

<b>St Albans Museums: 'Talking Buildings' project, 2016</b>	
<b>Building:</b>	<b>The Salvation Army Hall, 16 – 18 Victoria Street</b>
<b>Researched by:</b>	<b>Maureen Jones</b>
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: <a href="mailto:museum@stalbans.gov.uk">museum@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	

On February 4<sup>th</sup> 1911 representatives of the Salvation Army, the Mayor and leaders of public and religious life in St Albans gathered in Victoria Street to lay the foundation stones of the new Salvation Army Citadel.

The Salvation Army had been founded in the East End of London in 1865 by William Booth and the movement was expanding rapidly. In 1906 a great scheme was inaugurated by Salvation Army HQ to erect 250 new citadels and by 1911, 185 of them were already built and 25 were in the course of construction.

There had been privately owned public baths on the site. They were built about 1887 following unsuccessful pressure on St Albans council to provide such a facility for the town. Unfortunately it was not particularly profitable, which could have been due to the building of Cottonmill Lane baths in 1905, and they were closed down. The only evidence which remains of this building is a few tiles on the wall in the basement of the citadel.

The building was pulled down in 1910 and J Honour and Sons of Tring were commissioned to build a block building in the Salvation Army style which would include a main hall to accommodate about 600 people, a small hall accommodating about 230 people with various anterooms. The external design was to be of red brick with terracotta dressings. There would be crenulations at the roof line to represent a fortress as in all Salvation Army citadels. The total cost of the building was estimated at £4,200. National HQ would contribute £1,000 of this. The local corps and their friends would raise £2,000 leaving £1,200 on mortgage.

Commissioner William Eadie, representing General Booth presided and spoke of the Salvation Army's appeal to the man in the street. The Salvation Army was fighting for the underdog and wanted, by the power of God, to make a new man of him.

The Mayor, Mr A Faulkner, laid the first of the stones with a silver trowel. He thanked the Salvation Army for their work with the poor of St Albans and talked of their work in the slums of great cities, getting help to places that other churches had failed to reach. Putting people back on their feet not only in this country but in the colonies and by helping people to emigrate to Canada.

In this era there was a large movement to encourage people to emigrate and populate Canada. Adverts were put into newspapers like the Hertfordshire Mercury offering 'Free Farms' 160 acres of free land. Thus enabling people to quit paying rent and live in happy homes in a healthy and bracing climate. There would be cheap fares and comfortable and speedy travel. The Canadian 1911 census reveals that in that year the population was just over 7million, 22% of which was composed of emigrants ( those born outside Canada) of these emigrants 49% came from the British Isles.

William Booth had conceived the idea of sending surplus British labour to overseas colonies. The Salvation Army participated in the recruitment of women emigrants to Australia in 1882. By 1885 a regular series of notices appeared in the Army's magazine 'War Cry' advertising emigration to

Australia, South Africa and Canada. Their first emigration ship, holding over 1,000 people sailed from Liverpool to Canada in 1905. By 1908 more than 36,000 migrants had travelled to various parts of the British Dominions with help from the Salvation Army.

Foundation stones were also laid by Mr George Day, Mr A McIlwraith, Mr H McIlwraith and Mr Samuel Ryder, St Albans entrepreneur and seed merchant after whom the Ryder Cup is named. Mr Ryder, in his speech, praised the Salvation Army's work. He felt it was appropriate that there should be a good citadel in St Albans as the Army had honoured the town by bringing its printing works here.

William Booth was determined that the Salvation Army should have its own printing press and to that end in 1879 he set up a small printing office in London behind Army HQ. Here was printed not only War Cry but posters and hymn sheets. In 1901 the press moved out of London to St Albans, where it was known as the Campfield Press, and it expanded to also print bibles, hymnbooks, prayer books and other Christian literature. At their peak these printing works employed over 350 people and took on work for other organisations as long as they conformed to Army principles and carried no adverts for cigarettes or alcohol. The works ceased trading in 1991.

The St Albans citadel continues the work of the Salvation Army to this day.

#### **Research sources**

- Members of the Salvation Army at Victoria St
- [www.salvationarmy.org.uk/](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/)
- The Hertfordshire Mercury newspaper
- The Herts Advertiser and St Albans Times
- St Albans a History and Celebration by Tom Doig, The Francis Frith Collection, 2012
- Herts Memories -History of Victoria St by Derek Roft <http://www.hertsmemories.org.uk/>
- Sopwell Memories [www.sopwellmemories.org.uk/](http://www.sopwellmemories.org.uk/)
- Salvation Printing/ The Typographic Hub [www.typographicclub.org/articles/entry/salvation-printing/](http://www.typographicclub.org/articles/entry/salvation-printing/)
- St Albans Central Library. Roberts, E (1979) Chequer St, St Albans: historical background of the central area redevelopment site. Hertfordshire County Council. Local studies reference STALOC 711.7094 2585