

The Reverend Robert Ullock Potts

1866 - 1949

He was the Sub-Warden and Bursar of St Augustine's College from 1912 to 1930.

He set about the completion of a programme of excavations of St Augustine's Abbey which had begun in 1901. He wanted the 'holy ground' to be a 'source of inspiration to English-speaking peoples for all time'. In the seasons of 1914 and 1915, parts of the Anglo-Saxon churches were found underneath the Romanesque Abbey church.

Potts led successful archaeological works on the site for over 25 years. He was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries in 1922.



Saint Hadrian

circa 630 – circa 710.

Hadrian, or Adrian, was born in North Africa. He came to Italy, most likely as a refugee, where he became an abbot. Pope Vitalian invited him to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. Hadrian declined. However, the Pope accepted his suggestion of the Greek monk Theodore as Archbishop, if he accompany Theodore to England. Hadrian was installed as the Abbot of St Peter and St Paul⁴ in 670. He was a great scholar. Under his direction, the Canterbury monastic school had a wide influence. Hadrian worked with Archbishop Theodore in rebuilding the English church. Hadrian was venerated as a saint in the Middle Ages.



Longport, Canterbury, CT1 1PF

Over the last 1400 years there have been many notable figures who have contributed to the history of St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury, and it is now part of a UNESCO World Heritage site, with Canterbury Cathedral and St Martin's church.

On the 4th of September 2025, the Lord Mayor of Canterbury unveiled eight blue plaques including tributes to Saint Augustine and Saint Hadrian. The partners in this exciting project were English Heritage (the custodians of the Abbey), the Canterbury Society and the Canterbury Commemoration Society (jointly responsible for seven of the eight plaques) and the Nubian Jak Community Trust (responsible for the Saint Hadrian plaque) The two Societies funded the plaques. An additional small brass plaque was installed beneath the Saint Hadrian plaque to acknowledge the late historian Marika Sherwood's valuable research contribution to the Saint Hadrian tribute.

The plaques are now installed on the outer walls of St Augustine's Abbey, in Longport and this unprecedented unveiling commemorated notable figures in the history of the Canterbury World Heritage Site.



BLUE PLAQUES

AT

ST AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY

CANTERBURY



⁴ See footnote 1.

St Augustine

circa 534 - circa 604

In 596 Pope Gregory sent a group of monks from Rome, led by Augustine, to bring back Roman Christianity to southern England. They arrived in Kent in 597 and were well received by the local King, Ethelbert, who soon became a Christian. Augustine was consecrated the archbishop of the English and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury. He initiated the abbey of St Peter and St Paul¹ outside the walls of Canterbury. He was buried there in 604/605 and ever since has been honoured as a saint of the church.



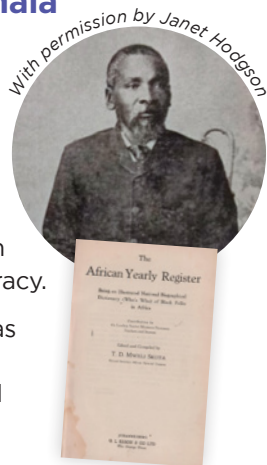
Nathaniel Cyril Kondile Mhala

1843 - 1920

He was the son of the Xhosa Chief Mhala, in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. He studied at St Augustine's College from May 1867 to Christmas 1868. In England he attended Parliamentary debates, which left him with an admiration for British democracy.

After returning to South Africa, he was successively the head of an Anglican school, a government interpreter, and employed in a legal office.

In the 1890s he was a founding member and vice president of the South African Native Congress (SANC), a forerunner of the African National Congress (ANC). In 1897 he became first editor of Izwi Lanatu (The Voice of the People). He was an active advocate for the founding of an African university, eventually leading to the establishment of Fort Hare University.



With permission by Janet Hodgson

William Thorne

Thorne, a monk at St Augustine's Abbey, wrote a history of the Abbey from its foundation to 1397. He was zealous for the Abbey. His main concern in his Chronicle were its property and privileges. His work was mainly concerned with three officeholders: the Kings, who were benefactors of the Abbey; the Abbots, who were the Abbey's guardians; and the Archbishops, who occasionally challenged the Abbey's independence. Thorne wrote in the preface to the Chronicle that he hoped 'to hand down to posterity with up-to-date pen the doings and events [of the Abbey] both in prosperity and adversity'.



John Tradescant the Elder

1570 - 1638



After the dissolution of St Augustine's Abbey in 1538, the abbot's apartments were converted into a royal palace. In 1612 Lord Wootton purchased the site. He employed John Tradescant the Elder, the famous gardener and collector of curiosities, to lay out three complex ornamental gardens, between 1615 and 1623, to the north and east of the palace. Lord Wootton died in 1628. Lady Wootton continued to live at the palace. In 1635 the gardens were described by a military surveyor. It was a 'delicate garden and paradise' with fountains and statues of mythological figures. Lady Wootton is commemorated in the name of the Green in front of the Fyndon Gate.²

Sir Alexander Beresford Hope

1820 - 1887

He was a politician, author and art collector. He recognised the historical importance of the site of St Augustine's Abbey and bought it in 1844. He formed a partnership with the Reverend Edward Coleridge, a master at Eton College, to found a missionary college at the site. St Augustine's College operated from 1848 to 1947. Hope employed William Butterfield to design the College buildings. Butterfield later became one of the great Gothic Revival architects. The works on the College exposed some of the site's medieval remains. This gave rise to archaeological investigations which continue to this day.



Thomas Fyndon

During Fyndon's time as Abbot of St Augustine's³, 1283 to 1310, great works were undertaken at the Abbey: a completely new abbot's lodging, a new cellarer's range, a new brewhouse and new bakehouse. The climax of all these works was a magnificent new gate of the Abbey in 1308. The gate survives, facing Monastery Street and Lady Wootton's Green. It established a model for English gatehouses until the end of the Middle Ages. The west gable wall of the brewhouse has also survived. It is in the campus of Canterbury Christ Church University.



¹ In 978, St Dunstan, then Archbishop of Canterbury, played a key role in renaming St Augustine's Abbey. Originally dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, Dunstan added St. Augustine's name to the dedication, reflecting the abbey's origins as a missionary centre founded by St. Augustine. This change solidified the abbey's identity and its association with the influential figure of St. Augustine. | ² See Thomas Fyndon above. | ³ See footnote 1.