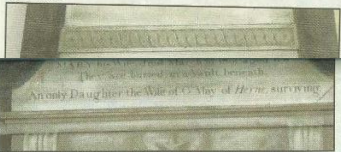


We should remember the work of city's thermometer man Six



BIRTHPLACE: The inventor was born near the current site of Barrett's showrooms



MEMORIAL: James Six was buried in a vault in the Holy Cross



PLACE OF REST: The Holy Cross Church, now known as the Guildhall

IF YOU have a greenhouse, and are worried about the effect this week's cold spell may have on your plants, say a thank you to the Canterbury-born James Six.

James was born not far from Barrett's showrooms near Westgate in 1730. His parents, James and Esther Six, were of French-speaking Protestant descent, known as Walloons, but were also active members of the Holy Cross church (now our Guildhall).

When demand for the products of their family silk weaving business fell off, James turned his interest to science. Despite no formal training, he took to the study of meteorology and astronomy.

Others before him had looked into ways of measuring maxima or minima of temperature, but, in 1780, James succeeded in producing a single simple instrument which could reliably record both.

Way we were

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A description appeared in the Royal Society journal that year, and quickly attracted international interest. James was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1792.

To this day, modern versions of the same apparatus are widely used in horticulture, climatology, houses and greenhouses.

You may well have one in your own greenhouse.

James' scientific interests were not restricted to thermometers - in 1781 he reported the comet he'd discovered "on the tip of the left hinder pair of the Little Bear".

This was confirmed by observers in China and across Europe.

James was a major benefactor of Holy Cross and funded purchase of its new organ. He also introduced Sunday Schools to Holy Cross when these were a novelty.

His biographer summed him up as "a competent yet modest and unassuming man of great integrity, and a devout Christian".

James died in 1793 and is buried with his wife Mary in a vault in Holy Cross church by the Westgate.

His memorial can be seen in Holy Cross, but it takes some finding, hidden in the chancel behind the curtain where those attending council meetings won't readily see it. He surely deserves more prominence than this?

Based on CHAS Notebook on the website of the Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society (CHAS) at www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk/

Hunt for hidden gems heading into city

DAYTIME television show Antiques Road Trip is coming to Canterbury in search of rare and valuable items.

Presenters James Lewis and James Braxton will visit the city as part of a tour of the country. The pair will trawl markets and antiques

shops for hidden gems, which have previously included a canoe, a tractor seat and scantily dressed mannequins.

The series follows the country's top experts as they travel across Britain in classic cars, hunting down

antiques to auction.

With a starting budget of only £200 each, the experts will put their wits and knowledge to the test in a bid to make the biggest profit.

Watch the show at 4.30pm on BBC1 on Monday.

Thought for the week

HOW are the resolutions going? Getting enough sleep/exercise? Eating less, drinking less, seeing more of family and friends?

By the middle of January the first excitement of the resolution season has gone: all that is left is the hard work keeping the promise we made to ourselves. This is especially true if it involves exercise. One gym in Canterbury recognises this. They call their New Year fitness programme the Challenge, a 10-week endurance competition.

I wondered what it would be like if we approached our spiritual life in

the same way: "Are you ready for the Spiritual Challenge? Do you want to increase your core strength? Could you do with shedding pounds of Worldliness? Are you ready to increase your flexibility in prayerfulness? Do you want to add endurance to your discipleship and service? Then the Spiritual Challenge[®] is for you!"

That might seem silly, but at least it takes our spirituality seriously. It isn't something that can be done well without practice. St Paul talks about the spiritual life like an athlete's training: serious, hard work, committed. Just as you wouldn't expect to run a marathon after twenty minutes' jogging, you shouldn't expect to be an expert in prayer if you can't build a regular quiet time into your daily life. But you are lucky, Canterbury is full of expert spiritual personal trainers. Just ask your vicar, pastor, minister. They know what you need to do, to help you achieve the new you.

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