



PERCIVAL CHERRY BLOW
1873 -1939
ARCHITECT
designed this building

Percival Blow (1873 – 1939)

Why a plaque:

Percival Blow has been referred to as St Albans' forgotten architect but several of his many existing buildings in St Albans are Grade II listed.

Importance to St Albans:

Among many of his designs we still have two Gothic Revival style buildings for St Albans School, adjacent to the medieval Abbey Gateway, the former offices and striking Art Deco exhibition hall for Ryder & Son on Holywell Hill, now a café, and the neo-Georgian former Barclays Bank in the High Street, now a restaurant.

History:

Percival Blow was born in St Albans on 18 January 1873 and lived in the city until his death in 1939. He attended St Albans School, studied architecture at King's College, London, and was then articled to Watford architect Charles Pryor Ayres. In 1898 at the age of 25 he launched his professional career as an architect based. His early work was in designing houses in St Albans and Harpenden but in 1909 he branched out into public buildings and commercial premises and later into banks and shops. He generally designed in the Arts and Crafts mode.

This led to many other institutional and commercial buildings. He had already completed what would become a wide range of buildings for businesses and shops, starting with a Straw Hat factory in Beaconsfield Road in 1903, and later the The Rats' Castle public house at Fleetville, for Watford brewers Benskins. Many of these other buildings are locally listed, including the attractive Arts and Crafts houses in Hall Place Gardens. He designed Edwardian villas in Clarence Road St Albans. Whilst the bulk of his work can be found in the city, Blow also designed a range of buildings in Harpenden (e.g., in the 'Avenues' area), Luton and further afield. Clients included Sainsburys for whom he designed some eight stores, including the St Albans branch formerly at 29 St Peter's Street. Waterstones occupy a former grocery store in St Peter's Street, designed by Blow for Oakley & Co in 1920.

The Alpha Picture House, Hertfordshire's first permanent cinema was adapted from a public hall building on London Road that he had originally designed for a social institute in 1903. In 1923 the cinema was refurbished once more under the guidance of Percival Blow.