**Chair’s Speech for AGM**

Good evening everyone – welcome to Canterbury society AGM 2024. We thought it appropriate to meet in this lovely old building – repurposed, with a modern theme. The arches are where the horses and carts used to enter this space which was a builder’s merchants. It joined on to Nason’s workshop (behind me) where they made their own linen etc and also to The Foundry Brewery (just down that end of this room)

Thank you all for being here today. It’s great to see so many familiar faces—and some new ones too! This past year has been a busy and rewarding one for our society, and I’m delighted to have this opportunity to reflect on what we’ve achieved together, as well as talk a bit about where we’re headed.

First of all, **thank you to the committee**.

**Reflecting on Our Achievements**

First off, let’s talk about some of the standout moments of the past year. One of the most exciting projects we undertook was the **Blue Plaques project**. Thanks to the hard work of our team and the enthusiasm of our members, we were able to commemorate some truly remarkable individuals and events in our local history. It’s been fantastic to see these plaques go up around town and to hear the positive feedback from the community.

We also had some fantastic **Social events** that brought us all together—the Winter Party and the Summer Party were both big hits. It was wonderful to see everyone enjoying themselves, sharing stories, and building stronger connections within our society. These events really remind us of the value of our community spirit.

Our **Talks program** has also been a highlight, especially the insightful session with the **new Dean**. It was a great chance to hear directly from someone who plays such an important role in our community, and the turnout was excellent. We were introduced to **Thomas Sidney Cooper** a relatively little-known artist – but not for long! There is much going on in the background to promote his work and local connections – watch this space.

We invited local politicians to present to you at our lively **Hustings** - it’s always good to see democracy in action!

Another highlight were the **outings to St. Augustine’s Abbey and Solly’s Orchard**. The weather was not kind but the visits were full of learning, fresh air, and camaraderie. We look forward to organizing more trips like this in the future.

On the **Campaigns front**, we’ve been busy! We’ve raised our voices on issues like poverty, the protection of Longport trees, and have been actively commenting on planning applications to make sure our city’s development is in line with our values. We even considered forming a town council to further our impact. None of this would have been possible without the passion and commitment of our committee.

I also want to take a moment to thank our **current sponsors** who have continued to support us throughout the year

1. BoConcept
2. Boys & Maughan
3. Canterbury Auction Galleries
4. Canterbury BID
5. Canterbury Commemoration Society
6. EdIT
7. King’s School
8. Martello
9. Paul Roberts 40
10. We’re thrilled to welcome a **new Sponsor** - South Canterbury Development Corporation Limited.

Your backing has been invaluable – thank you SO much. The support of all of you will help us do even more in the coming year.

**Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities**

While we’ve achieved a lot, there are still challenges ahead. We want to keep growing our membership and ensuring that our activities are relevant and engaging for all of you. We’ll need to keep up our efforts on the campaign front, especially when it comes to planning and local development. And we’ll need to stay creative and proactive in organizing events and talks that keep us all connected and informed. We welcome any suggestions and even more – any help!

We can’t wait to present to you our major event for this year - The Canterbury Society Heritage Expo – Saturday 9th November in Westgate Hall – Carole will tell you more about that shortly.

Plans are now afoot for the World Heritage site management plan - consultation

We have joined with CCC for their Cemetery group

**Thanks to Our Webmasters**

Before I close, I’d like to extend a special thank you to our outgoing webmaster, Ed Ludlow. You’ve kept us all connected and informed, and we much appreciate all the hard work you’ve put in. And let’s welcome Parker’s Design & print in Chestfield who has already hit the ground running and is bringing fresh ideas to our online presence.

**Closing Remarks**

In closing, I want to thank every single one of you for your dedication, energy, and support. It’s your enthusiasm that keeps our society vibrant and active. Let’s carry this momentum forward into the next year, facing our challenges with the same spirit and determination.

Thank you all once again, and here’s to another fantastic year ahead!