

## Other news

**A new Ziggurat application** (5/2015/2835) has been lodged. More use of glass is proposed in the already 'prior approved' conversion of the building into flats. It is not clear if this replaces the controversial plan for a brick façade, already agreed. The Society will not make a representation this time as the plan seems more acceptable.

**There has been yet another culture and heritage survey** putting St Albans near the bottom. We feel judgements are being made where the comparisons are not like with like. An excellent letter from Alison Macfarlane (Herts Ad 29 Oct) rightly pointed this out and that survey exercises should be analysed for any lessons to learn

## Visit to Salisbury

**W**hat a great day! The sun shone: the motorways cleared: we arrived on time in the lovely city of Salisbury. Where to wander on such a delightful day?

Coffee first in the garden of Mompesson House where "Sense and Sensibility" was filmed 20 years ago. How on earth did Emma Thompson get into that ball gown? And they had corsets underneath!

Lunch on the green gazing at Salisbury's beautiful cathedral then on to the town's museum to see the Turner Exhibition - paintings from his early years. The artist had worked for several architects, so his pencil and water colours of the cathedral are exquisite. A couple of the pictures had screws on the frame where a little curtain was hung to protect the painting. Did you know that?

And so into the cathedral. Hundreds still visiting to see their copy of the Magna Carta.

Then sitting in their wonderful Chapter House. Seeing the dead rat found in the skull of an ancient bishop. The rat was full of arsenic. St Albans Guides would have a ball with that story. Think of poor Humphrey!?

I didn't see Ted Heath's house enjoyed by some. I didn't shop. There was so much choice for us all. On the eve of the super moon we certainly had a super day. Thank you Bryan (Hanlon) for arranging the visit.

**Mollie Kennedy**

**Editors' note:** thank you to the other Brian (Holmes) for arranging the successful visit to Hemel Hempstead. Very good lunch at Alberto's; great tour of St Mary's Church.

and not simply dismissed as 'ridiculous' as in a previous article dated 1 Oct.

**The symptoms of the problem with the lakes in Verulamium Park** may have declined because it is winter, but the issue has not gone away. There is much discussion taking place but no decisions have been made. The Council claims lack of funds. It needs to get its priorities right. For the third year it is pressing ahead with a loss-making Christmas market - £140,000 deficit to date. All for an event that lasts just weeks. Yet Verulamium Park, with its lakes, is an all year-round destination.

**The Book Sale** on 24 October in the Old Town Hall, in partnership with the Arc & Arc, to boost funds for the new museum and gallery, raised £1,700. Well done everybody!

### Forthcoming events 2016

*Saturday/Sunday 23/24 January*

#### Enjoy St Albans Weekend Clock Tower opening

Climb St Albans' 93 steps for great views. 2.00pm – 4.00pm FREE (provisional event – check nearer the time in the special programme)

*Thursday 18 February*

#### Daughters of St Albans

An illustrated talk by Elizabeth Eastwood from the City Guides. The Cross Street Centre\* Dagnall Street at 8.00pm - FREE

*Thursday 17 March*

#### Fleetville: A Game of Consequences

A talk by Michael Neighbour of Fleetville Diaries. The Cross Street Centre\* Dagnall Street at 8.00pm - FREE

**Non-members are most welcome at our Cross Street evenings or to enquire about availability of seats on visits.**

\*Disabled parking only at The Cross Street Centre. There are public car parks nearby.

So as to avoid any possible confusion or misunderstanding, members are respectfully asked that if they attend any meeting or activity where they declare they are a member of this Society, they make it clear that their attendance and any opinion expressed does not necessarily represent those of the Society's Committee. The Committee can always be contacted for advice, information and update by any member. Also, the Society wishes to make it clear that when it is consulted about any plan or proposal this should not automatically be deemed as leading to consent.

**The Railfreight Petition** of 11,500 signatures to not sell the land was handed in to County Hall on 10 November last. We await the decision.

**It is a pity more members did not attend Elizabeth Eastwood's superb talk** (19 Nov) 'Sons of St Albans' - she came up with 26 local notables! **Don't miss** 'Daughters of St Albans' on 18 Feb 2016 - see events.

## News from the Clock Tower

**A**fter one of the best seasons ever, Heritage Open Days attracted 1,200+ visitors, mostly over that weekend – quite an achievement.

At Christmas, look out for the lights at the top of the tower, purchased jointly by the Arc & Arc and ourselves from Clock Tower funds. These were lit from 15 November, in conjunction with the Christmas illuminations throughout the city centre, some of which the Society has helped to sponsor.

## Membership Matters

### To join or renew membership

Subscriptions remain unchanged and are renewable on **1 April** each year.

Individual	£10
Family (2 or more)	£15
Pensioner/Student/Unwaged	£7
Residents' Associations	<b>Free</b>
Corporate	£50

To join or check payment details please contact the Membership Secretary, Bryan Hanlon, tel: 01727 851734 hanlonbryan@gmail.com or post to - 24 Monks Horton Way, St Albans AL1 4HA

### The Society acknowledges with gratitude the support from the following Corporate Members:

- T&B (St Albans) Ltd
- Debenhams Ottaway
- Rumball Sedgwick
- National Pharmaceutical Association
- Christopher Place Shopping Centre
- St Columba's College

*It is with sadness we report the recent deaths of Donald Bishop and Paul Barton, both members for many years.*

# St Albans CIVIC SOCIETY

Looking to the future-  
*with an eye to the past*

**President: Geraint John**

**Chairman: Tim Boatswain** 07873 586074

## Newsletter | Winter 2015

*This edition has been prepared by Eric Roberts (Committee member) and Peter Trevelyan (Awards Team). If you have any comments, please write to the Editors at 3 Abbey Mill End, St Albans AL3 4HN or email [ptrevelyan@aol.com](mailto:ptrevelyan@aol.com)*

### NEWS & COMMENTS

**H**eritage Open Days, as an event, was re-kindled locally through the Society's efforts in September and proved a great success. We are grateful to the Herts Advertiser for its support and publicity. Overall numbers at all the local attractions were up. We are planning to do the same next year, and will be asking the Council to reconsider its stance and become involved as a partner in this European and national event. 20 new members joined over the weekend. We welcome them.

**The Annual Awards** evening on 13 October was one of the best attended ever. About 130 people came along. The extra space created for the reception worked well, no doubt helped by opening up an area where Julian Trevelyan played some classical pieces from the repertoire that he was taking the following week to perform at the Marguerite Long International Piano Competition in Paris - which he went on to win. At 16, he was the youngest finalist ever, and the only British representative. Thanks, and well done Julian!

Pictures of the award winning projects feature in this edition. The triumph of The Odyssey recognises the importance of this iconic building and the tremendous amenity it now provides. Hopefully those who approved its demolition for flats can now see the value of the building and its use, and will realise why the Society fought so hard. Even former critical neighbours seem to have been converted! We were delighted to see the award acknowledged and the role of the Society, dating back to 2005, recognised in the cinema's November programme.



**Planning functions** in St Albans are under threat. We are gravely concerned over the Government's latest moves that could eventually emasculate local planning. This is covered in our article 'Nineteen Eighty-Four and Big Brother'. Do not be deceived by the attempt at humour – this is deadly serious and threatens St Albans in its pincer-like attack on local democracy and decision-making. These new powers are, to use a local analogy, 'Grimthorpien' in their scope. The Society intends to raise the issue with Anne Main, our MP, and Civic Voice, to which we are affiliated. The latter's policy of advocating collaborative processes with developers is now surely too one-sided and a somewhat academic exercise.

We accept there is a need to build more houses but, with the huge forecast increase in population, no one seems prepared to equate the two. Are our leaders so incompetent that they cannot connect these issues, or is it that they dare not do so? Meanwhile, none of the questions that we asked in the Summer Newsletter regarding jobs, schools, health care and transport, have been answered. These need to be addressed in

parallel with any housing developments in our area. Housing should not simply be imposed on the District with no regard for supporting infrastructure. **It is simply not sustainable**, which would be in itself a strong reason to reject more housing until these important issues are addressed.

**The Buongiorno Italia deli** in Lattimore Road will be known to many members. It is therefore pleasing to note the Planning Inspector, a Matthew Nunn, who actually seems to listen to what local people say in Appeals, turned down the proposed conversion of part of the building to residential. Back in April, when councillors on Plans Central committee narrowly refused the application, one of its members, Cllr Packenham, was reported as saying that the decision was "ludicrous" and that it was a "weak case". The applicant duly appealed.

Fortunately, the Inspector saw that the shop provided jobs and a wide range of high quality foods not readily available nearby. It had also won a number of awards and was a "very popular and valued local facility". Not so ludicrous and weak after all!

# Nineteen Eighty-Four and Big Brother

The Government announced on 12 October that the two year temporary rule allowing offices to be automatically converted into flats is to become permanent.

This prior approval clause, imposed onto the local planning system, means neither the Council, your Councillors, nor do you get a say in any such application. Whilst this has created several hundred new homes in St Albans, some out on retail parks, it has meant a loss of local job opportunities. Opposition to the changes has been somewhat muted from the commercial world, but the move to permanent prior approval has now brought expressions of concern from some London business organizations as likely to hinder the Capital's potential employment growth.

Consequently, the planning system thus becomes even more skewed in favour of any developer-cum-applicant. Remember, already you cannot appeal against a planning application approval that you objected to, whilst the applicant can if their plan is refused.

Things are about to get worse! That prior approval route has led George Osborne to come up with a policy to create zonal systems for brownfield sites, where developers will get automatic planning permission to build new homes irrespective of their design. Once again Councils, Councillors and residents will have no say. The area around the city station, already under pressure with the Ziggurat and Beaufort House conversions, now looks vulnerable for yet more ubiquitous blocks of flats.

The assault on our local democracy in planning goes on. If, like our Council, whose Local Plan dates back to 1994, an Authority does not come up with a new one by 2017

the Government intends to step in and dictate where new developments take place.

It's shades of Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty Four" and Big Brother. Some people find it hard to believe what's happening. Whither Localism?

Developers must be rubbing their hands in glee. The need for an independent voice in the planning process has never been greater. No Room 101 here!

Such was the monthly column for the Review in November. Things have moved on. The national press has since reported that: *"Ministers have quietly given developers the right to be granted planning in principle in areas that are earmarked for new housing schemes. ... (they) have expanded the scope of this 'planning in principle' power in recent weeks from brownfield sites to areas that are slated for development in local plans"*.

**The problem here is that our Council has still not finalised a Local Plan. At this rate, the Government might indeed step in in a year's time to produce its own plan for St Albans, with housing allocations on green belt land. Developers will then have carte-blanche to build what they want, whatever it looks like, on these greenfield sites.**

**Our already diminished planning department could lose both its local planning function and its principal design function. These would simply become redundant. Why should developers then talk to local politicians or, indeed, bother to engage with the community? The Government will have killed off Localism! Memo to Civic Voice - this must not go unchallenged.**

## City assets and the City Neighbourhood Committee (CNC)

The Cabinet of the Council has decided to transfer certain 'assets', notably the green spaces (other than Verulamium Park which has been retained as a strategic asset), children's play areas, public conveniences, and the Christmas lights in St Peter's Street to the CNC.

However, the Council has not given the

CNC anything like the necessary budget to maintain these assets. Another recipe for disaster in the making?

**Editors' note:** Thanks to the Clarence Park Residents' Association which alerted us to this shift. The full version of the Association's letter is available on the website.



# Annual Awards 2014

For projects finished between 1 January - 31 December 2014. Nominations for 2015 are now welcome.

### The Society's Award Winner 2014 Odyssey Cinema

Instigator: The Odyssey Cinema  
Architect: Richard Macan-Lind, EHW Ltd  
Contractor: Procure Building Services Ltd

More than just a restoration project, this is a complete re-birth!

It is evident that extreme care has been shown in the exceptionally sympathetic refurbishment of this Art Deco building. Period features and design motifs have

been salvaged or faithfully copied and used to very great effect, producing a balanced atmosphere of glitz, opulence, expectation, relaxation and comfort, all with great integrity.

A highly satisfactory result and a very great asset to St Albans.

### Commendations

Right top: Earthworks, The Warren

Right bottom: 61 Marshalls Drive

Below: Farrow & Ball, Market Place



## The Trevelyan Prize

A new feature this year was the introduction of the Trevelyan Prize. This is awarded annually to a project that has achieved the finest quality in terms of conservation/restoration.



### The Trevelyan Prize 2014 Abbey Parish War Memorials and the St Albans City War Memorial.

Instigator  
St Albans City and District Council

Designers  
Deborah White, Paul Gallagher – SADC

Contractors  
PAYE Stone work – London SE9 (Plaques),  
Harton Ltd – Bedford (Paving)  
BJ Building – St Albans (VC memorial stone)

The work of restoration is, indeed, a magnificent and worthy achievement to mark the centenary of World War 1. Drawing on painstaking research by members of SAHAAS (Arc & Arc), it has been meticulous in its execution. The cleaned and renewed stonework with its carved lettering and decorative surrounds reaffirm, quietly and without ostentation, that 'We will remember them'.

