



# THE CHRONICLE 2013

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[centre: The Enthronement 2013 in photographs]	



DAVID J. SHAW

In May 1641 Isaac Bargrave, Dean of Canterbury since 1625, travelled up to the House of Commons to present petitions from the University of Cambridge and from the almsmen, officers, and tenants of Canterbury Cathedral against a bill to abolish deans and chapters.<sup>1</sup> The bill was unsuccessful but Parliament's campaign to suppress the Church of England continued to gather force. By 1642, the Deanery at Canterbury had been seized by parliamentary troops and Bargrave had been taken prisoner; he died the following year and his successor was unable to enter into office until the Restoration in 1660.

In November 1646, the house of Sir Richard Gurney, 'late Lord Mayor of the City of London, a delinquent', was seized and allocated to be used as the office for the trustees for the sale of bishops' lands 'for their better accommodation in the discharge of the trust reposed in them ... and for the safe keeping and laying up of all records, evidences, writings, books, and other things ...'<sup>2</sup> Gurney House was also used as the office for the parliamentary commission set up to administer the goods and properties forfeit under the 1649 'Act for the abolishing of Deans, Deans and Chapters, Canons, Prebends, and other officers or titles belonging to any Cathedral or Collegiate Church or Chapel in England and Wales, and for the employment of their revenues'.<sup>3</sup>

A sequestrator had been appointed in 1644 to supervise the re-use or demolition of Canterbury Cathedral's properties.<sup>4</sup> The library building would have been

one of the buildings considered surplus to requirements and this brought into question the future of the library's books. The confiscation of the Chapter Library collections did not happen immediately, but in March 1650 the Trustees for the Properties of Deans and Chapters issued the following document:

At a meeting of the trustees for deanes and chapters London the 6th of march 1650  
Ordered that Capt<sup>nc</sup> Sherman doe make a catalogue of all the Bookes in the liberarie at Canterburie and that hee take Care for the spedie sendinge of them to Gurny House in the ould Jurie London.<sup>5</sup>

This document was recorded by Woodruff and Danks in *Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral*, where they give the opinion that the books were never taken away to London.<sup>6</sup> Nigel Ramsay was also unsure whether the books had followed the cathedral's archives to Gurney House,<sup>7</sup> but Sheila Hingley has shown conclusively that this was the case: 'They went by road [to Faversham] and then by river to London, in four barrels, a hamper and a box.'<sup>8</sup>

A catalogue was certainly made in 1650: it survives in the Cathedral Archives and is headed 'Confession Books etc seized by the Commissioners & sent to London from this library. 1649.'<sup>9</sup> The date '1649' will be an old-style date (the official new year starting on 25<sup>th</sup> March rather than 1<sup>st</sup> January) and indicates that the catalogue must have been drawn up immediately after the order was made on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1650.

Precisely what happened to the books when they got to London has not been entirely clear, nor precisely when they got there, nor the intention behind the confiscation. We know that the old 15<sup>th</sup>-century library room above the former Prior's Chapel was demolished in the 1650s, probably shortly after the removal of the books, with the result that it needed rebuilding at the Restoration.<sup>10</sup>

The Committee for Compounding, which had taken over some responsibilities from the Trustees for Deans and Chapters, ordered in 1651 that the cathedral's books should be consigned to Mr George Griffith, the Minister of the Charterhouse.<sup>11</sup> It seems that this process did not go smoothly; on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1651, one year after the original order to ship the books to London, the Trustees wrote to the Committee for Compounding to protest about obstructiveness on the part of the Committee's agents in Kent:

Trustees for sale of Dean and Chapters' lands to the Committee for Compounding.

Being obliged by our trust to secure the libraries of the late deans and chapters, we directed the removal of those at Canterbury, as in other places, to London, for disposal by Parliament, and to be kept from the embezzlement threatening them by the decay of the place where they were. Some of your sub-commissioners having interposed, we desire you to prohibit any further interruption in the removal of the books.<sup>12</sup>

The Committee for Compounding followed this up on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1651:

Committee for Compounding to the Commissioners for Sequestrations, co. Kent.

The Trustees for sale of Dean and Chapter lands inform us that you withstand their order directing the disposal of the library belonging to the late Dean and Chapter of Canterbury to Mr. Griffith, minister of the Charter House, London. We desire you to deliver the said library to Mr. Griffith, or his assignee, by catalogue, to be indented, one part thereof left with you, and the catalogue returned to us.<sup>13</sup>

My interpretation of these documents is that the books did indeed remain in Canterbury following the Trustees' order to Captain Sherman and the drawing up of the catalogue in March 1650 and that it took a further instruction from London a year later to ensure their delivery. The date of their carriage to London as recorded by Sheila Hingley is May 1651.<sup>14</sup> It may be possible to deduce from this that the old library had still not been demolished until mid-1651 at the earliest.

The books did eventually get to the Charterhouse in London, as there is a record that one of the new canons appointed at the Restoration, Dr John Castillion, travelled up to London to arrange for their return in 1661 and was obliged to pay £20 to Mr Griffith, the Minister, presumably as compensation for their removal. New boxes had to be made for their transport by water to Faversham,<sup>15</sup> which indicates that they had indeed been unpacked and put to use at the Charterhouse.

The copy of the 1650 catalogue in the

Cathedral Archives is probably the one which was ordered to be returned to the commissioners at Gurney House. It carries the subscription 'Pray place your books whear you had them' which could hardly have been written by someone with knowledge of the destruction of the old library in Canterbury; this annotation was presumably made in London and authorised Castillion to reclaim the collection.

Is this story of the confiscation of the Chapter Library simply one of Puritan animus against the Anglican cathedral and its goods and estates? It seems that the parliamentary authorities recognised the importance of the Chapter Library and understood that it would not survive if left in Canterbury with no cathedral personnel to care for it. Gurney House was not an appropriate permanent home for the collection: it was the administrative offices of the Trustees, not a warehouse. Their choice of the Charterhouse as a recipient seems a sensible one which might ensure that the books would continue to serve an academic purpose. The library at Lambeth Palace was sent off at much the same time to augment the university library at Cambridge and the books of St Paul's Cathedral went to Sion College,

both with some similar idea of ensuring that they served a useful public purpose. The principal task of the Trustees was to identify and sell off the lands and properties belonging to the Church to provide funds for the government; they needed the relevant Chapter archives for this purpose and these were eventually moved out to Excise House,<sup>16</sup> but the library books would not have had sufficient value for the commissioners to be interested in selling them. It is to their credit that they exercised their duties in such a way as to wish to safeguard the library. Not all cathedral libraries were so lucky during the Civil War.

When the books returned to Canterbury in 1661, there was no library building to house them. The story of the construction of the new library in the mid-1660s and the notable success of the Dean and Chapter in augmenting the collection by gift and by purchase over the next two centuries is one whose essentials have been told by Nigel Ramsay and by Margaret Sparks and Karen Brayshaw. The present story shows how fortunate the cathedral was, after the post-Reformation dispersal of its medieval collections, not to have lost in 1651 the early-modern library which Dean Isaac Bargrave had established in 1628.

<sup>1</sup> Sidney Lee, 'Bargrave, Isaac (bap. 1586, d. 1643)', rev. Stephen Bann, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, online version at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1370>, accessed May 2010.

<sup>2</sup> *Journals of the House of Lords*, [London, HMSO, n.d.], VIII, p. 583.

<sup>3</sup> 30 April 1649: *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, ed. C H Firth and R S Rait (3 vols; London, 1911), ii, p. 81.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Sparks, *Canterbury Cathedral Precincts. A historical survey*, Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, 2007, pp. 88–89.

<sup>5</sup> CCA DCc/LA/1/5. The document was signed by five of the commissioners: 'Johnstoun [John Stone], Mar Hildersom [Mark Hildesley], Collonell Roulfe [William Rolf], Georg Langham [George Langham], William Wyberd'.

<sup>6</sup> C E Woodruff and W Danks, *Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral*, London, 1912, p. 388.

## THE CHAPTER LIBRARY DURING THE PARLIAMENTARY INTERREGNUM

<sup>7</sup> Nigel Ramsay, 'The Cathedral Library and Archives', in: *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 382.

<sup>8</sup> Sheila Hingley, 'Cathedral Libraries: The Great Survivors', *CULIB - Cambridge University Libraries Information Bulletin*, Issue 63, Michaelmas 2008; see also Sheila Hingley, 'Ecclesiastical libraries: libraries for the higher clergy', in: *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, vol. 2: 1640–1850, edited by Giles Mandelbrote and K A Manley, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 122–133.

<sup>9</sup> CCA DCc/LA/1/6.

<sup>10</sup> Ramsay, 'Cathedral Library', p. 383; Sparks, *Canterbury Cathedral Precincts*, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Public Record Office, *Calendar of the proceedings of the Committee for Compounding &c.: preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty's Public Record Office; 1643–1660*, ed. M A E Green, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for HMSO, 1889–1892, I, pp. 429, 434. Sheila Hingley is wrong in stating that the original order of 1650 was made by the Committee for Compounding.

<sup>12</sup> *Committee for Compounding*, I, p. 429.

<sup>13</sup> *Committee for Compounding*, I, p. 435.

<sup>14</sup> See also Margaret Sparks and Karen Brayshaw, *A History of the Library at Canterbury Cathedral*, Canterbury: Friends of Canterbury Cathedral, 2011, p. 10 and note 16.

<sup>15</sup> Sparks and Brayshaw, *History*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> Ramsay, 'Cathedral Library', p. 383.