

Canterbury is an ancient city, much of whose medieval heart was lost to bombing in the Second World War. Enough of its history survives, however, to attract thousands of visitors in a normal year. There are Roman sites and the remnants of ancient churches to explore, as well as stretches of the city wall to traverse, but the cathedral is, of course, the principal attraction. Many visitors are, in fact, pilgrims rather than tourists. They seek especially the spot where Archbishop Thomas Becket was martyred in 1170 and where his shrine stood, beyond the high altar, from 1220 until destroyed by Henry VIII.

For Dickensians, Canterbury is where David Copperfield went to school and we can speculate about which house is the Wickfields', where David lived while a pupil at Dr Strong's, or indeed try to identify the school itself. It is merely speculation, however. The one certainty, apart from the cathedral, is the church where Mrs Markleham tells us Dr Strong and her daughter Annie were married - St Alphege (Saint Alphage to The Old Soldier). No longer a church, the building is clearly identifiable in a street close to the cathedral.

John Ingram, Branch Secretary, 2021