

# ***Outside West Keeper's Gallery, introduction on diagonal wall***

## **St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society**

Welcome to this exhibition celebrating our first 175 years

We were founded in 1845 and are one of the oldest historical societies in the UK. In 1845 Victoria had been Queen for eight years, the rubber band was patented, and Isambard Kingdom Brunel's SS Great Britain became the first screw propelled vessel to cross the Atlantic.

People were also becoming more aware that their historical heritage was at risk.

Our aims were to:

- raise public awareness of our heritage and
- to actively preserve the crumbling St Albans Abbey church and other Hertfordshire churches.

Later we increased our range of interests, and influence, to include archaeology and all

aspects of our history - modern as well as ancient, general as well as local.

But our original aims are unchanged. They are to Discover, Protect, Innovate and Inform. These are this exhibition's key themes. Do explore what our Society has achieved on a local and national level.

## **Portrait of James Grimston 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Verulam**

### **President and benefactor of the Society 1846-1895.**

James Grimston was President of the Society for 49 out of its first 55 years. Besides giving the Society its strategic direction, he also preserved the site of Verulamium. In 1854 he purchased the part which lay outside his estate; thereby saving the area from harmful development until it could be properly excavated. He also allowed only those he trusted to excavate.

The Grimston family have always been closely connected with the Society:

- They donated finds on their land to the city of St Albans.

- In 1929 they sold what is now Verulam Park to the City; allowing the famous excavations of the Roman site to take place by, amongst others, Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler (both Honorary Members of the Society).
- They were keen supporters of the Roman Theatre excavations.
- They are our patrons.

**Royal Collections Trust © Her Majesty  
Queen Elizabeth II**

# ***West Keeper's Gallery***

## ***Centre of room***

### **Clock Tower Model**

We, and St Albans Civic Society, provide volunteers so the Clock Tower can be visited. Caroline Howkins, who leads our group, approached Beth Jones, a student at the University of Hertfordshire to make a model of the Clock Tower for this exhibition. It also formed part of her degree work. We are delighted Beth was successful in obtaining her degree.

### ***Panel behind the Clock Tower model***

### **The St Albans Clock Tower**

The Clock Tower is the only medieval town belfry in England. It was completed by 1405 as a symbol of civic pride. Now, over 600 years later, its image is used to symbolise our local heritage and culture and has inspired many artists including Society

members such as, F G Kitton and Victoria Hine.

But it could all have been so different if it wasn't for us. By the 1860s the tower was dilapidated. We offered money to restore it and this persuaded the Town Council to raise funds by public subscription. In 1914 we took over the lease and opened the Tower charging 2d admission. The Council took over the lease but by the 1970s they could no longer afford to keep the Clock Tower open. Together with the Civic Society, we again came to the rescue, providing volunteers to keep it open.

During its life the Clock Tower has been - an ale-house, auctioneer's, butcher's, bookshop, draper's, earthenware store, fish shop, glass & china dealer, hatter's, hairdressers, paintstainer, pawnbroker, printer's, post office, saddler & harness maker, shoemaker, smith's, tailor's and Telegraph Station.

The Clock Tower is open weekends and bank holidays from Good Friday to the end of September. For more information:  
[www.stalbanshistory.org](http://www.stalbanshistory.org)

## **Frederick George Kitton (1856-1904)**

F G Kitton, artist, wood-engraver and author, became a member of our Society shortly after moving to St Albans in 1889. He gave a lecture to the Society on the 15th March 1901, entitled, “The Clock Tower: Its Origin and History” which was later published as a booklet (below).

He produced a number of sketches of the Clock Tower, including “The Clock Tower, St Albans” (right) and the “The Fruit Stall” which came second at the 1898 Hertfordshire Art Society Annual Exhibition at Hertford, winning him 10 shillings (below).

## **Victoria Hine (1840-1926)**

Mrs Victoria Hine, a watercolour painter and etcher, moved to Holywell Hill, St Albans with her artist husband, Harry, in 1881 and became a member of our Society. Of her “Ten Etchings of St Albans”, published in about 1886, two included views of the Clock Tower.

## **SAVE OUR CLOCK TOWER 1866**

In 1861, Mr Hill, the secretary of the Society, wrote to St Albans Council offering £30 to start a restoration fund for the Clock Tower which was in a dilapidated state. Many members made personal subscriptions and their names appeared on the lists of donators published in the Hertford Mercury for 25th February and 18th March 1865. The quote of £742 by Mr Miskin, the builder, was accepted with a completion date of November 1865 – it was eventually completed in October 1866 at a cost of just under £1000.

## **Lease on the Clock Tower 1914**

Our Society took over the lease on the Clock Tower in April 1914 in order to open it up to the public. For the admission price of 2d., a visitor could climb the 93 steps, enjoy the views, and admire Victorian turret clock and the medieval bell, Gabriel.

Canon George Glossop expressed concern about opening the Tower to the public in 1914 saying that if “certain ladies [suffragettes] visited the town” and climbed the Clock Tower staircase which “was particularly awkward one, and if these ladies got up there to throw down leaflets, they wouldn’t be able to stop them at all”.

[Image courtesy of Hertfordshire Archives]

## ***To the right of the door***

### **Clock Tower Competition**

The idea for the Clock Tower competition came about because of the need to “social distance”. How do we get our visitors down from the roof without passing the visitors coming up? So, we set a design competition and in came all sorts of entries – fantastical and practical, high tech and low tech, and funny and sensible but all engaging and enchanting. Due to lock down, the judges never met up but all did their voting by score sheets and email, but still managed to decide on these winners.

## ***Large wall to right of gallery***

### **Letter from Dr Mortimer Wheeler**

In this letter Dr Mortimer Wheeler is complaining about press intrusion into his excavations. Knighted in 1956, he became the foremost British archaeologist and the first popular TV archaeologist.

*Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies  
(HALS)*

### **Letter from Tessa Wheeler to Lord Verulam's land agent 1933**

In this letter Tessa writes about future plans for excavations at the Roman Theatre. Five of the seven committee members on the letterhead were Society members.

*Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies  
(HALS)*

### **Picture of Tessa Wheeler sweeping the hypocaust mosaic**

For four years Tessa Wheeler gave an annual lecture to the Society on what had been found during the previous season's

excavations. She also campaigned for a museum to be opened to exhibit the finds. Sadly, she died in 1936 and the Society later erected a plaque in the Verulamium Museum to her memory. She was buried in St Stephen's churchyard, St Albans, where you can still see her grave.

Do listen to a recording of Helen Bishop, one of our members, reading excerpts from Tessa's lectures.

*St Albans Museums*

## **Pictures of Tessa and Dr Mortimer Wheeler excavating at Verulamium 1930-1933**

Although the Wheelers were very much a husband and wife team, Mortimer tended to concentrate on the strategy, liaison and public relations as well as the Iron Age sites. His wife was very much the Site Director for the excavations at the main Verulamium site. She was also responsible for training the students and members of our Society who volunteered to help and learn.

*St Albans Museums*

## **1930s Discoveries at Verulamium**

Our Society played a key role in the 1930s excavations which preceded the creation of Verulam Park covering half the Roman site. In 1929 the City Council asked the Society to undertake excavations. Our Secretary, Charles Jones, consulted the Society of Antiquaries who joined the Society and City Council to plan a comprehensive investigation of Verulamium. The Director of the London Museum, Dr Mortimer Wheeler, was approached and a meeting took place over lunch in this very building.

From 1930-33 Mortimer and his wife Tessa along with a band of labourers, students and Society members excavated the site uncovering some of the finest mosaics ever discovered in Britain along with other artefacts. Mortimer also excavated the earthworks known as Beech Bottom and Devil's Dykes uncovering an unknown part of the district's pre- Roman past. This was one of the first archaeological excavations to cover a large landscape in England and over 25 per cent of the cost was met by Society members. Both the Wheelers were elected Honorary Members of our Society.

## ***Three large wall cases***

### ***Right hand case***

#### **Early Discoveries at Verulamium**

We led all early archaeological work at the Roman site of Verulamium. After the collapse of the Roman Western Empire many settlements, including Verulamium, declined. In the centuries which followed many of the remains above the surface were dismantled to provide materials for building and road making. Verulamium had to be rediscovered.

The first major discovery was the Roman Theatre excavated in 1847 by Richard Grove Lowe. We paid some of his excavation costs and printed his paper, outlining his discoveries, as our first major publication in 1848. Between 1898 and 1911 Society member William Page identified the site of the Forum and Basilica complex which was the administrative and commercial centre of the Roman town.

## **Cinerary Urn and early black bowl**

### **Verulamium**

#### **Cinerary urn dated before 200AD**

These items are some of the earliest excavated at Verulamium. Unfortunately, some early excavators did not provide details of what they found. We know the Earl of Verulam donated the black bowl and the cinerary urn, which held cremated remains, from a 19<sup>th</sup> century excavation at Verulamium. We do not know who found them, Richard Grove Lowe or William Page.

*St Albans Museums*

#### **Abstract from President's Report contained in Transactions of St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society 1929**

The Society produced records of its activities intermittently when funds allowed. Here we see the President's report stating our offer of assistance to the City Council for the excavations and its acceptance.

*St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society*

## ***Centre Case***

### **Early Discoveries at St Albans Abbey**

We have always been connected with the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban. The Archdeacon of St Albans, Dr Charles Burney suggested we should be formed, and one of our founders was Dr Henry Nicholson the Rector of the Abbey. Our first general meeting was in the Abbey Rectory on 21 October 1845. It was hoped we would be useful in preserving and restoring the then crumbling Abbey. Our members were often involved in archaeological digs in the Abbey precincts. The items displayed here were found during those digs. During Summer 1920 we funded and carried out an excavation in the garden of Orchard House (now demolished) which lay between the chapter house and the Victorian Deanery. When the trenches were being filled in Spring 1921 the gardener found the ivory fragment.

## **Copy of a fragment of an ivory book cover**

**Original found in the Precincts of St Albans Cathedral in 1921**

**1100-1199 AD**

The original is a rare survivor of one of the many medieval treasures of the Abbey. Most were lost when the Abbey was closed in 1539. It may have been attached to the front of a book cover, perhaps for a Bible or a book of religious services. You can see the holes for the rivets which would attach it to the cover. It is likely that the scene is from the Old Testament, but we cannot be sure. The craftsmanship is rated so highly that the original is preserved for the nation in The British Museum.

*Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban*

## **Monastic tile**

**Found in the Precincts of St Albans Cathedral in the 1800s**

**1300-1399 AD**

The high level of decoration applied to the monastic buildings as well as the Abbey Church. This was only appropriate as St

Albans Abbey was from 1163 England's premier monastery. This tile was unearthed in one of the Society excavations. It may have been included in the gifts to the Society in 1889 by Henry Toulmin who was the Society Treasurer and the owner of the Abbey Orchard field where the excavations took place.

*St Albans Museums*

## **Papal lead bull of Pope John XXIII**

**Found in a garden adjoining the Abbey's east end 1851-1852**

**1410-1414 AD**

This lead bull or seal was originally attached to a (now lost) document from the Pope. The two heads symbolise the Papacy and are of Saints Paul and Peter. The Inscription refers to this (**S**anctus **P**aulus, **S**anctus **P**etrus).

The papal document perhaps conferred privileges on the Abbey. The Pope John XXIII was deposed and is viewed as an 'Anti' or 'non-official' Pope. This meant the title could be used again by another Pope in 1958. The bull was exhibited at a meeting of

our Society by the Reverend Dr Nicholson in 1852.

*Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban*

## **Photograph of the Reverend Dr H Nicholson Rector of St Albans Abbey 1835-1866**

### **1860**

Dr Henry Nicholson was one of the founders of our Society. He worked tirelessly to ensure the Abbey church was restored. He allowed the Society to conduct archaeological work in and around the Abbey, and frequently gave lectures to the Society. His obituary stated: 'The widespread sorrow' caused by his death was 'a striking testimony to the love and esteem in which he was held by those among whom he lived and worked for thirty years'.

*Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban*

## ***Left hand case***

### **Modern Archaeological Techniques**

#### **Society Members and others helping with the geophysical survey of Verulamium 2019**

*Mike Smith, Community Archaeology and  
Geophysics Group (CAGG)*

#### **A TRCIA Earth Resistance Meter**

This is one of the machines used in the current survey of Verulamium. This machine is attached to the top of a frame as seen in this photograph.

*The Welwyn Archaeological Society.*

## ***Wall to the left of cases***

### **Mapping Verulamium**

#### **Surveys undertaken by the *Community Archaeology Geophysics Group***

CAGG was formed as part of the AHRC-funded *Sensing the Iron Age and Roman Past* project in 2013. The group has members from archaeological societies in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex and Cambridgeshire. CAGG undertakes surveys with local groups enabling them to access modern survey equipment and techniques. We have undertaken surveys on 24 sites, mainly in the east Midlands, but occasionally as far afield as Wiltshire. The work at the Roman city of Verulamium is our largest project and includes magnetometry, Earth Resistance and Ground Penetrating Radar surveys.

## **Insula XXXVII, building 1**

Buildings well-known from aerial photographs are often more clearly seen in the survey results.

## **Shops**

The shops next to the insula XVI temple show well in all three surveys.

## **Topographic survey**

When necessary, CAGG undertakes topographic surveys either using a dGPS or a UAV and SfM.

## **The Fosse**

The fosse is an earthwork on the NW side of Verulamium which predates the 3<sup>rd</sup> century town wall. It was sectioned by the Wheelers in the 1930s. The magnetometry survey revealed no clear archaeological feature within. The function of the earthwork remains unclear.

## **The Aqueduct**

We have interpreted the long sinuous feature which crosses the Gorhambury Estate as an aqueduct. It follows the contours as can be seen where it follows a V-shaped course to cross a dry valley. The aqueduct would have started further up the Ver valley near Redbourne.

## **At the Crossroads**

At the intersection of Streets 11 and 25, the surveys have revealed a large number of buildings with stone foundations, mainly of a much smaller size than some of the grander houses. The GPR survey is quite clear, although much work remains to be done processing the 19ha of data collected so far, particularly matching grids from 3 seasons.

## **Insula XXVI, Building 2**

This large townhouse shows clearly in the mag, GPR and Earth Resistance data. We decided to experiment with a multiplexed ER survey to examine changes with depth.

## **Insula XI**

An 18 inch gas main ruined the mag result in this Insula. Multichannel GPR survey by Mike Langton of Mala GS provided stunning results.

## **Pottery Kilns**

Verulamium is well-known for its early Roman pottery industry. We have detected a number of kilns, mainly in the south of the town.

**CAGG gratefully acknowledges the support of the following institutions:**

Arts & Humanities Research Council, UCL,  
SEAHA

## **Discover**

Our first aim as a Society was to protect the Abbey. But soon members were making exciting discoveries that added to our knowledge of St Albans and the surrounding area.

Richard Grove Lowe, a former Mayor of St Albans and one of our earliest members, discovered the Roman theatre on the Gorhambury Estate in 1847. He also excavated outside the Abbey Church working with another society member Reverend Henry Nicholson.

Excavating nowadays is costly, and does destroy intervening remains, so archaeologists now use non-invasive technology such as Ground Penetrating Radar. Since 2013 many Society members have assisted the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group in surveying the unexcavated areas of Verulamium.

## ***Corridor between galleries***

### **Protect**

We have always sought to protect our local heritage financially and through campaigning. We have given money to repair monuments and buildings. We have also exerted moral support to ensure buildings were not demolished or were restored sympathetically. We have a good relationship with St Albans Civic Society and campaign together on issues facing our City. Inevitably, there have been both successes and setbacks and sometimes conflict as well as amicable resolution.

One of our greatest successes was in 1859 when we led a campaign to insist the Clock Tower be restored and not pulled down.

During the 1880s we were divided over the plans of Sir Edmund Beckett, later Lord Grimthorpe, for restoring the cathedral. Sir Edmund was not a member of the Society, but some of his opponents were, and their letters show how bitter disagreements could be.

Challenges posed by historical structures are unrelenting. The work of Society members, Adam and Jill Singer in their recent valiant restoration of the medieval Kingsbury Barn, shows what can be achieved.

## **The Clock Tower**

The Clock Tower is the only medieval town belfry in England. It was completed by 1405 apparently as a symbol of civic pride. It now symbolises our local heritage and culture and has inspired many artists including Society members such as F. G. Kitton and Victoria Hine.

But it could all have been so different if it wasn't for us. By the 1850s the tower was dilapidated. We offered money to restore it and this persuaded the Town Council to raise funds by public subscription. In 1914 we took over the lease and opened the Tower charging 2d admission. The Council took over the lease but by the 1970s they could no longer afford to keep the Clock Tower open. Together with the Civic Society, we again came to the rescue, providing volunteers to keep it open.

During its life the Clock Tower has been many things from an alehouse to a Telegraph Station. It is usually open weekends and bank holidays from Good Friday to the end of September. For more information:  
[www.stalbanshistory.org](http://www.stalbanshistory.org)

## **Financial Support**

It is costly to preserve the past, so it remains for the enjoyment and education of future generations. Despite never being a very affluent Society, our history shows that we have always been prepared to donate money to help conserve important local buildings and memorials. The generosity of the Society and its members has helped secure the preservation of these buildings and monuments.

### **The surviving gateway of St Alban's Abbey**

1903-The Society granted money to repair the Abbey gateway.

### **The Bacon monument St Michael's church, St Albans**

1923- The Society granted money to help restore the monument to Sir Francis Bacon in St Michael's church.

1935- The Society granted money to repair St Michael's Church.

## **St Peter's Church, St Albans**

1932- The Society granted money granted to restore the Pemberton brass. The brass is engraved on both sides and is referred to as a 'palimpsest'. The old-style inscription is dated 1515. The newer, to Pemberton, is dated 1627.

1936- The Society granted money to restore the tomb of Nathaniel Cotton in St Peter's churchyard. Cotton pioneered the treatment of mental illness.

## **St Stephen's church, St Albans**

1934 – The Society granted money to preserve the Anglo-Saxon masonry and window in the North wall of St Stephen's Church.

## **Museum + Gallery, St Alban's**

2015-2017 The Society raised money to help reduce the gap between grants and expenses in the creation of St Albans Museum + Gallery.

## **Moral Support**

The natural desire to make improvements frequently leads to the destruction of what has gone before. However, a great deal of St Albans' charm and a reason why people live and visit our city is because of its blend of the old and the new. This was not always the case. Campaigns had to be fought to save buildings either from demolition or from undergoing such radical change they would have lost their traditional character.

These buildings, which we now take for granted, were all at one time at risk. Our Society played a key role in raising public awareness and persuading the buildings' owners to take steps to protect them:

## **The Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban's**

1856- Members of the Society formed the majority of the Committee who began the restoration of the Abbey Church.

## **The remaining Roman walls in Verulam Park**

1898- The Society erected fencing to protect the remaining Roman walls around St Albans.

## **'The Gables' in Market Place, St Alban's**

1899- Society member Frederick Kitton proposed a vote of thanks to those who had assisted him in the petition to save this building in the Market Place.

## **The former 'Tudor Tavern' in George Street and 'Crow Inn' in Fishpool Street St Alban's**

1902- The Society thanked businessmen for sympathetically restoring the buildings at 13 Fishpool Street and the upper corner of George Street.

## Kingsbury Barn

Most people would be deterred from attempting to rescue a Listed building in a dangerous state of repair, particularly if they had to buy the building and had no intention of living in it! By 2009 this is what members of our Society, Adam and Jill Singer, who own Kingsbury Manor, had done. This is the story in their words:

*‘Kingsbury Barn dates from 1374, one of several barns built to the same pattern in a short period following the Black Death. A planning application to make it into offices was refused several times, thanks to Roger Sansom of The Society of St Michael’s and Kingsbury who recognized the significance of the Grade II\* building and mobilised the local community to save it. It is one of a group of St Albans Abbey barns of national importance.*

*Conservation took 6 months after we got the licence to temporarily exclude the bats. Traditional materials and skills were used, rose head nails, hand-made tiles, timber pegs. Timbers were supported where necessary but not replaced and finally brushed with a soft brush. It sounds easy,*

*but involved a lot of new language, not least stop splayed scarf joint with under-squinted abutments - which we now know we have!*

*Architectural drawings were made before restoration and Roger Miles of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society recorded all the metal strapping that had been added over the centuries, so the barn is well documented.*

*Over 600 years old, the barn is now used for community and charity events and exhibitions and is part of St Albans heritage and an asset for its community.'*

The barn before restoration

**Adam and Jill Singer**

The barn after restoration

**Adam and Jill Singer**

## ***At top of staircase***

### **The Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban**

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fabric of the Abbey was in a dreadful state. In 1856 Gilbert Scott (later famous for his hotel at St Pancras Railway Station) was appointed Abbey architect. He joined our Society and planned the restoration. Our members raised funds for the work. Much was done, including preventing the central tower's collapse.

In 1878 Scott died. His place was taken by the wealthy Sir Edmund Becket, better known by his later title, Lord Grimthorpe. He did not join the Society but was determined to leave his mark on the Abbey. The Society's officials were unable to block his agreement with the Bishop, whereby Grimthorpe would pay for the restoration provided he could do whatever he liked.

However, one member of the Society, a wealthy banker, Henry Hucks Gibbs, later Lord Aldenham, controlled the restoration of the High Altar screen. He wanted to replace the missing statues of saints and holy men that the niches had once contained, along with the missing crucifix as the screen's centrepiece. Crucifixes had been forbidden

in the Church of England since the Reformation, but had become acceptable with the renewed interest in medieval architecture. Grimthorpe hated both ideas and took expensive legal action against Aldenham, who won the lawsuit. England, it is said, cheered and Aldenham implemented his ideas. The battle between the two men lasted from 1884 to 1899.

## **The exchange between Aldenham and Grimthorpe**

### **Pictures of the major protagonists**

In the Cathedral Library are three volumes of letters about the lawsuit between Lord Aldenham (1819-1907) and Lord Grimthorpe (1816-1905).

We have transcribed some of the letters and you can listen to the audio recording with members of the Society playing the roles of Aldenham, Grimthorpe, Dean Lawrence and the Bishop of St Albans. Dean Lawrence was very much in the middle between the two, although his sympathies lay with Aldenham.

*Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban*

## ***East Gallery to left of corridor***

### ***To left of door***

#### **Inform**

We have always aimed to raise awareness of our heritage. Our first lecture was in 1845 and our lecture series covering local, national, and international subjects of historic interest continues to this day.

Besides our talks, the Society continues to reach out to a wider audience. Its members share their research through publications – such as those about this building, the work of the architect Percival Blow, what life was like in St Albans during the 1914-1918 war, 17<sup>th</sup> century wills and our new series of ‘St Albans Concise Histories’.

We have always been innovative in how we make information available. In 1898 we agreed to erect commemorative plaques, many of which still exist. Today we digitise our material to reach a greater audience. The Society’s *Transactions* and lectures of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are accessible via our website. We hold in our library the report

of the Parliamentary Commission investigating bribery in the great election scandal of 1850. This has now been digitised.

‘Facts’ are challenged by reappraising the evidence and interactivity is used to generate interest. The Society’s website and email circulation bring events to members’ notice.

## **Set of Postcards from the 1907 Pageant**

*Originals donated by Brian and Janet  
Carter*

## **The Memorial plaques in St Albans**

In 1898 the Council of the Society agreed to promote a scheme to erect 'monumental tablets' to mark historic places in Hertfordshire. The reason is not given, presumably it was to inform passers-by of the significance of what they could see. In practice, the Society only managed to do this in St Albans. Financial difficulties also restricted the number of plaques we could erect. The first was a board erected in 1898 describing the remains of the Roman wall in Verulam Woods. The second was a tablet placed in Romeland in 1926 to commemorate the martyr, George Tankerfield. Neither of these exist today, but that marking the death of The Duke of Somerset, at the 1455 Battle of St Albans, does. So do the ones commemorating the Eleanor Cross, the residence of the 1<sup>st</sup> Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, and Tessa Wheeler.

## ***Wall to the right of the corridor***

### **Using aerial photography for archaeology**

Our Society was one of the first to commission air photographs to help plan archaeological excavations. 'Aerial photography' in archaeological excavations dates from 1913 when photographs were taken from a box-kite over a site in Sudan. During the First World War photographs were taken over the Western Front from aircraft. The archaeologist O.G.S Crawford, who had excavated in the Sudan and had been a member of the Royal Flying Corps, advocated using aerial photography to discover archaeological sites. Our President, in his 1929 Report, recorded the Society's gratitude to William Page and O.G.S Crawford for arranging air photography over Verulamium:

*'11 air photographs of the site of Verulamium were taken for the Society. These have been enlarged and show lines of roads and buildings that are now below the surface; they will be of great assistance in planning excavations.'*

Mortimer Wheeler was a supporter of Crawford's work. No doubt he used the

photographs before starting the excavations  
at Verulamium

**Some of the original air photographs of  
Verulamium taken for the Society in 1929**

*Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies  
(HALS)*

**A key plan showing the location of the  
photographs produced for the Society in  
1929**

*Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies  
(HALS)*

**Correspondence between the Society  
and Lord Verulam for permission to  
photograph the site**

*Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies  
(HALS)*

## ***On case end***

### **Henry Fowler and the Abbey Complex**

Rev. Henry Fowler was second master at St Albans Abbey School and a member of our Society. He wanted to discover the layout of the monastic complex at St Albans at the time of its greatest abbot, Thomas de la Mare (1349-1396). This was difficult because, by the 1860s, only the Abbey church and one gateway remained.

Fowler's methods were way ahead of his time. By careful measuring, excavating, and recording his findings, and gleaning what he could from studying the Abbey chronicles, he pieced together what is still considered to be a largely accurate depiction of the complex. In February 1876 he read his paper to the Society. It is a fascinatingly detailed description of the walls, gateways, buildings, cemeteries, and the adjoining properties.

He produced a beautiful plan to show the possible layout of the monastery to accompany his research. Several copies and fragments of this plan remain in the Abbey archives, but none are signed by him

and it is known that other Society members made copies.

### **Copy of Fowler's original plan of the Abbey Complex**

This plan from the Abbey School is a modern photocopy of what may be Fowler's original plan. You can see his signature. The original has been damaged by an attempt to laminate it in order to preserve it. This has led to the red ink Fowler used being absorbed into the laminate. This digital shows all his work more clearly than the original.

*St Albans School*

## ***In wall cases***

### ***Right hand case***

#### **Dr Norman Davey and recovering Roman Wall plaster**

Norman Davey, one of our members, had worked with the Wheelers during their excavations of Verulamium. Together with other Society members, in the 1950s, he joined Sheppard Frere's team excavating in advance of the road widening scheme at Bluehouse Hill. During these excavations large sheets of fallen Roman wall plaster were found. A process for lifting wall plaster had only been recently developed and was in its infancy. However, Davey devised new methods for lifting, preservation and mounting the plaster. He used the facilities of the Government's Building Research Station at Garston, Watford where he worked.

Davey's new process involved:

- specific steps for removing the wall plaster,
- treatment using water and specific solvents to fix pigments,
- use of other solvents to fill in gaps

all done in a room with temperature and humidity controls.

He also designed a reinforcing frame of duralumin (expanded aluminium) on which the slabs were mounted to allow transport and re-erection.

Sheppard Frere wrote:

*'The enormous achievement of Norman Davey has hitherto received little notice: but it would be no exaggeration to state that he has provided a whole new dimension to Romano British archaeology by recreating the nature of painted walls and ceilings to complement the conventional plans and pavements. In doing so he has made apparent a fresh channel of impact whereby classical art and culture affected Romano British life.'*

### **Picture showing Norman Davey at work**

*Photo from N.Davey and R. Ling Wall Paintings in Roman Britain (Britannia Monograph 3, 198 2) reproduced with kind permission of The Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies'*

## **Restored Roman wall painting, displayed in the Verulamium Museum**

*St Albans Museums*

### **Sir John Evans – a self-educated man with a fascination for archaeology**

Sir John (1823-1908) started as a clerk and became owner of the Apsley paper mill, Hemel Hempstead. Fascinated by archaeology, he was an active member of many national societies. As Vice President of our Society, he ensured a local museum was established at Hatfield Road in 1898 'to prevent the loss of relics of Ancient British, Roman, Saxon and Medieval periods.' It was the precursor of this museum.

Sir John made numerous innovative contributions:

- His 1848 paper on 'Coins of Ancient Verulam' laid the foundation of modern scholarship on British Iron Age coinage.
- He pioneered how archaeologists recorded pots.
- He secured an informal acceptance by the Government of the need to change the way it rewarded discoverers of

precious metal objects at a time when a large gold hoard was discovered at Park Street. Previously the Treasury had only paid bullion value for excavated gold coins. As a result, many people sold the coins they found to dealers who simply melted them down. Evans succeeded in persuading the Treasury to recognise the importance of an artefact based on its archaeological or numismatic value, so finders were paid a premium above bullion value. This helped save numerous artefacts from destruction and its principles are still followed today.

*Image The National Portrait Gallery, London*

## **Sir John Evans' pamphlet on "Coins of Ancient Verulam"**

Sir John presented his findings to our Society. This, and further work he produced and presented to the Numismatic Society, led to his main work '*The Coins of The Ancient Britons*', published in 1863.

*St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society*

**Photographs showing Sir John Evans'  
Depiction of pottery.**

*St Albans Museums*

**Photograph of coins from the Park Street  
Hoard currently in The British Museum.**

*The British Museum*

**Prehistoric Axe Head**

Sir John Evans, our Vice-President, donated many items to the museum he helped to establish in Hatfield Road. This prehistoric axe head is one of them'.

*St Albans Museums*

## ***Centre Case***

### **William Page and the Victoria County History**

William Page (1861–1934) was the most notable historian associated with the Society. He was Joint Secretary for five years and produced guides to St Albans and the Cathedral. He developed scholarly record-based local history.

His monumental achievement is the *Victoria History of the Counties of England* (VCH), founded in 1899. He was involved from the start and in 1902 was appointed general editor. He devised the templates which are still used today to bring uniformity to the volumes. In 1914, eminent medievalist T. F. Tout praised the VCH as ‘the training ground for a younger generation of medieval historians.’

Page died in post in 1934, having issued some 89 volumes, guided the VCH through numerous problems, and assured its survival – it is now one of the world’s longest running research projects.

Locally he edited and wrote much of the four volume VCH for Hertfordshire.

## **Portrait of William Page**

*Institute of Historical Research, University of  
London*

## **Four volumes of the *Victoria History of the County of Hertford***

*St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural &  
Archaeological Society*

## ***Left hand case***

**‘Report of The Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Existence of Bribery in the BOROUGH OF SAINT ALBANS. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty 1852’**

*St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society*

**‘Report of The Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Existence of Bribery in the BOROUGH OF SAINT ALBANS. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty 1852’**

Copy of the Digitised pages from the Report.  
Please see who took bribes.

*Thanks to Malcolm Merrick for the digitisation*

## **Selection of sketches by J.H. Buckingham**

Buckingham sketched many of the people involved in the Bribery Commission including both the court employees and

some of the witnesses. He was also a satirical cartoonist so many of his sketches include humorous notes he took of what was said.

### *St Albans Museums*

## **Presenting information in other ways**

The Society has taken advantage of technological advances to make its material more accessible. In the Society's Library at Sandridge Business Park is a copy of the original report relating to the bribery and intimidation of witnesses in the 1850 Parliamentary by-election. A Parliamentary Commission was finally sent to St Albans and sat in the courtroom of this building. It obtained evidence which showed that some two thirds of St Albans' voters sold their votes. This was not uncommon at the time, particularly in places with a small electorate. However, St Albans was well known for the practice over many years. Also the measures by which the electoral agents had prevented witnesses appearing in London to testify – further bribery and, indeed, kidnapping!- were viewed as extreme. The Government was determined that an example should be made to discourage

similar practices elsewhere. As a result, St Albans lost its right to send MPs to Parliament

The records have now been digitised so you can see if a person bearing your name gave or received bribes.

## ***To right of window***

### **Innovate**

Throughout its history our Society has attracted many talented members. It has provided a forum where new ideas can be tested and developed. Some of these innovations in archaeology and conservancy have been implemented nationally.

Sir John Evans' method of illustrating pottery has been followed by archaeologists ever since. He was a leader in the study of Iron Age coinage in the UK. He also gained government acceptance of the principle of paying discoverers of precious metal objects an amount greater than the base metal value. This discouraged the melting down of finds and led ultimately to the modern principles of 'Treasure Trove'.

Dr Norman Davey developed a new technique for raising and preserving intact painted wall plaster. He was able to preserve the wonderful Roman wall plaster found in the 1950s excavations at Bluehouse Hill.

William Page became General Editor of the Victoria History of the Counties of England,

saving the project which is still ongoing today.

The Society was one of the first to commission aerial photography of an archaeological site, arranging this before the Wheelers began their excavations of Verulamium.

More recently the Society has pioneered the use of illustrated maps.

## ***Window blind and below***

### **Publications over time**

The Society produced *Transactions* recording events and papers that members had given. These were produced from 1883-1914 and 1924-1938. Unfortunately, after this date, due to time and publishing costs, the *Transactions* were only produced in 1953 and 1961. All 34 volumes have now been digitised and are available on our website. Nowadays our Society and The East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society combine to produce *Hertfordshire Archaeology and History*.

From our earliest days the Society has encouraged publications. Some of these were undertaken at its expense and some by its members. The earliest was during the Society's first year when, in 1846, Reverend Boutell published his *Short Guide to St Albans Abbey*.

Other publications followed dealing with aspects of St Albans and the Society's wider Hertfordshire remit. Subjects have included Hertfordshire place names, Bricks and Buildings, The 1553 Borough Charter, the

Street Memorials of St Albans Abbey Parish  
and St Albans 1650-1700 amongst others.  
Some of these have been digitised on our  
website, others are still in print.

## ***Case in centre of room***

### **The Society's Current Publications**

We continue to make information on St Albans' heritage accessible to all. Our recent publications cover very different subjects:

- “*The Old Town Hall, St Albans*” - everything about this iconic building
- “*St Albans, Life on the Home Front*”- St Albans during the First World War
- “*St Albans Architect Percival Blow*”- Blow designed many local buildings using different architectural styles
- *St Albans Wills 1600–1615* provides rich insight into people's lives and the local economy

Dedicated groups of members undertake the research and work together as a team.

Subject matter knowledge is not necessary. Passion is important. Chris Green who wrote *The Old Town Hall, St Albans*, studied almost every inch of the building. Twenty-one members in three years, researched, wrote, and published *St Albans Life on the*

*Home Front.* The Percival Blow project team recorded all his 190 buildings.

Work has just begun on a series of publications on aspects of the history of St Albans and District: '*St Albans Concise Histories*'.

## ***To the left of window***

### **Creating maps to aid understanding wins the Society a National Award**

In 1982 six dedicated members of the Society completed seven years work. Their publication '*St Albans c 1820- the Town*' and its follow up '*St Albans c1820- The People*' gave a snapshot of St Albans before the railways, with a population of 4,500 and an inn and alehouse for every 25 male inhabitants!

They created a series of maps with buildings carefully labelled for reference. There was no Computer Assisted Design, so tracing paper and rulers were used instead! Ann Dean recalls keeping them fuelled up with tea in the dining room of her home on Verulam Road. The cartographers gave 'particular thanks to our near and dear ones with whom we have conversed only in grunts over the past five years'.

Their hard work resulted in them receiving the annual award from the British Association for Local History for the 'Best Local Society Publication for 1983/4'. They were: Eveline Alty, Donald Ashby, David

Dean (Project Lead) Kathleen Goad, Mary Harrington and Alan Pickles

**One of the award-winning maps**

*St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society*

**A photograph of the award-winning team**

*Ann Dean*

# St Albans Street Names

*'Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me and I learn'*

**(Benjamin Franklin: Polymath and one of the Founding Fathers of the USA)**

We learn and become informed in many ways. Some people prefer to observe or be talked to, others like to learn by interacting with each other. Here are the names of the 15 places in central St Albans. We have superimposed them onto the 1820s map to show which road were in existence in 1820 and which came later.

Do you know the origins of the names?

- 1) **Alma Cut**
- 2) **College Street**
- 3) **Drovers Way**
- 4) **Fishpool Street**
- 5) **Hall Place Gardens**
- 6) **Holywell Hill**
- 7) **London Road**
- 8) **Maltings**
- 9) **Marlborough Gate**
- 10) **Romeland**
- 11) **Sopwell Lane**

- 12) **Spencer Street**
- 13) **Spicer Street**
- 14) **Sumpter Yard**
- 15) **Verulam Road**

You can find the answers at [www.stalbanshistory.org/category/175th-anniversary](http://www.stalbanshistory.org/category/175th-anniversary) or use the QR code on the panel.

## ***Outside gallery***

### **The Reverend Boutell and Monumental Brasses**

The Revd Charles Boutell was one of our first secretaries. The first committee meeting took place in his rectory at Sandridge. His enthusiasm to promote our Society is beyond doubt but, unfortunately, he developed the habit of publishing books and financing them from the societies for which he was Treasurer! He was our Treasurer for two years and had to be pressed for accounts which, when they finally arrived, showed an amount owing to a printer which the Society took steps to ensure he paid. His passions included archaeology, heraldry and monumental brasses and his two books on heraldry and monumental brasses are highly respected and still in print today. Boutell dedicated his book on 'Monumental Brasses' to our Society.

### **Boutell's Book 'Memorial Brasses'**

Reverend Boutell's highly respected book on 'Monumental Brasses' was dedicated to the President and members of our Society  
*St Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural & Archaeological Society*

## **Photograph of the brass of Thomas De la Mare, Abbot of St Albans 1349 – 1396, St Albans Abbey.**

This is regarded as the finest brass of a high-ranking clergyman in England. It was well known to Charles Boutell, who described it in his book and made rubbings of parts of it. The brass was one of very few that survived the destruction of images in churches in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was in poor condition. Boutell had it restored in 1846 at the request of our Society. The cost is not recorded. When first produced in Flanders, it may well have been highly coloured to give a living depiction of the abbot.

## **Monumental Brass Society**

## ***In room at end of glass link***

### **The Society's lecture series**

Our first talk took place in 1845, many of the lectures taking place in this building. Our current venue is Marlborough Road Methodist Church, St Albans and we run an extensive series of lectures usually from September to May. Our lectures cover local, national and international subjects of historic interest as they have done throughout our first 175 years. Then, as now, our presenters are a mix of local experts and national figures. The national figures have included Carenza Lewis, Nikolaus Pevsner, Basil Spence, Mortimer and Tessa Wheeler. We hope, after the pandemic is over, to welcome Professor Michael Wood to this distinguished group. Here are the names of only some of those who have given talks, some famous, some less so, but all on fascinating subjects.

## List of Images

### **1. Mrs Maude Knight.**

© Katie Jones

### **2. Professor W.G. Hoskins**

©The Devonshire Association

### **3. Sir Basil Spence**

© National Portrait Gallery, London

### **4. Professor Sir Nikolaus Pevsner**

© Public Domain

### **5. Professor Colin Renfrew**

© Portable Antiquities Scheme

### **6. Professor Lord Asa Briggs**

© National Portrait Gallery, London

### **7. Dr Oliver Rackham**

© Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

**8. Most Revd and RH Lord Robert Runcie**

© Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban

**9. Mrs Jane Kelsall**

© Jane Kelsall

**10. Dr Rosalind Niblett**

© Dr Rosalind Niblett

**11. Miss Beryl Carrington**

© Andy Lawrence

**12. Mr Peter Hurford**

© St Albans International Organ Festival

**13. Professor Suzannah Lipscomb**

© Creative Commons

**14. Professor Carenza Lewis**

© Public Domain

## **Reassessing what we have and making new conclusions**

The Society has always believed in the value of encouraging the reinterpretation of history in the light of new evidence. We know more about the Roman occupation of this country, or indeed the War of the Roses, than we did fifty years ago.

Here are some current ideas recently discussed at events run by the Society:

**Accepted thinking-** The Romans population of Verulamium was 4,000

**Current thinking** – We have no accurate data on the population of any Roman town in the UK, and certainly not Verulamium.

**Accepted thinking-** The Roman Army left Britain in 410AD

**Current thinking** – The letter on which this statement is based only exists as a later copy of the original. As all the rest of the letter deals with Italy, what has been assumed to be a reference to Britannia may refer to the Italian town of Brittii . We therefore do not know when Roman rule ceased in the UK.

**Accepted thinking-** In 1887 workers on the new railway line running through Wheathampstead discovered a grave. In it they found a brass ewer with hinged lid and moulded feet dating from the late 6th to early 7th century.

**Current thinking-** The ewer is believed to be Byzantine and originated in the eastern Mediterranean. This means the grave, of which we have no more details, was of a high-status individual and possibly an Anglo-Saxon ruler of this area.

*With grateful thanks to Dr Kris Lockyer, Mr Simon West and the participants at the Society's 2019 conference on "Verulamium – the Life and Death of a Roman City".*

## **Standard Object labels**

**E10 (1) (colour code for Inform-Future)**

### **Picture of The Wheathampstead Ewer**

The ewer was sold by a Wheathampstead landowner to the British Museum in 1900. It has never been displayed in St Albans. It is the only known artefact from the Wheathampstead grave.

## **The British Museum**

## **The Current Society's Members**

In its earliest days the Society was no different from other societies. It was male and reflected the domination of the Church of England. But as its remit and social conditions changed, the society became more diverse. In 1899 Mrs Maude Knight became our first female Honorary Secretary. In 1900 she was the first female to lecture to the Society – her paper being ‘The Black Death and its effects with special reference to St Albans’.

Nowadays, the Society is much more diverse and welcoming. We are always looking for new members that are our life blood. Our role is still to Discover, Protect, Innovate and Inform. If you are interested in any of these, we are interested in you.

*The Society may claim to have played its part, not only in revealing and recording an important part of the history of St Albans, but also perhaps in helping to make some of that history’*

Brian Moody (Hon Sec) in “The Light of Other Days – A Short History of the St

Albans & Hertfordshire Architectural &  
Archaeological Society” 1995)