

Sit with Ebenezer

The island's most famous Guernsese man in literature has been immortalised in sculpture as part of the Guernsey Literary Festival. **Shaun Shackleton** talks to the artists behind the work ahead of its unveiling at Castle Cornet tomorrow

DON'T be surprised if you see Ebenezer Le Page on a bench in the coming months.

The island's most famous character has been brought to life for the Guernsey Literary Festival.

The fisherman and grower, created by GB Edwards in *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*, features on an ingenious sculpture. The Guernsey Book Bench is shaped like an open book and has been painted with portraits, iconic scenes and quotes from the novel.

Local artist and teacher Charlie Buchanan worked with Elizabeth College and Ladies' College students Sam O'Neill and Lauren Perry to paint the bench.

'We read the book before we started painting it two weeks ago,' said Sam, 17. 'We did it all collectively.'

The front of the bench includes a portrait of Ebenezer and scenes from the book as well as icons of Guernsey such as tomatoes and ormers – to reflect the character's occupations – and on the back Ebenezer is seen stepping out along the Rocquaine coast with his sweetheart Liza Queripel.

'We went to the Priaulx Library to find photographs of local people in the 1800s – the time in which the book is set,' said Charlie. 'They were fantastic and we ended up with piles of images.'

'Lauren posed for the portrait of Christine

'People can take selfies sat next to Ebenezer and share the pictures on Facebook'

Charlie Buchanan



The Guernsey Book Bench, painted by Elizabeth College and Ladies' College students Sam O'Neill and Lauren Perry with the help of local artist and teacher Charlie Buchanan, pictured right, depicts scenes and quotes from *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*. (9947576/596)

on the front of the bench.'

Charlie, who has read the book four times, chose the quotes.

'We wanted something that had emotional resonance, not too clever or coded. There are quite a few bawdy quotes that we could have used, but we wanted something that was accessible.'

The project is being sponsored by KPMG and the bench will be unveiled on Friday evening as part of Castle Nights. Copies

of the novel will be hidden around the castle for members of the public to find. It is hoped that they will read the book and pass it on to someone else.

'The bench will then be taken to Market Square until the end of the festival,' said Charlie. 'People can take selfies sat next to Ebenezer and share the pictures on Facebook.'

After the festival, in conjunction with the charity Every Child Our Future, the sculpture will begin a tour of the island's schools.

'Guernsey is full of creative, talented people and has inspired writers and painters for centuries,' said festival director Catriona Stares. 'Through this project we want to celebrate our island's rich artistic heritage while also inspiring people to share their love of books.'

Last year the charity National Literary Trust ran a similar project in which the UK's top artists decorated benches with scenes from popular books such as *Great Expectations*, *Mary Poppins* and *Peter Pan*. It raised £250,000.

● The Guernsey Literary Festival takes place from 16 to 20 September. Visit guernseyliteraryfestival.com for further details and to book tickets for events.

