

icism of  
es 'not  
laints'

170 letters received  
lice Crime  
r Ann Barnes' TV  
have been recorded  
plaints.  
was made in a  
by Mike Campbell,  
ime Panel policy

re was "a high level  
ence in a variety of  
he screening of  
missioner on  
ich were "roughly  
itive and 60 per

ll added: "The  
ents were similar  
in the media.  
ded criticism of  
staff in her office,  
ose who advised  
t, criticism of the  
nd criticism of her  
luring several  
vn on the

ement, none of the  
unted to a  
inst the  
'and I therefore  
decision of her  
o treat them all as  
e to be replied to  
mplaints to be

correspondents  
or the  
's response to re-  
ms, but there were  
about the way  
correspondence  
with.  
of correspondents  
sensitive remarks."

Cathedral's rare resident shows up just seven times in 160 years

# Our tick: a tough little character that defies the years

AMONG the 70 million specimens held by the Natural Science Museum, one tiny exhibit bears the simple label "Canterbury Cathedral 1917".

This creature, a tick just five to ten millimetres long, is named Argas Reflexus, with common names Pigeon Tick, Canterbury Tick or Bell Harry Bug.

While common in the Middle East and central Europe, where it thrives on pigeon blood, the creature has been spotted in only three English locations: in Canterbury Cathedral, in Rochester Castle, and in King's College chapel in Cambridge.

It has made recorded

### Way We Were



**David Lewis**  
Canterbury  
Historical and  
Archaeological  
Society

appearances in Canterbury Cathedral just seven times over the past 160 years. In the 1850s, a colony of the mites was placed in a box, closed, put to one side and forgotten. Five years later, the box was opened and a troop of Argas Reflexus, denied water, food (and pigeon blood!) for five years, walked out.



**CANTERBURY TICK:** The Argas Reflexus has only been spotted in three locations, one our cathedral

A second sighting was recorded in 1871 by George Gulliver FRCS FRS. George, surgeon and academic, lived in retirement in the 1870s and 1880s on Old Dover Road and played an active role in the East Kent Natural History Society.

At their 1872 meeting, he exhibited live cathedral specimens and gave a detailed description - eight legs including "two very sharp, sickle-shaped claws, by which the creature holds on to its host".





While common in the Middle East and central Europe, where it thrives on pigeon blood, the creature has been spotted in only three English locations: in Canterbury Cathedral, in Rochester Castle, and in King's College chapel in Cambridge. It has made recorded

appearances in Canterbury Cathedral just seven times over the past 160 years. In the 1850s, a colony of the mites was placed in a box, closed, put to one side and forgotten. Five years later, the box was opened and a troop of Argas Reflexus, denied water, food (and pigeon blood!) for five years, walked out.

surgeon and academic, lived in retirement in the 1870s and 1880s on Old Dover Road and played an active role in the East Kent Natural History Society. At their 1872 meeting, he exhibited live cathedral specimens and gave a detailed description – eight legs including “two very sharp, sickle-shaped claws, by which the creature holds on to its host”.

We have only passing references to appearances three to five. As noted above, the third specimen was spotted in 1917 and ended up in the Natural History Museum; the fourth came to light in the 1960s, when Canon John Bouquet found one in St Anselm chapel, and a fifth turned up on an altar cloth in 1963 and was reported in a New Scientist article.

### Stained

Number six was found in 1981 during the restoration of stained glass from a medieval miracle window in the cathedral Trinity chapel. It was definitely dead as it had been trapped in a metal frame, for several hundred years.

The most recent example (number seven) appeared early one morning in January 1999 and was definitely alive.

Canon Peter Brett was picking up a service book in the Chapel of Our Lady Martyrdom, spotted the creature on the move, and confined it in a container. It was later confirmed as a genuine Argas Reflexus specimen.

So what should you do if you happen to spot number eight?

First, don't panic – the scientists suggests a single bite would normally be harmless.

Second, pop it into a container for verification.

Third, congratulate yourself on spotting something seen by just a handful of people over several hundred years.

Finally, do please let me know as we'd very much like an image of it on the CHAS web site!



**STEP BACK IN TIME ONLINE**

Find more tales from Canterbury's past online at [canterburytimes.co.uk/hostalgia](http://canterburytimes.co.uk/hostalgia)



**REMEMBERED:** Nackington grave of George Gulliver, the surgeon active in the East Kent Natural History Society, who studied the tick



**TRAPPED:** Trinity chapel window – a tick was trapped here for several hundred years and was found during restoration work in 1981