

Visit to St Albans Cathedral

Date/Time	Wednesday 19 July 2023 1.15pm for 1.30pm start	Price	£35
Venue	St Albans Cathedral (meet inside - West Door)	Leader	John McNeill

St Albans Cathedral has been badly treated – by its own abbots in the late twelfth century, by the Dissolution, by Lord Grimthorpe in the 1880s. It is an ambitious, ramshackle and multi-phase former monastic church - saved by the mid-sixteenth-century town council to become a parish church, and given cathedral status in 1877. It is the sort of building of which one could become very fond. What survives is unquestionably important, a vast and still largely Romanesque building, perhaps best approached as a series of idiosyncratic set-pieces woven around an Anglo-Norman core. Chief among these is that superb crossing, but there is very much more - the best-preserved of all English medieval shrine bases, a wonderfully adapted and painted wooden presbytery vault, the bizarre nave extension, the great screen, the watching loft, the sequence of wall paintings that enliven the north nave elevation and, perhaps finest of all, that magnificent suite of fifteenth-century cage chantries with which the east end was transformed.

All this and more will be considered over the course of the afternoon.

St Albans is easily reached from London by Thameslink. There are frequent trains from St Pancras International to St Albans City taking between 18 and 34 minutes. It is also possible to travel via Watford Junction, where trains to St Albans Abbey leave once each at 45 minutes past the hour.

Leader

John McNeill lectures for the Department of Continuing Education at Oxford University. He is a Vice-President of London Art History Society for whom he has delivered numerous courses and led study tours and cathedral visits, and Secretary of the British Archaeological Association for whom he has edited and contributed to volumes on English medieval cloisters, chantries and Romanesque material culture. In addition to the above he is a member of the Fabric Advisory Committee at St Albans Cathedral.