



A SHORT HISTORY OF

THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY

FROM 2008 TO 2022

BY JAN PAHL



A SHORT HISTORY OF
THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY
FROM 2008 TO 2022

BY JAN PAHL



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Canterbury in the first two decades of the century 4

THE CANTERBURY SOCIETY

History of the Canterbury Society 6

Members of the Canterbury Society committee 6

Aims and constitution of the Canterbury Society 7

Working in partnership 7

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY 2008-2019 8

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY 2019-2022 15

By Richard Scase

PUBLICATIONS AND CONTACTS 18

PUBLISHED 2026

TO GET A COPY VISIT:
WWW.CANTERBURYSCOCIETY.ORG.UK

Introduction

This is a record of fourteen years in the life of the Canterbury Society, the leading civic society of the city. However, before turning to the activities of the Society we begin by outlining what was going on in the city during the years with which we are concerned.

Canterbury in the first two decades of the century

The early decades of the 21st century were a time of growth and change for Canterbury. The population of the city grew from around 44,000 in 2001 to around 55,000 in 2021. The growth and prosperity of the city was based on an economy dominated by education and tourism. There were two universities, namely the University of Kent, founded in 1965, and Canterbury Christ Church University, founded as a teacher training college in 1963, as well as an Art College, later to be subsumed into the University for the Creative Arts, with its base in Surrey. All these institutions grew during the first quarter of the century, attracting to the city students and staff from all over the world. The result was a city which was notably younger and more culturally varied than most of Kent.

Tourism had been a part of the economy of the city since the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170 and the subsequent growth of pilgrimage to his shrine in the Cathedral. The Cathedral, and the historic streets which surrounded it, continued to attract many visitors to the city. Recognition of this came when in 1988 the Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church were inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This designation is a mark of the international importance of Canterbury in both historical and religious terms.

The city was the centre of its area in terms of local government. During the years in question, there were two levels of local government. Canterbury City Council covered the city itself, together with Whitstable, Herne Bay and the surrounding villages. It was responsible for planning, housing, waste collection, community safety, parks and gardens and community events. Kent County Council (KCC) covered the whole of the county, with the exception of the Medway towns, which were constituted as a Unitary Authority. KCC was responsible for education, social care, services for children, public health, libraries and main highways.

Both levels of local government were dominated politically by the Conservative Party during the early twenty first century, though there were always elected councillors from the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party. It was not till 2024 that Canterbury City Council became ruled by a coalition of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, and not till 2025 that Reform became the dominant party at Kent County Council.

The years from 2010 onwards were years of cutbacks for Canterbury, as for the rest of the country. The election of a Conservative government in 2010 led to years of 'austerity' which fell particularly harshly on local government. Central government grants to local councils were cut by 40 per cent in real terms between 2009/10 and 2019/20, that is from £46.5 billion to £28.0 billion per year, according to the Institute for Government.

Canterbury City Council responded to the cuts in a number of different ways, many of which involved the Canterbury Society and other voluntary and charitable organisations in the city. For example, the council ceased to carry out some services, such as the organisation of Heritage Open Days and the maintenance of some small gardens. As we shall see the Heritage Open Days were taken on by the Canterbury Society, at first with some funding from the council, but later with no financial help. The Society also took on planting, weeding and generally caring for some of the neglected small gardens in the city, such as the Franciscan Path and the Butterfly Garden.

Another response to the cuts took the form of selling off land and property owned by the City Council. One example of this was the council's plan to sell Kingsmead Field for housing development. The successful public campaign to save this important open space was led by the Friends of Kingsmead Field. Another asset which came under threat was the Westgate Hall, which was due to be demolished and replaced with a car park, which would bring income to the council. Again the hall was saved by community efforts and is now a popular and thriving centre. The Canterbury Society supported both these community initiatives.

The cuts particularly affected the city centre, resulting in the abandonment of the Christmas lights, less control by the planners over garish shop fronts and less frequent removal of litter. One

response to this situation was the setting up of the Business Improvement District (BID), an organisation funded by local businesses, with the brief to enhance the city centre.

The first Canterbury BID was set up in 2016, with two representatives from the Canterbury Society on its management board. Its first big initiative was to reinstate the Christmas lights and since then its efforts have been important in enhancing the historic centre of the city. The BID and the Canterbury Society also got involved in producing guidelines for shop fronts in the city centre and in entering for Britain in Bloom competitions. Regular litter picks around the city by many community groups, and the annual river litter pick by the Canterbury Society, helped in dealing with the mounting tide of rubbish.

These were also years of growth in car ownership, with car use rising every year from 2010 to 2019, reaching a peak nationally of 278 billion vehicle miles in 2019, the highest level of car use ever recorded in the UK. Much of Canterbury city centre had been pedestrianised in the late 20th century, which added greatly to the quality of life for shoppers. However, it also meant increased traffic on the roads outside the city walls. The result was serious congestion and increasing concern about the impact of pollution. Research carried out at the University of Kent documented the levels of air pollution along the busiest roads. The Canterbury Society responded by publicising the situation, handing out leaflets asking drivers to turn off engines when their car was stationary, and setting up the Canterbury Alliance for Sustainable Transport.

The increasing population encouraged the building of many new housing developments around the city and meant that planning became one of the most important functions of the City Council. Planning applications had to be approved by the Council before any building could begin or before existing buildings could be modified. The Canterbury Heritage and Design Forum (CHDF) was responsible for reviewing and commenting on planning applications as they came to the Council.

At first this activity was supported by the Council, but later council funding was withdrawn and the CHDF functioned as an independent body and played a valuable role in monitoring the quality of new developments.

Members of the Canterbury Society committee were also active in commenting on planning applications, often working with CHDF on this. In 2014 the Society engaged in the debate about the Local Plan for the area. Comments from the Society concluded:

While we support sustainable development in Canterbury, we have concluded that the Publication Draft 2014 is based on an overly optimistic view of the prospects for economic and employment growth for which there appears to be no convincing supporting evidence. The Plan fails to achieve a sustainable balance between the economic, social and environmental impacts on the city, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. For these reasons we consider the Plan to be unsound.

In response to the pressures on the city the Canterbury Society produced its own *Vision for the Future of Canterbury* in 2013. Producing the Vision was led by Geoff Meaden and followed extensive meetings with local residents. It covered the following topics: the economy, housing and community, transport, heritage and conservation, open spaces and play areas, the natural environment, culture and leisure, community safety and city governance. An updated version of the Vision entitled, *A Vision for Canterbury: towards 2030*, was produced in 2019 and included new chapters on poverty and homelessness.



The Canterbury Society

History of the Canterbury Society

The first record of a Canterbury Society comes from 1776, when its Annual Meeting was announced in the Kentish Post or Canterbury Newsletter for March of that year. The item was headed 'Canterbury Society' and read:

The Annual Meeting of Members of this Society will be held at the ROSE, in St George's in this City, on Tuesday the first day of April next, when a Dinner will be provided to be upon the Table exactly at One o'Clock, and when the Members are desired to pay their Quarteridge Money and all Arrears before Dinner, and to transact Business, and when any healthy Person, not above the Age of Forty Years, may become a Member of the said Society, on; payment of One Guinea Entrance.

Perhaps one day someone will research this earlier version of the society? At the time of writing this is all we know about what might simply have been a dining club.

More recently the Canterbury Society flourished from the 1960s to 1990s, when its work and its successes were documented in its history, *Caring for the City: the Canterbury Society's First Twenty Five Years 1961 to 1986*. However, sadly that Society closed in the 1990s and there was no civic society in the city until it was revived in 2008, stimulated by an article by Richard Scase in the local paper, the Kentish Gazette.

This *Short History of the Canterbury Society from 2008 to 2022* records the activities of the society over those years. It is drawn from the minutes of the Canterbury Society committee during that time. This is not a list of everything that was done, but rather of actions which the Society took and which seemed to lead to positive outcomes. Of course, achievements are always joint ventures, with other people or organisations entitled to share the glory. We cannot claim that we alone did all the good things listed in the following pages. In some we played a major role, while in others we made a minor contribution, but for all the initiatives listed we would like to take some of the credit and feel some pride.

Throughout these fourteen years the Society organised regular public talks, sent out monthly

Newsletters, ran a website and Facebook page, responded to consultations, commented on planning applications, planted trees and flowers, organised trips to historic houses, cleared litter, supported other initiatives in the city, and had the successes listed below.

Members of the Canterbury Society committee

In 2019 the committee consisted of the following:

- > **Ptolemy Dean**, President
- > **James Allen**, Treasurer
- > **Keith Bothwell**, planning and the environment
- > **Clive Bowley**, planning and conservation, shop fronts guide
- > **Gary Healey**, Heritage Open Days (with Yasmin Ghandour), administration
- > **Geoff Meaden**, minutes secretary, the Vision and the environment
- > **Neasa MacErlean**, media and communications, bus services, newsletter
- > **Jan Pahl**, Chair, public engagement, newsletter, organiser of meetings and events
- > **Beverley Paton**, litter picking, tree and flower planting, Facebook page
- > **Hubert Pragnell**, planning and conservation, lead on visits
- > **Richard Scase**, events organiser, transport, newsletter and social media
- > **Martin Vye**, transport, poverty, housing and homelessness
- > **John Walker**, deputy chair, Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities, projects and fundraising
- > **John Yard**, Design Awards, shop fronts guide and Canterbury Climate Action Partnership

Other members of the committee in the years between 2009 to 2019 included:

- > Nick Blake, John Francis, Craig Griffin, Val Harris, Diana Holbrook, Tim Less, Gillian Northcott, Ema Rush, Judy Seymour-Ure, Julia Twigg, Virginia Webb, Fred Whitemore.

The constitution and aims of the Canterbury Society

The Constitution was drawn up in 2010. It set out the broad aim of the Canterbury Society as working for the public benefit of an area comprising the City of Canterbury and surrounding villages, which area is referred to as the 'Area of Benefit'. The Society is led by volunteers and was registered with the Charity Commissioners in 2015, number 1160588.

The Constitution describes the Society as a community-based organisation, which brings together a diverse group of local citizens, with a shared sense of civic pride and community spirit, who volunteer their time to carry out activities and campaigns that aim to improve the quality of life in the city. The Canterbury Society is concerned with the following issues:

- > Encouraging civic pride
- > The built environment/architecture
- > Historic heritage and tourism
- > Transport, including road, rail and cycling
- > Natural environment and sustainability
- > Leisure facilities
- > Arts and culture
- > The local economy
- > A fully inclusive community
- > Other issues which may be added in the future

Working in partnership

Over the years the Canterbury Society has been pleased to be able to work in partnership with many other organisations. The sharing of knowledge, skills and enthusiasm added greatly to what could be achieved. It is impossible to list them all, but these are some of the organisations with which we worked over the ten years covered in this review.

- > Association of Canterbury Residents' Associations
- > Business Improvement District
- > Campaign for Democracy in the Canterbury District
- > Canterbury Alliance for Sustainable Transport.
- > Canterbury Archaeological Trust
- > Canterbury Cathedral
- > Canterbury Christ Church University
- > Canterbury City Council
- > Canterbury Climate Action Partnership
- > Friends of Kingsmead Field
- > Friends of the Riverside
- > Kent County Council
- > Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership
- > Sustainable Development Goals Forum
- > University of Kent
- > Westgate Hall Trust

We thank these and other organisations with whom we have worked to enhance Canterbury.



Activities of the Canterbury Society 2008-2019

2009

With others we protested about the plans to demolish 24 Roper Road, a handsome Victorian house. The building was saved and has now been renovated.

Creation and distribution of a Canterbury Society postcard giving information on who to phone about litter and graffiti in the city: this was widely distributed.

We took the initiative in planting along the derelict Franciscan Path, with plants provided by the City Council. We had to re-plant again in 2012, and this path was later looked after by John Ellaby and then by Bev Paton and is much enjoyed by many passers-by.

Old Oast House, Hollow Lane. We objected to the plans to demolish this historic building and replace it with housing. The plans were rejected, went to appeal and were again rejected. The Oast House is still there.

Planting in the neglected Butterfly Garden in Pound Lane, supported by funds from the John Hayes Award, which were given to the late Kenneth Pinnock. He was chair of the Canterbury Society for many years and his family passed the award onto the Society. We continue to care for this garden, with the lead now taken by Geraldine Fish and Bev Paton.



One of many Canterbury Society litter picks.

2010

We were involved in the planning for the refurbishment of the Westgate Gardens, which led to the successful bid for a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

2010 and all other years. Litter picks. We started in 2010 with one at the University of Kent with the students, and have carried out litter picks every year and with many different residents' groups. Our annual river litter pick in the River Stour each July is supported by free beer donated by Shepherd Neame and by waders lent by the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership.

The Baptist Church, St Georges Place. Application to demolish. With the help of Julia Twigg, who was on the committee, and English Heritage, the council was persuaded to reject the application and instead the church carried out the rather nice improvements which are now there.

We supported the Westgate Hall Trust in working on their business plan for saving the Hall from demolition to make way for a car park. This was successful and the hall opened to the public in 2014 and is now the venue for many public events.

Expressed concerns about the plans for a water mill and museum in St Radigunds. These were rejected and the site remains a natural wild area and open to visitors.

Expressed support for the Canterbury Archaeological Trust campaign for keeping the Roman Museum open in the face of council proposals to shut it. The Museum is still open.

2011

The Canterbury Society was invited to send a representative to the Student Community Group and Fred Whitmore volunteered to do this. The committee developed into the Higher/Further Education Review, run by the city council, which produced a major report in 2016 after extensive consultation.

John Walker obtained grants for £750 and £125 which were used to plant trees, both in the Tannery Meadow and along the river by Sainsburys. Kingsmead School, St Peters' Methodist School and the Canterbury High School were involved in the planting.

Supported and took part in the photography project on 'A Year in the Life of Canterbury', organised by Nancy Banaigs of Kent Creative Arts. This eventually produced a book.

Objected to proposals by the University of Kent for a conference centre, hotel and student accommodation on Chaucer Fields. The proposals were subsequently withdrawn and the current Masterplan sites the conference centre/hotel next to Turing College.

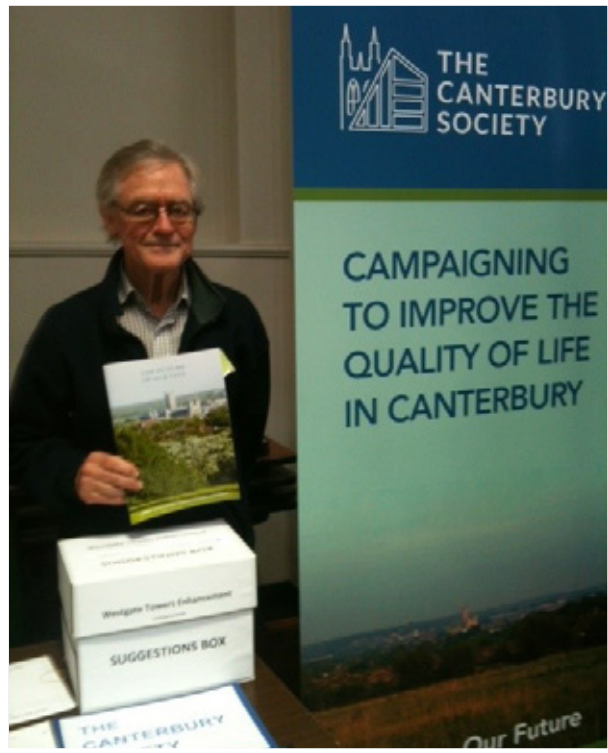
We took the lead in a project to commemorate the Siege of Canterbury, which took place in 1011. We obtained a grant of £600 to do this. The project involved convening a group which brought together people from the Council, the Cathedral, the University of Kent and other bodies to organise a range of activities. In 2012 we were awarded the Kentish Gazette Community Culture Award for this initiative.

We were involved with the City Centre Partnership in litter clearing and in Canterbury in Bloom activities. In 2012 the city entered for Britain in Bloom for the first time and was awarded a Silver Award in the Small Cities category of South East in Bloom. In 2017 Canterbury was awarded Gold in the RHS Britain in Bloom competition.

2012

Led by Geoff Meaden, we began work on a Vision for the Future of Canterbury by bringing in Glasshouse to organise a workshop with representatives of residents' groups. Developing the Vision was a major task for the Society over the year and led to the production of a widely-praised report in 2013.

We wrote to the Council about plans to build on car parks in the city, notably in Ivy Lane, Hawks Lane and St Johns Street. All these are still car parks.



Geoff Meaden and the Vision for Canterbury.

We planted trees along the path by St Radigund's car park with a plaque to note that this was in memory of those killed in the Viking Siege of 1011.

Wrote to Kent County Council about the need to fill in the missing section of the cycle route from Chartham to Canterbury. This was completed the following year.

The Canterbury Society supported the plan by Canterbury for Clean Air to commission a survey of traffic and pollution in Canterbury by Lyn Sloman. We organised the meeting at which this report was presented to city councillors and others.

We prepared a list of all residents' associations in the city with contact details for key people. This helped in the start of the Association of Canterbury Residents' Associations (ACRA).

2013

The Canterbury Society commented on plans for Tower House. Clive Bowley was involved with this and with many other planning applications. An earlier application was for a modernist extension and this was followed by plans for a garden room. We objected to these proposals and in the end the renovations were restricted to improvements inside the house. Tower House is now used for council and other meetings.

The Canterbury Society protested to the Council about plans to remove a large tree outside the Victoria Hotel. The tree is still there.

This year saw the setting up of the Campaign for Democracy in the Canterbury District (CDCD). We were involved in this from the start and organised a workshop on the topic of Localism. A successful campaign led to a change in the governance of the Canterbury City Council from the Executive to the Committee system.

Members were able to go on a coach trip to Downe House, the home of Charles Darwin. This was the first of a number of trips which in subsequent years took members to Eltham Palace and Greenwich, with expert commentaries by Hubert Pragnell.

Ideas were put forward on the landscaping of the re-development of the Westgate Towers area. The scheme which was eventually implemented included some of these ideas.

2014

John Walker took the lead in listing local buildings as 'Assets of Community Value'. Those included Kingsmead Field, the Westgate Hall, Beverley Meadows and the Environment Centre in Broad Oak Road, all of which now have greater protection from development.

Objected to proposals by Domino Pizza for the old Nat West Bank at the corner of Orchard Street and

St Dunstan's Street. The proposals were refused and this is now a popular café.

We expressed concern about the poor state of repair of the Eastbridge Hospital and over the years wrote three letters in support of their applications for funds. All these applications were successful and the repairs have now been completed.

The Canterbury Society Civic Champion Award scheme was launched, led by John Walker. In this first year it was awarded to Sian Pettman for her work for Kingsmead Fields.

Supported the proposal for a Business Improvement District (BID) for the city, led by Bob Jones. This was successful and we were invited to have two non-voting representatives on the BID board, which continues today.

The success of our Vision for the Future of Canterbury led us to bring out an up-dated Summary which was distributed widely and highlighted nationally by Civic Voice, the national body for civic societies. Griff Rhys Jones, President of Civic Voice, came to Canterbury to launch the Vision at a big public meeting.

This year we took on the organisation of the Heritage Open Days, supported by funds from the Canterbury City Council. Diana Holbrook, and more recently Gary Healey, have been responsible for successful Heritage Open Days in the following years, with the numbers enjoying these visits rising every year.

The Civic Voice Annual Conference was hosted by the Canterbury Society, and we were involved in organising events, arranging displays, leading walks and welcoming delegates to this major national gathering of civic societies.

We commented on plans for the Diocesan Payne Smith School and the scheme which went ahead reflected these comments.

We worked with the Friends of the Riverside to commission three seats to go into public parks in Greyfriars Garden and Solley's Orchard. The one in the Millers Field was short listed for a national Design Award by Civic Voice.



Lord Mayor of Canterbury and Lady Mayoress.

2015

We set up the Canterbury Society War Memorials Group which by the end of 2016 had surveyed most of the war memorials in the city and neighbouring villages. The results of the project were the basis for a display in the Westgate Hall.

The Canterbury Society took the lead in setting up the Historic Cathedral Cities Alliance (Now the Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns ACT). This is a nation-wide initiative bringing together civic societies concerned about balancing heritage and growth.

Canterbury Society Civic Champion Award was awarded to Imogen Morizet for her work in setting up the Westgate Hall Trust.

We organised Hustings for the elections to the Canterbury City Council. This involved inviting each political party to send a representative candidate and organising an event at which members of the public could question prospective councillors.

Worked with Canterbury in Bloom as a partner for the city's entry: the city was awarded Gold in the SE England in Bloom competition.

We were presented with an award by the Fair Trade Association for using Fair Trade products at all our meetings.

This year the City Council formally changed its system of governance from the Executive to the Committee system, following pressure from CDCD, the Canterbury Society and others.

We set up the Canterbury Society Design Awards for outstanding buildings in three categories: landscape and public realm, new building and restoration of an existing building. Initiated by John Walker, in the first year the Award scheme was organised by Nick Blake, and later by John Yard and Keith Bothwell.

We contributed extensively to the Consultation on the draft Local Plan and took part in the Public Enquiry on the Plan.



Hustings for the local elections.

2016

We organised the Canterbury Society Design Award Event at which awards were presented by Ptolemy Dean to four winners and a number of short-listed entries.

Worked as one of the partners with the BID on the city's entry to RHS Britain in Bloom: the city was awarded Gold in the national level competition, both in this year and in 2017.

City Council appointed a Heritage and Design Champion, which the Canterbury Society had been advocating for some time.

We commented critically on the plans for the renovation of the St Georges Street area. These plans were subsequently dropped. Later we supported a different scheme.



Jan Pahl on a litter pick in the River Stour.

2017

The Canterbury Society was invited to take part in the Litter Roundtable, which has subsequently led on many initiatives related to litter and graffiti. We continued to organise litter picks across the city, as well as our annual river litter pick.

We criticised proposals for garish signage on the new Metrobank in Rose Lane. The proposals for signage were toned down, though the bank went ahead.

The idea of a car free day was proposed by councillors and the Canterbury Society spoke in support at the Canterbury Area Member Panel, suggesting that this might be part of a broader Sustainable Transport initiative.

Concern about air pollution in the city resulted in a project led by Professor Stephen Peckham to measure pollution more accurately. The Canterbury Society took part in this project, which revealed higher than expected levels of pollution.

One source of pollution is the emissions from stationary cars waiting for level crossing gates to open. We designed a leaflet explaining the issue and handed it out to drivers waiting at level crossings in St Dunstan's Street and in Sturry.

As a member of the Friends of the Riverside, we were asked to speak at a council meeting in support of the plan to extend the riverside path across in

front of the Westgate. The plan was agreed and the path is now in place.

Canterbury Society Civic Champion Award was awarded to Rick Norman for his work for the community and for democracy in the district.

Members of the committee had meetings with Simon Wright, the CEO of Corinthian Land. He offered to make substantial funding available to support the setting up of a Sustainable Transport Forum, to consider problems following from the developments coming to the city.

We spoke in support of the Sustainable Transport Forum at the Joint Transportation Board, the Policy and Resources Committee and the full Council meeting. In October the Policy and Resources Committee agreed that the council would set up a Sustainable Transport Forum – though the Canterbury Society was not on the list of members!

We spoke at the Planning Committee about the draft plans for the new car park in Station Road West, in particular deploring the plan to cut down the trees and have a row of shops along the road. The council decided to send the plans back for re-drafting. The new plans did not have shops, nor were the trees to be cut down – but the plan went ahead.

The Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns, which the Canterbury Society set up in 2015, produced a report on the challenges of balancing heritage and growth in historic places across the country. This initial report was well-received by Historic England, which later gave the group £40,000 to carry out new research starting in 2019 on protecting heritage in historic cities.

We objected to the plans for the development of 14 Ivy Lane, and spoke at the Planning Committee. The application was rejected.



Protest march against air pollution.

2018

We started work on a new edition of the Canterbury Society Vision for the future of our City, led by Geoff Meaden. This involved meetings with residents' groups across the city and the completion of around 200 questionnaires by local people.

We continued to look after the Butterfly Garden in Pound Lane, with new planting being done by Beverley Paton and Geraldine Fish. Funds given to the Canterbury Society by the Canterbury Community in Bloom group enabled us to pay for a wealth of new plants.

We organised the refurbishment of the underpass by the St Dunstan's level crossing. The underpass was decorated with original art works by Henry Cockburn and redecorated, with support coming from crowdfunding and with finance from Network Rail.

We organised three litter picks, led by Bev Paton. The spring litter pick took place around Parham Road and involved students living in that area. The summer litter pick took place in and along the River Stour and was done in partnership with the Friends of Kingsmead Field. The autumn litter pick took place around Northgate and St Radigunds and involved students from the Kings School as well as the Friends of Kingsmead Field.

The Canterbury Society Civic Champion Award was awarded to Bob Jones for his work for the community and for setting up the Canterbury Business Improvement District.

We agreed to host the first meeting about the UN Sustainable Development Goals and this led to the setting up of the Sustainable Development Goals Forum, led by Carl Wright and Rick Norman. The Canterbury Society took the lead in a project on Poverty in Canterbury, led by Martin Vye and Jan Pahl.

After a talk by Heather Newton on the conservation work going on at the Cathedral, she offered to show members of the Canterbury Society round and Hubert Pragnell organised two very successful visits for members.

In collaboration with the University of Kent, we organised a Distinguished Speaker lecture at which Griff Rhys-Jones spoke. This was planned as the first event in an on-going collaboration between the Society and the University's Public Engagement initiative.

A report on Historic Buildings at Risk in Canterbury was prepared by Hubert Pragnell and presented to the City Council. This focused on six building at particular risk. Since then three of these have been renovated but three continue to cause anxiety: they are the Falstaff Hotel, Holland and Barrett and the Poor Priests Hospital.

We took part in several projects related to air pollution, including monitoring air quality with Professor Stephen Peckham, asking drivers to turn off their engines when stationary at level crossings and organising a Clean Air Pilgrimage around the city on 29th December.



Art works by Henry Cockburn in the St Dunstan's underpass.

The Canterbury Society Design Awards, organised by John Yard, were presented in January, with awards in five categories: new buildings, renovated buildings, new homes, open spaces and shop fronts and signage.

The Society took the lead in setting up the Canterbury Alliance for Sustainable Transport (CAST) with members drawn from residents' groups and interested individuals from across the city. This group is chaired by Martin Vye.

A Vision for Canterbury: towards 2030 was launched at an event in March organised by Geoff Meaden. The report was also presented to various meetings and a longer version prepared to go up on the website. Funding for the costs of production was contributed by the University of Kent.

The proposal in the Vision for an Eco-Forum led to the setting up of the Canterbury Climate Action Partnership, initiated by John Yard. This group was involved in discussions with the City Council which led to a debate at the full Council Meeting and the declaration of a Climate Emergency in Canterbury.

We spoke against the application from the takeaway in St Dunstan's Street to extend licensing hours till 3.00 am. The application was rejected.

We were asked by the City Council Conservation team take part in producing Guidelines for Shop Fronts in the city, led by Clive Bowley.

The Heritage Open Days were organised by Gary Healey, with 23 buildings open to the public this year and funding coming from the City Council and the Canterbury Auction Galleries. There was also a 'Thank you' event for those who opened their buildings.

Litter cleans were organised by Bev Paton around the World Heritage Site and in various other areas and the annual river litter pick took place in the St Radigund's area.

Led by the Canterbury Society, the Alliance for Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns was awarded a grant of £40,000 to carry out research on '*Balancing Heritage and Growth in Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns*'. The project began in January 2020 and produced a report in 2022.



One of 15 new Blue Plaques accross the city.

A second collaboration between the Society and the University of Kent involved John Walker inviting Sir Terry Farrell, distinguished architect, to give a very well-attended public lecture.

Members of the Society and friends planted 1500 daffodils along the river by the St Radigund's car park. We hope that these will flower for as long as the daffodils along the city wall, planted by the then Canterbury Society in the 1960s.

We organised an event in Cathedral Lodge for the launch of work on the Management Plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Site. An enthusiastic audience welcomed the initiative but at the time of writing are still awaiting the promised Management Plan.

The Canterbury Society began work on a project to put up new Blue Plaques commemorating distinguished residents of the city. In total 15 new plaques were put in place and a leaflet was produced with information about each one.

Activities of the Canterbury Society 2019 to 2022 *by Richard Scase*

In the summer of 2019 Richard Scase became chair of the Society following Jan Pahl's eleven-year period of leadership. He took over the task committed to pursuing the values of the Society that had been established since 2008. It was a challenging time to take over as Covid Lockdown was in place and this seriously inhibited what the Society could do, in terms of organising meetings and other face-to face events valued by the Society's membership. Even so, much was done between 2019 and 2023.

The Society's Newsletter was re-vamped as a monthly **Canterbury News** edited by Neasa MacErlean. She broadened its general appeal by updating local residents of what they could do/ not do under Covid constraints. The popularity of **Canterbury News** had a knock-on effect by increasing the membership of the Society by more than 50 per cent. It became one of the mainstays of the Society, providing local news and information as well as images that capture the diversity and vibrancy of the city. It introduced regular items on topics such as Canterbury's architecture (Clive Bowley), Behind the News (Stewart Ross), and Canterbury Walks. These were enhanced by the photography of Ray Newsom.

The Society's website was re-launched, using state of the art digital technologies. It was updated on a weekly basis, managed and produced by Ed Ludlow, informing members of forthcoming events as well as of local issues, such as housing developments, council policies, transport plans and so on.

Membership recruitment and subscriptions were digitalised. Annual payments became automatically renewable, saving the need for cash collections. Kim Parker, the newly-recruited treasurer of the Society, oversaw this innovation.

The Society's Constitution was updated and approved by the Charities Commission, together with its Governance practices. Formalised procedures were put in place for the management of the Society, the election of committee members and the arrangement of meetings and AGMs.

During this time, the Society's masthead and logo were re-designed. With such a broad range of community activities, it was decided to adopt a simple three-word description, 'Protecting the past, improving the present and shaping the future', which is what the Society does and has always done. The logo became: **Past - Present - Future.**

Between 2020-23, the committee added new members: Hilary Brian (events and heritage), David Clark (finance and funding), Carole Wells (marketing and membership), Sharon Higgenbottom (photography) and Mehri Holliday (environment and culture). During the same period, the committee lost Geoff Meaden, John Yard, Gary Healey and Neasa MacErlean. The Society will always be very grateful for their contributions.

As the activities of the Society expanded, the committee decided to set-up a number of sub-committees or Working Groups, each responsible for particular areas of the work of the Society. The Working Groups were Council Matters; Planning Architecture and Streetscape; Greening and Biodiversity; Heritage and Conservation; Finance and Funding; and Marketing and Membership. A further purpose of these groups was to co-opt non-committee members of the society so they could be more involved.

On a year-by-year basis, some of the Society's many activities were as follows.

2019/20

Awarded Civic Champion Awards to Jan Pahl, retiring Chair of the Society, and Paula Spencer, Manager of the Thanington Resource Centre.

Worked with Canterbury City Council in developing both its Corporate and Local Plans.

Worked with local planning officers on proposals to regenerate St George's Place Canterbury and the preparation of an updated guide for shopfront designs.

Led by Keith Bothwell, we were involved in setting up regular Repair Shops, in partnership with local community groups.



Repair shop in action.

Partnered with the Canterbury Alliance for Sustainable Transport, led by Martin Vye.

Organised a photographic competition on meadows and wildlife in the district.

Were involved in setting up a Pollinator Action Plan to protect wildlife and to lobby the council on meadow mowing.

As the lead on Greening and Biodiversity, Bev Paton was responsible for setting up 'Canterbury Trees'- a tree planting programme in collaboration with other environment groups. She also led on maintaining the Butterfly Garden in Pound Lane and the Franciscan Way, as well as obtaining funding and renovating the Three Cities Garden in the centre of Canterbury.

In November 2019 a 10th Anniversary Event of the relaunched Canterbury Society was held at the Westgate Hall at which more than 20 civic and community organisations attended and more than 150 guests. Colin Carmichael, chief executive of Canterbury City Council gave a talk on future plans for the city.



Planting in the Franciscan Way.

2021/22

Continuing dialogue and meetings with Canterbury City Council over the preparation of the Local Plan, particularly with reference to housing projections and transport proposals.

Representations to Kent County Council over the experimental trial with e-scooters and urging that this be abandoned due to an accident affecting a Canterbury Society member.

Presentation of the Society's Civic Champion Award to Paul Bennett of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust in 2021 and to Angela Gardiner of the Canterbury Food Bank in 2022.

Monthly reviews of planning applications to CCC with subsequent representations.

Discussions with Canterbury City Council and suggestions for the future of the City's market stalls and review of the city's conservation area.

The Society's Working Group on Greening and Biodiversity organised litter picks and participated in proposals to protect the heritage and future of Old Park and Chequers Wood, as well as taking part in such initiatives as Plastic Free Canterbury, the Canterbury and District Biodiversity Network, and Canterbury Wild Walls Project.

Raising awareness and fund raising for the successful completion of the Society's Blue Plaques programme.

Organising the Launch of the consultation on the Management Plan for the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Participation in the Heritage Open Days, organised by the National Trust.

Jan Pahl and John Walker led a national project funded by Historic England on 'Balancing Heritage and Growth in Historic Cities and Towns'. This led to the publication of a report in 2022, entitled, 'Towards a Better Balance between Heritage and Growth'.

Participating in the setting-up of the Canterbury Forum, a citizen-based assembly for discussion with City Council councillors and officers on policy matters.

Co-opted Board members of BID (Business Improvement District)

Work on Poverty in the Canterbury District was carried out with the Sustainable Development Goals Forum and the Soroptomists and led to the publication of a report on 'Poverty in Canterbury District Today' by Jan Pahl and Martin Vye.

Organised presentations and workshops to the Canterbury Climate Action Partnership, in Climate Change Week.

The Society's Annual Heritage Lecture, Annual Green Lecture and Annual Civic Lecture were held in collaboration with the University of Kent, organised by John Walker.

Hosted the launch of 'Canterbury Take Care', a report prepared by Save Britain's Heritage with contributions by members of the Canterbury Society.

The 2022 Design Awards, organised by the Society, were held at the Cathedral Lodge with more than 200 attendees, representing planners, architects, property developers and various professional and business bodies.

In January 2023 Richard Scase stepped down as Chair of the Society, and Hilary Brian became the new Chair in the spring of 2023. The Canterbury Society continues to flourish and to contribute to the quality of life in the city, led by a strong committee and supported by many hundreds of members. However, the story of the years from 2023 onwards must be for others to tell.



Talk on history by Paul Bennett.

Publications and Contacts

Kent Creative Arts (2012) *A Year in the Life of Canterbury: a Photographic Record*.

Canterbury Society (2013) *A Vision for the Future of Canterbury*, edited by Geoff Meaden.

Canterbury Society (2019) *A Vision for the Future of Canterbury: towards 2030*, edited by Geoff Meaden

Alliance of Historic Cathedral Cities and Towns (2022) *Towards a Better Balance between Heritage and Growth*, Allies and Morrison.

Pahl, J. and Vye, M, (2023) *Poverty in Canterbury Today*, Canterbury Society.

www.canterburysociety.org.uk

Designed and printed by Klaudyna Walkowicz:
KlaudynaUK@gmail.com



TO GET A COPY VISIT:
WWW.CANTERBURYSOCIETY.ORG.UK

