

The Chaucer Statue and plinth

This fine statue depicts Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1340-1400), known by some as the 'Father of the English Language', presenting the opening of his most famous work, the *Canterbury Tales*, to the people of the city. The plinth commemorates the pilgrims who featured in that work and the benefactors who enabled its creation.

The piece was commissioned and created by the Canterbury Commemoration Society (www.cantcommsoc.co.uk) who then handed it over to the City Council.

What follows is an edited version of a booklet produced at the time of the monument's unveiling in 2016. The text was originally edited by Pam Doyle. As a digital version of the pamphlet could not be found, the images of this edition have been scanned, which explains their somewhat grainy quality.

CANTERBURY COMMEMORATION SOCIETY, 2016

Registered charity number: 1057977

Patrons of the Chaucer in Canterbury Sculpture Project

Ms Carol Ann Duffy CBE FRSL – The Poet Laureate

Lord Norwich CVO

Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL

Trustees and Committee

Dr Brian Porter – President to October 2015

Mr Jake Davies – Chairman

Mr Ray Evison – Vice Chairman

Mr Alan Thistleton – Treasurer

Mrs Polly Coburn

Mrs Philippa Davies

Miss Cynthia Hawes

Mr Martin Taylor

The Chaucer in Canterbury Sculpture Project

Mr Ray Evison – Project Co-ordinator

Ms Pam Doyle – Fundraiser

Contact addresses

Michael Steed – Secretary

36 Dover Street, Canterbury CT1 3HQ msteed@hotmail.co.uk

Mr Ray Evison – Project Co-ordinator

5 Link Road, Tyler Hill, Canterbury CT2 9ND rayevison@btinternet.com

The Story of the Canterbury Commemoration Society to 2016

By Michael Steed

Chaucer is the second piece of sculpture gifted by the Canterbury Commemoration Society to the city and its people. You will find the first, the bronze statues of King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha meeting each other, in Lady Wootton's Green.

Our origins go back to June 1995, when we became a registered charity separate from the Canterbury Society. The inaugural meeting of the Canterbury Commemoration Society was held on 26 June 1996 at the Friends' Meeting House, Canterbury.



The King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha statues represent the imagined narrative of the King meeting his Queen, walking home from worshipping in St Martin's Church, to impart the news, in May 597, of the landing in Thanet of the Pope's emissary, Augustine. Support came from local businesses, corporate bodies and individual donors, who warmed to our appeal to celebrate how what happened in Canterbury 1400 years ago so affected England's and indeed Europe's history. They were unveiled by the Duke of Kent and the French consul, symbolising the original union of Kentish prince and French royal bride, on 26 May 2006.

King Ethelbert's code of laws, written down around AD 600, marked a significant point in the development of English, now the world's common language. After the conquest of England by the Normans in 1066, the Old English descended from Ethelbert's time had to co-exist with Norman-French. In due course, the two merged into the Germanic language of the common people that Geoffrey Chaucer was instrumental in making a language of great literature. His masterpiece, *The Canterbury Tales*, became the first book to be printed in English, reflecting the popular status it achieved in the English imagination.



This explains the link between the Society's first and second statue projects. More are in hand, notably a statue to Aphra Behn, the celebrated Canterbury-born 17th-century dramatist (and spy!) who was the country's first professional female writer, and a working model of Whitstable Harbour in 1923, when the last cargo of coal was unloaded from a sailing vessel. This we continue to celebrate this lovely city's important role in our national history.

Chaucer in Canterbury Sculpture Project

By Ray Evison

Dr Brian Porter hoped that the Society would commission a statue of Geoffrey Chaucer which would celebrate Chaucer as a foundation stone for the English language, and symbolise the link between Canterbury and the rest of Britain through pilgrimage, as described in the *Canterbury Tales*.

The Society, generously sponsored by The Canterbury Auction Galleries, launched an international competition for designs for a sculpture of Chaucer and for a plinth on which the sculpture would stand. The intention was to have local personalities who would be donating to the Project being portrayed as one of Chaucer's pilgrims around the plinth in a re-working of Thomas Stothard's painting of the Journey to Canterbury. More than two dozen artists expressed an interest in the competition and submitted designs for consideration. From this number four were selected to prepare maquettes to be presented to the selection committee. Concerned that none of those selected were 'modern' in concept, three distinguished modern sculptors were commissioned to submit their ideas to 'challenge' the four traditionalist ideas. In the end, worthy as the modern submission were, the Committee concluded that the four figurative short-listed ideas would progress. The selection panel met in 2013 and Sam Holland was commissioned to create the figure of Chaucer and Lynne O'Dowd to create the plinth and depict Chaucer's characters from the Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* in low relief around the plinth.

Sam Holland had submitted a bold proposal for the figure of Chaucer as a Pilgrim Poet leading the band of pilgrims described in his *Canterbury Tales* on the last leg of their journey from the Tabard Inn. Lynne O'Dowd had presented

a plinth in the distinctive form of a horse's hoof which related to the method of travel of the pilgrims depicted whilst allowing in its changing angle of incline a directional impetus to the figure mounted on it, and easy access to the image of the table at the Tabard Inn for those who would like to take a rubbing of that image. By negotiation and modification the two ideas were brought into a sculptural unity.

Chaucer and Canterbury

By Michael Steed and Brian Porter

Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343– 1400) was son of a prosperous London vintner whose career in the service of the Court gave him linguistic skills and opportunities to travel in the King's service. He married Philippa, the sister of John of Gaunt's third wife. His involvement in statecraft included being ransomed by King Edward III in 1360 after capture by the French, controller of customs in the Port of London and MP for the country of Kent in 1386. It is thought that he lived in Kent during the last years of his life; his renown was such that he was buried in Westminster Abbey, in what became Poets Corner, where a monument was erected to him in 1555.

While his Canterbury Tales consisted mainly of re-telling stories that were the stock of late medieval European culture, Chaucer invented the device of the pilgrims' journey to Canterbury as a narrative frame for what has become recognised as the first great poem written in English. His characters have individual voices in a way that had not been heard or read before. He caught the ambience of the time and the tone of both court and commoner. He not only wrote in the vernacular language, he developed its vocabulary and established it as literary currency. His achievement was well-recognised and enduring; William Caxton praised his "crafty and sugared eloquence", John Dryden dubbed him "father of English poetry". All who use the English language today owe him a profound debt.

Early landmarks in the development of the English language

449	The traditional date for the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, landing in East Kent, bringing their Germanic speech; however, records exist of Germanic tribes settling for three centuries before this and some modern scholarship argues that their language was spoken in South-East England even before the Roman conquest.
600	Soon after 600 King Ethelbert of Kent ordered the writing down of the First Code of English Law, almost certainly at Canterbury, in St Augustine's Abbey, using the local vernacular rather than, as was then customary in Europe, Latin. The oldest surviving copy is in the <i>Textus Roffensis</i> (early 1120s), property of the Dean and Chapter of Rochester Cathedral.
893–99	King Alfred the Great, who translated classical texts into Old English; the <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> commences, continuing until 1154.
c. 1250	Henry III's proclamations are the first after the Norman Conquest to use English.
1362	The Statute of Pleading (written in Norman-French) decrees that English be used in the Law Courts, though Latin remained the language of record; English used in Parliament for the first time.
1384	John Wycliffe's translation of The Bible into English published in manuscript.
c. 1387	Geoffrey Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i> , written in an English vernacular, assembled, circulating in manuscript.
1476	William Caxton introduces printing to England, Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i> being one of the first printed books in English (1478).
1525	William Tynedale's translation of the New Testament, the first printing in English of part of The Bible.
1549	Thomas Cranmer's <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> published.
1611	King James Bible (Authorised Version) published.
1623	William Shakespeare's <i>First Folio</i> published.
1755	Samuel Johnson's <i>Dictionary of the English Language</i> published.

Sam Holland ARBS

Sam is a figurative sculptor, living and working on the Kentish salt marshes, specializing in public and monumental pieces. Capturing the character and strength of each personality is the driving intent behind Sam's work, and she is known for her ability to produce historically accurate portraits. She studied Fine Art Sculpture at the City & Guilds of London Art School gaining a first class degree. She taught life modelling and drawing and began private tuition and

private commissions. In 1994, she set up her own studio. Since then she has worked full time as a sculptor, doing private and public commissions. She was welcomed into the Royal Society of British Sculptors (ARBS) in 2001.

Sam said: "It was a real honour to be given the opportunity of portraying Geoffrey Chaucer in Canterbury, a man who has shaped both English literature and the English language. Rather than representing Chaucer as author and poet, I've placed the statue within the context of this city by creating Chaucer – the character as recorded in the verse of *The Canterbury Tales*."

"Dressed as a devoted pilgrim of the time, Chaucer leans against a staff, while offering his fellow travellers the observations made about them on their journey down from London. Chaucer holds out the first vellum page of *The Canterbury Tales* for everyone to read, a reference to him as the first master of English literature."

"Using his own words from the text, I've tried to imbue the sculpture with the man's characteristics: stoutness, wit, modesty and humanity. Looking at the figure straight on, he appears dignified and wise but by walking around the figure, it is possible to see a wry smile appear on the right-hand side of Chaucer's face, indicating perhaps his greatest trait – a sense of humour."



Lynne O'Dowd



Based in Yorkshire since 1987, Lynne specialises in sculpting bas-relief on flat, concave, convex and folded surfaces for tonal and polychrome finishes in fibreglass resin, plaster and cast metals. Her BA (hons) in Fine Art Sculpture and R.A. British Institute Award for Portraiture preceded the start of a career as a freelance commercial sculptor in 1986, creating bespoke original work and mass-production masters for a wide variety of industries. She has a particular passion for modelling complex pictorial bas-relief, the technique used on the plinth.

Lynne said: "The seven metre circular plinth sculpted in bas-relief is a rare opportunity to illustrate Chaucer's famed Tales in the medieval tradition of re-telling known works, in this case, visually."

"The plinth relief portrays the 30 characters (including Chaucer himself) from Chaucer *Canterbury Tales* Prologue in a re-enactment of the pilgrimage from the Tabard Inn in London to Thomas Becket's Shrine in Canterbury. The design incorporates symbols illustrating six of the twenty-four stories they told each other on the way, along with the only one Chaucer actually invented, The Canon Yeoman's Tale."

"Objects representing the technical progress of written stories gradually being made available to everyone, a manuscript, quill, woodcut and metal letterpress blocks bearing Geoffrey Chaucer's name, delineate the beginning and end of the process of pilgrims."

"In homage to Chaucer's lifetime of travel, the silhouette of the plinth evolved from an image of his astrolabe, the latest navigational instrument of the day, which you just see inscribed into the floor under his feet. His passion for collecting stories on these journeys eventually brought us all *The Canterbury Tales*."

The Characters on the Plinth

By Pam Doyle

One of the ways funds were raised for the project was by offering individual donors the opportunity to be depicted as one of the 29 pilgrims of *The Canterbury Tales* on a mural that encircles the plinth for the statue. Each individual donor, listed in the following pages, who has sponsored a character, is recorded in perpetuity on the plinth of the sculpture for future generations to recognise their contribution and support.

It was a little daunting at first to be asked to seek sponsors for each of Chaucer's 29 characters in the Tales. But our sponsors were very generous and there was tremendous interest in the project. Lots of phone calls to various prospects over several months were made to try and entice them to join in. Sponsors came from far and wide, even the USA, but each one has some connection Canterbury. In the end we were very lucky to fulfil all the spots

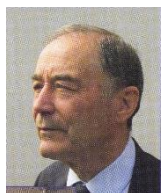
available. Some sponsors were good sports and offered to be depicted as Chaucer's racier characters such as the Pardoner and the Wife of Bath. In the end we had a 30th character in the form of Chaucer the Poet himself depicted by Martin Starkie, whose family sponsored him, and the Miller's two dogs, Charlie and Melba. I cannot take credit for all of the sponsors who came forward, however, as Ray Evison had secured half a dozen donors at the start of fund-raising.

In the following pages we include a short biography for each sponsor [as in 2016] and show them with a clay representation of how they appear on the plinth.

The plinth is one metre high with a seven-metre-long illustration around it inspired by the painting by Thomas Stothard, *The Pilgrimage to Canterbury*, which hangs in the Beane Museum and Art Gallery in Canterbury. The painting provides the arrangement for the merry band of 29 pilgrims, and their Host, who had suggested they should each tell four stories on the journey, the best winning a free meal on their return. The Knight spoke first having drawn the shortest straw.

Various signs and symbols and obscure artefacts embellish the plinth to introduce aspects of their tales and intrigue to contemporary Chaucer pilgrims visiting the City on their own particular quest. Finally, in the tradition of medieval reliquary, the plinth resembling a horse's hoof, brings the still life close enough for rubbings to be taken from the Tabard Inn woodcut as a souvenir of one's stay in Chaucer's Canterbury.

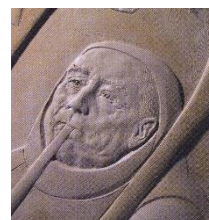
The Miller – Tony Denne



Tony is Chairman of the Kent Agricultural Merchant and Property Company: T. Denne & Sons Ltd. Tony was educated in Canterbury at Kent College and is involved in several activities in the City.

The Denne family has a long association with the City of Canterbury both in business and many other areas of Canterbury civil and community life. The family firm was founded in 1879 when it owned the large City Flour Mill, known

as Abbots Mill, which was situated in the centre of Canterbury supplying flour to the bakers of Kent.



The Miller's Dogs

Charlie – Border Terrier



The Border Terrier is a small, rough-coated breed of dog in the terrier group, originally bred to hunt foxes and vermin, although today it is a common pet. Charlie follows his breed characteristics very well, being stubborn and strong-willed, but very friendly. He loves to chase cats, but is very good with children. He is eager to please although was nicknamed the Border Terrorist as a puppy as he was so naughty.



Melba – Fauve Basset

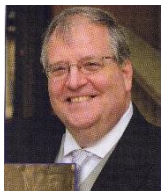


Fauve Bassets are charming, lively and outgoing little hounds, full of fun and naughtiness. Historically, the 'Basset Breeds', those low to the ground, have been used mainly for hunting rabbits and other small game. Melba comes from Belfast and has all the fiery temperament one would expect of a dog "sauced" in a place of high spirits.

Amusingly, all her brothers and sisters have names that nod to "food": Crackers, Marmalade, Nuts, Honey, Wheaties, Biscuit, though strangely no Beans.



The Host – Jonathan Ullmer MBE

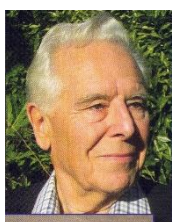


Jonathan is Principal of CATS College Canterbury and started his teaching career in Kent. His school has won national and international awards and there are 60 nationalities at the college studying A levels, International Baccalaureate, GCSEs and other exams. The college is part of Cambridge Education Group which won the Queens Award for Enterprise and in 2014 Jonathan was awarded the MBE by the Queen for services to education.



NB Jonathan Ullmer ceased his employment at CATS in 2017 when he took up a new role abroad. Subsequently, a complaint was made against Mr Ullmer relating to his previous employment at the Cecil Jones High School in Southend which was referred to the Teacher Regulation Authority. CATS have stated that during his period of employment with that College (2008-2017), no allegations of this nature were made. Following the findings of the TRA professional conduct hearing, Mr Ullmer lost his licence to teach.

The Doctor of Physic – Dr David Pratt



After school, David spent a year in France including a travel scholarship at Bordeaux University. He returned the following year for National Service where he was co-opted to the Joint Services School for Linguists to learn Russian. Subsequently, he decided to study medicine and joined the 1st M.B year at St. Thomas' Hospital, London in 1958, where, after qualifying, he met and married Sue, his 'Nightingale' wife. They have four children and eight grandchildren, who claim a good deal of their time and, perhaps not surprisingly, include a Russian daughter-in-law and a French son-in-law.

He worked largely at St. Thomas' in various House and Registrar posts until he came to Canterbury in January 1972. He succeeded Dr Stewart Wachter, GP and Doctor of Physic, in his eighties, who had been born in, and practised from, the King's Bridge Surgery. This was on the site of the former King's Mill, part of Henry II's compensation to the Becket family – thus a tenuous connection with the Canterbury pilgrims. The surgery, now the ASK restaurant, is just a few paces from where the statue stands. By another quirk of coincidence, it faces across from Canterbury's St. Thomas's Hospital.

1988 brought big changes for David with a move of house from Patricbourne to open St. Stephen's Surgery, remaining also Police Surgeon/Forensic Examiner until retirement. He has a continuing interest as a Trustee of the Huguenot Chapel at the Cathedral.

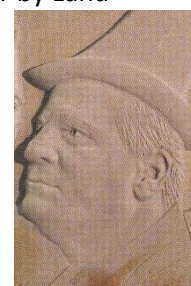


The Merchant – Hugo Fenwick



Hugo first came to Canterbury in 1994 as a Director of Ricemans, which Fenwick had acquired a few years previously. Following the proposals to redevelop the Whitefriars Quarter by Land Securities, he oversaw the development of the new Fenwick department store in the City which opened in 2003. Although he has since taken up a Group role in the company based in London, his strong affinity with the City has remained.

He is fascinated by its history and admires the previous project from the Canterbury Commemoration Society, the Ethelbert and Bertha statues on Lady Wootton's Green. He has retained strong connections with the City through his role as Vice-Chairman of Canterbury College and as a Trustee of Canterbury Cathedral.



The Man of Law – Frederick Spencer Clock 1844–1922



Frederick was born with both a physical disability and a troubled family background. He grew up in humble circumstances opposite St Margaret's Church (now THE Canterbury Tales Visitor Attraction).

His father, John Spencer Cloke, plumber and decorator, died in 1857, leaving his widow to bring up six children. Esther Cloke ran a greengrocer's shop, above which the family lived. John's mother, Mary Cloke, had not disclosed a father when she registered his birth at Hythe in

1799, but John passed on the Spencer name to all his children.



Frederick made a success of life in his chosen profession, the law. By 1871, he was clerk to the Chartham School Board, living with his wife Fanny (née Alchin) at Wincheap Terrace. Soon after, he moved to Sandwich, where he established a solicitors' partnership, Cloke & Tucker, and became clerk to Eastry Poor Law Union. Cloke & Tucker passed to his son, Frederick Alchin Cloke.

He is sponsored by six of his great-grandchildren: Sue Arnold, Sarah Ash, Iain Bremner, Frances Holliday, David Steed and Michael Steed, in memory of their mothers, Barbara Bremner and Peggy Steed, née Cloke.

The Manciple – Donald Beerling MBE 1926–2013



Donald Beerling, with his wife Poppy, bought the Dominican Priory in 1969 and lovingly restored it as a very popular Community Centre for the citizens of Canterbury. He was also President of the Canterbury, Whitstable, and Herne Bay Scout Association, The Canterbury City Band, The Prince of Wales Youth Club, and Shop Mobility. He received his MBE for his work in the community and restoration and care of the Dominican Priory, one of the two remaining building of the Black Friars Monastery. He is sponsored by his widow Poppy.



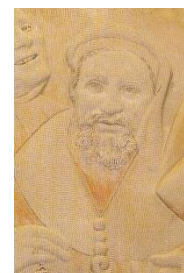
Chaucer the Poet – Martin Starkie 1922–2010



Martin Sidney Starkie was born in Burnley, Lancashire, the son of Henry Starkie (musician) and Pauline Ann Martin. He attended Burnley Grammar School before being drafted to Italy during the Second World War. Following the war, he attended Exeter College, Oxford, where his lifelong passion for Geoffrey Chaucer and his works was inspired by his mentor, Professor Neville Coghill who notably translated *The Canterbury Tales* into Modern English and from whom Martin inherited the performing and dramatic rights.

His professional career as an actor and broadcaster attracted many accolades and, in 1968, Martin produced and co-directed the musical *The Canterbury Tales* which enjoyed a long run in the West End at the Phoenix Theatre.

His passion for Chaucer extended to Canterbury where his Chaucer festival team occupied the 15th-century premises St Peter's Street. Many activities, including exhibitions, workshops and performances operated from this site and Martin was a well-known advocate for Chaucer in Canterbury.



The Franklin – Paul Roberts



Paul has made a significant contribution to the townscape of Canterbury. From small beginning, over 30 years ago, designing house extensions, his work has spread to much larger projects including Parham Student Village, a major mixed residential and retail scheme in St Dunstan's, Station West housing development, and countless one-off houses and groups of houses and apartments.

He is renowned for his knowledge of the local development market. So great is his love of Canterbury that he rarely takes on projects beyond the City.



The Knight – Tony Pratt



Tony Pratt is managing director of the city's only Auction House – The Canterbury Auction Galleries, and feels fortunate to have spent his entire working life involved with fine arts and antiques, his great passion. He has been keen to repay the debt to the city of Canterbury and is proud to have been associated with, and supported, various arts projects within the city.

These include The Beaney, the new Marlowe Theatre, the Canterbury Festival and the previous project from the Canterbury Commemoration Society, the



Ethelbert and Bertha statues on lady Wootton's Green.

He looks forward to seeing this latest project, the statue of Geoffrey Chaucer, installed on the corner of Best Lane and the High Street, which he feels, will be a suitable welcome to the city for locals and tourists alike.

The Reeve – Clive Stevens

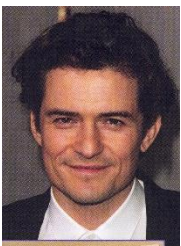


Clive is Chairman at Kreston Reeves LLP, the Kent based Chartered Accountancy practice with whom he has been all his career since leaving school. He was for over 18 years the firm's Managing Partner. Clive is also the Chair at Turner Contemporary in Margate. His other roles include being a Board Director at Locate in Kent and Kreston International as well as a member of the Council of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England Wales.



Clive lives in Margate, has worked in Kent all his life and is a Kent Ambassador. He is married to Brigitte and they have two grown-up sons, Matthew and Simon.

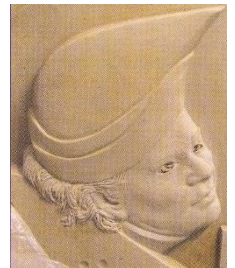
The Young Squire – Orlando Bloom



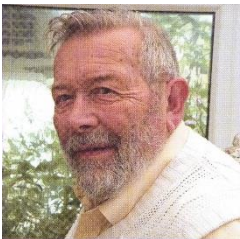
Orlando is an internationally well-known and award-winning film actor of screen and stage, most famous for the role as Legolas in Peter Jackson's Academy Award winning trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* and Will Turner in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. He has been described as one of the highest profile actors of the past 15 years for his collective body of work.

Orlando was born in Canterbury and attended Junior King's and St Edmund's School. He trained at the National Youth Theatre in London and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where he gained a BA Hons in Drama. The University of Kent awarded him with an Honorary Doctor of Arts (honoris causa), in 2010 in recognition of his contribution to film

Apart from his successful acting career, Orlando has been an avid supporter of UNICEF since 2007 and was appointed a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in 2009. He was presented with the Audrey Hepburn Humanitarian Award in 2015 in recognition of his commitment to the rights of children around the world. He was subsequently honoured with the BAFTA Britannia Humanitarian Award in 2015, and in the same year was also honoured by the 41st Deauville Film Festival for his outstanding collective body of work over the last 20 years. In addition, he was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 2014.



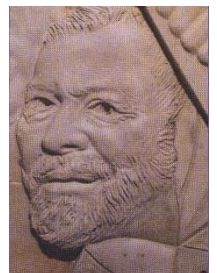
The Yeoman – Graham Wood



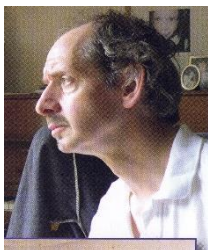
Graham was born and brought up in London, his family lived in Canterbury for generations so he has known the city since the early 1950s and has lived here since 1989.

He is a retired history teacher spending his final 14 years of teaching at The King's School. He was on the Committee of the local branch of the Historical Association for 25 years and served as both Treasurer and Chairman. He is on the committee of the Oaten Hill and District Association and is currently Treasurer of its Local History Group. He served on the Canterbury City

Council as a member for Westgate Ward from 2011 to 2015 and is a devotee of Kent County Cricket.



The Ploughman – Andrew Abbott



Abbott's Dairy was founded 230 years ago in Limehouse London and progressed to Canterbury in 1924. It became known as the friendly *pint on the doorstep* business. Today, the company is involved in refreshing and maintaining buildings. Andrew was involved with The Canterbury Tales arts & crafts exhibition at the Neville Pundole gallery in 2002, providing the photographic element and description. This was a rediscovery and appreciation of Chaucer's immense invention and contribution to English culture, language and storytelling.

Andrew said: "It's nice to contribute to a motif, which is about the gathering of people. Our own lives are enriched, living in a 'hub' like Canterbury, by meeting people from all sorts of places and backgrounds. It can be inspiring, re-booting and energising. We have the wonderful Cathedral, the Pilgrims destination, right on our doorstep, a perennial presence to assist our projects. It's got to be my favourite building. It's amazing to think that Chaucer created/propelled these kinds of ingredients into a universal language.



By co-incidence, the ploughman has no actual tale to tell. However, there is a poem from the same period which to a certain extent describes his lot: *The merthe of all this londe*; a peaceful reflection on a life of 'Going Up and Down.'"

The Good Parson – Canon Ron Diss 1931–2010



Ron was born in Poplar, London. He trained for ministry at Salisbury Theological College and was made Deacon and ordained Priest in the Diocese of Southwark where he served as curate at St Alphege, Greenwich. Following various appointments in London he moved to Winchester in 1978 to become the Bishop's domestic Chaplain. He was appointed Vicar of St Peter, Maybush in 1980, Honorary Chaplain of Winchester Cathedral in 1985 and Rector of Freemantle, Southampton in 1991.

On his retirement in 1996, he was made Canon Emeritus in Winchester and on moving to Canterbury became an Honorary Chaplain to the Bishop of Dover. Ron was also a Franciscan companion, a spiritual director to many and much loved and valued family member, friend and encourager to many more. Ron is sponsored by his friends.



The Nun's Priest – Canon Gerald Hudson 1920–2010



Gerald was born in London. He studied Theology at Exeter College and was ordained in 1943. He initially served in the bombed-out parish of St Paul's Deptford. Following his marriage to Meg in 1945, he served at various energetic parishes in London before accepting the post of Principal of the Southwark Ordination Course at Bletchingley. In 1980, he was appointed by Archbishop Coggan to be Vicar at Mary-Le-Bow in London, showing himself to be a rigorous, humane and energetic leader.

He retired in 1985 and moved to Whitstable. Here his gifts were soon recognised and for two years he ran the Post Ordination Training Course for Canterbury Diocese and was Chaplain to the Diocesan House in Westgate. He was known for his whimsical sense of humour and a mind that could retain astonishing amounts of information. He is sponsored by his widow Meg.



The Nun – Jane Edred Wright



Jane was married in 1962 to Edred Wright, then Director of Music at The King's School, and has lived in Canterbury ever since, working part-time at Junior King's School for twenty-one years.

Her interests are bridge, walking with Canterbury Ramblers, driving (a member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists for 49 years), swimming, travel and books. She actively supports Canterbury Cathedral, where she is a volunteer, The



Marlowe Theatre, Stour Music, Canterbury Music Club and the Canterbury Festival.

Jane has two children and is the grandmother of five university students. She successfully climbed Kilimanjaro three years ago to raise money for a charity sending to a Kentish school for handicapped children, and for children who needed cochlear implants.

The Lady Prioress – Lady Juliet Tadgell



Lady Juliet and her family have a keen interest in art. She is the keeper of the Wentworth Fitzwilliam art collection, one of the most prestigious private collections in Great Britain. This collection includes paintings by Anthony van Dyck and George Stubbs.

She also supports various galleries and museums in London and is a former Trustee of the National Gallery.

She supports local charities including Canterbury Cathedral and the Pilgrims Hospice. She is founding Patron of Turner Contemporary Margate, a Patron of Deal Music Festival, a Friend of the Canterbury Museums, and a Friend of the Stour Music Festival.



The Shipman – Colonel John (Jack) Hoffman 1931–2009



Jack was born in Quincy, Massachusetts and raised in Pitman, New Jersey. He graduated from Drexel University with an engineering degree. Entering the Army in 1956, he served for 30 years in the Corps of Engineers and Signal Corps, with tours of duty in Germany, Korea, Italy, Vietnam, Belgium, Holland and in the USA.

He is a direct descendant of Robert Cushman, who chartered the Mayflower to take pilgrims to America in 1617, whilst living in Canterbury.

Robert Cushman was his 9th great-grandfather. After his retirement, Jack enjoyed researching family genealogy. He served as the Assistant Governor General for the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of New Jersey, past First Colony Governor, former Governor and Historian of The Fuller Society. He is sponsored by his daughter Laura Hoffman.



The Oxford Scholar – Allister Collins



Allister was co-founder and CEO of International telecommunications company NextGen Mobile Ltd from age 16, providing employment to local staff at its Blean-based offices. Allister graduated from The University of Kent at Canterbury with 1st class honours in Computer Science in 2005. After exiting his business in 2014, he worked with the new owners of the company as Chief Architect of the world's largest text messaging platform.

Allister now enjoys tradition, investments and overseeing unique local property redevelopment projects.

He has a particular interest in helping the local community through enterprise, and in 2015 opened a community-focused pub & restaurant featuring a village shop and museum – a truly unique venue called 'The Tyler's Kiln', where everything is locally sourced, including its 24 members of staff. For the past three years, an apt quote The Canterbury Tales has been hidden in the woodwork of the pub's back-bar, and it will finally be revealed after the statue has been unveiled.



The Wife of Bath – Polly Gasston Coburn



Polly was born in Kenya and enjoyed an idyllic childhood and an excellent, if rather old-fashioned education, interspersed with safaris into what was then a very wild and unspoiled country. Her father was a great enthusiast and something of a polymath. At the age of six, for no reason, Polly decided she wanted to become a goldsmith: her parents encouraged this idea from the outset.

Polly went to London to be trained in her chosen trade and came to Canterbury in 1982. She joined the Canterbury Commemoration Society, becoming a trustee within a year.

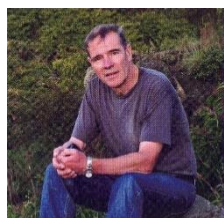
Having always been interested in history, and particularly in architecture, the Society seemed an obvious choice. At this time, after a break of some 30 years, Polly decided to go back to her first love, and started again as a goldsmith, working exclusively in 22ct gold, her design inspiration coming from her experiences travelling in the Near East.

The Chaucer Project has always been close to Polly's heart, and has been a great vehicle for her interests in history and language, as well as sculpture, and the processes of bronze casting, some of which cross over into her own techniques. Today Polly exhibits and sells her gold work mainly in London.

She chose to be depicted as the Wife of Bath on the Plinth because she felt it would have amused her late husband.



The Pardoner – Ray Metherell 1944–2008



Ray was born in Watford and moved to Canterbury in 1947. He went to Simon Langton Boy's School and excelled at cricket and football. After teacher's training in Cheltenham he taught in Hampshire and Aylesham, then went overseas to Colombia where he spent five years at the Colegio Britanico School in Kali.

He returned to Littlebourne to look after his sick mother whilst teaching at Herne Bay. He moved to Junior King's in 1989 where he stayed until 2008. He taught RE, Geography, History, maths and lots of sports, turning out some very fine tennis and cricket players. He was well known for working with difficult children teaching them, through sport, to believe in themselves.

Ray was an inspiring history teacher with a great enthusiasm for visiting churches, castles and historic houses. His memorial service at Canterbury Cathedral was packed with people who were inspired and motivated by him. He is sponsored by Rosemary Walters.



The Summoner – Brigadier Maurice Atherton CBE, JP, DL



Following his education at St John's School, Leatherhead, Maurice Atherton was commissioned into the East Yorkshire Regiment in 1946, and served in Egypt, Sudan, Malaysia, Austria, Germany, Hong Kong and Ghana; he attended the Staff College, Camberley in 1958. His career included periods as: Military Assistant to the Commander of British Forces, Hong Kong; College Chief Instructor at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst; Commanding Officer of the Green Howards, Commander of the Dover/Shorncliffe Garrison and Deputy Constable of Dover Castle. He was awarded the CBE in 1981.

His public record includes long periods as a Justice of the Peace on the Dover Bench and as County President of the Royal British Legion. He was High Sheriff of Kent in 1983/84. He is Deputy Lieutenant of Kent, and received an Honorary Doctorate in Civil Law in 1996 from the University of Kent.



The Monk – Robin Eyers

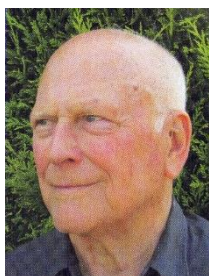


Born in Folkestone, Robin was evacuated to Chilham, where he grew up, following the loss of his home to a parachute mine. Initially a Civil Servant, he joined the Buffs and later transferred to the Intelligence Corps, seeing active service in Cyprus. Later he joined what became BT until his retirement in 1990 as South-East regional marketing manager. Robin spent time as a volunteer coastguard auxiliary before coming to live in Canterbury.

He and his wife, Gina, have been regular volunteers at Canterbury Cathedral since early 2003, initially as assistant, guides and now as stewards. Their hobbies included ballroom, Latin and sequence dancing, until arthritis intervened. Their 'spare time', cathedral apart, is divided nowadays between cruising, spending time with grandchildren, genealogical research and keeping in touch with friends around the world by e-mail.



The Friar - Robin Hawkins



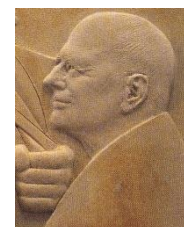
Robin was born in Baghdad in 1937 and the family came back to Canterbury in 1946 when he father took over his father's job as Public Analyst. He attended St. Edmund's School as a pupil from 1946 to 1955 and taught Physics there from 1963 to 1997.

He was a Territorial Army major, O.C., C.C.F. and won an Investors in People award.

He spent 1955–1959 at Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

He was an all-round sportsman playing Canterbury 1st team rugby, hockey, swimming, water polo, squash, and tennis. He has represented Great Britain in the Masters Swimming European and World Championships.

He was a Royal Yachting Association Instructor running dinghy courses at the National Sports Centre at Bisham Abbey for 30 years, and was a keen cruising yachtsman. He was also an Observer of the Year with the Channel Swimming and Pilotage Federation.



The Carpenter – Thomas Ernest Porter 1899–1986



Thomas went to Whitstable Endowed School. During WWI he was on the Western front where he was wounded. During WWII he worked as a builder and carpenter for the Admiralty, commuting to Rochester, and also belonged to the home guard. As the Battle of Britain progressed, he was able to watch from his home in Seasalter.

After the war he worked on various building projects including schools. He was fascinated by the natural world, in particular astronomy, birds and the sea and he was a keen sea fisherman and beachcomber. He also built boats by himself and loved sailing. He is sponsored by his late son Dr Brian Porter.



The Weaver – Grainne Cullen



Grainne's parents moved to England in 1959, and finally settled in Broadstairs. They had a 'world view', and were looking for opportunities in education, not least for the several children, and were up for the challenge of a new horizon.

Grainne said: "It's lovely to be involved with a literary icon, Chaucer. My mother, Moira, was the most avid reader I ever knew. She had read all of Dickens by twelve, and often eulogised about *Jane Eyre*, her favourite book. Her favourite poems were about love: the wonder *Brown Penny*, by W.B. Yeats and of course *The Cloths of Heaven*, by the same.

"My father, Des, brought with him all his enthusiasm and knowledge for sport. Though no Olympian, his father disadvantaged children in Dublin, and trained them in his kitchen for the



'Golden Gloves' boxing competition. Des the younger was involved with children and exercise/sport for the rest of his life. All of the children are involved in the creative fields.

I studied fine art at Camberwell School of Art and was exhibited in the Brit-Art movement in the early 90s and then taught the subject at Canterbury College. I continue to paint, often on the themes of renewal and regeneration."

The Haberdasher – Katharine Abbott



Six hundred years later, Katharine finds herself frequenting the same avenues that Chaucer describes in The Canterbury Tales. After leaving St. Edmunds, she went to the university which suited her further interests, University College London. She spend a surprising amount of time in the London Bridge/Borough Market area. Even today it is one of the liveliest happening neighbourhoods in London. The George pub, the last of the Tabard-style Inns, still buzzes and the "contemporary" arrival of the new Crossrail viaduct over Stoney and Park Street has enhanced the atmosphere further. London is incomparable.

Katharine: "Returning to Canterbury is fantastic in that, what we so like remains. I'm aware that in the haberdashery stakes (I'm told the word first appears in Chaucer) this is not the case. It's fantastic to be celebrating the works and achievements of Chaucer, sometimes described as Father of the English language."

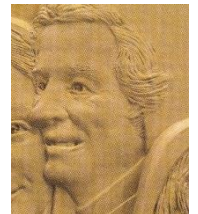


The Dyer – Dorothy Lydia Porter 1905–1989



Dorothy was born in Brixton and moved to Whitstable in 1910. Her family had always holidayed in Whitstable provoking the move there. She attended the Whitstable Endowed School before meeting Thomas whom she married in 1921. Before her marriage she worked in a draper's store in Whitstable and then for Mr Le Fevre in Canterbury.

She enjoyed music and was a good singer. She taught herself piano and violin and in her last years, added the guitar to her repertoire. She is sponsored by her son Dr Brian Porter.

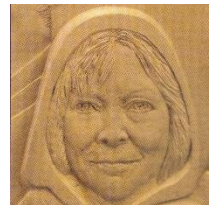


The Tapicier – Paula Vickers

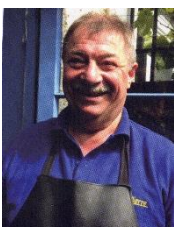


Originally from south London, Paula moved to Canterbury 20 years ago. She has a keen interest in ecological issues and for many years worked as a science teacher. For over 20 years she also worked as a GCSE Science Moderator and exam writer for a national examinations board. She worked for a book publisher, gave talks on conservation and captive breeding programmes and two local animals parks, plus worked part time for the Wellcome Trust, running various science workshops in genetics for university and college students.

For eight years, Paul enjoyed working in local government as a Canterbury City Councillor, with an active interest in both planning and environmental issues. Throughout her life, Paul has enjoyed embroidery as a hobby, particularly making pictures of wildlife. Always one to support local charities and events, she is a member of the Canterbury Cat Society and regularly dons waders to join other volunteers to clean the River Stour.



The Cook – Michel Piquet



Michel is from Burgundy in France. He first came to England 20 years ago when he worked in a French fish restaurant in London. He met his English wife Yvonne whilst there and they left to open their own Hammersmith restaurant called 'La Plume de ma Tante' which they ran for nine years.



They decided to move out of London and after a long search for suitable premises they opened the popular Café St Pierre, in the heart of Canterbury, in 1995, where he is owner and chef. Michel has been sponsored for this character by an anonymous donor who is one of his customers.

The symbols around the plinth



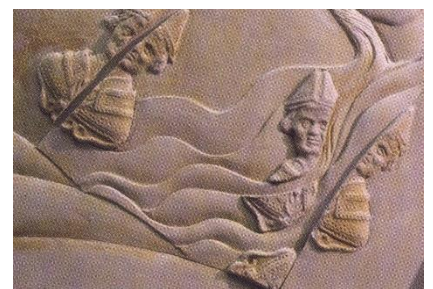
The Tabard Inn woodcut



Hoop and chequer



Crowned A – Amour Vincit Omnia

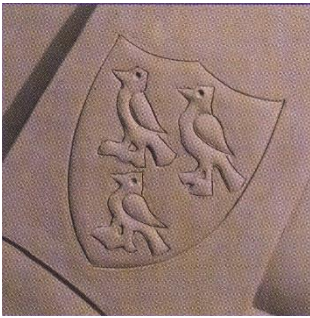


Pilgrims souvenirs – the five guildsmen throw Becket badges into the river

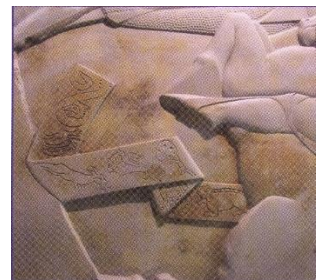




Bow and peacock arrows



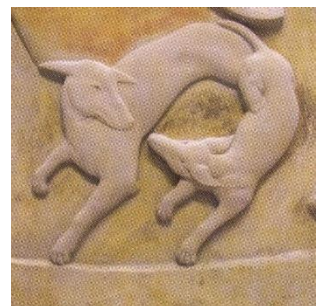
Coat of Arms of Thomas Becket



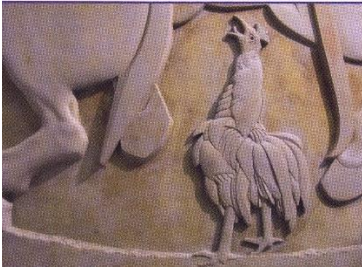
Seven sins including a snake, frog, goat, lion, snail, peacock and board – The Good Parson's tale



Garland of roses and lilies



Little dogs playing



Chanticleer – The Nun's Priest tale

Full Circle

Miller piping
 Bumcheeks scorched
 Hoop and Chequer – Host – he gestures
 for the Knight's Tale first – Emelye's prayer.
 Doc, Merchant, Lawman, Franklin – striding out
 Fluted Square glancing back
 Between the Reve and brothers – Plowman and Good Parson
 Trailing a tale of Seven Deadly Sing.
 Yeoman, bowed and peacock arrowed
 charges through the Nun's Priest's tale of Chanticleer
 falling Sainted Cecilia's garland-ringed musical misnomer.

Amor Vincit Omnia

Sisters.
 Scholar's books and Shipman's dagger
 The White Crow whispers – the Manciple's story
 and Chaucer weights – astrolabe, pen and rosary.
 A cupped ear, straining to hear
 the Wife of Bath keeps tight rein over five spurs.
 Pardons sold
 and gynglen chimes herald
 a hunting Monk
 and the Summoner's fury
 against the sated Friar.
 Fraternity Guildsmen cast their Becket badges into the river for luck
 Shielded by – three black crows.
 Miller's dog started steed – tumbling Cook
 his pal, dodging hooves below
 the – Miller piping
 bumcheeks scorched
 Hoop and Chequer – Host – he gestures
 the Merchant's second Tale – of Beryn.

Donors

We are grateful to the following for their generous donations which, together with our character sponsors, helped to make the Chaucer in Canterbury Sculpture Project such a success.

Andrew Abbott

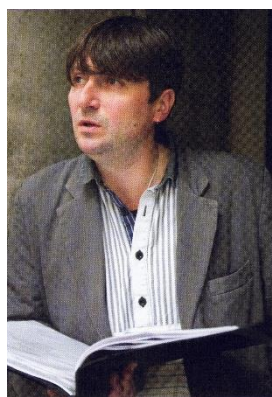
Sybil Barnes (deceased) & Ann Bullivant

Katie Cobbett
Rev M L Cooper
The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury
Sylvia Denning
Ray & Lynne Evison
Diane & Alan Forrest
Isabelle Gillard
Barrie & Valerie Gore
John E Hill
James Mansell Jagger
Pat King
Edith Miller
MSM Holdings
Roger J E O'Brien
Giles & Anne Rooke
Marilyn Sansom
Cynthia Short
Ken Terrett
Alan & Valerie Thistleton
Pauline Walters
Jane Edred Wright
R G Hills Charitable Trust
The Freemasons
Dane John Masonic Lodge No 8810

The unveiling

The statue, which was donated to the City of Canterbury by the Society, was unveiled by Simon Armitage on Wednesday, 12th October 2016 at 12 noon in the presence of the Lord Mayor and other dignitaries and sponsors.

Simon Armitage



Simon Armitage was born in West Yorkshire and is Professor of Poetry at the University of Sheffield. A recipient of numerous prizes and awards, he has published over a dozen collections of poetry, most recently *Paper Aeroplane: Selected Poems 1989–2014*.

His translations of medieval verse include his acclaimed *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (2007) and *Pearl* (2016). Armitage's poems have been part of the GCSE and A level exams for nearly two decades. He is also the author of two novels and of the non-fiction bestsellers *All Points North* (1998), *Walking Home* (2012) and *Walking Away* (2015).

Armitage's extensive writing for television and radio includes the BAFTA-winning *Feltham Sings* for which he received a prestigious Ivor Novello Award for song-writing. His theatre works include *The Last Days of Troy*, performed at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre in 2014. Armitage's most recent book *Still* (2016) features his versions of *The Georgics* by the Roman poet Virgil paired with aerial photographs of the Somme.

Armitage is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. In 2010, he received a CBE for services to poetry. In 2015, he was elected Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford.

Simon Armitage's Speech at the Unveiling of the Statue

Chaucer in Canterbury

A year or so ago I visited The Huntington Library in San Marino, California, a veritable strongbox of documents and manuscripts, many of them British and Medieval in origin. While I was there I stood awestruck in front of one of their prize possessions, the so-called Ellesmere Chaucer, a beautifully illustrated and illuminated edition of the Canterbury Tales, not only one of the most-drooled over artefacts in Chaucerian studies but a jewel in the crown of world literature. It's the early provenance and the exquisite and preserved nature of the Ellesmere Chaucer that makes it so important and coveted, but another aspect of its value, it struck me as it glowed and glinted in front of me and as I tried to decipher the ornate calligraphy, lies in the symbolic reach of its language. Here was late fourteenth century English poetry in an early fifteenth century edition being so proudly possessed and presented at one of the far shores of the English-speaking world, with the silhouette of Los Angeles city and the iconic Hollywood sign standing incongruously at its shoulder. It reminds us that Chaucer isn't just one of our greatest exports, but part of the transport by which the English peoples and their voices have travelled and adventured and settled.

And if Chaucer spans geography then of course he also spans time. Presumably it would have been inconceivable to Geoffrey that six hundred plus years after his death a poet in Yorkshire could have rolled out of bed as late as 6.30 a.m. yet be standing in the middle of Kent before lunchtime. Imagine what a disappointingly short poem the Tales would have been if his assembled and assorted pilgrims could have hopped on the 10.08 from St Pancras to Canterbury West. But for all those technological leaps and scientific advancements, Chaucer's work remains topical and urgent for us, because Chaucer deals in fundamentally human predicaments, predicaments involving love, sex, health, wealth, death etc., all the mysteries and tragedies and hilarities of human existence. And does so in very human terms – at a human level and on a human scale. Chaucer set a benchmark for where great writing should be pitched - who it should be aimed at and how it should be delivered - a benchmark that contemporary poets and poems continue to be measured against, whether they like it or know it or not.

Unlike some of his contemporaries, the anonymous Gawain- or Pearl-poet, for example, or the virtually-anonymous author of Piers Plowman, William Langland, we're fortunate to know quite a lot about Geoffrey Chaucer the person (though very little in fact about Chaucer the poet). And what a person he seems to have been, given the number of titles and epithets we might apply to him: student, soldier, kidnap victim, lawyer, astrologist, alchemist, page, husband, father, civil servant, courtier, esquire, diplomat, ambassador, spy (?), accused, Controller of Customs and Subsidy of Wools Skins and Hides, Member of Parliament, Justice of the Peace, Clerk of the Kings Works and Forester to the King, making him something of a medieval Forrest Gump by all accounts, never far from the famous names and historical events of his day. In those many roles, especially as an employee, Chaucer stands in the line, or perhaps stands at the head of the line, of British poets who have balanced both a literary and a non-literary professional life, as opposed to those poets who have chosen to exist as pure aesthetes in ivory towers or book-encrusted garrets. And we should be grateful, because it's difficult to imagine how the Canterbury Tales could have come about without such a rich and varied interaction with people and society, without Chaucer having one foot under the desk and one foot in the street, as it were. That sense of "real-life", however much it's poeticised, is surely what lends the Tales their documentary potency and their dramatic punch. Chaucer, to use a well-known phrase both literally and figuratively, but without any intentional gender bias, was "a man of the world", it seems, a citizen of the everyday, and it's for two reasons stemming from that notion that I think we should remember and celebrate him today.

The first relates to Chaucer's choice of English as his means of expression, when Latin or French might have found him a more elevated and immediate and established readership or audience.

Chaucer wasn't the first poet to make the decision to write poetry in his native, vulgar tongue, but he was the first poet to do it so extensively and so brilliantly, a decision that was to throw a switch in the signal-box of British poetry, changing the direction and destination of writing in its wake, extending the franchise and the mandate of poetry beyond the confines of state, church and the well-to-do. This isn't to characterise Chaucer as a literary anarchist of some kind, seeking to tear down the system. Literacy levels were very low, publishing and printing wouldn't be invented for several more decades and authored works tended to be distributed within small circles and limited court coteries. But if poetry was to eventually develop as something of a democratic art, then Chaucer, writing about people and doing so in the language of the people, played an unparalleled role.

And if it's through that role that we've come to refer to Chaucer as 'The Father of English Literature', and to put him on a pedestal as we're about to do today, both metaphorically and physically, then this leads me to my second point. Chaucer might well be our original National Poet, the Patron Saint of English Poetry, but we should be wary of dressing him in some form of national costume or draping him in the flag. Like all the best poets, like all the great poets, Chaucer was an importer of ideas and styles, even a borrower and a thief we might say, but in any case a poet involved in international dialogue and intellectual commerce with his predecessors and his contemporaries, at home and especially abroad, open and alert to influence and instruction from several European traditions. Whether Chaucer really met Boccaccio or Petrarch isn't entirely clear but what isn't in doubt is the way he was guided by their example, both in style and subject, just as Dante's shadow falls across Chaucer's page or parchment as well. Just as Chaucer's shadow has fallen across the pages of poets from this country and other countries ever since. So whatever version of him waits to be unveiled this morning, here in Kent, from where presumably he would have criss-crossed the Channel to Spain and Italy and France and beyond, let's not diminish or limit him by asking him to stand sentinel above the white cliffs of English Poetry, or saddle him with being the inventor or discoverer of some strain of pure and patented verse. Instead, let's recognise Chaucer as a wonderful assimilator and collator of voices and vocabularies, whose eye for different lives and ear for various languages has influenced the way we see and hear the world today, and the way we write it down, and the way we read it. As English speakers we are all the kith and kin of Geoffrey Chaucer; as a poet I flatter myself with the idea that I'm some kind of literary descendent, and am proud to be related to such a notable ambassador for that global and borderless country called poetry. And proud and humbled to have been asked here today to take part in this ceremony.

October 2016