

Great Cloister

a Lost Canterbury Tale

A history of the Canterbury Cloister, constructed 1408-14,
with some account of the donors and their coats of arms

Paul A. Fox

Foreword by

His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, Earl Marshal



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Arundel Castle

I am delighted to have been asked to write a few words to introduce this new landmark study on an important national monument. The beauty of the four walks of the Great Cloister of Canterbury Cathedral is something which I have long admired without being aware of my own profound familial connection with it. I discover in these pages that one of the cloister bays was conceived as a fitting heraldic memorial to my ancestor Thomas Mowbray, the first Earl Marshal and first Duke of Norfolk, both titles which I have the honour to bear today. For many generations my antecedents have had a special relationship with the heralds, but the cloister was built before the officers of arms came to be regulated, before heraldry was systematised, and before the creation of the College of Arms. In taking the story of each cloister shield back to its origins, this book has much to say about how heraldry evolved in England. An important fact which has been long forgotten, and one which would have been of enormous interest to my predecessors as Earls Marshal, is that the complex heraldic scheme of the cloister was the personal project of my kinsman Archbishop Thomas Fitzalan, known as Thomas Arundel. He was a man born and raised in my family home of Arundel Castle as the brother of my 20th great grandfather Richard Fitzalan, earl of Arundel, a title which has now passed to my eldest son. The Archbishop was one of the great personalities of the reigns of Richard II and his successor Henry IV. From this dark and troubled era there emerged this most extraordinary monument. In the centuries since its creation many of the key figures in our nation's history will have looked upwards at the Canterbury shields in wonder, but as families became extinct many of their stories came to be forgotten. You will find them brought to life again within these pages. Each unique shield which Thomas Arundel decided to include has been beautifully illustrated in colour. I have found a great many ancestral families here, but there is much to interest those with no such personal connection. Archbishop Arundel emerges as a kindly man who had a singular preoccupation with heraldry, while his cloister project has at long last been placed firmly in the context of its times.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norfolk', written in a cursive style.

Edward Fitzalan-Howard

18th Duke of Norfolk

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Abbreviations

aft.	After
Arch.	Archives
b.	born
bef.	before
c.	circa
d.	died
dsp	<i>decessit sine prole</i> , died without issue.
ER	East Riding of Yorkshire
fl.	Flourished
IPM	Inquisition post mortem.
K.G.	Knight of the Garter.
MP	member of parliament
NR	North Riding of Yorkshire
viz.	namely (<i>videlicet</i>)
WR	West Riding of Yorkshire

Explanation of shield numbers

Example 21/35=413

First part: number of bay/ position in bay as given by Messenger

Second part = number supplied by Willement and elaborated by Griffin.

Refer to the bibliography for these sources.

For a virtual walk around of the cloister as it might have appeared in 1500 please visit www.drpaulfoxsa.com

Introduction

The Great Cloister of Canterbury Cathedral is one of the glories of medieval England. I consider myself greatly privileged to have been shown around it for the first time, at the age of eighteen, by Cecil Humphery-Smith, whose enthusiasm for it was boundless.¹ My own decision to study the cloister was triggered many years later by a question about the dating of one of the shields. A little digging brought me to the surprising conclusion that nobody had ever worked out a precise chronology of construction. Surely, I thought, with so much heraldry about, that would be a simple matter? Following a whole decade of work many difficulties remained to be resolved, and the foolishness of that initial presumption was evident. Eventually all the pieces of the jigsaw fell into place, and the time has come for others to consider my conclusions. As things stand the absence of any modern synthesis has prevented there being much consideration of the cloister in fairly recent scholarly accounts of the cathedral and its precincts.

In the 1930s the momentous decision was taken to put back the colour which was lost from the cloister shields through centuries of erosion, eighteenth-century whitewashing, and ultimately by deliberate removal in the nineteenth century. Commander Messenger was charged with the task of determining what those colours should be. Few would have been aware that his task was an impossible one to complete within the required time frame, given the difficulty of accessing the necessary historical sources. The inevitable outcome was that Messenger adopted a 'best guess' strategy which led to a great many of the shields being wrongly attributed, such that not a few families who were not even contemporary with the cloister were included.

Without the digital revolution it would not have been possible to undertake a complete analysis of the cloister within the fifteen year period that it took. Indeed the task would probably have taken more than a lifetime using the resources that Messenger had at his disposal. The whole process was considerably enhanced by the gradual publication of the four volumes of Thomas Woodcock's *Dictionary of British Arms*.² One of the biggest obstacles to reconstructing the medieval cloister in all its glory was the well meaning attempt of Thomas Willement to document some residual traces of colour in 1827. He blended together personal observation and

supposition with his analysis of earlier antiquarian records, without providing his sources. Severe disquiet about his conclusions was raised from the very outset, and awareness of this prompted the late heraldic scholar John Goodall on learning of my interest to warn that I was going to face severe difficulties.

The determination of Willement's *modus operandi* was a long process. The only way forward was to begin anew with the earlier sources, records made by Scarlett in 1599, by Philpott in 1613, by an unknown antiquarian at about the same time, and by Bryan Faussett in the 1750s. Copies of these sources were studied repeatedly, placed side by side, and the shields from each source were allocated their Willement and Messenger numbers. The Fausset manuscript was brought to my attention relatively late on in the process, and provided crucial information showing that the certainty with which Willement ascribed many shields was entirely fallacious. It became apparent that some repainting of the cloister must have occurred even before 1599, some of it quite arbitrary, while in some instances there was deliberate falsification of the colouring. Similar problems are not infrequently encountered when studying church monuments, which have in the past been subjected to restoration by those with inadequate heraldic information at their disposal.³ The problems of the sources are covered in greater depth in chapter 4.

Each shield has been studied intensively, and attributions suggested for the many shields never previously identified. An important aspect which has not previously been explored is that of possible links between arms placed in close proximity. This turned out to be a singularly productive line of enquiry and some revelations came out of it, such as the reconciliatory function of Bay 30. The lost social and political history of the cloister can now be reconstructed. Those wishing to comprehend the monument in its entirety will need to read the lengthy main section of the book in which each shield is presented.

The long held supposition about the arms was that they were effectively a roll call of donors to the cathedral during a particular period. While this is partly true, the assemblage is not entirely random: the cloister is a roll of arms which has discernible themed sections, and even outside these sections many shields appear to have been purposefully placed together. Moreover, the many foreign knights and aristocrats who undoubtedly continued to visit Canterbury, even during a period

¹ My visit was an excursion of the Cambridge University Heraldic and Genealogical Society organised by the then president, David Vines White, who is currently Somerset Herald.

² DBA.

³ For an excellent example of this see Woodcock.

when England and France were technically at war, were not permitted to have their arms here. Not only is the choice of shields highly selective, but their organisation betrays strong family interests which point unwaveringly to the guiding hand of Archbishop Thomas Arundel. The evidence for the archbishop's close personal involvement is detailed in chapter 3, with a summary of his life from the 1390s in chapter 2. It can be deduced that Arundel must have had a strong personal interest in the science of armory. Given that Henry IV chose to be buried at Canterbury, Cecil Humphery-Smith long maintained that this must have been a royal project, perhaps delegated to a court herald, but this possibility has been definitively ruled out by this study.

The construction sequence of the cloister is strange and counter-intuitive. The year of completion is fixed at 1414 by the building accounts. It could not have begun before the accession of Thomas Arundel in 1397 because his predecessor left money towards the first of the new walks. Structurally, the roof was added to the vaulting, which establishes that each complete bay of the cloister was added as a unit, making it a straightforward matter to change the direction of the build. It has been deduced that there were two such changes of direction. Whilst it is not possible to be absolutely certain that there was no gap in the building schedule, there is no reason why there should have been. The retrocalculation, based on what survives of the building accounts, is that work commenced in 1408, a conclusion supported by the heraldry. A proposed timeframe for the construction of each bay is presented in chapter 1.

The cloister is the only complete roll of arms (albeit in stone) to survive from the reign of Henry IV, and the only English example of what might be called an ecclesiastical roll. As such it affords insights into the heraldry of its time, some of it transient and experimental, as detailed in chapters 5. Much of the genealogy covered in this book is new, and the author hopes that he might have provided some useful new leads for those interested in medieval families. Pedigrees have only been included where good published examples are not available in other works, excepting some instances where one has been provided to facilitate an understanding of the heraldry.

Acknowledgements

The author would particularly like to thank Dr Nigel Ramsay for checking the introduction, Dr Richard Baker, Principal of the Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies in Canterbury, for checking the whole work; Dr Adrian Ailes and Patric Dickinson, Clarenceux King of Arms, for reviewing the book and making some helpful suggestions; the late Alice, and Cecil Humphery-Smith for their gracious hospitality over so many happy weekends at their retirement home in Seasalter. These occasions provided me with the stimulus to break new ground through lengthy brain storming sessions covering every aspect of medieval heraldry.

Chapter One

History of the Cloister's construction

On 21st May 1382 the Canterbury cathedral cloister and chapter house were severely damaged in an earthquake. This followed the demolition of the old nave in 1377, which took place as a prelude to rebuilding it. During the 1390s a great deal of construction work took place, and in 1396, under the terms of his will, Archbishop Courtenay gave £200 to rebuild the south walk of the cloister. This was the walk adjacent to the nave, leading from the Archbishop's Palace to the Martyrdom, the route which Becket took in the final journey of his life.¹ It is clear from the predominance of non-heraldic bosses in this walk that it was the first to be completed. The eventual cost of building its ten bays came to £300 - priceless information because this gives a unit cost of £30 per bay.² The likely reason why the cost proved so much greater than the original estimate was that Courtenay's successor, Thomas Arundel, wanted elaborate and beautiful bosses to be carved for the vaulting.

There has been a lack of clarity about the date of the south walk, with estimates ranging from 1395 to 1405.³ Building accounts survive for the period 1396 to 1400 and show money being spent on the nave only.⁴ The records have been lost for the next four years covering May 1400 to May 1404, but there is no compelling reason to suppose that the south walk was completed during this period. Architecturally it made sense to finish work on the nave and all the buildings around the cloister first, and work on the chapter house was not completed until 1405, at a cost of £1006.⁵ Arundel's arrival at Canterbury in 1397 coincided with the first architectural use of heraldry at Canterbury, in the bosses of the new nave and nave aisles.⁶ His personal arms appear in the third and fourth central bays of the nave and in the first bay of the north aisle, corresponding to the earlier phases of the vaulting of each.⁷ In 1400 he donated 1000 marks (£666 13s 4d) for the completion of the nave vaulting.⁸

In the cloister the arms of Archbishop Courtenay are to be found in Bays 3,7 and 10 of the south walk, and those of Archbishop Arundel in Bays 8,9 and 10. There

is no heraldry at all in Bays 4 and 5. The two original shields placed in Bay 1 offer crucial dating information which points to a date of construction of 1405 or later. The arms of Juliana de Bohun, Archbishop Arundel's beloved sister, were given pride of place beside the doorway to the Martyrdom. She was received into the cathedral confraternity on 6th April 1405. Joining Bays 1 and 36 were the royal arms of Portugal, likely to have been sponsored by Beatrice the daughter of King João of Portugal, who visited Canterbury in November 1405 on her way to be married by the archbishop to his nephew, the earl of Arundel. The original shields in Bays 1 to 9 are quite different from those in later bays. They are all relatively small compared to the later shields, with the solitary exception of the arms of Bohun impaling Fitzalan in Bay 1, and they all have a carved surround, mostly a rosette of leaves, again with the exception of the Bohun arms. The mason who carved the first heraldic bosses had a style notably different from that of the two masons who carved the remainder, the style of the lions in Bays 1,6,8 and 9 being quite distinct from that employed later on. The only clue which helps to determine whether the South Walk Bays 1 to 9 were built in a clockwise or an anticlockwise direction comes from the fact that Bay 1 represents a point of transition. The arms of the archbishop's sister were the first to be carved large, but the style of lions shows that the work was by the original mason. A new mason was then introduced, perhaps a heraldic specialist, who worked with the original mason in Bays 35 and 36. These are the first two bays of the east walk, on the way to the chapter house. The style of the priory's arms in Bay 35 indicates the original artist, while the royal arms in Bay 36 were carved by the new man. Three of the new style large shields were placed in Bay 36, and another three in the subsequent Bay 35, with a further large shield in between. They probably date to the beginning of 1410, and here Arundel chose to reward some of the major donors from recent years. They included Sir Thomas Fogge (d.1407) and his wife Joan Valoignes (d.1425), great benefactors of the cathedral who were together admitted to the confraternity in 1404, when they made a donation towards the building of the chapter house.⁹ Also placed here was Joan, Lady Mohun (d.1404), who made a very large bequest to the cathedral in her will. Thomas Arundel knew about the value of using heraldry as a means of soliciting donations to building works, having already placed heraldic bosses in the newly rebuilt nave. It was an example which he brought

¹ Sparks: 15; Woodman: 166 held a contrary view, which led him into error in terms of dating the cloister rebuild.

² Dahmus: 231; Christ Church Register S, Appendix to HMC 9th Report: 111; will of Archbishop Courtenay in Somner, appendix to supplement: 33.

³ Woodman: 164-9; Sparks: 12-15.

⁴ Arch Cant vol 29: 71-74.

⁵ Arch Cant 29: 75.

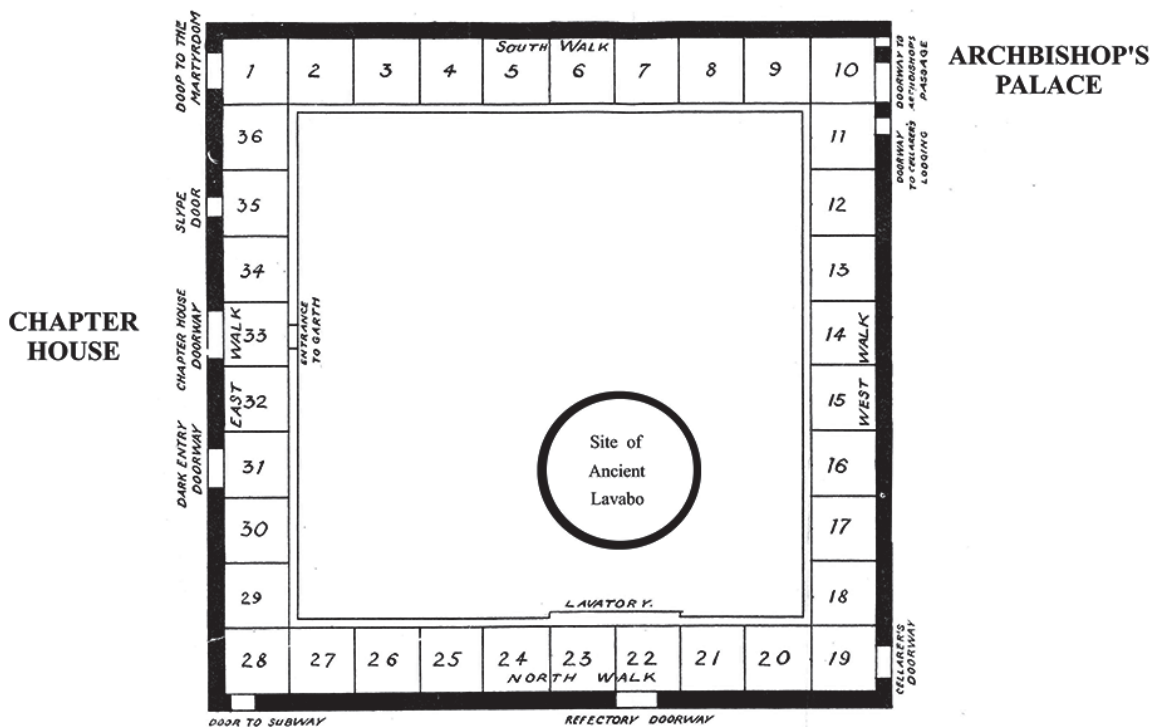
⁶ Blockley: 132-37.

⁷ Blockley: 133.

⁸ Blockley: 136.

⁹ See Fogge.

NAVE



REFECTORY

Figure 1. The basic plan of the cloister after Messenger

with him from York Minster, where donations for arms carved in the nave had been used to finance building works decades earlier in the fourteenth century;¹⁰ he was archbishop of York from 1388 to 1396.

The first conclusion concerning construction is that the south walk was built in an anticlockwise direction from Bays 9 through to 1, concluding with an assemblage of commemorative shields in Bays 1, 36 and 35. Work then recommenced at the other end of the south walk in Bay 10, the first fully heraldic bay. This raises two important questions: firstly, why was the direction of construction changed after Bay 35, and secondly, what triggered the sudden change to a completely heraldic vault? From the beginning of 1407 until the end of 1409 the archbishop headed the Lancastrian administration as chancellor, but his resignation from that post on 21st December 1409 left him free to focus his energies on his see and his cathedral. December 1409 represents a watershed both in the life of the archbishop and in the evolution of the cloister. The prior of Christ Church needed more funds for building work, and the archbishop decided to seek more donors. The arms of Juliana de Bohun carved so large in Bay 1 had just gone

up (estimated date November-December 1409) and they looked impressive. Arundel wanted to see how it would look if more shields were carved in this manner. He used Bays 36 and 35 as a test bed for a new mason.

The heraldry of Bay 10 has a more strongly local Kentish flavour than most of the other bays, and probably dates to the middle of 1410. The reason for the local flavour might well have been that high ranking visitors to the cathedral had seen the new large shields in Bays 35 and 36, and liked what they saw. As a consequence Arundel will soon have realised that it was going to be very easy for him to secure donations in return for the placing of arms in the cloister. Of particular note in Bay 10 are the arms of Master John Kington, a very distinguished personage whom the archbishop, as a singular mark of honour, personally clothed as a monk before the high altar of the cathedral on 21st March 1410. We also have here the arms of John Monins of Dover who migrated to Canterbury and was made an honorary freeman of the city in 1409, and of John Isaac who became a porter of the abbey in 1407. Three individuals were commemorated who had died in the recent past: Lord Cobham of Rundale, who died in October 1405; Sir William Brenchesley, who was buried in the cathedral nave in 1406, and whose wife many years later founded

¹⁰ Fox YM.

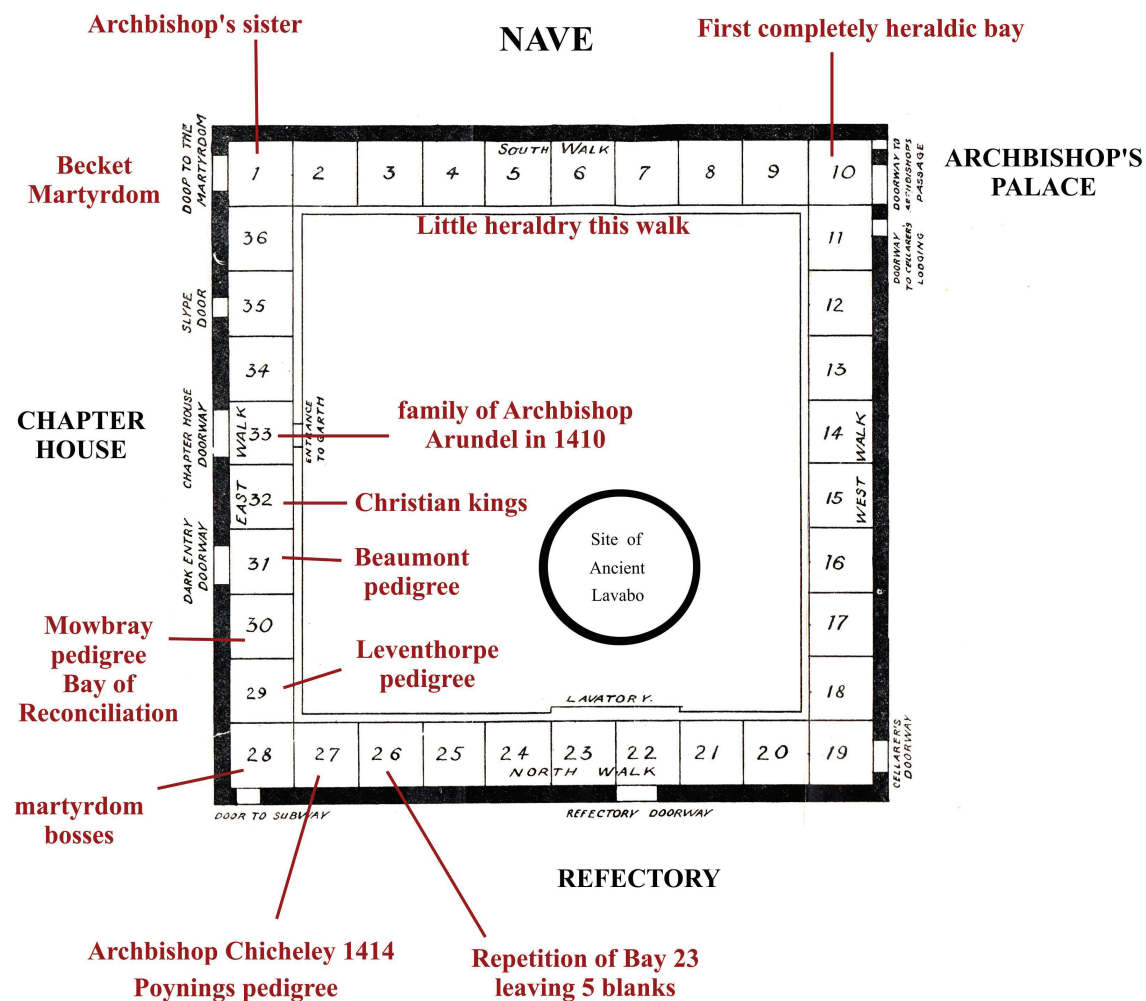


Figure 2. The key heraldic components of the cloister

a chantry in the cathedral; and Roger Cavendish of Suffolk, who died in c.1408. Bay 10 has the arms of Arundel in the centre. They are repeated on the side wall, in between the arms of Archbishops Courtenay and Sudbury, while on the other wall above the door to the Archbishop's Palace are the arms of St Thomas of Canterbury, St Edward the Confessor and St Edmund, sanctifying the prelate's guests as they began the sacred walk of St Thomas from the palace to the Martyrdom.

The reason why the direction of the build was changed in around May 1410 was that by then Arundel had already conceptualised the cloister as a roll of arms, and realised that something special would need to be devised for the three bays directly outside the chapter house. One of the triumphs claimed for Prior Woodnesborough, who acceded in 1411, was a clearing of the abbey's debts, probably through the archbishop's money-raising venture.¹¹ The evidence that the heraldic scheme in the cloister was largely of the archbishop's

personal devising, and little to do with Prior Chillenden (d.August 1411), will be presented below.

Work continued from Bay 10 in a clockwise direction, with the completion of the west walk and much of the north walk. The heraldry reveals that following the completion of Bay 25 in November-December 1412 clockwise work was halted and recommenced in an anticlockwise direction from Bay 34, completing the three bays in front of the chapter house. The rationale for this is not difficult to surmise. Henry IV lived at Christ Church Priory for an extended period during 1412 as his health deteriorated, and the amendment to the building sequence was made at the beginning of 1413, most likely because the archbishop was aware that the king's life was drawing to a close. The completion of the three bays in front of the Chapter House must have been prioritised, one of them being the *Royal Bay* 32 which honoured Henry IV. The last bays to be constructed were predominantly extended pedigrees of the archbishop's friends and relations, of which there were five in total – an excellent way of filling up space quickly.

¹¹ Woodman: 169.

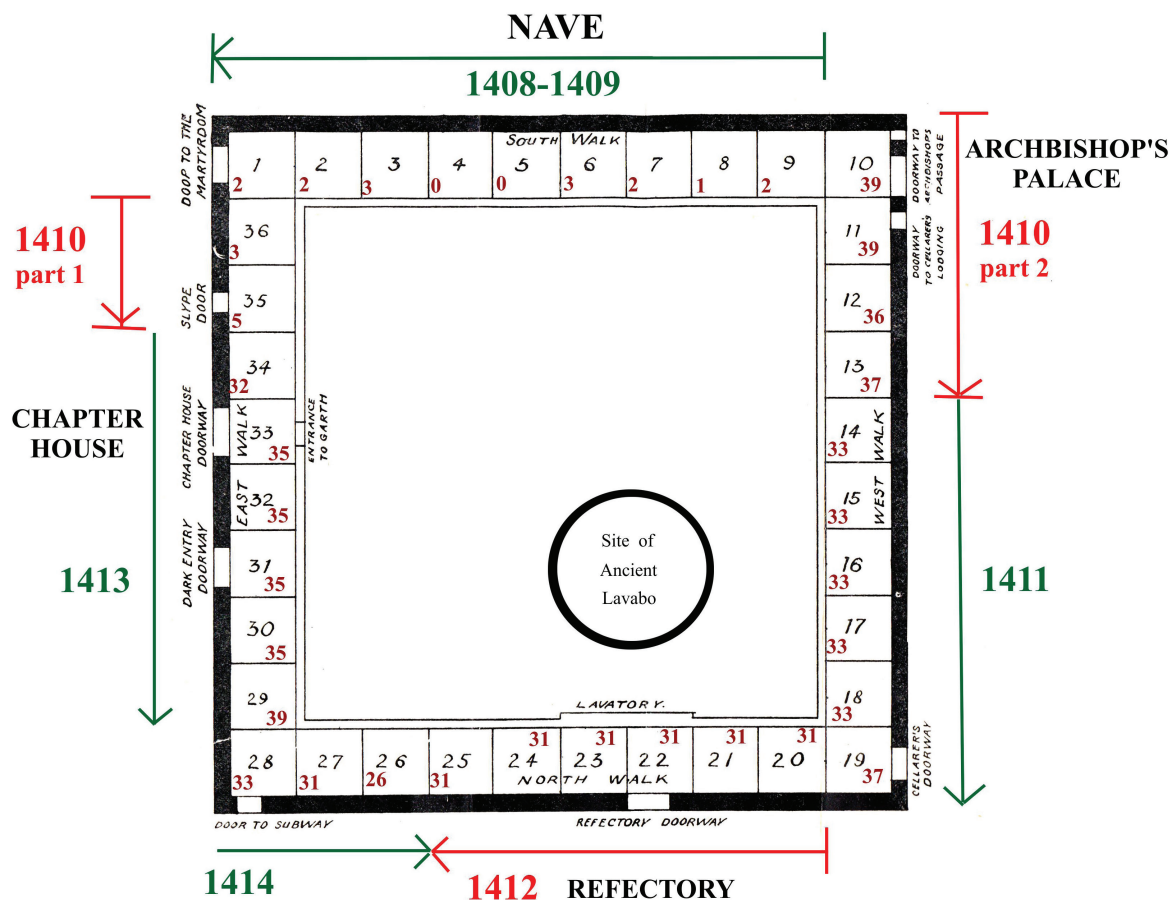


Figure 3. The cloister construction sequence with proposed dates. The bay numbers in red indicate the original number of heraldic bosses in each bay.

Archbishop Arundel died on 14th February 1414 just as Bay 28 was being completed, and the shield of his successor, Archbishop Chicheley, was incorporated into the penultimate Bay 27. A problem then arose because Arundel had left no plan for the final Bay 26, and so to complete his project Bay 23 was repeated but back to front. The repetition of shields in this bay is the best evidence for the reversal of direction of cloister construction in 1413, which unquestionably before that time was proceeding in the opposite direction. Cardinal Thomas Bourchier, who was archbishop from 1455 to 1486, utilised the opportunity presented by the duplicate bay to insert his personal arms, together with those of his brothers and of their ancestor Thomas of Woodstock. The shields were inexpertly added, and did not survive into the nineteenth century.¹² The gap which they left was filled with five members of the royal family, unveiled by King George VI on 11th July 1946.¹³ The only other arms intruded into the original

scheme during the medieval period were those of William Wainfleet (d.1486), and of Bourchier's successor Cardinal John Morton (d.1500). Those of Bourchier and Morton completed the cloister sequence of medieval archbishops of Canterbury who were also cardinals. Wainfleet and Morton were probably inserted at the sites of duplicate shields, perhaps those of the cathedral priory. The cloister vault was repainted on at least three separate occasions, as will be discussed below.

Four further shields were added in the post medieval period. The arms *ten torteaux* 4,3,2 and 1 and a label of *three points azure*, belonging to Miss Margaret Babington (d.1958), Steward of the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral from 1928 until her death, were added to Bay 35.¹⁴ Finally, three shields were added to Bay 10 to commemorate the first papal visit to Canterbury, that of Pope John Paul II in 1992. These were the arms of the Pope, of the Prince of Wales, and of Archbishop Robert Runcie.

¹² It has been supposed that they might have been painted, but it seems unlikely that the paint would have survived for a century and a half before being recorded.

¹³ They were the arms of King George VI and his consort Queen Elizabeth, for Queen Mary of Teck, and for the two princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret. They were designed by Professor Tristram.

See Messenger: 44-5 and frontis.

¹⁴ This was a personal grant to her.

Dating the cloister

Combining the information that the unit cost of each cloister bay was £30 with the building accounts extant from 1411 to 1414 permits some conclusions to be made about the building schedule. The project was finished in 1414 at a cost of £95, equating to the final three bays, and taking six months. That only three bays were made in 1414 fits well with the heraldry, in that two bays can be definitively dated to after the death of Thomas Arundel in late February 1414. Between 1411 and 1413 £540 was expended on the cloister, which equates to two walks or 18 bays, and a rate of 6 bays a year, or one every two months.¹⁵ The accounts for 1406 to 1410 are lost, but if a constant rate of progress is assumed a start date for the project can be posited in July 1408. This would place the construction of Bay 10 in May-June 1410, very much in keeping with the individuals included within it. At a steady rate of progress the construction would have taken 72 months, ending in June 1414, and a fairly exact timetable can be postulated. To give but two examples of how this reconstructed timetable appears to accord well with known facts, Lord Hungerford, admitted to the cathedral confraternity on 6th July 1409, has his arms in Bay 13 of the west walk, probably completed in December 1410. Bartholomew Lord Bourchier died in 1409, and his arms in Bay 12, probably completed around October 1410, are likely to have been the result of a commemorative donation made by his widow in 1409-10. Lady Bourchier herself died on 12th September 1410 leaving a ten-year-old daughter, who is most unlikely to have made such a gift, as sole heir.

BAY	MONTHS	YEAR
9	July-August	1408
8	September-October	1408
7	November-December	1408
6	January-February	1409
5	March-April	1409
4	May-June	1409
3	July-August	1409
2	September-October	1409
1	November-December	1409
36	January-February	1410
35	March-April	1410
10	May-June	1410
11	July-August	1410
12	September-October	1410
13	November-December	1410
14	January-February	1411
15	March-April	1411
16	May-June	1411
17	July-August	1411
18	September-October	1411
19	November-December	1411
20	January-February	1412
21	March-April	1412
22	May-June	1412
23	July-August	1412
24	September-October	1412
25	November-December	1412
34	January-February	1413
33	March-April	1413
32	May-June	1413
31	July-August	1413
30	September-October	1413
29	November-December	1413
28	January-February	1414
27	March-April	1414
26	May-June	1414

¹⁵ Griffin 1936: 4.