

Canterbury Historical Association

First Meeting for 2012 INAUGURAL GEOFF RICE LECTURE

Professor Geoff Rice (UC, History)

GARRICK'S FRIEND: People and Places in the Life of the Fourth earl of Rochford (1717-81), Anglo-Dutch courtier, diplomat and statesman.

Lord Rochford is one of the forgotten figures of Georgian England. Dismissed by Horace Walpole as 'a man of no abilities and of as little knowledge', Rochford has long been neglected by historians as a political light-weight in the cabinets of Grafton and North, and one of the mediocre ministers who let Britain's disputes with her American colonists slide into war. The disappearance of his private papers has also deterred would-be biographers, but many of his letters survive in the papers of his correspondents, such as the actor David Garrick, and they reveal an engaging and likeable extrovert, who played the Baroque guitar and enjoyed the opera.

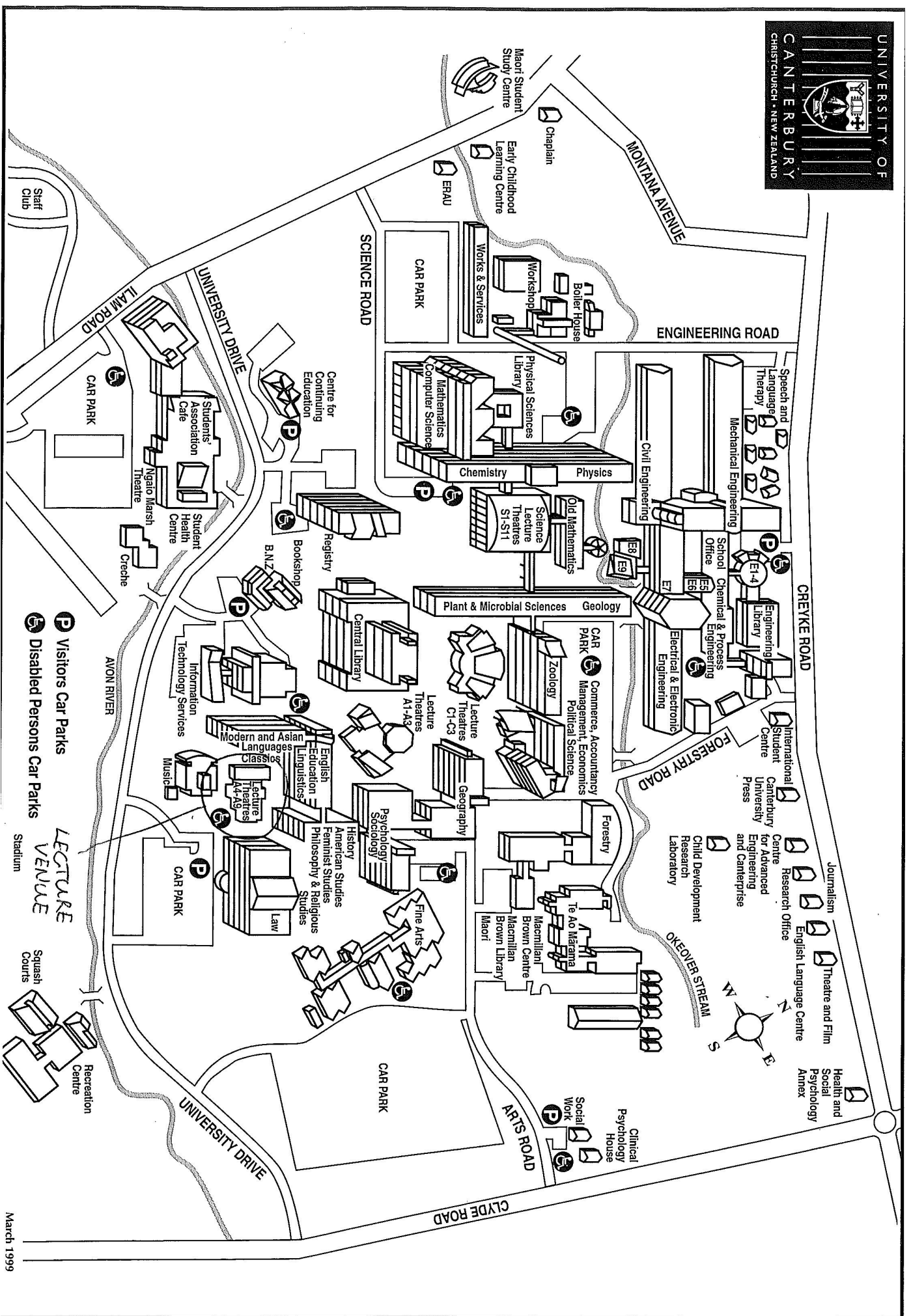
Professor Rice's PhD thesis examined Rochford's diplomatic career in detail, at Turin, Madrid and Paris, working on State Papers Foreign in the Public Record Office, London, and on microfilm from European diplomatic archives, and formed a very different opinion from that of Walpole. He also discovered that Walpole had special reasons to vilify Rochford, as George III's go-between in the painful negotiations of 1772 concerning the clandestine marriage of Walpole's niece to the Duke of Gloucester. As a diplomat, Rochford had been a thorough professional, mastering complex negotiations and stoutly defending British interests, even against the formidable duc de Choiseul.

As secretary of state, Rochford was George III's foreign policy expert, and in the early 1770s was de facto foreign minister, carrying the burdens of both Northern and Southern Departments on his own. Professor Rice's recent book reveals that it was Rochford who masterminded Britain's side of the 1770 Falkland Islands crisis, not Lord North, and that he conducted (with the king's support) secret and risky alliance talks with the French. His unpublished 1775 Plan for Peace in Europe shows that he was an imaginative strategic thinker. Rochford's private life was every bit as racy as his diplomacy, as this talk reveals.

Professor Rice taught European History at the University of Canterbury from 1973 until his retirement in 2011. His most recent publication, *All Fall Down: Christchurch's Lost Chimneys*, appeared in 2011. He is also, of course, a stalwart life member of the Canterbury Historical Association. In recognition of his decades of service, 2012 marks the inaugural Geoff Rice Lecture, presented on this occasion by the man himself.

Tuesday 13 March 2012 at 6.30 pm
Arts Lecture Theatre A4, University of Canterbury

Preceded by a social gathering in room 311 of the History building from 5.30.
All Welcome!



Visitors Car Parks
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LECTURE VENUE
Stadium