



ST. ALBANS AND THE GARDEN OF THE ROSE –JULY 2015

About 40 intrepid U3A members set out by coach to St. Albans on July 1st. The day turned out to be the hottest day of this year and many previous years, with the thermometer at times reaching 36 C, or almost 97 F.

In the morning, we were told about St. Alban's rich and varied history by two very knowledgeable tour guides, one giving us a detailed account of some of the more historic events and buildings in the town, whilst the other



guide explained the origination and development of the town's cathedral. In the town, for example, a plaque outside the Fleur-de-Lys Inn, says "*John, King of France, was detained in a house on this site after his capture at Poitiers in 1356 and before his removal to Hertford Castle.... Between 1420 and 1440 an inn was built here by the Abbey of St.Albans*".



Nicholas Breakspeare, who has the distinction of becoming the only British Pope, received his early education at the Abbey School in St.Albans. When he decided that he wished to be a monk he approached the Abbey at St.Albans, but was told that he was insufficiently well educated to be accepted. Nicholas then left for France and rose through the ranks of the Catholic Church and was elected Pope Adrian IV in 1154. He died in 1159.

When he was asked, as Pope, to decide which abbey should be England's foremost establishment, he was magnanimous enough to nominate St.Albans (over Westminster), in spite of their earlier rejection of him. Unfortunately time did not permit a visit to the site of the Roman town of Verulamium, which lies a short distance from the present town.

In the afternoon, after a splendid lunch in the Abbey restaurant, we visited the Garden of the Rose. This garden was set up 50 years ago by the Royal National Rose Society (RNRS). The RNRS was originally formed in 1876 and is the world's oldest specialist plant society. The St Albans site is about 5 acres and contains displays of tens of thousands of roses, both historic and modern.



Unfortunately, because of the extremely hot weather, members were only able to have a cursory viewing of the spectacular displays, and most beat a hasty retreat into the shade, and helped themselves to copious amounts of soft drinks and ice cream. Hopefully a photo carousel of selected photographs, taken on the day, will be available on the website in the near future.

David Taylor