

Canterbury Cathedral was first built in 597 A.D. due to the coming of the first archbishop Augustine from Rome. Canterbury Cathedral is located in Kent, just outside of London. It has been the seat of the spiritual head of the Church of England for five centuries. The Cathedral has withstood several wars, more prominently, World War II and the constant bombings of London. The Cathedral has undergone remodeling or partial destruction at least four times over the centuries, yet still stands as the center of the Anglican religion. The most prominent reconstruction occurred after the fire in 1174, four years after the death of Saint Thomas Becket. The Church was rebuilt in Gothic style and became a shrine to the Archbishop Becket.

Canterbury Cathedral was originally built using stone from Caen, France. The masons had a system of each performing one specific task. There was a Setting Out mason who would prepare templates, the Banker who cut the blocks to fit the templates, the Carve who created the special features and the Fixers who actually bond the stones. The gothic style architecture is characterized by the use of vaulting, flying buttresses, pointed arches and steep high ceilings. A perfect example of this would be the Cathedral's impressive archways. The use of rib-vaults and pointed arches permitted larger window spaces, providing greater access to light. The builders made the pointed arches by placing blunt, wedge-shaped stones called voussoirs on a framework.

Gothic vaults, or ceilings, were difficult to build, considering that the stones had to be precisely set, or the ceiling would collapse. Cathedrals had vaulted ceilings because the medieval builders thought that they helped reduce the risk of fire. They also gave the inside of the cathedral a finished look. Since the high ceilings were so heavy, the builders

would often use flying buttresses to help support them. These graceful columns replaced the massive Romanesque piers.

Since Canterbury Cathedral was built during the Middle Ages, it displays gothic art throughout the Cathedral. The Cathedral was filled with stained glass to serve the illiterate as lessons in science and history. Within the Trinity Chapel inside the Cathedral, there are many windows depicting Archbishop Becket's life and the miracles that had occurred at his tomb shortly after his death. These windows became known as the Miracle Windows, because many pilgrims were comforted by the pictures, and in awe of the colored glass. Within the Choir there were twelve windows that depicted excerpts from the Bible that the illiterate could look at while the priest read that portion out loud.

Before the 1600's, Canterbury Cathedral had many wall paintings. Most of these paintings vanished during the 1600's, and some are just being found hidden behind newer walls, and under other layers of paint. The most visited painting in the Cathedral would be the one depicting the legend of St. Eustace from the 1400's. This picture was found in the 1800's and has since been retouched and hung for visitors to see. One of the walls actually contains pre-Christian motifs and heraldic shields to show that their owners contributed to the Church funds. A painting of St. Paul and the Viper can also be seen in St. Anselm's Chapel. It is hung high in a corner, and wasn't discovered until 1888 behind another wall.

With the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170, Canterbury Cathedral became a famous site for worship. The Archbishop Becket was murdered because he believed that King Henry II shouldn't control the church. He was killed by four knights who had misinterpreted the King's outrage with Becket as the King wanting someone to kill him.

Becket was killed at the altar in Canterbury Cathedral. This event turned Canterbury Cathedral into a shrine, with pilgrims traveling from all over to visit Saint Thomas's tomb, and he remained a popular figure for the remainder of the Middle Ages. These pilgrimages were in fact what inspired Chaucer to write the Canterbury Tales, based on the real pilgrimages. Chaucer also referred to Becket in one of his tales as, "the holy blessed martyr."

Canterbury Cathedral has withstood many centuries of war and damage, yet still remains a prominent head of Christianity. The Cathedral displays many pieces of artwork as well as structure that are no longer common, such as depictions of the Bible in stained glass as a way of teaching peasants the stories. Canterbury Cathedral has lasted this long, preserving its heritage and will continue on for many more generations.

Bibliography

www.canterbury-cathedral.org/

www.cix.co.uk/~archaeology/hilites/canter.htm

www.loyno.edu/~letchie/becket/tour/default.htm

www.passports.com/trips/cityfact/cityfact.asp?city=Canterbury%20Cathedral

www.heritage.me.uk/religiou/canterb.htm

Discovering Britain and Ireland by National Geographic Society

Great Britain by Fodor's 2000

I chose to teach my topic to my younger brother Kevin, because I knew he would be the toughest critic in my family. My brother loves to learn, and constantly asks questions, so I believed that if I wanted to make sure I could teach my topic well, I should first teach it to my brother. As expected, my brother was excited to hear that he was going to be taught about something that he had been interested in learning more about. He was already interested in this topic because we had been to England just a year and a half ago, but we were unable to go in. My brother is the type of person who, when entering a museum will want to read every single thing about an exhibit before moving on, usually long after the rest of us have already left. So you can probably imagine what kind of critic he would be about my teaching. After the fact that I taught my brother he said that I tended to speed up a little while the slide was a little slower. He also asked what a flying buttress was, which I explained was the pillars in the cathedral. Overall he said it was very good, but I needed to calm down. I thought this was a great thing to hear from my brother, considering he is such a harsh critic.