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## THE STORAGE OF CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL ARCHIVES AND THEIR TRAVELS 1541-1967

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From the setting up of the New Foundation cathedral in 1541 the archives (those of the Priory and those generated by the Dean and Chapter) were stored in two places, an exterior treasury or Audit House occupying a lead-roofed chamber beside the Treasury of c.1400 (Willis 1868, p. 188), and an interior treasury which was the twelfth-century *Vestiarium* north of St Andrew's Chapel. The Statutes required that in the Audit House there should be Register Books and Account Books in chests and presses, and in further chests and presses Court Rolls, legal papers (bonds etc.), Rentals and Inventories. There was to be a chest for the Treasurer's petty cash and the farmers and bailiffs of the manors should be summoned to Audit meetings. In the Inner Treasury there should be a chest containing £200 left over from each accounting year 'to be drawn down in case of need', and a smaller chest for the Common Seal, to be kept in the larger chest. Statutes, ordinances and letters patent were to be in another chest, with further chests for muniments for manors, lands, tenements, rents, possessions and liberties, documents later known as *Chartae Antiquae*.

From Somner in 1640 it is known that the 'Church Records' were kept in the Treasury and 'partly in the loft over this vestry', that is over St Andrew's Chapel (Battely 1703, p. 95). The 'loft' had been the 'new chamber of the petty sacrists' created by inserting a floor within the chapel c.1400 (Woodruff 1911, 65). In 1637 at the time of Archbishop Laud's visitation, in a letter he instructed that the muniments were to be inventoried and brought down from the upper into the inner room of the Treasury (Bruce 1868, pp. 86-7). When the floor of the 'loft' was removed in 1864 'several charters and other documents which had obviously slipped through from the upper room' were found (Faussett 1868, 341). On Wilkes' Waterworks Plan (DCc Fabric 35, 1668) the vestry and the Inner Audit are marked with the Audit House beside them. From 1649 the muniments had been removed to Gurney House in Old Jewry, London, and later to Lambeth Palace: at the Restoration in 1660 it was said that the Common Seal and Registers and other records and evidences were

lost (*Archaeologia Cantiana*, 10 (1876), 96); but some, perhaps all, were eventually returned.

Michael Stansfield's study of the Audit House fire of June 1670 (Stansfield 1997, 37-50) shows that the 'loose documents', evidences of title such as the *Chartae Antiquae*, court rolls, leases, terriers and surveys were not damaged and were presumably kept in the Inner Treasury as the Statutes required. He suggests they were kept in large wooden lockers, wooden drawers or boxes and linenfold presses. Fire damage was mainly confined to records in book form, stored in the Audit House as in current use: volumes of Priory estate accounts, Chapter Acts, registers of leases and other business, manorial court records, rentals, though some unbound documents, such as Somner's personal papers, were burnt. It is probable that the fire was in the roof, so that the Audit House was not lost but could be repaired (the work being undertaken in July-August 1670). Some slightly damaged material was rebound in 1691-2: 'Payd Mr Burgess for binding several Registers and Records that had escaped the fire. By order of the Dean & Chapter, £4.6.6' (DCc TB 28, p. 34). Further rebinding was done under Samuel Norris, Auditor, in the 1730s. After the fire the damaged books and papers were carried away and were not given further attention. Hasted observed that '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 one of the rooms over the vestry of the church' (Hasted 1799, p. 528, footnote f).

A new Audit House was built 1719-20 (DCc TB 53, p. 21; TB 54, pp. 43, 57, 58). It was of brick with four sash windows, wainscotted and had a fireplace, shelves and a cupboard. Hasted notes that there were portraits of Henry VIII (as founder) and of Charles I (perhaps that still existing) and of Dr Lynford Caryl, 'late Master of Jesus College, Cambridge, and a Prebendary of this church, a person to whom the body is much indebted for his indefatigable care and industry in the regulation and improvement of their estates' (Hasted, IV, p. 528, footnote b). Dr Caryl's 'Observations' on the individual estates were carefully kept, but lost to Chapter with the estate papers in 1862 and are now found in U 63, the list of returned papers. The new room was comfortable and perhaps impressive. Chapter had removed the spiral staircase from the vestry to the chamber above St Andrew's Chapel in order to make a better entrance to the Audit House from the north presbytery ambulatory.

Cyprian Rondeau Bunce, former King's School boy, lawyer, Alderman, was employed by Chapter to 'arrange all our Papers and Documents' 1804-6. He was described working by a fire in the Audit House by David Powell in 1805 (note copied by Woodruff in Bunce, Schedule I). Bunce showed Powell the Treasury 'most neatly fitted up with wooden casses,

and in particular one large one filling up a spacious Norman wall arch, containing numerous Records which he had or was so diligently arranging'. Bunce also showed Powell the 'loft' above the 'vestry', where Powell admired the painted vault. Hasted had said that 'all the ancient Charters and records of the Church are kept, in large wooden lockers, made in the shape of copes' (Hasted 1799, p. 528). Bunce was concerned with the legal evidences and working papers for the cathedral estates, from which the Chapter derived their income. He catalogued the *Chartae Antiquae*, which had been 'placed in a Nest of Drawers' in the Treasury by Samuel Norris, and created a schedule of the muniments which included 'other ancient Charters, Deeds and Writings, chiefly selected from numerous instruments dispersed in various parts of the Treasuries of this Church'. Bunce called these *Chartae Supplementales*. In his draft introduction to the Schedules he noticed all the classes of document of which the Schedules were comprised, especially the 'Court Rolls, Register Books, Rentals and other Records and Papers, appertaining to the several Manors of this Church' and the leases (DCc/MB 4/4/12). The manors are listed in alphabetical order, with notes of appropriate documents. The Schedules as provided by Bunce were in three volumes with a separate index (they were interleaved in 1905).

Bunce's Schedules left a problem for later archivists: what had he done with the papers which were not concerned with Chapter estates and administration, papers which gradually came to light between 1852-94? There is evidence (see Cressida Williams 1997) in that he had tied up letters in bundles and left them in the Treasury, since Canterbury Letter 105 is endorsed in Bunce's hand 'Ancient Letters to and from Various Persons in a variety of years found in several parts of the Treasury, no. 1'. It seems possible therefore that the larger bundles tied up in old leases which were not found until 1894 may have been assembled by Bunce, since they included the Henry of Eastry letters as well as *Sede Vacante* papers and medieval diocesan presentations and inquisitions. They were stored by some unknown person on top of the Treasury cupboards and were obscured by deed boxes (J.B. Sheppard, 1894, p. 191).

Canon Dr John Russell (Stall XI, 1827-1863) made an inspection of the muniments in 1828-9, as one of a committee of five. He checked the *Chartae Antiquae* in their drawers, and all the Registers. Later he checked the estate papers against the pages of Bunce's Schedules. He listed papers 'wanting' and 'slovenly displaced' (DCc LA/6/5). His draft report does not mention the letters 'from Various Persons' which Bunce had left, but the two volumes of Canterbury Letters (in scrapbooks) can now be proved to have been assembled by Russell. His hand-writing is to be seen on several endorsements and the paper on which the letters are mounted is watermarked 1829 (Williams 1997). J.B. Sheppard had supposed that the Canterbury Letters were the work of Bunce. Russell presumably did

not know of the larger bundles, or if he was aware of them, he thought them safe enough on top of the cupboards in the Treasury.

Further documents came briefly to light in January 1852 while Albert Way, a distinguished antiquary, was staying at 17 The Precincts with his cousin-by-marriage A.P. Stanley (Stall V, 1851-8). Way's letter to Sir Frederick Madden, Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, was quoted by Nigel Ramsay in his chapter on the Cathedral Archives and Library in the *Cathedral History* (1995). A 'parchment scroll' was dropped in the garden of Minor Canon William Bennett at the South Aisle House by the Brickwalk (part of the Priory Infirmary) by 'one of the Cathedral Jackdaws'. Way 'succeeded in penetrating into a Norman chamber, the receptacle of the rejectamenta of the Muniment Room'. He reported that 'the jackdaws had free access, on all sides, heaps and chests of parchments were there'. The Dean ordered the parchments into the Treasury, but the story is not continued (Ramsay 1995, pp. 394-5). It must be said that Way and Madden enjoyed making fun of the clerical keeping of muniments: an account of their visit to Westminster Abbey in 1862 was published in *The Westminster Abbey Chorister* (2007), from Madden's diaries. Way kindly said that the Canterbury 'Documents in the 'Treasury' proper seem in good care and well arranged and docketed', which was praise indeed.

Where was the 'Norman Chamber' into which Way 'penetrated'? It was not in the northern staircase tower attached to the north-east transept, as that was reported in 1861 to have had no floors (DCc Fabric 63/1, p. 16). Since the rooms near the Treasury were used for storing archives, it is likely that the chamber was either that above the Treasury, the present Choir Practice Room, or the chamber over St Andrew's Chapel. The Practice Room is easily reached up the stair within the Treasury wall and does not appear to be a 'Norman Chamber' (it is 1292), except for the Norman work on the former outer wall of the chapel. The chamber over the chapel was more difficult of access, and, when reached, was a Norman chamber. The spiral staircase leading to it had been taken out c.1720 when the new Audit House was built. It could be reached from the Practice Room if there was a stair or ladder in place of the modern wooden steps, though taking many chests and bundles into the chamber would have been difficult. The jackdaws did not have entry 'on all sides' as there are only two windows. When the documents were put in the chamber in 1806 (if this is correct), the windows must have been properly glazed, as Bunce was far too careful to consign papers to a place liable to the entry of weather and birds. Further, when rediscovered the documents were in 'chests & hampers' and some were in 'an oaken portable cupboard', so only some were 'in heaps'.

It seems highly probable that the documents found in 1852 were moved to be stored in the upper rooms or attics at the house which remained on the Archbishop's Palace site (now part of the Old Palace). This building

had been rented from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners by Chapter for use as workshops from 1846, and the freehold was bought in 1852. The whole ground floor was used, divided up between the various trades. The documents were discovered by workmen and about 1863 J.B. Sheppard was shown 'a ragged parchment roll' and told that there 'were several chests and hampers in the workshops of the Church containing similar documents'. Sheppard was engaged in cataloguing archives, so he bribed the workmen and made a 'respectable collection' of a hundred or so records, perhaps by 1876, 'in which the compilers of parochial histories found many useful hints and missing links', so some were estate documents (J.B. Sheppard 1894, p. 190). Others were Priory letters, which Sheppard began to paste into scrapbooks, *Christ Church Letters*, vol. I.

By 1878 the workmen had moved on to the present Works Yard site: H.G. Austin, the Surveyor, was provided with the 'disused workshops' to make himself a house. The documents were moved out into the carpenters' shops, stonemason's shed and stable in the Stone Yard west of the house. The workshops and the Stone Yard, sheds and stable are shown on DCc Map 6 of 1861. There was an official search by Chapter in the Carpenter's Shops, when *Sede Vacante* material was discovered in the 'oaken portable cupboard'. A further search in the Stable in the Stone Yard provided more *Sede Vacante* and items for *Christ Church Letters II* in 1893. Sheppard wrote that he had searched the stone-cutters' shed but there appears to be no record of what he found there. The rest of Bunce's diaspora was found on top of the Treasury cupboards in 1894, in bundles probably made by Bunce and put there by Bunce or Russell. These were described by Sheppard as 'sound and comparatively legible documents in parchment wrappers' (Sheppard 1894, p. 190).

Sheppard died in January 1895: Augustus Jessop in an obituary quotes a letter from Sheppard describing the finding of the documents in the Treasury (Jessop 1894-5, p. 170). He blamed Dr Russell for concealing them 'in about the most inaccessible place he could think of'. As the earlier finds had been made, Sheppard had mounted them in scrapbooks, but in what was later described as 'a wholly fortuitous order' (J.P. Gilson, Report 1905, DCc, LA/5/4). The contents of the scrapbooks show the categories of material regarded by Bunce as outside the scope of his Schedules: letters, *Sede Vacante* documents, and financial records from the Priory, both estates and domestic. The documents found in the Treasury added more items and provided the Eastry letters and some medieval diocesan papers. The scrapbooks included two volumes of *Christ Church Letters* (part of volume I, printed in the Camden Society, First Series 1877); two volumes of *Sede Vacante Books*, 1892 and 1893; three Scrapbooks of Priory papers, known as 'Manuscript Scrapbooks'. In addition there are the collections of Domestic Economy and Rural Economy consisting of unmounted Priory documents, which presumably came from the same

source. There seems no mention of the finding of the Obedientiary Rolls: since the Beadles' Rolls were still in a Treasury cupboard in 1905 'tied in bundles (very thick with dust)' as noted by Gilson, perhaps the Obedientiary Rolls were also in the Treasury and escaped Bunce. It must be said that although the Chapter took the Treasury for a summer vestry in 1873, records were not finally removed from it until 6th March 1924 before the making of the new Treasury cupboards in 1925 (note pasted into Bunce, Schedule I, pt. I). After Sheppard's death, George J. Blore, then Head Master of the King's School and Deputy Librarian, published in the Diocesan Gazette (Blore 1895) a list of 'The Manuscripts in the two Libraries connected with Canterbury Cathedral' (interleaved copy, DCc, LA/5/3). Some were kept in the 1868 Chapter Library, others in the Howley-Harrison Library, especially those found during Sheppard's time. He does not mention records in the Treasury. He had the most valuable assistance of Reginald Lane Poole, who published an account of the muniments, especially those recently discovered, in 1901 (Poole 1901, pp. 205-281). From this time the cathedral records, divided by Bunce, were to be considered as one collection.

But it was often forgotten that yet other records were absent from 'the two Libraries' mentioned by Blore. Among the reforms of the first half of the nineteenth century was that of Church finance and the founding of the Ecclesiastical Commission (1835) to oversee this process, whereby (amongst other matters) the estates of bishops and their cathedrals were annexed for 'the augmentation of poor parochial livings'. After the Dean and Chapter Act of 1840 canonries at Canterbury were reduced (gradually) from twelve to six, so that surplus income went from the Dean and Chapter to the Commissioners (the canons still paid themselves out of their estate income). The Commissioners desired to take over the estates, as they were sure their own management would provide better returns. From 1859 they were in discussions with Chapter towards a 'transfer' of the estates: evidence can be found in Chapter Acts 13, and in papers in 'Boxes in the Basement' 7 (especially 310-29). This transfer was dated from 29th September 1861 under an order in Council of 6th August 1862, by which the estates 'without conveyance or assurance in the Law ... [shall] become and be transferred to and vested in us and our successors [the Commissioners]'. Since the estates had thus changed hands, title deeds and other documents had to be given to the Commissioners. Some were retained here, because some property was allowed to the Chapter, with a money payment of £5,700, to pay salaries and expenses. There was to be a 'Permanent Estate' in due course instead of the cash payment, which was established on 9th August 1860. Documents were sent up on 18th September 1862, listed in DCc BB7/462, a large paper booklet. (The Permanent Estate did not continue: after 1902 all land was exchanged for

Tithe Rent Charges, so that the Chapter owns buildings in the Precincts and some houses and shops in Canterbury but no land elsewhere.)

In the paper booklet of 1862, leases from 1800 were identified, earlier papers were labelled 'Bundle of Old Deeds'. Maps and plans were listed, with the name of the draughtsman if known (1659-1861). 'Surveys and Valuations, Terriers and Miscellaneous Papers' included Terriers from c.1500 and medieval rentals for some manors. Court Rolls, some medieval, were also required. Acts of Parliament concerning the cathedral were from 1770 to 1860. Two Registers of Leases were in the list of 'Miscellaneous Documents', described as Register H and Register I, marked 'to be returned'. They can be identified as Lease Register 44 (1774-77) and Lease Register 45 (1777-1779); but they were not 'returned' until a general return of papers in 1966.

Though a vast number of documents were sent to the Commissioners, they were mostly individual items, not books of record used in the Treasury and Audit House for estate business. However, when the Commissioners were considering the proposed Permanent Estate, they needed access to further details to calculate the exact value of each manor or woodland in order to achieve an income of £17,500 (including rents from the permitted estate of 1862). Perhaps through a visit to Chapter by W.A. Yool, the Commissioners' actuary or accountant, they became aware of the Bunce volumes, which they referred to as 'Canterbury Chapter Schedule Books' or 'Notitia'. They 'obtained a loan of them from the Chapter Treasury with a view to their being used by the Agents and Officers of the Board in their investigations of the titles etc. of the (late) Chapter Estates' (DCc BB7/440). The 'loan' was probably made in March 1864 (DCc BB7/414). When the Permanent Estate had been selected (9th August 1866), the Secretary to the Commissioners wrote to the Dean, declaring that 'the future ownership of the two volumes first mentioned will be properly in the Board, the books being an indispensable accompaniment to the mass of documents which have been handed over as title Deeds of the (late) Capitular property'. The Chapter did not agree: the four volumes were returned on 21st August, though two were again borrowed in December 1866, and returned (DCc BB7/445). Documents relating to the new Permanent Estate were sent back to Canterbury on 23rd March 1867 (DCc LA 4/2). There was a further exchange of documents on 14th August 1879 when Chapter acquired property in the former Archbishop's Palace area and land in Adisham and Bekebourne (DCc LA/4/1).

The 'title deeds' and other documents gathered by the Commissioners from English cathedral chapters in the 1860s eventually passed in the 1930s to the guardianship of the Public Record Office, then in Chancery Lane. In 1959 most of the Court Rolls from Canterbury estates were returned here by the Church Commissioners (heirs to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners since 1948). The rolls were classified as Unofficial



Deposit U 15 and were catalogued in 1990. On 28th September 1966 the main consignment of documents (which had been sent in 1862) was returned to Canterbury. The typed list is marked up with 'items crossed out in blue' kept at the Commissioners; 'items crossed out in Red are missing'; 'items crossed out in Green were handed away previously'; 'items crossed out in Black were destroyed or disposed of'. The green items are U 15, now catalogued. A further small consignment was sent in September 1967: these have been amalgamated with the 1966 group and form Unofficial Deposit U 63 (a tidy version of the Commissioners' typescript, omitting the items crossed out, acts as a catalogue of U 63). It must be noticed that some maps were not returned and can be seen at the Church of England Record Centre in Bermondsey.

Thus it was not until 1967 that the greater part of the documents lost in 1862 was again at Canterbury and the archive comprising the records of the Priory and those of the Dean and Chapter was in some sense complete. Considering that some 'evidences' went to Gurney House and to Lambeth Palace during the Commonwealth, as well as other accidents discussed in this article, it must be a matter of surprise and pleasure that the archive remains carefully guarded, catalogued and in use in its own place.

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