

Conservation Areas in England were first designated in 1967 and next year will be the 50th anniversary of St Albans joining the list. We would like this to be something to celebrate, and the opening of the new Museum in the wonderfully renovated Town Hall building is a huge step forwards. On the other hand we are alarmed at signs of neglect elsewhere, especially with regard to roads, pavements, boundary walls, street furniture and uncleared litter. These are also key elements in how attractive the city is - both to visitors and to the residents. We hope that SADC and others responsible for maintenance will take these problems in hand urgently.

Membership and your Personal Data

'Blacklisting' of e-mails from the Secretary (as a result of being reported as SPAM) was a major headache. It took time to clear this, and revision of the mailing list has now been overtaken by the General Data Protection Regulation. The terms of collection, use and deletion of members' personal data were already essentially covered on the APRA application form but are fully stated on the APRA website (<http://aprastalbans.org/uncategorized/apra-and-your-personal-data/>). Happily, this compliance work has led to a surge in membership - new joiners and old members rejoining. Welcome to all!

We hope that e-mails from APRA are useful without being excessive, so please **Join Us now*** or **confirm your e-mail address** to membership@aprastalbans.org if you haven't already done so. *Download a form from the website or contact the Membership Secretary.

Are you a rent-paying tenant? If you are interested in the area you are just as welcome as owner-occupiers!

We now have a reasonable reserve fund, which has allowed us to continue to offer membership at £5 per person (£8 for two members at the same address).

We regret the absence of a 2017 Newsletter. Previous issues are available on our website.

For personal security we also recommend that you sign up to Neighbourhood Alert for periodic warnings about scam and fraud risks (www.ourwatch.org.uk).

Congratulations to Edgar Hill on re-election to the District Council. The support of our Verulam Ward Councillors is very important to us and we look forward to further fruitful collaboration with all of them.

APRA 2018 Committee:

Peter Trevelyan, Chair, Abbey Mill End
Geoff Dyson, Vice Chair, College St
Andrew Yaras, Treasurer, Fishpool St
Robert Pankhurst, Secretary, College St
Justin Douglas, Membership Secretary,
Lower Dagnall St
Kate Buckley, College Place
Sally Hickman, Heritage Close
Norman James, College Street

New committee members are always needed - please get in touch to find out more and consider standing at our AGM in November



Our Social Activities

APRA arranges at least one talk of local interest each year. In April Kate Morris gave us an informative one on the growth of the Abbey Parish in the 18th and 19th centuries.



We also have social gatherings of members. On 1st June more than 50 members enjoyed a relaxed and pleasant evening, with another stimulating competition devised by Geoff & Jude Dyson. Once again we thank Bishop Norman Banks for the generous use of his lovely garden.

We feel that these events are important in encouraging a sense of community linked by care for our historic environment.

Roads, pavements and verges -1



Mount Pleasant was resurfaced last year. College Place, a narrow cul-de-sac where the weak carriageway has been deformed and damaged by heavy traffic and where water leaks are common, is next on the list. Ironically this is just as further house-building is about to start at the far end, with minimal restriction on the access of oversized construction traffic. We will continue to support the long-suffering residents if problems continue.



Deterioration of the Victorian blue-brick pavements and their ironwork means that some, especially the east sides of Spicer Street and College Street, have become quite hazardous for pedestrians.

Restorative work was carried out in 2016 on part of Lower Dagnall Street, but unfortunately inappropriate materials have been used where ironwork is missing and some of the sandstone kerbs originally laid on edge are being eroded by traffic damage.

These pavements are distinctive features of the Conservation Area and action is urgently needed to prevent them gradually disappearing. We will continue to press the Council to maintain them better.

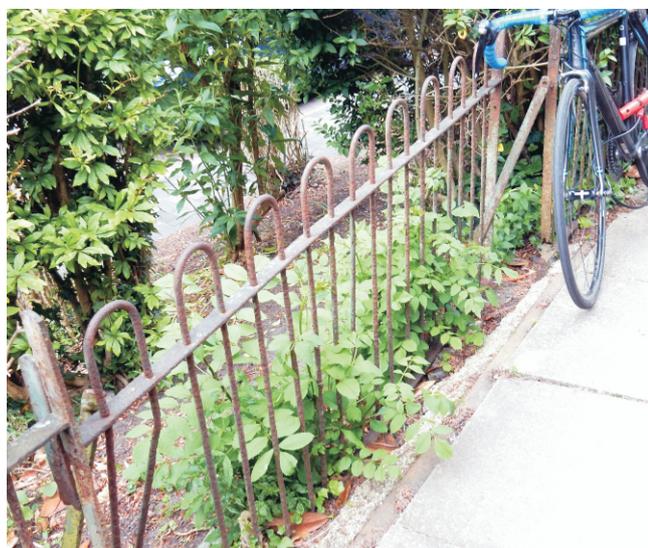
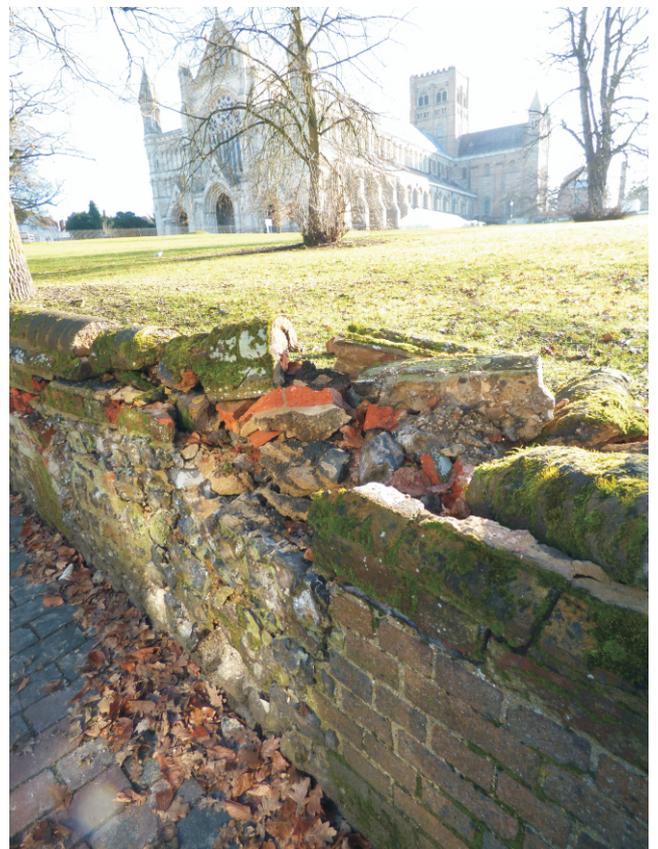


Roads, pavements and verges -2



Congratulations to residents who have taken control of the weed-infested verges in Abbey Mill Lane. As in the area behind the bench in George Street, the late Spring has shown the value of such efforts to our area.

SADC gardens contractors have greatly improved planting in the bank outside Romeland cottages, where the water leak has finally been subdued. Although we obtained an estimate for restoration of the iron railings outside the cottages, our initial request to the Neighbourhoods committee was turned down because they are not SADC property! Happily Edgar Hill has pursued this for us and it may now be funded from the Ward Councillors' budget.



The loss of a bough from the wonderful beech tree in the Abbey grounds on 21 April during a thunderstorm resulted in severe damage to the adjacent wall. Careless traffic has dealt a severe blow to part of the old flint-and-brick wall alongside the Abbey Orchard. We have long complained about the insecure state of this wall and the risk it presents to pedestrians. After much buck-passing between the parties, it seems that the Cathedral works department is responsible for maintenance – we hope that full and sensitive repairs will be undertaken soon.

Street furniture

In 2016, when HCC started to fit LED street lights, we published a survey of local lighting furniture and their conservation value: (<http://apralstalbans.org/uncategorized/street-lights-and-lamp-posts>). Apart from removal of one old lamp-post in Welclose Street and its replacement by a different design, the LED programme seems to have stalled (because of complaints about the harsh white light, or perhaps the budget for this has run out?). However, the dreadful state of most lamp-posts has not been addressed (some rusty, newer aluminium ones never painted, most plastered with unsightly signs and stickers). Some of the worst examples are in the area around the Abbey most frequented by visitors.

Giving them all a clean-up and a fresh coat of paint of uniform colour would be a big step towards enlivening the appearance and coherence of the Conservation Area. We think this would be great way to mark its 50th anniversary and join the city centre revival.



.... and the condition of the railings between the Abbey and the Gatehouse is not going to enhance this approach to the new Welcome Centre.

Car Parking

After a second period of consultation, during which several APRA suggestions were adopted, SADC implemented parking in a new unified Zone B last October. Extended control hours (7 days a week, to 10.30 pm) may have relieved some of the pressure on car parking for residents, although some may feel that they have lost out. For example, despite the new stretch of parking bays on Verulam Road, 'rogue' parking still occurs in the centre of the zone, especially at night.

What is your experience?

School Coaches

We continue to be represented (via the Combined Residents Association group, chaired by Geoff Dyson) in meetings with the St Albans School authorities. Have you noticed any less congestion in Romeland Hill following more rigorous parking restrictions and enforcement? At least bus drivers now seem to be switching engines off while waiting for the afternoon pick-up. Nevertheless we still object to the almost daily noise and disruption caused by large buses and coaches in the narrow streets of the Conservation Area.

Please give us your feedback on these or any other issues that we could take up.

Planning Issues

One of our main tasks is to support residents with concerns about local developments, mostly as advertised in SADC planning applications. Our policy for this is explained on our website. During the past year we commented on plans for St Albans School Maths block (which was approved), the garage site in College Place (refused but then allowed on appeal), and a major project in Mount Pleasant (twice refused, recently revised again). **Although not always successful, comment from a recognised group such as APRA may carry more weight than individual submissions.** If you become aware of plans that affect you or the area, please let us know.

We have also commented on the St Albans Local Plan 2018, since we think the lack of a positive policy for the Conservation Area opens the door to unsympathetic development.

Enforcement

We would like to hear of any developments that you believe may breach or exceed approved planning conditions (or may even be carried out without permission). Too many infringements are absorbed through retrospective applications. We are extremely concerned at local authority's lack of sensitivity to some developments and reluctance to take enforcement action against breaches.

APRA is a non-aligned voluntary association for local residents. This Newsletter will be delivered in the area around the Abbey approximately enclosed by Holywell Hill, High Street, Verulam Road, Hill Street and Abbey Mills. It is also available from our website. Please send comments or queries to secretary@apralstalbans.org