**About the Portrait Bench**

The Portrait Bench is a new and unique national collection of local portraits. The figures are inspired and chosen for their individual contribution to the life of the community.

Creating portraits is an old custom - honouring individuals for their philanthropy, political prowess or acts of heroism, and most commonly for the love of family members. All major public spaces are graced by statues or portraits of eminent individuals and family photos are treasured across the world.

Each Portrait Bench is a collection of three distinctive, life-size local figures cut from sheet steel and installed by a simple bench, inviting you to sit or step up into the space and become a part of the portrait group.

The features of each character have been simplified while retaining their essential characteristics. The characters reflect those things that are important to the community; each is inspired by the local heritage, culture and aspirations of the area; some we’ll know and some we won’t…together they will represent around 230 characters chosen by thousands of people from across the UK.

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**Choosing the Westminster portraits**

Residents were asked to vote for three people with connections to the area that they wanted to represent Westminster.

The portrait bench can be found in the small park close to St Mary’s Church, Paddington Green.

**New walking and cycling networks**

Sustrans is bringing the award winning National Cycle Network deep into the heart of communities across the UK to enable many more people to get about on foot and by bike. Find out more about walking and cycling routes in Westminster and how to find this portrait bench at www.sustrans.org.uk/c2/westminster

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English scientist Alan Turing was born in Warrington Crescent, Maida Vale.

In 1938, he took a part-time position with the Government Code and Cypher School, a British code-breaking organisation. During World War II, Turing was a leading participant in wartime code-breaking. He worked at Bletchley Park, the GCCS wartime station, where he made five major advances in the field of cryptanalysis, including specifying the bombe, an electromechanical device used to help decipher German Enigma encrypted signals. He also wrote two papers about mathematical approaches to code-breaking, which became such important assets to the Code and Cypher School that the GCHQ waited until April 2012 to release them to the National Archives of the United Kingdom. Turing led the design work for the Automatic Computing Engine and ultimately created a groundbreaking blueprint for store-program computers.

Mary Jane Grant was born in Kingston, Jamaica in 1805. Her father was a Scottish soldier, and her mother a Jamaican. Although technically ‘free’, being of mixed race, Mary and her family had few civil rights - they could not vote, hold public office or enter the professions.

In 1850 Kingston was hit by a cholera epidemic. Mary Seacole, using herbal medicines, played an important role in dealing with this disease. She also dealt successfully with a yellow fever outbreak in Jamaica. Her fame as a medical practitioner grew and she was soon carrying out operations on people suffering very serious injuries. Mary lived in Paddington and buried in St Mary’s Cemetery.

Michael Bond began writing in 1945. His first book, A Bear Called Paddington, was published in 1958 by William Collins & Sons (now HarperCollins Publishers). At the time, Michael Bond was working as a television cameraman for the BBC.

After the first Paddington book was accepted, Michael Bond went on to write a whole series and by 1965 his books were so successful that he was able to give up his job with the BBC in order to become a full-time writer.

In 1997 Michael Bond was awarded an OBE for services to children’s literature. He is married with two adult children and lives in London, not far from Paddington Station.