, March / April 2023.

pp.28-35 “Crossrail: an underground journey”, by Mike Pitts. The major archaeological discoveries made during the construction of the Elizabeth Line are arranged in order of their age.

*Herts Past and Present*, no 41, Spring 2023.

p.16 “John Cox (1939-2022)”. This short obituary, mentions John Cox's contribution to SAHAAS and his work on the local history of Hertfordshire and St Albans.

pp.23-29 “The Hertfordshire guild that survived: 1. The Medieval Period”, by David Perman. A guild in Ware survived Tudor reforms and its successor still exists today. The guild was established as a brotherhood of innkeepers and the article covers the period up to the mid-1530s mostly through property deeds.

**Lin Watson**

### Transcriptions of early PCC wills

From the start of lockdown, the National Archives has generously waived its usual £3.50 fee to download

wills from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) probate collection. For the town of St Albans and the four contiguous parishes there are 60 of these from the 1540-1600 period, all downloaded and available in the Society's Library. (For further information see *Newsletter* 219, February 2021, pp. 11-12.)

One disadvantage of these original documents is that they are all in early modern script, problematic however good one's palaeographical skills are. However, sterling work by David Lasky over lockdown has made 41 of them accessible to all researchers. He has transcribed wills relating to the town and also the parishes of St Michael's, St Peter's and Sandridge outside the urban

boundaries. (Transcripts of St Stephen's PCC wills have already been published separately.) The resulting MS Word files are now available to view in the Library alongside the originals. You can see what is in this digital collection on Soutron, our online catalogue – ref. P32011. (One word of caution: as these transcriptions have not been formally edited, researchers will need to ensure accuracy themselves.)

David and Michele, his wife, recently moved away from St Albans. They are much missed by their many friends in the Society and the City in general.

**Jon Mein**

## **NEW PARKING CHARGES**

Many of us use the SADC carpark off Bricket Road when attending lectures but, as of last month, charges will now apply. The cost will be £1.50 – unless you have a Senior Citizen's pass, in which case still no charge at all. The machine at the entrance to the carpark accepts coins but not cards.

If you wish to enjoy free parking, there are no evening parking restrictions on parts of Victoria Street, both above and below the Lattimore Road traffic lights.

*NB We would ask that you do not park in front of the church, unless you have difficulty in walking from the carpark.*

**Bryan Hanlon**

## THE MAYOR'S HISTORY FUND

Society members will be aware that in 2022, following a great deal of work, we were able to transfer the funds originally established to support the 'Mayor's Prize', an essay-based competition, to be made available for research. The fund was renamed the 'Mayor's History Fund' and is administered by the Society on behalf of the Mayor of St Albans. Local history researchers can bid for financial assistance, up to a maximum of £250, to cover expenses that, if incurred, would prevent publication of their work. The Society established a Research and Grants Committee, comprising its President, Secretary and Treasurer, to administer the fund and to consider applications. The first award was made in 2022 to Frank Iddiols to assist his research into Ordnance Survey benchmarks in the central St Albans area.

Applications for funding from members / non-members can be made twice a year, in March and September. If anyone wishes to make an application for funding the next closing date is 30 September 2023. Full details, and application form, can be found on the Society's website

[www.stalbanshistory.org/research/the-mayors-history-fund](http://www.stalbanshistory.org/research/the-mayors-history-fund).

**John Morewood**

## MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members:

Sarah Arnold	Graham Jolliffe	Colette & Roger
Michael & Dimah Bailey	John, Geetha Maloney	Tomlinson
Callum Brooks & Emma Jones	& family	Austin Trueman
Steve Devo	Patrick Moorhouse	Robert Wilkinson
Thomas Field	Jane Sherry & Stephen	Brian Williams
Daphne Fisher	Rogers	Pauline Willis
Jennifer Hopping & Ray Munt	Jonathan & Danielle	Ray Wilson
Brian, Jennifer Johnson	Sandford	
& family		

## CLOCK TOWER REPORT

“Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!” called out the Town Crier as he rang his handbell, “Good Citizens of St Albans, I want you to welcome the Right Worshipful, The Mayor of the City and District of St Albans, Councillor Geoffrey Harrison, commonly known as Geoff!” And so began the official opening of the Clock Tower for the summer season 2023 by the Mayor on Good Friday, 7 April. A video of the opening can be seen on the Clock Tower Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/StAlbansClockTower/videos/750821966451643](https://www.facebook.com/StAlbansClockTower/videos/750821966451643).

Also in attendance for the opening was the editor of the online newspaper, the *St Albans Times*, Matt Adams, who took numerous photos many of which can be seen in his four-page article in the 13 April 2023 issue. A lovely, sunny

photo of the view along Market Place and St Peter’s Street takes up the entire front page of this 11th issue of the paper, and describes the roof top experience as giving, “the best view in town”. The paper can be read at: [www.stalbanstimes.co.uk](http://www.stalbanstimes.co.uk) (issue 11).

The Clock Tower joined in the King’s Coronation Celebrations with a volunteering information event on Monday, 8 May. This was part of the 'Big Help Out' campaign. A display on the first floor informed visitors what a Clockateer does and a volunteer was on hand to answer questions and explain what they do.

I would like to finish by welcoming our new volunteers and thanking Ray De La Salle for agreeing to become one of our Weekend Organisers. Thank you, Ray.

Just let Mike Carey and me know know via email if you are interested in becoming a Clockateer and giving an hour and a half of your time to sit in the Clock Tower over a summer weekend to welcome visitors.

**Caroline Howkins**  
[clocktower@stalbanhistory.org](mailto:clocktower@stalbanhistory.org)



The Mayor and Town Crier at the opening of the Clock Tower, April 2023 (© Andy Lawrence)



## UPDATE ON THE ST JULIAN'S PROJECT

Research into the St Julian's estate and its neighbourhood in St Stephen's parish continues. Several valuable datasets have been created including transcription of the baptisms, marriages and burials at St Stephen's church, which reveal the clergy involved and witnesses to marriages and allows family reconstruction and in some cases the specific location or occupation of families. This latter work is near completion and a few more transcribers would allow the remaining work to be done so that the set can be lodged for wider use.

Clergy connected with St Stephen's parish have also been tabulated, revealing interesting instances of absent clergy, the location of a vicarage in the seventeenth century, curates assisting in the parish etc. Most recently the logbooks of the St Stephen's National School on Watford Road (predecessor of Killigrew School) have been transcribed, allowing an insight into the education of children in the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although University of Hertfordshire Press remain interested in the Group's revised book proposal for a history of

the estate from the post-Civil War era of the estate with its splendid mansion, that project is on hold, in favour of concentrating on exploitation of the wonderful account book written by Elizabeth Ashurst in the second half of the eighteenth century. This pause allows time for highlighting the material culture of the period which is reflected through her purchases of sometimes exotic foodstuffs, fabrics and her maintenance of the mansion and its garden.

Mrs Ashurst's relationship with the non-conformist community both in the town and in London is also the subject of specific study and when written up will fill a gap in the town's historiography. The Dissenting community in St Albans was strong and well connected to that in London and elsewhere, but the evolution of Unitarianism in the late eighteenth century caused a schism and the ultimate demise of the chapel in Dagnall Lane. Mrs Ashurst and her associates were closely connected with the chapel and their lives can inform the story of that community.

Anyone interested in this aspect of St Albans history or of Dissent in general is welcome to contact me to learn more or contribute.

**Kate Morris**  
**[kate@englishinfo.biz](mailto:kate@englishinfo.biz)**

## **'TIME FOR TEA' AT ST ALBANS MUSEUMS**

**Weston Gallery, St Albans Museum  
+ Gallery  
19 May – 5 November 2023**

When planning a new exhibition, the idea can come from all kinds of sources. Exhibition ideas can come – from an anniversary, a new piece of historical research, the passion of an individual researcher, a particular object in our collections or even from a passing comment. 'Time for Tea', opening 19 May, is a mixture of the last three of these sources.

When I started working for St Albans Museums and first got to explore the collections in our store, I found myself looking at the boxes of ceramics and wondering what the best way to include a selection in an exhibition would be. Some are beautiful and precious, others are more ordinary, but we have a wide range of teacups, dinner plates, jugs, bottles, and every other ceramic object you can think of.

During Lockdown, the museum team started to hold online 'tea breaks' to stay connected with others whilst working from home and as we compared mugs and teapots the idea came back to me. As anyone who has worked



Bristol tea bowl and saucer c.1780  
(St Albans Museums)

on a project, or been in a meeting with me, will know I am an enthusiastic tea drinker but also as a historian I am fascinated by the role this Chinese plant has come to play in our history and society.

Time for Tea will explore tea from leaf to cup including everything from how you boil your water to the best kind of cup or mug to use. We will be unpacking kettles, thermoses, delicate tea bowls and decorative teapots from our collection and we will look back at the tea houses and cafes St Albans has been home to in the past.

We hope to see you in the exhibition (and our café!) this summer.

**Sarah Keeling  
Post-medieval Curator  
St Albans Museums**

## SEMINARS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANCIENT FRESCO

In this series of three seminars, Dr Maria Musto, a member of the Society, explores the development of fresco in the Roman and earlier periods. Her story mixes time and place: time in respect of pre-dynastic Egypt to the classical period, and place in terms of the origins of fresco in the eastern Mediterranean leading to later examples in Italy and then Verulamium. Place also relates to the buildings in which we see fresco today and what these examples tell us about the differing cultures of the people who commissioned them.

There are two elements to understanding our story. Firstly, fresco wall paintings encompass three techniques. Secondly, there is the question of the four different styles which we can see in the best-known fresco, those from the Roman empire. At their heart is the idea of 'decorum' achieved by using decorative strategies to balance the enclosing space of the wall. As the evolution of decorum is not homogeneous and indeed varies by region, we can distinguish four different styles. The first style is called the masonry style; the second involves illusionistic architecture and surrealism; the third so-called 'candelabrum style' involves two



A third-style fresco, Verulamium Museum phases covering the reigns of Augustus and Claudius; and the fourth evolved as a conglomeration of the previous styles.

Starting at 2.30pm and lasting for around an hour, these richly-illustrated seminars will be held in the Society's Library on the following Thursdays:  
25 May – Introduction  
29 June – The Three Techniques  
27 July – The Four Styles

Maria has been interested in fresco for some sixteen years since excavating in Pompeii and then Nea Paphos in Cyprus.

Full details will follow via enews with registration via Eventbrite. If you have any questions in the meantime, please email me.

**Jon Mein**  
[events@stalbanshistory.org](mailto:events@stalbanshistory.org)

## BLUE PLAQUES LATEST

One of St Albans' most famous citizens, Stephen Hawking, was honoured by Blue Plaques St Albans in February with the latest unveiling. Close to 100 people came to Stephen's old family home in Hillside Road to see his sister, Mary, 'do the honours' with a speech giving many details of his life – both here in his home city and during his later life in Cambridge as a world-renowned theoretical physicist, cosmologist and author. Albanian John McClenahan, a friend from his days at St Albans School, also spoke about Stephen, and indeed of the house itself.

Professor Tim Boatswain, chairman of Blue Plaques St Albans (BPSA) and SAHAAS publicity officer, commented that Stephen was a remarkable physicist and best-selling author. Throughout most of his life he battled with motor neurone disease but still managed to survey the cosmos from his wheelchair, theorising on the nature of gravity and the origins of the



The ceremony at 14 Hillside Road  
(© Stuart Macer)

universe. It is absolutely appropriate that St Albans recognises this amazing man with a blue plaque. Stephen Hawking is a wonderful symbol both of brilliant thinking and extraordinary human determination.

Hawking's is the seventh plaque to be installed by BPSA. This voluntary organization was established to commemorate famous men and women who have lived and worked in St Albans by placing blue plaques on buildings associated with their lives.

**Bryan Hanlon**

## HERTS AT WAR – PROGRAMME OF TALKS

Some members may recall the Herts at War project that explored the effects of the First World War on Hertfordshire and its people. The programme of talks was a key part of the project. After a leave of absence, the programme has now restarted and you can find details at [www.hertsatwar.co.uk/events](http://www.hertsatwar.co.uk/events).

## NEWS FROM WHEATHAMPSTEAD HISTORY SOCIETY

After a slowish post-Covid 'bounce back', we picked up momentum in the later months of 2022 and into 2023. At the time of writing, we have 62 paid-up members. Attendance at our monthly meetings has broken all records with more than 40 people, both members and guests, in November and January and over 50 in February. This seems to be linked to the fact that all three of these talks were focused specifically on aspects of the history of Wheathampstead. This is obviously good news but, on the other hand, we still find it difficult



Wheathampstead School c.1980 (© WHS)

to involve members in actually doing research. Any advice about this would be welcome.

Having said that, three members of the Society have been researching the history of Wheathampstead School, the secondary school which opened in 1965 and closed in somewhat controversial circumstances in 1988. (See photo.) Our

February meeting was a talk about the school based largely on documents at HALS and press reports, plus the reminiscences of two pupils. What we need now are memories of more pupils, teachers, and anyone else who had links with the school. Contributions welcome!

Ruth Jeavons, in her role as Village Recorder, has assembled over many years a substantial collection of documents, photographs and other materials about Wheathampstead's history. Over the last couple of years, members of the society have catalogued this collection which has continued to grow. This archive is currently in store, where it will have to stay until or unless we can develop a Heritage Centre. It is not accessible to users.

We are therefore delighted to have made an arrangement with the Wheathampstead Community Library whereby the archive catalogue can be searched online and users can request to see items from the archive in which they are interested.

To find out about this arrangement, please go to our website:  
[www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk/history-society.asp](http://www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk/history-society.asp)

**Patrick McNeill**

**[whs@wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk](mailto:whs@wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk)**



## SOCIETY OUTING – THE BARBICAN: NOT JUST NEO-BRUTALISM

The Barbican is a residential estate built between 1965 and 1976 within the City of London. It is Grade II Listed as an icon of Neo-Brutalist architecture. Neo-Brutalism rejects nostalgia, and is characterised by ‘minimalist constructions that showcase the bare building materials and structural elements over decorative design’. (Wikipedia/Brutalist Architecture).

A St Albans-Barbican link? Surely not! Only Peter Burley’s breadth of interest and knowledge could give us three such links. We approached the Barbican by St Alban’s church tower in Wood Street, we went up steps into the Barbican through a building engineered by St Albans’ resident Terry Hill, and we paused there above the very spot where reverberations of the Second Battle of St Albans (1461) were determined. (See p.6 for more about the ‘Forgotten Battle’ exhibition.)

We turned into the Barbican Wall Walk which, Peter explained, is at the height the medieval wall (built on top of the Roman wall) had reached in the middle ages. We could see stretches of that wall below us. We could see different textures where the height of the wall had been much increased. We could see



Fig.1: Roman remnants that inspired design

brick incorporated in the rough stone. We could see the remnants of round towers incorporated in the wall, we could see a water course marking the moat that had been around the Wall. (Fig. 1) We could see the original tower of St Giles by Cripplegate, rough stone below, brick above – and the rest of the church reconstructed in rough stone. All these features of church and wall and Barbican were consciously incorporated into the design of the buildings on the site.

Also to be recognised as we progressed along the walkways, were the feeling of being within a bastion with only arrow slits for light (Fig. 2), being within an amphitheatre (Fig. 3), being loomed over by an array of soldiers. Less obvious allusions were to ships funnels: but none to railway engines so closely associated with the site, nor to the garment making here in the twentieth century, nor the burial grounds that extended across the



Fig.2: As in a bastion lit only by arrow slits?  
(© Chris Dunn)

whole site beyond the arc of churches. Tombstones, one would think, could fit neatly into the Brutalist scheme.

Designers had more than history in mind. Much influenced by the urban planning ideals of the Le Corbusier School, the whole estate was to be – and is! – made of first rate materials, using first rate construction techniques, comfortable, safe, egalitarian, beautiful. Even within, the dwellings are comfortable: sometimes small but sound-proof, temperate and always with a pleasant view over water features or the green spaces that were made especially lovely for our walk by magnolia and cherry blossom, tender green foliage and spring bulbs.

Factors that contributed to the realisation of the ideals were:

- The scale of the site. 40 acres of buildings were destroyed by a single

bombing raid in the Second World War.

- The money the Corporation of London was able to allocate to the project.
- The clear aim of the Corporation to provide affordable housing for 5,000 people from all walks of life.

Our verdict? The Barbican certainly achieves the Neo-Brutalist aim of ‘combined functionalism and bold sculptural expressionism’, but our walk was ‘not *just* Neo-Brutalist’ in that we realised that the Barbican is not *just* an architectural icon but a wonderful place in which to live, and a wonderful place to visit – and Peter gave us a glimpse not *just* of Neo-Brutalism but of the breadth and depth of history associated with the site.

I can only touch on all we learned on our walk. There is tons of stuff worth devouring on the web.

**Kate Bretherton**



Fig.3: As in a Roman amphitheatre?

## **ADDING TO THE LEGEND OF STAINED GLASS ARTIST CHRISTOPHER WEBB**

The achievements of Christopher Webb have been covered in a recent article in the *Newsletter* but the life of this outstanding stained glass artist, a modest, deeply religious man, is a rich seam to mine.

To fill in a little bit more of his history and association with St Albans, Christopher Rahere Webb was born on 5 February 1886 in Chislehurst, Kent. He came from a family of artists and his uncle, Sir Aston Webb, was at one time president of the Royal Academy and Royal Institute of British Architects.



Portrait of Christopher Webb (Courtesy of St Albans Cathedral / Eileen Roberts Papers)

Webb was educated at Rugby School, The Slade School of Art and was articled to Sir Ninian Comper, one of the last great Gothic Revival architects.

Webb fought in the First World War in the Artists' Rifles. Afterwards he set up in business with fellow artist Randall Blacking. Both had been pupils of Comper and Webb assisted the architect in creating the Great West Window of St Albans Cathedral, the diocesan memorial to the fallen, completed in 1925.

After his marriage in 1926, Webb and his wife Mary moved to St Albans where he continued to live and work for the rest of his life, as Jane Ridge states (SAHAAS *Newsletter* 224, pp.26-27). Webb worked from a former stable, once part of Orchard House, on a private road off Holywell Hill now known as Orchard House Lane. The very fine Georgian house at the head of the lane was the home of his sister Marjorie and her husband Humphrey H. King.

His move to St Albans was significant as it brought him into closer association with St Albans Cathedral. In 1933 Webb assisted Blacking in his scheme for the marble font towards the west of the north nave aisle. Webb designed for the wood-carver the four standing figures of the Evangelists which adorn the elab-

orate baroque style font cover which he then painted and gilded, identifying the figures with Roman lettering beneath.

In November 1936, the Dean and Chapter appointed Webb adviser on artistic features in the Cathedral. He went on to design the Baptistry windows in 1939. The late Eileen Roberts, whose original manuscript on Christopher Webb is lodged with St Albans Cathedral, stated: "These memorial windows with scenes from the lives of the Virgin and of Christ are amongst Webb's finest, their medallion motifs harmonising with the Early English style of the nave arcade."

Another notable window is that of St Alban. Webb always produced watercolour sketches of proposed window designs and two of these beautiful drawings are held in the cathedral archives.

In the early 1930s, Webb commissioned local architect Percival Blow to design an additional work space, the Brick Studio. This building was flat-roofed and projected beyond the stable block somewhat to the west to allow for a large, north-facing window. It was here that Frank Pinnock, who joined Webb as an apprentice aged 15 in 1930, worked at his easel, painting the glass as the light shone through it. There is a

portrait of Pinnock seated at his easel in the lower part of the Christopher Wren window in the vestibule of St Lawrence Jewry-next-Guildhall. That church was one of many damaged by bombing during the Second World War, leading to Webb's greatest creative period in a career stretching over 40 years. For example, In 1952, when the *Herts Advertiser* published an article about Webb (12 September 1952, p.1), he was working on five war memorial windows for the Port of London Authority headquarters building near the Tower of London. The article further reported that Webb was designing a stained glass window in the chapel on the St Albans Hospital site.

More recently it has emerged that in 1924 he designed the stained glass East Window at St Luke's Church, Hatfield, as a memorial to those who rest in the adjoining churchyard. This, I believe, adds to the list of known Webb works.

Age eventually caught up with him and he wound up the business in 1964. He died just two years later on 15 September 1966 at the age of 80. His ashes were scattered outside the Baptistry windows at St Albans Cathedral, a fitting memorial to his artistry.

**Sue Mann**

## PUBS EVERYWHERE

There were just six pubs in the parish of Wheathampstead in 1830. Thirty years later there were some 27. [Note 1] The number in the borough of St Albans more than doubled in the same period, following the trend in England that more than kept pace with the increase in population. What was the cause of this growth? The answer lies in a remarkable piece of legislation enacted in 1830; remarkable because it actively encouraged people to drink beer. This was the Beer Act.

To make sense of how the Act markedly changed the number of pubs in our area, we must get to grips with the difference between the existing alehouse licence and a new type of licence established by the Act. This was the beerhouse licence. There were several key distinctions between the two: for

example, beerhouses were restricted in what they could sell to beer and cider, and their opening hours were limited. But, and here's the key difference, anyone could take out a beerhouse licence simply by paying 2 guineas across the counter at the local Excise office. Contrast this simplicity with the complex process needed to obtain a new alehouse licence where prospective publicans had to throw themselves on the mercy of local, often partial, magistrates. Moreover, with the number of alehouses in decline across the country before 1830, the likelihood of being granted the necessary licence was low.

There was demand for more public houses though: when the Act came into effect in October 1830, the floodgates opened. Several of our remaining pubs first appeared in the records at this time. The Farmer's Boy on busy London

Road was trading just 12 months later. In the rural hinterland, new beerhouses followed, for which, in modern terms, there is no obvious business case. Off the beaten track, was there really enough trade to support the Elephant and Castle at Amwell to the south-west of Wheathampstead? Likewise, the John Bunyan (originally the Prince



The Elephant and Castle, Amwell, c.1929, with the South Herts Beagles (Courtesy *Herts Advertiser* / Mike Neighbour; copy from SAHAAS Library)



of Wales, established c.1860) at Coleman Green?

The beerhouse that most defies imagination is the Fox in Ragged Hall Lane. It just so happens that members of this Society, Patricia and Malcolm Two, live in what was the Fox. They had previously been told that their house had been a pub, an example of oral tradition holding true over 170 years. Written confirmation comes from the 1838 tithe award which records Kings Langley brewer John Andrew Groome as the owner and James Mileman the occupier. [2] This 1830s house has been modernized in the last 50 years or so but you get a flavour of the original design from the room to the left of the front door. It is largely untouched albeit perhaps divided in two at some point.

For anyone unfamiliar with the area, Ragged Hall Lane leads to the west off the road from St Albans to Chiswell Green. Only by travelling beyond the twentieth century housing developments on the way to Potters Crouch can you still get a sense of just how unpopulated the area was.

Why open a pub where local custom and passing trade must have been in short supply? The answer, for Groome anyway, is because he could. For Mileman it was the chance to earn

additional income. Unfortunately, the 1841 census omits a crucial detail about him. While the occupations of several of his six children are listed – a mixture of agricultural labourers and straw plaiters – his is not. Anyway, beerhouse keepers are rarely recorded as such in early census returns. For example, the probable first publican at the Elephant and Castle is listed only as a carpenter. And it is multiple occupations that provide the clue as to why so many people chose to open beerhouses on main roads or by-ways. It was just another source of income for the family when parents and children all had to contribute. This must have been the case with the Fox although, even then, the pub was trading for just a few years at best. In contrast the household economy of the Elephant and Castle and the John Bunyan proved more sustainable and that is a key reason why these pubs are still with us today, over 160 years later.

**Jon Mein**

#### **Notes:**

[1] P. McNeill et al, *The Pubs of Wheathampstead 1830 to 1914* (Wheathampstead, 2019).

[2] HALS, DSA4/89/1 + 2, St Stephen's parish tithe map and award, 1838.

Copies of these sources are available in the Society's Library.

## **“WELCOME STRANGERS”: HOW TWO MID-VICTORIAN ST ALBANS HOTELS ATTRACTED NEW TRADE**

The banner “Welcome Strangers” was meant to greet visitors to the Grand Gala and Fire Brigade Fete in St Albans in July 1860. “It cannot rain continually” the local press reported, but that day it did, and the evergreen festooned arch erected by the Peahen at the top of Holywell Hill got so waterlogged it was “lowered to the mother earth”, by a single gust of wind. (See drawing below.) Towards the Abbey Church, the George Inn (26 George Street) was preparing for the crowds expected on the excursion train from London. The number of people arriving from outside

of the town disappointed the organisers. When, in the evening, the band entertained those still gathered at the George, even the “usual spirit of liberality” of its licensed victualler Henry Barrance, couldn’t compensate for the washed-out occasion.

I have been researching Henry, my 2x great-grandfather as part of a book I’m writing about Charles, one of Henry (1815-1867) and Emma Deayton’s (1827-1870) sons. During this research, Henry and the landlady at the Peahen, Mary Marks (1795-1869), appeared regularly together in the news. Were they teaming up to attract new trade?

The “Welcome Strangers” message at the fete seems motivated as much by need as conviviality. St Albans lost a lot of through-traffic when the London to Birmingham railway bypassed the town in the 1830s. The coming of the Abbey branch line in 1858 was seen as a source of new custom and both hoteliers appear keen to foster that commerce. For example, both Mary and Henry had each owned one of the three



‘Fall of the Triumphal Arch’ by J.H. Buckingham, 1860.

Cropped. (Reproduced courtesy of St Albans Museums)

exclusive licenses for wine sales within the Borough and they are mentioned in court proceedings policing this arrangement in 1861. It's possible they teamed up to protect common interests.

However, my recent research into both the George and the Peahen suggests that the collaboration may have gone even further. Whilst searching for references to the family name, I stumbled upon a mention in the first issue of *The Draper and Clothier* from 1860. This was aimed towards giving the 500,000+ people employed in the textile industry a voice. Included as a supplement was *The Travellers' Handbook, a Guide to the Principal Hotels and Commercial Inns in England and Wales*\*. The only entries for St Albans were for the George and the Peahen. Coincidence?

Commercial travellers were sent out by merchants and manufacturers to visit prospects on a pony and trap, often for weeks at a time. The men took samples of goods to the stores, obtained orders, and then sent these back to the office to be dispatched. Accommodation had

to be found in different places and the *Handbook* was a forerunner of today's hotel recommendation sites. It listed inns that would supply the traveller with good food, a table to complete his paperwork on and contact with colleagues in a commercial room separate from the rest of the customers. As fashion began to change more rapidly, sales visits became more frequent, and travellers brought regular custom. No detailed records exist but on the night of Sunday 7 April 1861, when the census was taken, one visitor was at the George. The Peahen had more luck with three boarders and six guests, of which one was a commercial traveller. Since Henry left a considerable estate in 1867, we can only surmise that he was also successful at the George, and that both places welcomed many a stranger.

**Tim Barrance**

**Note:**

\* Houlston & Wright (pubs), *The Travellers' Handbook, a Guide to the Principal Hotels and Commercial Inns in England and Wales* (1859), p.76.

## HAVE YOU HEARD A GOOD LECTURE RECENTLY?

For our lecture programme, I am always on the look-out for good speakers to give talks to the Society on history, archaeology, and architectural topics. If you can recommend someone, please do let me know by emailing: [lectures@stalbanshistory.org](mailto:lectures@stalbanshistory.org)

**Gill Girdziusz**

## HISTORY AND ALL THAT

Where did you discover history? Was it in CBBBC's 'Horrible Histories', or was it that delightful product of 1930s, *1066 and all That*? Did you have an inspiring history teacher who passed on their enthusiasm? As a member of the Arc & Arc, it is likely that you have a good interest in the way history is presented. I will now ask you a very serious question about not being serious. Are jokes and quips acceptable or even welcome if they excite a curiosity about the past? Is there a line between a light touch and going for laughs? Should we allow the history book that makes us laugh to be playful with so-called 'facts'. After all, a passion for history feeds on accuracy, so can we ever play with the 'truth'? Truth is in itself arguable so does it matter if an entertaining piece is a little short on accuracy?

We need comparisons, and I have arbitrarily chosen two books which claim to make history entertaining, but which deliberately offer differing levels of authority. The slim volume which delighted an early twentieth century readership is *1066 and all that*. It was originally published in *Punch* and those of you who have not read it might enjoy its infectious silliness. [Note 1] For my part the joy of it is that it has no shame. Who can forget Williamanmary, known as the Orange, who were initially popular



because the people believed 'it' was descended from Nell Gwyn?

*1000 years of annoying the French* is the other book I have chosen. [2] It is less of a parody and contains more facts. Compare the treatment of Agincourt and the differences are obvious. In *1066 and all that*, scholarship is replaced by Shakespeare:

"On the death of Henry IV Part II his son, Prince Hal, who had won all English hearts by his youthful pranks [...] determined to justify public expectations by becoming the ideal English king. He

therefore decided on an immediate appearance in the Hundred Years' War, making a declaration that all the treaties with France were to be regarded as dull and void." (Ch. 27)

*1000 ways* is more circumspect, but it does venture a small quip at the end of this paragraph (and uses the safety of a footnote to discuss whether the French ate frogs). Henry's troops rested the night at Maisoncelle and then went out to the battlefield next morning to 'clear up'. As usual, the dead were stripped of their valuable weapons and jewellery and the wounded were asked whether they were in *Who's Who*, and, if not, sent to join the list of the dead.

*1066 and all that* deliberately misinterprets history and it makes most people laugh. But the question is how far can we go with the amusements? Does its jokiness make serious historical writing

seem too dull and difficult for the general reader? Or does it hook them in and tempt them to look at the past in more detail? Popular historians (Lucy Worsley, Kate Williams, even David Starkey) bring serious topics to the small screen. But while David Attenborough's wildlife programmes might inspire someone to adopt a tiger, has the Rat from *Horrible Histories* ever persuaded anyone to adopt a rare book from the British Library?

We are left with the question: can humour spark a passion for history or does it merely rouse a passing interest. What do you think?

**Dr Ruth Herman**

#### **Notes:**

[1] W. Sellars & R. Yeatman, *1066 And All That* (London, 1930), p. 56.

[2] S. Clarke, *1000 Years of Annoying the French* (Kindle Edition), p.87.

### **TO THE OTHER END OF AKEMAN STREET!**

Today we think of Cirencester as an attractive and busy market town, the Capital of the Cotswolds. But in Roman times it was far more than that: second only in size to Londinium, Corinium Dobunorum became the capital of Britannia Prima, which encompassed the whole of south-western Britain. It stood at the junction of three Roman roads, one of which – Akeman Street – led to Verulamium. This September we are planning a Society visit to Cirencester, its excellent museum, packed with archaeological finds, and also a guided walk around the older part of the town, which later became a wealthy centre for the medieval wool trade.

Save the date: Wednesday, 20 September. More details to follow via enews.

## UPDATING THE HISTORY OF THE PEMBERTON ALMSHOUSES

In Roger Pemberton's will of November 1624 he gave detailed instructions to his sons for almshouses for six poor widows to be built in Bowgate opposite St Peter's church. They were to be 'six sufficient rooms, bricks or stones, six convenient garden plottes, within a wall of brick and stone'.



The Pemberton Almshouses, 2022  
(Photo taken by Stuart Macer; © SAHAAS)

A codicil to his will added in November 1627 bequeathed the widows £5 a year for ever, to be paid out of income from land to be bought by his sons. Two widows were to be chosen from the parishes of St Peter's and St Stephen's and one each from St Michael's and Shenley. The widows had to attend services at St Peter's church weekly and to 'live peaceably and quietly together'.

This building has always interested me. Wanting to know more I set myself the task of examining the history of the building and its residents from 1629 when the almshouses first opened their doors. Here in brief are some of my findings. The very survival of the building came under scrutiny in the late nineteenth century. The *Herts Advertiser* for 3 July 1887 has this: "There are six rooms, each woman having one room about 18ft by 14ft and 8ft high.

The rooms are pleasantly lighted on the east and west sides. In situation, surroundings, and size of rooms the Almshouses are all that can be desired. They are however, much out of repair".

Parishes were making repairs to the almshouses by then. In 1888 it was suggested that they should be shut down. However, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee spawned many activities and the almshouses were to be repaired.

In 1905 Willoughby Pemberton, a descendant, repaired and enlarged the building. It avoided the threat of redevelopment in 1929. By 1942 they were again in a poor state and St Albans City Council became owners in 1944. The almshouses were listed Grade II in 1950 because of their architectural and historical interest and in 1960 important



extensions at the rear gave each resident a kitchen and bathroom.

Unfortunately, little is known of the residents until the Victorian period when census details reveal much about the occupants. The original occupants were to be six poor widows of good character, not less than 60 years old, unable to provide for themselves through their own exertions, but had not received poor relief in the three preceding years. Those census details confirm that the inhabitants were much as Pemberton intended. Many were needlewomen and straw hat workers sharing their room with carers – daughters and grand-daughters in the main – several also in the straw trade. (Straw hat making was a key industry over this period in St Albans.) That income of £5 – from the manor of Shelton in Bedfordshire – continued to be paid well into the 1900s. Perhaps it still is.

The average age of the residents was in the mid-70s and they mostly only survived one census in their almshouse. However, Elizabeth Evans was 80 years old in 1871 and her profession was rather touchingly stated as "Takes in Mangling". By 1881, Elizabeth was 91 and her profession had been upgraded to "Formerly Laundress". Many proudly stressed that they were "Living on Own



Jo Cooper with her rear garden plot  
(Photo taken by Stuart Macer; © SAHAAS)

Means" and some stated that they were "Past work".

With the help of Councillor Jacqui Taylor, I was able to visit the almshouses in February 2023 to chat to current resident Jo Cooper. Jo has lived here for the last five years and kindly showed us the integration of the 1960s bathrooms and kitchens into the original building. At the rear each resident has a garden plot as instructed by Pemberton. Following our visit, Cllr Taylor organised a renovation programme of the plots.

Now with eligibility updated, the Pemberton Almshouses are a great example of the ability of St Albans to support its people and preserve its heritage. Long may this continue as we approach 2029 and celebrate 400 years of this magnificent building.

**Stuart Macer**

## GENTEEL ST ALBANS RESTORED PART II

An article in *Newsletter 227* (February 2023) described the eighteenth and early nineteenth century development of the area at the north end of St Peter's Street as an elegant residential quarter, and its partial return to residential by Foxley Group, who have refurbished nos 103 and 105 (Fig.1). The site at no. 103 has an interesting history as a gentlemanly residence, even prior to the construction of White House and all the way up to that building's conversion to commercial in the twentieth century. The site with an existing house was put up for sale in 1827 by Robert Campbell of Fakenham. Campbell's father was vicar of Weasen-

ham in Norfolk, and apparently owned the advowson there. His wealth may have come through his wife, who perhaps benefited from the Carter / Lascelles plantations in Barbados. Robert was heir to his father's Hertfordshire properties. The house in Bowgate was described as having three principal bedrooms with dressing rooms and three servants' apartments, a good kitchen and a well of fine water. It was 'situate in the most preferable part of St Peter's Street' and had neat pleasure grounds and kitchen garden, well stocked with choice fruit trees. A 400 ft gravel walk led to a summer house at the extremity of the grounds.

Campbell's tenants had included a Mrs Margaret Carr in 1804-6, a Mrs Woolfe from 1806-9 and, from 1809-1814, a Mrs Jackson, who was rated at £18 for the house. Wine merchant John Mather lived in the house from 1815-19, and it is perhaps following Mather's occupancy that the house became a school for ladies, run by the Misses Wells. This was perhaps in conjunction with the St Albans Academy (for boys) which was located in the house at present day nos 101 and 101A.



Fig.1: White House (no.103) and Bowgate House refurbished 2021 by Foxley Group (© Kate Morris)

The plot can be seen on the St Peter's parish map of 1826 (Fig.2)

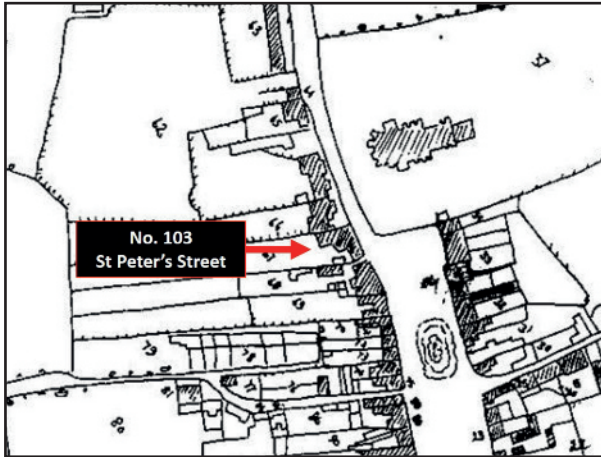


Fig.2: Extract from St Peter's parish map, 1826  
(Reproduced courtesy of HALS)

Jones bought both nos 103 and 101. No. 101 continued to be occupied as a school until the 1840s when Revd Andrew Donald gave it up and moved elsewhere. The schools had attracted pupils from London, and elsewhere, in response to advertisements which highlighted the town's accessibility (70 coaches a day then) and its salubrious air.

directly opposite the corner of the churchyard running back to what later became Church Street and the house at the time of its occupation as a school is illustrated by the image of the schoolroom which is now replaced by the St Peter's Mews development (Fig.3).

The house at no. 103 was rebuilt for Jones, probably in 1834, by the architect George Smith, who had recently completed the new Town Hall and Court Room. The house was named 'White House'. What happened next will have to wait for a future edition of the *Newsletter*.

**Kate Morris**

The purchaser of Campbell's house was Samuel Jones, a retired Holborn optician who had come to live at Daltons on Folly Lane in 1826. Immediately elected an Alderman of the Borough, he became Mayor in 1827 and shortly after would oversee the replacement of the old Town Hall and redevelopment of the Market Place.

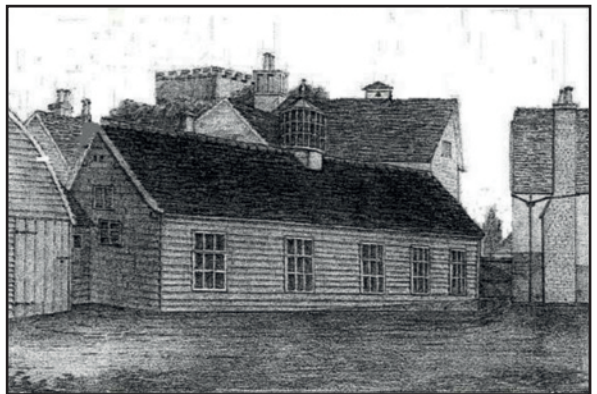


Fig.3: The St Albans Academy schoolroom c.1830, prior to the building of the White House (Courtesy of HALS)

## NEW PUBLICATION FROM THE HERTS RECORD SOCIETY

***Berkhamsted St Peter  
Churchwardens' Accounts c.1584-  
1660*, edited by Nick Brown, assisted  
by Christine Whittingham**

The churchwardens' accounts of Berkhamsted St Peter, surviving in an account book held in the British Library, cover the period 1584 to 1748, but, for reasons of space, this edited volume stops at 1660.

The early years are fragmentary, but from 1589 through to the 1630s there are detailed accounts for most years. They record income from parish properties and payments for burials, and expenditure on church administration including building works. Payments for work such as the improvement of the pulpit indicate the parish adapting to the changing requirements of worship after the Reformation. The accounts between 1632 and 1637 are missing. Those from 1638 onwards lack detail but do include lists of names of church ratepayers and names of those receiving benefits from charitable donations, as well as various items of parish business during the 1640s. From 1656 detailed accounts resume. Thus, unusually, these accounts cover the years of the Civil War and the Commonwealth.

As well as accounts, significant other material is recorded: for example, details of those who provided purveyance for the royal residence at Hatfield; inventories of church goods, including one from the late Commonwealth period; and lists of parish arms and armour, including one dated 1588 at the time of the Armada. The church was in great decay and money for extensive repairs was needed. Funds were raised through rates, so there are numerous rating lists and indications of disputes with parishioners over the amount of money claimed by the parish. Thus the text offers information which can be examined to throw a light on many aspects of parish life in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Details of how to purchase this volume will be found on the Herts Record Society's (HRS) website. Copies of all their publications are available in the SAHAAS Library.

Founded in 1985, the HRS's purpose is to publish texts relating to Hertfordshire that would not otherwise be easily accessible. Please consider joining the society to help further this important work.

**Dr Heather Falvey**  
**Secretary, HRS**  
**[www.hrsociety.org.uk](http://www.hrsociety.org.uk)**

## THE MEDIEVAL SUMMER AT ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL

The medieval Abbey was a centre of learning and scholarship and the monastery library contained over 600 books. Continuing in this tradition, this summer's programme is an opportunity to learn more about life in the Middle Ages. Whether you have a penchant for the history of architecture, are keen to brush up on your archival skills, or wish to immerse yourself in the art and astronomy of the period, there is a range of events for all to enjoy. For further details about these events – those marked \* are online as well as in person – please visit:

[www.stalbanscathedral.org/Pages/Events/Category/adult-learning](http://www.stalbanscathedral.org/Pages/Events/Category/adult-learning).

Wednesday 14 June, 7.30-9.00pm

### **Remembering 1323: Rebuilding St Albans' Nave**

Tickets £10 (students £6)

John McNeill considers why the Abbey was left with one of the most varied naves in European medieval architecture and the story of rebuilding and renewal.

Saturday 17 June, 10.30am-3:30pm

### **St Albans Abbey Medieval Archive: What Might Have Been**

Tickets £25

Dr Michael Stansfield, Archivist and Records Manager of New College Oxford,

explores the hidden contents of medieval archives. This workshop aims to investigate the types of documents that might have been in the Abbey's archive.

Thursday 6 July, 7:30-9.00pm

### **Going to Church in Medieval England\***

Tickets £10 (students £6)

England is full of medieval churches and their architecture is much studied. But what went on inside them? Join Prof. Nicholas Orme to find out more, as he delves into his recent and widely-praised book, *Going to Church in Medieval England*.

Wednesday 19 July, 7:30-9.00pm

### **The Influence of Astronomy and Cosmology on Medieval Art\***

Tickets £10 (students £6)

Art historian Dr Valerie Shrimplin considers examples of Judaeo-Christian art spanning AD 500-1500 and explores artworks from medieval manuscripts to Renaissance images of the cosmos, sun, moon, comets and Milky Way.

Thursday 27 July, 7:30-9.00pm

### **Born Sinful? A Dramatised Debate**

Tickets £10 (students £6)

Join Prof. Tim Boatswain and Stephen de Silva for a theatrical and imaginary debate on Original Sin between British theologian Pelagius and St Augustine of Hippo.



## THE EARLY DAYS OF VERULAM HILLS FARM

For milking. That's where the cows are heading in that bucolic scene on the front cover – at least in my imagination. Verulam Hills Farm in what is now Verulamium Park is their destination. Despite a good search of the usual sources, the farm's history remains hazy. Perhaps the following few notes will start the ball rolling.



Verulam Hills Farm from the east, c.1932  
(Jon Mein's collection)

Comparing the 1799 St Michael's parish map with the 1843 tithe map and their respective reference books shows that entirely new farm buildings had been erected at some point in between. [Note 1] An 1829 sales advert helps us be more precise. It states that the property comprised 'a newly erected residence, good homestead and cottage' together with 46 acres of land. This suggests that these new buildings date to the 1820s. [2]

It is somewhat surprising to find a new farm established in the district at this time when the movement, nationally at least, was more towards consolidation. The answer to this conundrum lies in those 46 acres of farmland. The reference book for the 1799 map lists the owner of the same 46 acres as Mr Watts, proprietor of the nearby Abbey Mill. Presumably the necessary barns were in the environs of the mill itself. When

Watts sold up in 1802, 60 acres of land were on offer as well but there is no mention of Verulam Hills Farm. [3] Jump forward to the 1843 tithe map and those 46 acres now enclosed the farmhouse and buildings. So, not a new farm, but necessary new farm buildings instead.

Production at the farm (see photo above) continued well into the 1900s but the buildings have long been demolished.

**Jon Mein**

### Notes:

[1] Verulamium Museum, St Michael's parish map and reference book, 1799; HALS, DSA/4/87 St Michael's tithe map and award, 1843. Copies of both are in the Society's Library.

[2] *Morning Herald*, 'Freehold Farm', 11 July 1829, p.1.

[3] *Morning Chronicle*, 'Oil Mill near St Albans', 23 August 1802, p.1.



**LECTURE PROGRAMME**

9 May – 23 May 2023

All lectures commence at 7.45pm unless otherwise stated.

Please note the delivery of lectures varies between Church only, Church plus live-streaming via Zoom, and Zoom only. Our 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 this pattern but there are many variables that can affect the order of lecture provision.

We will continue to offer occasional lectures that non-members can attend without charge.

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 9 May

**The Second Battle of St Albans**

Dr Peter Burley

**Zoom only**

This lecture complements the current SAHAAS exhibition at St Albans Museum + Gallery. A larger programme of events is associated with the exhibition, being run by Barnet Museum and Medieval Festival, The Battlefields Trust, St Albans Cathedral and the Museum + Gallery. Learn about the first use of handguns in Britain, why Warwick the Kingmaker failed so badly and meet one of England's first – and least likely – war correspondents. Hear about new infor-

mation and perspectives on the battle that are still emerging.

*Our Vice-President, Dr Peter Burley, lives on the battlefield of the Second Battle of St Albans (1461, Wars of the Roses). He has researched the battle extensively working with colleagues in the Battlefields Trust. His lecture supports the exhibition on the battle being held in St Albans Museum ending on 28 June 2023. This will be more of a narrative account of the battle, but members are urged to visit the exhibition in advance of the lecture.*

Tuesday 16 May

### **Jim Callaghan: A Reputation Revised**

Dr Martin Holmes

#### **Church only**

Jim Callaghan is widely regarded as a thoroughly decent man but a less than successful prime minister, 1976-79. In mitigation he did inherit high inflation, a falling pound and a weak economy from his predecessors Ted Heath and Harold Wilson which meant that an application to the International Monetary Fund [IMF] for a bailout happened on Callaghan's watch. Tough though the IMF terms were, Callaghan successfully shielded the NHS and Welfare State from the budgetary discipline that was imposed. More successful was his handling of EEC issues especially his decision to keep the pound out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism in 1978 to prevent any possible rise in unemployment. But his handling of the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979 is more difficult to excuse. Despite his extensive background as a trade unionist, his government blundered by imposing a 5 per cent pay restraint policy at exactly the wrong time as a general election loomed with the prospect of a Thatcher victory.

*Dr Martin Holmes is a Senior Common Room member at St Hugh's College, Oxford University, where he was previously Lecturer in Politics for over 20 years. He is the author of seven books*

*including the Labour Government, 1974-79 which covers the period of the Callaghan government. His latest book From the Treaty of Versailles to the Treaty of Maastricht was published last year.*

Tuesday 23 May

### **Hidden Hands: the Secret Lives of Manuscript Makers and Owners**

Dr Mary Wellesley

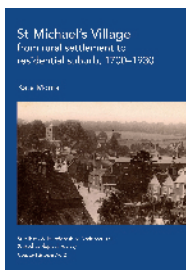
#### **Church and Zoom**

Disgruntled scribes, protective owners, artists interrupted – Mary Wellesley will trace the stories of people who made, loved and sometimes destroyed medieval manuscripts, some of the most engaging artefacts ever made by human hands.

*Dr Wellesley is a writer and historian who teaches courses on medieval language and literature as part of the British Library's adult learning programme. She completed her PhD at University College London while working in the Department of Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Manuscripts at the British Library. Her book Hidden Hands: the lives of Manuscripts and their Makers, published in 2021, was chosen as one of the history books of the year by The Times and BBC History Magazine.*

**Details of our autumn 2023 programme will be published this August in the Newsletter and on the website.**

# RECENT SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS



## **St Michael's village, from rural settlement to residential suburb, 1700-1930**

Kate Morris

The story of how St Michael's village was transformed from a thriving artisan community to an attractive residential suburb of St Albans.

**£7 + £1.80 p&p**

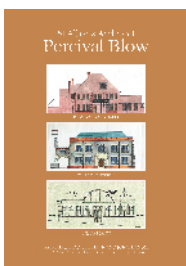


## **Mistress of Gorhambury, Lady Anne Bacon, Tudor courtier and scholar**

Deborah Spring

The life of a remarkable woman who had a considerable impact on the Tudor era.

**£6.50 + £1.80 p&p**

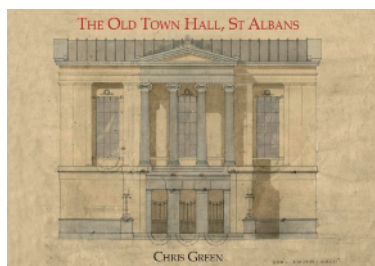


## **St Albans Architect Percival Blow: From Arts and Crafts to Gothic Revival and Art Deco**

Patricia Broad, Sue Mann & Jonathan Mein

The story of a very gifted man with a passion for good design, whose work has left a lasting legacy in St Albans.

**£6.99\*/£8.99 + £2.00 p&p**



## **The Old Town Hall, St Albans**

Chris Green

This book charts the history of the city's iconic old town hall over almost 200 years.

**£6\*/£6.99 + £2.00 p&p**

\* Members price. Note that it is not available in the online shop.

Available from our online bookshop, by email: [publications@stalbanshistory.org](mailto:publications@stalbanshistory.org), by phone: 01727 863340, and at most in-person lectures on Tuesday nights. Some books are also available in local bookshops

# PHOTO QUIZ

These three photos formed part of Andy Lawrence's quiz at the New Year Party in January. Where are the buildings? The answers are at the bottom of the page.

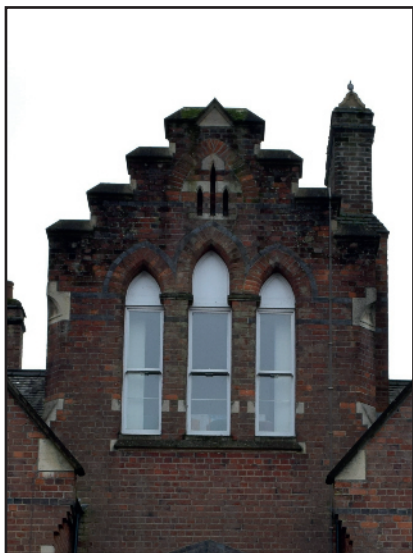


Photo 1



Photo 3



Photo 2

**THE ANSWERS**  
Photo 1: part of the St Albans prison buildings, now the Register Office.  
Photo 2: the old hospital chapel off Normandy Road.  
Photo 3: the former museum building in Hatfield Road.