

Laura Bloom
Visitor Services Officer
St Albans Cathedral



Welcome

- VSO since the beginning of this year – one of the new HLF funded roles at the Cathedral
- My job is to ensure all visitors have the best possible experience when they come to visit us
- I am also a Cathedral Guide so I am going to start off by giving you a very brief history of the Cathedral

A brief history



Alban story – Britain's first saint and longest site of continuous Christian worship in the UK over 1700 years

793 Saxon King Offa founded the first Benedictine monastery here

1066 & 1077 archbishop of Canterbury Lanfranc brings his nephew Paul over to be the first Norman abbot

New church consecrated in 1115 and grew to become one of the wealthiest and most important abbey in the country not in part thanks to the only English Pope, Adrian IV being kind to the monastery that he grew up in the shadows of, and where his father was buried.

Photo – what the monastery looked like just before it was shut down by Henry VIII during the Dissolution in 1539. You can see what a vast community it had become and how the town in the background, grew up right along with it.

Townpeople bought for 400 and it became their parish church – too large to look after

Victorians decided to restore this precious building: thanks to incredibly hard work by George Gilbert Scott and Lord Grimthorpe the building survived in much the same way it looks today

1877 – becomes Cathedral and we now have one of the largest congregations of any Cathedral in the country and continue to be a site of pilgrimage for thousands of visitors each year

What we offer

- Free Daily Guided Tours
- Tower Tours
- Services
- Concerts
- Talks and Courses
- Family Events
- Shop
- Café



- If you want the full story please do come and take a tour with our Cathedral Guides– we offer free guided tours every day of the week
- I have brought lots of copies of our What's On Guide which has all of our upcoming events for the next few months listed – please do take one when you leave.
- Throughout the year we have all sorts of special services for schools, charities, and special groups
- In addition to concerts and recitals
- We have an incredibly exciting programme through our study centre of courses you can sign up for like Philosophy, Faith and Culture, and Old English and there are also amazing evening talks on varied topics: Faith and Football, Theology and the Tour de France, Shakespeare's Women and so many more – I have brought the summer programme with so please to take one when you leave
- Family discovery mornings – the last over Easter brought in over 300 children to
- The weather is perfect at the moment for the Abbot's Kitchen Café in the orchard and our shop is offering some lovely St Albans Cathedral inspired gifts which you must go and have a look at



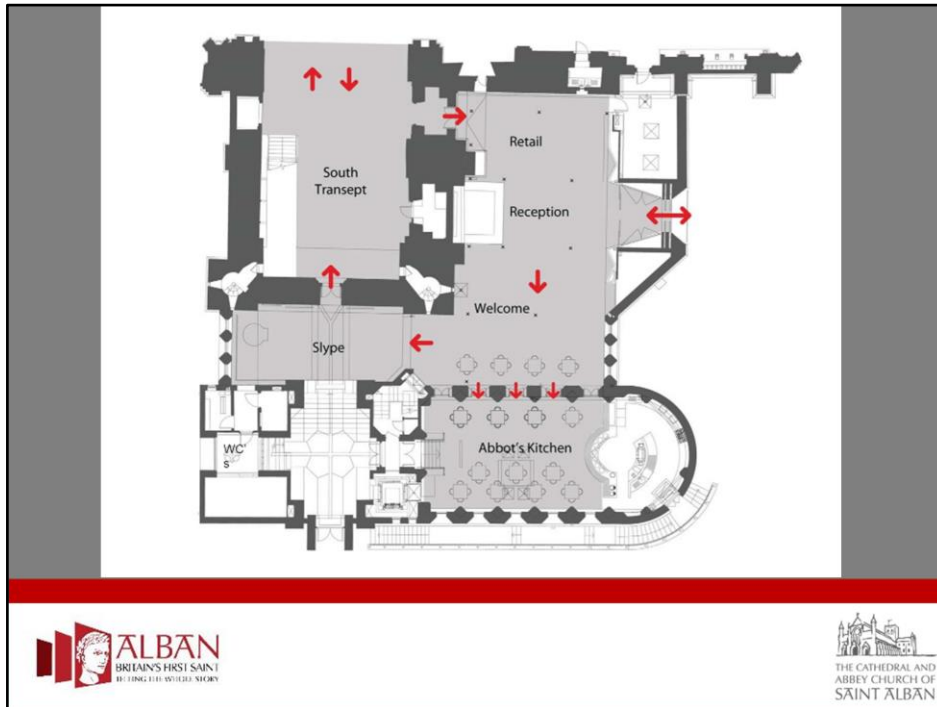
And this is thanks to the Alban, Britain's First Saint Project

- Julia just told you about the amazing work the museum is doing and their work getting the new Museum ready to open
- The Cathedral is also in the middle of a project which I will tell you all about now. St Albans having 2 major development projects part funded by the HLF is a once in a lifetime opportunity to change the way people experience our city – which is incredibly exciting
- Alban, Britain's First Saint is a 7m project HLF funded for 4m and 3m from fundraising by the Cathedral through trusts, foundations, and over 1000 individuals
- What is this project about? This is what it says on the tin really – the project's aim is to tell the story of Alban, the people who built, ran, and lived in the Abbey and the many other stories of this places which has influenced 1,700 years of British history.
- We would like to raise the profile of St Albans as a visitor destination and help sustain the future of our magnificent building and the community that surrounds and upholds it



Welcome is at the heart of this project

- A new welcome centre where visitors and groups can orientate themselves
- Creates an obvious main entrance into the Cathedral



WELCOME CENTRE

- The welcome building will give people the initial information they need to understand what they are going to see.
- The building will also contain the shop, and it will open out onto the café on the left and on to other practical facilities, not least new TOILETS.
- It will be an exciting building and will create a wonderful new venue space for events

New Education & Study Centre





- Our amazing collection of medieval wall paintings dating back to the 12th century will be illuminated with audio visual projectors –
- This technical innovation is the first of its kind in an English Cathedral and will recreate the original effect of the paintings allowing visitors to see them as pilgrims would have seen them centuries ago.



AMPHIBALUS

The project will include the full restoration of the recovered shrine of Amphibalus

Amphibalus was the priest that Alban rescued, but who was later martyred in Redbourn. He also had a shrine but since its discovery during Victorian restoration works until now it has not been properly rebuilt and has remained a heap of stones, languishing in the corner of the North Ambulatory.

The plan is to reconstruct it in the four Tapers Chapel, and also to commission a painted reredos there telling the story of Alban and Amphibalus in medieval style.

This will put the medieval Abbey's two (of only 13 in the country) stone pedestal shrines, on show together for the first time since the Reformation.

Why are we doing all of this?



What is the point of all the building work, designing interpretive displays, writing text for signs and everything else we have been working so hard on?

Tell our stories



We think we have some pretty fantastic stories to tell the world

- To scream and shout about them
- Raise the profile and awareness of Alban, Britain's First Saint and his remarkable story of bravery, compassion, and faith
- This is an artists impression of what the timeline in the Welcome Centre might look like



- The exhibition space, seen here, is where the treasury used to be, next to the North Transept if you are familiar with the Cathedral building
- This will be the main concentrated area to tell our stories – you will be able to read about the scriptorium in the monastery and watch a video about daily life in the Cathedral today



Artists impression of some of the family friendly activities and information we will have in the South Transept

New Audiences

- Millennials
- Local visitors
- SEND
- Non-local visitors



Aim to increase our visitor numbers 35% by 2021 and sustain this growth beyond the project



One of the major aspects of this project is attracting a wider and more diverse audience to come in and hear these stories

- Lindsay Wong our new Community Engagement Officer who is here today, wave hello, is working to engage all of the audiences listed here in addition to our existing visitors
- One of the huge benefits of the project is an increase in staff which is making all sorts of things possible for the first time ever – So we also have dedicated marketing campaigns to target these audiences – Hayley Lewis our head of marketing is working with an ever increasing team to make all of this happen

Wide variety of events

- Themed Tours
- Education trails, learning boxes
- Study days, workshops, conferences
- Festivals
- Late events
- Staff and volunteer training
- Joint Exhibitions



One of the ways we will do this is by creating an exciting programme of activities to bring in new visitors

- Themed Tours: touch tours, costumed tours, youth tours, specialist subject tours and there is even talk of a binoculars tour so watch this space for more details to emerge
- Festivals: World of Alban, Roman Festival
- Training: Customer care, disability awareness, visitor welcome across st albans

Exhibitions: Scribes and Scholars


Improve facilities and access

- Lift in the Chapter House to have a fully accessible Library and learning space
- Raising the floor of the Café to be the same level as Welcome Centre
- Ramp in exhibition space to open more of the building up to all visitors
- Larger and better toilet facilities




- Last, but certainly not least, we have the opportunity to vastly improve our facilities and access throughout the Cathedral, Chapter House and new welcome centre so we can provide a fitting welcome to all who come in.
- Specialist training for our staff and volunteers to ensure we can make everyone welcome and comfortable when they visit



Supported by




The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



Raise the profile of St Albans



ALBAN
BRITAIN'S FIRST SAINT
RE-THINK YOUR VISITOR STORY



THE CATHEDRAL AND
ABBAY CHURCH OF
SAINT ALBAN

- As I mentioned at the beginning of this presentation, we as the staff and volunteers of the two major sites in St Albans have the most wonderful opportunity to work together to make St Albans a really fantastic place for people to come and visit.
- We are getting the time and resources to invest in the city and make it the best it has ever been.
- If we all have a better understanding of both sites and what they offer visitors we will be able to always point visitors in the right direction.
- Thank you so much for coming today and working together to make the most of these incredibly opportunities St Albans has been given.



- I will now hand you over to Cat who will be talking about tourism in the city
- But before then does anyone have any questions at all for me?