

# The *history* of Christopher Place.

The Shopping Centre is located on an area between Verulam Road, Upper Dagnall street, Market Place and French Row, on a site which included the yards for the Christopher and Dog Inns in French Row, as well as slum housing for some of the poorest people in town. The Shopping Centre was designed by architects Gordon Benoy and Partners in a neo-medieval style, and named Christopher Place, consciously preserving the name of the Christopher Inn.



## Our *history*

1838

In 1838 the council was asked to resolve the 'nuisance' arising from the overcrowded state of the Christopher, which then housed 10 families, mainly paupers, eight of whom were suffering typhus fever.

1840

It reopened as a beerhouse in 1840, and the landlord Neptune Smith subsequently found himself accused of running a brothel.

1945

The first general meeting of the St Albans Architectural Society, the condition of the site in 1845 left much to be desired: "The effluent from the slums nearby French Row and Gentle's Yard (now Christopher Place) either drained into cess pits beneath the property (often contaminating the sub-soil) or was stored outside in readiness for collection by the night soil carts."

1966

In 1966 they ran a training excavation on Gentle's Yard, the training being given by society members who had served an apprenticeship over the years by working on other sites. The trainees were mostly young people from local schools. They were led by the museum's conservation officer.

1970

Legendary St Albans local Ginger Mills lived on the site in his battered old camper van during the 1970s. Gentle's Yard was subsequently subject to a planning brief for retail and residential development with car parking, but Ginger claimed squatter's rights, the whole matter went to court and he was subsequently paid around £14K to vacate.

1980

Beginning of construction of Christopher Place Shopping Centre.