THE STORY OF ALBAN

Alban lived (at some time during the 3rd Century) in the Roman city of Verulamium. Although he was then a worshipper of Roman Gods including the Emperor, he gave shelter to a Christian Priest fleeing from persecution. Influenced by the priest's prayer and teaching, he became a Christian. When the authorities discovered the priest's hiding place Alban exchanged clothes with him. The priest escaped and Alban was bound and taken before the judge. The judge was furious at the deception and ordered that Alban should receive the

The beheading of Alban and the fate of his executioner from The Life of St. Alban written and illustrated by Matthew Paris (died 1259), a monk at St. Albans Abbey. Reproduced with kind permission of © The Board of Trinity College Dublin.

punishment due to the priest, if he had indeed become a Christian.

Alban declared his Christian faith, saying words still used here as a prayer 'I worship and adore the true and living God, who created all things'. Despite flogging he refused to sacrifice to the Roman Gods and was sentenced to death.

He was brought out of the town, across the river and up a hill to the site of execution where his head was cut off. Legend tells us that on the hill-top a spring of water miraculously appeared to give the martyr a drink; also that moved by his witness the original executioner refused to carry out the deed, and that after his replacement had killed Alban, the executioners eyes dropped out. This account is based on that of the Venerable Bede, who tells us that:

'When the peace of Christian times was restored a beautiful church worthy of his martyrdom was built, where sick folk are healed and frequent miracles take place to this day.' [About 760]

In later years the church also contained the shrine of Amphibalus, the priest whose life Alban saved.

Ever since those early times, people have journeyed to this place to remember Alban and all that he stands for. They have come to pray for peace and healing and to seek God. They came in such numbers in the middle ages that St. Albans became the premier Abbey in all England. They come here still.