

## St Albans Museums: 'Talking Buildings' project, 2016

Building: 1 Market Place

Researched by: Laura Slack & Marit Gruijs

This research was undertaken by volunteers and is not an exhaustive history of the building but captures what intrigued them during the project.

If you have any memories you'd like to share, or any queries about the research, please do let us know: [museum@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:museum@stalbans.gov.uk)

The attractive, timber-framed building at 1 Market Place occupies a central position in the heart of historic St Albans. It has a remarkable story to tell due to its long, documented history of continuous ownership and its charitable status. It also has aesthetic and architectural merit which warranted its listing on 27 August 1971 (List entry Number: 1103109) at Grade II.<sup>1</sup>

### Structure

The building is notable for its architectural importance and historic fabric. The listing entry notes that it comprises of three storeys and an attic<sup>2</sup> although it also has a basement.<sup>3</sup> It is described as having a high pitched, tiled roof with gabled dormer.<sup>4</sup> The exterior is plastered with some of the timber frame exposed and, unusually, it has a double jettied construction<sup>5</sup>. The windows have been reglazed but are of the earlier casement type. The shop on the ground floor is listed as dating to the twentieth century and projects into the street. The list entry also notes that this building forms a group with numbers 3, 2, 4 Market Place and 18 High Street. It was formerly known as 35 Market Place but the date of this change is unknown.<sup>6</sup> The Victoria County History uses street number 35 and so it retained this address until at least 1908.<sup>7</sup>

### Early history

This property has a fascinating and long history which can be traced in the records back to the sixteenth century. The listing entry for the extant structure records that it dates from the seventeenth century<sup>8</sup>, but it is not clear what this date is based upon and does not correspond with the documentary evidence described below. An early date can be assumed based on an inspection of the surviving fabric and its location in the centre of the market place abutting the Clock Tower. The Clock Tower itself dates from 1403-12.<sup>9</sup> The market place was probably developing from the mid-twelfth century<sup>10</sup> and the buildings evolved into permanent structures from stalls or booths erected by traders from the early thirteenth century<sup>11</sup>. Records from the Abbey show that French

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<sup>1</sup> Historic England, 2016, '1, Market Place: List entry summary'.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> White, 2013a. 'St Albans eyesore revitalised for Magna Carta promotion'. *Herts Advertiser*. 21 July 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Historic England, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Jettied is a building technique used in medieval timber-frame buildings in which an upper floor projects beyond the dimensions of the floor below.

<sup>6</sup> Historic England, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Page, W. (ed.) 1908a. 'The city of St Albans: Advowson and charities', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2*, pp. 510-515

<sup>8</sup> Historic England, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup> Page, W. (ed.) 1908b. 'The city of St Albans: Introduction', in *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 2*, pp. 469-477

<sup>10</sup> Freeman, M. 2008. *St Albans: a history*, p85

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p85

Row had been established before 1335<sup>12</sup> and so, if the listing date is correct, we can assume that the current structure was not the first one built on the site. The meat market occupied the lower part of the market place<sup>13</sup> and so 1 Market Place may have sat within this zone and could have been used for this purpose.

### **Charitable role**

The building was bequeathed by Thomas Lathbury (Lathberye) in 1579<sup>14</sup> to The Charity of Thomas Lathberye and its subsidiary charity The Charity of Richard Raynshaw (charity number 209339<sup>15</sup>), which were founded in 1579 and 1569 respectively<sup>16</sup>, and it has been in the ownership of the former ever since. This charity has previously owned several buildings in St Albans during its history including the Vine Public House at the beginning of the twentieth century<sup>17</sup>, but 1 Market Place is their sole remaining commercial property. The will stipulated that it should be used for the benefit of the poor of St. Albans<sup>18</sup> and so the income derived from its lease is used to fund almshouses and relieve the poor. The income from 1 Market Place is still used to fund the almshouse accommodation provided by Raynshaw's charity in Spicer Street and Lower Dagnall Street<sup>19</sup>. An additional property in "Dagenhall" Lane was also bequeathed by Lathberye but this is no longer owned by the charities<sup>20</sup>.

It is believed that Lathberye and Raynshaw established their charities as penance after they drew swords against each other in church.<sup>21</sup> Raynshaw was Sergeant-at-Arms to Henry VIII and Elizabeth I and so was a man of influence and important in St Albans society. He appears to have been a charitable individual as he also gave land to the Free Grammar School.<sup>22</sup>

Records suggest that the building may have been occupied by a John Kilbie sometime during the period 1650-1700.<sup>23</sup>

The charities' activities can be seen in a further official report of 1834 which lists Raynshaw's Charity consisting of "11 rooms, which are inhabited, rent-free, by 10 poor persons of the town" though this probably relates to the almshouse rather than the commercial property. The report states that the occupants were chosen by the mayor and aldermen, with advice from clergymen.<sup>24</sup> It also records

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<sup>12</sup> Page, 1908b, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> Freeman, op.cit., p89

<sup>14</sup> Page, 1908a, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup> Charity Commission, 2016a

<sup>16</sup> Trustees of The Charity of Thomas Lathberye and its subsidiary charity The Charity of Richard Raynshaw. 2014. 'Trustees Report'. In: "Accounts for the Year Ended 31st December 2014." p1

<sup>17</sup> Page, 1908a, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> Page, 1908a, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Trustees of The Charity of Thomas Lathberye and its subsidiary charity The Charity of Richard Raynshaw. 2014. Op.cit. p1

<sup>20</sup> Page, 1908a, op. cit.

<sup>21</sup> White, D. 2014. 'St Albans store refurbishment uncovers lost treasures.' *Herts Advertiser*. 3 February 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Carlisle, N. 1818. *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales*. Volume 1. p511

<sup>23</sup> Smith, J.T. and M.A. North. 2003. *St Albans, 1650-1700: A Thoroughfare Town and Its People*, p60

<sup>24</sup> Austin, C. 1834. 'Report on the Borough of St. Alban (Herts.)'. In "Reports from places in any district: Municipal Corporations in England and Wales", p2929

that Thomas Lathberye left an annual sum of 45/. a year to be distributed among the poor of the town.<sup>25</sup>

The changing value of the lease can be traced through history. Documents show that in 1874 the lease was six pounds and ten shillings a year<sup>26</sup> but by 1900 this had risen to £40 a year.<sup>27</sup>

Remarkably, Thomas Lathberye's charity is still operating to this day and the Charity Commission records still list the aim of the charity to be to "provide housing accommodation and other assistance where needed for those in need in the area of St. Albans, Hertfordshire". This is largely achieved through helping the elderly by providing grants and buildings. Half of the income is used to fund the almshouse and the rest has a more general use for the poor of the city.<sup>28</sup> In the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2014 the charity had an income of £49,300, but spent £186,700 due to restoration work carried out on 1 Market Place and the almshouse. The current work of the charity is governed by a scheme of 28 June 1918 which has subsequently been amended three times.<sup>29</sup> The work of both charities are overseen by the same board of seven trustees and it does not employ any staff.<sup>30</sup>

There is a box of files related to the two charities held at the SAHAAS Library (stalbanhistory.org) and in the archives of St Albans Cathedral<sup>31</sup> but these could not be accessed during the course of this research. Further records were found in the office of the charity's former clerk during refurbishment work in 2014 and have been deposited at the Herts Archives and Local Studies centre at County Hall, Hertford. These documents included the original wills of Richard Raynshaw and Thomas Lathberye (dating to 1569), documents setting out lease agreements (mostly in Latin) and one document written during the reign of Elizabeth I.<sup>32</sup> They are likely to hold significant further information on the charitable aspects of this building.

### Recent history

The building was occupied by the Isis Crystal Shop and Crystal Reiki Healing Centre<sup>33</sup> from 1993, when they established their business in St Albans, until approximately 2011. They stocked crystals and minerals, books and music for meditation. They continue to trade online.

The shop was then empty for a couple of years after the tenant defaulted on their lease<sup>34</sup> and



<sup>25</sup> Ibid, p2929

<sup>26</sup> White, 2014, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> Page, 1908a, op. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Charity Commission. 2016b. 'Data for financial year ending 31 December 2014: Thomas Lathberye. Documents'

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Charity Commission. 2016c. 'Data for financial year ending 31 December 2014: Thomas Lathberye. People. '; White, 2014, op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Kelsall, D.J. 2008. 'Catalogue of the Muniment Room', p45

<sup>32</sup> White, 2014, op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Permutt, P. 2016. 'Isis Crystal Shop and Crystal Reiki Healing Centre'

<sup>34</sup> White, 2013a, op. cit.

the state of the building became a source of local frustration. It was rundown and the location of the property next to the Clock Tower, a prominent tourist attraction, meant that some felt the image of the city suffered. The Herts Advertiser ran a snapshot survey of tourists who told them that “it looks terrible”.<sup>35</sup> Some felt that landlords were not doing enough to help businesses.<sup>36</sup> At this time the property was available on a ten-year lease through the London-based agency Harmer Ray Hoffbrand (HRH). It was recorded as comprising 2,072 sq ft.<sup>37</sup>

1 Market Place was then partially revitalised and was given an educational role in tourism and history. In the build up to the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta St Albans celebrated its role in this historic event. The city hosted a range of events and the property was used as a central point for promotion and outreach.<sup>38</sup> Merchandise and information was displayed in its windows. This represented the first step in getting the building back into use.

Shortly after this the owners of the property applied for listed building consent to carry out renovations. The application from 29 November 2013 lists replacement of the felt roof, new guttering, replacement section of timber to rear elevation and internal alterations among the changes to be made.<sup>39</sup> The upper floors were also converted into offices at this time.<sup>40</sup> This refurbishment work is reported to have cost £100,000.<sup>41</sup>

In Retail Ventures Ltd (company number 08560621) listed 1 Market Place as their registered office from 7 June 2013 and so may have occupied the offices upstairs. The company dissolved on 20 January 2015.<sup>42</sup>

The building is currently occupied by a branch of STA travel on a ten year lease.

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<sup>35</sup> White, D. 2013b. ‘Frustrations over St Albans’ eyesore store’. *Herts Advertiser*. 12 July 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ibid

<sup>38</sup> White, 2013a, op. cit.

<sup>39</sup> Blake, J. 2013. ‘St Albans City and District Council Public Notices’

<sup>40</sup> White, 2014, op. cit.

<sup>41</sup> White, 2014, op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> Companies House. 2016. ‘In Retail Ventures Ltd’ record

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