

Canterbury
Cathedral



Bringing Heritage to Light

A Review of Canterbury Cathedral's
Memorials and Monuments

April 2025



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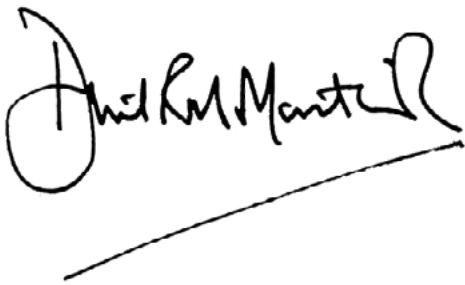


Foreword by the Dean of Canterbury

In recent years we have become more conscious than ever of the way that the monuments and memorials in our Cathedral Church tell the stories of the powerful in our history and the victors in our wars.

We are more aware now that there are other stories; and that Jesus characteristically spoke of release for the captives and freedom for the oppressed. The work presented in this review is just the beginning of identifying monuments in our heritage which need fresh interpretation – not to deny (for example) the bravery of those remembered, but to add to that side of the story the memory of those they fought against, whose cause may well have been the more just.

I commend this review and the ongoing work that will follow it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Monteith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Monteith, Dean of Canterbury

Introduction

In light of the heightened awareness of the past injustices of slavery, and cultural and racial oppression, their ongoing impacts and, in some instances, the present perpetuation of them, Canterbury Cathedral has conducted a review of its monuments and memorials.

This review has been undertaken on behalf of the Dean and Chapter, and led by our former Canon Librarian, Revd. Dr. Tim Naish.

The 19th century was the time of the greatest increase in the erection of memorials at Canterbury Cathedral; there are fewer from earlier times when the slave trade was at its height. Therefore, our review has highlighted that questions around British colonialism and imperial expansion rather than slavery are most relevant to the Cathedral.

We have not identified any monument or memorial at the Cathedral that needs to be removed or covered due to its association with, or celebration of, a known enslaver or oppressor of others. There is though a need to acknowledge the ways in which our monuments as a whole, some more than others, commemorate or celebrate ways of life and thought that were unjust. This acknowledgment must be honest and frank, and with it comes the responsibility to use the Cathedral's memorials to express regret where necessary, and to interpret, inform and educate. Our monuments offer the opportunity to tell stories that enable reflection both on the past and on living justly today in ways that are faithful to Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd, in line with our vision for 'inspiring life in all its fullness.'

It is evident that the Church of England was a significant shaper and supporter of public policy and attitudes in past centuries (though it has always also contained rebels and prophets). Canterbury Cathedral inescapably reflects this past, and there is much in our shared history that we recognise as deplorable, and need to acknowledge as such.

This review began with a strong sense of the necessity of addressing these truths, but from a sober duty has arisen an awareness that we have an opportunity to inform and educate, using a wider understanding of history, including its mistakes, to work towards a better future for all. Although begun before they appeared, the review has subsequently taken note of and followed the Guidelines on Contested Heritage in Cathedrals and Churches issued by the Church Buildings Council and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England.

An ongoing process

The Cathedral remains open to further light being shed on its monuments and the people and events they commemorate. Additional action or interpretation is always a possibility in the light of new information.

We are challenged by the way that the current debate creates missional opportunity for creative partnerships. We recognise that emotions are rightly stirred by injustices past and present, and that practices of enslavement and colonisation were abhorrent, cannot be justified, and should be named as such, rather than celebrated. We are committed to continuing thoughtful and prayerful consideration of these matters in the light of the Christian gospel.

Identified monuments and memorials

The following objects have been identified by the review as giving cause for concern. In some cases, these concerns have been publicly raised by others in the media.

The Juxon Family Shield of Arms

*(William Juxon 1582-1663;
Archbishop of Canterbury 1660-1663)*

The shield of arms of the Juxon family features four “moors’ heads” and is carved on the 17th-century wooden doors of the Cathedral’s Christ Church Gate (Buttermarket side). The Juxon family arms incorporating the four heads survives at other sites across the country from about 1630 onwards.

Our friends at the University of Kent have carried out extensive research on the history of these arms: they are now certain that they predate Archbishop William Juxon (1582-1663; Archbishop of Canterbury 1660-1663), and are confident that on the balance of probabilities they reflect his extended family’s overseas trading interests, which persisted through the 17th century, especially in relation to sugar.



The exact characterisation (‘blazon’) in the grant of arms is: “Or, a cross Gules between four blackamoors’ heads affrontee, couped at the shoulders, proper, wreathed about the temples Gules.” Whilst no evidence has surfaced to date of William Juxon’s direct involvement with slaving, the image illustrates how through the 17th and 18th centuries many leading members of the Church, including Juxon’s family, were involved in a trade based on the practice of enslavement. We have encountered a diversity of response to the arms, from those who find them deeply offensive to those who are intrigued and interested that people of colour were depicted in England in the 17th century.

Whatever the detailed historical facts (which are probably not discoverable), the caricatured carved heads evoke emotive reactions from many contemporary viewers. In the course of our review, one former resident of the Cathedral Precincts - a person of colour - reported the sense of dissonance and tension created in him by regularly passing the arms. Whilst not everyone agrees, the view of the majority with whom we have engaged, including those of African heritage, is that the arms on the door should be left in place, and attention should be drawn to them through appropriate interpretation and regretful acknowledgement of the Church’s involvement in slavery.

We propose to offer such interpretation, recognising the potentially offensive nature of the heads, referencing the ongoing research (a colleague at the University of Kent is in the process of developing a website on the Juxon arms), acknowledging past injustices, and inviting thoughtful attention to the issues raised at the present time. The means of display will have to be decided: possibly through a QR code placed as near as possible to the gates, accessible when open or closed.

Grave slab to Nathaniel Herring (died 1716)

Herring is the only known slave-owner memorialised in the Cathedral, according to a search of the Legacies of British Slave-ownership database maintained by University College London. We must be open to any evidence, emerging from other sources, of memorials to others with identifiable direct links to slaveholding or the slave trade, but thus far we have discovered only this one.

Herring's grave slab is now in the relatively obscure 'Treasury Yard' in the open air on the north side of the Cathedral building, just beneath its external wall. The slab is cracked and in an area chained off from public access and currently used as a 'builders' yard'. The slab was within the church until the nave repaving of the 1990s. Herring's remains are presumably still under the nave floor.

At his death in 1716 aged 31, Herring owned 201 enslaved people on Jamaican estates. He was born in Jamaica. The reasons for his burial in the Cathedral are unclear; there is no known link between him and the later Thomas Herring, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1747 to 1757.

We recommend that this slab remains where it is in relative obscurity, but is openly acknowledged in interpretative material within the Cathedral (see later).

Statue to Richard Hooker on the West Front (1554–1600. Statue erected in Victorian era.)

Hooker was rector of Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, where he wrote much of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. He died there in 1600 and was buried in that church, where there is a memorial. He was born in Exeter, and there is a prominent statue of him by Exeter Cathedral. He is a highly significant figure in the history of Anglicanism (and of English prose style).

We have considered this Victorian statue as one press article drew attention to it and claimed that Hooker 'acted as the mentor for the Anglican clergy of the first English slaveholding colonies'. This claim could be taken to suggest that he had an official position in this capacity. Our review panel, which included the university historian behind the article, agreed that the influence of Hooker is of the general kind, as prominent thinkers and writers always create the climate for the thought and action of a society.

There is nothing in Hooker's writing to indicate specific support for, or encouragement of, slavery. That he was a friend and mentor to some who worked in the early colonies, and is likely implicitly or explicitly to have supported their practices, should be acknowledged.



Only if further evidence is discovered of a deep engagement in support of the slave trade do we see a need to take action in regard to this statue. Such a discovery would necessitate a major re-evaluation of one of the most significant figures of English history and literature of his period.

Statue to George Stanhope on the West Front

(1660-1728; Dean of Canterbury from 1704. Statue erected in Victorian era.)

Stanhope was Dean of Canterbury from 1704, and is buried in Lewisham. Criticism has been levelled at Stanhope because of his involvement in the Society of the Propagation of the Gospel (the predecessor of today's USPG) which through the 17th and 18th centuries was widely supportive of the practice of slavery, including the owning of a Barbadian slave plantation and the purchase of enslaved people who were exploited there. These are matters which today's USPG recognises as 'deeply shameful'.



Many senior churchmen – including archbishops and deans – were associated with the SPG; this serves as a good example of the manifold ways in which the Church of England – in the 18th century especially – not only tolerated but also frequently encouraged the practice of slavery.

We plan an interpretative display of some kind within the Cathedral and grounds which acknowledges this shameful past and illustrates and reflects upon relevant monuments, including this one, in such a way as to educate our visitors about the evils of racial injustice and modern-day slavery.

Isaac Bargrave and the Bargrave family

(1586-1643; Dean of Canterbury 1625-1643)

Isaac Bargrave is buried in Our Lady Martyrdom, where there is a memorial and painting. There is a statue of him on the West Front. Three of Isaac's brothers invested in the Virginia settlement in the early 17th century, and two of them moved there. The involvement of Kentish families with the Virginia settlement was widespread. There is no evidence for Isaac's active involvement in matters relating to the settlement or to enforced labour. If evidence is identified, we will re-evaluate.



The collection of artefacts of Isaac's nephew John Bargrave (1610-1680), a canon of the Cathedral, is held in the Archives. This includes some extremely rare pieces of native American jewellery which were given to John as a gift. The legitimacy of their provenance and of their ownership by the Cathedral has not been queried; some of the items were lent back for an exhibition in Jamestown, Virginia, in 2007.

John Bargrave collected modestly and never travelled to the Americas. The Bargraves need to feature in the interpretation mentioned above. This display must make clear the involvement of many churchmen through the 17th & 18th centuries in the slave trade and slaveholding, express the regret and repentance of the Church, and the need for ongoing commitment to justice and equality.

Memorial to Major Simon Willard (1604-1676)

On the south wall of the Western Crypt, a memorial to this 'Kentish soldier and early pioneer in the settlement of the British colony of New England' describes him also as 'Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces against the hostile Indian Tribes.' These 'Indian Tribes' were peoples settled in the North American continent - who today might be referred to by descriptors as 'indigenous', 'Native American', or 'American Indian', or by specific Indian Nations names - who were defending their territories against unprovoked and often cruel aggression, and this needs to be acknowledged in relation to Willard's record. As this monument is in a distinct location well away from others in the Nave, at present we propose separate interpretation, alongside the memorial in the Crypt.



19th-century Memorials of Empire

Many Nave monuments memorialise soldiers and others killed during the expansion of empire.

For example, there are three regimental memorials commemorating the Sutlej Campaign of 1845-6 during the Anglo-Sikh wars:

- **Colours of the 31st Huntingdonshire Regiment, and memorial to men of the regiment** (south nave aisle). Monument by Edward Richardson (1812-1869).
- **Memorial to 16th Queen's Lancers 1845** (south nave aisle). Monument by Edward Richardson.
- **50th Queen's Own Regiment** (north nave aisle). Monument by George Nelson (1810-1888); model for it exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851.



Another example is the **memorial to Lt. Col. Frederick Mackeson** in the north nave aisle. Mackeson was a pupil at the King's School, Canterbury; he died in 1853. The inscription on the memorial refers to his military career (including participation in the Sutlej Campaign) and his death by a wound inflicted by a 'Mahometan fanatic'. The word 'Mahometan' is itself an archaic name formerly in Western usage but never used among Muslims for the Muslim religion, and is a term that some today consider offensive.

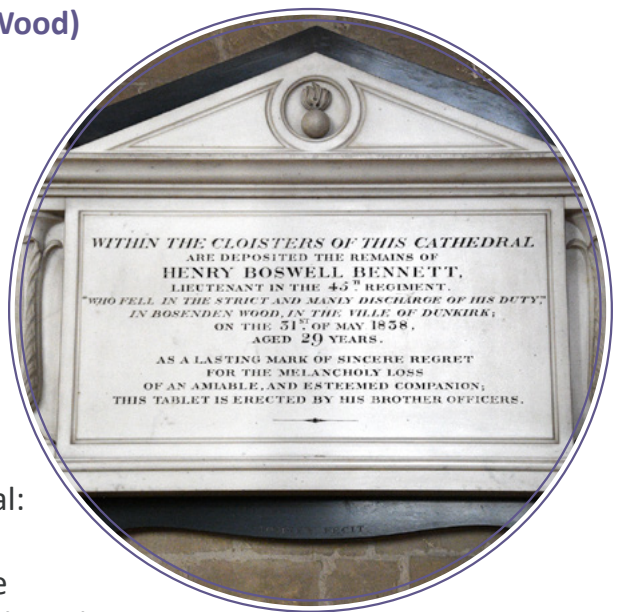
Monument by John Graham Lough (1798-1876). Figures on the memorial include a possible depiction of Ata Mahomed, chief officer at Peshwar, who was wounded trying to save Mackeson. There are many further examples of other memorials to those engaged in the enlargement and defence of the British Empire. All of these ‘tell the story’, as it were, from one side only: that of the colonisers.

We intend to move the **Colours of the 31st Hunts** to St Michael’s Chapel where all other Colours are kept. We will also create in one of the nave aisles interpretative material acknowledging the iniquities of empire without detracting from the courage of those who gave their lives for causes we now recognise as often deeply oppressive. This display must take the opportunity to tell stories from the other side – for example how ‘fanatics’ arguably had just cause for resisting political, cultural and religious oppression. It should invite and encourage reflection on the complexities of our history, and provide space for all to repent of past misdeeds and give thanks for human courage.

Memorial to Lt H B Bennett (The Battle of Bossenden Wood)

(Memorial in the nave north aisle by Thomas Longley (fl 1802-1845), master mason of the Cathedral)

Bennett, a lieutenant of the 45th Regiment, was killed in the Battle of Bossenden Wood, near Dunkirk, Kent, in 1838, and was buried at the Cathedral. The ‘battle’ (considered by some the last battle on English soil) was against an uprising of farm workers led by John Thom who styled himself Sir William Courtney. Eight of the farm workers were killed and others wounded.



The Cathedral has received an objection to the memorial: while Bennett was buried with full military honours, the farm workers were buried in unmarked graves in the churchyard of St Michael’s Hernhill, with only a modern board recording their names. The signatories are requesting a re-evaluation of the memorialisation in both locations.

We will work together with the people of Hernhill and others to display, alongside this memorial, material telling the story of this piece of local history and recording the names of all the deceased, drawing attention to the issues of justice which are raised throughout the Cathedral by memorialisation.

An external ‘Battle of Bossenden Wood Memorial Project’ is already underway (see <https://whitstableviews.com>).

St Michael's Chapel or 'The Buffs' Chapel

The role of this chapel, where multiple military Colours are kept, raises the question of the long and complex history of the relationship between the Church and our Armed Forces. Although not part of the initial focus of this review, the matter was highlighted by some of those with whom we have subsequently consulted.

There is no question of removing these Colours - which belong to the State - but Christian attitudes to military force and to war have always been diverse, and we are considering whether to provide interpretation drawing attention to this.



Further individual memorials

As part of this review, we have also identified a further three memorials for consideration for different reasons:

Dean Frederic Farrar (1831-1903; Dean of Canterbury 1895-1903). Farrar had also been Archdeacon of Westminster and Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. He was buried at Canterbury Cathedral in the cloister garth where there is a gravestone; there is a memorial in the south aisle of the Nave, and the west window of the Chapter House is dedicated to him. Farrar was a respected preacher and prolific writer. *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* implies questions about his sexual behaviour. However there is at present no substantial evidence to cast doubt upon his memorialisation, or to require action or interpretation.

Dean George Bell (1883-1958; Dean of Canterbury 1924-1929). Bishop Bell was Dean between 1924 and 1929 and during that time founded The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral. The Friends commissioned a statue to Bell but its production was halted when a posthumous abuse accusation against him was made public in 2013.

As acknowledged by former Archbishop Justin Welby in his personal statement on Bishop George Bell, published in November 2021, 'the posthumous allegations made against Bishop George Bell were taken seriously and investigated fully. I do not apologise for that, but as I have said before, we did not manage our response to the original allegation with the consistency, clarity or accountability that meets the high standards rightly demanded of us. I recognised the hurt that has been done as a consequence, and I have apologised unreservedly for the mistakes made in this process. What I say today that is new and should have been said sooner is this: I do not consider there to be a 'significant cloud' over Bishop George Bell's name.'

There are no plans to install the statue of Bell until the current extensive restoration work to the Cathedral's West End and North West Tower – the site of the empty statue niches – is complete, most likely in 2026. The Bell statue itself is unfinished, with work paused until installation is possible.

Should further accusations or new evidence regarding Bell come to light, the Cathedral would carefully re-assess these plans.

Lettering by Eric Gill (1882-1940). In light of his known sexual abuse of his daughters, there have been debates about the display of the work of the sculptor Eric Gill (e.g. his Stations of the Cross at Westminster Cathedral).

Gill carved the lettering on the memorial to Col. Edgar Ravenhill in the north nave aisle at Canterbury Cathedral and possibly the lettering on the tombstones of Frederick Temple and Frederic Farrar in the Cloister, and on the memorial to Temple in the Corona.

As this carved lettering is not a celebration or endorsement of Gill and is not major or substantial work, and its removal would seem to penalise those memorialised, we do not propose its removal.

Recommendations

As indicated above, the Cathedral finds nothing within its collection of memorials and monuments which is so egregiously glorifying individuals, entities or events relating to gross injustice that it should be removed or covered over. Nonetheless there is much that relates in diverse circumstances to practices, involvements and ways of being which it is quite wrong to celebrate. The Cathedral, as a result of this review and in light of its new Vision and Strategic Plan, is committed to drawing attention to past wrongs, making clear that many were victims of actions commemorated within or around it, and telling those victims' stories. This will involve interpretation in words and images; we shall begin work promptly on the words and images to be used in this interpretation, and on discussing the most appropriate and engaging ways of making it available in the digital age. As well as on-site display, this may include the use of our audio-visual media guides, our website, QR codes linking to other sources of information, and so on.

Indicative illustrations of some of the approaches that may be considered include:

- Creating a display space in or adjacent to the Cathedral where these matters can be interpreted in greater detail than (in most cases) is possible alongside particular monuments themselves.
- Among the tours and talks offered by our volunteer guides, developing 'alternative' tour options, looking at different kinds of things from the usual, telling 'counter-stories'.
- Offering one-off (or a series of) educational events or seminars, looking at the story/ies of one or more of our memorials, with an historical/descriptive introduction, moving on to a debate both of the historical material from an ethical/theological viewpoint, and of the matters it raises for contemporary society.
- Drawing more attention to the Huguenot Chapel in the Crypt; the Cathedral has for centuries provided a space for French-speaking Protestants (initially those fleeing from religious persecution) to worship in their own language. This currently happens each week in this Chapel.
- Drawing more attention, and more creatively, to the Chapel of Saints and Martyrs of our Time, at the east end of the Cathedral, and the men and women celebrated there, from a wide variety of geographical, cultural and racial backgrounds. As with the Huguenot Chapel, the diverse stories of these people in their contexts provide rich opportunity for engagement with contemporary matters of justice and human rights.

Advisors and Consultants

Locally, we have engaged with the CIO *Ethnic Minorities in Canterbury*, and are grateful to the following for giving time to visit the Cathedral, see some of our monuments and memorials, and discuss them with us:

Agyapal (Paul) Singh Babra

Devika De Zoysa

Charles Enoch

Keji Moses

Lillian Ndawula

Ndidi Nwahiri

Most recently, Paul and Keji have joined our planning group for this area of work, and given it substantial time and attention, for which we are especially grateful.

In addition, we consulted at an early stage of this process with the following external persons, and we are grateful for their willingness to give their time and insight:

Revd. Duncan Dormer, General Secretary, USPG

Rt. Revd. Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover

Revd. Dr. Ayla Lepine, at the time Ahmanson Fellow in Religion and Art, National Gallery; now, Associate Rector, St James' Piccadilly

Dr. Ben Marsh, Reader in American History, University of Kent

Rt. Revd. Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, Bishop of Willesden. Formerly BAME Mission and Ministry Enabler (Leicester Diocese), and Pastor to the French congregation at Canterbury Cathedral

Mitch Robertson, Programming & Collections Manager, Canterbury Museums & Galleries

Prof. Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice-Chancellor, Canterbury Christ Church University Church University

Get in touch

If you would like to comment on this report, or to submit relevant information about the Cathedral's memorials and monuments, please email enquiries@canterbury-cathedral.org





Canterbury Cathedral

Inspiring life in all its fullness

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