

The Tale of the Tile

*The link between St Alban's Pauatahanui
and
The Fraternity of The Friends of
Saint Albans Abbey*



"I gaze at these tiles and think, yes think
that they were made not so long after
Christ was on this earth."

Cathedral Mason

St Alban's, Pauatahanui, Vestry Minutes 12 March 1959

Correspondence:

From St Albans Abbey, England inviting the Vestry to become associated with "St Albans World Fraternity".

Mr G. L. Taylor kindly donated an English 10/- note with a request that the Vicar send it as a donation to the Fraternity.



The Fraternity of the Friends of St Albans Abbey

15th April 1959

Dear Mr Pearce

Thank you so much for your letter received early this month and for the 10/- enclosed therewith. The Dean and Fraternity are most happy to welcome you and your Church as Corporate Members of the Fraternity, and your membership card will be coming by surface mail some time soon.

It was very kind of you to give all the interesting details regarding your Church and congregation, and some of these items may appear in the Annual Report of the Fraternity.

As regards your request for a piece of wood or stone to incorporate into something you may design in your Church, I have passed your request on to the rightful quarter, and I hope that in due course you will receive something. Thank you very much for enclosing the photograph of the steeplejack at work.

With every good wish
Yours sincerely
Sybil W. Millward

St Alban's Cathedral

St Albans
Hertfordshire
England

April 20th (1959)

I am sending you a piece of Roman Tile which I trust arrives safely.

The Tile was made during the time of the Emperor Diocletian. That would be about the year 300. I gaze at these tiles and think, yes think that they were made not so long after Christ was on this earth.

You most probably know that first they were used in the Roman City of Verulamium, after disbandment and in the year 1077 Paul of Caen used the tiles to build the monastery of St Alban.

Age is something one cannot buy. I like to look again at these tiles when working at the top of the Tower and think of the summer suns and the storms of winter they have withstood.

Sincerely yours
W. Barrett
Cathedral Mason.



St Alban's Pauatahanui

16th September 1959

Mr W. Barrett

Cathedral Mason
St Alban's Cathedral
St Albans
Hertfordshire
England.

Dear Sir,

I am glad to be able to tell you that the piece of Roman Tile you so kindly consigned to us in April last arrived safely. It was a long time on the journey, but we have had it for two months now and it has been greatly admired. I would have acknowledged it sooner but for the fact that I have been collecting British Postal Orders so that I could send you a refund for the postage which I noted was 8/6d. I now enclose the Orders for 5/- each. Would you please pass them on to the proper quarter.

My people wish me to send you very grateful thanks for the trouble you have taken in sending us this treasure and for your very descriptive letter which came with it. We shall find a way of incorporating the tile in some part of our St Alban's church, together with a plaque describing its origin. It is indeed an inspiring link with the distant past, and with your historic Cathedral.

Wishing you every blessing,
Yours sincerely,

(The Reverend) Vicar (F. Pearce)



In 1996 during a tidy-up of the vestry, in readiness for the St Alban centenary celebration, a piece of “brick” was found in a cupboard. It was put in the rubbish pile.

A later reading of the minute book revealed the significance of the ‘brick’. It was the Roman tile sent from St Alban’s in England in 1959! Frantic enquiries revealed that it had been put under the church.

The piece of tile was carefully retrieved and is now displayed for its interest and association with St Albans in England.



St Alban's Church, Pauatahanui was named after the first British martyr, said to have been born at Verulamium (St Albans, Hertfordshire). He served for seven years in Rome in the army and on his return to Britain he is said to have been put to death as a Christian. A church was built on the place of his martyrdom in about 793AD.

The Roman municipium of Verulamium, one of three destroyed by Boadicea, was one of the finest towns in Britain. In 1959 a magnificent multi—coloured mosaic floor was excavated at Verulamium, dating from the second century. The core of the church, which is the second longest in England, dates from the 11th century. It is dominated by a central tower of red Roman brick, salvaged from the Verulamium site near by.



c 250 A.D.
793

The Martyrdom of St Alban
King Offa provides an endowment for the
monastery on the site

1077

Paul de Caen is appointed Abbot

1077 - 1115

Robert the Mason builds the Norman church and
tower using flint and 4th century Roman brick

Christian brick reclaimers of St Albans

Shortly after the martyrdom of St Alban, probably in 303, a church was built on the spot where he was slain, and in 793 Offa, king of Mercia, who professed to have discovered the relics of the martyr, founded in his honor a monastery for Benedictines, which became one of the richest and most important houses of that order in the kingdom.

The abbots, Ealdred and Ealmer, at the close of the 10th century began to break up the ruins of the old Roman city of Verulamium for materials to construct a new abbey church; but its erection was delayed till the time of William the Conqueror, when Paul of Caen, a relative of Archbishop Lanfranc, was in 1077 appointed abbot. The cathedral at Canterbury as built by Lanfranc was almost a reproduction of St Stephens, Caen; but Paul, while adopting the same model for St Albans, built it on a much larger scale. The church was consecrated in 1115, but had been finished some years before.

Of the original Norman church the principal parts now remaining are the eastern bays of the nave, the tower and the transepts, but the main outlines of the building are still those planned by Paul. It is thus one of the most important specimens of Norman architecture in England, with the special characteristic that, owing to the use of the flat broad Roman tiles, the Norman portions are peculiarly bare and stern.

The reuse of reclaimed bricks was a well-established Christian activity, and Roman bricks reused a thousand year's ago in an Early English abbey are still performing sterling service today.

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St Philip's
The Crescent
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