



Glossary

For Schools' Miracle Windows Research Pack



Canterbury
Christ Church
University

C K H H

CENTRE FOR

KENT HISTORY & HERITAGE

Cathedral terms

- **Aisles** the aisles are the walkways at the side of the cathedral. They follow the outer walls and trace round the outside of the centre of the church, therefore allowing people to be funnelled to Becket's shrine while protecting the monks from the everyday folk.
- **Cathedral** a huge church located in important cities. A cathedral is home of the 'cathedra', which is the seat of a bishop or archbishop.
- **Crypt/Undercroft** the large section underneath the eastern end of the cathedral. They are often underground, but Canterbury Cathedral's crypt is rather large, and has tall windows that allow plenty of light in. When a crypt is designed this way, it is known as an Undercroft rather than a crypt. The altar in this area is dedicated to Our Lady Undercroft, cementing its position as an undercroft as opposed to a crypt. After Becket was murdered in 1170, his body was buried at the far eastern end of the undercroft until 1220.
- **Trinity Chapel** the eastern end of Canterbury Cathedral which contains the shrine of St. Thomas Becket. This section of the cathedral was burnt down in 1174 and was rebuilt to house Becket's shrine. It was finished around 1220, when Becket's body was moved from the crypt to the new trinity chapel shrine. This is where the miracle windows are located today, on both the northern and southern aisles.
- **Tomb shrine** the earliest resting place of Thomas Becket where many miracles were recorded by the monks Benedict and William.

Church terms

- **Archbishop** the most important churchman in the kingdom. An archbishop ruled over all other bishops and churchmen in the country. The most important archbishop in England in the medieval period, and still today, is the archbishop of Canterbury.
- **Bishop** a leading churchman who is based in a cathedral. In medieval times, bishops were only men, and they played an important role in the administration of the kingdom.
- **Excommunication** this was the most serious punishment a Christian could suffer in the medieval world. Usually issued by the pope or senior churchmen, such as archbishops, excommunication means that an individual is rejected by the Church. They are no longer allowed to attend church, are no longer protected by its laws, and are classed essentially as an outlaw of Christianity. For a leading statesman, this opens the possibility for their easy removal from office, as they are no longer classed as Christian.

- **Interdict** this is very similar to an excommunication but covers a whole country. Churches were no longer allowed to hold services, there were no baptisms, weddings or funerals conducted by a priest and there was no longer any Church protection over the realm. These were very rare but could happen after extraordinary events or if the pope was angry with a country or its ruler.
- **Martyr** a martyr is someone who died or was killed while fighting for a specific cause. For example, Archbishop Becket was killed for standing up for the rights of the Church, and therefore became a martyr and a focus for all those thought King Henry II was seeking to limit the power of the Church.
- **Monks** men who lived a religious life away from the rest of the world. They lived in monasteries called abbeys or priories which also contained a large church. During Thomas Becket's lifetime, Canterbury Cathedral was home to many monks, with some saying over 100. The monks of Canterbury did not answer directly to the archbishop, but instead answered to the prior, who oversaw all the monks at the cathedral. Women could similarly lead such a religious life, they were known as nuns, and lived in a nunnery. There was a nunnery in Canterbury at the time of Becket too.

Pilgrimage terms

- **Cult** this is the term used to describe the followers of a saint and all the works and objects produced in the name of saint for the sake of pilgrimage. St Thomas had a huge pilgrimage following and had millions of pilgrim badges produced in his name. St Thomas also featured in artworks and stained-glass and churches dedicated to him. All this constituted his 'cult', which is in essence the 'fan-club' of a saint.
- **Miracle** an unexpected cure of an individual's physical or mental health. In the medieval world, these often included the blind being able to see once again, 'madness' being cured, or if someone was terribly sick, they would feel better. Miracles often occurred at the shrines of great saints, such as St Thomas Becket's tomb.
- **Penance** a journey/pilgrimage was one form of penance, whereby the sole intention was to relieve someone of their sins. A penitent would make their way to a certain place, often barefoot and in poor clothes to show their regret and sorrow. They might also face physical punishment by the churchmen or monks of the cathedral or abbey. This system was intended to publicly shame the penitent who had confessed to their wrongdoing and who sought forgiveness from the Church.
- **Pilgrim** a pilgrim is someone who travelled from their home or another starting point to a destination of great importance to them. In medieval times, they would travel to a church or cathedral, such as Canterbury Cathedral. They would travel for many reasons, most commonly to seek a saint's aid. This might include praying for a cure or a miracle from their chosen saint.
- **Saint** a saint is someone who is of very great religious significance. They have to be 'canonised' or made a saint by the pope, who was the most important churchman in the medieval world. There were many saints in medieval Europe, mostly men, but sometimes women and children too. They could be figures from the New Testament

in the Bible, or people who were seen as living very good lives, such as helping the poor, or who were martyrs. Thomas Becket was thought by many to be a saint and martyr.

Society terms

- **King** the king is the most important man in the land. During Becket's lifetime, the king was answerable to no-one in the country, and ruled over all of England. A king was supposed to be kind but powerful and to protect both his people and the Church too. In the twelfth century, kings of England ruled not only England, but also much of France, including Normandy and Aquitaine.
- **Knights** these are men who had proven themselves to the king. Some were great warriors who fought in several battles. Most were born into high status families, and some were related to the king. The king himself was also a knight. To become a knight, a man had to be 'knighted' and swear allegiance to the king or great lord who had knighted him. This often happened around the age of 16. After being knighted, the young knight would be declared a 'man', meaning that he could then rule over lands or lead men into battle.
- **Lord** a lord was a man, or sometimes a woman, who ruled areas on behalf of the king. Sometimes the lord would oversee large areas of land that could span many counties all over England. In some cases, they also held lands in France, often in Normandy. These lords were known as cross-channel lords. The most senior lords were also known as barons, dukes, and earls.
- **Peasants** these were the everyday people of the country. Many were farmers. They held a wide range of different sized land holdings, often these lands were held from their lord to whom they paid rents or other dues. Such payments might be as money, or things like hens, or as work for their lord. Some peasants were landless and might work as farm labourers, some did special jobs such as ploughing. Other peasants might be shopkeepers or smiths in the local village or town.
- **Rebellion** this is where a lord or a king is faced with an uprising on a huge scale. They can happen for many reasons, including taxation (such as the Peasants' Revolt of 1381), changes in religious laws (such as the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536), or if the lords of the land are unhappy with the king (such as the rebellion of the barons under King John, which led to Magna Carta in 1215). They can often erupt due to royal family issues, as was the case in the 1173/4 rebellion.

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