

Silent Witnesses: The Archaeology of Burials, Churchyards, and their Contexts



27-29 September 2019, St Albans Cathedral

We are pleased to be bringing the SCA conference to the beautiful city of St Albans, where recent excavations at the Cathedral have uncovered not only the lost grave of Abbot Wheathampstead but also evidence of Normans and post-medieval burials. Fittingly, this conference is set to address the themes of burials and churchyards through a wide array of lectures, including a keynote presentation by Martin Biddle. We will focus not only on St Albans, but address the themes of burials and churchyards through an array of lectures.

Highlights:

Tour of St Albans Cathedral
Guided coach tour of churches
Keynote Friday evening lecture

Christianity at Verulamium and the Origins of St Albans Abbey
(Martin Biddle, St Albans Cathedral Archaeologist)

The Monks' Graveyard Excavation: finding a lost abbot at the Abbey church and Cathedral of St Albans
(James Holman, Canterbury Archaeological Unit)

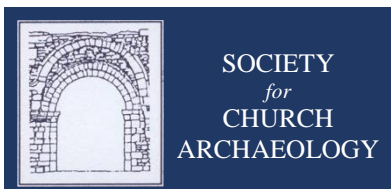
Life and death on the outskirts of London: osteological finds from St George's Chapel, Brentford
(Elizabeth Knox, Museum of London Archaeology)

Health and disease in the 19th-century Baptist congregation at Mare Street, Hackney
(Niamh Cartey, Museum of London Archaeology)

Elite burials at Peterborough Cathedral in the 11th Century
(Jackie Hall, Peterborough Cathedral Archaeologist)

The Digital Ossuary: new recording and analysis of the medieval charnel house at Rothwell, Northants
(Lizzy Craig-Atkins, University of Sheffield)

Where the bodies are buried: the National Burial Grounds Survey
(Joe Elders, Church Buildings Council)



2019 Conference Programme

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<https://www.churcharchaeology.org/conferences.html>

Friday 27 September

17.30 – **Reception and Keynote Lecture:**
 19.00 **Martin Biddle: Christianity at Verulamium and the Origins of St Albans Abbey @ St Michael's Memorial Hall, Branch Road, AL3 4SS**

14.10 – **Health and disease in the 19th-century Baptist congregation at Mare Street, Hackney** Niamh Cartey (Museum of London Archaeology)

14.50 **Tea Break**

Saturday 28 September

9.00 – **Registration @ St Albans Cathedral, Visitor Centre**

9.30 – **Elite burials at Peterborough Cathedral in the 11th century**
 10.10 Jackie Hall (Peterborough Cathedral Archaeologist)

10.10 – **The Monks' graveyard excavation: finding a lost abbot at the Abbey church and Cathedral of St Albans**
 10.50 James Holman (Canterbury Archaeological Unit)

10.50 **Tea break**

11.10 – **The Digital Ossuary: new recording and analysis of the medieval charnel house at Rothwell, Northants**
 11.50 Lizzy Craig-Atkins (University of Sheffield)

11.50 – **Society for Church Archaeology AGM**
 12.30

12.30 – **Lunch**
 13.30

13.30 – **Life and death on the outskirts of London: osteological finds from St George's Chapel, Brentford**
 14.10 Elizabeth Knox (Museum of London)

15.10 – **Where the bodies are buried: the National Burial Grounds Survey**
 15.50 Joe Elders (Church Buildings Council)

17.00 – **Tour of St Albans Cathedral**
 18.15

18.30 – **Conference Dinner @ Loft, 23B George Street, AL3 4ES**
 20.30

Sunday 29 September

Hertfordshire Churches Coach Trip guided by Joe Elders of the Church Buildings Council.

All times approximate and subject to traffic / other conditions on the day

9.00 **Coach departs St Albans**

St Mary's, Ashwell

St Mary's, Hitchin

12.00 – **Lunch at the Bucks Head, Hitchin**
 13.20

St Mary's, Reed

St Helen's, Wheathampstead

16.00 **Arrival back in St Albans**



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Sunday Coach Tour*

St Mary's, Ashwell

"So I went to Ashwell. We first saw its gigantic fourteenth century church tower dominating all. And the church inside, white and spacious and East Anglian, with arcades like a Cathedral, clear glass everywhere, uneven floors and splendid chancel, was worthy of the best of English villages." Sir John Betjeman

St Mary's is a 14th century church, and one of the largest village churches in Hertfordshire. Its most striking feature is in the tower. Crenellations about half way up The Tower show its original height. The second half is said to have been added after the Battle of Agincourt in 1415 and the traditional Hertfordshire spike was added between 1415 and 1562. The Tower is the tallest in Hertfordshire rising to 176 feet. Unusual features include a stone handrail in the spiral staircase and a passage in the thickness of the walls, themselves eight feet thick in places.



Inside, originally the windows were filled with stained glass and the walls covered with paintings. All were destroyed either at the Reformation or by the 17th century Puritans. In 1538 the east window telling the story of Thomas Beckett was removed by edict of Henry VIII. The church contains some interesting examples of medieval graffiti, and some fine 20th century embroideries by Percy Sheldrick of Ashwell who was a master weaver at the William Morris workshops.

St Mary's, Hitchin



In 792 AD Offa, King of Mercia, founded a Benedictine monastery on this site. In 910 the monastery was destroyed by fire and the monks moved to the Abbey at St Albans. The second church, mentioned in the Domesday Book, was partly destroyed by a 'great wind' in 1115, and an earthquake in 1298. The present church dates substantially from the 14th and 15th centuries. The church was originally dedicated to St Andrew, but came to be known as The Church of St Mary due to the powerful and influential Guild of our Lady founded in the 15th century, the same period from which dates the font, with its depiction of the Twelve Apostles, mutilated by soldiers during the Reformation.

The Charnel House was used as a prison by Cromwell's men. The door to it is medieval, as is the door to the south porch, from which a sundial can be seen on the south east corner of the tower. It was placed there in thanksgiving for the restoration of Charles II.

St Mary's, Reed



St Mary's Reed has Anglo-Saxon origins, and the Anglo Saxon aisleless nave has survived intact next to a 14th century chancel. The most obvious Anglo-Saxon feature is a bricked up door, which is more visible on the outside of the church. The doorway itself is blocked with flint, but the Anglo-Saxon stone frame is still very visible, including the Ionic-column pattern carved in to the stone under the capitals (the horizontal stone at the start and end of the arch). It has been compared to work at the late-Saxon church at Langford in Oxfordshire. More Anglo-Saxon stonework is visible on the corners of the outside walls, and while the tower dates from the 14th century it's believed that it may have been built on top of a smaller Anglo-Saxon base.

More recent additions include the porch, which was built in 19th century, although the door inside the porch is believed to date from the 15th century, as is the carved stone font. The church has very little stained glass as most of it was destroyed in previous centuries. There's a local rumour that one of the smashed medieval windows was buried. When it was eventually dug up it was installed in the church at neighbouring Barkway instead.

St Helen's, Wheathampstead

St Helen's Church is the oldest church in Wheathampstead but the exact date of its origins are unknown. The originally wooden Saxon structure pre-dated the Norman conquest, but no records survive which establish the date.

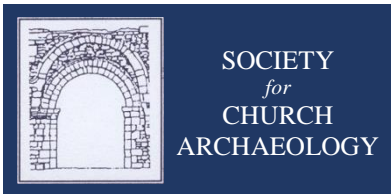
An ambitious scheme of restoration was begun during the early part of the 13th century, the original Saxon church having become dilapidated. The chancel was rebuilt and lengthened in around 1238. The east window triple lancets which still survive in the structure today date from this time as do the window and doorway with its dog-tooth decoration on the north side of the sanctuary.

However, from the Lincoln Cathedral Registry (Wheathampstead fell within the See of Lincoln up until 1845) the building of the central tower dates to about 1290, which is the first definitive date that can be ascribed to the church.



St. Helen's is built of flint rubble and Totternhoe clunch, with flint facings and limestone dressings. There being no stone of this type in the area, it is thought that the medieval builders used stone from the Midland quarries shipped down the River Ouse to Bedford and from there conveyed by horse and cart along the Roman roads to Wheathampstead.

**Please be aware that churches included on the tour may have to change if Sunday services require alternations to visiting times*



2019 Conference Booking Form

Silent Witnesses: The Archaeology of Burials, Churchyards, and their Contexts

Friday 27 September

Reception and Keynote Lecture

£5 per person

Saturday 28 September

Conference (including lunch)

£40 member fee/ £50 non-member fee

Cathedral Tour

Free with conference registration

Conference Dinner at Loft

3-course dinner, including service charge but not drinks £26 per person.

Sunday 29 September

Coach Trip (including lunch)

£25 member fee/ £30 non-member fee

Student Bursary Fund

If you would like to contribute, please indicate amount here £_____

TOTAL £_____

Name(s):

Phone No. Email:

Address:

Dietary or Access Requirements:

Please make cheques payable to 'Society for Church Archaeology' and post, with booking form, to our Treasurer, Becky Clark, Cathedral & Church Buildings Division, Archbishops' Council, Church House, Great Smith Street London SW1P 3AZ.

If you would prefer you can email the completed booking form to oldfield.norma@gmail.com and send electronic payment by PayPal (see overleaf for details). For other queries email our Conference Secretary, Norma Oldfield via email as above, or phone 07415 585420.

DEADLINE FOR BOOKING IS FRIDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER 2019



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2019 Conference Booking Details

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Paying by PayPal

In PayPal, choose “pay for goods and services” and enter the Society’s email address (churcharchaeology@gmail.com). Use the reference “SCA Alban” plus your name in the “notes for seller” box, so that we can match your payment with your booking form.

In order to cover PayPal’s fees, there is a £1.50 surcharge; please simply add it on to your total cost

Venue

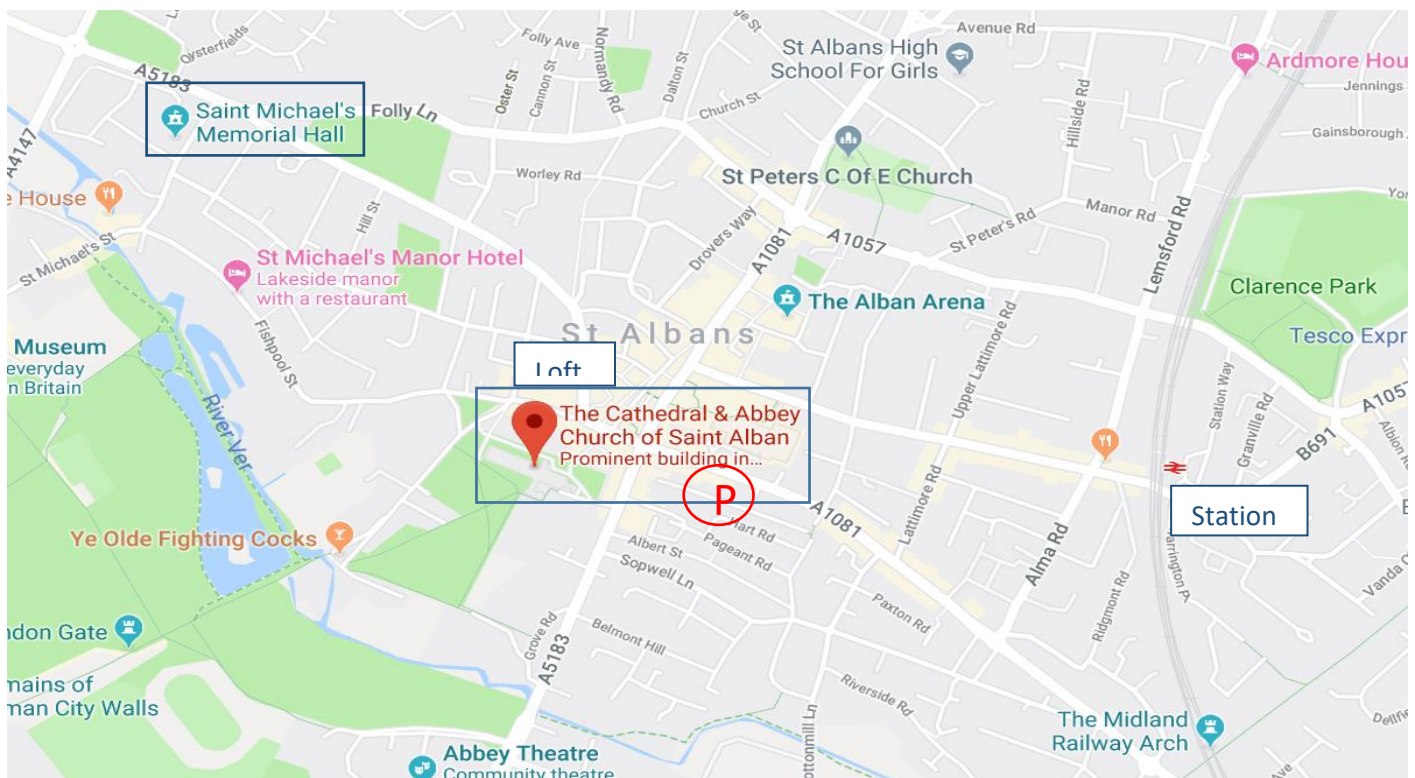
St Alban’s Cathedral, containing the Shrine of St Alban, is a site of national pilgrimage. There has been a church on the site for 1700 years, with the current Cathedral begun in the 11th century. It is used as a place of prayer and stillness by visitors every day. The Cathedral has one of the oldest and most extensive surviving series of medieval wall paintings, ranging from the late 12th century to the 16th century, and at 85 metres, St Alban’s has the longest nave in England. The conference will take place in the crypt of St Alban’s Cathedral, within the new fully accessible visitor centre.

Travel

The railway station is approximately 1 mile, or a 20 minute walk from the Cathedral. The nearest parking is at the London Road Car Park, which is free on Sundays and after 16.30, but otherwise £10.90 for 24 hours.

Details of disabled parking and accessibility at the Cathedral can be found here:

<https://www.stalbanscathedral.org/visit/accessibility>



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