A squatter in St Albans in the 1980s Dave Kotula

Inspired by a discovery in an attic, a project is telling the changing story of homelessness and life in squats, thanks to National Lottery players.

While squatting in St Albans during the 1980s and early 1990s, Dave Kotula took hundreds of photos documenting the city's squats and those who used them. Decades later, he rediscovered them in his attic and shared them with the St Albans Arts Team.

Squatlife

His photos are now central to their Squatlife project. Backed by £50,600 of National Lottery funding, it is exploring the hidden history and wider issues of homelessness and squatting – from Victorian workhouses to present day perceptions.

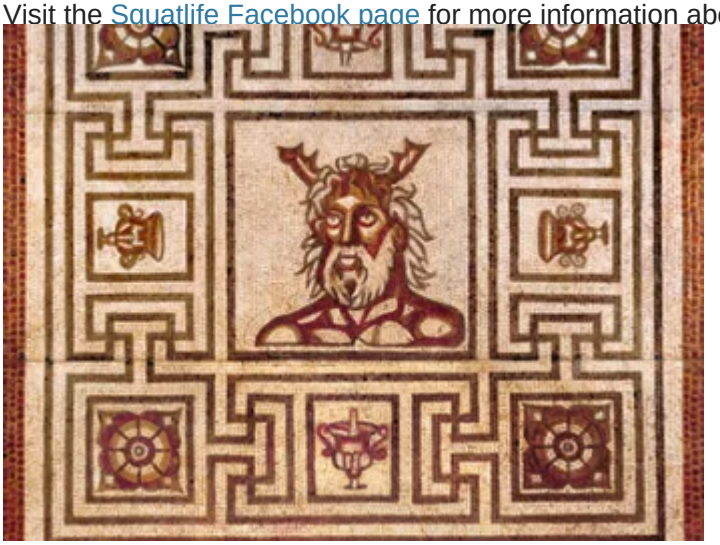
As well as exploring the past, people who are or have been homeless are sharing their own experiences. The project works with a number of charities in St Albans, enabling young people in particular to have their voices heard and get involved in curating exhibitions, photography and plays.

Trespassers welcome

This summer there are plenty of ways to hear those stories:

- **See Dave Kotula's photos on display at St Albans Museum + Gallery.** As well as a glimpse into squatting in St Albans in the 1980s, the exhibition documents the treatment and challenges faced by homeless people over the centuries. Thought-provoking and challenging, the free exhibition runs until 26 August.
- **Book a free ticket to see Trespassers Welcome**. Working with nationally acclaimed theatre group Cardboard Citizens, actors from the local homeless community have created a production to share their stories. The interactive performance is free to attend and will take place at the Abbey Theatre on Friday 27 July.
- **Visit the Walk a Day in My Shoes collection**. Young people who are currently homeless have worked with Herts Young Homeless and a professional photographer to record their daily lives. The poignant collection will be tied to railings around St Albans Cathedral and the city centre until 26 August, providing an insight into life on the streets or sofa surfing.
- **Join the Waifs, Vagabonds and Workhouses tour**. Join a guided tour through the city centre to hear about the history of homelessness in St Albans. Starting at the Cathedral, the free tour from 2.30 – 4pm on Sunday 29 July stops by the House of Correction, Raynshaw's Almshouses and the former slums.
- **Take the children to a creative workshop**. Free workshops will take place in August at St Albans Museum + Gallery. The 'Home Sweet Home' workshop will explore the concept of what makes a home while 'Huff, Puff, Blow Your House Down' will share a unique and creative twist on a classic fairy tale. Workshops take place on 1, 4, 8 and 11 August from 2.00 – 4.30pm, suitable for under 12s accompanied by an adult.

Visit the Squatlife Facebook page for more information about the events.



Some of the best mosaics outside of the Mediterranean are found in St Albans St Albans Museum + Gallery

Albans' new Museum + Gallery

Members of Cardboard Citizens performing

Artist's impression of the new welcome centre

Saint, city, cathedral: revealing the story of St Alban