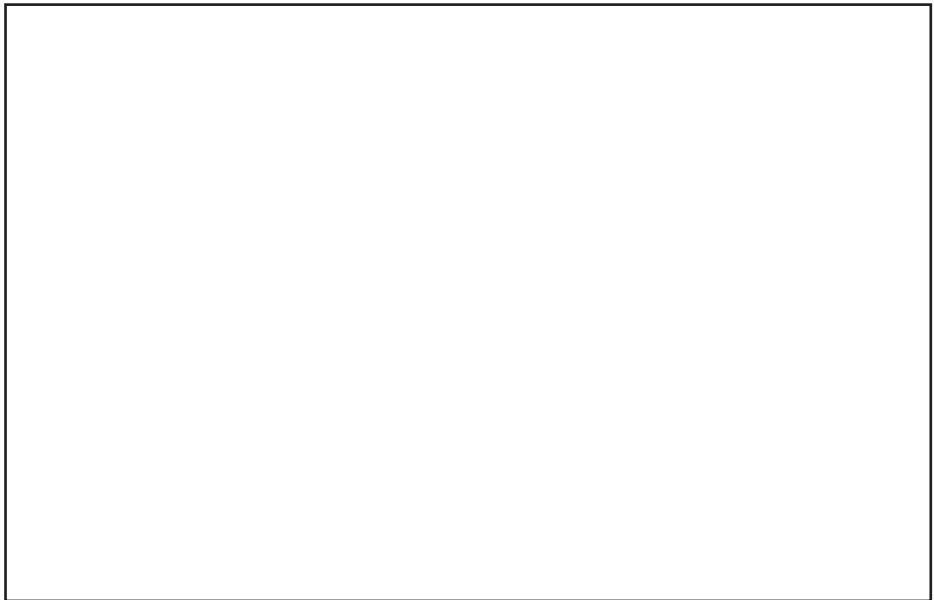




ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER 230

November 2023



Fishpool Street looking east, c.1905. Two dilapidated houses, nos. 176 and 178, to the centre left, condemned as unfit for human habitation in 1926. (Reproduced courtesy of HALS, ref. DZ/27/Z28). See pp. 28-29 for more about the two houses.

Included in this issue:

Author Solomon Shaw?
New issue of *Herts Archaeology*
Mural in the Market Place
The outing to Cirencester

War with Spain
Christopher Webb again
The Abbot and the 2nd Battle
Links to Rhode Island

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THE BUILDING OF SPENCER STREET

'A new street is in progress of building at St Alban's, to form a nearer road to the New Court House and central part of the town, from the new line of road by the Verulam Arms Hotel, to be called Spencer Street ... It has been projected by Richard Kentish, Esq., through whose property it passes.' (Source: *County Press*, 24 August 1833, p.3)

OPPORTUNITY...

The Bedfordshire Historical Record Society is seeking someone to fill the vital role of General Editor. In simple terms the editor works with authors to craft future volumes and liaises closely with the publishers. For a full description of the role and for contact details visit:

www.bedfordshirehrs.org.uk.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

When you read this, it will be November and, with the darker evenings, thoughts will be turning to Christmas and the New Year. But as per last year much has been done, and much remains to be done, in this 'autumn term'.

Our lecture series has begun again. We have already had lectures on such diverse subjects as the Devil's Dyke at Wheathampstead, the Salonika campaign in the First World War and, in the Second, Polish intelligence operatives at the Langleys and Hemel Hempstead, the stained glass of Christopher Webb whose studio was in St Albans, the forgotten St Albans painter Holmes Winter, and stadia at Wembley Park. An equally diverse range of fascinating subjects will take us through the winter (see pp. 35-38)

What has been very pleasing is that, over the summer, progress has been made by volunteer groups in reclaiming St Albans heritage. Thanks to St Albans City Guides, the Clock Tower now has interpretative panels on its viewing platform so visitors can better understand the view. Blue Plaques St Albans, which this society supports, has installed more



plaques during the summer and continues its work (p. 34). Thanks to Tim Boatswain, our Publicity Officer, the succubus in the passageway leading to Christopher Place has been restored after years of neglect. Our Society as a body and some individual members helped contribute to its restoration. I hope you have all seen the wonderful wall painting in Sovereign Way on the mid-nineteenth century election bribery scandal. (pp. 16-17) This was again driven by Tim and will shortly be joined by my information panel

which will briefly describe the mural and give visitors the opportunity to read more by accessing our website via a QR code. We are now planning future murals on the War of the Roses Battles and the seventeenth century civil wars. Our focus on Lee's House at Sopwell, the Roman ruins, and other parts of our heritage which are at risk will also continue over the winter months.

As always 'so much to do, so little time in which to do it'. But it is not 'all work and no play'. Do come to our New Year Social on 12 January (see the back cover). This will again be held at St Stephen's church hall and will be a

wonderful opportunity to mix socially with friends and also find out more about what this Society is doing. Further details are enclosed in this *Newsletter*.

term as President at the AGM and on behalf of all your Council wish you a good Christmas and a healthy and peaceful New Year.

May I thank you for your confidence in voting for me to undertake a second

Dr John Morewood
chair@stalbanhistory.org

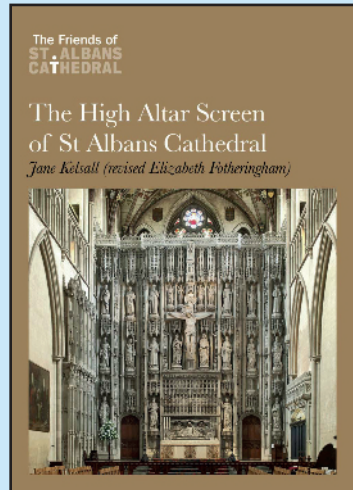
HOT OFF THE PRESS: *THE HIGH ALTAR SCREEN OF ST ALBANS CATHEDRAL*

By Jane Kelsall, revised by Elizabeth Fotheringham
28 pp, illustrated, full colour
ISBN 978 095 025 1417

This booklet presents a short history of the 'most sumptuous' High Altar Screen erected by Abbot William of Wallingford in 1484. The original statues were destroyed sometime after the Abbey was dissolved in 1539. The screen was restored in the late 1800s by Lord Aldenham who came into conflict with Lord Grimthorpe in the process.

Elizabeth Fotheringham has abridged and revised Jane Kelsall's comprehensive text from the 1999 publication to include some additional detail on the screen itself and the saints represented on it. It also describes the recent 'Saints in Colour' installation.

The booklet is published by the Friends of St Albans Cathedral. It is available from the Cathedral Shop or by post from the Friends of St Albans Cathedral, St Albans Cathedral, Sumpter Yard, St Albans, AL1 1BY. Price: £5.95. Please add £1.75 for orders by post. Cheques should be made out to the Friends of St Albans Abbey.

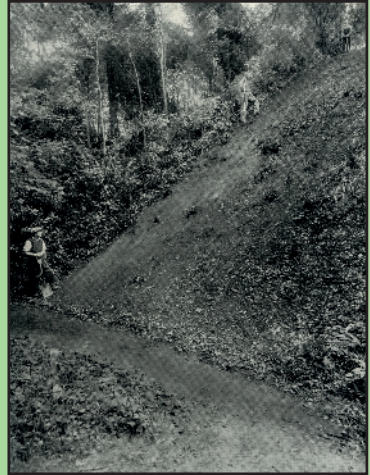


THAT WHEATHAMPSTEAD ALBATROSS

At his talk to the members in September, Mike Smith set several hares running when he discussed the popular idea that there was once an Iron-Age oppidum in Wheathampstead that was both the early capital of the Catuvellauni and the site of the epic battle between the Romans and the Ancient Britons. A view that has been around since the 1930s, Mike questioned it robustly, suggesting there could be other explanations for what was happening in the Iron Age.

With several members keen to discuss his excellent talk in more depth, Mike has offered to lead a seminar for those of us with an interest in Iron Age history and the origins and purpose of Devil's Dyke and Beech Bottom Dyke in particular. This will be at 2.30pm on Thursday 7 December, the venue being the Society's Library at Sandridge Gate (AL4 9XR). There will be no charge for members and this is in person only.

As registration will be via Eventbrite, expect to receive the link to the relevant webpage in the third week of November. If you have any questions, please email events@stalbanshistory.org.



Devil's Dyke during Wheeler's excavations, 1932
(SAHAAS *Transactions*, 1937, p. 95)

HOT OFF THE PRESS: *WILLIAM WILSHERE'S HITCHIN FARM AND GARDEN, 1809-1824*

William Wilshere of Hitchin kept several books of 'Farm and Gardening Memoranda'. The two covering the years 1809 to 1824 published here are unusual and important sources for students of both agricultural and garden history. Unlike most surviving journals or notebooks from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they include accounts of both the farming and horticultural activities of a particular individual. Published by the Hertfordshire Record Society, you can find more information here: www.hrsociety.org.uk/volume_39.html

ST ALBANS & HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHITECTURAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022/23

The Annual General Meeting was held on Tuesday 26 September 2023 at Marlborough Road Methodist Church. 86 members attended in person, with 71 members joining online via Zoom.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Ian and Heather Jardine, Valerie Shrimplin, Geoffrey Rice, Mark Freeman, Dee Drinkwater, Tim Boatswain, Francesca Weal, Jenny Burley, Joyce Lusby, Beryl Munro.
2. **President's comments.** The President reviewed the current health of the Society against the four criteria he had used at the 2021/22 AGM:
 - a) Number of members – now stands at 713, an increase of 8.5% on the previous year. This may be the largest number in the Society's history.
 - b) Financial health – good, see later comments from the Society Treasurer.
 - c) Positive feedback from members – thank you to everyone involved in providing the wide range of activities enjoyed by members. Standout events this year, in addition to all the other activity, had been the Archaeology conference, an exhibition on the second Wars of the Roses Battle in St Albans, and the Michael Wood lecture on the Anglo-Saxons.
 - d) How we are viewed externally – the Society is used as a source of information by outside agencies and individuals, as well as working in partnership with other local organisations such as the city and cathedral guides, the Civic Society and St Albans Museum + Gallery.

He concluded that the Society is currently in a good place, but that the district heritage of St Albans is at risk, due partly to apathy but also to the Council's financial crisis. St Albans is having to rely on the work and generosity of individuals and voluntary groups including ourselves. We have also highlighted a range of local historic features at risk of deterioration. Like our predecessors in the Society, we need to act as custodians for future generations.

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2022.** These had been circulated with the November 2022 newsletter. Their adoption was proposed by Christine McDermott and seconded by Peter Burley, then agreed by all present in person and online.
4. **Accounts for the year ended 31 May 2023.** These had been circulated with the August 2023 newsletter. The Treasurer confirmed that the Society was in a healthy

state financially. Income was keeping pace with expenditure, and there were ample reserve funds to finance future projects. He concluded that there was no necessity to increase the annual subscription. The accounts had been approved by the external examiner. Their acceptance was proposed by Helen Bishop, seconded by Pat Howe, and agreed by all present in person and online.

5. **Reports from Groups.** These had been circulated with the August 2023 newsletter. Their acceptance was proposed by Donald Munro, seconded by Robert Pankhurst, and agreed by all present in person and online.
6. **Election of President.** Council had unanimously recommended the re-election of John Morewood as President for a further, and final, term of three years. This was proposed by Tony Berk, seconded by Ann Dean, and agreed by all present in person and online.
7. **Election of members of Council.** The following members were elected *en bloc*, to serve until the next AGM, having been proposed by Julia Merrick, seconded by Kate Morris, and agreed by all present in person and online.

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

8. **Appointment of Honorary Member.** Pat Howe was nominated to become an Honorary Member of the Society, in recognition of all she had contributed to its work over the past decades. This appointment was proposed by Kate Bretherton, seconded by Christine McDermott, and agreed by all present in person and online.

LIBRARY REPORT

We always like it when people enjoy their visit to the Library and find what they are looking for, but I was especially pleased when a recent visitor commented that “The camaraderie between all of the volunteers was a delight to see”.

Libraries can be daunting places to go into and even I, who have worked in them just about all my adult life, sometimes find myself nervous and ill-at-ease in an unfamiliar reading room. May I reassure you all that SAHAAS Library is not at all stuffy or scary and that, although we take your enquiries seriously, and will do our very best to find what you are looking for, it won't necessarily be in silence and there won't be any “shushing”.

One of the best things about the Library is that, whatever your enquiry or area of interest, you are likely to find someone else around the table, whether on the Library team or a visitor, who has some knowledge or experience to share.

The Library is here for all of you, so do come in and make the most of it. We will be very pleased to see you.

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

Abbots Langley Local History Society Journal, no. 58, Spring/Summer 2023.
pp. 10-11 “Christina of Markyate”, by Prue King. Christina was born about 1108 in Huntingdon. She joined a hermit's cell near Markyate partially to escape an arranged marriage. Her reputation for holiness led to her becoming the first prioress of the priory of Markyate.

Harpenden & District Local History Society Newsletter, no. 150, August 2023
pp.19-26. “A history of Avenue St. Nicholas, Harpenden: part 2”, by Derek French. The conclusion of a study of the development of the road with notes on individual houses on the east side and their occupants.

Herts Past and Present, no. 42, Autumn 2023.

pp.2-9 “Frederic George Kitton: the life and work of a Hertfordshire Artist”, by John G.E. Cox. Kitton was an artist and author who lived in St Albans in the 1890s and was a member of SAHAAS.

Much of his large body of work featured Hertfordshire and St Albans and several of his illustrations have been reproduced in the article.

pp.18-23 "The Hertfordshire guild that survived: 2. The Reformation and after", by David Perman. The Ware guild survived investigation by royal commissioners in the Tudor period. Since then, it has had many names and is currently called the Ware Charities. The charity still owns the White Hart inn which it first acquired in 1426.

The Local Historian, vol. 53 no. 2, April 2023.

pp.123-140 "Manor, Hall, Court, Place and Bury: the distribution of manor-house names in central and southern England" by Jane Croom. Using maps, the author explores regional differences in the terms used to name manorial complexes. The term Bury is concentrated in Hertfordshire and surrounding areas.

Lin Watson

TRANSITION PROJECT REPORT

As you may recall, the Transition Project Group is studying the move from monastic control of St Albans to corporate government in the years following the abbey's dissolution in December 1539. We are now in the

third and final phase of the project. The group is identifying those who prospered from land sales in the 1540s and beyond, as well as the effects of the dissolution on the town's economy. As teasers for now, here are two brief examples of what we are working on:

Firstly, (Sir) Richard Lee is a key focus. If he's unfamiliar to you, just think of the ruins at Sopwell. Colloquially called 'Sopwell Nunnery', those ruins are what's left of his second house on the site of the priory. Comparing what has been previously written about Lee with a 'deep dive' into the primary sources, the research team is starting to revise existing views.

Secondly, building on research published in 2000 by Prof. James Clark, we have identified a group of monks who continued to live in the town following the dissolution. One monk in particular intrigues us: Richard Stondon. His probate inventory, which shows expensive tastes, indicates he occupied a six-bedroom house. Another document indicates this was located on Romeland just outside the Abbey gateway.

More anon.

Jon Mein & Ailsa Herbert
transition@stalbanshistory.org

SOLOMON GEORGE SHAW: PRINTER, PUBLISHER – AND AUTHOR?

The Society's Library has recently acquired a copy of *History of Verulam and St Alban's ...* printed in 1815 in St Albans by Solomon George Shaw. It is an important source for anyone interested in the late Georgian history of the town. Shaw opened for business around 1809, a noteworthy event in the history of modern St Albans. While there were other printers and stationers already here, what sets him apart is his book publishing side-line. You can see a list of his publications on the facing page. But there's more to Mr Shaw's publishing. Three of the books provide observations and details about St Albans found in no other contemporary production. Was he also the author of these otherwise unattributed texts?

To answer this, let's look at the list of his publications on the facing page. At first glance, the mix of titles suggests he was little more than a jobbing printer. However, close reading of the three unattributed books provides plenty of material about St Albans. What links these texts is the running theme of the need for change in economic and political aspects of town life, particularly the role of the borough corporation – the forerunner of today's

district council. The earliest of these books, the 1663 charter and constitution, is the first publicly-available edition of the corporation's two most important documents. The unnamed editor hoped that their 'publication will increase our respectability as a corporate body'. The possessive plural confirms the editor's interest in the corporation. Criticisms of the corporation are set out in the second book, the *History of Verulam and St Alban's*.

Whoever wrote and edited these two books was clearly a member of the corporation. It is no surprise to find that Shaw had taken an interest in its work as soon as he arrived in town. For example, in 1810, he paid for his freedom to trade in the borough. This was an unnecessary step as such restraints of trade were then largely ignored. He was subsequently appointed an 'Assistant to the Mayor and Aldermen' of the corporation; the relationship between the three parties a source of criticism in the second book.

The last book is a lengthy business case for constructing the proposed horse-drawn rail link, the unnamed author concluding that the benefits to the town were 'self-evident'. The discussion considered several points raised in the 1815 book about the failure to build the St Albans canal in the 1790s.

As the printer of these books, with their shared themes and interest in the corporation, Shaw's was most probably the common hand as editor and author of all three.

Whatever influence he had was short-term as he left town after just eight years, his departure perhaps due to his bankruptcy in 1817.

Jon Mein

Publications attributed to S.G. Shaw as author, printer or publisher

The following list has been extracted from online bibliographical sources.

1810 – *An essay on the Revelations: particularly on the seven vials, supposed to be now pouring out, containing an answer to the question 'Watchman what of the night' by T. Blundell*

1812 – *Report of the Proceedings at the Institution of the St Albans Branch Bible Society, April 16th, 1812*

1813 – *Fulcher's hints to noblemen and gentlemen of landed property, how they may build farm houses, cottages, and offices ... without going to the timber merchant's yard for assistance*

1813 – *The charter and also the constitutions ... of St Albans**

1814 – *Rules and Orders of a Friendly Society, called the Union Society of Tradesmen and Artists, meeting ... in Dunstable, etc.*

1815 – *A Letter to Trinitarian Christians*, William Marshall, Unitarian minister, St Albans

1815 – *History of Verulam and St. Alban's: containing an historical account of the decline of Verulam and origin of St. Alban's, and of the present state of the town, the abbey, and other churches ... **

1817 – *An Enlarged Selection of Psalms and Hymns, for the use of the Parish Church of St. Peter, St. Alban's ...* Compiled by T. Fowler

1817 – *Clemens & Severus: or, Considerations on the policy and reasonableness of capital punishments. Occasioned by a recent execution. - Hitchin: printed by S. G. Shaw, printer and book-binder*

1817 – *Observations on the proposed rail-way from the Grand Junction Canal, at Bel-Swaine's, to the town of St. Alban's / by an inhabitant **

* Copies available in the Society's Library

CLOCK TOWER REPORT

Thanks to the funding provided by the St Albans City Guides, there are now four new information boards on the roof top. They were officially unveiled by the Mayor, Cllr Anthony Rowlands, and the City Guides on 18 August and will provide our visitors with details of some of the interesting buildings that can be seen from the rooftop.



The Mayor and party unveiling the new information panels (© Andy Lawrence)

668 visitors were welcomed to the Clock Tower for free over the Heritage Open Days weekend of 16/17 September. Our visitors enjoyed the display entitled 'Starring the Clock Tower in film and on TV' on the first floor. The Clock Tower has appeared in a variety of films including, a silent black and white 1920 American film 'If Winter Comes' and the charming British film 'Hand in Hand' which was mostly filmed in central St Albans over the summer of 1960. The Tower has also featured in TV series such as 'Grange Hill,' the 'Hairy Bikers' and last year, 'Antiques Road Trip'. During the weekend, the children also had the chance to win a bag of chocolate coins by playing "Hunt the Keys."

The Clock Tower closed its door for the winter on Sunday, 1 October, having had 9,155 paying visitors over the season, plus those 668 free visitors over Heritage Open Days. Although not quite back to pre-Covid times, the visitor numbers are certainly increasing towards the 2019 total of paying visitors, 10,036.

As always, I would like to thank all those Clockateers who have given their time this season to keep our Clock Tower open to the public and look forward to seeing many of them next year at the Clockateers Party.

Caroline Howkins
clocktower@stalbanhistory.org

SAHAAS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

As from the September 2023 meeting, minutes of the Society's Council meetings are now being published on our website: www.stalbanshistory.org.

SAD NEWS ... TONY ROOK

It is with much sadness that we record the death in September of Tony Rook, a leading light in the development of archaeology in Hertfordshire. He was particularly associated with the Welwyn area.

Tony was born in Kent, where he attended the Judd School in Tonbridge and developed an interest in archaeology, learning excavation skills under Frere in Canterbury. He met his wife Merle when he was studying maths, chemistry and physics at the University of Leicester. They married in 1959, and moved to Welwyn in 1960.



Tony Rook (1932-2023)
(© Jim West)

In Welwyn, Tony began searching for sites and gathered a group of fellow archaeological devotees, which eventually became the Welwyn Archaeological Society; Tony was Director until 2009. Led by Tony, the society excavated many sites in Welwyn and beyond, including the Roman villa at Dicket Mead, where his efforts led to the preservation of the bath house in a vault under the A1(M).

Tony's many publications include a number of books such as *A History of Hertfordshire* (1984/1997), *Roman Building Techniques* (2012) and *The River Mimram* (2014).

Dr Kris Lockyear

THE HISTORY OF FLAMSTEAD

Flamstead Heritage and the Flamstead Society are running a lecture series over the next few months putting the village's history in its wider context. For example, talks in December and February consider 'Ancient and Medieval Board Games' and 'Bells and the landscape of English memory'. For full details please visit www.flamsteadheritage.org.

NEW ISSUE OF *HERTFORDSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY*

Volume 19 of the journal we jointly publish with East Herts Archaeological Society is about to go to the printer. Here as a tease is what you will be seeing early in the Spring (see facing page). More information will follow then but if you have questions in the meantime, please email me. You will find copies of all previous volumes of *Herts Archaeology & History* in the Society's Library.

The journal's editor, Isobel Thompson, has kindly provided the following synopsis of vol. 19's contents.

Christine McDermott
hertsarch@stalbahshistory.org

The range is broad: from the Holocene to post-medieval, palaeoenvironmental to historic buildings, from Letchworth to Stanstead Abbots and Berkhamsted to Bishop's Stortford. Some of the highlights include re-examination of the Wheeler's late Iron Age Ditch at King Harry Lane, with cremation burials marking an entrance, and evidence of the Ditch's use through the Roman period (Hood); a well-preserved stretch of Roman Ermine Street on the high ground south of Ware at Chadwell Springs (Peachey et al.); and an interesting sequence from the third century BC to second century AD from one portion of extensive recent developments which are transforming our knowledge of Buntingford (Clarke).

A radiocarbon-dated Bronze Age site at Bengoe stimulates discussion on how solution hollows may work on archaeological material (Brown); and a simple vessel from Hitchin shows that pottery-making was not, as usually thought, entirely a lost skill in the fifth to sixth centuries AD (Fitzpatrick-Matthews & Morris).

David Perman's article on the relationship between Hertford and Ware neatly combines historical and archaeological data to set out his argument that Ware may have been 'the original Hertford'; and Michael Shapland's article on a building in Ware High Street traces the surviving elements of its conversion from late medieval coaching inn to eighteenth century gentry house, and incorporation within a nineteenth century department store – a model of what can result from historic building recording.

Dr Isobel Thompson

CONTENTS OF 'HERTS ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORY', VOL. 19

A palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological investigation of Holocene deposits from north Hertford (*Rob Scaife et al.*)

Archaeological investigations at Stag Lane, Berkhamsted (*Peter Boyer*)

The post-depositional action of solution hollows upon archaeological remains at Sacombe Road, Bengoe (*Jim Brown*)

On the periphery: over four millennia of human activity at Chadwell Springs, Ware (*Andrew Peachey et al.*)

Archaeological investigations at Cade Close, Letchworth Garden City (*Helen Ashworth*)

A middle Iron Age to early Roman farmstead north of Hare Street Road, Buntingford (*Graeme Clarke*)

Archaeological investigations at King's Park, King Harry Lane, St Albans (*Andrew Hood*)

Archaeological investigation at the Six Bells, St Michael's Street, St Albans (*Anna Doherty*)

Late Roman occupation at Wickham Hall, Hadham Road, Bishop's Stortford: evaluation and excavation 2018-2019 (*Howard Brooks et al.*)

An 'Anglo-Saxon' cup from Gaping Lane, Hitchin (*Keith Fitzpatrick-Matthews & Isobel Morris*)

Excavation at Hartham Lane, Hertford: possible evidence for Hertford's late Anglo-Saxon northern *burh* (*Andrew Newton & Kate Higgs*)

A Saxo-Norman site at Chapelfields, Stanstead Abbots (*Anthony Mustchin*)

Hertford and Ware – a reassessment of origins (*David Perman*)

The Christopher, 65-67 High Street, Ware: new discoveries at a late medieval coaching inn (*Michael Shapland*)

Medieval archaeology and 18th-19th century evidence at Layston House, Hare Street, Buntingford (*Andrew Newton*)

THE NEW MURAL IN SOVEREIGN WAY

Have you seen the new mural in Sovereign Way and wondered what the thinking is behind it? In simple terms it forms part of a campaign to improve the city centre's historic alleyways. You just have to look at what other old cities and towns have done: they play an integral part in the visitor experience, York being perhaps the best-known example. There are artworks and interpretative panels for the visitor indicating the history of these passageways.

Sadly, in St Albans, the special heritage of the alleyways has been long neglected and their condition is poor (Fig.1). As well as the passageways being soiled with pigeon excrement, the state of the buildings is unkempt with graffiti on the walls. Some of the alleyways are clogged up with wheelie bins that are often subject to fly-tipping. The bins are both an eyesore and a health hazard, encouraging vermin – a poor advertisement when the city is attempting to encourage more visitors to enjoy its heritage.

This new mural is the first step in our plans. We hope it demonstrates what can be done to with the alleyways which both marked the passages



Fig. 1: Lamb Alley in its modern shabbiness
(© Tim Boatswain)

between the stalls in the medieval market and provided entrances to its inns. Some alleyways have their own specific architectural or historical interest. Boot Alley for example was in the area where leather was worked into shoes. Meat puddings were sold in Pudding Lane and Dog Cut and Lamb Alley led to the Dog inn and Lamb alehouse respectively. The entrance to the Christopher inn, off French Row, has a late sixteenth/early seventeenth-century carving of a she-devil, a succubus, believed to prey on unwary travellers. The Market Place, probably accessed by the alleyways from what is now Chequer Street, played a part in the First Battle of St Albans in May 1455 during the Wars of the Roses.



Fig. 2: Part of the new mural – Jacob Bell, almost an MP (© Tim Boatswain)

The mural represents the story of the election bribery scandal that besmirched the town's reputation far and wide. In 1850 one of the two MPs for St Albans, a Liberal, died. The Conservatives attempted to capture the vacant seat in addition to the one they already held. Their candidate Sir Robert Carden lost the election to the Liberal Jacob Bell (Fig. 2). Sir Richard was convinced corruption had taken place and in 1851 a special Parliamentary Commission came to St Albans and established an inquiry in the courtroom, in what is now the Museum + Gallery. Many witnesses were summoned to give evidence. Although only men of a certain property status could vote then, several women, who had been bribed

to persuade their husbands to vote for Bell were put on the stand.

It emerged that Bell's agents had bribed over 300 voters. The action took place down Sovereign Way. Entering the black door on the south side of the passageway, members of the electorate were offered refreshments and then called individually to go upstairs to meet Bell's agent. When the agent, sat at a desk, got up to gaze out the window and turned his back, the voter could help himself to five sovereigns (worth over £100 in today's money) – hence Sovereign Way. With the exposure of the scandal, the Commission determined to punish all of St Albans, and the constituency was not allowed an MP for over 30 years.

The mural, generously sponsored by Christopher Place, is part of a cooperative project between SAHAAS, Conservation 50, BID ('Business Improvement District') and St Albans District Council. The artist Ant Steel, who is the Artist in Residence at the Cathedral, has been commissioned to recreate images from the town's great election scandal.

Let's hope this new installation in Sovereign Way heralds an appropriate revival of our historic alleyways.

Tim Boatswain

THE OUTING TO THE CAPITAL OF THE COTSWOLDS

Hurricane Lee: we all knew it was coming, and arrived at the coach armed with waterproofs and umbrellas. But the morning of our trip to Cirencester was relatively calm – apart from the M25 of course...

On arrival at the Corinium Museum we were greeted by Phil, who gave an excellent introductory talk. As well as telling us a bit about the history of the town and the museum itself, he highlighted ten items on display which we

mustn't miss. Many of these dated back to Roman times, when Corinium Dobunnorum was the second most important town in Britannia. They included a beautiful mosaic featuring a happily feeding hare which was discovered under a hypocaust at some local allotments in 1971 – the hare now features as a symbol of Cirencester, and appears all over the town. And a rare second-century, copper, enamelled, cockerel figurine found in a child's burial in 2011, a symbol of the god Mercury. The museum itself is large and spacious, covering the historical development of the Cotswolds from prehistoric times to the present day, with plenty of interpretation information, both written and audio.

After lunch we met together again outside the porch of the parish church of St John the Baptist, which stands in the central market place of the town. The three-storey porch is a building in itself, constructed in the fifteenth century by the abbot of the Augustinian abbey for his dealings with the town. The large church reflects the wealth of a centre for the wool trade, and among the many features of interest and beauty is a fine silver gilt cup made in 1535 for Anne Boleyn and given to the church by Dr Master, Elizabeth I's physician.



Fig. 1: Michael Graham admiring an artist's impression of the Roman gate of Corinium which led via Akeman Street to Verulamium
(© Sally Pearson)



Fig. 2: Guide Jim Thompson in front of a former wool warehouse.
(© Sally Pearson)

Three very knowledgeable and enthusiastic members of the Cirencester Civic Society then guided us around the

older parts of the town, telling us in detail about the history of the abbey (very little remains), the wool traders' buildings (Fig.2), and the Bathurst estate. Needless to say, this was the moment when the remnants of Hurricane Lee arrived in earnest, so it was a pretty damp experience, but none the less interesting for that. Even in wind and heavy rain, the softly-coloured Cotswold stone buildings are attractive, and the historic character of the town shines through. We received a message afterwards from our guides, expressing their admiration for the staying power of their visitors from SAHAAS: 'the weather was awful but they stuck it out'. We would expect no less from our Society members!

Sally Pearson

SEEKING MEMBERS WITH SKILLS IN LATE-MEDIEVAL GENEALOGY

The Transition project group is looking for members with skills in researching late-medieval family history. Our particular focus is Sir Richard Lee, surveyor of military fortifications for three Tudor monarchs and owner of the Sopwell estate from 1538 until his death in 1575.

Various attempts were made in the pre-Internet period to make sense of his early life with the result that he may have links to Sussex or perhaps to St Albans. With primary source material now more readily accessible, can you help throw fresh light on the first thirty years of Lee's life? If you have expertise in this field, please contact Jon Mein and Ailsa Herbert via:
transition@stalbanshistory.org

THE ST ALBANS—SPANISH WAR

"I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany." These are the familiar but still chilling words from Neville Chamberlain's radio broadcast announcing in September 1939 the news many had feared. My late father, a twelve-year old Boy Scout at the time, recalled hearing them through a window as he delivered official messages in Welwyn Garden City. Those words were to cast a pall over his teenage years.

Altogether less chilling was the day St Albans declared war on Spain. This was Saturday 16 January 1762. You don't believe me? You just have to look at part of the official record of the St Albans Borough Corporation, the Mayor's Accounts (HALS, SBR/317), where the facts are writ large: 'Paid by cash expenses at the White Hart on meeting the Aldermen & officers to proceed to declare war on Spain 7s 6d'. (Fig. 1) There we are. Told you!

The next entry confirms it. The ledger shows these men – I am sure they were all men – gathering again later that day. Their purpose can only have been to discuss military strategy: 'Paid by cash expenses in the evening drinking the success to the war by direction of the Aldermen £1 17s'. A third entry notes: 'Paid by cash the Constable to drink on that occasion 4s'. The unnamed contributor must have had essential expertise to share.

The record then stops so we don't know what strategy they had set. Was the local militia mustered? Did the town's gunsmith receive urgent notice at his Market Place shop to check his stock of powder? Were instructions sent to the captains on the River Ver to ready their boats for action?

If Saturday evening had been full of good fellowship, Sunday morning dawned tired and emotional. The corporation's war council of fewer than 20 men must have woken up with one hell of a hangover. After all, those expenses of 48 shillings equate to over



Fig. 1: Extract from the Mayor's Accounts showing two of the 'Spanish' entries (HALS, SBR/317, p.73)

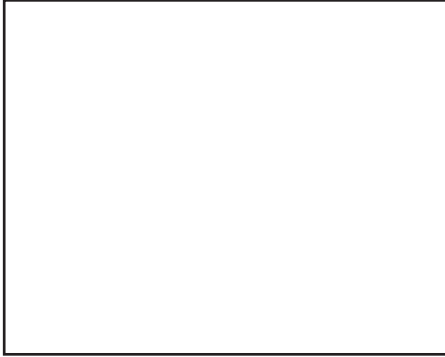


Fig. 2: The White Hart, c.1800, by H.G. Oldfield (Reproduced courtesy of HALS)

550 pints of beer. It was not just beer on offer of course but wine as well, mulled for a cold winter evening perhaps. A horrible cocktail for pre-Paracetamol times.

This is a delicious episode in the history of St Albans, one that the late, estimable Elsie Toms brought to public attention in the 1960s* and which I have now further embroidered. What's the context? For one thing and to be serious for a moment, these men were drinking the scant income of the heavily indebted borough corporation, money needed to clean the streets, not for boozy evenings playing toy soldiers.

For another, and back to the whimsy, St Albans was not acting alone. Great Britain had declared war on Spain just twelve days before. This marked the start of the so-called Anglo-Spanish

War, a now largely obscure adjunct to the Seven Years War. Worried by the poor performance of the French who had suffered bloody nose after bloody nose at the hands of the British, the Spanish took to the field to repel Anglo attacks on their empire.

What of modern relations with Spain? The actions of the borough corporation in 1762 have left its current successor, St Albans District Council, in a sticky situation. Whatever your feelings about Brexit, relations with our European neighbours continue to be important. Surely the Mayor should write to the Spanish Ambassador assuring him of our best intentions?

Could this also be an opportunity to 'twin' with some appropriate city in Spain? As John Morewood pointed out to me, Valladolid towards the north of the country would be most suitable. It too has significant Roman heritage and was the site of several medieval religious institutions. The clincher is its Catholic seminary founded in 1589 to train priests to serve in England. To whom is it dedicated? St Alban, of course.

Jon Mein

* E. Toms, *The Story of St Albans* (1962), p.173.

CHRISTOPHER WEBB AND HIS WORK AT ST LAWRENCE JEWRY CHURCH

Although I missed the recent talk by Canon John Edwards, I was pleased to see Jane Ridge and Sue Mann's articles about Christopher Webb (*Newsletter* nos. 224 & 228) and hope these raise his profile among SAHAAS members. In case it has inspired anyone to look for more of his work I want to tell you about his windows in another London church.

St Lawrence Jewry is the official church of the City of London Corporation and is situated next to the Guildhall. Almost all the windows are by Webb and collectively they are regarded as his finest work. I discovered them when a Webb exhibition displaying pictures of his original sketches and cartoons was held there. Although they were interesting, what I really found impressive was the combination of the church itself with those Webb windows, clearly designed as a set, with stained glass images but still letting in lots of light. Apparently he once said that the purpose of glass was to let in light and if it didn't it was not serving its purpose. Because I was so impressed I bought a copy of Canon David Parrott's booklet about the windows. From that I learnt that the medieval church had been destroyed by the

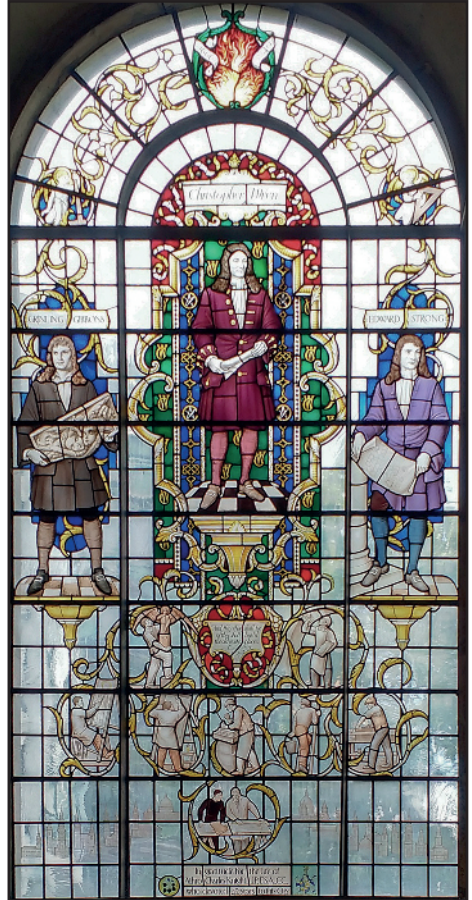


Fig. 1: The Wren window (Andy Scott, CC-BY-SA via Wikimedia Commons)

Great Fire of London, was rebuilt by Christopher Wren but destroyed again by a fire bomb in the 1940 blitz which only left some of the outer walls and the tower.

Probably the most well-known window is that which depicts Christopher Wren. (Fig. 1) This is not in the body of the

church but is hidden away in the vestibule at the back. It is of particular interest to us in St Albans as it also includes images of two people with connections to the city. The medium-sized figure to the right of Wren is his master mason, Edward Strong, who has a large stone memorial in St Peter's church where he was buried. Then below Wren are two small figures with a table in front of them on which are plans of the church.

The one on the right is the architect, Cecil Brown, who is showing the vicar his plans for the mid-1950s restoration. He had become cathedral surveyor in St Albans early in 1940. Here he was probably best known for his isometric drawing of the Abbey, done while fire-watching, which was displayed in the Abbey until recently. At St Lawrence Jewry, Brown was involved in all aspects of the rebuilding including collaborating with Christopher Webb on the design of the windows. Close inspection of the Wren window reveals the entwined initials 'C & W' surrounding the image no

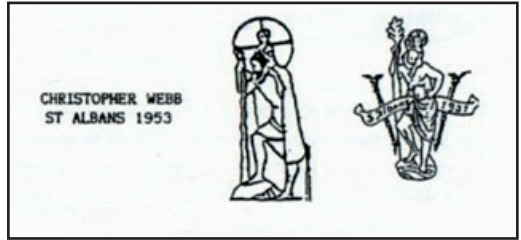


Fig. 2: Webb's three maker's marks (Eileen Roberts)

doubt meant for him but, as it happens, could also stand for Christopher Webb. However as most of the windows were his, it was not thought necessary to include his 'maker's mark' although he certainly used at least three different ones during his career as recorded by Eileen Roberts and shown above. (Fig. 2)

To learn more about Christopher Webb's windows and his maker's marks I suggest that as well as visiting St Lawrence Jewry you might look for Webb windows in churches here in St Albans. As a starter there are three in the Abbey including the Martyrdom window in the south Presbytery aisle which has a tiny St Christopher in the bottom right-hand corner.

Sheila Green

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 2024 edition is 15 January.

THOMAS BASKERVILLE IN HERTFORDSHIRE

'We went to Watford a market Town in Hartford shire, where the water was then so high September 24 1671, we could not well pass over without wetting our saddles for which reason we went another way to St Albons a great market Town about six miles from Watford and 20 miles from London, in Hartfordshire.'

There was still a ford over the river Colne which deterred Thomas Baskerville from riding the most direct route to St Albans; a bridge was built some time after the date, 1671, that he gives for his journey.

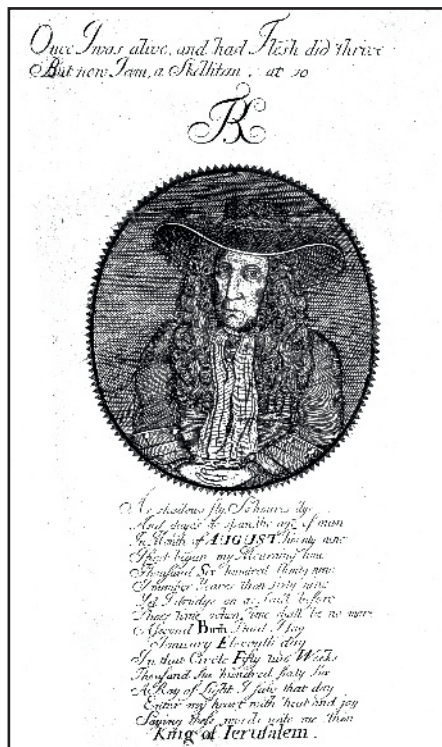
I recently spent time trying to make sense of Baskerville's not always tidy handwriting, using a skill learned in Hertfordshire. It is sixty years since I first lived in St Albans, and subsequently in the country near Knebworth. Heather Falvey's recent review of *Datchworth and Tewin in Tudor and Stuart Times in Local History News* (No. 148, p. 27), with its tribute to Lionel Munby, has reminded me particularly of those years. I attended Munby's classes where he taught us to read sixteenth and seventeenth century handwriting.

Thomas Baskerville (1630-1700) wrote accounts of ten journeys which he made

in England, and also of other shorter expeditions, and these have been preserved in three manuscripts. His visit to St Albans was the ninth journey which he wrote about. He kept notebooks on his travels, commenting when he came to write up one journey that the pages had become blotted. He always wrote 'we' implying he did not ride alone, although only occasionally did he name a companion or a man servant who accompanied him.

Baskerville did not stay at the Bull in St Albans, which he said was the greatest inn that he had seen in England, but at the Lion; he stayed long enough to spend time in the abbey church, and to explore 'Verrulam a village near this town'. His account was written ten years after the journey, because he added that in 1681 money was being raised to restore the church. Amongst other details, he wrote out a poem which was on the wall above where St Alban's shrine had stood. Is the poem still there?

His writing contains interesting and unusual details, like being informed that one well in St Albans was 40 fathoms deep, or like a long list of local and world specialties which he implies were available in England: one was 'St Albans straw Tankards and pots'. He had travelled from his manor house, Bayworth in Sunningwell in Oxfordshire (but then



A broadsheet reproduced with permission of Abingdon School. For such a cheerful man, delighting in beer, bowls, company and wine, it is a gloomy image, but presumably contains the engraving Baskerville commissioned when planning to publish his writings. It also contains a statement of his birthday, which was otherwise unknown.

in Berkshire), and from St Albans he returned home travelling westward to Ashridge; he wrote a considerable description of the house and park, having a particular interest because his friend Richard Blower had been the master of the horse there.

Part of one of the three surviving manuscripts was transcribed, modernised and published in Her Majesty's Historical Manuscript Commission Appendix part II to their *Thirteenth Report* in 1893. Information in the Appendix was used in the early Victoria County History volume on Hertfordshire vol. 2 (1908), like the lack of a bridge at Watford during the seventeenth century, or St Albans being a great market town with many fair inns which was quoted in the text. But other delightful and interesting observations were not referred to. *Thomas Baskerville: journeys in industrious England*, containing almost all his writings, was published in October by Hobnob Press (ISBN 978-1914407512), edited by me.

Anthea Jones

CONGRATULATIONS...

To Helen George for her award in the '20sStreets' competition run jointly by the British Association for Local History and the National Archives. The title of her submission was 'Watford in the 1920s – Three Ladies of Trewins Department Store'. For more about the competition please see www.balh.org.uk/RTH152.

AN ABBOT'S LAMENT AND THE SECOND BATTLE OF ST ALBANS IN THE WARS OF THE ROSES

In 1873 Longman & Co. published the *Registrum Abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede, Abbatis monasterii Sancti Albani*. The original manuscript had passed through several owners including Lord William Howard of Naworth Castle in my own county of Cumbria. Howard purchased the volume for 20s. in 1589 and it remained at Naworth until later owners deposited it at the College of Arms who gave permission for publication. Henry Thomas Riley MA, of both Oxford and Cambridge universities and a barrister at the Inner Temple, edited the volume. He provided an introduction dating the manuscript to 1465-1475 and said it drew on two documents, both now lost, which were written by Abbot John or at his direction. Apart from adding a note in English in the margin of each paragraph, Riley did not translate the Latin text, no doubt presuming that his audience was well versed in Latin. This has not helped more recent writers on both the local War of the Roses battles (the abbot being a key witness to both).

When Peter Burley and I were working on our recent exhibition, I asked our member Brenda Bolton to translate the

relevant pages for us. Brenda is a highly regarded medievalist and she willingly agreed. So, what did her translation reveal about the Second Battle that we did not already know? Firstly, we gain an insight into the psychology of Abbot John. In both his prose and his poetry, he castigates the Lancastrian army which he portrays as a group of 'boisterous and swaggering northerners' who have 'plundered, despoiled and ravaged' every place they have travelled through south of the Trent, sparing no-one nor their property. He ascribes their victory to the fact that Northerners are born so far away from the Sun that they have more blood and were therefore more aggressive whilst the Yorkist army made of Southerners, who have less blood due to their living too close to the sun, lacked stamina and ran away. In the exhibition we persuaded Malcolm Merrick to splendidly voice the abbot's diatribe against Northern 'toughs' and Southern 'softies'.

The abbot was on firmer ground with his factual account. He tells of the Lancastrians pursuing Montagu's defeated Yorkist troops on horseback with lances and slaying them as they fled. There is no mention of Warwick attempting to help Montagu his brother during the battle. In the fields 'lying near the northern end of the

town, and on both sides of the road and also in the fields elsewhere' there were so many bodies that the few townspeople who chose to stay could not bury the dead. After knighting his son, Henry VI was welcomed to the abbey, visited the high altar and shrine of St Alban, and then went to his chamber in the King's lodging. Before he got there, Abbot John frantically implored him to issue a general proclamation against the Lancastrians plundering St Albans. Although the King did so, no one took any notice. The abbot blamed the Queen, Margaret of Anjou, for taking whatever she wanted, and the pillaging of St Albans only ended when the Lancastrian troops withdrew northwards. 'The Northerners plundered everything, destroyed everything, and carried it away with them to their own parts'. They destroyed anything that could not be moved. The abbey's tenants lost their cattle, crops, and utensils.

In the cloister, the abbot spoke to the very small number of his religious com-

munity who were left. Most, including the prior and archdeacon, had fled. He addressed those left as 'brothers and sisters' and one wonders if this indicates the monks had given shelter to the nuns of Sopwell priory. Abbot John told them that although the abbey's buildings still stood, everything moveable had been taken. There was nothing left to sustain them, and he advised the community to depart except for those whose presence was crucial 'for the government of the cloister, the choir and the goods of the church in general.' The abbot himself left and retired to Wheathampstead. It is strange that in the account there is no mention of Warwick, the Yorkist commander, and his mistakes which led to the defeat. However, there is possibly one barbed thrust at the end stating, 'the bears from the South would be cursed for ever', the bear and ragged staff being of course Warwick's personal emblem.

John Morewood

AGM MINUTES, CONTINUED FROM P. 7

- 9. Election of Independent Examiner of Accounts.** The Treasurer emphasised the importance of having an independent examiner, especially as the Society's income now topped £25,000 per annum, which was the threshold at which the Charity Commission required one to be appointed. He proposed Cathy Phillips for election to the post for a further year. This was seconded by Bryan Hanlon and agreed by all present in person and online.

PROBLEM HOUSING IN FISHPOOL STREET

The photo on the front cover shows two houses in Fishpool Street condemned in 1926 as unfit for habitation. This was in the first wave of slum clearances in inter-war St Albans. The active participants in this process formed a varied group. Of course, the City Council was involved as it had statutory responsibilities and powers to manage the housing stock. Likewise, the owners of the condemned houses, all let for rent, had their own interest as did their tenants. More surprising was the Bishop of St Albans. Why was he involved?

‘Homes fit for heroes’ had been Prime Minister Lloyd George’s promise for returning soldiers in 1918 but some in St Albans at least felt the response to his call was underwhelming. The bishop, Michael Furze, led a campaign to embarrass the City Council into taking action. In 1924, to demonstrate just how poor some houses were in the city’s medieval core, he initiated a survey known as the ‘St Albans Citizens Housing Enquiry’. This was led by a team of visitors to houses for example in Fishpool Street and Sopwell Lane.

The two houses you see to the centre-left, nos. 176 (right) & 178, were on the list and the relevant reports survive in

the City Archive (ref. SBR/3580/14) at HALS. The visitor, G.C. Cruikshank of Bank House (122 Fishpool Street) recorded that no. 178, home to a family of four, was 1-up, 1-down and:

“unfit for habitation, though very well kept by the tenant. The sitting room is very cold in winter, as besides a brick floor, the fire smokes if the two doors (one into the street & one into the passage) are both closed. It also smokes the bedroom. The bedroom is as it were a very big landing and ... very cold & draughty, a bad place to be ill in.”

There was a tap and sink but no copper or bath; cooking was in the sitting room. No. 176 was apparently no better. Cruikshank recorded that Mrs Dudey, the occupier,

“was ill so I did not see this house, but the doctor who attended to her husband before he died, told me the house was unfit to be lived in by anyone. No guttering on roof. Very little plaster in walls. Ceiling falling – kept up by putting board across from beam to beam”.

In 1926, both houses were officially condemned as being unfit for habitation. Is there a causal link between the bishop’s intervention in 1924 and the council’s action two years later? Prob-



Nos. 176 (centre) and 178 Fishpool Street today
(© Stuart Macer)

of the *Herts Advertiser* (11 May) shows them still standing, albeit boarded up.

There's an interesting coda to this story. In his covering note to the Fishpool Street section of the survey, Cruikshank stated: "I find many of the tenants have a real appreciation of the charm of Fishpool St & resentment has been shown at the term 'slum' being applied to this street." What do you make of that?

Jon Mein

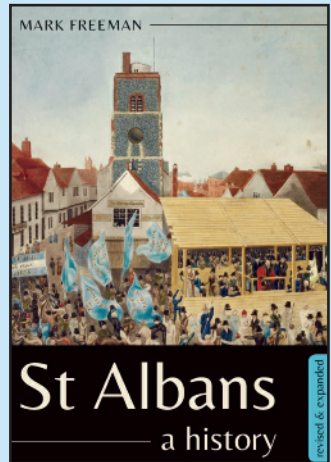
by not one that can be made yet although it can at least be said that his work heightened public awareness. This was not the end of the buildings however. A photo from a 1934 edition

Note: Copies of much of the Housing Survey paperwork are available in the Society's Library.

HOT OFF THE PRESS: *ST ALBANS: A HISTORY*

Mark Freeman's history of St Albans, first published in 2008, has been substantially rewritten by the author and brought fully up to date, making it an invaluable guide to more than two thousand years of the city's history. Described by the publishers, University of Hertfordshire Press, as a 'masterful' volume, it is a scholarly but readable account of St Albans from pre-Roman times to the present day.

Mark is a member of our Society, lives in St Albans, and is Professor of Social History and Education at University College London.



Priced at £19.99, the book contains 420 pages, including chapters on the evolution of St Albans and shorter 'In Focus' sections covering particular episodes and themes. Further details can be found at-
<https://tinyurl.com/stalbansahistory>.

A ST ALBANS CONNECTION TO RHODE ISLAND AND THE PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

Roger Williams founded the Providence Plantations in America in 1636. The colony was an offshoot of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, formed after Williams was expelled from Massachusetts and fled in winter to Indian territory where he subsequently settled. Roger had no known connection to Hertfordshire, having been born in London around 1603, educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and married to Mary Bernard at High Laver, Essex in 1629. Roger was attracted to the teachings of Mary's father, Richard Bernard, a Puritan clergyman from Somerset. Williams was not accepted by the Church of England because of his radical views, and he eventually fled to Massachusetts where he was welcomed as a prospective protestant clergyman until his persistent teaching of unorthodoxy made him unwelcome

there too, first in Boston, then Plymouth, and finally Salem where the General Court ordered him expelled back to England in the fall of 1635; he fled Salem in January 1636 to escape the sheriff.

Shortly after his winter flight to escape expulsion, a group of twelve like-minded colonists joined him in the wilderness to become the original proprietors of what is now Rhode Island in 1636. One was Thomas Olney, a shoemaker from St Albans, who had landed in Boston with his family in April 1635 and settled in Salem. [1]. Thomas must have been of like mind with Roger when he left Hertfordshire, or been quickly radicalized, because he willingly moved his family into the Indian territory with the Protestant radical less than a year after coming to the New World. Olney held many official positions in the colony as did his son of the same given name. My connection to these events arises because my ninth great grandfa-

ther, John Field, came to Providence from St Albans in the late 1630s, and interacted with these men throughout his life.

In the late 1800s, when the early papers of Providence were compiled for publication, the following

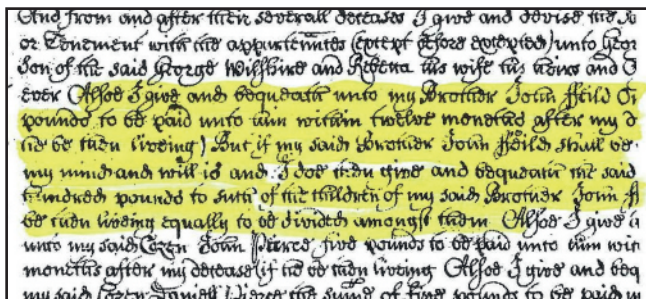


Fig. 1: Extract from James Field's will, 1686 (Reproduced courtesy of the National Archives, ref. PROB 11/382/9)

draft of a document written in the hand of Thomas Olney was found [2]: "Whereas there was by James Field of St Albans in Hertfordshire, who is some time since deceased a bequest made of one hundred pounds the which by his last will and testament he gave and bequeathed unto his brother John Field dwelling in Providence in New England; and if he were dead then ye said moneys to be divided amongst his children. And whereas ye sayd John Field is deceased and ye sayd legacy not yet payd. Be it known..."

The puzzling writing led me to investigate seventeenth century life in Hertfordshire, where I came across the SAHAAS publication, *St Albans 1650-1700*, in which the family of James Field, lathrender, is discussed. [3]

Another search of the (British) National Archives discovered that James' will still existed, and it mentions the same bequest cited in the *Field Genealogy*, linking my family to the Olney family and St Albans. I have found nothing else about the lives of these families in Hertfordshire. (See Fig.1.)

Thomas Chappell Field, PhD

Notes

[1] J. Olney, *A genealogy of the descendants of Thomas Olney: an original proprietor of Providence, R.I., who came from England in 1635* (Press of E.L. Freeman & Son, 1889)

[2] F. Pierce, *Field Genealogy*, vol. 1 (Hammond Press, Chicago, 1901)

[3] J. Smith & M. North (eds), *St Albans A thoroughfare town and its people* (Hertfordshire Publications, 2003)

MEMBERSHIP

Welcome to our new members:

Lexi Barbakoff
Francoise Barnard
Charles & Tanya Barringer
Michael Bennett
Susan Claydon & Axel Flaig
Wendy Chester
Dr Lynton Cox
Jon Easter
Jez Hildred
Nick Houlis

Phil Howes
Mark & Mary Jenkin
Mary Kenward
Matt Perfect
Chris Rounds
Valerie Scott
George Smith
Dr Fiona Spencer & Dr Jonathan Tuck
Simon Thwaites
Graham Williams

NEWS FROM THE MUSEUMS

As we reported in the February edition of the *Newsletter*, St Albans Museums was successful in receiving a grant of £350,000 annually for the next three years as part of Arts Council England's Investment Programme. We've since recruited six new members of staff, including a Community Engagement officer, a Volunteer Officer, an additional Learning Officer and marketing and commercial staff, who have already begun to help us deliver our ambitious activity programme.

Some of the areas that are covered by our plan include:

- diversifying our schools audience at Verulamium by subsidising schools with higher levels of pupils from more deprived communities
- building our early years audience at St Albans Museum + Gallery
- showcasing the work of international artist Rana Begum, who grew up in St Albans and attended both Bernards Heath and St Albans Girls' Schools
- building on the success of our Community-in-residence scheme to build long-lasting and productive relationships with various community groups
- improving our knowledge of the history of black communities in St

Albans and better reflecting them in our collections

- new displays at Verulamium Museum that highlight some of the themes of everyday life in Roman Britain that are traditionally less explored in our museum.

Over the coming months you'll see the results of some of these projects coming to fruition. Rana Begum's exhibition *Ordered Form* opens in December in our Weston Gallery and promises to be a visual delight! This will be accompanied by a large-scale installation, entitled 'Mesh', in the Assembly Room, installed just after Christmas. To coincide with this exhibition, we are running a series of events aimed at engaging with local South Asian communities, including art workshops and reminiscence sessions.

Our 'Time for Tea' exhibition has been very popular, particularly with family groups which was a key audience we wanted to attract. Serving up pretend tea and cake in our tribute to the Thrales tea room has proved a hit with the under 5s visiting us and for older visitors, the opportunity to see so many objects from the museum's collections has been received very positively.

Earlier this year, you may have seen the exhibition on the railings outside St Albans Museum + Gallery by one of our



Young visitor serving the refreshments in the 'Time for Tea' exhibition at St Albans Museum + Gallery.

Communities-in-residence, the Hertfordshire ME/CFS Group, aimed at raising awareness of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. They have since been working on artwork inspired by their experiences in the museum and will be taking over the museum for a day next year. Our next Community-in-residence is Passport to Leisure, a group of adults with learning disabilities, who are keen to learn more about Verulamium Museum and the collections. The residency scheme is proving very enriching for all involved, with lovely feedback from the community groups taking part and creative outcomes such as new products for sale in the museum shop.

Our Black History Research Group has recently re-launched, with the addition of 11 new members at the last count.

This is a real priority for us to better understand the lived experiences and history of people in our local community who have been underrepresented in our collecting previously. Research has already uncovered a colour bar imposed in the 1960s by the developers T F Nash on purchasers of homes in Marshalswick. What was particularly interesting was the ferocity of the subsequent outrage by local residents vocalised in the letters pages of the *Herts Advertiser*!

At Verulamium, we're working with a Guest Curator on a new display linked to stories of migration, in Roman Britain and today. The display, which will incorporate sound elements, will focus on the rich cultural exchange that existed in Roman Britain, using subjects like food and music as examples to demonstrate how different cultures helped shape the way of life here.

As you can see, it's an exciting time at the museums and we're looking forward to seeing how our plans develop over the next three years.

Cat Newley
Audience Development Manager
St Albans Museums

THE BLUE PLAQUE FOR ARTHUR MELBOURNE-COOPER

On Friday 6 October at the Odyssey Cinema in London Road, Jan Harlan, Stanley Kubrick's film producer and brother-in-law, officially installed a Blue Plaque for Arthur Melbourne-Cooper (1874 – 1961).

Arthur was a photographer and filmmaker, known for pioneering work in stop-motion animation. Later, he set up a documentary and newsreel company, Kinema Industries, which famously shot the 1913 Derby when the suffragette, Emily Davison, threw herself in front of the King's horse.



Jan Harlan at the installation of the new plaque
(© Snjezana Boatswain)

In this embryonic industry, his career was one of 'firsts'. Arthur opened Hertfordshire's first cinema, Alpha Picture House, on the Odyssey site. He was also a founder member of the British Kinematograph Manufacturers Association. By 1907 he had established his own company, and in the same year filmed the phantom ride film 'London to Killarney' from a special observation car attached to the front of a train. Immediately afterward he filmed a comedy, 'Irish Wives and English Hus-

bands', the first fiction film to be made in Ireland. In 1908 he produced an animated film 'Dreams of Toyland'.

Despite initial success, financial difficulties ensued when the Alpha Picture House failed an inspection and had to be sold off. With his business wound

up, he moved to Manor Park in south-east London. He managed a cinema in Harrow while still making puppet animation pictures – his best known is 'Cinderella' (1912). With the help of a partner's capital, he established Heron Films Ltd, producing comedies and dramas. On the outbreak of the First World War, Arthur closed his companies, becoming a

munitions inspector at Luton. After the war, he went to Blackpool where he managed a film company called Animads, a sub-division of Langford's Advertising Agency Ltd, making a number of animated advertisements, including one for Cadbury's chocolates.

Retiring in 1939 Arthur moved with his wife to Little Shelford near Cambridge. He died in 1961.

Prof. Tim Boatswain

LECTURE PROGRAMME

5 December 2023 –20 February 2024

All lectures commence at 7.45pm.

Please note the delivery of lectures will vary between Church only, Church plus live-streaming via Zoom and Zoom only. 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 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.

Any changes to the programme will be notified on our website and via enews.

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

Tuesday 5 December

Fano: St Albans' Italian Twin

Geoff Harrison

Church and Zoom/Open Lecture

A small city with a cathedral, occupied by the Romans with significant ruins remaining. Sounds familiar? Come along and discover more about Fano, the Italian city with whom St Albans has been twinned since 1998.

Geoff Harrison has had the honour and pleasure of being Mayor of St Albans on two occasions, 2014-15 and 2022-23. Having been a keen walker who has led tours in Britain, Europe and the USA, Geoff has served as a district councillor

for 23 years. He has both entertained visitors from and visited Fano and formed lasting relationships. He will share his enjoyment of Fano and its people, some of whom will hopefully be able to join us on the night through the wonders of modern technology.

Tuesday 9 January 2024

110 years of Aviation History in Hertfordshire, 1913–2023

Guy Thomas

Church only

Guy Thomas will cover airfields, aircraft and individuals, which include early aviators Noel Pemberton Billing, MP for Hertford, W E Johns of 'Biggles' fame who was born in Hertford in 1893, Fred-

erick Handley Page who developed Handley Page Aircraft Ltd at Radlett and Geoffrey de Havilland who set up de Havilland Aircraft at Hatfield in 1930. Today, the county's aviation industry continues in research, design and development with Airbus Defence and Space Site, MBDA missile systems and the STEM Discovery Centre as an education facility, developed in partnership with North Hertfordshire College, Airbus and others.

Guy has a lifelong interest in aviation heritage and has produced aeronautical drawings and articles. He is a tour guide at the RAF Museum, 'speaker finder' for the East Hertfordshire Aviation Society and gives talks on aviation topics.

Tuesday 16 January

Eiffel: the Man, the Tower and The Statue

Doug Irvine

Zoom only

Gustave Eiffel (1832-1923) was a French civil engineer whose name is most widely known for the monumental tower that he built in Paris. During his working life he constructed or made a contribution to a wide range of prestigious structures including bridges, buildings, the Statue of Liberty in New York, and elements of the Panama Canal. When he retired

from civil engineering, he went on to carry out significant work in meteorology and aerodynamics, and was a promoter of early cinema. This talk will cover the life and works of this talented and energetic engineer, scientist and businessman.

Douglas Irvine is a Fellow of the Institution of Civil Engineers and has worked for both consulting engineers and contractors. Now retired, he takes a keen interest in the lives of early civil engineers and their work.

Tuesday 23 January

Succubus, grotesques, gargoyles and sheela na gigs

Prof Tim Boatswain

Church only

Recently the succubus at Christopher Inn passageway, St Albans has been conserved – what is she and why is she there? This talk will look at succubi, grotesques, gargoyles and sheela na gigs, which are a fascinating element of architectural history. They are enigmatic: part of folklore and mythology as well as a reminder of the creative imagination of the people who made them.

Tim is Professor of Anthropology and History and a regular contributor to the Adult Education Programme at the Cathedral. He campaigned to conserve

the Christopher Inn succubus which was seriously at risk. Among his several voluntary roles, he is a member of our Society's Council where he helps with publicity.

Tuesday 6 February

Stowe House – Past, Present and Future

Eileen Gascoigne

Church and Zoom

The principal temple in the famous landscape gardens, Stowe House dates from the later 1600s although it developed much over the next 100 years. Some of its grandeur has recently been restored, the exterior and state rooms in particular, in a project led by the Stowe House Preservation Trust. This talk explores the rise and fall of the Temple-Grenville family, originally responsible for the house's development, highlighting their great social and political ambitions, and the three sales leading to the eventual creation of Stowe School in 1923.

Eileen Gascoigne's involvement as a volunteer guide at Stowe House began 12 years ago, after a career in fine art and art history. She is one of the 'Ambassadors for the House', whose role is to promote the splendour of Stowe, and has been involved in presenting specialist tours on its paintings.

This work remains one of the richest experiences of her life.

Tuesday 13 February

Landscapes revealed: examining Orkney's Neolithic settlements and monuments

Prof. Jane Downes

Zoom only

This talk presents research results from survey and excavation in the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site. In addition to the known sites of Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and the settlements of Ness of Brodgar and Barnhouse, remote sensing has revealed a remarkable array of further complexity of this outstanding landscape.

Professor Downes is Director of the UHI Archaeology Institute based in Orkney. She is an archaeologist who has undertaken survey and excavation within the Orkney World Heritage area, as well as research in the Pacific islands of the Cook Islands, Niue and Rapa Nue (Easter Island) and is an expert on climate change and its impact on heritage globally.

Lecture Programme cont'd overleaf

Tuesday 20 February

**The Women of Christ Church,
Verulam Road, in mid-19th century
St Albans**

Dr Julie Moore

Church only

In 1859 a new Anglican church was consecrated in St Albans. Originally intended for a Roman Catholic congregation, Christ Church in Verulam Road owed its existence to the generosity of Mrs Isabella Worley of New Barnes. She stepped in upon the death of its original benefactor, Alexander Raphael, MP for St Albans, and financed

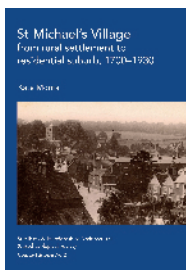
the completion of the church and the living of its first minister, Revd Henry Smith. She was just the first of many women, from all classes, who supported the new church. This talk will explore their contribution to the life of both church and town, and consider the impact of the evangelical message on their personal lives.

Julie Moore is a Visiting Research Fellow with the University of Hertfordshire. A longtime member of SAHAAS, she was closely involved in the Society's Home Front project.



St Peter's Street, c.1905. Another photo from the same album as the image on the front cover
(Reproduced courtesy of HALS, ref. DZ/27/Z28)

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

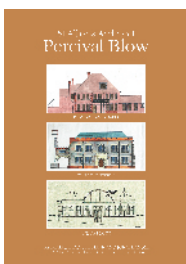


Mistress of Gorhambury, Lady Anne Bacon, Tudor courtier and scholar

Deborah Spring

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

£6.50 + £1.80 p&p

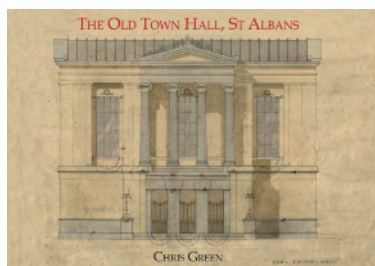


St Albans Architect Percival Blow: From Arts and Crafts to Gothic Revival and Art Deco

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, by phone: 01727 863340, and at most in-person lectures on Tuesday nights. Some books are also available in local bookshops

OUR MAIN SOCIAL EVENT OF THE YEAR



NEW YEAR PARTY



FRIDAY 12 JANUARY

7.30 - 9.30 PM

St Stephen's Church Hall [AL1 2PT]

Meet with fellow members and guests for a convivial evening of conversation, brain-stimulating quizzes, project displays, and the chance to explore this interesting church.

New members especially welcome to also get a wider view of our aims, ambitions and activities.

All complemented by various liquid refreshments
and a tasty finger buffet.

Traditionally the delicious food is mainly provided by you, and many people bring along a favourite sweet or savoury dish of their choice – ready for plating please. The Society is happy to reimburse you financially for this.

Contact Val Argue on 07766 187747 or nyp@stalbanhistory.org if you can bring a contribution.

Tickets £8 in advance via Eventbrite or £10 on the night. If, exceptionally, anyone has problems with booking this way contact Sally Pearson via nyp@stalbanhistory.org who will help you.

Eventbrite link – <https://bit.ly/40dfHrd>

**Any offers of general help in any area will be lovely.
Contact nyp@stalbanhistory.org**