

THE 'ALMOST SILENT' CANTERBURY CAR

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This summary draws heavily from two earlier magazine articles by Michael Worthington-Williams: *The Canterbury Car* appeared in *Kent Life* (February 1967) and *Henry Dawson and The Canterbury* in *The Automobile* (October 2007).

A good overview of the Rhodaus Peugeot garage site, which is at present unused and awaiting redevelopment¹, can be gained from the top of the Dane John mound². The 'Canterbury car' was built here between 1903 and 1906.



view from Dane John mound looking south



former St Mary Bredin school

¹ future use of the site is still uncertain - present plans are for student accommodation (not limited to Canterbury Christ Church students) but these do not incorporate the St Mary Bredin school building

² images taken November 2014

The most prominent building, showing fancy Victorian bargeboards on each gable and standing on a mound, was built in June 1856 as the St Mary Bredin primary school³. The school closed in the 1940s. Buildings to the left include the Agricultural Hall, built in 1878⁴ with the then novelty of electric lighting. A new use for the hall was found in 1909⁵, with the opening of Canterbury Roller Skating Rink, described as 'one of the largest rinks outside London'. Despite the 14,000 sq ft floor of 'finest prime-rock maple', and some initial enthusiasm (fancy dress masked carnival, grand battle of confetti, etc)⁶, the venture was not a financial success and it closed in April 1911⁷.

The Canterbury Motor Car Company was formed in 1903, run by engineers Henry Dawson and Henri Pavillet⁸. Dawson had moved to Canterbury⁹ from Clapham, where he had run a car manufacturing business¹⁰. He lived on Whitstable Road in the property known as Red Gables¹¹. The new car production works were located at Rhodaus, then known as the Pavilion site. The company also had sites in Best Lane (now Multiyork) and in Stour Street. A 1904 advertising brochure describes four models, each called The Canterbury. The smallest (Type A) was a two seater, 8 HP, selling for 175 guineas, whilst the largest (type D) had four seats, 20 HP and cost 500 guineas. The sales figures are not known, but were apparently never high, and by 1906 production had ceased.

Multiyork store in Best Lane - note the lowered kerb at the shop entrance



Henry A Dawson in the 1940s

³ Kentish Gazette 3 June 1856

⁴ Whitstable Times 21 December 1878

⁵ Whitstable Times 9 October 1909

⁶ Folkstone Herald 25 December 1909; Kentish Gazette details have appeared in *The Canterbury Book of Days* by Paul Crampton (2011) pg 243

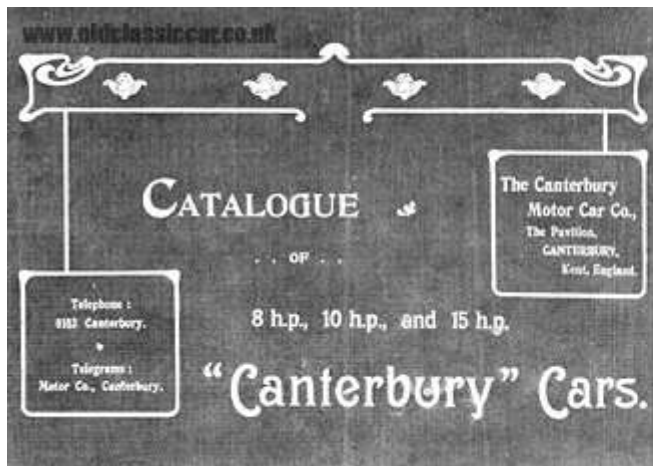
⁷ London Gazette 9 May 1911 pg 3576

⁸ records linking Henry Louis Pavillet to Canterbury have proved very hard to find - he was apparently born in Surrey in 1875; more exist for Henry Frederick de Pavillet, presumably his son, living at 66 Old Dover Road in 1930.

⁹ the reason for this move was supposedly to live close to Edward Dearle, Doctor of Music, Henry's grandfather - no local records for Dr Dearle have been found

¹⁰ see The Automobile October 2007 article by Michael Worthington-Williams *Henry Dawson and The Canterbury*

¹¹ census return 1911 Henry Alfred Dawson, single, age 36, lives with his parents Henry Thomas (69) and Jessie Dawson (65); all three were born in Nottinghamshire; father and son were both motor mechanics



15 h.p. "Canterbury" Car.



brochure 1904 with image of model D

Canterbury car model B



Pavilion works in 1904



Canterbury car model C

The business and its name survived, active in car sales and engineering services. The Roller Skating site was absorbed into the business in 1911. Henry Dawson applied his engineering skills in a variety of new areas, some more successful than others. In 1909 the new local cinema in St Peter's Street, The Canterbury Electric Theatre, made use of his Multicheck ticket machine which issued tickets and recorded audience numbers. A light aeroplane, built in 1910 and trialled on St Martin's Hill, flew, but refused to rise more than a foot off the ground¹². Later uses for the Pavilion site included the manufacturing of car seats for Rootes Ltd¹³ (destined for Sunbeam Rapier, Humber Sceptre and other models), and more recently the Peugeot garage. Henry married Jessie Nash at St Mildred's church in 1913, and died in 1953 in Tankerton.

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Henry Dawson in the plane that refused to fly

¹² Kentish Gazette 24 February 2000

¹³ for photograph of the Rootes works see *Images of Canterbury* (K M Group) 1997, pg 33

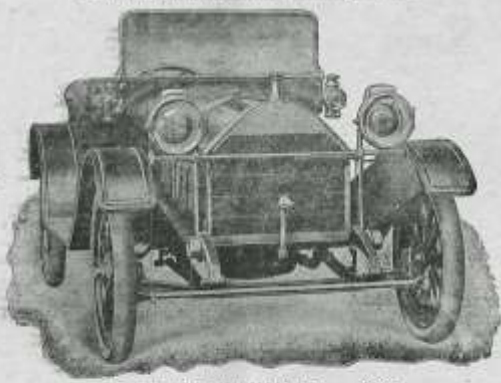
CANTERBURY MOTOR CAR COMPANY,
 HEAD OFFICE AND WORKS:
PAVILION GARAGE,
 CANTERBURY.

MOTOR ENGINEERS.
 Telephone: 101 CANTERBURY. Telegram: MOTOR CO.

BRANCH DEPÔT:
CITY GARAGE, BEST LANE,
 CANTERBURY.

Trial Run and Inspection cordially invited.

We can give immediate delivery of these Cars.



These Cars are fully guaranteed in every respect.

15-18 H.P. HUPMOBILE — £225.

Not the CHEAPEST but the BEST small Car on the Market.

13 h.p., 4-cylinder, sliding gear, 3 speeds and reverse, gear change, Bosch magneto, Zenith carburettor, Torpedo body, cape car hood and screen, 2 head lamps, 2 side and tail lamps, tools, etc.

Advertisement in Kentish Gazette and Canterbury Press 9 November 1912
 - by this time the business was retailing cars, not manufacturing them

The Motor.

ADVERTISING.

1903.

LIGHT.
 HANDY.
 SPEEDY.
 RELIABLE.



Almost a motorcar!

rival product in the motoring press (1903)

THE MOTOR.

THE 'R.S.' TRI-CAR.

RIGID. SPEEDY. POWERFUL.

3 h.p. ENGINE.

THE HILL-LEVELLER.

£45

£45

another rival product in the motoring press (1903)

The Motor.

Dunhill's Motorities.

EVERYTHING BUT THE MOTOR.

GOGGLES.

Over fifty different designs stocked. The best quality Goggles are fitted with hand-ground worked pebble-glasses, which will be found to have no injurious effect on the eyes, even if worn for long periods.

THE VIENNA.

Giving the greatest freedom of vision, very light and exceedingly comfortable.

648. Aluminium frame, edged chenille ... 12/6

649. Ditto, mounted in doosan (see illustration) ... 18/6

THE LATEST NOVELTY.

654. Same pattern as No. 649, but by an ingenious device the glass may be changed, thus enabling a clear, coloured or smoked glass to be inserted at will ... 30/6

THE BEXHILL.

Giving a true sideways vision.

655. In leather, with best glasses ... 12/6

656. In grey silk ... 10/6

With aluminium framework ... 10/6

WITH SILK MASK.

With best pebble glasses.

643. Medium size lenses ... 5/6

645. Larger ... 7/6

With moulded glasses.

652. Large size glasses ... 4/6

656. Medium ... 3/6

657. Small ... 2/6

accessories advertised in the motoring press (1903)