

A IS FOR APHRA

CANTERBURY COMMEMORATION SOCIETY

Canterbury Commemoration Society, supported by A is for Aphra

Aphra Behn Sculptors' brief

AUTUMN / WINTER 2021/2



Canterbury Commemoration Society (charity number 1057977) are commemorating the life and work of Aphra Behn - the first professional woman writer - by commissioning a new piece of public art. We are currently fundraising for a life-and-a-quarter size bronze statue to stand with the old walls of the city of Canterbury - the city where Behn grew up. Our friends at the charity A is for Aphra (charity number 5176479) are dedicated to celebrating the life and work of Behn and are assisting in the promoting and administration of this statue competition.

This is an open call for sculptors to submit proposals for this statue, in any medium (written proposals, sketched and annotated, photographed, 3D etc). Proposals are to be with the committee by Monday 6th January 2022 at the latest.

OUR VISION

WHY APHRA?



WHO WAS APHRA BEHN

WHO WAS APHRA BEHN?

Aphra Behn was born Aphra Johnson in 1640 in a small village just outside of Canterbury. Her family moved to the city of Canterbury a few years later where her mother was a wet nurse and her father a barber / innkeeper. She was a working class girl, who through fortune and circumstance, learnt to read and write.

Aphra Behn went on to become the first woman writer to earn her living by the pen. As she told people she was "Forced to Write for Bread and Not Ashamed to Owne It". She had more plays (including *The Rover)* staged between 1670 and her death in 1689 than any other playwright and she also published poetry and prose works, including *Oroonoko*, which brought the sufferings of slaves in the central American colonies to the attention of a wider public back in England. *Oroonoko* was a very important work for the Abolitionist movement.

Aphra Behn remains a feminist and LGBTQ+ icon ('For sure no Crime with thee we can commit / Or if we shou'd - thy Form excuses it' she wrote to another woman in her poem 'To the Fair Clorinda'.



TO THE LOVELY WITTY ASTREA

OH, wonder of thy Sex! Where can we see,
Beauty and Knowledge join'd except in thee?
Such pains took Nature with your Heav'nly Face,
Form'd it for Love, and moulded every Grace

JACOB TONSON





KEY DATES

Monday 1st November 2021 - Open call for proposals launched.

Thursday 11th November 2021 - 7pm Optional Zoom Q&A for sculptors (inc. Any questions about Behn / Canterbury / Materials) Email hello@aisforaphra.org for Zoom link.

Thursday 6th January 2022 - Deadline for submission of statue proposals.

Sunday 16th January 2022 - Announcement of four shortlisted statues and commissioning of bronze maquettes.

[Continues over]



MORE KEY DATES

Friday 10th June 2022 - Deadline for delivery of bronze maquette from each shortlisted sculptor.

June / July 2022 - 'Tour' of shortlisted maquettes to key UK sites associated with Aphra Behn.

Saturday 16th July 2022 - Grand fundraising dinner in central Canterbury.

Monday 18th July 2022 - Announcement of the winning design.

Summer / Autumn 2023 - Statue unveiled in central Canterbury.

KEY DATES CONTINUED

THE SPECIFICATION

- A LIFE TO LIFE-AND-A-QUARTER SIZE FIGURATIVE SCULPTURE OF BEHN AS AN ADULT.

- THERE ARE THREE KNOWN POSSIBLE PORTRAITS OF BEHN - WE WOULD LIKE THE SUBMISSIONS TO REFLECT THESE LIKENESSES OR USE THEM AS INSPIRATION. PLEASE SEE HERE FOR AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE ON THE AUTHENTICITY OF KNOWN BEHN PORTRAITS.

-FREE STANDING OR STANDING ON A LOW PLINTH UP TO THREE FEET HIGH.

-IN BRONZE







PROPOSALS *MAY* WISH TO CONSIDER HOW THEY:

-REFLECT HER CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

-REFLECT HER CANTERBURY / KENTISH ORIGINS

-REFLECT BEHN AS A PROTO-FEMINIST AND LGBTQ+ ICON.

THE SHORTLIST

KEY INFORMATION



A COMMITTEE FORMED BY TWO CHARITIES - THE CANTERBURY COMMEMORATION SOCIETY AND A IS FOR APHRA - WILL CHOOSE A SHORTLIST OF FOUR SCULPTORS FROM PROPOSALS SENT IN.

THERE IS NO FEE FOR INITIAL PROPOSALS.



A PAYMENT OF £4500 INC. ALL EXPENSES WILL BE MADE TO EACH SHORTLISTED SCULPTOR. HALF ON COMMISSION AND HALF ON DELIVERY OF THE MAQUETTE (35-40 CM HIGH IN BRONZE). THESE MAQUETTES WILL THEN BE OWNED BY THE CANTERBURY COMMEMORATION SOCIETY.



ONE WINNER WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN JULY 2022. WE ENCOURAGE SCULPTORS TO INCLUDE AN ESTIMATE OF THE ANTICIPATED OVERALL COST (INC. ARTIST'S FEE) IN THEIR PROPOSALS. AS A GUIDE, THE COMMITTEE WOULD NOT LOOK TO EXCEED £65,000 FOR THE COST OF THE STATUE TO THE POINT OF DELIVERY (NOT INCLUDING INSTALLATION).

SHORTLIST AND PAYMENTS



STATUE LOCATION

The precise location within the city of Canterbury is still to be decided. Possible locations include Solly's orchard (pictured to the left) and the High Street (pictured below).



STATUE LOCATION





PLINTHS

Free-standing statues are encouraged. However, the committee also very much welcomes the use of plinths that reflect other elements of Aphra Behn's life / work and/or the natural environment (including the River Stour) and cultural heritage of the City of Canterbury. Examples of items might inspire creative plinths include old mill stones powered by the water wheels that used to be set on the River Stour, leather-bound books in a seventeenth-century style, masonry and stone from Canterbury's ancient walls.

SOME EXISTING CANTERBURY "FACES"



Queen Bertha

by Stephen Melton / Commissioned Canterbury Commemoration Society



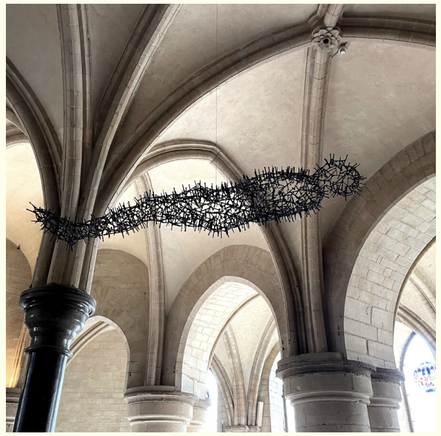
Dave Lee

by Dominic Grant



Geoffrey Chaucer

by Sam Holland / Commissioned: Canterbury Commemoration Society



Transport

by Antony Gormley



The Marlowe 'Kitty'

by Edward Onslow Ford



Our Lady of Canterbury

by Sister Concordia Scott



ABOUT APHRA

Born in December 1640 near Canterbury in Kent to Bartholomew and Elizabeth Johnson.

Travelled to Surinam around 1660. Witnessed the horrors of slavery and wrote about them later in 'Oroonoko'.

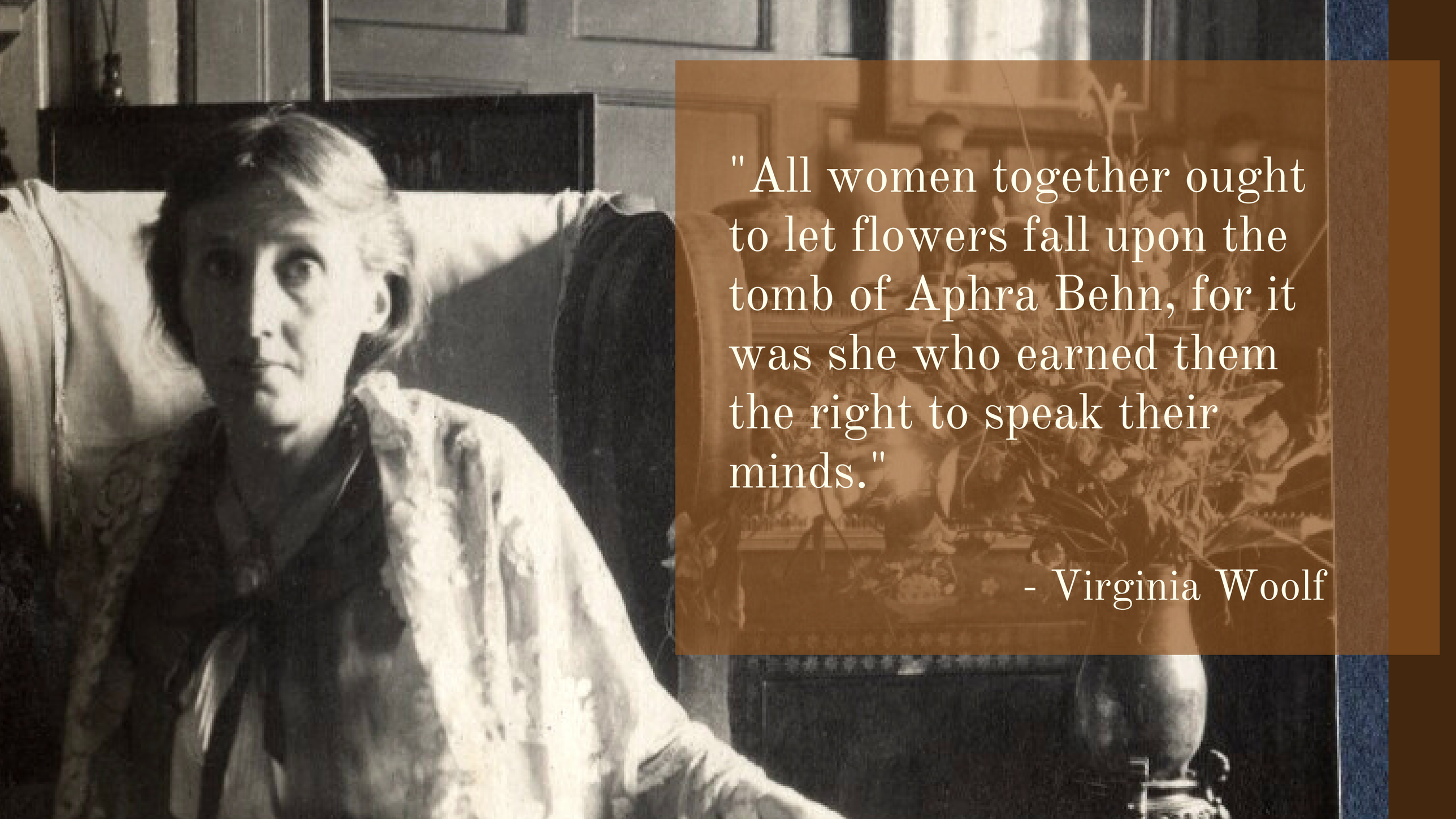
Was a spy for Charles II in the mid 1660s.

Perhaps married briefly (Johannis Behn - a ship merchant). He may have died in the Great Plague. Likely had love affairs with women as well as men.

Wrote 19 plays and other novels, poems and literary translations from other languages. Was the first woman in the English language to earn her living by writing.

Died in 1689 and is buried in Westminster Abbey, London.

Find out lots more about her here.



"All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds."

- Virginia Woolf



PROPOSALS

To be delivered (via email or post - see contact details on the final page of this document) by 11.59pm on Monday 6th January 2022

Statue proposals can be in any format. An annotated sketch, a model, a staged photograph with notes, a webpage with details, a PDF presentation, a video etc.

The proposal should make clear your artistic vision for the project. This should include a short written statement about the your inspiration for depicting Aphra in your chosen way.

You should also include a ballpark figure for anticipated costs for a life / life-and-a-half commission and any other information (e.g training/previous public art commissions/work done) you wish to make the committee aware of.

CHECKLIST FOR PROPOSALS



USEFUL FURTHER RESOURCES

BEHN RESOURCES

In Our Time (Radio 4) on Aphra Behn - Click here.

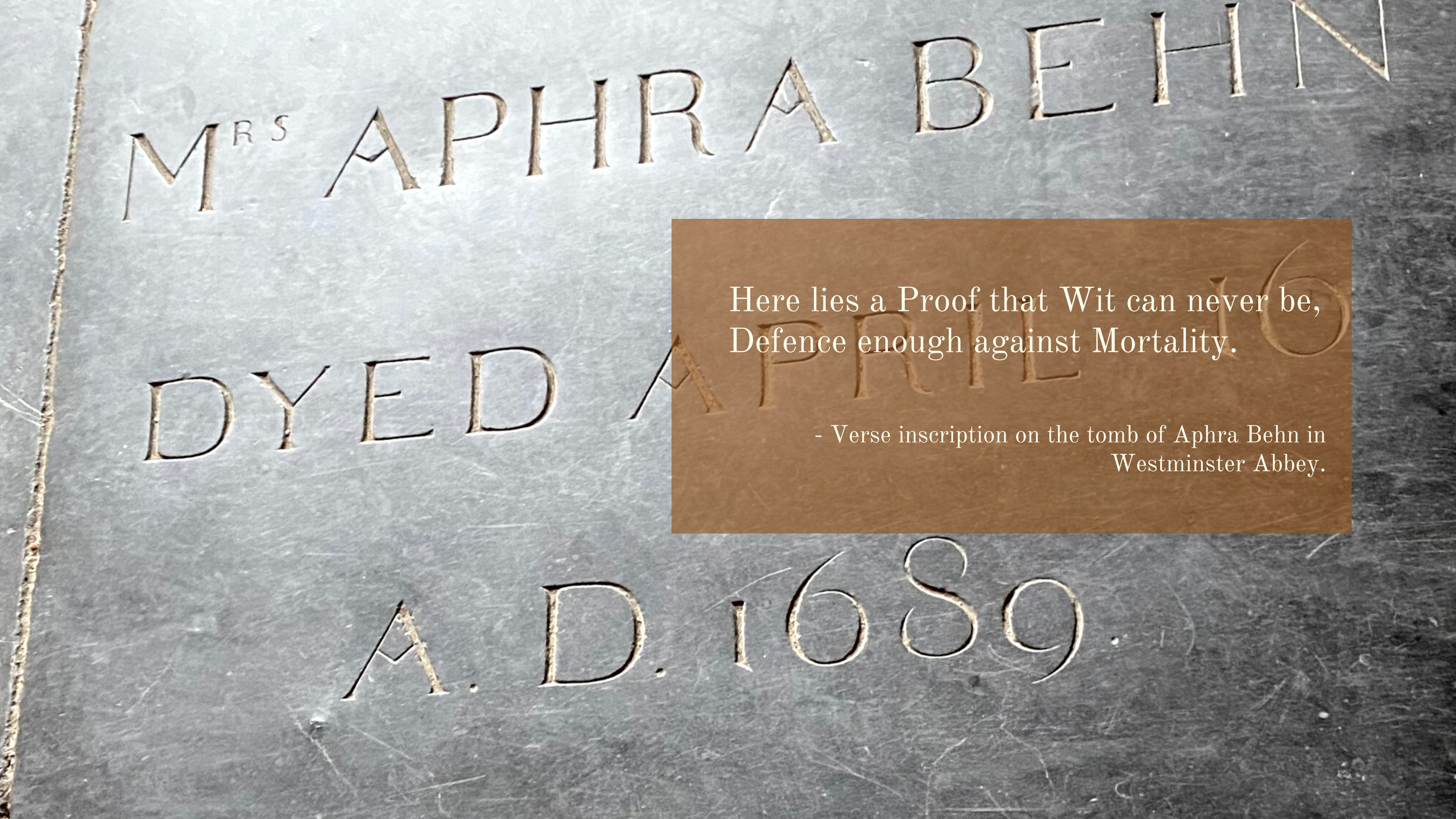
Recent Times Literary Supplement review on The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Aphra Behn - Click Here.

Royal Shakespeare Company resources on 'The Rover' - Click here

Useful video about Behn's time as a spy for Charles II produced by the National Archives - Click here.

An excellent article about Behn and the possible portraits of her - Click here.





Here lies a Proof that Wit can never be,
Defence enough against Mortality.

- Verse inscription on the tomb of Aphra Behn in Westminster Abbey.



Contact Details

Mailing Address for submissions

Behn Sculpture Submissions, 3 Marine Parade, Whitstable, Kent, CT5 2BQ, United Kingdom

Email Address for submissions and/or enquiries

hello@aisforaphra.org

Phone Number

Charlotte Cornell, Chair of A is for Aphra / Vice-Chair of the Canterbury Commemoration Society: 01227 491689

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