

Press Information

Issued on behalf of Visit Kent

Where Orlando Bloom rubs shoulders with the ghost of Henry VIII

VISIT KENT LAUNCHES MAJOR HERITAGE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

From big screen heartthrob Orlando Bloom to James Bond creator Ian Fleming, Kent is home to a prestigious line-up of celebrity names and faces.

And with two major anniversaries in 2009 – the 500th anniversary of Henry VIII's accession to the throne and the bicentenary of Charles Darwin's birth - Visit Kent is launching a three-year campaign to raise awareness of the county's rich heritage.

Targeted at both American and domestic visitors, the **VIP Campaign** will focus on Kent's connections to heroes, icons, contemporary celebrities and medal-winning Olympians - and the memorable places associated with them.

Kent Historian **Dr David Starkey CBE**, the man who made TV history sexy and one of the county's biggest fans, says he's "never been happier anywhere". He is a devotee of the historic cathedral city of Canterbury, with its magnificent World heritage Site, and the inspiration for Geoffrey Chaucer's motley band of medieval characters on their way to the shrine of the martyred Thomas Becket.

Starkey patronises Canterbury's popular farmers' market, The Goods Shed, and is a regular visitor to Kent's variety of historic houses and cottages.

Canterbury-born Orlando Bloom made his acting debut on the local stage and recalls carol singing in the cathedral, commenting: "That sort of space instils a sense of awe and imagination."

Charles Dickens' favourite holiday home of Broadstairs inspired his novel *David Copperfield* but in Rochester you can spot all the places that the author wove into his stories – as well as Gad's Hill Place, Higham (open to the public on selected days) where he lived in his final years. At the Dickens World complex at Chatham Maritime you'll come face to face with most of his characters!

Internationally-renowned musician, bandleader and TV presenter **Jools Holland**, who lives at Cooling Castle and has been a deputy lieutenant for the county since 2005, has special ties with Rochester – whether playing a charity concert in the ancient cathedral or performing with his rhythm and blues orchestra in Rochester Castle Gardens.

En route from Margate to Dover is James Bond's *Moonraker* and *Goldfinger* country – “a panorama of colour and romance” which captured the imagination of Bond creator **Ian Fleming** who had a weekend and holiday home at St Margaret's Bay. (Look for the white house with green shutters to the north end of the shingle beach). And Bond girl **Gemma Arterton**, who stars in the latest adventure *Quantum of Solace*, was born in Gravesend.

In the heart of Kent is one of the county's most talked-about gardens – at Sissinghurst Castle – which was created by controversial literary figure **Vita Sackville-West** who shared the idyllic Kent landmark with her politician husband Sir Harold Nicholson.

On to Hever Castle, Edenbridge (via the market town of Tonbridge where the 12 year old future Olympic gold winner **Kelly Holmes** was encouraged to take up running) and the scene of Henry VIII's blossoming romance with his future second wife Anne Boleyn.

From a 16th century to a 20th century icon, **Sir Winston Churchill**, who made his family home at Chartwell, Westerham away from the cut and thrust of politics for 40 years. (His cigar boxes, favourite yellow chair and his paintings in the garden studio are all testament to a statesman totally at ease and able to recharge his batteries.)

It was at Down House, Downe where **Charles Darwin** carried out the experiments to prove his ground-breaking theory of evolution, *On the Origin of the Species*. In 2009

English Heritage is celebrating the 150th anniversary of its publication with a fascinating exhibition and new audio-visual guides.

For full details on Kent's famous faces go to www.visitkent.co.uk

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Notes to editors:

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