

# Cross an evocative symbol of our city and its rich past

## Way We Were



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CANTERBURY city has lent its name to a wide range of unrelated objects – Canterbury bells, The Canterbury Tales, Canterbury pace (and hence to canter), Canterbury hoe (hoe with angled slim prongs), and several pieces of antique cabinet furniture supposedly favoured by one Archbishop or another (including a sheet music stand and a supper tray). Yet another object derived from the city's name is the Canterbury Cross.

The Canterbury Cross has a square at its centre and distinctive curved arms that together form the partial outline of a circle. It gets its Canterbury name from a Saxon brooch of this shape which was dug up in 1867 in St George's Street, close to what is now just St George's tower. Dated to around 850 AD, the original brooch is about 2½ inches in diameter made of bronze with silver panels (more strictly niello, a fusion of silver, copper and lead). It is held in the Heritage Museum in Stour Street. Look out for the triquetra



**ORIGINAL:** The cross brooch (three cornered knot) pattern symbolising the Trinity which is cut into each arm; also the wavy vine leaf pattern around each panel.

So where can we look in the city for reproductions of this special Canterbury shape? We can start in the city streets, where it has been adopted from time to time for city bollards and railings. We can also look in the cathedral, on the nave wall just inside the South West entrance door. Here we can see the shape in bronze set in stone, and learn that in June 1935 copies were sent to 92 Anglican cathedrals throughout the world – 20 to Australia, 15 to Canada, 11 to South Africa, 6 to New Zealand, down to two in USA and one in The Gambia. Another example can be seen on top of the obelisk

and memorial to the 41 Kentish protestant martyrs burnt here 1555 to 1558. The memorial was erected in 1899 in Martyrs' Field Road, Wincheap. The choice of a Canterbury Cross did not please everyone – one writer to the local press pointed out that use of a cross, seen by many 16th century protestants as an idol, 'is the most glaring insult to the memory of the martyrs'. Other uses are less visible – when in 1902 Archbishop Temple was buried in the cathedral garth, his coffin lid bore a simple depiction in oak of the Canterbury Cross.

Yet another example of the Canterbury Cross can be found on the gravestone at St Martin's of a local surgeon, Frank Wachter. Frank formed part of family that provided the city with successful doctors and surgeons over three generations. He served as medical officer of health for 50 years, and for this was made a freeman of the city.

### Fountain

A memorial in his honour stands in Dane John Gardens, in the form of a drinking fountain (sadly no longer functioning). Frank's link to the original Canterbury Cross was personal. His brother-in-law, the Mercery Lane jeweller William Trinnell, had purchased the original Saxon brooch and left it in his will to Frank's son, Dr Harold Wachter. The latter, in turn, bequeathed it to the Beane Museum on his death in 1949. His son David and Harold's wife presented it to the museum in 1950. So we should thank the Wachter family – without them our museum would lack its original Canterbury Cross.

■ To see the original brooch, ask



**MEMORIAL:** The grave of Frank Wachter



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■ Find more tales from Canterbury's past online at

[canterburytimes.co.uk/nostalgia](http://canterburytimes.co.uk/nostalgia)



**MEMORIAL:** The grave of Frank Wacher



**PLAQUE:** In the Cathedral nave

**ON THE STREET:** Bollard at Burgate has Canterbury cross



**MONUMENT:** Martyrs' Field