

S.A.L.H.S

website: www.salhs.org.uk

Stanstead Abbotts Local History Society

Issue 39

Editor—Terry Collins

July 2021

The Story of Waterford Church

In May our speaker was Malcolm Wandrag, Churchwarden of St Michaels and All Angels church at Waterford. He began by telling us that in the mid 17th century, in Nottinghamshire, farmers were being robbed on their return from market, when they were carrying cash. So a gentleman called Thomas Smith, a mercer, suggested that he would hold the monies till the following day when the farmers could return to collect it, with their servants for protection. And so began the banking system, Smith's Bank, which later became the Nat West Bank we know today.

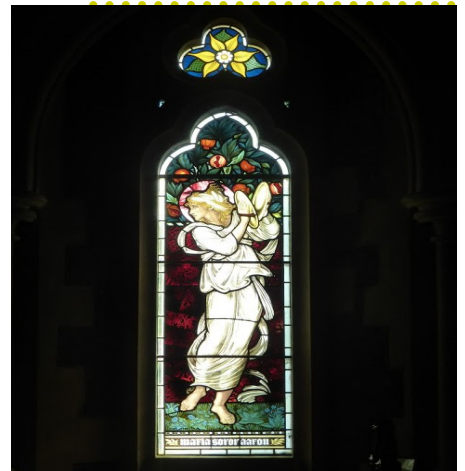
It is with thanks to Robert Smith, a descendent and banker in London, who married Isobel Keen and was given the Goldings Estate as a wedding gift that this small church was erected. They did all they could to improve the lot of the people of Waterford, part of the estate, and the foundation stone of the church was laid on 28th October 1871 and was consecrated on St Michaels Day 25th July 1872.

From the outside the building looks like many other small Parish churches but once inside you will

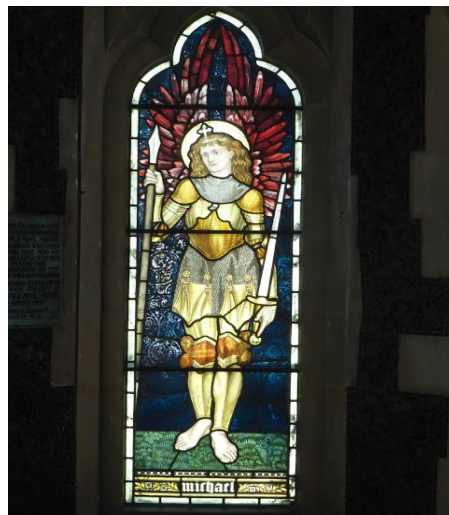
see what makes this one so special.

It is the stained glass windows and the mosaics that make this church stand out from the ordinary.

The church was designed by the prolific Victorian architect Henry Woodyer (1816-1896) While many people regard the stained glass by eminent Pre-Raphaelites as the stars of the show the mosaics are just as important, and attractive. These mosaics were made after Robert Smith's death and were installed in three campaigns in 1901, 1909 and 1913 and were made by Powell and Sons the makers of the mosaics in St



Miriam by Edward Burne Jones



Archangel St Michael by William Morris

Moving on to the stained glass, there are 14 windows, eight by Edward Burne Jones and others by William Morris, Ford Madox Brown and Karl Parsons. The East window shows a nativity scene by Burne Jones with the surrounding angels playing musical instruments is a piece by William Morris. Of all the windows in the church the most significant one is Miriam (the sister of Moses and Aaron,) another Burne Jones piece located in the South chancel. The most western nave window shows the patron saint of music St Cecilia. This is a really eye catching piece and is the first seen when entering the church. This work is attributed to Karl Parsons but is based on designs by the Irish Arts and Crafts artist Harry Clarke. All the Morris and Co stained glass pictures were produced in the traditional method using small pieces of coloured glass but Parson uses other methods, such as etching to produce his work which gives greater detail than in a traditional window.

Well worth a visit, call 01920 830035, for opening times. Terry Collins



Mosaic in Waterford Church

Pauls Cathedral. The lower part of the sanctuary which were decorated at the same time as the upper parts are not mosaic but opus sectile (meaning cut work) a technique used in the Renaissance but revived by Powell. While mosaic is formed from small pieces of stone, glass, or ceramic, opus sectile is made from larger pieces cut in the desired shape or pattern.

The Signal Box at St Albans South

Our June zoom meeting was rather different than some we have held, the topic being, the Signal Box at St Albans, the speaker was Tony Furse from the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust.

He began his informative talk in the early days of the railways when St Albans had no cathedral just the abbey church and had a population of around 10,000. Transport had changed rapidly since the coming of the railways with the opening of the Stockton to Darlington railway in 1825, designed and built by George Stephenson. A journey of twelve miles which took two hours, shortly after this the Manchester to Liverpool railway opened carrying goods from Manchester to the docks at Liverpool but they also wanted passengers, who were carried in open coaches with three classes. Many people forget that there were still 3rd class coaches into the 1940's. The locomotives being used were travelling at speeds of up to 29 miles per hour. During the next 10 years a total of 3000 miles of track were laid.

By this time railway mania had set in and there were over 160 small railway companies some of which were taken over by Midland Railway in 1844, but most of them had no connection to London. There was one that ran from Derby via Rugby to Euston and one running to Bedford then Hitchin into Kings Cross. Unfortunately this did not work out well for the Midland railway company as it cost too much to operate their trains. So they decided to build their own track which they did running from Bedford into St Pancras crossing the Regents Canal on the way.

As it entered London it went through an area called Agar Town home to over 3000 people in one of the worst



Signal Box Before Renovation

slums in London. The Midland purchased the area and made all the residents homeless when they demolished all the houses. St Pancras church grave yard was badly effected needing to move over 3000 bodies, the architect involved was Thomas Hardy and he was quite disturbed by this. It seems that the Victorians had little care for their dead as the grave-yard was disturbed again at a later date and more bodies were removed.

In June 1892 the Midland opened a new signal box replacing an older box, as part of its upgrade from two to four tracks. It was altered again in 1907 and nothing

was changed from then on until 1963 when a toilet was added. After the railways were nationalised in 1947 the line was electrified and signal boxes were gradually closed as they became redundant and in 1979 the St Albans South box was closed.

From then on the box remained empty and over the years began to decay although it was made a listed structure in 1980 by then it was starting to look run-down and by the turn of the century it was almost falling down, there were 144 panes of glass on the signal box and everyone of them was broken. It was proving to be an eyesore and local residents wanted it gone. Network Rail did nothing to look after it and its condition got steadily worse. The local council was taken to court over the dilapidated condition of the signal box but as a listed structure they could not demolish it, but they could move it. However it would cost thousands of pounds a day to take it all apart. Then in 2002 a group of local enthusiasts formed the St Albans Signal Box Preservation Trust with the aim of renovating the box. At first they had been quoted a sum of £250,000 to carry out the works necessary but they eventually managed to get the sum reduced to £130,000. Then as a registered charity they were able to apply for and obtain heritage lottery funding. The work involved both contractors for the exterior and volunteers who put in thousands of hours work for the internal alterations and updating, until in 2009 it was ready to open to the public. It has been restored to its appearance as it was in the 1950's with 44 signal levers and visitors can see how the signaller worked and contacted other signal boxes along the line in the long gone days of steam. This was an excellent talk that was enjoyed by those of us who zoomed in to hear.



The Signal Box today

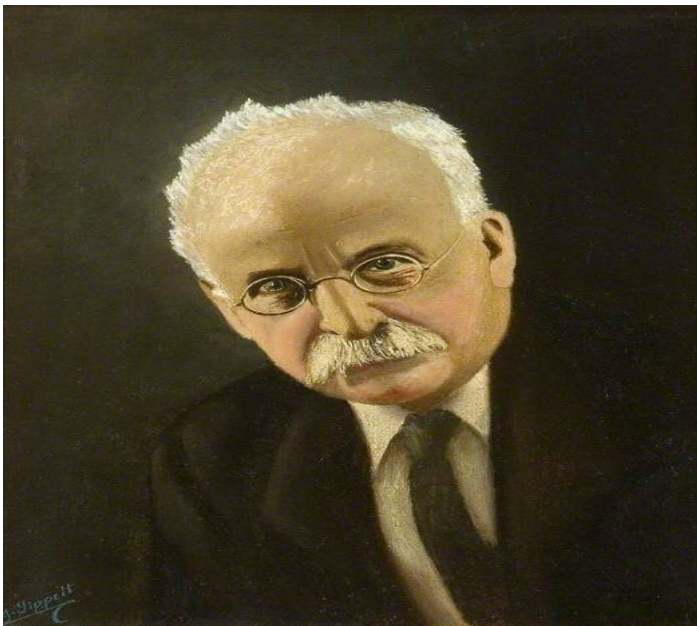
Terry Collins

The History of Welwyn Garden City

Our July meeting saw the return of Marion Hills from HALS, with her talk on Welwyn Garden city's history and development. Unfortunately there was a technical problem with the sound so what follows is not based on her talk.

The year 2020 saw the centenary of Welwyn Garden and the arrival of its first residents moving in on 6th December 1920. Prior to the development the area was just woodland and open fields. Letchworth Garden City had been built in 1905 as the first Garden City based on the ideas of Ebenezer Howard the founder of the Garden City movement, which tried to combine both town and country living, and was a reaction against the slums poverty and pollution of industrial city dwelling where over half of the population lived at the end of the 19th century. Howard's plan was for a Garden City with a population of about no more than 32000 and limited to no more than 12 houses per acre

To get this plan in operation his company, the Garden City Pioneer Company was founded in 1919 in an effort to attract investors and find suitable land, which it did. In 1919 at the age of 70 Howard purchased almost 3000 acres of land near the old village of Welwyn where he wanted to built his second Garden City. Louis de Soissons a French/Canadian was appointed as consulting architect and he produced a masterplan for the towns housing ranging from maisonettes and cottages to imposing houses plus schools, churches, shops and open spaces. Prior to building all the trees were noted so they could be part of the cityscape, few were destroyed and new ones were planted. Howards vision of a grand central garden



Ebenezer Howard



Shredded Wheat Factory Welwyn Garden City

became the Parkway a mile long road with many trees and a fountain running up to the town centre (now The Campus). De Soissons chose red brick Neo-Georgian style for all the properties that he designed. His work is regarded as a masterpiece in town planning a hundred years after it was produced. He remained in charge of the towns development until his death in 1962.

By 1926 almost 3000 houses had been built and by 1938 there were 13500 residents. But it was not just houses that de Soissons was responsible for. Applecoft School, formerly Handside School, the first to open in Welwyn Garden City in 1923. Its light and airy classrooms were considered at the time to be a radical design. The Free Church dedicated in 1929 is in Dutch expressionist style with a stepped Gable style with matching windows

One of Howards key visions was that Welwyn was not going to be a dormitory town that emptied every morning and only returned in the evening. He wanted workers to be able to walk or cycle to work so the town needed to be economically self sufficient. The towns industrial zone became the home of many well known companies including Roche Chemicals (1937) Murphy Radio(1928) and Nabisco who chose the site for it manufacture of Shredded Wheat. Production began with 100 employees. As well as ground breaking design conditions for the staff included free lunches, white tiled bathrooms, tennis courts and a 5 day week.

Originally the plan was that residents did all their shopping in one place and that was the company owned Welwyn Stores, so in 1921 a 10 year embargo was placed on private shops, much to the residents resentment. The first shop to start trading was W H Smith in Howardsgate in 1930 with other shops following. The towns first bank was Barclays originally trading from a hut until it moved into a neo Georgian building designed by de Soissons.

Terry Collins

British Legion Ladies on Coronation Day



On Coronation Day, 2nd June 1953 the village Ladies who were members of the British Legion gathered to have their photograph taken for posterity in the Station forecourt. It is believed this was taken between 5pm and 5.30 pm before they had taken part in the parade up and down the High Street which was scheduled to depart from the station sidings at 5.30pm. Coronation Day was unseasonably cold and blustery with temperatures below 10 degrees centigrade. For most of the day it was grey and overcast, drizzly and with a chill wind from the north east. This may go some way to explain why they are so well wrapped up on a June day. The names of those who could be identified have been listed. It is hoped that members of the history society may be able to put names to those yet to be identified and spot any errors in the names so far identified.

Stuart Moye

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|----|---|
| 1 | Mrs Kingsbury | 8 | Mrs Reynolds (Florrie) |
| 2 | Mrs Large (Daisy) | 9 | Mrs Hitch (Edie) |
| 3 | Mrs Beeston (Olive) | 10 | Mrs Measday (Joyce) |
| 4 | | 11 | Miss Smith (Margaret) {Became Mrs Bird} |
| 5 | Mrs Hasler (Cissy) | 12 | Mrs Lyon (Iris) |
| 6 | Mrs Lawrence | 13 | |
| 7 | Mrs Barry (Florrie) | 14 | |
| | | 15 | Mrs Ingrey |

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Data Protection Act

In accordance with the above act we have to advise that the Society holds information on computer in respect of each member. This information is used for routine membership purposes only and remains confidential.

Forthcoming events

August	8th	2021	Visit to lime kiln at Amwell
September	10th	2021	Down the New River by Rob Gifford
October	8th	2021	Queen Victoria's rooms at Kensington Palace by Dr Lee Prosser
November	12th	2021	Murders in Hertfordshire by Nik Pringle
December	10th	2021	Christmas Party (To Be Confirmed)

It is hoped that meetings will resume in the Parish Hall from September.

This will be confirmed by email nearer the time.