

The Relics of Thomas Becket in England

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While Becket's relics are likely to have been owned by institutions and individuals throughout much of later medieval England, the reliable surviving evidence for them is limited. Without pretending to anything like completeness, the present essay assesses a range of sources in order to determine (or at least suggest) their usefulness for constructing a historically rooted understanding of the definition, distribution, appearance, and housing of Becket-relics. The approach taken arises partially from an ambition to cover as much ground as possible in the available space, and partially from misgivings about the value of documents whose original contexts cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed. The analysis is intended to contribute to scholarship on the cult of Becket generally in later medieval England: to this end, evidence has been sought widely and Canterbury receives less attention than the reader might expect, although the essay turns to the cathedral priory at the end.

INTRODUCTION

THOMAS Becket and relics go together like blood and water. However, the subject of Becket-relics is rarely tackled by itself, and most of what has been said of it – historically and in modern scholarship – naturally centres on Canterbury cathedral. By contrast, this essay is focused squarely on relics, and reviews evidence from England broadly as well as from

Canterbury. While this broader evidence has not been ignored in the past, it never appears to have been marshalled as it is below.¹ This is the essay's main justification.

In saying that evidence has been marshalled, I do not pretend to have looked at all of the relevant sources. What follows is no more or less than a selective exploration of ways in which relics appear in surviving relic-lists and other documents, arranged in order to cover as much ground as possible in the available space. The questions asked of this material are basic ones that rely as little as possible on hypothesis. As such, the essay may look like the preface to a larger study; if so, then this is due to a wish to avoid the straightforward listing of examples, which may seem an obvious approach to Becket-relics in England but would involve much repetition and, it seems to me, a less mindful assessment of evidence. From what is offered here, an impression of the national diffusion of Becket-relics should nevertheless arise, and an advance be made on a subject which could easily and profitably be extended. With regard to sources, I have excused myself from deep trawling in the sacred biographies published in the Rolls Series and elsewhere, in part because useful work has been and is being carried out on the evidence for relics in these texts, and in part out of a wish to place greater emphasis on the later middle ages than is usually done.² This orientation is a matter of personal preference, but it also responds to a common assumption that Becket's cult (as distinct from the quantity of hagiography it generated) waned in the period after 1300. While the notion of decline will not be tested directly here, it is worth saying that although aspects of Becket-veneration in England may have changed in relation to Becket's political recontextualisation, his homogenization vis-à-vis other saints, the ways he was depicted, and various other things, the cult suffered no obvious setback until the years 1536-38.³ Outside Canterbury, the stake of relics in the late medieval cult – as in individual saint-cults generally – may indeed have declined from an early peak,

particularly relative to that of images, but the evidence for this needs to be tested and a survey of the relics is one place to start.

To manage expectations about what follows, it should be noted up front that investigation of the various classes of Becket-relic is beyond the compass of the following discussion. However, in order to contextualise the examples that arise, two basic points may be helpful. The first is simply that the most commonly encountered of these classes are corporeal relics (i.e. parts and products of the saint's body: blood, 'body-fluid', brain, heart, bone, flesh, skin, fat, hair, dust) and vestment relics, with a third class that may be called 'personal accessories' some distance behind but still common enough.⁴ One could argue for more than this, but I will not do so except to notice things like swords and paving-stones and recognise the concept of 'locational' or 'ambient' Becket-relics at Canterbury and elsewhere. The second point is that, while corporeal relics may be thought somehow superior, and blood is recorded more often than any other type of relic, Becket's vestments appear to have played an equally prominent part in the dissemination of his cult among English religious institutions.⁵ Including the burial shroud and worn pontifical ornaments, at least twenty distinct vestment-types emerge from English documents.⁶ The value given to these items is suggested by various things, not least the role they played in Becket's legendary relationship to the Virgin Mary, and also images whose artists rendered vestments with special care, such as the remarkable drawing of the saint in the Black Book of the Exchequer (Kew, The National Archives, E 36/266, fol. 10v: c.1240-50) (Fig. 1).⁷

WHILE this is no place to speculate about the quiddity of relics in general, a preparatory observation about historical attitudes to Becket-relics per se is needed due to the vast quantity and range of things that could be counted as relics where a saint of recent and local provenance had owned, used and commissioned much.⁸ Like kings, archbishops left a lot of material objects in their wake: in Becket's case, these included books, buildings, documents (with and without seals), vestments, ornaments, household items, and other things. While one's instinct may be to regard many or all such things as relics, the sources suggest a distinction. For example, in the inventories of Canterbury cathedral priory compiled for Prior Eastry in the early 14th century, various items associated with Becket, and presumably given by him, are listed with other objects of their type rather than with the relics. They are simply designated 'of saint Thomas' (*sancti Thome*), the form used in relation to other distinguished donors.⁹ Elsewhere, at Canterbury College Oxford at the end of the middle ages, books available to the monk-students included some 'of saint Thomas the martyr', observing the same form. There is no indication that the inventory-makers thought these books special: the designation *martiris* was evidently added simply to avoid confusion with Aquinas, who is referred to as *sanctus Thomas* in the same lists.¹⁰ This distinction also emerges where custodians judged it necessary to state that an object which might otherwise have been taken for a gift or historical curiosum was in fact a holy relic. Thus, in an inventory of the valuables of St Paul's cathedral in London, dated 1245, a staff or crutch (*potentia*), and comb of Becket appear, 'which are regarded as relics' (*que habentur pro reliquiis*).¹¹ Elsewhere, in a record of episcopal visitation of the hospital of St Julian at Southampton in 1290, a list of moveable items includes an ivory pen said to have belonged to Becket, 'which is kept with the relics' (*tenetur pro reliquiis*).¹²

There is no suggestion in the latter two cases that the relic-status of the objects cited was dubious, or that the matter needed testing, as was evidently the opinion with regard to another comb kept at the parish church of Tillingham in Essex, described in 1249 as ‘a small, long comb, once, as it is claimed (*ut dicitur*), belonging to blessed Thomas’.¹³ Rather, what emerges in these and other documents is that attribution to Becket was not a sufficient guarantor of relic-status. Thus, for the modern scholar, something more definite is needed to identify a Becket-relic, such as inclusion in a relic-list or reliquary, or else direct testimony. Where this appears, there is usually no reason to doubt the historical relic-status of a given object, even if a similar object may not have been considered a relic elsewhere. It is remarkable that when, in the 1230s, some Canterbury monks confessed to tearing a charter issued by Becket, and transferring its seal to a copy, no anxiety was expressed about damaging something sacred. This may have been because the supposedly torn charter never really existed; but in any case, none of the cathedral’s surviving inventories lists Becket-sealed documents as relics.¹⁴ Conversely, a certain letter kept at the collegiate church of Warwick was listed as a relic in 1464, apparently because it bore Becket’s seal.¹⁵ These and other factors complicate the question of what may now be identified as a Becket-relic in an obvious way, and evoke some of the general challenges of studying medieval relics.

Fortunately, the different ontological problem of whether a relic attributed only to ‘St Thomas’ belonged to Becket or the apostle for whom he was named, rarely arises. A reliquary recorded c.1482 in the parish church of St Stephen Walbrook, London, contained ‘diuerce’ relics ‘of sent George, and of Sent Thomas’: this is unclear, and the fact that the church was hard by the place of Becket’s birth is merely suggestive.¹⁶ On the other hand, part of a shirt ‘of St Thomas’ owned by the Benedictine nuns at Derby in 1536 almost certainly was considered a Becket-relic, because a shirt is one of the commonest such relics

in surviving lists, but does not appear in English sources in relation to the apostle.¹⁷ The same may be said of the comb at Tillingham, a type of relic recorded unambiguously of Becket in several sources but never of Thomas the apostle (also indicative in the Tillingham record is the form *beati Thome* rather than *sancti*). It is tolerably clear, too, that a reference to relics 'of St Thomas' done up in a cloth with those of other saints at Lincoln cathedral in 1536 refers to Becket, because Thomas 'of India' and Thomas Cantilupe are designated as such elsewhere in the same set of documents.¹⁸

As it happens, there is usually little to gain by fastidiousness about the distinction between historical curiosity and sacred relic mooted above. Clearly, the two properties were not mutually exclusive.¹⁹ For example, due to the context of the record, it seems likely that 'a pontyfycall off saynt Thomas of Canterbury closed in silver' kept at the parish church of All Hallows, London Wall, in 1501, was thought to be sacred as well as curious on account of its supposed provenance, albeit it is not referred to specifically as a relic.²⁰ The same may reasonably be assumed of the Becket-comb given to Butley priory in Suffolk in 1534 by one of the canons there, a brass candlestick with Becket associations left by a vicar of All Saints, Bristol, to his church in 1270, a Becket-sandal (*crepita s. Thome martyris*) recorded at the collegiate church of Heytesbury (Wiltshire) in 1220, and an ivory pin ('pyne de euere'), said to have belonged to Becket, bequeathed by one noblewoman to another in 1319, although, again, none of these things is called a relic.²¹ It is true that in such cases the standards of evidence for relic-status were probably not high, but this question can scarcely be entertained at such a historical distance. These standards are invisible in the records of great monasteries and secular churches and may not have been consistently high there either. It is impossible in most cases to detect the original reasons for accepting a given fragment of bone, leather, or cloth, or particle of hair or dust, as a Becket-relic. If one casts a

wide net, one finds that standards of evidence do sometimes emerge in relation to English relics, but their exercise usually appears to have been triggered by ad hoc qualms about a relic's source rather than its substance.²² Thus, for example, the doubts of an abbot of St-Denis about the authenticity of certain Becket-relics (an inch-long piece of scalp together with the hair on it), which he declared 'to be vain forgeries' (*vanas et transfactorias esse*), evidently arose from mistrust of the lay servant who conveyed them. They can hardly have emerged from inspection of the objects, because medieval relic-collections, including that of St-Denis, were full of such things. The abbot was, anyway, prepared to admit the relics if they were authenticated by the pope or the incumbent prior of Canterbury, Henry of Eastry (ruled 1285-1331).²³ In short, the question of credibility, so familiarly evoked by the character-sketch of the Pardoner in Chaucer's General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* (lines 694-706), has to be set aside where it does not obviously permeate the evidence.

Accepting the documentation for Becket-relics at something like face value does relatively little to simplify the subject under review because much of this documentation is resistant to even cautious interpretation. This is true not just of relic-lists but also where, as occasionally with chronicles, records of Becket-relics occur in narratives. A medley of issues arises at this point, only some of which can be noted here. Probably the clearest is uncertainty about the signification of terms (e.g. what in formal and material terms was actually meant by *staminum*, *substantia corporis*, *benda*, and so on). This problem, which is fundamental to the question of the appearance of relics, is nearly always present to some extent, and has naturally to be set aside for practical purposes. In numerous cases there is no specific term at all, and thus effectively nothing to help one envisage what is referred to. As with other saints, it is common to find Becket-relics listed simply as 'of' Becket (*de sancto Thome*, 'relikes of Seint Thomas of Canterbury' etc.). There is a range of possible reasons for

this economy, of course – e.g. ignorance, larger interest in reliquaries than their contents, pious lack of concern for detail – but this is beside the point. Difficult references about the number and arrangement of relics also crop up: Rachel Koopmans has considered some of these in the Reading abbey relic-list, where certain Becket-relics are designated ‘in two places’ or ‘in three places’ (*in duobus* or *tribus locis*) in what now seems an ambiguous way.²⁴ Further, where the existence of more than one list from a given institution exists, the inconsistencies that tend to arise are unsettling because hard or impossible to reconcile. For example, the Becket-relics recorded at St Paul’s cathedral in 1245 do not appear in another inventory of the same scope taken in 1295. Different relics are mentioned instead: two pieces of the saint’s head (*duas pecias de capite*) and some unspecified items lodged in crystal vessels.²⁵ There is not enough evidence here to assume a fluidity among the relics according to which some departed while others arrived. Where more specific documentation exists, as from Westminster Abbey in the period 1467-1520, it is occasionally possible to detect a degree of churn among relics and associated valuables, but it is risky to extrapolate from these situationally peculiar cases.²⁶ One’s instinct is to think that some other, unknown, reason lies behind the differences in the St Paul’s inventories, at least with regard to the absence of the comb and staff/crutch in 1295, items which the canons seem unlikely to have offloaded.

Glastonbury provides a more complex picture, and with it a better sense of the possibilities and problems of the evidence. The abbey’s monks generated at least three surviving relic-lists in the 13th and 14th centuries, two of them seemingly discrete documents and one incorporated into their domestic chronicle. There are differences among the Becket-relics in each case. The earliest list, evidently composed c.1240-47, contains relics of the cowl, buskins (*pedule*), cloak, and hair-shirt, plus a cloth stained with

blood (all common Becket-relics).²⁷ A longer list, of early-14th-century date, adds much to this in terms of quantity and specific information. As many as twenty relics are now recorded; the aforementioned cloth (if it was the same one) is said to be stained with brains as well as blood, the cowl is identified as the one used by Becket around the time of his martyrdom (*de cuculla qua tempore sui martirii usus fuit*), and the buskins said to have been on his feet when he died.²⁸ Conversely, and unexpectedly given its popularity as a Becket-relic, the hair-shirt is no longer named, although whatever the monks thought they had of it is possibly included silently under a reference to 'all the vestments' (*de uniuersis uestimentis*) or another to *de uestimentis*. The third, slightly later, list in the chronicle is essentially the same except that it introduces Becket's 'knife with a coral sheath' and his 'ring with a peridot which he was wearing at the hour of his passion'. The increments, which are paralleled in these lists with reference to other saints, suggest an active pursuit of relics over the period, and the ring is known to have been donated by Adam of Sodbury, abbot from 1323 to 1334.²⁹ Where Becket in particular is concerned, any such pursuit would chime with evidence for the augmentation of his cult by abbots Robert of Petherton (ruled 1261-74) and John of Kent (ruled 1291-1303).³⁰ It might also be taken to reflect the fraternal ties between Glastonbury and Canterbury cathedral priory reflected in the latter's martyrologies.³¹ Equally, however, the differences may have some other cause. For instance, it may be that the compiler of the 1240s list, or the copyist responsible for its survival, did not include everything he could have. Much depends on what one thinks these lists were made for. If I. G. Thomas is correct in suggesting that the 13th-century list was actually made to supplement the chronicle that precedes it in the same manuscript then the compiler may not have felt obliged to be as thorough as he might if producing a forensic inventory.³² In fact, the real reason, or reasons, fall within a spectrum of possibility which (in

the language of realpolitik) is far richer in known and unknown unknowns than it is in certifiable facts.

This point about the bearing of a document's purpose on its value as evidence in a certain context, which is perfectly familiar to medievalists, can be made more clearly of Becket-relics by turning to Westminster Abbey and Salisbury cathedral. John Flete, prior of Westminster from 1456 to 1466, included a list of relics in an institutional history compiled with the aim of educating fellow monks about the abbey's glory.³³ His purpose led him to arrange the contents in a special way, according to both the names of illustrious donors and the identity of the relics. Most of the donors mentioned are kings, of whom Henry III is said to have given various conventional Becket-relics, i.e. parts of the hair-shirt, cloak (*pellicium*), surplice or mantle (*superpellectium*), and 'other vestments', plus an ivory comb and quantity of blood. Several clerical donors are also identified, including Becket himself, who gave an ivory statue of the Virgin Mary, 'excessively beautiful and very important to him' (*pulchram nimis et sibi specialissimam*).³⁴ Flete omitted certain saintly relics from his list, including some important ones, for whom prestigious donors could not be named, because his aim was to conflate the abbey's spiritual and political capital as adroitly as possible. By contrast, the relic-lists included in two shrine keepers' inventories made in 1467 and 1479, soon after Flete was working, do not specify the things Henry III gave, and while they include two ivory statues of the Virgin, neither is identified with Becket. This does not mean that the Becket-relics had disappeared in the intervening decade (it is most unlikely that the monks would have parted with such things), but simply that the aims of the shrine-keepers were different and thus that they recorded things differently. These monks had to be able to render an account of precious objects that were vulnerable to loss through theft and carelessness, so their focus was on what they could see: shrines, pyxes, images, and so on. Probably, their

record of an 'ymage of our lady of iverye with a crowne of golde upon hir hede and our lord in hir armes' refers to the object noticed by Flete, but because the association of this object with Becket was invisible, they did not mention it.³⁵

The Salisbury examples reinforce the point through documents made for different purposes than those from Westminster. A 15th-century relic-list in a Sarum processional contains 240 entries, designated in a preamble to be read aloud in English on the cathedral's feast of relics. It has the iterative form and hierarchical arrangement of a litany, with separate sections for Christ with the Virgin Mary and apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins. In most cases, the individual entries simply record 'a relic of saint' followed by the name, although a few are more specific as to number or type. Near the beginning of the list of martyrs comes 'Too reliques of Seint Thomas of Canterbury'.³⁶ It was unnecessary for the purposes of the document to identify these relics by type. However, an inventory of the cathedral treasury taken in 1536 is more revealing, recording a casket containing an arm of Becket and some other unspecified relics, one of which presumably accounted for the second of the two mentioned in the processional.³⁷ The fact that this entry is in a list of images rather than relics per se suggests that the arm-relic was housed in a 'talking' reliquary of the customary shape.³⁸ Thus, according to its particular purpose, each document yields evidence not contained in the other.

THE SIZE AND HOUSING OF BECKET-RELICS

THE record of an 'arm' here evokes the problem of appearance – that is, basically, of form, size, and housing – which arises when one tries to imagine what a documented but lost relic might have looked like. In the past, the vagueness of sources on this front functioned to the

disadvantage of the cult of relics by enabling assumptions (both innocent and knowing) about impossibly large numbers and clerical bad faith. The records of 'arms', 'heads', and other body-part reliquaries in the sources are particularly vulnerable to this; one thinks of G. Coulton's mordant remarks on 'five heads of John the Baptist'.³⁹ In fact, such a reliquary might be justified by only a small fragment of bone or flesh believed to have come from the body-part it symbolised. This well-known fact helps explain how the English royal treasury could have in it 'a hede of Seynt Thomas of Canterbury of golde stondyng upon a base' (assuming this was a reliquary) six years before the Canterbury shrines were destroyed.⁴⁰

In the absence of contradictory evidence, it is a safe enough guess that most Becket-relics were small if not minuscule and did not evoke the form of a specific bone, vestment, or other object. The main grounds for this are first, that most surviving relics of other saints are small and formally nondescript, and secondly, that with regard to corporeal relics, Canterbury's incontestable claim to the whole relic of the body would have been challenged by the dissemination of large body-parts.⁴¹ A sense of what was probably typical in terms of size and appearance is had from an early-14th-century English reliquary tablet currently on loan to the Victoria and Albert museum (Fig. 2).⁴² This has fourteen labelled relics set in the frame behind glass or crystal, four of which are Becket-relics: parts of an unspecified vestment, the blood (evidently blotted into cloth), the hair-shirt, and a burial-vestment acquired at the translation (*svmptus ad translacionem eivs*) (Fig. 3). Each is about 10 mm long or less: this is roughly what is meant here by 'small'. Broader support for the assumption that relics were typically small is found where a document's author felt it necessary to insist that a relic under his review was not of small size or quantity. Thus, Becket-relics at St Augustine's abbey, Canterbury, are described in the domestic chronicle as 'a great part (*magnam partem*) of the blood that he shed' and 'not a little' (*non modico*) of

the brain.⁴³ Similarly, the corresponding chronicle from Peterborough abbey specifies ‘a great quantity (*maximam quantitatem*) of his blood’ in two crystal vessels.⁴⁴ Just possibly, the quantity was emphasised in these cases to distinguish the relics from ordinary ampules of ‘Becket-water’ during a period (1176-77) when that item was popular, but this does not alter the point. Elsewhere, Exeter cathedral claimed a large piece (*pars magna*) of Becket’s hair-shirt and a larger one (*maxima pars*) of his bloodstained *camisia*, Shrewsbury abbey the whole rochet (*rogeth integer*) in which he celebrated mass, and Waltham abbey a long strip (*corrigia longa*) from the girdle he was wearing when laid out after death.⁴⁵ But such references are unusual, while the specific information that the scalp-relic at St-Denis was an inch in size (or perhaps the size of a thumb: *ad mensuram pollicis*) is exceptional.⁴⁶ Of course, these comments about size and quantity do not apply to certain complete and thus readily visualised objects counted as Becket-relics, including the combs, knife, ring, and image already mentioned, other knives owned by the monks of Bath and Bury St Edmunds, the sword-relics preserved at Canterbury, Carlisle cathedral (recorded 1536), and the Temple church at London (recorded 1307), the paving-stone, or stones, in the Reading abbey collection, and such oddments as the head-hairs claimed by Reading and Wimborne minster in Dorset.⁴⁷

Occasionally, information about a relic-container is given that corroborates this point about the small size of Becket-relics. The pendant reliquary associated with Margaret of Sicily (d. 1183) now in New York is only 5.1 × 3.2 cm, but according to its inscription it held relics of at least five vestments plus some blood.⁴⁸ Less clearly, but still indicatively, the monks of the Cistercian abbey of Meaux in Holderness kept a cache of vestment-relics (chasuble, alb, ‘vestments’, belt, hair-shirt, shirt, cloak, plus *de substancia corporis* – perhaps Becket-dust) in a little box (*cistulam*) of ivory.⁴⁹ Glastonbury’s monks housed at least

seventeen Becket-relics in 'a smaller round box' (i.e. smaller than one holding relics of St Edmund Rich), some of them bound up together in packets (*partier ligate*), conceivably to make a larger thing out of items whose individual size rendered them vulnerable to loss.⁵⁰ And at Minster in Thanet priory in 1536 the nuns were found to have a 'smale pixe ... with relikkes of seyntt Thomas of Caunterburye' in their dormitory.⁵¹ In relation to this point, and for the avoidance of possible doubt, it may be noted that surviving relic-boxes with Becket-imagery, some of which may have been used in England, give no clear indication of the size of their original contents.⁵² These boxes, which are often about 150 or 200 mm long (they are sometimes a little larger), are likely to have contained objects associated with various saints, for relics were routinely stored together for the sake of decorum, security and perhaps ease of use. Many churches appear to have kept most or all their portable relics in one shrine, whose size is rarely indicated but which need not have been longer than 150-200 mm. For example, a 15th-century relic-list from St Chad's college in Shrewsbury has thirty-seven entries for relics of Christ and various saints kept *in feretro*, including, about halfway down, pieces of Becket's hair-shirt and the chasuble he was buried in.⁵³ In any case, it is unsafe simply to assume that boxes with Becket-imagery actually held Becket relics. A scene of his murder combined with crucifixion or other imagery was generically suitable to a reliquary, especially one holding relics of martyrs. At St George's college, Windsor, there was a reliquary displaying scenes of the crucifixion of Christ and martyrdom of St Stephen, but it held no relics of St Stephen (it did, however, hold relics of other saints, including particles of Becket's hair-shirt and bones).⁵⁴

As a rider to these comments about relic-size, it is worth acknowledging that while small relics were undoubtedly the norm, there was no barrier in theory to claims of larger relics of vestments, pontifical regalia, and other things which Becket could be assumed to

have owned, used, or touched in numbers. Thus, Shrewsbury abbey's whole rochet is acceptable, as is the fact that Becket's hair-shirt could be seen hanging up – evidently whole – in the cathedrals of Canterbury and Santiago de Compostela.⁵⁵ A reference to a shirt-relic belonging to St George's college at Windsor having been washed by a laundress has reasonably been thought to show that the object was relatively large.⁵⁶ This reference also suggests that the shirt in question was a 'quotidian' one not associated with the saint's murder (for why have a servant wash away Becket's blood?). These cases highlight a point it seems worth pausing to emphasise, namely, that not all vestment- and insignia-relics ascribed to Becket in the sources were directly implicated in his martyrdom. Indeed, in the absence of any indication that the relic was worn when he was murdered or buried, one may suppose otherwise. Claims that relics came from vestments worn in specific circumstances are of themselves evidence for historical awareness of the tendency of such relics to proliferate. Thus, in addition to the rochet worn at mass (Shrewsbury abbey again) and the cowl worn around the time of martyrdom (Glastonbury), there is a reference, perhaps from Byland abbey, to a relic of the buskins in which Becket was consecrated (*de peduli cum quo consecratus fuit*).⁵⁷ Where they occur, such situational links imply an interest in Becket's biography, a theme manifest at Canterbury, where the Bohemian nobleman Leo of Rozmital and his companions, when they visited in 1466, were shown the chalice with which Becket celebrated private masses, a spring from which he drank, an image of the Virgin which he often talked with, and other things apart from the celebrated ones to do with the murder.⁵⁸ These objects were unique in their associations rather than their types: Hulne, a Carmelite friary in Northumberland, also claimed a cup attributed to Becket, a well of St Thomas at Wymondham (Norfolk) was a local pilgrimage attraction, and another special Becket-image of the Virgin at Westminster Abbey has already been noted.⁵⁹ In

general, the assumption that Becket had owned multiples of vestments and other things helps to explain both the geographical and social permeation of his relics and Canterbury's ongoing capacity to produce them. This capacity is lampooned in Erasmus's account of the prior offering to gift a sweat-soiled handkerchief to his guests, a type of Becket-relic that did indeed exist (Lesnes abbey in Kent had a relic *de sudario*).⁶⁰ It is indicated more prosaically in other sources, including by 'a relyke of Syntte Thomas of Canterbury' given to Croscombe parish church in Somerset in 1520, reasonably explained as the fruit of a personal pilgrimage to Canterbury cathedral.⁶¹

As to how Becket-relics were housed, the indications given above are typical of the evidence. With rare exceptions, one is either told nothing about the matter (as for example with the fourteen or more relics at Reading abbey, the twelve-odd at Waltham, and the nine at Shrewsbury abbey), or a precious container of a generic type is recorded. In a 16th-century list of relics at Coventry cathedral priory, relic and container appear to be conflated: 'a relique of Saynt Thomas of Canterburie parte syluer and parte copper'.⁶² Where crystal or glass is indicated, it is at least possible that the relic under or within it was intended to be visible at the time of its enclosure. Crystal 'vases' are specified at St Paul's cathedral and Peterborough, with the relics being contained in the foot of one of the vessels at London.⁶³ At Meaux abbey there was a glass 'urn'.⁶⁴ Glastonbury had Becket-relics in a 'crystal', a term commonly used in such contexts but even less formally distinct.⁶⁵ The monks of Durham owned a 'pyx' ornamented with crystal stones (though perhaps not of itself transparent), while at Ely, two 'phylacteries' given by Bishop Eustache (1198-1215) contained relics of Becket and other saints under stones, presumably clear ones and if so then perhaps something like the surviving reliquary tablet in the Victoria and Albert museum, mentioned above.⁶⁶ In the treasury at Worcester cathedral priory there was 'a monstrans with pe

brayns of Seint Thomas of Canterbury'.⁶⁷ While a see-through container seems particularly well-suited to displaying blood or brains, which were striking and evocative relics, these references cover a range of relic-types, including vestments. A container for Becket-related items might just as well be opaque, of course, as those at Salisbury, Windsor, Glastonbury (the 'smaller pyx'), Meaux (the ivory pyx), and elsewhere evidently were. At Meaux, twelve Becket-relics were sealed in a silver cross, and at Lesnes abbey, which was dedicated to Becket, relics of his chasuble, dalmatic, handkerchief, and silk winding-sheet were enclosed with others of Christ and the Virgin in the foot of a cross which seems to have stood on the high altar.⁶⁸ The list associable with Byland abbey includes relics deposited in an altar dedicated to St Stephen in 1200: along with the relic *de peduli* were particles of the hair-shirt and cowl, plus bones of other, older saints.⁶⁹ At Peterborough there were two *altaria de lapidibus* on which Becket's body was laid out (*super quos ... occubuit*), which have reasonably been interpreted as paving stones incorporated into portable altars.⁷⁰

These attempts to say something about the size, form, and housing of Becket-relics do not amount to an argument for how these relics were actually viewed. In fact, relics of all descriptions are in most cases likely to have been normally invisible in the later middle ages, and permanently so where they were kept in grand shrines or buried in altars or the foundations of buildings.⁷¹ Without speculating on the purposes and functions of Becket-relics in any detail, it seems probable that most of them were normally accessible only to the sacrists, shrine-keepers etc. responsible for their care. Except at Canterbury cathedral and some continental churches which attracted English pilgrims (e.g. Compostela; Sta Maria Maggiore in Rome, where there was an 'arm'), relics of the saint usually seem to have formed unexceptional elements of larger collections that were locked away out of sight to keep them secure.⁷² In special circumstances they may have been visible when relic-

cupboards were opened to public view (as happened at Durham), but were presumably not noticed individually by most viewers on these occasions.⁷³ In fact, the majority of Becket-relics probably had no specific ritual functions, unless included among items taken on procession, selected for display on an institution's feast of relics, or venerated individually at Becket's liturgical feasts; and there appears to be little specific evidence about this.⁷⁴ Plainly, this does not mean they were ineffective, for any institution's relics functioned in unison to enhance its prestige, increase the number of its divine protectors, and other things.⁷⁵

It is always possible, of course, that Becket-relics were exposed for distinct veneration in response to regional pilgrimage, particularly in the early days of the cult. However, there is a mismatch between evidence for such pilgrimage and documented relics. Thus, even if it is true that the relics brought to Peterborough c.1177 by Benedict made the abbey 'an important centre of Becket's cult in the Midlands', there is nothing apart from their topicality to suggest they were displayed.⁷⁶ Again, at Beverley Minster, where Becket had been provost, the chapel of St Thomas the Apostle annexed to his prebend became a site of local interest immediately after his translation in 1220, but no relic is said to have existed there.⁷⁷ The church of St Thomas of Acre in London, which stood on the site of Becket's birthplace, yields no evidence I can find of relics, although its custodians presumably claimed some.⁷⁸ Perhaps in such cases the building and its ambient space were regarded as relics in the way the Virgin Mary's house at Walsingham was: here, one thinks of the chapels that William Fitzstephen states were constructed by denizens of Canterbury in places where Becket had trodden.⁷⁹ If one starts to admit this sort of thing then the problems and possibilities of identifying relics arise in a way already discussed of objects associated with Becket but not documented as relics.

Perhaps a more likely exception to these suggestions about the invisibility of Becket-relics are examples kept in parish churches and chapels, public places where the scarcity of sacred objects heightened their relative prestige. The fact that Becket-relics are singled out in some parochial documents tends to support the idea. The book at All Hallows, London Wall, the comb at Tillingham, 'relyke' at Croscombe, and a pastoral staff recorded at St Edmund's church, North Lynn (Norfolk), in the 1360s, which Becket 'had carried in his hand' (*in manu gestabat*), are likely to have belonged to modest, institutionally appropriate relic-collections whose other elements were thought less noteworthy. Thus, at St Edmund's church in North Lynn, a *feretrum* is mentioned immediately after the Becket-staff, while in addition to its Becket-comb, Tillingham had 'relics in a *feretrum* of gilded wood' and 'a small *feretrum* for bones, with little relics'.⁸⁰ It is clear in these cases that the Becket-relics stood out at the time of documentation. In such contexts, the use of Becket-relics was probably more active than was generally the case in the collegiate and monastic domain. A sense of practical function is had from a record of visitation of the parish of Wisborough Green (now West Sussex) made in August 1538. Here the church had at least eighteen relics, including particles of Becket's blood, vestments, and tomb, plus a 'chymer' – probably a robe or cloak (*chimera*), or part thereof – ascribed to him. These items, along with the rest of the collection, were said by respected parishioners to 'have been used and offered unto time out of mind'.⁸¹

CANTERBURY

This overview of Becket-relics may be rounded out by turning squarely to Canterbury cathedral, whose records and architecture do much to compensate for the haziness of

evidence in other quarters. Prior Eastry's inventories, the reports of foreign visitors, and much incidental material combine to give a sharper sense of quantity and variety than may be had for any other relic-cult in medieval England.⁸² The documents allow one to appreciate not only what the monks said they had and how it was housed, but also the arrangements they contrived in order to generate meaning. These arrangements are indicated by the building's larger punctuation with stations of major significance (the shrine in the Trinity chapel, the martyrdom, crypt with its tomb, and corona), and also by narrower juxtapositions such as those between the point of Richard the Breton's sword and the spot on which Becket died, and the hair-shirt – first and enduring proof of his monasticism – hanging by the shrine itself.⁸³ It seems paradoxical that at the centre of all this was the towering invisibility of the whole relic itself, elevated and doubly encased in the shrine and shrine-cover. Present absence (so to speak) was the norm with whole relics in great churches and vital to their charisma. 'You saw the bones? ... No, that's not permitted, nor would it be possible without the use of ladders': thus Erasmus.⁸⁴ The base metal badges from Canterbury representing a mitred body below a reliquary reflect a desire to manifest something only really visible by the eye of faith alone (as such they are testimony to what has been called 'frustrated seeing').⁸⁵ While a widely discussed interpretation of these objects as candid reflections of the shrine's post-1220 form may be superficially tempting, it misses the point that the marvellous opulence of the reliquary was considered the most faithful manifestation possible of the extraordinary thing it contained, in relation to which a sculpted effigy could only have seemed banal.⁸⁶ The great *feretrum* was, ultimately, a sort of vestment-relic in its own right: at least one chronicler called it Becket's 'precious tunic'.⁸⁷ The precise form of the shrine is in any event frustratingly obscure, in spite of the pilgrims' accounts. Here is Canterbury's share in problems raised throughout this essay.

Fortunately, the building remains to feed one's imagination, and for that matter to admit detailed digital reconstruction of its Trinity chapel.⁸⁸ Indeed, more than imagination and virtual reality are at issue here, for some of the surviving architecture was originally thought to have its own relic-status in relation to Becket's cult. Wenzel Schaseck, Leo of Rozmital's scribe, includes the columns at the entrance to the Lady chapel (i.e. in the martyrdom) among the choicest relics shown to his company by the cicerone, and the shrine-area pavements, which may still incorporate stones from the Romanesque pavement on which Becket's dead body lay, were once supposedly impressed with petrosomatoglyphs of the saint's feet.⁸⁹ More subtly, but no less clearly, the creamy and pink-red stones of the piers flanking the shrine-space were evidently chosen to represent the qualities of purity and martyrdom evoked by Becket's biographers, qualities that were central to his much vaunted association with Christ. Paul Binski has made a powerful case for the historicity of this symbolism, which may be footnoted by Bede's testimony, given in the *Historia ecclesiastica* and thus monastic common knowledge, that the colour of Christ's tomb in Jerusalem was itself 'white mingled with red'.⁹⁰ That the monks themselves were alive to this symbolism – and its utility – is further indicated by their claim, in a defensive letter written to Innocent III in 1198, that Becket had recently 'rubricated' the stones of their church with his blood and brains, and that this was the ultimate proof of their liberties.⁹¹ It goes without saying that this building has the best claim to recognition as a locational relic, even if its authentic ambience has vanished.

CONCLUSION

IN the early 16th century, monks of Canterbury cathedral priory evidently started adopting 'Thomas Becket' as a name in religion, something not recorded at an earlier date.⁹² One of these men, who died c.1520, had his name erased from the priory's martyrology after the royal proclamation against Becket was published in 1538, but someone realised the error and reinstated the name.⁹³ The evidence for this mistake nicely evokes the ambiguities and subtleties that subsisted for medieval people beneath the surface of written words. One is constantly up against this matter when reviewing the documentation for Becket-relics in England, and, given how generally apt medieval evidence is to wrongfoot easy assumptions, a cautious approach to the questions of identification, nature, display, significance, and other things raised in this essay has seemed best.

What it is safe to assume is that the distribution of Becket-relics in medieval England was both geographically wider and socially deeper than one can actually show. There were surely hundreds of examples: one thinks, for a start, of the religious houses and parish churches dedicated to the saint, few (if any) of which yield direct evidence for relic-ownership. These facts of having been widely distributed and deeply embedded are almost certainly latent in the texture of the evidence that has been reviewed here, just as they are likely to be in the appearance and distribution of the saint's iconography. Whether this could be successfully demonstrated is, perhaps, another matter, but in any case, the possible avenues for further work on Becket's relics are various, and include questions about lay ownership and use, transmission, and the parallels drawn historically between Becket and other saints (a topic with a clear art historical dimension). These saints include not only the obvious candidates – the Virgin Mary, Stephen, George, Dunstan, Edmund Rich, Edward the Confessor, etc. – but also regional figures whose association with Becket might

serve a reputational or political purpose: St Kentigern at Glasgow comes to mind here.⁹⁴ I hope the advocacy of such work will be regarded as this essay's main purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to dedicate this essay to the memory of Antonia Gransden (1928-2020), who was a good friend and encouraged me to be sceptical about the surfaces of medieval documents. It is a pleasure to thank Lloyd de Beer for many fruitful and humorous Becket-discussions, and to acknowledge the forbearance of Tom Nickson, who awaited a late submission with his usual equanimity and has done so much work to put this volume together. The errors in the essay are uniquely mine and I apologise for them, as I do also for the important documentary and bibliographical omissions.

¹ However, an overarching synthesis is achieved by I. G. Thomas, 'The Cult of Saints' Relics in Medieval England' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1974). For relics at Canterbury see 56-72; for a conspectus of institutions holding Becket-relics known to I. G. Thomas see 465-66. I gladly concede the great usefulness of this thesis to my own work.

² I.e. the *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, ed. J. C. Robinson and J. B. Sheppard, 7 vols (Rolls Series, LXVII, 1875-85); *Thómas Saga Erkebyskups*, ed. E. Magnússon, 2 vols (London 1875); also *Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence, La Vie de Saint Thomas Becket*, ed. E. Walberg (Paris 1964). For current work see e.g. R. Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Philadelphia 2011), 139-200, 271-92; eadem, 'Visions, Reliquaries, and the Image of the "Becket Shrine" in the Miracle

Windows of Canterbury Cathedral', *Gesta*, 54 (2015), 37-57; eadem, 'Thomas Becket and the Royal Abbey of Reading', *English Historical Review*, 131 (2016), 1-30.

³ For the political recontextualization of Becket in relation to heresy after 1400 see e.g. J. F. David, 'Lollards, Reformers, and St. Thomas of Canterbury', *Birmingham University Historical Journal*, 9 (1963-64), 1-15. Fair evidence for Becket's homogenization is found in rood-screen paintings, stained glass, and other works of art.

⁴ For Becket-fat (*pinguedine*) see *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, ed. J. T. Fowler, Surtees Society, 99-100 and 103, 3 vols (Durham 1898-99), II, 429; for *pars cordis gloriosi martyris* see C. E. Woodruff, 'Letters to the Prior of Christ Church Canterbury from University Students', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, 39 (1927), 1-33 (at 20); for *liquore corporis sui liquefacti* see H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Popes, Monks and Crusaders* (London 1984), essay XVIII, 253.

⁵ For vestment-relics in Becket's early cult see Rachel Koopmans' essay in this special issue.

⁶ Including the following (with Latin where terms are ambiguous or multiple): alb; belt/girdle (*cestus; zona*); chasuble; cope; dalmatic; rochet; tunicle; pallium; mitre; pontifical gloves; ring; cowl; hair-shirt (*cilicium, lorica*); drawers (*braccae; femoralis cilicium*); shirt/vest (*camisia, staminum, subuculum*); cloak (*chimera, pellicium*); mantle (or surplice: *superpellicium*); footwear ('bootes', *caligulae, crepitae, pedules, sandalia, sotulares*); burial shroud (*de serico in quo corpus eius involvebatur; de panno in quo inuolutum erat corpus eius*). Except, perhaps, for the drawers, none of these vestment-types is unique to Becket: all occur as relics of other saints.

⁷ See e.g. H. D. L. Ward and J. A. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, 3 vols (London 1961-62), II, 659-60 (no. 28); *Thómas Saga*, I, 23-25; N. J. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, 2 vols (London 1982-88), I, 119-21

(no. 73: De Brailes hours, including Virgin vesting Becket in hair-shirt), 130 (no. 83: Black Book); II, 152-54 and fig. 299 (no. 159: Bible of William of Devon, with Virgin instructing Becket to wear the hair-shirt).

⁸ On the definition of relics see, canonically, E. A. Dooley, *Church Law on Sacred Relics* (Washington, DC 1931), 3-9; also E. Waterton, *Pietas Mariana Britannica* (London 1879), 86; *The Inventories of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, 1384-1667*, ed. M. F. Bond (Windsor 1947), 280-81.

⁹ *Inventories of Christchurch Canterbury*, ed. J. W. Legg and W. H. St John Hope (Westminster 1902), 51, 60, 70-74, 76, 79.

¹⁰ *Canterbury College Oxford*, ed. W. A. Pantin, 4 vols (Oxford 1947-85), I, 6, 15, 61.

¹¹ W. S. Simpson, 'Two Inventories of the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, London, dated respectively 1245 and 1402', *Archaeologia*, 50 (1887), 439-524, at 471.

¹² *Registrum Johannis de Pontissara episcopi Wyntoniensis*, ed. C. Deedes, Canterbury and York Society, 19 and 30, 2 vols (London 1915-24), I, 705.

¹³ W. S. Simpson, 'Visitations of Churches in the Patronage of St. Paul's Cathedral, 1249-1252', *Camden Miscellany*, 9 (1895), iii-xx, 1-38, at 15.

¹⁴ C. R. Cheney, 'Magna Carta Beati Thome: Another Canterbury Forgery', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 36 (1963), 1-26.

¹⁵ P. A. Newton, 'Some New Material for the Study of the Iconography of St Thomas Becket', in *Thomas Becket: actes du colloque international de Sédières 19-24 Août 1973*, ed. R. Foreville (Paris 1975), 255-63 (at 260).

¹⁶ T. Milbourn, 'The Church of St. Stephen's, Walbrook', *Transactions of the Middlesex Archaeological Society*, 5 (1881), 327-402, at 341.

¹⁷ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner, and R. H. Brodie, 21 vols (London 1862-1910), X, 138.

¹⁸ C. Wordsworth, 'Inventories of Plate, Vestments, etc., belonging to the Cathedral Church of the Blessed Mary of Lincoln', *Archaeologia*, 53 (1892), 1-82, at 15, 16, 73.

¹⁹ For a sense of this see e.g. E. Inglis, 'Expertise, Artifacts, and Time in the 1534 Inventory of the St-Denis Treasury', *Art Bulletin*, 98 (2016), 14-42. The relevant literature is extensive.

²⁰ *The Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Allhallows, London Wall*, ed. C. Welch (London 1912), 68. Like St Stephen's Walbrook, this church was close to the site of Becket's birth. Compare Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 411, an 11th-century psalter which, according to a mid-16th-century note on fol. 140v was once covered in silver and owned (or touched) by Becket.

²¹ T. Martin, *The History of the Town of Thetford in Norfolk and Suffolk* (London 1779), 190-91; *Facsimiles of Manuscripts and Inscriptions: Series 2*, ed. E. A. Bond, E. M. Thompson and G. F. Warner, 2 vols (London 1884-94), II, pl. 137 (William Selk, also donating Becket-dust: I think Tom Nickson for this reference); *Lateinische Schriftquellen zur Kunst in England, Wales und Schottland vom Jahre 901 bis zum Jahre 1307*, ed. O. Lehmann-Brockhaus, 5 vols (Munich 1955-60), I, 568 (no. 2126: Heytesbury); Newton, 'New Material', 263: compare a 'pyne de yuoir' of St Edmund Rich given to Brigham parish church in Cumbria in 1348, mentioned in I. Fletcher, 'Brigham Church', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 4 (1879), 149-77, at 165.

²² Thus, according to Matthew Paris, did St Albans abbey miss out on the True Cross relic that went to Bromholm priory in Norfolk.

²³ Woodruff, 'Letters', 18-21. The affair is datable 1285-91 on internal evidence. See also B. Ward, 'Two Letters Relating to the Relics of St Thomas of Canterbury', in *Intellectual Life in*

the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson, ed. L. Smith and B. Ward (London 1992), 175-78 (innocent of Woodruff's earlier article). A homiletic example relating to Becket is outlined by R. Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton 2013), 328-29.

²⁴ Koopmans, 'Reading Abbey', 21-23.

²⁵ *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, II, 216-17 (nos 2951, 2954).

²⁶ See e.g. J. Luxford, 'Recording and Curating Relics at Westminster Abbey in the Late Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History*, 45 (2019), 204-30.

²⁷ M. Howley, 'Relics at Glastonbury in the Thirteenth Century: The Relic List in Cambridge, Trinity College R.5.33 (724), fols. 104r-105v', *Mediaeval Studies*, 71 (2009), 197-234, at 200, 232.

²⁸ J. P. Carley and M. Howley, 'Relics at Glastonbury in the Fourteenth Century: An Annotated Edition of British Library, Cotton Titus D.vii, fols. 2r-13v', in *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition*, ed. J. P. Carley (Woodbridge 2001), 549-616, at 594-95.

²⁹ *The Chronicle of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. J. P. Carley, trans. D. Townsend (Woodbridge 1985), 24-27, 260-61. Where it is recorded as Sodbury's donation (*ibid.*, 261), the ring is said to have been made of gold and worn 'at the hour when he fell by the swords of the wicked'.

³⁰ Carley and Howley, 'Relics', 571 n. 10.

³¹ E.g. London, British Library, MS Cotton, Vitellius C. XII, ff. 155-156v (Glastonbury listed first and second among institutions for whose brethren the Canterbury monks were bound to pray); compare London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 20, fol. 250v.

³² Thomas, 'Cult', 180.

³³ *The History of Westminster Abbey by John Flete*, ed. J. A. Robinson (Cambridge 1909), 33, 68-72; Thomas, 'Cult', 295-312.

³⁴ *History of Westminster Abbey*, 69-70.

³⁵ Luxford, 'Recording and Curating', 13, 26.

³⁶ *Ceremonies and Processions of the Cathedral Church of Salisbury*, ed. C. Wordsworth (Cambridge 1901), 33-40 (Becket entry at 35).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

³⁸ B. D. Boehm, 'Body-Part Reliquaries: The State of Research', *Gesta*, 36 (1997), 8-19.

³⁹ G. G. Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, 4 vols (Cambridge 1923-50), III, xii (quotation), 114-15, and 109-20 *passim*.

⁴⁰ *The Antient Kalendars and Inventories of the Treasury of His Majesty's Exchequer*, ed. F. Palgrave, 3 vols (London 1836), II, 272. If this was not a reliquary then one wonders at its form and treatment, for as well as being on a base, it was studded with pearls and stones. The weight is given as only 7.25 oz (about 200 grams), which if accurate suggests a relatively small object.

⁴¹ On whole body-relics see M. Spurrell, 'The Promotion and Demotion of Whole Relics', *Antiq. J.*, 80, (2000), 67-85.

⁴² The reliquary belongs to Douai abbey. I am very grateful to Michaela Zöschg, Curator of Medieval Art at the V&A, for her help with studying the object and Abbot Geoffrey Scott for permission to reproduce it. Detailed studies of it are planned by Michaela Zöschg and Michael Carter.

⁴³ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 189, fol. 68v; see also *William Thorne's Chronicle of Saint Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*, trans. A. H. Davis (Oxford 1934), 100.

⁴⁴ *Historiæ coenobii Burgensis scriptores varii*, ed. J. Sparke (London 1727), 101.

⁴⁵ Thomas, 'Cult', 481 (Exeter); F. Wormald and P. M. Giles, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Additional Illuminated Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum*, 2 vols (Cambridge 1982), II,

569 (Shrewsbury); N. Rogers, 'The Waltham Abbey Relic-List', in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. C. Hicks (Stamford 1992), 157-81, at 179.

⁴⁶ Woodruff, 'Letters', 18.

⁴⁷ *Des böhmischen Herrn Leo's von Rozmital Ritter-, Hof und Pilger-Reise durch die Abendlande, 1465-1467*, ed. J. A. Schmeller (Stuttgart 1844), 39 (Canterbury); Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 111, p. 6 (*cultellum* at Bath: late 12th century. Compare D. Rock, *The Church of Our Fathers*, rev. edn, 4 vols (London 1904-05), I, 110 n. 13); *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Suppression of Monasteries*, ed. T. Wright (London 1843), 85 (Becket 'penneknyff' at Bury in 1536); *Letters and Papers*, X, 140 (Carlisle: compare *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward I: Volume 1, 1301-1307*, ed. H. C. Maxwell Lyte (London, 1898), 516); T. H. Baylis, *The Temple Church and Chapel of St. Ann*, 3rd edn (London 1900), 145; Koopmans, 'Reading Abbey', 21; J. Hutchins, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (London 1861-74), III, 225.

⁴⁸ Newton, 'New Material', 260-62; *English Romanesque Art 1066-1200*, ed. G. Zarnecki, J. Holt and T. Holland (London 1984), 283 (no. 303); *Treasures from Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, ed. M. Bagnoli et al. (London 2011), 186-87 (no. 98).

⁴⁹ Thomas, 'Cult', 520.

⁵⁰ Carley and Howley, 'Relics', 595.

⁵¹ R. W. Banks, 'Inventory of Relics from Suppressed Monasteries', *Archaeol. J.*, 41 (1884), 89-91, at 90; *Letters and Papers*, X, 219.

⁵² For one at least that was certainly made for use in England see Newton, 'New Material', 263. More generally, see S. Caudron, 'Les châsses reliquaries de Thomas Becket émaillées à Limoges: leur géographie historique', *Bulletin de la Société archéologique et historique du*

Limousin, 121 (1993), 55-82 (listing fifty-two examples); *English Romanesque Art*, 277, 282 (nos 292, 302); *Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400*, ed. J. G. Alexander and P. Binski (London 1987), 225 (nos 87, 88); *Treasures from Heaven*, 186-88 (nos 97-101).

⁵³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D 1225, fol. 10r (Becket-entry printed in Newton, 'New Material', 260).

⁵⁴ *Inventories of St. George's*, 168.

⁵⁵ *Leo's von Rozmital Reise*, 154 (Canterbury); *The Pilgrimage of Robert Langton*, ed. E. M. Blackie (Cambridge 1924), 27 (Compostela).

⁵⁶ *Inventories of St. George's*, 61 n. 10. (I have not seen this document myself.)

⁵⁷ S. Marritt, with J. R. Davies, 'Scottish Bishops and the Relic-lists of the Cartulary of Christchurch Priory, Twynham, Hampshire, 1200–1221', *Innes Review*, 65 (2014), 128-52, at 147.

⁵⁸ *Leo's von Rozmital Reise*, 39 (chalice), 154-55 (spring, 'darauss hat sant Thomas altag trunken'; image, 'das gar oft mit sant Thomas geredet hat').

⁵⁹ *Letters and Papers*, X, 142 (Hulne, here called Alnwick); M. Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge 2016), 205.

⁶⁰ *The Colloquies of Erasmus*, trans. C. R. Thompson (Chicago 1965), 308-09; M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Fifty Manuscripts from the Collection of Henry Yates Thompson* (Cambridge 1898), 35.

⁶¹ As it is in *Church-wardens' Accounts of Croscombe, Pilton, Patton, Tintinhull, Morebath, and St. Michael's, Bath, Ranging from A.D. 1349 to 1560*, ed. E. Hobhouse (Frome 1890), 35 and n. 2.

⁶² H. H. Sparling, 'Relics', *Notes and Queries*, 7th ser. VI (1888), 466 (printed from BL, Egerton MS 2603, fol. 26r). It is vaguely possible that this was not a corporeal relic.

⁶³ *Historiæ Burgensis*, 101; *Lateinische Schriftquellen*, II, 216-17 (nos 2951, 2954).

⁶⁴ Thomas, 'Cult', 520.

⁶⁵ Carley and Howley, 'Relics', 594.

⁶⁶ *Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham*, II, 429; H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, 2 vols (London 1691), I, 634.

⁶⁷ V. Green, *The History and Antiquities of the City and Suburbs of Worcester*, 2 vols (London 1796), II, v.

⁶⁸ Thomas, 'Cult', 520; James, *Yates Thompson*, 35; *Missale de Lesnes*, ed. P. Jebb (Worcester 1962), 1. See also *Inventories of Christchurch*, 93.

⁶⁹ Marritt, 'Scottish Bishops', 147.

⁷⁰ *Historiæ Burgensis*, 101; E. King, 'Benedict of Peterborough and the Cult of Thomas Becket', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 9 (1996-97), 213-20, at 215-16; P. Fergusson, 'Architecture during the Rule of Abbot Benedict (1177-94)', in *Peterborough and the Soke: Art, Architecture and Archaeology*, ed. R. Baxter, J. Hall, and C. Marx, *BAA Trans.* xli (Abingdon 2019), 179-99, at 199 n. 46.

⁷¹ For foundation-relics at Abingdon and St Albans abbeys see Thomas, 'Cult', 318.

⁷² *A XVth Century Guide-Book to the Principal Churches of Rome*, ed. and trans. C. E. Woodruff (London 1933), 9 (Rome; see also 63). The relics listed in this manuscript were presumably those accessible to pilgrims.

⁷³ *Rites of Durham*, ed. J. T. Fowler, Surtees Society, 107 (Durham 1903), 5.

⁷⁴ Thus, the customaries of St Augustine's Canterbury and Westminster contain nothing apropos, albeit they give instructions about the celebration of Becket's feasts, which were among the most important at both houses: *Customary of the Benedictine Monasteries of Saint Augustine, Canterbury, and Saint Peter, Westminster*, ed. E. M. Thompson, 2 vols

(London 1902-04), I, 431-32; II, 61, 78, 270, 272, 293, 296. Relics of other saints were, however, venerated on their feasts (e.g. *ibid.*, I, 382). I confess I have not looked into this matter in a very detailed way for present purposes.

⁷⁵ On such generic functions see Thomas, 'Cult', 318-39; *Customary of the Benedictine Monasteries*, I, 293.

⁷⁶ Fergusson, 'Architecture', 191.

⁷⁷ *Memorials of Beverley Minster*, ed. A. F. Leech, Surtees Society, 98 and 108, 2 vols (Durham 1898-1903), II, 335.

⁷⁸ For a review of the evidence see D. Keene and V. Harding, *Historical Gazetteer of London before the Great Fire, 1: Cheapside* (Cambridge 1987), 214-52.

⁷⁹ *Materials*, III, 152.

⁸⁰ *Archdeaconry of Norwich: Inventory of Church Goods temp. Edward III*, ed. A. Watkin, 2 vols (Norwich 1947-48), II, 123 (North Lynn). For Tillingham see Simpson, 'Visitations', 15.

At All Hallows a 'bone off saynt Davy closed in sylver' is specified alongside the book: *Churchwardens' Accounts of the Parish of Allhallows*. For a monastic example see Martin, *Thetford*, 190 note, where the comb of Becket is specified along with a non-specific *pixide argentea reliquiarum*.

⁸¹ *Letters and Papers*, XIII/2, 36. This record of a relic of Becket's tomb, perhaps unique, may corroborate Benedict of Peterborough's account of the reason for adding a protective stone casing to the tomb in the crypt (*Materials*, II, 81).

⁸² For Eastry's and much other Canterbury documentation see *Inventories of Christchurch*. Accounts of foreign visitors are mentioned in S. Blick, 'Reconstructing the Shrine of St. Thomas Becket, Canterbury Cathedral', in *Art and Architecture of Late Medieval Pilgrimage in Northern Europe and the British Isles*, ed. S. Blick and R. Tekippe, 2 vols (Leiden 2005), I,

405-41, at 405-12, to which one may add *Silesiacarum rerum scriptores* (Bd 3), ed. G. A. Stenzel (Breslau 1847), 363 (Nicholas von Poppelau, 1484); C. Van Duzer, 'A Previously Unknown Sixteenth-Century Description of the Shrine of St. Thomas Becket', *Viator*, 48 (2017), 323-34.

⁸³ *Inventories of Christchurch*, 133-35; *Leo's von Rozmital Reise*, 154 (*ob dem sarch*, i.e. 'above the tomb', meaning to the east of the shrine).

⁸⁴ *Colloquies of Erasmus*, 308.

⁸⁵ J. Barker, 'Frustrated Seeing: Scale, Visibility, and a Fifteenth-Century Portuguese Royal Monument', *Art History*, 41 (2018), 220-45.

⁸⁶ For this reading see Blick, 'Reconstructing the Shrine'.

⁸⁷ *Historiæ Anglicæ scriptores X*, ed. R. Twysden (London 1652), col. 2181 (*tunica preciosa*).

⁸⁸ See J. Jenkins, 'Replication or Rivalry? The "Becketization" of Pilgrimage in English Cathedrals', *Religion*, 49 (2019), 24-47, and the same author's essay in this special issue.

⁸⁹ *Leo's von Rozmital Reise*, 39 (*Ibi omnes reliquiae nobis monstratae sunt ... deinde columna ante sacellum Genitricis Dei*); P. Binski, *Becket's Crown: Art and Imagination in Gothic England, 1170-1300* (London 2004), 24; Jenkins, 'Replication', 28.

⁹⁰ Binski, *Becket's Crown*, 2-9; *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford 1969), 510-11 (*Color autem eiusdem monumenti et sepulchri albo et rubicundo permixtus*). Bede reproduced the account of Arculf, the 7th-century Frankish pilgrim-bishop.

⁹¹ *Chronicles and memorials of the reign of Richard I and Epistolæ Cantuarienses*, ed. W. Stubbs, 2 vols (Rolls Series, xxxviii, 1864-65), II, 444 (*Libertates ... quae noster Thomas adhuc recenti sanguine cerebri in lapidibus ecclesiae rubricavit*).

⁹² J. Greatrex, *Biographical Register of English Cathedral Priories of the Province of Canterbury c.1066-1540* (Oxford 1997), 83-84 (noticing two examples).

⁹³ Lambeth Palace Library, MS 20, fol. 197v.

⁹⁴ For the pairing of Becket's and Kentigern's relics see J. Dowden, 'The Inventory of Ornaments, Jewels, Relicks, Vestments, Service-Books, etc., belonging to the Cathedral Church of Glasgow in 1432', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 33 (1898-99), 280-329, at 298-99; for its political context see H. Birkett, *The Saints' Lives of Jocelin of Furness: Hagiography, Patronage and Ecclesiastical Politics* (Woodbridge 2010), 11, 184-89.