Geological trail around the city centre of St. Albans

START: The War Memorial, at the north end of St Peter's Street is built of **Portland Limestone** (Isle of Portland, Dorset) showing many fragments of fossil shells. Cross St. Peter's Street.

1st stop: City Point to the right of Zoohouse at the junction of St. Peter's Street and Catherine Street is faced at ground floor level with **travertine** (near Rome, Italy). This cream-coloured limestone was formed by precipitation of calcium carbonate around plants which grew in warm water bubbling onto the ground surface through springs. The plant remains subsequently decomposed, leaving irregular cavities in the rock. Cross Catherine Street and continue southwards down St Peter's Street.

2nd stop: Costa, which is faced with an attractive dark green variety of **serpentine** (Cornwall) containing pale green veins of the mineral chlorite. The paving slabs beneath your feet are **granite** (China). Cross St Peter's Street and then turn left, go past the Post Office and into Civic Close and to the right of the Arena.

3rd stop: The front of the Court House is faced with two interesting rocks. At the ground floor level, the grey rock is **larvikite** (S. Norway); this contains large crystals of a feldspar mineral called labradorite, which have an attractive blue iridescence. We will see several varieties of this rock during our walk. The upper parts of the building are faced with an unusual type of Portland Limestone known as **Roach**. The large cavities in it were formed by dissolution of fossil seashells incorporated in the limestone when it was deposited on the seabed. The cavities are like those in travertine, but general larger.

4th & 5th stops: Walk back to St Peter's Street, to your left is Ladbrokes, which is faced with **marble** (Italy). Turn left the next building is the Post Office, erected in 1935, it is mainly built of brick, but the lowest 1.3m and the window and door surrounds are built of **Portland Limestone**. Continue southwards down St. Peter's Street.

6th & 7th stops: Leightons Opticians is faced with **red granite** (Peterhead, Aberdeenshire) and past the Vodaphone shop the doorway leading to Broadway Chambers is faced with a dark variety of **larvikite** (Norway) with more **red granite** above and to the right is a very attractive pink to dark red variety of **serpentine** (Lizard, Cornwall). Continue along St. Peter's Street.

8th & 9th stops: NatWest Bank. The ground floor and window surrounds of the higher floors are built of red **Sherwood (or Bunter) Sandstone** (Mansfield, Nottinghamshire).

This Triassic rock is quite soft and easy to carve, but weathers readily; in particular the carvings above the windows are badly deteriorated. Next door is Waterstones whose shop front is faced on either side with a pale grey variety of **larvikite** (Norway). Continue along St Peter's Street until the traffic lights, cross Victoria Street into Chequer Street.

10th stop: Lloyds Bank: Like the Post Office, this is built of **Portland Stone**. Note occasional fossil mollusc shells in the rock. In front of the bank cross Chequer Street to the side of the Town Hall and turn left to walk down the western side of Chequer Street. At HSBC (Portland Stone again) turn right into Lamb Alley and continue through to Market Place. Turn left, and as you walk along the pavement note the kerbstones made of various hard igneous rocks. The greenish grey stones opposite the end of Lamb Alley are of **syenite** (Markfield, Leicestershire). When the pavements of St. Albans were laid in the 18th Century, this rock was easily transported from Leicester by railway. Continue southwards down Market Place.

11th stop: Clock Tower, which is an early 15th Century curfew tower build mainly of dressed **flint** from the local Chalk, but with quoins of Carboniferous sandstone, probably a Coal Measure sandstone from the Bradford area, W. Yorkshire. Among the flints are also a few pieces of **Hertfordshire Puddingstone**. Note the way this hard rock has fractured; the silica matrix between the flint pebbles is so hard that the fracture surface has cut straight through the pebbles. The rock is from beds of sand and clay (the Reading beds) overlying the local Chalk; patches of flint pebbles were deposited within the Reading Beds by rivers and later became cemented by precipitation of silica between the pebbles. Because it is so hard, puddingstone can take a high polish and then shows a range of attractive colours. Turn left onto High Street.

12th stop: The Dressing Room, the front of which beneath the windows is faced with a very dark variety of **larvikite** (Norway). Continue to the corner of High Street and Chequer Street.

FINAL stop: In front of the entrance to Hamptons International the kerbstones are of **Dartmoor Granite** with large white feldspar crystals.

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