

Woodberry Down, (formerly St Albans 1902-1998) Colway Lane, Lyme Regis

Researched⁽¹⁾ and compiled by Graham Davies, 2014, revised 2026

St Albans began life as a preparatory school which opened in September 1902⁽²⁾ with Frank A M Mariette as headmaster. Ronald Johnston⁽³⁾, a former pupil (1905-1911), can remember it being built.

The postcards indicate an early extension to the original build.



Post mark 1905



Post mark 1909

Advertising the School at home and for the British Raj in India.

**ST. ALBAN'S SCHOOL,
LYME REGIS, DORSET.**

THIS PREPARATORY SCHOOL, situated 300 feet above sea level, is sheltered from the North and East. Healthy spot. Boys prepared for Public Schools and Navy. Special attention paid to Modern Languages. Bathing, Gymnasium, Cricket and Football Ground.

Prospectus on application from Head-Master, F. A. MARIETTE, B.A. Cambridge.

Cheltenham LookerOn, July 9, 1904

Civil & Military Gazette, Lahore, Nov 15, 1910

**St. ALBAN'S SCHOOL,
LYME REGIS, DORS ET.**

MR. F. A. MARIETTE, B.A., Camo., and Mr. C. D. E. DEWE, M.A., Camb., receive boys between the ages of 8 and 14 for preparation for the **PUBLIC SCHOOLS** and OSBORNE. Bracing position, over 300 feet above sea level.

Reference kindly permitted to—
General Sir GEORGE LUCK, G.C.B.,
Landford Lodge, Salisbury.

and **ERNEST MARTIN, Esq.,**
6, Hastings Park Road, Alipore, Calcutta.

Prospectus on application to "Civil & Military Gazette" Office, Lahore. (354—c) t h s

St Alban's School, 1911 census

Frank Mariette (47), headmaster, wife Elizabeth (45), and daughter Gwen (11).
Alan Dickson (34), assistant master & Edith Hall (40), music mistress.
17 scholars/boarders, ages ranging from 9 to 13.
A matron and a governess.
A cook, butler, 3 waiters and under-gardener.
28 rooms in the house, excluding scullery, landing, lobby, closet & bathroom.

St Alban's School, 1921 census

Frank Mariette (57), headmaster, wife Lorna (53), and Daughter Gwen (22).
Four School teachers (2m, 2f).
21 scholars/boarders, ages from 7 to 14.
A matron
7 servants (2m, 5f)

The school would have also hired staff from the local community for the house and gardens.

Headmaster Mariette retired sometime between 1928 and 1930.

Description of St Alban's School, 1930⁽⁴⁾

Headmaster – R E H Dent

Assisted by a staff of University and Public School men and a mistress for the younger boys.

Prepares boys between the ages of 7 and 14 for the Public Schools and the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

Especially built for purpose, the school stands in its own grounds of 16 acres, high above Lyme Bay.

The curriculum is varied and gives every encouragement to individual talent. A good standard is aimed at so that boys may take and maintain creditable places at their public schools. Scholarships have been won at various schools on the ordinary course of work.

A special feature is the attention paid to the physical welfare of the boys.

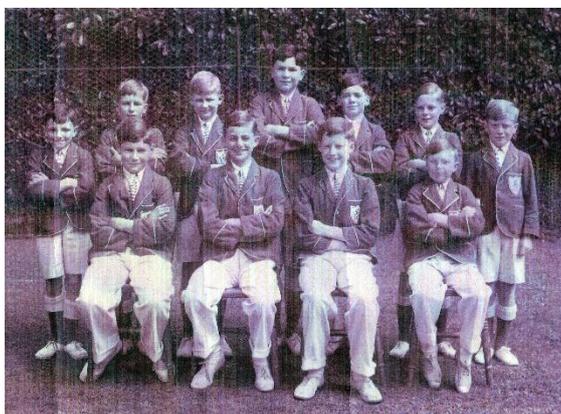
The head matron is a trained nurse.

The School games are cricket, association football and hockey. Boys who can swim bathe in the sea.

Swimming and diving are taught in the open air swimming bath.

For purposes of competition the school is divided into sets, a system that fosters the team spirit and is intended to prepare a boy to take his place in his house at a public school. There is also a troop of boy scouts, who spend the weekends in camp in the grounds during the summer term.

Regular use is made in the winter of the lantern and cinematograph.



Ron Rowland was a former pupil (1930-33). He joined the school when just 8 years old and indicates in his letter to Lyme Regis Museum (2007) that the school numbers were down to a "cricket team" when he left in July 1933. He thought that Mrs Dent was the school owner and that she had an open Lagonda tourer. He confirms the activities of soccer, cricket and hockey and adds shooting .22 rifles on a 25 yard range and roller skating in the gym when it was raining.

St Alban's School 1933, Mr Rowland is front row, on left.

The school closed in 1933.

In 1934 St Albans was a **Workers' Travel Association** (WTA) guest house managed by John W Harvey.

**HOLIDAYS
IN BRITAIN**

AT SPECIAL W.T.A. CENTRES

Lyme Regis ..	£2. 7.6 per week "All-in"
Bideford	£2.17.6 " " "
Rhos-on-Sea .	£2.15.0 " " "
*Bangor	£4.19.6 " " "

* Including four motor excursions.

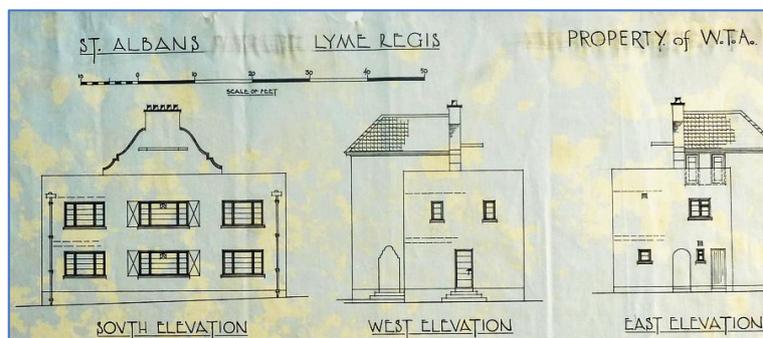
W.T.A. Coach-Cruises

The Best Value for Money!

7 Days from £7.17.6 inc.

Daily Herald 24 May 1934

WTA built an annexe at St Albans.



Extract from plans in 1934 prepared by D R Nicholls FRCIS LRIBA High Street, Chard

St Albans was requisitioned in WWII, first by the British Army in 1940 and later by the Americans in 1943. After the war St Albans returned to being a WTA guest house.

Advance information is available on **WORKERS' TRAVEL ASSOCIATION** Guest Houses, for which the demand is very heavy indeed. The season's programme is not yet to hand in printed form, and early personal application is necessary

W.T.A. Centres include :

HEACHAM, Norfolk	80/- per week
DOLLARBEG, Scotians	95/- " "
SHANKLIN, I.O.W.	105/- " "
LYME REGIS, Dorset	80/- " "
HOPE, Derbyshire	80/- " "
DUNOON, Scotland	105/- " "
KESWICK, Lake District	80/- " "

and other new centres to be opened during 1947. Let us quote you for Guernsey and Jersey

Blyth News 6 February 1947

WTD. all kinds of DOMSTC. STAFF, now; permanencies. — Apply Mrs. London, W.T.A. Guest House, St. Alban's, Lyme Regis, Dorset. 'Phone 449.

Western Morning News 14 January 1947

2 HOUSEMD.-WAITRESSES and 1 KITCH. PORTER read. — Apply W.T.A. Guest House, St. Albans, Lyme Regis 449.

Western Morning News 19 February 1948

MALE Assistant COOK, keen, need not be experienced, and a Kitchen Porter, Wan'ed, immediately. — W.T.A. Guest House, Lyme Regis, Dorset.

Western Daily Press 2 June 1950

Galleon Guest Houses

from £9.10.0 to £16.0.0 weekly

Rates depend on dates and location. These Guest Houses are located at the Isle of Wight, Folkestone, Bournemouth, Bexhill, Lyme Regis, Keswick, Heacham, Torquay, Bude, Dollar, Port William, Dunoon and Swanage.

Ask for W.T.A.'s 'HOUSEPARTY' Brochure (THE YELLOW BOOK).

Other W.T.A. (Galleon) brochures are also available ON REQUEST.

Hammersmith & Shepherds Bush Gazette 30 January 1964

St Alban's Hotel (Galleon Travel) 1969 -1979

As told by Sheila Applebee⁽⁵⁾

There were 32 bedrooms, including the annexe, with a maximum of 72 guests.

The hotel was open from Easter to September with Christmas opening tried at a later date.

Staff numbers varied from 19 to 24 (July/August). There was room to put up 8 staff on site.

Many of the staff came from the town with some agency staff from the Midlands and Malta.

Out of season Dennis and Sheila were alone at St Alban's with a housekeeper.

The staff consisted of:

Chef and assistant chef.

Pan room boy – MP John Denham's first job. Tim Healey, son of Denis Healey, also worked there.

Waiters/waitresses who also took turns in washing the dishes. Sheila eventually only used men to wait at tables as they were less trouble. They were smartly dressed in blue shirts with bow ties.

Chambermaids.

Bob Collier was the gardener.

St Alban's provided breakfast, lunch and evening meal. Over the years the price increased from £8 to £20. There was no alcohol licence.

There were dances in the social room on Tuesday and Friday nights, and a mystery coach trip (extra).

There were also guest concerts.

St Alban's was set in 15 acres of grounds which included a tennis court and swimming pool.

Dennis and Sheila Applebee left at the end of 1979.

Galleon Travel sold St Alban's in 1979 to Joseph Allnatt Centres. It was run as the St Alban's Activity Centre in which the capacity increased from 70, at the previous hotel, to 170 for the Activity Centre. Bunk beds were brought in and some of the rooms were altered. Table service was changed to self-service.⁽⁶⁾

In May 1993, four teenagers, attending the St Alban's Activity Centre, died in a canoeing accident in Lyme Bay. In December 1994, Peter Kite, managing director of the parent company, OLL Ltd (formerly 'Active Learning and Leisure Ltd'), was convicted to three years in prison (reduced on appeal) for manslaughter through gross negligence. OLL Ltd was found guilty of corporate manslaughter and fined £60,000. This tragedy hastened the passage through parliament of 'The Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995.

The owners, Joseph Allnatt Centres, sold the site in 1998 to Geoffrey Lloyd who changed the name to Woodberry Down and ran it as a residential Activity and Field Studies Centre into the 2010s.

Visit to Woodberry Down 31 March 2014

The Activity & Field Studies Centre had closed down. Its land to the north of the house had been sold to Bloor Homes on which they had received planning permission in 2014 to build 46 houses.

The image displays a comprehensive set of architectural floor plans for the Woodberry Down Centre, accompanied by several photographs of the buildings. The plans are organized as follows:

- Ground Floor:** Shows a large Sports Hall, Dining Area, Dining Hall, Kitchen, Lounge, and various utility rooms including a Utility Room, Freezer Room, and Store. It also includes a Prep and Washing Up Area, Larder, and several WCs.
- First Floor:** Features a Staff Area, Laundry Area, and a series of bedrooms (Bedroom 1 through 7) with associated showers and WCs. A central Office and a Drying Room are also present.
- Second Floor:** Consists of multiple bedrooms (Bedroom 1 through 7), a Sitting Room, a Bathroom, and a Store.

Photographs provide visual context for the plans:

- A photograph of a large, bright room with blue walls and wooden floors is linked to the Sports Hall on the Ground Floor plan.
- A photograph of a dining area with a red carpet and wooden tables is linked to the Dining Area on the Ground Floor plan.
- A photograph of a two-story brick building with an external staircase is labeled "Classrooms & Dormitories" and is linked to the Sports Hall area.
- A photograph of a white, two-story building with a gabled roof is labeled "Annexe⁽⁷⁾" and is linked to the Staff Area on the First Floor plan.
- A photograph of a staircase with a wooden handrail is linked to the Entrance Hall on the Ground Floor plan.
- A photograph of a lounge with a green sofa and a large window is linked to the Lounge on the Ground Floor plan.
- A photograph of a house with a stone wall and steps leading up to it is linked to the Annexe⁽⁷⁾ area.
- A photograph of a large, multi-story house with a prominent chimney is linked to the main building complex.

In 2016 Bloor Homes were given permission to demolish the Woodberry Down Centre and build 6 houses.

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- (1) This research began in response to an enquiry in May 2011 from Dr Ross Davies who was researching the life of Stephen Haggard (1911-1943), actor, writer, poet and SOE operative. From about 1921-1924, he reports that Haggard attended a prep school, St Albans in Lyme Regis. Stephen Haggard was the great-nephew of author H Rider.
 - (2) An advertisement in the Bridport News, 27th March 1903 confirmed that the St Albans Preparatory School opened in Sept 1902.
 - (3) [Memories of Lyme](#) by R Johnson www.lymeregismuseumresearchteam.co.uk.
 - (4) An advertisement in *History of the Church of St Michael the Archangel* by Rev C Carew Cox, published 1930.
 - (5) Conversations with Sheila Applebee in 2011.
 - (6) Conversation with John Bond in 2011. Initially hired by Sheila Appleby in 1975, he stayed on for a couple of years after the change to the Activity Centre.
 - (7) The Annexe was not part of Bloor Homes in 2016 and was later put up for sale.

General References

Lyme Regis Museum Research Team's Digital Archive (2009-2025).
FindmyPast Newspapers.