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RECOVERING THE PAST: THE AFTERMATH OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL'S AUDIT HOUSE FIRE OF 1670¹

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Fire has been one of the greatest destroyers of archives over the centuries - the Great Fire of London in 1666 destroyed the major part of the archive of the Court of Arches, the Cottonian Library suffered massively from fire in 1731, and much of Canterbury Cathedral's early archive disappeared in flames in 1067. The threat of fire is one that archivists continually have to guard against in the form of fire drills, building inspections, fire protection systems, disaster plans and fire brigade exercises. That the threat is still a very real one has recently (August 1994) been demonstrated all too painfully at Norwich with the destruction by fire of the Central Library and the consequent great disruption to the County Record Office beneath it.

Fire's destruction of archives actually takes two forms: the immediate burning by the fire itself, and the longer term deterioration from the water that is usually used to put the fire out. It is the effects of these double agents of fire and water that the archivist and conservator often have to try and recover from, and that can take a long time. This paper will try to illustrate this by examining the fire in the Audit House of Canterbury Cathedral in 1670, how the building was affected and subsequently rebuilt, and how the archives it contained were affected and are only now being restored to use through the work of the Cathedral's Archives department. The Cathedral's past has been recovered in that previously inaccessible records are now available again and the conservation process has involved the actual re-covering of these volumes.

In 1670, many of the administrative records of Canterbury Cathedral were stored in the Audit House, situated on the north-east side of the

¹ I am grateful to Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Mark Bateson for their comments which have saved me from a number of inaccuracies; the remainder are my own. All documents cited are from Canterbury Cathedral Archives, unless otherwise indicated.

church. It was roofed in lead which in June 1670 was being repaired. On 23 June, 1670, a certain Miss Savin noticed flames coming from the Audit House. The fire took forty or fifty men to extinguish it.² Damage to the records was considerable. Twenty years later, Nicholas Batteley recorded the event and unconsciously issued a challenge to archivists and conservators in writing to John Strype: '...a fire happened to ye place where ye records lay, whereby many of them were consumed, and ye rest much defaced. A damage irrecoverable!'³ A hundred years later, Edward Hasted noted that the situation had not improved much, though he did strike a more optimistic note: 'Many of the manuscripts which suffered by the above fire, remain in the same mutilated state as at their first removal, (though many of them might with care be recovered), in a heap on the floor, in the one of the rooms over the vestry.'⁴ More recently, Nigel Ramsay has lamented this fire as a 'disaster',⁵ but just what scale of a disaster was it? Forty to fifty men were employed in extinguishing it, one suffering severely for his efforts, but how destructive had the fire been? The Chapter Act Books, the core administrative records of the cathedral, make no mention of the event and the building itself was not to be reconstructed until 1719-20.

Robert Willis is the only person really to have attempted to outline the building history of the Audit House. He has the building standing in 1670 as a long thin two-storey structure, supported on a two-bay undercroft, abutting the north-west walls of St. Andrew's chapel and the Treasury.⁶ In 1651, it had two rooms and a closet on the first floor and a single room on the second floor.⁷ It was accessed by doorways in the stair-turret in the south-west corner of St. Andrew's chapel, leading into the north aisle of the choir, and through the more southerly of the two west-facing window apertures of the Treasury. There was also a bridged first-floor passageway linking the Audit House to the Prior's Chapel to its north. The doorway for this is still clearly visible in the wall of the Prior's Chapel, now the Howley Library. The other two doorways are less obvious today, but they can

² M. Beazeley, *History of the Chapter Library of Canterbury Cathedral* (reprinted from the *Bibliographical Society Transactions*, 1907), 49-51.

³ Cambridge University Library, Add. MS 3, f.65.

⁴ E. Hasted, *History...of Kent* (1st edn., 4 vols., Canterbury, 1778-1799), iv, p.579 n.f.

⁵ N.L. Ramsay, 'The Cathedral Archives and Library' in (Eds.) P. Collinson, N.L. Ramsay and M. Sparks, *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Oxford, 1995), 383.

⁶ R. Willis, *The Architectural History of the Monastery of Christ Church in Canterbury*, (London, 1869), 79-81. I am grateful to Margaret Sparks for discussions on this topic.

⁷ DCc/Survey 22, f.152r.

be distinguished by newer stonework on the interior of the St. Andrew's chapel stair-turret, along with replacement concrete steps there, and by newer stonework and a new iron grille in the Treasury window, probably inserted in 1869 when the Audit House was demolished.

Of the Audit House itself only one bay of the undercroft survives, abutting St. Andrew's chapel. This has a medieval core, with a groined vault of perhaps the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and it has been buttressed at its open corner. It was tidied up with flints in the nineteenth century, probably to produce a level surface. If this bay were to have been replicated exactly, as suggested by Willis's plan (which is not faultless, as the west walls of St. Andrew's chapel and the Treasury are rather more closely aligned than he records), it would have extended along very much more than the half of the Treasury's west wall allowed by Willis's plan. That it did extend this far is suggested by the difference in the weathering on the decorated string-course along the Treasury west wall, in very good condition up to this point, where it may have been protected by the Audit House abutment, and then badly worn beyond it. This suggests that the original Audit House was rather larger than Willis indicates; as large, perhaps, as the rebuilt Audit House of 1719-20 which Willis outlines as being a rather grander building than the original one. This building was extant in Willis's time, but has since been demolished (in 1869), leaving, rather curiously, a single bay of the undercroft. Two near-contemporary ground plans of the 1670 Audit House do survive. A 1668 plan of the water pipes in the Precincts is less precise, showing St. Andrew's chapel and the adjacent Audit House, abutting at right angles to the church. Hill's 1680 waterworks plan is more reliable, depicting the Audit House as a building of almost triangular dimensions, and almost as large as the adjacent St. Andrew's chapel and Treasury.⁸ Still being used in 1648, it survived the demolition proposal of 1651, though repairs to the roof, windows and glass were necessary on the return of the Dean and Chapter in 1660.⁹

If it is difficult now to determine on the ground the dimensions of the original Audit House, it is impossible to discern any visible effects of the 1670 fire. Recorded notices of the fire itself are limited to payments to Miss Savin for raising the alarm and to the men, forty or fifty of them apparently, who extinguished it. The choir boys may well have been involved in immediate salvage operations.¹⁰ Such a

⁸ DCc/Fabric 35; Map 143. See also Thomas Johnson's plan in R. Dodsworth and W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London, 1655), i, facing p.18.

⁹ Add. MS 80, f.15v; DCc/Survey 22, f.152r; DCc/TV 8/1/10a, 8/2b, 8/1/7, 8/1/2. I am grateful to Miss Joan Jeffery for the TV 8 references.

¹⁰ DCc/TB 6, ff.36v-37r.

number of helpers would seem to suggest a conflagration of some proportion, but the fetching of water for an operation like this would have been no easy task and may have required a human bucket-passing chain of some length. Also, the vagueness of the figure suggests that the precise number was not known and may indicate an overestimation. The fire seems to have made little other intrusion on cathedral life at the time. Neither the next chapter meeting, nor any subsequent ones, took any recorded notice of it. Repairs were soon effected in July and August 1670 by John Flackton, with the roof being retiled, and a new table was provided by Abraham Goldsborough in December.¹¹

The building had, however, evidently suffered in the fire as, nearly fifty years later, it was 'not only incommodious but dangerous', and Chapter resolved on 3 December, 1718, to rebuild it 'so soon as the season of ye year will permit'. John James, joint clerk of works at Greenwich Hospital,¹² surveyed the site in March 1719. In April, he specified that a single storey building be built over the undercroft, of brick above floor level, with a cornice, eaves and gutter above, with four sash windows in the west wall and that it be wainscotted in 'bead-work'. Demolition of the old Audit House may have occurred in the 1719 summer season. The boards for the new one were delivered from London in November. In the following spring work started in earnest on erecting the new building, one of some style, with the four sash windows of eighteen panes each, shuttered, with window seats, stone moulding round the doors, and wainscotted throughout in deal. It was fitted with shelves, a double-locked cupboard, new chairs and table, a coffee pot, cups and sugar box, and sixteen brass hat hooks. Painting was completed by Rawlings Mott in November 1720.¹³ This building survived until the new library was built over the southern end of the dormitory ruins in 1868 and Chapter ordered the now redundant Audit House to 'be removed as soon as possible' on 13 February, 1869.¹⁴

¹¹ *Ibid.*, ff.34r-35v; DCc/TB 7, 58.

¹² For his architectural career, including other Kent work at Deal St. George and Rochester cathedral, see H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects* (London, 1978), 451-4.

¹³ DCc/TB 53, pp.21 and 25; DCc/TB 54, pp.43, 57-8; DCc/TV 58; C.E. Woodruff and W. Danks, *Memorials of the Cathedral and Priory of Christ in Canterbury*, (London, 1912), 347. Rather better plans than Willis's of this new building are to be found in: W. Woolnoth, *A Graphical Illustration of the Metropolitan Cathedral Church of Canterbury*, (London, 1816), facing p.1; C. Wild, *Twelve Perspective Views of the Metropolitan Church of Canterbury* (London, 1807).

¹⁴ DCc/CA 13, 255.

The Audit House was also known as the *Auditorium exterius*, with the Treasury being the *Auditorium interius*. They were both used for housing the records of the cathedral and its estates. It is impossible now to be certain how the records were arranged in 1670. They had only recently been returned from London after the restoration of the Dean and Chapter in 1660 and it is possible that some series might not even have completed the journey back to Canterbury by the time of the fire, if they were returned at all.¹⁵ The disruption of the fire, the subsequent organising in the 1730s by Samuel Norris, cathedral auditor from 1715, and especially C.R. Bunce at the end of that century, and later removals by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, all make the organisation of the records in 1670 a question of debate. What can be said is that the series of loose documents, such as evidences of title - the great *Chartae Antiquae* series - court rolls, leases, terriers, surveys and rentals, appear to be all but untouched by fire damage.¹⁶ These would probably have been stored in the Treasury, or *Auditorium interius*, in perhaps the 'large wooden lockers' present in around 1800¹⁷, or in wooden drawers or boxes, perhaps in linenfold presses.¹⁸ (The successors to such boxes - the Boxes in the Basement series - introduced by Bunce on his reorganisation and cataloguing of the records in 1804, have only recently been superseded.) Some loose papers were destroyed in the fire, but they were those of William Somner which had recently been acquired. Other such series may have been lost and that loss may not now be known. Almost no vouchers or bills for the receiver and treasurer survive from before the Civil War. These may have been burnt in the fire. Equally, they may have been thrown away after the accounts were drawn up. Similar documents from the later medieval period were disposed of thus, but not very effectively as they were to be discovered

¹⁵ Ramsay, 'The Cathedral Archives and Library', 382-3. William Somner lamented that 'Our very common seale, our registers & other books, together with our records & evidences of all sorts [were] seized & distracted; many of them irrevocably lost, & the rest not retrived without much trouble & cost...', Lit. MS A 15, f.7v.

¹⁶ Some charters present before the fire are no longer extant: Ramsay, 'The Cathedral Archives and Library', 385. They were possibly with Somner's papers as a number of the charters printed in W. Somner, *A Treatise of Gavelkind* (2nd edn., London, 1726) have not survived; I owe this suggestion to Dr Ramsay. The other dangers to which such records were prevalent is indicated by the purchase of 2 rat traps for the Audit House in December 1661: DCc/TV 9/161.

¹⁷ E.W. Brayley, *The Beauties of England and Wales*, vol. viii, (London, 1808), 843.

¹⁸ As such documents are still housed at Christ's College, Cambridge, for instance. A 'chest' and a 'trunk' had new locks fitted in July 1661 and April 1662 respectively: DCc/TV 8/1/21, 9/162.

in stables in the later nineteenth century; they can still clearly be seen to have been screwed up for throwing away.¹⁹

What did undoubtedly suffer in the fire were the cathedral's records held in book form; these were evidently stored in the Audit House as records which were in use in the current administration of the Dean and Chapter. Volumes of estate accounts from the last century of the medieval priory, books of chapter acts, registers of leases and other business, books of manorial court records and rentals all were burnt. However, few suffered total destruction. In almost all the series, the damage is varied, and in some cases of a definite pattern. Some volumes have been lost, some damaged more or less badly and some have apparently escaped altogether. It is now impossible to be convinced about the causes of this. Some books may have been out of the Audit House at the time of the fire. But the system of triplicate locks for the doors, necessitating the presence of three members of Chapter before entry could be made to the Audit House, the rules governing removal, and the fact that much of the administrative business was carried on in the Audit House, would seem to argue against that. More crucial is how the books might have been arranged. If they were stored by series, chronologically, standing vertically, with the spine outwards,²⁰ on shelves, as they are now, it is possible that the fire spread vertically in one corner of the building. For instance, the Chapter Act Books have no volumes surviving for 1540-61, presumed burnt; the volume for 1561-68 is badly burnt with up to half of each page gone; that for 1568-81 is less badly burnt with only around an inch of the top and right margins gone; those for 1581-1628 are charred on the right margin; those for 1628-70 are gone. This could indicate them being shelved, as above, on two shelves, with the fire attacking from the left side and possibly from above. The volumes of medieval accounts have a similar cyclical pattern with the bound accounts of the medieval bedels and priory obedientaries having two groups of a volume(s) missing, followed by four volumes of gradually less badly damaged books. The accounts of the medieval farmers have suffered more, with similar occasional gaps now, and others badly damaged by fire with covers and bindings destroyed and all page numbers lost. The shelving must have held as

¹⁹ Such as many of the items in the DCc/DE class.

²⁰ Archbishop Matthew's library acquired by York Minster in 1628 was shelved upright, but with the fore-edges to the front: C.B.L. Barr, 'The Minster Library' in (Eds.) G.E. Aylmer and R. Cant, *A History of York Minster* (Oxford, 1977), 502. However, there is no indication that the Audit House volumes had titles on their fore-edges as Matthew's books had.

the very packing-together of the books seems to have saved most of the actual text from damage, but a number of folios were lost. Other books of such accounts are merely charred and scorched and some are unblemished. Again, the pattern of damage would suggest these volumes were shelved perhaps five or six to a shelf in a bay which was attacked by fire from its left side, presuming they were shelved chronologically left to right.

This is, of course, suggestive rather than conclusive evidence. The books might have been stored flat and not in this order at all. However, if it is further assumed that the shelving was against the presumably windowless east wall of the Audit House, abutting St. Andrew's chapel and the Treasury, and if it is allowed that the fire damage progressed from left to right, it is possible that the fire was relatively localised at the northern end of the Audit House. It is known that the fire began after workmen had been repairing the lead roof of the Audit House, and so it may have been caused by one of the processes involved in the repairs. Alternatively, it might have stemmed from a chimney fire, as the fireplace was at that end of the building.²¹ Furthermore, an additional injunction was added to the library regulations in November 1672 banning candles from the library and urging care with fires.²² However, June was not the time of year when the necessity for either of these potential fire hazards would have been paramount.

Such conjectures do indicate that the fire may have been seated in the roof area. This might explain why the fire was noticed by Miss Savin before it had a hold of the whole, not very large, Audit House, and why it seems to have been spectacular enough to have required forty or fifty men to extinguish it, and to have caused some observers to think the whole cathedral was ablaze.²³ The fire did destroy some books, but more suffered charring or cockling from the heat of the fire rather than necessarily from direct flames. There is also little sign of extensive smoke damage to the books, which might have been expected from a fire burning below and around the books. Some of course are even unscathed. So it is further conjecturable that the fire, whilst spreading downwards in some parts, may have been confined more to the roof or the upper part of the building. Furthermore, whilst some books have indications of water damage, it is not consistent throughout the volumes, and such damage may alternatively be a

²¹ The fireplace was well used with faggots for the Audit House being a regular expenditure for the treasurer: DCc/TV 4 (1633); DCc/TRV 9/41 & 42 (1662).

²² Beazeley, *Chapter Library*, 54-7.

²³ *Idem*, 50.

consequence of later, or even earlier, storage conditions. Certainly the damage is not as extensive as might be expected for a fire raging above and around the books being extinguished by dousing with buckets of water. So the fire may have been localised in perhaps the north-western part of the building, and it is such roof-edges/angles/gutterings which would most likely have needed attention from workmen. This corner was of course also the part of the building furthest from any other building and may help to explain why the fire remained localised and did not spread to infect the Treasury and St. Andrew's chapel, let alone the rest of the cathedral.

Whilst not as calamitous as it might have been, the fire did still do considerable damage to the cathedral's records, and recovery from it has, until recently, been sporadic and slow. A rebinding - if such a term can be used for wrapping in a couple of boards covered in an old lease - programme was undertaken by Samuel Norris, the cathedral auditor, in the 1730s.²⁴ He dealt with the medieval rental and estate account volumes which had been unaffected or only moderately damaged by the fire. Such volumes were enshrined as the *Miscellaneous Accounts* series by C.R. Bunce in about 1804. Thus, they remain, some of the parchment books cockled, but openable, and some of the paper books charred. One of the badly cockled parchment books, MA 32, was fully repaired in 1955: the folios were flattened, by means of the edges being slit, and it was then rebound. The *Chapter Act Books*, (paper volumes), that were badly burnt in the fire (CA 1 and 2), were repaired with new paper and rebound in reverse calf by the British Museum in 1896.²⁵ The medieval priory registers have suffered some slight heat damage; this may have been in 1670, but it could equally have been at some other unidentified time. They do seem to have been renumbered and probably rebound not long after the fire.²⁶ Their successors, the registers of leases and copies of other documents, beginning in 1394, certainly suffered badly in the fire. Those for 1551-89 and 1607-42 lost their bindings, all their pagination and their original order. Some of the pages, mainly from the later sixteenth century, were repaired with paper and bound up as *Registers V - V7* in around 1950, but the ordering was often random and some pages were even bound in back to front. The paper accounts of the medieval priory farmers from around 1485 to 1540 had been left as disordered piles of loose pages. The parchment volumes of manorial court records

²⁴ DCc/TB 69, f.32r.

²⁵ F.W. Cross, 'The Early Minute-Books of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury', *Arch. Journ.* liv (1896), 235-48.

²⁶ Ramsay, 'The Cathedral Archives and Library', 384.

from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth century were a very different problem, having cockled and contracted badly, and in a number of cases the edges of the pages had welded together so that the text was inaccessible. The volumes had broken apart, but generally only into two or three sections. (These sections now have such an appearance that comparisons have been made with, amongst other things, dried cow-pats.)

The problem facing myself as the relevant archivist in 1992 was to restore these records to something like their original order before the conservator could begin work on actually repairing the records. The cockled parchment court books were relatively easy to sort. They largely still retained their original order. As they are records of the cathedral's individual manorial courts, these individual courts often cover no more than a page or so, and each new court records the date when it sat. So dating each block of pages was relatively straightforward, and putting them in order was likewise simple enough. Even if no date was visible on the outside page, few blocks were completely unopenable, and so a date could be found somewhere.

What posed far greater problems were the paper books of late medieval farmers' accounts and the registers of leases and other business. The farmers' accounts in 1992 were about seven or eight boxes of loose pages, largely disordered. As mentioned above, not all volumes had been broken up by the fire so the survivors were useful as models. The models were unfortunately not consistent. In theory the farmer of each of the priory's estates throughout south-east England accounted each year for his rent and the expenses he was allowed against his rent. The accounts of all the priory's estates for one year were recorded together, and two or three years' worth might be bound in one volume. The accounts for each year were made up of two parts: estates in Kent, and estates outside Kent, which actually included Kent west of the Medway.²⁷ However, these parts did not always appear in the same order, and, more importantly, the estates by no means appeared in the same order within each part. Furthermore, not every estate was accounted for each year: there might be some whose account was a year or more late and some whose account might be for more than just the one year. These were exceptional though.

The first task was to sort the pages into annual bundles. Most were now detached loose pages, but a few were still just attached to their fellows in their quire and the odd fragment of binding sewing remained.

²⁷ The sections were headed 'Kancia' and 'Extra Kanc' in the fifteenth century and 'Firmariorum' and 'Warda' in the sixteenth century: DCc/MA 6, 12, 13.

However, some had been badly affected by damp and were very delicate, if not actually now stuck to their neighbours. The fire had burnt off all the folio numbers from the top right corner, (one fortunately dog-eared page survived with an example of a number), and in many cases part of the text as well. Water might have eaten away more of the page. (There were, however, almost no signs of rodent gnawing having contributed to losses.) Many of these estate accounts covered only a page or so and the accountants had fortunately recorded the date in full at the head of each account, rather than just 'for the same period'. So, many of the pages could be sorted into annual bundles by the date; for others, similarity in the burn pattern and in the hand (though that could change within the year), were used to help in this initial sort.

Once the pages were in annual bundles, there was the rather harder task of trying to recreate their original order within each bundle. If the estates had been accounted in the same order each year this would have been relatively straightforward; but they were not. The burn pattern was an aid as some volumes were, for instance, more badly burnt at the front than the back. In the main, other methods had to be used. Each account was in two parts. Expenses followed receipts, with subsections in each, and then came a final total. Expenses subtracted from receipts gave the profit, or loss, position for the year. Again fortunately, most accounts did not start at the top of the page and finish at the bottom of the other side, but rather started immediately after the previous one and usually ran on to the next page. So it was possible to reverse the accountant's calculation and add the expenses to the total to produce what should be the figure for the receipts, search for that amount among the other pages and then reunite the two. The same process could be carried out with the subsections to produce the total of receipts or expenses. (The original accountants made very few mistakes in their calculations.) Finally, sentences were often split over pages and so ensuring that the text made sense was another confirmation of a correct juxtaposing of pages. To render the task a little harder, some of the pages were so damaged that the text at the head or foot of the page was now missing, and some pages were missing altogether. The whole process might be likened to doing a jigsaw puzzle with no picture to go by, some of the pieces missing, and most of the pieces having lost their joins. The satisfaction of successfully marrying up these pages was immense! The whole process was time-consuming, but a momentum was built up and, though several attempts were usually needed to clear up the last elusive pages, the task was completed.

The next records were the now dismembered volumes of registers of leases and other business. These were a similar problem, being disordered piles of loose pages, again some seven or eight boxes of

them. As with the accounts, some volumes had survived unscathed as a guide to the order of the rest. The order of business was largely chronological, but once more there were considerable caveats to make the sorting task harder. Much of the business consisted of registered copies of leases of the cathedral's properties, which had the date of issue in the first line or two. These leases would sometimes run over several pages, and the date was never cited in full again, being merely referred to as 'the date above written'. Fortunately the name of the person taking out the lease was mentioned several times in the course of the lease; but that person might lease several different properties, over several years. Other business included registered copies of leases of the archbishop's properties. These were ratified by the dean and chapter. It was under the date of this ratification that the leases were entered in the register, which was a date later than that of the lease itself. The registers also contain a host of other appointments, letters from archbishops and monarchs and even such texts as visitation articles, all of which were likely to have been registered after the date of the original document. The handwriting was also less of a consistent guide to the original order as the hand frequently changed, even in the middle of a lease, and a few entries seem to have been inserted at a later date in a later hand. As mentioned earlier, work had been done on selecting some of this material for repair in the 1950s. Unfortunately, these repairs, made with acidic paper, were now actually doing damage to the original paper, and the pages that had been repaired were mostly not in their original order, with some being bound up the wrong way round. The decision was therefore taken to break up these volumes (Registers V-V7), redistribute the pages in their original places as far as possible and undo the repairs.²⁸ As with the farmers' accounts, some pages have now been lost altogether and these gaps are now represented, as in the volumes of farmers' accounts, by blank pages in the reconstituted volumes.

As the archivist's work on a particular series was completed, with the pages back in what was probably their original order, and numbered as such (as far as possible in the centre of the side, rather than in the corners which the fire had burnt away), the conservator's work could now begin, to restore the volumes to use.²⁹ This conservation work

²⁸ A concordance of the old and new page numberings has been maintained.

²⁹ An additional conservator, Roy Moxham, was engaged at the Cathedral Archives 1993-95 to work on this. His post, and the necessary materials and equipment, were half-funded by the British Library's National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, with the remainder being shared between Kent County Council and Canterbury Dean and Chapter. Other conservation work has been carried out by the conservation manager at the Cathedral Archives, Jim Wayre, to whom I am grateful for clarification of the conservation processes used.

has so far focused on the volumes of farmers' accounts. It has involved much lengthy cleaning, washing and deacidification of the pages. Meantime, hand-made rag paper specially watermarked with the Dean and Chapter's arms was produced by Griffin Mill. Each page then had a frame cut out for it from this paper with a slightly overlapping edge to provide support for the charred edges of the original. The original and the frame were married together with a Japanese tissue covering to bind the repair. Quires of these new pages were built up and sewn together. Two or three years' worth of these accounts were then bound up, and finally recovered within oak boards taken from Bunce's Boxes in the Basement and with red Moroccan leather spines. Microfilming has also been carried out as part of the conservation process, to reduce the need for these originals to be used in the searchroom and to facilitate the production of copies from these films.

All this has meant that, after an interval of over 320 years, these accounts at least are now available for use once more. They fill a gap of nearly a hundred years in the history of the cathedral's estates from the mid-fifteenth century to the dissolution of the priory. They provide evidence of the topography, economy, agriculture, buildings and local history of many parts of Kent and the south-east.³⁰ Work continues to complement this series with the recovery for historical research of the cathedral's registers of leases and other salient documents, and its volumes of manorial court records. Recovery from the 1670 Audit House fire has been long and slow, and is not yet complete,³¹ but it is proceeding.

APPENDIX 1

Documents involved:

DCc/MA 107-27	Farmers' accounts 1485-1537 sorted and conserved
DCc/Reg U3-U8, Y2-Y7	Cathedral registers 1553-1642 sorted and being conserved
DCc/CR 64-69, 71, 73-82	Manor court books 1483-1619 sorted and unconserved

³⁰ Receipts detailed were usually for the farm of the manor and arrears, against which the farmer would be allowed expenses including repairs to the manor's domestic and farm buildings, mills, ditches and embankments, detailing materials, workmen and carriage, payments to priory officials, and payments of scots; some farmers rendered a corn account. See Appendix 2 for a full list of the estates detailed in the accounts.

³¹ All sorting was completed in 1995.

RECOVERING THE PAST

APPENDIX 2

Estates in the recovered farmers' accounts MA 107-127:

Buckinghamshire

Monks Risborough bedelry
Monks Risborough manor

Devon

Docombe manor

Essex

Bocking in Mersea
Bocking manor
Borley manor
Borley mill
Lalling manor
Middleton manor
Panfield priory
Southchurch manor
Stisted bedelry
Stisted manor

Kent

Adisham manor
Agney manor
Amery Court
Appledore manor
Barksore manor
Barton manor
Beakesbourne
Beckard marsh
Berry Court manor
Boyton manor
Bramling manor
Brook manor
Brooksend manor
Challock rectory
Great Chart manor
Little Chart
Chartham corn mill
Chartham fulling mill
Chartham manor
Cliffe manor
Copton manor
Eastry manor
Eastry rectory
Ebony manor

Edenbridge rectory
Elverton manor
Fairfield rectory
East Farleigh manor
West Farleigh manor
Godmersham manor
Googy Hall
Grimsland
Gripping manor
Grippis and 40 acres
Le Haw
Hollingbourne manor
Ickham manor
Kete Marsh
Leysdown manor
Loose manor
Lydd Court
Meneland
Meopham manor
Meopham rectory
Mersham manor
Monkton almonry
Monkton manor
Orgarswick manor
Orpington manor
Parkhall
East Peckham manor
Ruckinge manor
Seasalter rectory
Stonebache (part of Seasalter)
Teston manor
Tile Oast in Blean
Westcliffe rectory
Westerham rectory
Westwell manor
Westwell rectory

Norfolk

Deopham manor
Deopham rectory

Oxfordshire

Halton manor
Halton mill

Newington bedelry
Newington manor

Suffolk

Hadleigh bailiwick
Hadleigh/Aldermerty mill
Monks Eleigh bedelry
Monks Eleigh manor

Surrey

Cheam manor
East Horsley manor
Merstham manor

Sussex

Bearsted rectory
Mundham rectory
Pagham rectory