



New LED street lights

Members may have noticed the incongruous replacement lanterns appearing on many lamp posts around the city. We are indebted to an article in the newsletter of a fellow-society in Folkestone (proposed destination for our Spring rail visit on 6 May 2017):

“The internet is awash with negative reaction to the new lights. *“Lighting cities with cheap, glaring LEDs is a dim move”* [NEW SCIENTIST]; *“LED Streetlights save energy, but could have some serious side effects”* [EARTH ISLAND JOURNAL]; *“Coming to a street near you - the lights that keep you awake and could make people ill ...”* [MAIL ONLINE]. According to the last article, wherever LED lights have been installed, they have left residents in uproar, with petitions and threats of legal action reported in Wales, Bath and Manchester. Studies have indicated that LED lights disrupt sleep patterns by suppressing the body’s production of melatonin, a hormone by which our sleep patterns are governed.

“Our chief concerns, though, are of course the environmental impact, which is twofold. Aesthetically, the new lamps look awful; and, while white light may sound preferable to existing sodium street lighting, white LEDs give a bleak, unforgiving light, totally unsuited to conservation areas.”

We concur. What do members think?

In order to avoid any possible confusion or misunderstanding members are respectfully asked that, should they be involved in 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 on any matter by any member. Equally, the Society wishes to make it clear that when it is consulted about any item this should not be automatically deemed as leading to consent.

Where’s my Programme card?

Members may be expecting their new Programme of events card with this edition. It has been decided that it will now appear with the December newsletter and feature 2017. Your attention is drawn therefore to the following events for the rest of 2016:

8-11 September

Heritage Open Days

The Society has once again stepped in and produced a local guide in association with the Herts Advertiser. St Albans Council is giving its support this time. Copies of the guide can be found at the Tourist Information Office in the Arena, the Clock Tower at weekends, and the Cathedral’s Information Desk. Enjoy this year’s bigger, better and more varied programme of attractions as part of a European and National heritage festival.

Saturday 8 October

Autumn coach visit to Cheltenham

Details and booking form are available with this newsletter for members. Non-members may also apply for seats, so bring your friends.

Tuesday 11 October

Annual Awards Evening

A celebration for members and invited guests. Wine, canapés – and music! One of the Society’s highlights of the year. Come along and see who and what wins! Doors open 19.30 for 20.00 at the Maltings Arts Theatre. FREE for paid-up members.

Thursday 17 November

‘Scandalous St Albans’

A talk by Elizabeth Eastwood. We look forward to the entertaining stories this excellent speaker has to give us this time. 20.00 at the Cross Street Centre, (Upper) Dagnall Street Baptist Church. FREE.

Answers to Quiz 1. Early film/cartoon animation. **2.** Fishpool Street/Tuberculosis even numbers side. **3.** The Capitol and then The Odeon. **4.** Semaphore signalling. **5.** Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. **6.** 1374. **7.** Robert Runcie. **8.** Lord Grimthorpe. **9.** Clarence Park. **10.** Ryder’s Seed and Exhibition Hall. *The winner of the £20 M&S voucher scored 8½ out of a potential 10.*

News from the Clock Tower

The current season continues to see an increase in visitors. However, we do need some more volunteers. Are there any students out there who would be willing to give a few hours of their time? This could help boost their social skills and local knowledge – all good on a CV.

The Tower was used for the launch of the Heritage Open Days programme on 25 August.

Interested volunteers please contact (01727) 838965/830521.



One of the 606 seats in the District currently being freshly painted. (Ray and son Joe are doing the hard work.)

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’ Association	Free
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:

- Austin Trueman Associates
- Christopher Place Shopping Centre
- Debenhams Ottaway
- National Pharmacy Association
- St Columba’s College
- T&B (St Albans) Ltd

St Albans CIVIC SOCIETY

Looking to the future-
with an eye on the past

President: Geraint John

Chairman: Tim Boatswain 07873 586074

Newsletter | Autumn 2016

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

NEWS & COMMENTS

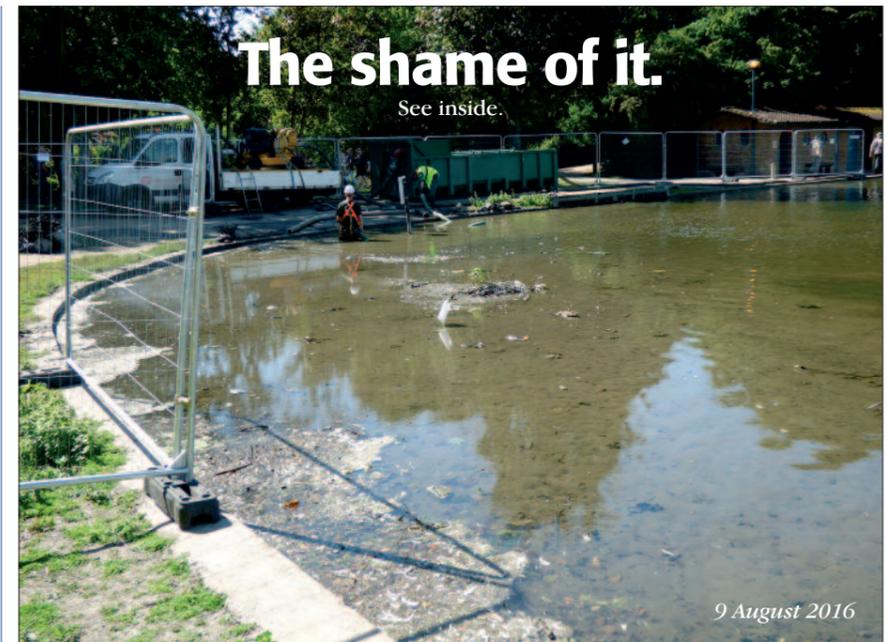
We welcome new members who have joined the Society during the summer, including Austin Trueman Associates (Corporate) and those from the Larks in the Park event. The Society had a stall and an entertaining quiz, which is published here for you to try your hand.

The AGM on the 30 June had a good attendance. The wine tasting opportunity afterwards, organised by the Chairman, went down well!

We draw members’ attention to **Heritage Open Days** 8-11 September, the **visit to Cheltenham** on 8 October, and the **Annual Awards Celebration Evening** on 11 October. More on this in the article concerning the 2016/17 **programme card**.

National planning – we were encouraged to see that the new Prime Minister is in favour of keeping the Green Belt. However, this is already being challenged. A report by the London School of Economics is advocating houses should be built on what the authors designate as ‘ugly’ parts. This totally ignores the overriding principle of Green Belt status which is to ensure settlements remain distinct and do not become merged into one large agglomeration. It is not just about the land looking ‘pretty’.

There are still thousands of hectares of derelict or brownfield land, especially within London, that should be prioritised for housing and which are within reach of existing services and infrastructure. It is accepted we need to raise annual house building from last year’s 143,000 to nearer the 200,000 target. The Government should



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take measures to ensure that sites where there are existing approvals are developed and that house building firms are not land-banking, which invariably sees them seeking to grab more areas of the Green Belt. Incentives should be given to kickstart brownfield building.

Local planning – sadly, the Pemberton Building, in the grounds of St Albans City School, has now been lost. The Cathedral’s new Welcome Centre has been approved, despite an eleventh-hour recommendation to refuse by the Council’s planners. With a wing and prayer, some might even say with an element of divine intervention after the Dean had spoken in favour, Councillors gave permission, thereby enabling this Heritage Lottery Grant Project to proceed. The Society hopes that once this new building is in place, the external appearance of the Cathedral will no longer be despoiled by inappropriate and plain ugly temporary and transient structures, such as the frequent portakabins and that ice cream van!

In the last newsletter we urged members to become involved in the proposed **development by Angle Property for the Civic Centre South Opportunity Site**. Angle held a public consultation on 13/14 May which many members attended. The timescale was that comments would be reviewed during the summer with a planning application being lodged this autumn. Then, in July, the Council announced, with Look!St Albans, a series of workshops and public meetings on 9, 10, 11 and 16 September (www.stalbans.gov.uk/planning/policy/ccos.aspx). It is not clear if this is an alternative or parallel consultation process, or whether this might in some way

prejudice Angle’s expected planning application. This is all rather confusing. The CCSOS is extremely important. Nothing has happened for several years and then, just as can occur when waiting for a bus, two (consultations) come along almost together! Moreover, the chosen dates clash with, the already advertised, Heritage Open Days, which is unfortunate because many potential participants might well be interested in both.

Let us not forget what the previous exercise has already established for the site. The City Vision study led by Urban Practitioners, December 2009, identified the CCSOS as a priority for early development and included a high level conceptual masterplan for the area. This proposed a mixed-use development that included a hotel and supermarket; further retail and restaurant uses; a cultural and community hub, potentially comprising library, gallery space, cinema and museum to be accommodated on the site.

St Albans City Vision, although a non-statutory document, forms an essential part of the evidence base for the emerging Core Strategy, not least because of the extensive consultation in its preparation. It is of direct relevance to the future of this site.

OTHER NEWS

Railfreight. Apparently, Helioslough is now known as SEGRO. In July, they announced that they had done their own timetable work purporting to show how the terminal and freight trains would fit into the Midland Mainline schedules. This has been given to Network Rail. Since when has SEGRO obtained timetable expertise and

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NEWS & COMMENTS *continued*

were they working from the existing service or the one with those extra trains proposed in 2018 with the Thameslink Enhancement Programme? This is somewhat like a pupil not only selecting their exam questions, but answering them and presenting it to their Headmaster as a wonderful piece of work! The Society has requested MP Anne Main ask Network Rail to make SEGRO's submission available for inspection by interested parties. This she has done. Network Rail has replied saying it requires 'further analysis by SEGRO' before it is in a position to have 'a stance on pathing availability'. So SEGRO's claim to have solved the timetable issue is premature.

Now you see it, now you don't! That magnificent Roman mosaic, hidden under carpet tiles in the Arena, was on display in early August. (Why not also for Heritage Open Days?) Unforgivably, it is still badly marked by stains left by those nasty tiles. This mosaic needs to be moved to a permanent display. Why not to the new Town Hall Museum and Art Gallery? What do members think? **Tell us.**

Still on the **Town Hall Project**, the Society is donating a further £500 in support, and its name will be engraved on one of the special Oak Panel Honours Boards.

Noisy Skies!

Aircraft noise over St Albans has increased recently – and it could get worse. The prime culprit is Luton airport and the moving south of the Harpenden flight path over St Albans. Peter Lilly MP is advocating a further rerouting of planes towards west of St Albans – that would mean noise over the Cathedral and Verulamium. Mr Lilly has got a cheek to dump on St Albans like this. Ann Main please liaise with him and stop this nuisance.

People need to act now.

There is strong evidence of links between aircraft noise and health disorders. St Albans house price values may be affected. Luton airport plans further expansion. Why should this council-owned airport in Bedfordshire be pushing its aircraft noise down into Hertfordshire?

What you can do:

- Visit www.stalbanssky.org
- Complain to the Civil Aviation Authority at airspace.policy@caa.co.uk
- Copy in our MP and both local and County Councils, and your Councillors. They all need to be doing more about this.

The Shame in Verulamium

St Albans Council should be ashamed that it allowed Verulamium Park's lakes to become, for a second summer, foul smelling polluted eyesores. Indeed, we should all be ashamed of this image of our city.

There have been repeated articles and letters in the local press expressing concern, disgust and dismay at the state of the lakes and the death of wildfowl. These have been like water off a duck's back (pardon the pun). The responsible Council Officer and spokespersons have seemed almost in denial about the seriousness of the situation and the anger and upset caused, plus the need to do something quickly.

Prompted in February 2016, by an alleged remark of a Councillor, that there had been no actual letter of complaint received (that is hard to believe), the Civic Society soon remedied that! An official complaint was made to the Chief Executive, James Blake, with a copy to Council Leader Cllr Julian Daly, and the Portfolio Holder responsible for the park Cllr Chichester-Miles. This brought an official response on the 7 March on behalf of the Head of Community Services, Richard Shwe, listing the various options the Council was evaluating (some might say procrastinating) to address the problem. The fact the Council had all last winter to have done just this seems to have eluded them. A timebomb had been left ticking away since last summer's pollution waiting to explode into the lakes this year.

Surprise, surprise! Summer 2016 arrived. The weather warmed. The stagnant silt fermented creating the dreadful smell and killed off, indeed slaughtered, wildfowl including some swans. The RSPB/RSPCA should take action against the Council for its rotten treatment of these birds.

Has anyone felt responsible enough to

resign? Fat chance! The Chief Executive has remained silent. Isn't he concerned about his Council's bad press? Verulam Councillors have seemed impotent to act.

This August we're told tons of silt (one communication says '150 tonnes' another '60 tons') were to be removed as an initial effort to help ease matters. WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG TO GET ROUND TO DOING THIS OBVIOUS THING? A political circular showing some smiling Councillors posing lakeside as if they have saved the day really didn't impress. The damage had been done. Too late to save the wildlife. Ducks, swans RIP.

Those appalled visitors may never return, so the local visitor economy suffers. Residents' amenities have been compromised. How the park obtained its Green Flag status again is frankly amazing and brings that accreditation system into disrepute. As for civic pride – forget it. Oh that we could pass a motion of no confidence in our Council over this.

This cannot be allowed to happen again. From being ashamed, we all need to become more involved. The situation, coupled with the recent destaffing of the makeshift Tourist Information Office, makes a mockery of the Council's aspiration to be a prime visitor destination. The Council must get a grip – and urgently initiate a long-term plan. It needs to convince us that it is up to the job of positively managing and promoting the St Albans visitor economy and assets within its care.

Editors' note: on a happier note, efforts to protect the Roman Wall, which have very much involved our Chairman, Tim Boatswain, look to be coming to fruition. New low-level railings are to be installed. (So why remove them in the first place?)



Jack Wills has had a good paint job. Coating the end of the roof tiles looks wrong, and is asking for trouble.



Letter box freshly painted - looks great, shame about the poor preparation!



Larks in the Park quiz

From the stall in Victoria Playing Field on 26 June:

1. St Albans' based Arthur Melbourne-Cooper was a pioneer of what?
2. Which St Albans street is said to have had a 'tuberculosis' side and a 'thrombosis' side?
3. Today's Odyssey Cinema has had two previous names. Name them (half point each). (*The Civic Society started the campaign to save the cinema from demolition.*)
4. What was the Clock Tower roof used for during the Napoleonic Wars?
5. Holywell House was the home of which famous lady?
6. Kingsbury Barn was built in? (Nearest decade will do!) (*The Society will be opening the Barn for Heritage Open Days 9, 10 and 11 Sept.*)
7. A former Archbishop of Canterbury is buried on the north side of the Cathedral. Who?
8. Batchwood Hall was originally the residence of?
9. What did the then Duke of Cambridge open in St Albans in 1894? (Neither a door or window will do!)
10. Today's Café Rouge was originally what?

Answers on the back page.



The Annual Cricket Match – the Civic Society and the Friends of Victoria Playing Field versus the Council on Sunday 17 July. Result inconclusive, but great fun!

Night Time Economy

The Society responded to the Council's online Night Time Survey. However, it considered the format rather restrictive and therefore sent the following additional comments, as it did seem somewhat biased towards just young people and drinking. The city centre should be for all age groups:

1. Why just the focus on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays? This gives the impression that the survey is only considering the current night time economy emphasis on licensed activities.
2. Consideration should be given to create a more inclusive evening economy. For example, provision of a civic space for performance / public events, eg music - perhaps consider for the new development proposed east of St Peters Street (CCSOS).
3. As well as No.2, build on the new Town Hall Museum and Gallery project to create a truly cultural hub for residents and visitors to enjoy evening events. These would finish c. 22:00-22:30 giving the opportunity for patrons to use nearby facilities such as cafes / restaurants and traditional pubs (with food), without feeling intimidated by the excess drinking atmosphere that is often present.
4. A recent survey by Lancaster University found that the relaxation of licensing hours created by the 2003 Act had not created a more continental café culture but had fuelled binge drinking with the associated consequences on city centre environments, health, additional pressure on A&E, police and councils (costs of administration and cleaning).
5. St Albans has a high number of city

centre residents that continues to increase with the recent conversion of offices into residential dwellings. These are occupied by commuters and young families whose amenities need to be recognised and met. At present there appears to be an emphasis on attracting an outside clientele who have different needs. The local resident groups need to be better catered for and their need for an undisturbed night's sleep protected otherwise the current tensions that exist between residents and some late night establishments will be exacerbated.

The Council is invariably drawn in to have to try and sort out the problems which should not have been allowed to arise in the first place.

6. Until the present clash of city centre night time interests is resolved, any Purple Flag accreditation is going to be jeopardised.

7. The recent further downgrading of the temporary Tourist Information Office is unhelpful. We trust this is not a prelude to ongoing cut backs in this activity. The restoration of a proper Tourist Visitor Information Centre with full facilities (offering events, performances and travel ticketing) and fully trained staff into the revamped Town Hall building is essential. Otherwise a great opportunity will be lost to promote the city's economy, both the day time and night time.

Rita Waldron and Eric Roberts

On behalf of the Society's Committee.

Editors' note: Do members have any further views? **Please let us know.**

St Albans Art Society Annual Exhibition

This took place 27 July to 30 July. Winner of the St Albans trophy (donated by Society member Mary Newbery) was 'Spying on St Albans Cathedral' by Michele Head. Our President, Geraint John (left), presented the award.

