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‘Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle’: historical pageants in twentieth-century Britain

The fascination which history has for us is not merely a curious interest in a dead past, it arises from an intimate conviction that past and present are inseparably linked. A community is a living organism, with its roots in bygone days, and the attraction of age is not its remoteness, but its links with the present.

-- W. R. Hiskett, Mayor of St Albans, *St Albans Millenary Pageant 948-1948: Souvenir Programme*, 1948.¹

In the early twenty-first century, history has an arguably unprecedented prominence in British cultural life.² The popularity of historical television programmes, the widespread interest in family history, and record numbers of visitors to historical sites such as castles and stately homes, all point to a popular fascination with the past. Recent developments, fostered by the growth of the internet and the establishment of new television channels, have prompted a number of scholarly reflections on the role of history and ‘heritage’ in British culture.³ In a wide-ranging examination of the ways in which history is ‘consumed’ in modern Britain, Jerome de Groot has asserted:

How a society consumes its history is crucial to the understanding of contemporary popular culture, the issues at stake in representation itself, and the various means of self- or social consumption available ... Consumption practices influence what is packaged as history and work to define how the past manifests itself in society.⁴

Building on the pioneering work of historians such as Patrick Wright and Raphael Samuel in the 1980s and 1990s, reflections on history and heritage have themselves taken a historical turn, prompting debates about how the past has been interpreted and ‘used’ in different periods of British history.⁵ Peter Mandler, for example, has traced the origins of the nineteenth-century ‘history boom’, when nationalist discourses underpinned both scholarly and popular representations of the past, but sees the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a period of public scepticism about ‘the relevance of the national past’.⁶ In contrast, Paul Readman has noticed a *growth* of interest in history in this period, pointing to a number of cultural indicators drawn from publishing, architecture, theatre and preservation movements.⁷ More recent periods have also come under scrutiny, notably the 1950s, when the Festival of Britain and the associated revival of medieval mystery plays, among other things, signalled new ways of presenting the past to a popular audience and – it might be argued – of re-stating the contemporaneous relevance of local and national traditions in the aftermath of the Second World War and in the context of modernist influences on British culture, including the visual and performing arts.⁸ It is clear that much can be learned about a society from its relationship with its own history, and that the nature of what Wright called ‘the presence of the past in British society’ at different times is worthy of sustained examination.⁹

One notable example of popular engagement with the past in twentieth-century Britain was the historical pageant, in which successive episodes from a community’s history were depicted, involving large numbers of local people, usually in an outdoor venue. As a number of historians have emphasised, they were a notable feature of the Edwardian age, when observers wrote of an outbreak of ‘pageant fever’ or ‘pageantitis’.¹⁰ In total, more than forty pageants were staged in Britain between 1905 and 1914.¹¹ The only full-length study of modern English pageants, by Ayako Yoshino, focuses on this period.¹² The majority of pageants were staged in provincial urban communities, ranging from Dover to Liverpool to

York, but there were also three notable pageants in London: the English Church Pageant (1909), the Army Pageant (1910) and a Pageant of London at the Festival of Empire in 1911.¹³ Although less widely discussed by historians, historical pageants remained popular during the interwar period, notable for their 'sheer variety': they ranged from pageants in the Edwardian mould, celebrating the history of a town or city, to pageants depicting the industrial history of cities such as Manchester, to pageants celebrating the history of particular industries, organisations and social movements.¹⁴ Historical pageants were associated with Empire Day celebrations and other urban rituals of the period, and their size and success provides evidence of the resilience of urban 'governance' in a period when it has traditionally been seen to be in decline.¹⁵ Moreover, historical pageants remained a significant feature of British life in the 1940s and early 1950s, often associated with – but by no means confined to – the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953. The post-war pageants were no less impressive and ambitious than those of the Edwardian period, but have attracted comparatively little attention: Samuel, for example, mentioned them only in passing in his monumental work *Theatres of Memory*.¹⁶ Even in the 1960s and 1970s, there were occasional modest revivals of interest in historical pageants, and the Millennium celebrations in 1999-2000 encouraged more communities to stage them. Some accounts of the development of modern 'community plays', which are often based on real historical events, acknowledge the influence of twentieth-century pageantry.¹⁷ Others, however, while seeing community theatre as a descendant of medieval miracle and mystery plays, overlook the more recent twentieth-century 'epidemics' of historical pageantry.¹⁸ As a widespread cultural phenomenon, involving hundreds or even thousands of performers and sometimes attracting tens of thousands of spectators, twentieth-century historical pageants warrant a more extended consideration than they have hitherto received. This is emphasised by the longevity and adaptability of the pageant form, which emerged in the particular circumstances of the Edwardian period and persisted through the very different contexts of the interwar years and then the 1940s and 1950s.

Although not quite the same as historical re-enactments or so-called 'living history', historical pageants raise similar questions about the ways in which the past is represented and 'experienced'. There is a substantial literature on the theory and practice of re-enactment, often focusing on the meaning of 'authenticity' and the attitudes to the past that underlie such activities.¹⁹ Re-enactment groups such as the Sealed Knot Society insist on appropriate costume, while many re-enactors prefer to use the original location of the battles that they perform, 'desiring a physical linkage between themselves and the past'.²⁰ Like re-enactments, pageants served a 'performative educational function', which was explicitly articulated in many cases.²¹ Indeed, in the 1940s and 1950s pageants could and did claim exemption from the entertainments tax that was levied by HM Customs and Excise, on the grounds that they were 'wholly educational'.²² Professional historians sometimes worked with pageant organisers, and the scriptwriters emphasised the historical accuracy of the scenes that they depicted, often providing references to primary and secondary source material.²³ Yet at the same time pageants were theatrical events, designed as 'spectacle'; they often drew on Shakespeare and other literary and dramatic sources, and sometimes featured fictional or mythical characters. Samuel called pageants 'histrionic', and noted that 'the very idea of spectacle, with its undertones of the theatrical and its reliance on glitter' could be seen as an affront to the 'dignity' of history.²⁴ This delicate balance between historical accuracy and the needs of performance could result in a complex attitude to the past and its relationship with the present. Both Samuel and de Groot have suggested that re-enactment and 'living history' emphasise the contrasts between past and present, yet at the same time these activities can work only if they make history 'live' – or make it 'go', to quote Della Pollock.²⁵ For a

community to stage a historical pageant, there needed to be some sense of a 'usable' past, one which could be brought into the service of the present in some way; this is reflected in the comments of W. R. Hiskett, quoted as the epigraph to this article. Thus historical pageants, like 'living history', demonstrated what de Groot has called 'faith in the educational virtue of historical embodiment' and 'an underlying pedagogical investment in performed reconstruction of historical periods'.²⁶

For the social historian, important questions surround the meaning and uses of historical pageants as community 'spectacles'. As with other urban rituals in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they helped to create an officially sanctioned 'civic image' for a town or city, onto which it was hoped and expected that civic pride would be attached.²⁷ They could also fulfil a social function within communities. Theatrically, pageants could be viewed as 'spectacles of domination' or 'rituals of the powerful', to use Baz Kershaw's terms, carrying social messages intended to support the preservation of social and political hierarchies.²⁸ Some historians have argued that pageants were inherently conservative events, presenting an elitist version of history, and organised and performed in ways that validated and reinforced existing power relationships. For Michael Woods, the organisation and content of the Taunton pageant of 1928 reflected strategies for maintaining 'hegemonic power structures' at a time of class conflict: Woods relates the pageant to the context of the General Strike of 1926. Members of local elites served as patrons and committee chairmen, and the pageant was anti-modern and traditionalist, emphasising the values of middle-class social leadership.²⁹ Not all historians, however, have agreed with this interpretation. Readman, for example, sees Edwardian historical pageants as embodiments of a willingness to use the past in new ways to inform the present and future, ways that were not necessarily conservative or nostalgic.³⁰ Moreover, Deborah Sugg Ryan argues that, even if pageants were intended to work in the way that Woods suggests, they 'did not just operate hegemonically, with elites imposing ideas about Englishness and citizenship on the masses'; they could have a range of different meanings for those who participated in and watched them.³¹ In a similar vein, Pollock argues that, in historical performances, the audience is 'more active than reactive, and meaning is coproduced by participants equally and powerfully invested in the outcome of their exchange'.³² In any case, the pageant form itself could be adapted for different uses: Mick Wallis, in an examination of interwar Popular Front pageantry, has shown that the pageant form could be adapted by a range of political organisations, to serve different political purposes.³³ Another example was a *Communist Manifesto* centenary pageant in 1948.³⁴

Based mainly on a local study, this article examines the roles that historical pageants played in the lives of the communities that staged them. A pageant was an opportunity for a town or city to present a vision of itself to its members and to the outside world, and to draw lessons of contemporaneous political and social relevance. The choice of historical episodes for presentation – which periods were chosen, which were omitted, and how the portrayal of key events changed over time – was a matter for careful consideration, and reflected the type of history that producers and script-writers felt was suitable for dramatic performance. Historians have considered how far pageants fostered an imperial consciousness, how far they depicted a nationalistic version of the past, and how far they were rooted in local experience. Readman argues that pageants – along with other developments in the late Victorian and Edwardian period – demonstrate the importance of 'the local roots of national identity', helping to ground patriotism in a local context.³⁵ This article agrees with Readman's interpretation, and will also show that a strong sense of localism was perhaps an even more important ingredient of the historical pageantry of the 1940s and 1950s, despite the socially unifying experience of the world wars and the promotion of a 'national' culture

by institutions such as the BBC.³⁶ Another key question concerns the relationship between the past as depicted in historical pageants and the present-day life of the community. The extent to which pageants emphasised either continuity or differences between past and present is indicative of the uses to which history was being put, and the lessons that were drawn from it. While W. R. Hiskett was in no doubt that local history illustrated the similarities and continuities with the present, alternative interpretations of historical pageantry are certainly possible. David Glassberg, in a study of American pageants, argues that the emphasis shifted between the 1900s and 1920s: whereas before the First World War pageants tended to depict the evolution of a community and even suggest what might happen in the future, by the 1920s differences between present and past were increasingly likely to be highlighted.³⁷ By contrast, it will be suggested here that continuity between past, present and future was a growing theme of British historical pageantry by the mid-twentieth century, reflecting some of the wider trends in historical culture. In the 1960s, however, the form and function of pageants changed very rapidly, overturning many of the themes that had persisted from the Edwardian era into the mid-twentieth century.

The main focus of this article is on a series of pageants in one English city: St Albans in Hertfordshire. St Albans staged its first historical pageant in 1907, and there were two more outdoor pageants in 1948 and 1953, and an indoor ‘pageant play’ in 1968. As the main local newspaper, the *Herts Advertiser*, commented in 1953, the people of the city were by this time ‘connoisseurs of pageant’.³⁸ This continuity of pageant tradition enables its evolution to be traced through the experience of a single community. In many ways, St Albans was typical of the towns and cities that staged successful pageants in the first half of the twentieth century. It is relatively small – the population of the municipal borough was 18,133 in 1901, 44,098 in 1951 and 52,174 in 1971³⁹ – with a long and varied history. Its proximity to London, with good transport links, enabled visitors from the capital to increase the pageant audiences. There were plenty of historical episodes to choose from. St Albans is on the site of Roman Verulamium (or Verulam), which had been destroyed in Boudicca’s revolt but rebuilt to become one of the most important towns in Roman Britain. Verulamium had been the site of the first Christian martyrdom in Britain, of St Alban, from whom the modern city takes its name. St Albans had one of the largest medieval abbeys; it played an important role in the Peasants’ Revolt; two battles took place there during the Wars of the Roses; and nearby Gorhambury House had been the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century home of Nicholas and Francis Bacon. Nicholas appeared in the Elizabethan scenes that featured in the first three pageants. It was – and remains – a city where a sense of history has been a notable aspect of social and political life over a long period, but which also, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, experienced rapid development of industry and housing, and the growth of a commuter population. By the end of the nineteenth century, there was a flourishing community of local historians and antiquarians, which was closely involved with the first pageant, and an emerging civic conservation movement. In this respect, St Albans was fairly typical of British urban communities in this period: as Lucy E. Hewitt has recently emphasised, ‘the concern for local history and heritage and that for the civic status and identity of cities began increasingly to coincide as the [nineteenth] century matured’.⁴⁰ Although these developments were common to many towns and cities across Britain, they featured everywhere a strong sense of localism. As a result, a local study of civic rituals such as historical pageants can shed light on many shared aspects of social and cultural history in this period.⁴¹

The pageant of 1907

The historical pageant was a particularly widespread and spectacular phenomenon during the Edwardian period. Historians of the British theatre and visual arts have emphasised the role of two leading Edwardian ‘pageant-masters’: Louis Napoleon Parker, who is credited with staging ‘the first of the modern pageants’,⁴² at Sherborne in 1905, and Frank Lascelles, producer of the Oxford pageant of 1907 and many others. Oxford was a fairly typical example: it involved at least 1,000 participants and depicted 15 scenes from the history of the city and university, beginning with St Frideswide and the origins of Oxford in 727, and ending with the visit of George III to the city in the eighteenth century.⁴³ Large casts of performers were common (to take one example, there were 3,000 at the Colchester pageant in 1909); capacious grandstands were erected for spectators (even at tiny Hinchingsbrooke, outside Huntingdon, in 1912, there was space for 5,000); and the sales figures for pageant programmes and ‘books of words’ were impressive (at Oxford in 1907, the book sold 17,000 copies even before the first performance).⁴⁴ Historical pageantry was also found in Scotland – there was a pageant at the Scottish National Exhibition in 1908 – and widely dispersed across the empire, reaching, for example, Quebec, Cape Town and Calcutta before the First World War.⁴⁵ Moreover, influenced by British pageants, historical pageantry became a ‘craze’ in the USA, as chronicled by Glassberg in a thorough survey of pageants across the Atlantic.⁴⁶ The historical pageant was a notable example of civic performance, in which urban elites attempted to promote the image of their town or city through a focus on its history and traditions. In doing so, as Simon Gunn has explained of Victorian civic rituals, pageants ‘embodied ideas of authority and identity in a symbolic yet highly visible fashion’, symbolising unified middle-class social leadership of the urban community.⁴⁷ In their historical focus, pageants can be seen as conservative in spirit and intention: Glassberg, for example, sees the pageants of Louis Napoleon Parker as explicit rejections of modernity.⁴⁸ However, for others, such as Readman, pageants brought the past into the service of the present in more complex ways, comprising ‘a response to the experience of change’ that was not necessarily anti-modern, but which ‘reflected a widely felt desire to sustain a sense of continuity at a time of change’.⁴⁹

The St Albans pageant of 1907 took place from 15 to 20 July. The pageant-master was Herbert Jarman (1871-1919), who was recruited from the Lyric Theatre and paid a fee of £380.⁵⁰ Most of the others involved with the pageant had direct connections with St Albans. The text and lyrics were written by Charles H. Ashdown, a science master at St Albans School, who was also secretary of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society and author of *St Albans Historical and Picturesque* (1893). His wife – herself a noted historian of costume⁵¹ – took the role of ‘Chief Mistress of the Robes’, which, given that the cast numbered some 3,000, was a substantial one. The grandstand had a capacity of 4,000, with boxes available at £5 5s., and seats at 21s., 10s.6d., 5s.6d. and 3s.6d. The pageant took place in Verulamium Park, on the site of the former Roman city, with the cathedral – formerly the abbey church – forming the impressive backdrop. As with other Edwardian pageants, there was an organising ‘Pageant Committee’ and a plethora of sub-committees – at St Albans, there were ten, including one to assist Mrs Ashdown with the costumes, one concerned with casting, and one to organise the horses that were used in the pageant – and a large board of patrons, on which most of the leading citizens were represented. These acted as guarantors against financial loss, in return for which they had priority booking for seats.⁵² Among many practical measures, the Pageant Committee was required to pay the costs of additional policing, and the city council had to make improvements to walkways to enable visitors to travel safely to the pageant.⁵³ The organisation was centred on a building known as Pageant House, from where the local press reported regularly on ‘Pageant Gossip’. A ‘very excellent’ book of words, featuring

Ashdown's text and various additional articles, was produced; as other historians have emphasised, these were useful and perhaps essential, because the outdoor location of pageants and the size of the areas used meant that audiences often found it difficult to hear what the actors were saying.⁵⁴ There was also an illustrated souvenir programme, giving more detail on each episode, and a series of postcards showing pageant scenes was produced. All these features were shared with other Edwardian pageants.

The support of the city council emphasises the importance of civic pride as a recruiting agent for the pageant. As Matthew Vickers has emphasised in a study of Liverpool, the building of a 'civic image' was a widespread goal of local authorities in this period, and '[c]ivic patriotism was the behavioural response which civic image sought to provoke.'⁵⁵ In Liverpool this effort largely failed, and the pageant was not a success, but in other places civic patriotism was clearly in evidence. At St Albans, both the local press and the pageant literature itself emphasised the importance of civic identity and 'local patriotism'. The finale of the pageant comprised an 'ode to Verulam and St Albans', followed by the 'apotheosis of St Albans', a hymn which summarised the pageant scenes and reiterated the claims of the city to national importance. Although the very last act of the pageant was the obligatory singing of the national anthem, the 'apotheosis' was an altogether more impressive performance, taking place at the end of a procession of all 3,000 pageanteers.⁵⁶ The promotion of civic pride was a stated objective of many pageant-masters during the Edwardian period, even when – like Jarman, Parker or Lascelles – they had been recruited from outside the community.⁵⁷ A clear aim of the St Albans pageant was to demonstrate the important role that the city had played in the national past, and to enhance its claim to broader attention.⁵⁸ For one resident, writing in 1962, there were clear civic lessons to be drawn from the 1907 pageant, as a result of which '[t]he ordinary citizen began to feel that there was something special about his city and something worth preserving. It was little enough, but it was the beginning of civic knowledge which leads to civic pride.'⁵⁹ The civic consciousness that was stimulated by the pageant encouraged this writer, the local historian Elsie Toms, in her later career as a councillor, alderman and mayor of St Albans.

The pageant involved many of the leading citizens in key roles, replicating existing power structures in the city. A visit to one performance by the lord mayor of London became the occasion for a civic parade, as well as an official address by the city council, which met specially to draft it.⁶⁰ The patrons of the pageant included the bishop, dean and mayor of St Albans, the mayors of nearby towns, the marquis of Salisbury, the earl and countess of Verulam and many others, while the committees were chaired by prominent businessmen or councillors, or in one case the mayor's wife.⁶¹ A poster was produced commemorating with photographs many of those prominent individuals who had contributed to the pageant. The highly stratified seating arrangements, with the range of ticket prices, ensured that social hierarchies were replicated in the pageant audience. Louis Napoleon Parker had insisted that a pageant should be 'a great Festival of Brotherhood, in which all distinctions of whatever kind are sunk in a common effort',⁶² but at St Albans and elsewhere differences could and did arise from the pageant and its organisation. Efforts were swiftly made to smooth over any problems, often with an appeal to civic sentiment. For example, at one point there were press reports about a shortage of male volunteers to take part in the pageant, and it was suggested that this was due to uncertainty about whether local employers would allow them to take the necessary time off work to participate. Most soon confirmed that this would be allowed, and their 'patriotism' was quickly praised.⁶³ In turn, this raised concerns among some local workers that employers would institute a 'lock-out' during the week of the pageant, thereby depriving them of much-needed wages. The 'grand committee' of the pageant moved swiftly to dispel these rumours, and at the same time emphasised the employment opportunities

afforded by the construction of the grandstand.⁶⁴ These controversies echo those found by Yoshino in other towns that staged pageants in the Edwardian period, such as Romsey.⁶⁵

Although members of local elites had a prominent role in the organisation and performance of Edwardian pageants, it was also essential to the success of a pageant that wide local participation was fostered: pageants needed performers and audiences. As Vickers has shown, one reason for the failure of the Liverpool pageant was the ‘participation deficit’, which resulted in a significant financial loss that was borne by the city council.⁶⁶ At St Albans, considerable efforts were made to ensure wide local participation, and to involve the ‘patriotic citizen’ in the pageant. The recruitment of so many performers, and the financial success of the St Albans pageant, are a testament to these efforts, though it should be noted that limits to popular participation were set. For example, there is no evidence of any public consultation regarding which episodes from the city’s history should be performed. The extent to which the cast and audience were, in de Groot’s terms, ‘enfranchised’ by their involvement in the process of historical re-presentation is open to question. De Groot notes that contemporary historical re-enactment

enfranchises the audience, while also subjecting them to a viewed history, history as a performance and story ... The audience’s gaze empowers them ... and gives them a certain interpretive authority. However, the re-enactor also takes on a power role in this relationship, as they have the authority of ‘verifiable’ truthful history on their side.⁶⁷

The choice and presentation of historical events depicted in historical pageants was largely a matter for elite direction, and the nature of this dominant version of the local past is discussed below. It is important, however, to acknowledge that the ‘message’ of the pageant may not have got through to those who performed in it and watched it. Both Ryan and Readman, while acknowledging the power relationships inherent in Edwardian historical pageantry, emphasise the enthusiastic popular reactions to it.⁶⁸ For Readman, ‘popular concern for the past ... could develop independently of elite direction’, and pageants, with their thousands of participants, could mean different things to different people.⁶⁹ The wide participation in historical pageantry was such that the events portrayed, and the pageant itself, could have multiple meanings. Indeed, one did not even have to attend the pageant in order to experience it. At Oxford, where many local residents could not afford the cheapest 1s. ticket of admission, they could still appreciate the pageant, because they could see the pageanteers dressed up for their roles in the streets.⁷⁰ This was also true at St Albans, where the size of the cast meant that it was not possible to provide changing facilities – members of the cast walked around the city in their costumes – and where the lowest price of admission (3s.6d.) was considerably higher than at Oxford.⁷¹

Pageants had an explicit educational purpose: they often involved schoolchildren, and in the case of Liverpool, for example, the pageant was supported by the education committee of the local authority. The aim of ‘popular education’⁷² was tied up with the importance of authenticity in the reconstruction of historical events. Louis Napoleon Parker insisted that a pageant should be played at ‘the spot on which the outstanding events represented actually occurred’, and was particularly impressed by episodes where the parts were played by ‘descendants of the historical protagonists, speaking a verbatim reproduction of the actual words used by them’. For Parker, such practices ensured authenticity, which was further enhanced by the use of locally sourced props and costumes, music written by local composers, and even the use of local labour to construct the grandstands.⁷³ In this respect, St Albans was seen by one contemporaneous writer as an excellent example of what a pageant should be: ‘[i]n a pageant we want the tang of locality; we want to see the people who belong

to the place doing the best they can.’ Among other things, this writer thought, such local involvement would help to ensure the historical accuracy of the episodes depicted in the pageant.⁷⁴ Sometimes popular responses to appeals to local patriotism went further than necessary: the St Albans pageant provided an opportunity to display the ‘local xenophobia’ that K. D. M. Snell has identified as a significant element in English culture over a long period.⁷⁵ For example, one correspondent to the *Herts Advertiser* complained that the performance of Episode 3 – the martyrdom of St Alban – had been offered to a group from the nearby village of Radlett, and objected to this on the grounds that, as the martyrdom had taken place very close to the site of the pageant, it should be St Albans people who enacted it.⁷⁶ The educational function of the pageant was important to Charles Ashdown, who, as secretary of the Architectural and Archaeological Society, tried to use the build-up to the event to stimulate interest in the more scholarly aspects of local history. The limited success of his efforts – for example, a lecture on the battles of St Albans attracted only a ‘moderate attendance’⁷⁷ – reminds us that the effects of a pageant may well have been different from those initially envisaged by those who organised it. The need both to educate and to ensure popular participation meant that pageants often trod an uneasy path between entertainment and instruction: at Liverpool, Vickers attributes the failure of the pageant to its ‘functional ambiguity’.⁷⁸ St Albans, along with most of Parker’s pageants, was more successful in this respect, largely because of its success in mobilising civic ‘patriotism’ behind the pageant and its wider aims.

Tables 1(a) – 1(d) about here

The choice of scenes depicted at St Albans was fairly typical of the concerns of Edwardian pageants, although it necessarily reflected the specific circumstances of the city’s history. Table 1(a) lists the scenes, which were performed in chronological order. No fewer than four of the eight episodes were pre-Norman, with three dating from the Roman period and one from the Anglo-Saxon. The version of history presented in the pageant was largely a conservative one, driven by an interest in the role of ‘great men’ – the last five scenes all featured kings or queens, or both – although Ashdown was at pains to point out that, in the reconstruction of the Peasants’ Revolt, ‘the feelings prevalent among the lower classes at that time have been preserved’.⁷⁹ Most of the dialogue was in verse, in places taken directly from literary sources, such as William Cowper’s 1782 poem, ‘Boadicea: An Ode’.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, great pains were taken, at St Albans and elsewhere, to emphasise the historical accuracy of the scenes presented: although the pageant was a theatrical representation of the past, ‘authenticity’ was important. References to specific sources were not usually given, but the souvenir programme contained extracts from the exchequer accounts in the Public Record Office that were used to prepare some of the details in Episode 5, ‘The Eleanor Procession’.⁸¹ A virtue was made of the fact that the pageant took place so close to most of the events that were depicted, and Ashdown also pointed out that the charter used by the actors in Episode 6, ‘The Peasants’ Revolt’, was ‘an exact copy of the original’.⁸² The overall ‘message’ of the pageant was one of national and civic pride, centred on an awareness of the place of St Albans in the national story. Empire did not feature prominently in the pageant, although there were some echoes of it. Yoshino has examined Episode 1, in which the tribal chief Cassivelaunus, addressing Julius Caesar, predicted the future greatness of the British Empire, and explains that ‘the resonance between Roman imperialism and British imperialism was a major part of the pageant’s fascination with the Romans’, a fascination that was widespread in this period, and which resulted in a range of ‘allusive’ references to empire.⁸³ Michael Dobson also sees the ‘preoccupation with Elizabeth’ in these terms.⁸⁴ On the whole, however,

city and nation were the predominant themes at St Albans: as the souvenir programme explained, 'it is the business of the Pageant to muster local events which have produced ... wide-reaching national results'.⁸⁵

The last scene of the pageant was probably the most significant: it depicted the visit of Elizabeth I to the home of Sir Nicholas Bacon, Gorhambury House, in 1572. It is particularly noticeable that no later scene was included in the pageant, and therefore that more than 300 years of history were effectively excluded from it. This was also true of other Edwardian pageants, including Parker's pioneering venture at Sherborne, where, although Elizabeth herself did not appear, the last episode was the visit of Sir Walter Raleigh to the town in 1593.⁸⁶ As Readman, Glassberg and Dobson have all emphasised, Elizabeth I was the most popular character in English pageantry of this period, and it was not uncommon for pageants to end with her, or at least not to venture beyond the Civil War.⁸⁷ The official souvenir of the St Albans pageant reflected this bias against more recent history as it surveyed, in turn, the political, religious, social, military, and finally the literary and scientific importance of St Albans. The first section ended with the death of Richard II, the second at the dissolution of the monasteries, the third in the eighteenth century (discussing the duchess of Marlborough), the fourth in 1660, and the last in 1486, when the *Book of St Albans* was published at the abbey's press. The only reference to a more recent period was a brief mention of the recent expansion, in the 1880s and 1890s, of the printing industry in St Albans, 'where it made such an early start in the fifteenth century'.⁸⁸ Unlike American pageants, the English versions did not consider recent economic and social developments, and were focused on a more distant past; for Glassberg, this reflects Louis Napoleon Parker's concept of the pageant as 'a protest against modernity'.⁸⁹ Hence the popularity of morris dancing and revelry in Edwardian pageants, including St Albans, where the significance of the music used in the Elizabethan scene was not lost on a writer in the *Herts Advertiser*, who commented: 'Here we realise, somehow, that hitherto we have been listening to something in a minor key and that we are passing into the major, that, in fact, we are emerging from gloom to sunshine.'⁹⁰

Both Glassberg and Woods, in different ways, argue that the historical content of English pageants was inspired by cultural conservatism. Woods sees pageant scenes as presenting a message of local and national loyalty, and a rejection of socialism. For example, he sees the Taunton pageanteers' reconstruction of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion as a fairly unambiguous anti-socialist warning.⁹¹ Similarly, although the grievances of 1381 were clearly and not unsympathetically articulated in the St Albans script of 1907,⁹² Ashdown used the pageant programme to describe the Peasants' Revolt as a 'Free Trade Socialistic Labour Movement of the 14th century', from which political lessons could be drawn:

The point of interest to us is that it was the breaking up of the feudal system. It is impossible to govern without some system, and it is equally impossible that any system should prove adequate to fresh emergencies in a progressive body politic. The paradox of a constitution is that it cannot be fully constituted. Perhaps that is why the English Constitution is such a success.⁹³

It was possible, then, to draw direct conclusions of contemporary political relevance from the episodes in the pageant. For Woods, however, a possibly more significant aspect of the Taunton pageant was the theme of continuity between past and present that ran through it.⁹⁴ Conversely, according to Glassberg, the conservatism of English pageants lay in their anti-modernism: they downplayed the links between past and present, and, within the pageants themselves, the links between the successive episodes.⁹⁵ In this respect, the English pageant was very different from its American counterpart, where the development of the community,

and the relationship between past and present, were at the heart of the ‘message’. In terms of presentation, the St Albans pageant of 1907 corresponds with Glassberg’s account of English pageantry. A ‘narrative chorus’ introduced most of the episodes, but made little attempt to draw them together: each stood alone as a historical tale, with no thematic continuity between them. Although the souvenir programme contained more contextual information, the book of words presented little more than the text of the pageant, with just two short pages of ‘historical notes’.⁹⁶

The pageant, then, might be seen to correspond with de Groot’s interpretation of the modern historical re-enactment, which – despite the insistence on ‘authenticity’ – ultimately ‘reminds the participant and the (potential) viewer of the essential *otherness* of history’.⁹⁷ However, such an interpretation would overlook the extent to which the St Albans pageant was timed and designed to serve contemporaneous purposes. It was bound up with the emerging civic conservation movement, in St Albans and many other British cities in this period, which prompted a variety of local associational activities, as Hewitt has recently emphasised.⁹⁸ Ashdown himself was a leading local campaigner, who had led the successful opposition to the installation of telegraph poles on the main shopping street of St Albans in 1906, and, in the previous year, the failed attempt to prevent the demolition of Hall Place, the house where Henry VI had reputedly stayed prior to the first battle of St Albans in 1455; Ashdown described this house as ‘a connecting link with the past history of our city’.⁹⁹ In this respect Ashdown could be seen, like Parker, as a resolute anti-modernist, hostile to what he sneeringly termed the “‘march of improvement’”.¹⁰⁰ Urban preservationism, though, was not necessarily anti-modern in spirit: the past could work for the present. Civic image was not just self-serving, but could promote economic ends. Thus historical pageantry, in St Albans and elsewhere, played an important role in the promotion of the tourist industry: as Mandler has shown, this importance pre-dated the first Parker pageant.¹⁰¹ St Albans was making a significant effort to attract tourists in the Edwardian period; and this and other pageants can be seen in this context, as Yoshino has emphasised.¹⁰² Special trains were laid on from London, and visitors came from as far afield as the United States.¹⁰³ Ashdown himself was the author of one of a number of guide books to St Albans that were published around the time of the pageant.¹⁰⁴ Significantly, a share of the profits from the pageant went to the local museum.¹⁰⁵ The past was not just something to promote civic pride, but could be brought into the service of the present as an exemplar and guide. Thus for the dean of St Albans, W. J. Lawrance, writing in the pageant programme, the past should be ‘a treasured and a living memory – inciting them [the people of the city], not to a mere empty glorying in an illustrious past, but to emulate in widely differing circumstances the spirit and achievements of their forefathers’.¹⁰⁶ For Lawrance, it was the examples provided by historical characters that gave the history of St Albans, as presented in the pageant, its element of ‘continuity real, vigorous, instructive’.¹⁰⁷ In Lawrance’s comment can be discerned the seeds of the more explicit links between past and present drawn by Mayor Hiskett in 1948.

The pageants of 1948 and 1953

While the Edwardian ‘epidemic’ is well known to historians, there is also a growing recognition of the vitality of historical pageants throughout the interwar period. Although Ryan notes that Frank Lascelles tended to stage ‘much smaller local historical pageants’ after the First World War, many pageants were in fact just as impressive in scale as those before 1914.¹⁰⁸ For example, Lascelles was pageant-master at Harrow in 1923, where 3,600 performers took part in the ten scenes of local history that were re-enacted.¹⁰⁹ There was a Scottish Historical Pageant at Craigmillar Castle in 1927, and in 1928 some 1,500 people

performed in the Taunton pageant.¹¹⁰ Many others followed in the 1930s: examples include Salford (1930), Barking (1931), Falkirk (1932), Chester (1937) and Manchester (1938).¹¹¹ These pageants usually took the same form as those held before the First World War, and aimed at similar civic objectives. For the historian Charles Oman, writing in the Harrow pageant 'handbook' in 1923, pageants were 'an excellent means of teaching local patriotism and the sense of civic fellowship, by a display of local history'.¹¹² Often, as was the case at Salford, Barking and Manchester, the pageant commemorated a centenary of the borough's first charter. The type of scenes depicted were similar to those in the Edwardian period, though in the 1930s some more recent episodes were included. At Chester in 1937, the visit of Princess Victoria to the city in 1832 was the final scene, and it was claimed – wrongly – that this was 'the first appearance of the great Queen in any Pageant'.¹¹³ Meanwhile, the parallel tradition of the 'left pageant' gained strength in the 1930s, as described by Mick Wallis, while Helen McCarthy has shown that the pageant form was adapted for internationalist purposes by the League of Nations Union.¹¹⁴ These developments lie outside the scope of this article, but they emphasise the adaptability of the pageant form and its usefulness to a range of organisations and communities.

There was no pageant at St Albans during the interwar period,¹¹⁵ but the city played its part in the flourishing of historical pageantry after the Second World War. The early to mid-1950s, in particular, saw an outbreak of 'pageant fever' that was no less virulent than its Edwardian predecessor, with some towns, like St Albans, staging pageants again, and many doing so for the first time. It is surprising that this has been so little recognised by historians. Yoshino acknowledges 'a brief revival of the form, stimulated by the Festival of Britain and Queen Elizabeth II's coronation', but the surviving records indicate that this period had a very high incidence of historical pageantry, possibly higher than the years before 1914.¹¹⁶ A new generation of pageant-masters emerged, presenting their interpretations of local and national history to communities across Britain. They included Louis Napoleon Parker's grandson, the 'pageant-master and producer' Anthony Parker.¹¹⁷ Large numbers of people often took part and watched, and many sections of local communities were mobilised. For example, King's Lynn Charter Pageant of 1954 involved no fewer than 59 local organisations, including groups as varied as the Conservative Ladies Association, the National Dock Labour Board, the Rotary Club and a range of churches.¹¹⁸ Other examples include a pageant at Carlisle in 1951, a floodlit pageant at Cirencester in 1953, and, in the same year, a coronation pageant at Warwick Castle produced by Anthony Parker.¹¹⁹ The latter brought together Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria, both aged 27, in a spectacular and contrived finale.¹²⁰ There were also historical pageants in Wales, and, increasingly, in Scotland. Post-war Scottish examples include Clackmannan (1949) and Cambuslang (1955).¹²¹

St Albans hosted a 'Millenary Pageant' in 1948, celebrating the 1,000th anniversary of the traditional date of establishment of the town, market and school; The 1948 event was one of the earliest large-scale post-war pageants. According to one recollection, it 'captured the imagination of the Press and public the world over, especially as it was one of the first touches of glamour and frivolity after the grim war years'.¹²² It was responsible for launching the career of one of the most prolific pageant-masters of the time. Cyril Swinson (1911-63), who had been born and brought up in St Albans, was a founder of a local theatre group – the Company of Ten – and the St Albans Ballet Society, and worked as a publisher and author, using the pseudonym Hugh Fisher. St Albans was Swinson's first major pageant, and he went on to be pageant-master in many other places, including Wisbech in 1949 and Hitchin in 1951; he was also master of the King's Lynn Charter Pageant in 1954, and a pageant at Jersey in 1955. Swinson produced the Dickens Festival Pageant at Rochester in 1951, depicting

fictional events, and when he died in 1963, he was working on a pageant to be performed at Dunstable.¹²³ Swinson was commissioned in 1947, on an unpaid basis,¹²⁴ to write and direct the Millenary Pageant, and as in 1907 the city council and leading figures in the diocese of St Albans were eager to lend their support. With a cast of 1,000 and a choir of 200, the pageant was smaller than in 1907, but still a major civic event. With substantial takings from ticket sales, as well as the souvenir programme and car park, the pageant made a profit of £3,282 1s.3d., helped by its exemption from the entertainments tax.¹²⁵ The profits were put to charitable use, this time towards the construction of a home for the elderly. The success and profitability of the 1948 event encouraged St Albans to stage its third pageant in 1953, with Swinson again the pageant-master; this was one of many pageants in the same year associated with the coronation of Elizabeth II.¹²⁶ The St Albans pageant was entitled 'A Masque of the Queens', and here the cast numbered more than 1,600, while the grandstand could seat 4,000.¹²⁷ A visit by the then queen Elizabeth had raised the profile of the 1948 pageant, but locally the 1953 event was better reported, owing to the easing of paper rationing.¹²⁸

The nature of both official and popular attitudes to the past in early post-war Britain has been examined by a number of historians. Mandler discerns an 'indifference, or outright hostility, to history' among the British public in the mid-twentieth century, dating a revival of interest to the 1960s.¹²⁹ The key cultural event of the period, the Festival of Britain, is often seen as determinedly modernist in inspiration and tone, 'pointing the way forward' for a nation ravaged by war and austerity. As Harriet Atkinson has recently emphasised, however, the Festival and its associated activities embodied a more complex sense of the relationship between past, present and future.¹³⁰ During the early post-war period, a 'wider exercise of historical re-evaluation' resulted in a 'search to reconcile the past with the present'.¹³¹ Such a reconciliation required a greater emphasis on historical continuity, and a rejection of any lingering anti-modernism that might have been associated with Louis Napoleon Parker and other Edwardian pageant-masters. This in turn had implications for the ways in which the past was represented in historical pageants: if history was to be a guide to action in the present, or if the present was to be part of a seamless progression from past to future, then there must be limits to the 'otherness' of the events depicted in pageants and other representations of the past. At a national level, the post-war imperative required that the past be brought into the service of the future, and according to Becky Conekin this pointed the Festival organisers towards a shared body of 'timeless traditions' that worked to reinforce notions of national unity; these traditions underpinned the official exhibitions of 'The Land and the People'.¹³² Alongside the Festival there was a revival in a number of cities, most notably York, of medieval mystery plays. Heather Wiebe suggests that these religious dramas, with large casts recruited from the local population, recalled 'the tradition of amateur historical pageantry', although their Biblical subject-matter and medieval origins tended to leave them 'quarantined in their own pastness'.¹³³ In contrast, it will be shown below that historical pageants often asserted their contemporaneous relevance, attempting to channel civic pride and goodwill into particular municipal and social objectives.

Even more than in the earlier periods, the main aim of post-war urban historical pageants was to promote the 'civic image' of the town or city in which they were performed. At St Albans, many of the episodes depicted the part played by the city at significant moments in the national story. As Mayor Hiskett remarked in his foreword to the 1948 pageant programme, '[f]ew communities have made a more distinguished contribution to the life and development of the Nation; few can produce from the treasure houses of the past such a wealth of effort and achievement.'¹³⁴ Tables 1(b) and 1(c) show that there were both similarities and differences in the scenes chosen for re-enactment in 1907, 1948 and 1953. The first two scenes of 1948 had also appeared in 1907, but whereas Charles Ashdown's

pageant had ended with an Elizabethan scene, the millenary pageant contained four subsequent episodes, although only one of these dated to the nineteenth century. Given the ‘queens’ theme of the 1953 pageant, Swinson’s choice was more restricted, but here he followed Jarman and Ashdown in depicting Boudicca’s revolt, the second battle of St Albans and a visit to Sir Nicholas Bacon at Gorhambury by Elizabeth I, although on this occasion her second visit, in 1577, was chosen instead of the one in 1572. Again, only one Victorian scene appeared, and there was nothing from the eighteenth century. As in the Festival of Britain, empire was ‘barely represented’ in the St Albans pageants – certainly not in an explicit way – though this may not have been the case in all post-war pageants.¹³⁵ As for more recent events, there was only one brief mention of the world wars and their impact on St Albans: unlike the interwar American pageants examined by Glassberg, which tended to depict the First World War, the St Albans Millenary Pageant, and most other British examples in the interwar and post-war periods, steered clear of this aspect of recent history.¹³⁶ In terms of the dialogue, both pageants used mostly prose, in contrast with 1907, although the chorus always communicated in verse, and the whole of Episodes 6 and 8, and much of Episode 1, in 1953 were also versified. More than in 1907, the chorus in both 1948 and 1953 linked the episodes together, emphasising progression from one scene to the next.

In both 1948 and 1953, the importance of national identity and ‘timeless traditions’ was highlighted by the prominence of Elizabeth I; in St Albans as elsewhere, she remained one of the most popular characters in post-war historical pageantry. The theme of the 1953 pageant, appropriately for a coronation event, was ‘loyalty’.¹³⁷ In the epilogue, the chorus reminded the audience that, at the beginning of a new Elizabethan age, ‘[w]e must endeavour to be worthy of our town,/Our country and our Queen.’¹³⁸ The tone of the depiction of the first Elizabeth’s visit to St Albans, in both 1948 and 1953, was similar to that adopted by Ashdown in 1907. In both the post-war pageants, Elizabeth I was accompanied by cheering crowds, and dancing appeared in the programme at this scene in 1948.¹³⁹ (Alongside the 1948 pageant, the English Folk Song and Dance Society organised a folk dance festival, attended by more than 1,400 people.)¹⁴⁰ As the chorus explained in 1953, Elizabeth I herself inspired a great English age:

She had such spirit, courage and resolve,
 She lit a torch in all men’s hearts.
 England found new greatness in her reign:
 ...
 She gave new life and spirit to her time
 That all men walked with bolder step, with head held high.¹⁴¹

Just as in 1907, however, civic pride was a more dominant theme than national identity in the post-war pageants. This is demonstrated by two particular scenes from 1948. Episode 3, ‘Ulsinus Has a Plan’, was set in 948 and depicted Abbot Ulsinus laying out what would become the town of St Albans, reflecting not only the millenary celebrations but also the growing sense, emphasised by Mayor Hiskett, that the city’s past was an important element of its twentieth-century identity.¹⁴² The last scene of 1948, ‘St Albans Is a City’, portrayed the celebrations of 1877, when the city and diocese of St Albans were established.¹⁴³ In 1953, the Victorian scene depicted the restoration of the abbey church, which became the cathedral, and emphasised that it was in the nineteenth century that ‘St Albans was beginning to revive its pride in the glories of its civic past’.¹⁴⁴ These civic glories were reflected in the ‘pageant hymn’, which was used in both 1948 and 1953, and echoed the ‘apotheosis’ of 1907. The post-war pageanteers sang:

Lift up your hearts on high,
Sing and rejoice;
Lift up you hearts on high,
Sing with one voice.
Sing of our ancient town,
Tell of her glory,
Tell of her sorrows, too,
Tell all her story.

Saint Albans – Saint Albans,
We honour thee to-day.
Saint Alban – Saint Alban,
We follow in thy way.
Bless our endeavours, Lord,
To thee we pray
Give us new courage, and
Hope for to-day.¹⁴⁵

The hymn remained in the civic consciousness for some time, and was even sung at Swinson's funeral in 1963.¹⁴⁶ Along with similar examples of pageant hymns in the post-war period, it reflects the extent to which, in a phrase used by the prolific American pageant-master William Chauncy Langdon, 'the place is the hero' of a pageant.¹⁴⁷ Civic pride was emphasised by the activities that surrounded the pageants: for example, the council agreed to pay for the city's flag to be flown from the roof of the library for the duration of the 1948 pageant, and a banner advertising the pageant was hung outside the town hall.¹⁴⁸ Special trains were laid on, and there were associated exhibitions in the city, including one of the city charters and corporation plate.¹⁴⁹ A number of the scenes in the post-war pageants, drawing on more recent history, told interesting stories about local history, but had comparatively little resonance for the national story: examples include the election scene of 1722, the restoration of the abbey church in the 1850s and the celebration of city status in 1877. This further emphasises the civic dimension of post-war pageantry.

As in 1907, the pageants of 1948 and 1953 were closely linked with preservationism. Atkinson notes that one outcome of the 'historical re-evaluation' of this period was a renewed concern for urban architectural heritage.¹⁵⁰ Like Ashdown before him, Swinson was involved in the civic conservation movement: the pageant-master later became the founding vice-chairman of St Albans Civic Society, which was established in 1961, aiming 'to encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in St Albans, and to stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the city and its surroundings'.¹⁵¹ The pageant of 1948 took place at a time of widespread concern about the future of the ancient buildings on some of St Albans's oldest streets, a concern which was echoed in planning reports for the city in the mid-1940s.¹⁵² In the context of a growing commuter population, Swinson was particularly worried that a lack of local community spirit would discourage residents from supporting civic conservation: in 1953, he expressed his fear that St Albans would 'turn into just a dormitory where people live in order to work in London'.¹⁵³ His message, however, was not crudely anti-modern; indeed, it resonated with the aim of the city council to promote St Albans as a manufacturing and residential centre. For Swinson, civic pride could support the twin aims of planned urban development and the protection of the historic environment: 'I feel it is all to the good to stimulate pride in the city just now, when it

is in danger of becoming just a dormitory, or a large disorganised mass.’¹⁵⁴ St Albans had been designated an ‘expansion town’ after the Second World War, and in this period the city council continued the regular publication of printed guides to the city, which had begun during the interwar years, designed to attract new residents, businesses and visitors.¹⁵⁵ The pageant programmes of 1948 and 1953 – both priced at 2s.6d. – also participated in the work of promoting the city to visitors, and a special leaflet was produced for visitors during the pageant.¹⁵⁶ Local businesses advertising in the programmes invited visitors to look around their industrial premises, demonstrating the local importance of the pageants as commercial events, while others took the opportunity to advertise for factory workers, in a period when St Albans remained a manufacturing centre (more than a quarter of occupied inhabitants worked in manufacturing in 1951).¹⁵⁷ In this context, both the 1948 and 1953 pageants aimed explicitly to enlist the past in the service of the development of the modern city. As Mayor Hiskett’s comments of 1948 demonstrate, the links between past and present were very clear. The past could be a guide for the future: the dean of St Albans, Cuthbert Thicknesse, speaking at a public meeting about the pageant in 1947, ‘stressed the effort which the Pageant might have of drawing the townspeople more together as a living community as it was in the days of Ulsinus’, the abbot who had established the modern town in 948.¹⁵⁸ It had even been suggested that the 1948 pageant should include an episode dealing with ‘the present or future’, although such a scene did not materialise.¹⁵⁹ Significantly, the historical notes in the pageant programme for 1953 were entitled ‘St Albans Past, Present and Future’, and although the ‘Future’ section was short, it set out an impressive vision of a larger city, with planned suburban development and continued employment in modern industrial work. As the author of this section, the city surveyor, commented, ‘[t]he future St Albans will be a pleasant place, retaining the best of the old combined in a harmonious way with the modern development and presenting a picture of an English city growing and changing through the centuries.’¹⁶⁰

These themes of continuity and civic development ran through other pageants in the post-war years. They underpinned Swinson’s pageant at King’s Lynn in 1954, where a pageant hymn – similar to the one sung at St Albans but in this case written by the script writer, A. A. Gray – expressed the hope that the current generation would ‘serve’ the town, and that ‘future generations’ would ‘extol and praise her name’.¹⁶¹ Other pageants also followed up the theme of ‘loyalty’, and pageant programmes expressed this in local terms. The Surrey town of Guildford had a pageant in 1957, directed by ‘Britain’s foremost pageant-master’, Christopher Ede. Here, according to the local mayor’s comments in the pageant programme, civic pride was the foundation of wider allegiances: ‘The greater loyalties spring from the lesser, and if we are proud to be Her Majesty’s subjects in a world-wide Commonwealth and Empire, we are proud, too, to be citizens of a town which has contributed its share to the founding of that Empire.’¹⁶² Only through an understanding of the town’s history, the mayor explained, could this civic pride be renewed and help to guide Guildford through times of political difficulty. The programme notes for Scene 19, ‘The Twentieth Century’, contained clear echoes of Swinson’s earlier concerns about St Albans, though with a more optimistic conclusion:

Times of stress alternating with times of progress and prosperity have produced a busy county market town, struggling to secure its beautiful old buildings from the pressing claims of a lively commerce, seeking to serve the twentieth century with its manifold needs. The railway has brought London to Guildford’s doorstep, and many of her citizens travel daily to work. The town, however, is in no danger of becoming a mere dormitory[.]¹⁶³

The range of active local organisations, many of which had themselves contributed to the pageant, was taken as evidence that Guildford would retain an independent life and identity in the future. Meanwhile, other pageant-masters made use of history in a more direct way, as an inspiration to current and future generations. At Carlisle, for example, the pageant-master Lionel Lightfoot contrasted the popular tendency to ‘recoil with horror’ at medieval atrocities with a widespread acceptance of the development of nuclear weapons. As a result he pleaded with the people of Carlisle to ‘make this Pageant a tribute to our ancestors’, but also ‘a token of our well wishes and affection for the millions of men and women of our race who are yet to make history’.¹⁶⁴

At St Albans, there were clear echoes of 1907 in many aspects of the organisation of the pageants of 1948 and 1953, including the involvement of local elites and the complex committee structure. The earl of Verulam was president of the 1948 pageant: he lived at nearby Gorhambury House, which featured in the Elizabethan scene, Episode 5 (see table 1(b)). Mayor Hiskett chaired the ‘general committee’, and his immediate predecessor the ‘executive and finance committee’. Dean Thicknesse was a vice-chairman, and the executive and finance committee also included three vicars, two aldermen and the headmaster of St Albans School.¹⁶⁵ Again, there was a group of guarantors against financial loss for both pageants. Like the lord mayor’s attendance in 1907, the royal visit of 1948 provided an opportunity for civic pomp, with key individuals and ‘civic heads’ being presented to the queen before and after the performance that she attended.¹⁶⁶ In the final scene, ‘St Albans Is a City’, members of the city council played their own predecessors from 1877, with Hiskett himself taking the role of mayor.¹⁶⁷ However, wider participation remained a vital aspect of civic pageantry, the aim being to mobilise as large a part of the community as possible in a shared cultural event. According to Swinson, even those with little interest in history benefited from taking part, because they were brought together in a common effort, taking pride in their organisational achievements and perhaps making new friends in the process; this echoed Louis Napoleon Parker’s concept of a pageant as a ‘Festival of Brotherhood’.¹⁶⁸ Even those who did not attend a performance of the pageant could experience the event in other ways, as one participant from 1948 remembered:

Nobody who has not been in a pageant can truly savour the atmosphere which pervades the community. After some weeks of rehearsal in church halls or rain-sodden fields the great day finally arrives. Thousands of people throng the streets leading to the arena and are hustled aside by scurrying monks, mediaeval ladies on bicycles munching sandwiches as they pedal, choleric cavaliers trying to inch their cars through the mob as they reflect on the dinner they will not have, Roman soldiers steering an erratic course through it all with demure Regency ladies simpering on the the pillions, all, in our case, converging on the site of the Roman city of Verulamium.¹⁶⁹

Through the temporary transformation of the town, and the festival atmosphere created – the *Herts Advertiser* remarked in 1953 that ‘St Albans during pageant-tide has taken on a gay and fantasia-like appearance’¹⁷⁰ – the pageant could be expected to promote a civic consciousness. Parker, Langdon and other pioneers of historical pageantry had hoped that a pageant itself would become a significant event in the life and history of a community, and the St Albans pageants were intended to achieve this aim.

As in 1907, the pageants did not always function as ‘Festivals of Brotherhood’. Local social and political rivalries did not disappear because of the pageant, and the ‘community’ did not always work in the smoothly united way that the organisers hoped. As in 1907, there appears to have been little public debate about which episodes should appear in the pageant –

Swinson's draft synopsis for 1948 underwent very little revision – but in 1953 a public meeting saw a 'popular clamour' against the decision to use recorded music, and eventually the organisers backed down and conceded a small orchestra, despite the greater cost.¹⁷¹ Despite the city council's support for the pageant, the Highways, Buildings and Works Committee was unwilling to permit banners to be hung across the city streets to advertise it.¹⁷² There were also some concerns about who should play in which scene in 1948: in an echo of the correspondence in the local newspaper in 1907, one member of the pageant committee noted 'the desirability of the people from each district being engaged in episodes in which that district featured'. This required the various parishes within the city to be appropriately represented in the relevant scenes.¹⁷³ Meanwhile, there was some opposition to the 1948 pageant from a 'faction' within Swinson's own Company of Ten theatre group.¹⁷⁴ The pageant also offered local people the chance to complain about the conditions in which they were then living. One resident of St Albans imagined a pageant scene performed in 2048, depicting the early post-war period, in which austerity was the dominant theme:

We will show you how in [19]48
 St Albans lived, and what they ate
 Honoured Bacon in their fashion
 Subsisted on a two-ounce ration.
 Records tell how Mayor Hiskett
 Had for joint a bit of brisket.
 ...
 But old Albanians as in war
 Instead of clamouring for more,
 Beneath the rationing blows then dealt
 Just smiled, and tightened up their belt.
 The City Fathers at that date
 Extracted a nineteen-shilling rate...¹⁷⁵

By 1953, there were clear signs that it was becoming more difficult to draw all sections of the local community together to support the pageant. A scheme was introduced – on the suggestion of the now ex-mayor Hiskett, who was a member of the pageant committee although no longer a councillor – whereby local businesses were offered blocks of tickets for their employees, with the intention that the latter pay for them by instalments. However, to the disappointment of the pageant organisers, this offer was not widely taken up.¹⁷⁶ In the end, the audiences for the 1953 pageant were lower than hoped for, with ticket sales realising little more than half the income of 1948, and attendances totalling 17,709: a fairly impressive figure, but on average still less than two-thirds of the total grandstand capacity across the seven performances. The result was a financial loss – borne by the guarantors – of £1,203 1s.4d. (Any profits would have gone to '[c]hurch extensions and improved local amenities'.)¹⁷⁷ In the end, the substantial civic energies and popular involvement in the pageant were not enough to make it a commercial success.

In writing the pageant, Swinson drew on a mixture of historical and literary sources. He claimed to have used 'contemporary records of the incidents depicted, wherever this was possible', though for Episodes 1-4 it was not. Instead he used Bede for the martyrdom of St Alban, and the St Albans abbey chronicles for Episodes 2 and 3. Later episodes were based on a mixture of secondary and published primary sources, but for Episode 4 Swinson relied heavily on Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part 2*.¹⁷⁸ He admitted to taking some liberties with historical accuracy: the Duke of Marlborough appeared in Episode 8, for example, though he

may have been too ill to have taken part in the election of 1722, and Episode 9 conflated two separate events in the same year, 1877.¹⁷⁹ A balance needed to be struck between the aims of popular education, theatrical entertainment and civic image, and this allowed for a mixture of influences on the script. In 1953, Swinson provided less detail about his sources, but they included Tacitus and the abbey chronicles, as well as secondary sources such as the *Victoria County History* and *Dictionary of National Biography*.¹⁸⁰ Only one episode in 1953 (number 10) was completely invented, according to Swinson, but other amendments and omissions can be noted. Although not credited in the script, Episode 1 in 1953 – ‘Queen Boadicea’ – used Dio Cassius’s account of the Iceni queen’s revolt, which does not mention Verulamium, and Swinson extended Boudicca’s speech based on Dio to include references to it. Although both Roman and Iceni cruelties were described in the pageant, Swinson stopped short of depicting the worst atrocities attributed by Dio to Boudicca’s troops.¹⁸¹ Perhaps most notably, however, and despite Swinson’s concerns for historical authenticity wherever possible, the 1953 pageant featured a dragon, which according to the *Herts Advertiser* was the ‘comic highlight’.¹⁸²

As this suggests, there was a more light-hearted atmosphere surrounding the 1948 and 1953 pageants than had prevailed in 1907, when a certain solemnity had characterised the proceedings and a sober tone had pervaded the pageant literature. Episode 4 of the 1948 pageant was a dialogue-based comic interlude between the depiction of Abbot Ulsinus and the folk-dancing and processions of the Elizabethan episode, and the election scene of 1722 was also quite frivolous. It was possible for the pageants to permit a certain amount of self-mockery: thus one advertiser in the 1953 programme, a ladies’ clothes shop, quoted a dictionary definition of pageantry, ‘Splendid Display; Pompous Spectacle’.¹⁸³ By contrast, the souvenir programme in 1907 had explained earnestly and self-referentially that Elizabeth I had taken part in ‘public functions and festivities, such as Pageants, which were made instruments for teaching the principles of patriotism’.¹⁸⁴ By 1953 there was space in the officially sanctioned civic image of St Albans for a modest amount of humour and irreverence. There was a range of possible responses to the post-war pageants. In her history of St Albans, Elsie Toms recalled the evening of the queen’s visit to the pageant in 1948: as she arrived, ‘a beautiful rainbow seemed to encircle the Abbey [i.e. cathedral] tower ... the most spectacular effect that any producer could have dreamed of’.¹⁸⁵ However, another witness to the same performance remembered not the opening but the finale, when a lone horseman led the entire cast in a march past the royal box, before returning to the centre of the stage. On this occasion, the horse ‘decided to accompany this move with a lusty passing of wind infinitely varied in pitch, speed and volume’, which lasted for the whole hundred yards of its walk.¹⁸⁶ The ‘irreverence to authority’ in the pageant, so enjoyed by this witness, would be an even more significant feature when historical pageantry returned to St Albans in 1968.

‘Time and the City: A Pageant Play’ (1968)

Historical pageants were staged in the 1960s and 1970s: there was another Scottish Historical Pageant at Craigmillar Castle in 1967, for example, and smaller events at Musselburgh, Dunfermline Abbey, Forfar and Arbroath.¹⁸⁷ Pageantry continued in England, too, albeit less feverishly than before: Carlisle staged a pageant in 1977, for example, and, much closer to St Albans, there was a pageant at Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire in 1966.¹⁸⁸ However, the number and scale of pageants undoubtedly declined, and the importance of visual spectacle was downgraded. Even in 1948, faced with rationing and financial uncertainty, Cyril Swinson had considered producing a smaller ‘pageant play’ instead of a full-scale pageant. The

pageant play was familiar from the interwar period, and Swinson explained that it was ‘more of a play, and less of a pageant; less [*sic*] performers, less spectacle, less elaborate arrangements, and more dialogue and singing, and more drama’.¹⁸⁹ Another pageant-master drew a similar distinction: a pageant was ‘more spectacular, more a matter of movement than of speech’.¹⁹⁰ The pageant play was considered more suitable for audiences increasingly accustomed to radio and television, and less likely to be impressed with the choreographed outdoor spectacles of an earlier period. In any case, at St Albans the experience of financial loss in 1953 made it unlikely that another large-scale pageant would take place.

A pageant play, ‘Time and the City’, was produced for the St Albans Festival in June, performed by 200 local schoolchildren and members of a local youth theatre company. It was written and directed by Cyril Swinson’s younger brother Arthur (1915-70), who was by this time a well-known author and military historian, and a producer and script-writer for radio and television, including many episodes of *Dr Finlay’s Casebook*. Arthur Swinson had been ‘Marshal of the Arena’ in the 1948 pageant, and also wrote military history, as well as serving as secretary of the English Folk Song and Dance Society.¹⁹¹ His interests, then, included pageantry itself and some of the pursuits that were associated with it, but the 1968 pageant play was in many ways unlike its predecessors. Even its location was different: it was staged indoors, in the newly opened City Hall. This was part of a large civic centre development, which included new council offices and car parks; ironically, Swinson’s brother Cyril had, until his death in 1963, vigorously opposed the council’s plans for this site.¹⁹² Arthur Swinson himself satirised the construction project in his novel *The Temple*, published in 1970.¹⁹³ The hall had seating for 1,000 people: the maximum nightly audience, then, was only a quarter of that which could be accommodated for the 1953 pageant; and there were only three performances of ‘Time and the City’, meaning that little more than ten per cent of the potential 1953 audience could see it. No ‘book of words’ was issued, as had been the case for earlier pageants, and there are few surviving copies of the script.¹⁹⁴ There was little of the visual spectacle that featured in the outdoor pageants of the 1940s and 1950s: rather, it was important that the audience could hear the dialogue.¹⁹⁵ This reflected the ubiquity of radio and television, and Swinson’s own background in these media. The indoor location also reflected a changed approach to historical ‘authenticity’: the pageant play was not, in Ryan’s words, ‘dependent upon the idea of an “authentic” place with memories that could be reconstructed in its landscape’.¹⁹⁶ Although the scenes in 1968 were based on real historical events, greater licence was taken with the storylines, and the approach to the civic past was less reverential than in earlier pageants. Swinson aimed to keep ‘in line with the general knowledge of events and the people involved in them’ – only one episode (number 4) was entirely ‘apocryphal’ – but he admitted that his ‘first concern has been to construct a viable theatrical vehicle’.¹⁹⁷ Nevertheless, to understand the scenes, a considerable knowledge of local history was required, and this caused difficulties for some members of the audience.¹⁹⁸

The changed attitude to the past is reflected in the list of episodes (see table 1(d)). The so-called ‘permissive shift’ experienced in the 1960s resulted in a public attitude to the past that Mandler has described as ‘ironic affection, and eventually wholehearted enjoyment’. One aspect of this was a renewed cultural engagement with the Victorian period, which itself might take an ironic or ‘witty’ form.¹⁹⁹ Thus in the 1968 pageant the Romans and Anglo-Saxons were dropped, and the earliest scene was set in 1155: instead of the martyrdom of St Alban, which had featured in the 1907 and 1948 pageants, the first episode told the story of the twelfth-century dispute between the monks of Ely and St Albans over the martyr’s relics. Whereas in both 1948 and 1953 Cyril Swinson had included only one Victorian scene in his pageants, there were no fewer than three in 1968. Significantly, one of these, Episode 6,

concerned the events of 1850 and 1851, when the borough of St Albans had been disenfranchised following revelations of corrupt practices at a parliamentary by-election.²⁰⁰ A commission of inquiry had met at St Albans town hall in 1851 to consider the election, and the pageant presented extracts from its deliberations. Although this was the most notable event in the modern political history of the town, it had never been part of an earlier pageant; indeed, as recently as 1962, Elsie Toms's history of St Albans had not referred to it. By contrast, Swinson's young pageanteers revelled in the details of the corruption investigation, although this scene was deemed 'incomprehensible' by an unimpressed reviewer in the *Herts Advertiser*.²⁰¹ The final episode, 'enlarged and adapted' from a report in the same newspaper in 1896, concerned a court case in which a woman was charged with driving at excessive speed: the first case in the city, supposedly, involving a motor car.²⁰² None of the scenes contained versified dialogue, which would have been unsuitable for the frequently irreverent tone of the script. In contrast to earlier pageants, only one royal character was included: Henry VIII in 'The King Rides to Sopwell' (the location of a nunnery near St Albans), set in 1527, and Richard II, in the Peasants' Revolt episode. Royal characters were, therefore, much more thinly represented than in earlier pageants; and they were also represented less deferentially.

These two scenes are the only ones from 1968 that can be directly compared with those in earlier pageants. 'The King Rides to Sopwell', which depicted the courtship of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, had also featured in 1953. In 'Time and the City', this scene contained more political and sexual innuendo than the earlier version, although even in 1953 one character had pointedly remarked that '[s]tatecraft and politics rarely go hand in hand/With simple goodness or true piety'.²⁰³ A starker contrast with earlier depictions was apparent in 'The Death of an Agitator', which presented Swinson's version of the Peasants' Revolt; this differed radically from Ashdown's reconstruction in 1907. In that year, as noted above, Ashdown had used the episode to draw favourable conclusions about English constitutionalism; he had also praised Richard II's 'wisdom of clear-sighted youth and courage'.²⁰⁴ The version of 1907 depicted the rebellion at St Albans, and the sentencing of the ringleaders to death, but did not present the aftermath, ending instead with a speech of reconciliation from king Richard:

Come, let us now forget in merry play,
 Unpleasant things that we have seen to-day;
 And with light hearts, forgetful of the past,
 Make each fair hour more blithesome than the last.²⁰⁵

By contrast, the character of Richard II was far less sympathetically presented in Swinson's play, appearing as politically unaware, even slightly idiotic. He was shown as being more interested in a game of ball-and-cup than in the revolt that was going on around him.²⁰⁶ In addition, the 1968 pageant play referred to the aftermath of the revolt, when some of the townsmen of St Albans removed the bodies of the hanged rebels from their gibbets, and Richard then ordered them to re-hang the rotting corpses.²⁰⁷ There was no sign of Swinson's brother's reluctance to include the grimmest details of earlier historical atrocities. Unlike Ashdown's depiction of the revolt, Arthur's 1381 scene certainly did not seek to assure the audience of the progressive possibilities of English constitutionalism; it was more concerned to document the brutality and unfairness of those in authority. Swinson was remembered as a man who 'did not hesitate to rattle cages', and his script clearly reflected the cultural upheavals of the 1960s.²⁰⁸

Local and national patriotism did not feature heavily in the 1968 pageant play. Narrating Episode 2, on the background to Magna Carta, Swinson remarked that '[w]e can feel proud that the first step [towards representative government] was taken at St Albans'; however, this type of comment was a rarity, and even here the narrator downplayed the significance of the charter, which was 'very limited in scope and did not greatly help the common people'.²⁰⁹ (Intentionally, or otherwise, this comment echoed the earlier description of Magna Carta in Sellar and Yeatman's *1066 and All That*.)²¹⁰ Swinson's own patriotism was not in doubt: his daughter remembers him as a 'moustachioed, Sandhurst and public school educated English army officer', with a 'faith in national institutions [and] the landed Establishment'.²¹¹ When he died in 1970, a friend described him as '[a] man who had great love for his country and native St Albans. These were attributes which many people today appeared to denigrate.'²¹² As president of various local organisations, and a co-founder with his brother of the Company of Ten theatre group, Swinson was heavily committed to the civic life of St Albans, and was, like his brother, an active campaigner for civic conservation. However, the historical pageant was no longer seen as the most effective vehicle for the promotion of civic consciousness. The nearest that St Albans came to the spectacle of earlier pageants in 1968 was later in the Festival, when it was the city's turn to stage a 'day of pomp' to commemorate Magna Carta. This involved a City Hall reception, and a procession with historical costumes, but its significance seems to have been lost on many local people.²¹³ Swinson's play involved only one section of the local population: schoolchildren and young people. It was not considered possible to mobilise the entire community in a shared effort at raising civic awareness; the wide participatory element of earlier pageants could not be emulated. Indeed, 'Time and the City' can be seen as a deliberate rejection of the unifying ambitions of earlier pageants. This message of change was explicitly asserted in the epilogue, which featured a 'pageant play song' – not a 'hymn' as in earlier years – in which the young cast sang:

The years go by –
 New generations
 Advance to claim the stage.
 This is our age!
 We come to claim the stage!²¹⁴

The new City Hall itself, where the pageant was staged, was becoming a site of intergenerational conflict: a rigid dress code had been put in place for dances at the Hall, and at a 'gala beat ball' in June 1968, attended by 1,000 teenagers, a scuffle broke out after one young man was refused entry because of the length of his hair.²¹⁵ In a period of social and cultural conflict, it was unsurprising that many of the scenes in 'Time and the City' depicted fighting and discord, although even Swinson stopped short of attempting to depict twentieth-century wars. Far from the 'Pompous Spectacle' of earlier pageants, 'Time and the City' can be seen as an attempt to burst the bubble of civic pomposity, as Swinson went on to do more effectively in his novel *The Temple*. The 'new generations' that followed Swinson rejected the 'histrionic' version of the past that was presented in the historical pageant, and when they did re-enact past events, they did so in very different ways.²¹⁶

A separate article would be required to consider in full the emergence of the historical community play in the 1970s and 1980s, and the similarities and differences between this way of re-staging the past and the historical pageantry of earlier decades. Theatrical activities involving professional writers and producers working with local actors, presenting historical dramas, were a notable feature of this period, and according to Baz Kershaw they 'almost

amounted to a new genre'.²¹⁷ Most pioneers of the community play did not consider themselves to be inheritors of the Parker pageant tradition; and rather than focusing on the 'ancient battles and royal visits' of earlier pageants,²¹⁸ community plays often drew inspiration from the history of popular protest or discontent. One such play was Ann Jellicoe's *The Reckoning*, set and performed in Lyme Regis and depicting the Monmouth Rebellion, while Peter Terson's *Under the Fish and Over the Water* was based on the Bradford on Avon riot of 1791, and members of the local community were involved in historical research to support the production.²¹⁹ A more recent example is Petra Kuppers's theatrical work in Ystradgynlais in south Wales, inspired by local mythology and involving people with disabilities in what Kuppers presents as 'political labor'.²²⁰ Some community plays resemble pageants in depicting successive events, though they usually lack the pageants' chronological range. With hundreds of local inhabitants involved over a period of up to two years, and with an explicit radical purpose in some cases, such ventures might be considered 'spectacles of resistance' rather than 'spectacles of domination', although Jellicoe and others insisted on the importance of social mixing and wide community involvement, and community plays have sometimes been viewed as 'reactionary' events, reflecting and reinforcing local social inequalities.²²¹ However, they share with historical pageants the aim of raising community consciousness: the past may have been depicted, and brought to bear on contemporary concerns, in different ways from before, but one of the key features of earlier historical pageantry remained. Indeed, it might be argued that, in their emphasis on the present usefulness of the past and in their socially unifying purpose, community plays have more in common with traditional historical pageants than did the type of pageant play staged by Arthur Swinson in 1968. Neither genre, however, featured the 'Splendid Display' or 'Pompous Spectacle' of earlier twentieth-century historical pageantry.

Conclusion

The first key point to emerge from this survey of historical pageants in one city during the twentieth century is their continuing vitality into the post-war period. This amounted to considerably more than a 'brief revival'.²²² Many historical pageants in the 1940s and early 1950s were as large and spectacular as those staged by Louis Napoleon Parker and Frank Lascelles in the early twentieth century, and often presented similar versions of the national and local past. Although their scale and ambition, and the element of visual spectacle, declined, pageant plays survived and evolved in the 1960s and 1970s, and indeed beyond, in many places, and the practice of re-enacting a series of scenes from the history of a community or an organisation remained widespread. Many schools and churches performed historical pageants, and the tradition of the 'left pageant' also persisted: there was, for example, a 'Highlight[s] of the Struggle' pageant at a Communist Party rally in 1972.²²³ Moreover, the emergence of the community play, with its focus on local history and popular participation, can – arguably – be seen as a theatrical development in the pageant tradition.

It is also clear that the content and style of pageantry in the 1940s and 1950s had many similarities to that of the Edwardian period. Indeed, in some respects the later pageants displayed the same characteristics in greater measure. The pageants of Cyril Swinson owed much to the earlier tradition, and although there were some changes – notably a willingness to depict some more recent scenes and to introduce more humour – many of the same themes recurred in pageants half a century after the initial Edwardian outbreak of 'pageantitis'. Elizabeth I remained the most popular character, especially at the dawning of the 'new Elizabethan age' in 1952 and in the context of the coronation in the following year. However, it can also be argued that, in St Albans at least, the local focus of the 1907 pageant was

intensified in 1948 and 1953, as Swinson tried to reassert the city's individuality in a period when its historic character appeared to be threatened by rapid expansion and by the growth of a commuter population. In this way the pageants were popular educational events which, it was hoped, would help citizens to understand and manage the changes that St Albans was experiencing. Even in the Edwardian period, Readman argues that popular cultural responses to history valued 'continuities between the past, present and future ... [and] the maintenance of a sense of connection to the national past was one means by which Englishmen and women came to terms with their experience of change that was sometimes unsettling in its rapidity'.²²⁴ The same argument holds, in even greater measure, for the post-war period, when pageants can be seen as embodiments of community responses to the challenges and opportunities that resulted from social and economic change, helping towns and cities across Britain to negotiate what Heather Wiebe calls 'the peculiar realities of rupture and dislocation in 1950s Britain'.²²⁵ In part, this was to be achieved by the ways in which history was presented to the large popular audiences that attended pageants, and in part by the collective effort of organising and producing them. Considerable efforts were devoted to promoting a 'community spirit' in the post-war pageants, and it was precisely this 'spirit' that was remembered by participants and spectators many decades later.²²⁶ As Glassberg has noted, the memory of pageants themselves as key events in civic history could remain in the collective awareness of a community for a long time, and this was certainly true at St Albans.²²⁷ This is echoed in contemporary accounts of 'community performance', which is seen by Petra Koppers and Gwen Robertson as 'a transformative personal and communal journey'; as others have emphasised, 'performance' includes the preparation and aftermath of a production, as well as its staging.²²⁸

Participation, then, was an important element of historical pageants, and organisers seem to have been remarkably successful in recruiting hundreds, even thousands, of performers to take part in them. Simon Gunn has asserted that 'participation in civic parades and processions represented a claim to citizenship and to a public voice in the town or city', and the same could be said for pageants, though there were clear limits to the extent to which performing in a pageant could 'enfranchise' the citizen, to use de Groot's term.²²⁹ In pageants, the role of the pageant-master and script-writer was crucial, and where these positions were held by the same person, as was the case with Swinson, this individual had considerable authority. Organising committees were well aware of the importance of 'the creative imagination of the Pageant-Master'.²³⁰ There was scope for others to influence the course of a pageant, given the complexities of arranging costumes, props, horses and so on, but the organisational hierarchy of a historical pageant usually reflected the existing social structure of the community. Popular participation was mobilised but carefully managed: performers played in scenes written and choreographed from an elite perspective. As others have emphasised, however, this does not mean that all performers, let alone members of audiences, understood pageants in the same way. Although it is difficult to explore the meanings attached to historical events and their depiction, it seems clear that they could vary among those who played in and watched them. The diary of one pageanteer that Ryan has discussed shows little evidence that participation had the effect that pageant-masters such as Frank Lascelles intended, in terms of developing civic and imperial pride.²³¹ At St Albans, the apparent reluctance of the local population to engage with the educational events that surrounded the 1907 pageant shows that the earnest intentions of the organisers were not always met with popular enthusiasm. Moreover, a pageant could itself become focus of local tensions, as political, parochial and personal rivalries reared their heads. Such tensions were, for the most part, effectively contained in St Albans, but further research on historical

pageants could unveil more complex stories of community conflict over the re-enactment of local history.²³²

The large-scale civic pageant declined fairly rapidly from the mid-1950s onwards. This happened somewhat later than appears to have been the case in the United States,²³³ but it certainly happened. Pageants, or pageant plays, in the 1960s were smaller affairs, often commemorating a particular institution or event rather than a community as a whole. The large-scale historical pageant can be seen as a victim of the cultural upheavals of the late 1950s and 1960s, together with the ‘mobile privatisation’ that accompanied the spread of television and other consumer goods.²³⁴ At St Albans, as elsewhere, there were various celebratory events in the 1960s and 1970s, including occasional festivals and regular carnival processions,²³⁵ but by this time it was more difficult to mobilise a whole community behind a historical pageant, or any other form of civic display and ritual. Meanwhile, the less reverential attitude to the past that accompanied the social changes of the 1960s ensured that, when historical pageants or pageant plays were performed, the presentation of historical episodes was very different from before. These changes were particularly noticeable in Arthur Swinson’s 1968 pageant play, which contrasts strikingly with the pageants of 1907, 1948 and 1953. Whereas Charles Ashdown would have recognised many features of Cyril Swinson’s pageants, the ‘Splendid Display’ of earlier pageantry seemed unsuitable in the new cultural context of the 1960s. Perhaps the seeds of this unsuitability were discernible in 1953, when the ‘Pompous Spectacle’ of civic pageantry was gently mocked in the pageant programme itself. By 1968, historical characters were not viewed as exemplars to be followed, and nor were the ‘timeless traditions’ valued as had been the case in earlier pageants. Few links between past and present were drawn, explicitly or implicitly, in ‘Time and the City’, which unashamedly leaned more towards entertainment than civic enlightenment. For a large part of the twentieth century, however, the ‘Pompous Spectacle’ of the historical pageant remained a notable feature of civic life in St Albans, and in many other towns and cities. Historical pageants promoted civic pride, raised the profile of local history and urban conservation, and became in themselves significant events in the social history of the communities in which they were staged.

Table 1: Scenes in the St Albans pageants, 1907-1968

(a) The 1907 pageant

1. Julius Caesar and Cassivelaunus, 54BC
2. Boudicea, 61AD
3. Martyrdom of St Alban, 303
4. Offa Founding the Monastery of St Alban, 793
5. The Eleanor Procession, 1290
6. The Peasants' Revolt, 1381
7. Second battle of St Albans, 1461
8. Queen Elizabeth at Gorhambury, 1572

(b) St Albans millenary pageant, 1948

Asterisks denote scenes that also appeared in the 1907 pageant.

1. *The Martyrdom of St Alban, 303
2. *King Offa Finds the Abbey, 793
3. Ulsinus Has a Plan, 948
4. Holy Day, 1440 (visit of Henry VI to St Albans Abbey)
5. *Queen Elizabeth I Visits Gorhambury, 1572
6. King Charles I Visits the School, 1626
7. The Civil War, 1643
8. Whigs vs Tories: An Election Scene, 1722
9. St Albans is a City, 1877

(c) 'A Masque of the Queens', 1953

Asterisks denote scenes that also appeared in the 1907 pageant

1. *Queen Boadicea: The Battle against the Romans, AD61
2. Queen Matilda: The Solemn Dedication of the Abbot, 1116
3. Queen Eleanor: The Abbot and the Women of St Albans, 1274
4. Queen Philippa: Her Churching at the Abbey, 1341
5. Queen Katherine: A Royal Visit to the Abbey, 1428
6. *Queen Margaret: The Second Battle of St Albans, 1461
7. Anne Boleyn: A Tudor Courtship, 1532
8. Queen Elizabeth I: A Visit to St Albans, 1577
9. Princess Anne: A Visit to the Churchills, 1692
10. Queen Victoria: The Restoration of the Abbey, 1856

(d) 'Time and the City: A Pageant Play', 1968

1. 'The Case of St Alban's Bones', 1155
2. 'England Must Have a Charter', 1213
3. 'The Death of an Agitator', 1381
4. 'The King Rides to Sopwell', 1527
5. 'The General [Monck] from Scotland', 1660
6. 'Corruption! Corruption!', 1851

7. 'Sir Edmund Buys the Abbey', 1880
8. 'The City Meets the Motor Car', 1896

¹ *St Albans Millenary Pageant 948-1948: Souvenir Programme, 21st-26th June 1948*: St Albans Central Library, LOC.791.624.

² For some reflections on this, see Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London: Profile Books, 2002).

³ See for example Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵ Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume I: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London: Verso, 1994); Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1st edn 1985]).

⁶ Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 109-17.

⁷ Paul Readman, 'The Place of the Past in English Culture', *Past and Present*, vol. 186 (2005), pp. 147-99.

⁸ Heather Wiebe, 'Benjamin Britten, the "National Faith", and the Animation of History in 1950s England', *Representations*, vol. 93 (2006), pp. 76-105; Becky Conekin, *The Autobiography of a Nation: The 1951 Festival of Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Harriet Atkinson, *The Festival of Britain: A Land and Its People* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2012).

⁹ Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, p. ix.

¹⁰ Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 170; Deborah Sugg Ryan, "'Pageantitis": Frank Lascelles' 1907 Oxford Historical Pageant, Visual Spectacle and Popular Memory', *Visual Culture in Britain*, vol. 8 (2007), pp. 63-82. For an extended but not otherwise untypical medical metaphor, see Robert Barr, 'The Pageant Epidemic', *The Idler*, vol. 31 (1907), pp. 437-46.

¹¹ Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 173, lists 22 in England; see Deborah Sugg Ryan, "'The Man Who Staged the Empire": Remembering Frank Lascelles in Sibford Gower 1875-2000', in Marius Kwint, Christopher Beward and Jeremy Aynsley (eds), *Material Memories* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), p. 169.

¹² Ayako Yoshino, *Pageant Fever: Local History and Consumerism in Edwardian England* (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 2011). See also Robert Withington, *English Pageantry: An Historical Outline* (2 vols, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), which places Edwardian pageants in a much longer historical context.

¹³ Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 172.

¹⁴ Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, p. 249; Tom Hulme, 'Civic Culture and Citizenship: The Nature of Urban Governance in Interwar Manchester and Chicago', (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2013), chapter 3.

¹⁵ Richard H. Trainor, 'The "Decline" of British Urban Governance since 1850: A Reassessment', in Robert J. Morris and Richard H. Trainor (eds), *Urban Governance: Britain and beyond since 1750* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 28-46.

¹⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, pp. 176, 191-2.

¹⁷ Neil Beddow, *Turning Points: The Impact of Participation in Community Theatre*, ed. Mary Schwartz (Bristol: South West Arts, n.d. [2001]), p. 10.

¹⁸ Sarah Burton, *How to Put on a Community Play* (Twickenham: Aurora Metro, 2011), pp. 16-21; Petra Kuppens, *Community Performance: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 15-57; Ann Jellicoe, *Community Plays: How to Put Them On* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 8.

¹⁹ See for example Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011).

²⁰ De Groot, *Consuming History*, p. 113.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

²² Report on 1948 pageant, n.d., p. 5, folder 1, and accounts and letter from G. A. Pilgrim to J. M. Donaldson, folder 2: Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, Hertford (HALS), Off.Acc.1162/3602.

²³ See for example, Louis N. Parker, *The Sherborne Pageant* (Sherborne: E. Bennett, 1905), foreword.

²⁴ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, pp. 191-2, 266.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-17, 284; de Groot, *Consuming History*, pp. 105-6, 113; Della Pollock, 'Introduction: Making History Go', in Della Pollock (ed.), *Exceptional Spaces: Essays in Performance and History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), pp. 1-45.

²⁶ De Groot, *Consuming History*, p. 118.

²⁷ See for example Matthew Vickers, 'Civic Image and Civic Patriotism in Liverpool 1880-1914', unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (2000), pp. 43-75.

²⁸ Baz Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology: Environments and Performance Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 214-15, 222-7.

- ²⁹ Michael Woods, 'Performing Power: Local Politics and the Taunton Pageant of 1928', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 25 (1999), pp. 57-74.
- ³⁰ Readman, 'Place of the Past', pp. 174-5, 190-7.
- ³¹ Ryan, "'Pageantitis'", pp. 66, 75-6; Ryan, 'Staging the Imperial City', p. 131.
- ³² Pollock, 'Making History Go', p. 22.
- ³³ Mick Wallis, 'Pageantry and the Popular Front: Ideological Production in the "Thirties"', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 10 (1994), pp. 132-56; Mick Wallis, 'The Popular Front Pageant: Its Emergence and Decline', *New Theatre Quarterly*, vol. 11 (1996), pp. 17-32.
- ³⁴ Pageant programme: Warwick University, Modern Records Centre, MSS.202/CP/107/4.
- ³⁵ Readman, 'Place of the Past', pp. 178-9. On empire see Deborah Sugg Ryan, 'Staging the Imperial City: The Pageant of London, 1911', in Felix Driver and David Gilbert (eds), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 117-35; Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, chapters 3-4.
- ³⁶ Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain 1922-53* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1953).
- ³⁷ David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), esp. pp. 79ff, 123, 143-50, 258-9.
- ³⁸ *Herts Advertiser*, pageant supplement, 26 June 1953, p. ii. A pageant was also staged in 1909, involving local schoolchildren, but this was not an episodic historical pageant like those discussed in this article. See Charles H. Ashdown, *St Albans – Caen, 1909: 'In the Footsteps of the Conqueror'* (St Albans: Dangerfield, 1909).
- ³⁹ Mark Freeman, *St Albans: A History* (Lancaster: Carnegie, 2008), p. 257. St Albans became a city in 1877 – an event celebrated in the 1948 pageant – and this article uses 'city' for the period after this, and 'town' when referring to events before 1877.
- ⁴⁰ Lucy E. Hewitt, 'Associational Culture and the Shaping of Urban Space: Civic Societies in Britain before 1960', *Urban History*, vol. 39 (2012), pp. 595-6.
- ⁴¹ See, for example, David Cannadine, 'The Transformation of Civic Ritual in Modern Britain: The Colchester Oyster Feast', *Past and Present*, vol. 94 (1982), pp. 107-30; Simon Gunn, 'The Middle Class, Modernity and the Provincial City: Manchester 1840-1880', in Alan Kidd and David Nicholls (eds), *Gender, Civic Culture and Consumerism: Middle-Class Identity in Britain 1800-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 112-27.
- ⁴² Mary Porter Beegle and Jack Randall Crawford, *Community Drama and Pageantry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1916), p. 17. See Louis N. Parker, *Several of My Lives* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1928), pp. 275-303.
- ⁴³ Ryan, "'Pageantitis'", p. 64.
- ⁴⁴ Readman, 'Place of the Past', pp. 173-5.
- ⁴⁵ Ryan, 'Man Who Staged the Empire', p. 169; Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, p. 204.
- ⁴⁶ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p. 1 and chapter 7.
- ⁴⁷ Simon Gunn, 'Ritual and Civic Culture in the English Industrial City c.1835-1914', in Morris and Trainor, *Urban Governance*, p. 231; see also Woods, 'Performing Power', pp. 62-3.
- ⁴⁸ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, pp. 149-50.
- ⁴⁹ Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 150.
- ⁵⁰ Draft financial statement of pageant: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/2769.
- ⁵¹ Mrs Charles H. Ashdown, *British Costume during XIX Centuries, Civil and Ecclesiastical* (London: T. C. and E. C. Jack, 1910).
- ⁵² See papers in HALS, Off.Acc.1162/2769.
- ⁵³ St Albans city council, minutes, 25 June 1907, 30 July 1907: HALS.
- ⁵⁴ Ryan, "'Pageantitis'", pp. 68-9; Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 99-106; *Herts Advertiser*, 15 June 1907, p. 4.
- ⁵⁵ Vickers, 'Civic Image', p. 4.
- ⁵⁶ Charles H. Ashdown, *The St Albans Pageant, July 15th to July 20th, 1907* (St Albans: Pageant House, 1907), pp. 53-5.
- ⁵⁷ See for example Parker, *Several of My Lives*, p. 279.
- ⁵⁸ *St Albans & Its Pageant, Being the Official Souvenir of the Pageant Held July 1907* (St Albans: Smith's Printing Agency, 1907), pp. 15, 40.
- ⁵⁹ Elsie Toms, *The Story of St Albans* (St Albans: Fisher, Knight, 1962), pp. 179-80.
- ⁶⁰ St Albans city council, minutes, 18 July 1907.
- ⁶¹ Ashdown, *St Albans Pageant*, front matter.
- ⁶² Quoted in Vickers, 'Civic Image', p. 43.
- ⁶³ *Herts Advertiser*, 27 April 1907, p. 4; 4 May 1907, p. 4.
- ⁶⁴ *Herts Advertiser*, 11 May 1907, p. 6.

- ⁶⁵ Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 194-5.
- ⁶⁶ Vickers, 'Civic Image', pp. 45-6, 73-4.
- ⁶⁷ De Groot, *Consuming History*, p. 107.
- ⁶⁸ Readman, 'Place of the Past', pp. 170-1, 174-5; Ryan, "'Pageantitis'", pp. 74-6.
- ⁶⁹ Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 198.
- ⁷⁰ Ryan, 'Pageantitis', p. 76.
- ⁷¹ Toms, *Story of St Albans*, pp. 179-80.
- ⁷² This phrase was used by a member of Liverpool's education committee: Vickers, 'Civic Image', pp. 50-1.
- ⁷³ Parker, *Several of My Lives*, pp. 279-80, 285-6.
- ⁷⁴ Barr, 'Pageant Epidemic', p. 439.
- ⁷⁵ K. D. M. Snell, 'The Culture of Local Xenophobia', *Social History*, vol. 28 (2003), pp. 1-30.
- ⁷⁶ *Herts Advertiser*, 4 May 1907, p. 5.
- ⁷⁷ *Herts Advertiser*, 18 May 1907, p. 5.
- ⁷⁸ Vickers, 'Civic Image', p. 74.
- ⁷⁹ Ashdown, *St Albans Pageant*, preface.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Ashdown may have been encouraged to draw on Cowper because the poet had lived in St Albans for a time during the eighteenth century: see James Corbett, *Secret City: Hidden History of St Albans* (St Albans: McDermott Marketing), pp. 23-9. I am grateful to Martha Vandrei for her insights into the depictions of Boudicca in the St Albans pageants.
- ⁸¹ *St Albans & Its Pageant*, pp. 22-3.
- ⁸² Ashdown, *St Albans Pageant*, p. 12.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 18; Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 124, 179. Yoshino notes that not all pageants presented Roman imperialism in a favourable light, but that even Parker, whose pageants were critical of the Romans, endorsed the British imperial project (pp. 133-4).
- ⁸⁴ Michael Dobson, 'The Pageant of History: Staging the Local Past 1905-39', in Mark Thornton Burnett and Adrian Streete (eds), *Filming and Performing Renaissance History* (Basingstoke; Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 168-9; Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 143-8.
- ⁸⁵ *St Albans & Its Pageant*, p. 40.
- ⁸⁶ Parker, *Sherborne Pageant*, pp. 34-6.
- ⁸⁷ Readman, 'Place of the Past', pp. 177, 179; Dobson, 'Pageant of History', p. 167; Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p. 46.
- ⁸⁸ *St Albans & Its Pageant*, pp. 64-72. On the printing industry, see Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 224-5.
- ⁸⁹ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, pp. 149-50.
- ⁹⁰ *Herts Advertiser*, 15 June 1907, p. 4.
- ⁹¹ Woods, 'Performing Power', p. 67.
- ⁹² Ashdown, *St Albans Pageant*, pp. 41-3.
- ⁹³ *St Albans & Its Pageant*, p. 46.
- ⁹⁴ Woods, 'Performing Power', p. 67. See also Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 139, 148.
- ⁹⁵ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, pp. 149-50.
- ⁹⁶ Ashdown, *St Albans Pageant*, pp. 11-12.
- ⁹⁷ De Groot, *Consuming History*, p. 107. Emphasis added.
- ⁹⁸ Hewitt, 'Associational Culture'.
- ⁹⁹ Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 251-2.
- ¹⁰⁰ Charles H. Ashdown, *St Albans Historical and Picturesque* (London: Elliot Stock, 1893), pp. v-vi.
- ¹⁰¹ Mandler, *Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, pp. 220-1.
- ¹⁰² Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, esp. pp. 69-92.
- ¹⁰³ Toms, *Story of St Albans*, p. 179.
- ¹⁰⁴ Charles H. Ashdown, *The City of St Alban [sic]: Its Abbey and Its Surroundings* (St Albans: Gibbs and Bamforth, 1907). An earlier edition was published in 1902. See also, for example, William Mate, *Mate's Illustrated St Albans* (2nd edn, 1907; 1st edn 1903); William Page, *St Albans Cathedral and Abbey Church: A Guide* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1911).
- ¹⁰⁵ Draft financial statement of pageant: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/2769. At this time the museum was known as the Hertfordshire County Museum.
- ¹⁰⁶ *St Albans & Its Pageant*, p. 15.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ryan, "'Man Who Staged the Empire'", p. 169. Ryan's note 35 does not mention the Harrow pageant.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Handbook of the Harrow Historical Pageant, 7pm, June 28 to July 5, 1923* (Harrow: Pageant Office, 1923), p. 13.

- ¹¹⁰ *Scottish Historical Pageant Held at Craigmillar Castle, Edinburgh, July 1927: Official Pictorial Souvenir* (Edinburgh, 1927); Woods, 'Performing Power', p. 61.
- ¹¹¹ *Salford Historical Pageant and Charter Celebrations, 700th Anniversary, June 30th to July 12th 1930: Book of Words* (Salford: Salford Historical Pageant Committee, 1930); *Book of Barking, being a Souvenir of the Charter Celebrations, Historical Pageant and Industrial Exhibition* (no publisher given, 1930); *Falkirk Historical Pageant, at West Quarter, Falkirk, on 11th, 15th and 18th June 1932: Official Souvenir Booklet* (Falkirk: Falkirk Historical Pageant, 1932); *Chester Historical Pageant, also Searchlight Tattoo, at Chester, July 5th to 10th 1937: Official Souvenir Programme* (no publisher given, 1937); *Manchester Historical Pageant, June 27th to July 2nd, Displays and Searchlight Tattoo, July 4th to 9th, 1938, Charter Centenary Celebrations: Official Souvenir and Programme* (Manchester: Manchester Historical Pageant Committee, 1939).
- ¹¹² Sir Charles Oman, 'In Praise of Pageantry', in *Handbook of the Harrow Historical Pageant*, p. 8.
- ¹¹³ *Chester Historical Pageant*, episode 9 (no page numbers). Victoria had appeared in the Taunton pageant of 1928, though she did not have an episode of her own: Woods, 'Performing Power', p. 61.
- ¹¹⁴ Wallis, 'Pageantry and the Popular Front'; Helen McCarthy, 'The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain c.1919-56', *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 70 (2010), pp. 108-32.
- ¹¹⁵ There was a Rotary Club Pageant in 1933, but this took the form of a fête and was not a historical pageant, although it did feature a carefully planned miniature reconstruction, on the new ornamental lake in Verulamium Park, of the 1918 naval raid on Zeebrugge. See the papers in HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3579.
- ¹¹⁶ Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 247-8. A large survey of archival holdings in England and Wales identifies some 400 pageants, a substantial proportion of which took place in the period after 1945.
- ¹¹⁷ *Warwickshire Coronation Pageant, Warwick Castle, July 17 to 25, 1953: Souvenir Programme* (no publisher given, 1953). Warwick Castle had hosted an early Parker pageant in 1906: see Mandler, *Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*, p. 221. Apart from those relating to St Albans, which are held in St Albans Central Library, the pageant programmes cited in this article were consulted in the British Library or National Library of Scotland.
- ¹¹⁸ *King's Lynn Charter Pageant 1204-1954* (no publisher given, 1954), pp. xv-xvi.
- ¹¹⁹ *Carlisle Historical Pageant, August 6-11, 1951: Book of Words* (Carlisle: Carlisle Historical Pageant Committee, 1951); *Floodlit Pageant of Cirencester, within the Home Park, Cirencester: Souvenir Programme* (no publisher given, 1953).
- ¹²⁰ *Warwickshire Coronation Pageant*, pp. 41-4.
- ¹²¹ *Clackmannan Historical Pageant, 9 July 1949* (no publisher given, 1949); *Pageant of Cambusland, in the Institute, 25 April to 30 April 1955* (no publisher given, 1955).
- ¹²² *Herts Advertiser*, 18 June 1973, p. 18.
- ¹²³ *Herts Advertiser*, 26 June 1953, pageant supplement, p. vi; 22 April 1955, p. 10; 4 January 1963, p. 26. The Dickens pageant is described in *The Times*, 27 April 1951, p. 3. Swinson had done some small-scale pageant work before the Second World War, although the nature of this is not clear. In preparation for the 1948 pageant, Swinson visited pageants at Bradford and Chelmsford the previous year: Millenary Pageant Sub-Committee, minutes, 7 October 1947: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602.
- ¹²⁴ Professional theatre producers and script writers had been approached, but their fees were too high. Swinson was offered modest personal expenses in connection with the pageant. See Millenary Pageant Sub-Committee, minutes, 13 February 1947.
- ¹²⁵ Report on 1948 pageant, n.d., p. 5, folder 1, and accounts and letter from G. A. Pilgrim to J. M. Donaldson, folder 2: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602.
- ¹²⁶ *Herts Advertiser*, 12 December 1952, p. 1.
- ¹²⁷ *Herts Advertiser*, 19 June 1953, p. 1; 26 June 1953, pageant supplement, p. iii.
- ¹²⁸ The *Herts Advertiser* was refused permission to exceed its ration for the occasion: *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 8.
- ¹²⁹ Mandler, *History and National Life*, p. 93.
- ¹³⁰ Atkinson, *Festival of Britain*, p. 5.
- ¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 141.
- ¹³² Conekin, 'Autobiography of a Nation', pp. 84, 100-3.
- ¹³³ Wiebe, 'Benjamin Britten', pp. 79, 85-6.
- ¹³⁴ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 3. For another example, see Conekin, 'Autobiography of a Nation', pp. 164-5.
- ¹³⁵ Conekin, 'Autobiography of a Nation', p. 5, chapter 7.
- ¹³⁶ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 57; Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p. 267. The Manchester historical pageant in Heaton Park in 1926 included a scene that portrayed Manchester's 'heroic efforts' during

the war: Hulme, 'Civic Culture and Citizenship', p. 95. For a later example of a pageant with a First World War episode, see *Pageant of Cambuslang*, episode 7.

¹³⁷ *Herts Advertiser*, 19 June 1953, p. 1.

¹³⁸ *St Albans Pageant 1953: A Masque of the Queens*, p. 11: St Albans Central Library, LOC.791.624, p. 55.

¹³⁹ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁰ *Herts Advertiser*, 18 June 1948, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 43.

¹⁴² *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 25-7.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-5.

¹⁴⁴ *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁵ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 57.

¹⁴⁶ *Herts Advertiser*, 11 January 1963, p. 13.

¹⁴⁷ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, pp. 69, 78. See below, p. 000.

¹⁴⁸ St Albans City Council, Library Committee minutes, 21 May 1948, item 10: HALS; Freeman, *St Albans*, p. 304.

¹⁴⁹ *Herts Advertiser*, 18 June 1948, p. 4; St Albans City Council, General Purposes and Establishment Committee, minutes, 19 May 1948, item 21: HALS.

¹⁵⁰ Atkinson, *Festival of Britain*, p. 66.

¹⁵¹ *Herts Advertiser*, 9 June 1961, p. 1.

¹⁵² Freeman, *St Albans*, p. 319.

¹⁵³ *Herts Advertiser*, 3 July 1953, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ *Herts Advertiser*, 26 June 1953, pageant supplement, p. vi

¹⁵⁵ Terence Newell, *Ten of the Best: A Life in the Company of Ten during Its First Fifty Years* (1985), p. 101: St Albans Central Library, 792.0942585; Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 287-8. See, for example, *St Albans as a Visitor's Resort and Residential Town* (Cheltenham: E. J. Burrow, 1923); *St Albans: The Story of the City and Its People in the 1950s* (facsimile edn, St Albans: Paton Books, 1995 [1st edn 1950]).

¹⁵⁶ St Albans City Council, General Purposes and Establishment Committee, minutes, 19 May 1948, item 22: HALS.

¹⁵⁷ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 48: advertisement for Ballito nylon stockings; *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 24: advertisement for Orchid lingerie and underwear manufacturers. See Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 288, 296-7.

¹⁵⁸ Town [sic] meeting, minutes, 10 July 1947: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602.

¹⁵⁹ St Albans City Council, Millenium Pageant Sub-Committee, minutes, 13 February 1947: HALS.

¹⁶⁰ *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 63.

¹⁶¹ *King's Lynn Charter Pageant*, p. xiii.

¹⁶² *The Pageant of Guildford, Shalford Park from June 26th to July 6th, 1957: Official Programme* (no publisher given, 1957), foreword.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, scene 19. There are no page numbers in this programme. The description of Ede appears in the biographical notes in the programme.

¹⁶⁴ *Carlisle Historical Pageant*, foreword.

¹⁶⁵ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, pp. 11, 65.

¹⁶⁶ Report on 1948 pageant, n.d., HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602, folder 1, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶⁷ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 67; St Albans City Council, General Purposes and Establishment Committee, 21 April 1948, item 16(a). Not enough councillors were available for all the performances, and so robes and hats were lent to others for the purpose: 19 May 1948, item 17(a).

¹⁶⁸ *Herts Advertiser*, 20 August 1954, p. 8; see above, p. 000.

¹⁶⁹ Newell, *Ten of the Best*, p. 102.

¹⁷⁰ *Herts Advertiser*, 26 June 1953, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ Cyril Swinson, draft synopsis for pageant, 18 April 1947, is very similar to the list of episodes in table 1(b): HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602. On the debate concerning music, see 1953 Pageant Committee, minutes, 29 December 1952, 26 January 1953, 2 March 1953: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3603; report on 1953 pageant, n.d., item 23: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3603, folder 1. The public meeting was held in December 1952.

¹⁷² St Albans City Council, Highways, Buildings and Works Committee, minutes 27 April 1948.

¹⁷³ Millenary Pageant Sub-Committee, minutes, 9 June 1947: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602.

¹⁷⁴ Newell, *Ten of the Best*, pp. 101-2.

¹⁷⁵ Letter from 'F.A.D.', *Herts Advertiser*, 2 July 1948, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ 1953 Pageant Committee, minutes, 2 March 1953: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3603; report on 1953 pageant, n.d., item 11: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3603, folder 1.

- ¹⁷⁷ 1953 pageant accounts, attached to Pageant Committee minutes, HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3603; breakdown of audiences: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3603, folder 2; 1953 Pageant Committee minutes, 29 December 1952; *Herts Advertiser*, 23 October 1953, p. 10.
- ¹⁷⁸ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, pp. 29-35, based on *Henry VI Part 2*, act 2, scene 1.
- ¹⁷⁹ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 59.
- ¹⁸⁰ *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 7.
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11; Dio, *Roman History*, 62.1-12.
- ¹⁸² *Herts Advertiser*, 26 June 1953, pageant supplement, p. ii. The dragon appeared in Episode 5. There is a video showing highlights of the 1948 and 1953 pageants, including this scene, in the library of the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society, Old Town Hall, St Albans.
- ¹⁸³ *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 52: advertisement for Arthur Blott. The *Oxford English Dictionary* uses the phrase 'splendid display', but not 'pompous spectacle'. A number of dictionaries use the full phrase: see, for example, *Concise English Dictionary: New Edition* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), p. 651.
- ¹⁸⁴ *St Albans & Its Pageant*, p. 54.
- ¹⁸⁵ Toms, *Story of St Albans*, p. 190.
- ¹⁸⁶ Newell, *Ten of the Best*, pp. 104-5.
- ¹⁸⁷ Albert Mackie, *Scottish Pageantry* (London: Hutchinson, 1967), p. 235.
- ¹⁸⁸ 'Carlisle Pageant 1951' <<http://www.tulliehouse.co.uk/carlisle-pageant>> [27 February 2013]. There is video footage of the Berkhamsted pageant: see <<http://ftvdb.bfi.org.uk/sift/title/439864>> [27 February 2013]. See also Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, p. 176.
- ¹⁸⁹ Millenary Pageant Sub-Committee, minutes, 7 October 1947: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602.
- ¹⁹⁰ *Derbyshire Coronation Pageant, King Henry V: Souvenir Programme, 1953, Chatsworth* (no publisher given, 1953), no page numbers.
- ¹⁹¹ *St Albans Millenary Pageant*, p. 67; *The Times*, 20 August 1970, p. 10.
- ¹⁹² *Herts Advertiser*, 11 January 1963, p. 13.
- ¹⁹³ Arthur Swinson, *The Temple* (London: Joseph, 1970).
- ¹⁹⁴ See Arthur Swinson, *Time and the City: A Pageant Play* (unpublished typescript, 1968): St Albans Central Library, LOC.822/SWI/STA.
- ¹⁹⁵ *Herts Advertiser*, 7 June 1968, p. 7.
- ¹⁹⁶ Ryan, 'Pageantitis', p. 63.
- ¹⁹⁷ Swinson, *Time and the City*, appendix, pp. iii, v.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Herts Advertiser*, 7 June 1968, p. 7.
- ¹⁹⁹ Mandler, *History and National Life*, pp. 93-4.
- ²⁰⁰ On this by-election, see Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 219-23.
- ²⁰¹ *Herts Advertiser*, 7 June 1968, p. 7.
- ²⁰² Swinson, 'Time and the City', appendix.
- ²⁰³ *St Albans Pageant 1953*, p. 41.
- ²⁰⁴ *St Albans & Its Pageant 1907*, p. 46. See above, p. 000.
- ²⁰⁵ Ashdown, *St Albans Pageant*, p. 43.
- ²⁰⁶ Swinson, 'Time and the City', p. 40.
- ²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, episode 3; on these events, see Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 114-15.
- ²⁰⁸ Antonia Swinson, 'Introduction', in Arthur Swinson, *Scotch on the Rocks: The True Story behind Whisky Galore* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2005 [1st edn 1963]), p. 15.
- ²⁰⁹ Swinson, 'Time and the City', p. 28.
- ²¹⁰ W. J. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That: A Memorable History of England* (London: Methuen, 1930), chapter 19.
- ²¹¹ Swinson, 'Introduction', pp. 14-15.
- ²¹² *Herts Advertiser*, 25 September 1970, p. 5.
- ²¹³ *Herts Advertiser*, 14 June 1968, p. 10; 21 June 1968, p. 1.
- ²¹⁴ Swinson, 'Time and the City', p. 110.
- ²¹⁵ *Herts Advertiser*, 7 June 1968, p. 1; 21 June 1968, p. 3. See also Swinson, *Temple*, pp. 227-9.
- ²¹⁶ Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, pp. 191-2.
- ²¹⁷ Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 175.
- ²¹⁸ P. J. Waller, *Town, City and Nation: England 1850-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 314.
- ²¹⁹ Jellicoe, *Community Plays*, pp. 3-10; Peter Terson, *Under the Fish and Over the Water: A Community Play for Bradford on Avon* (Bradford on Avon: Ex Libris Press, 1990).

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- ²²⁰ Petra Kuppers, 'Community Arts Practices: Improvising Being-Together', in Petra Kuppers and Gwen Robertson (eds), *The Community Performance Reader* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 36-43.
- ²²¹ Kershaw, *Theatre Ecology*, p. 214; Jellicoe, *Community Plays*, pp. 43-5; Kershaw, *Politics of Performance*, pp. 185-95.
- ²²² Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, p. 247.
- ²²³ See documents in the Labour History Archive, Manchester: CP/LON, EVNT/02/16.
- ²²⁴ Readman, 'Place of the Past', p. 191.
- ²²⁵ Wiebe, 'Benjamin Britten', p. 78.
- ²²⁶ *Herts Advertiser*, 18 June 1998, p. 6.
- ²²⁷ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, p. 96. For memories of the St Albans pageants, see *St Albans and Harpenden Review*, 20 November 1975, p. 2; 21 April 1977, p. 10; *Herts Advertiser*, 18 August 1967, p. 4; 1 July 1977, p. 6; 17 January 1986, p. 8; 9 June 2011, p. 20.
- ²²⁸ Petra Kuppers and Gwen Robertson, 'General Introduction', and Baz Kershaw, 'Performance, Community, Culture', in Kuppers and Robertson, *Community Performance Reader*, pp. 3, 82-3.
- ²²⁹ Simon Gunn, 'Analysing Behaviour as Performance', in Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire (eds), *Research Methods for History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 192.
- ²³⁰ Letter from Lawrence du Garde Peach, quoted in Millenary Pageant Sub-Committee, minutes, 13 February 1947: HALS, Off.Acc.1162/3602. Peach was the committee's first choice to be pageant-master, but his fee was considered unaffordable.
- ²³¹ Deborah Sugg Ryan, 'Staging the Imperial City: The Pageant of London, 1911', in Felix Driver and David Gilbert (eds), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 131. The diary was kept by a participant in Lascelles's Empire Pageant of 1911. See also Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 13-14.
- ²³² For one example, see Yoshino, *Pageant Fever*, pp. 231-45.
- ²³³ Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, chapter 7.
- ²³⁴ See Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974).
- ²³⁵ Freeman, *St Albans*, pp. 303-6.