

PANDEMIC PORTRAITS

The People of St Albans in the Time of Covid

Living through the Covid Pandemic is the biggest challenge faced by the people of St Albans for over seventy years. It is also history in the making. Last month, before Lockdown 2 was imposed, already feels like history. Indeed, October 2020 is already history. Future generations will study the Pandemic and analyse the ways it changed the social, economic and political fabric of this country.

As a photographer living in St Albans, I am working with St Albans Museums, St Albans BID and the Herts Advertiser to record the way in which we are surviving the Pandemic. I am doing that by making portraits of people, mainly in the Market Place, but also elsewhere in town, as they go about their daily lives, shopping, working etc. I am taking photographs of people both wearing and not wearing their Covid-safety masks. I am also asking everyone photographed to say a few words about the Pandemic and how it has affected them. I am producing the portraits as digital diptychs – portraits of each person with and without a mask, side by side, with a short caption beneath. The portraits reflect the diversity of St Albans.



ALVA Designer

It's chaos and I'm skint. I had a good week of sales last week, but it is so unpredictable.

In return for participation in the project, I am emailing a free portrait to everyone photographed.

The project has already shown that, although St Albans is a relatively affluent town, there are huge disparities in the way in which the Pandemic affects people. The lives of some have been devastated. Others have hardly been touched. The comments included in the captions are very varied and provide a real insight into the effect of the pandemic. They show great public strength and resilience, but also hint at private pain and angst.

I hope the project will run for a year, with images and comments divided into monthly chapters so that we can see whether attitudes change over time. Clothing will also reflect the changing seasons and perhaps even changing moods. The portraits with captions will enter the archives of St Albans Museums so that future generations of Albanians will be able to see what we look like and read our short comments about the Pandemic. Some of the images may also be shown on pop-up digital screens in the Museum + Gallery in December 2020 and feature in the Museum's planned *Lock Down Life* exhibition in March/April 2021. But I don't want this just to be a dry historical record. I want this to be an immediate, ongoing, inter-active project involving all the communities of St Albans. The Museums and I are making the images immediately available via Instagram, Facebook and Twitter (including the *All Things St Albans* and *St Albans Past and Present* Facebook groups), web-sites, digital screens in local businesses and the local press.

Weather permitting, I will be standing outside the Town Hall which houses the St Albans Museum + Gallery a couple of days a week. If you wish to be photographed, please email me at nicmadge@ntlworld.com or message me on 07956 920904 to agree a mutually convenient time and date.

I am very conscious of Covid-safety issues and will ensure that social distancing is maintained at all times. I will provide hand-sanitiser. All photographs will be taken in the open air.

About me

I am a photographer who lives in St Albans. I have recently completed an M.A. in Documentary Photography and Photo-journalism at the University of the Arts, London. Previously, I have published photo-books and had solo exhibitions of my portraits/street photography at the British Museum and the Swiss Cottage Gallery, as well as several joint exhibitions.

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https://www.nicmadge.co.uk/PANDEMIC_PORTRAITS.php

And follow me on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/nicmadge/>

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