CANTERBURY cathedral

Cathedral's Tunnel restored after 600 years

A tunnel in the heart of Canterbury Cathedral, built in the early 15th Century, has been
re-opened to the public for the first time in over 40 years. Linking the South West Transept to the Martyrdom, and running under the Pulpitum steps that give access to the Cathedral Quire, the tunnel was built in about 1420 to allow pilgrims to visit the site of the murder of St Thomas Becket without disturbing monks performing their daily duties. In recent years, the tunnel has been closed to the public and used to house electrical switchgear and as a store.

"We have reopened this tunnel to give proper access for people in wheelchairs to the Martyrdom, one of the most important parts of the cathedral" said the Very Revd Robert Willis, Dean of Canterbury, earlier today. "The Cathedral has hundreds of steps, which can make life difficult for anyone who finds it hard to climb up and down steps. Wherever possible, we are improving access for the disabled; and are delighted to have restored this tunnel to its original use. Now it has been cleared and reopened, it also gives tantalising new vistas of two central areas of the Cathedral".

Four knights of King Henry II murdered St Thomas Becket in the North West Transept of the Cathedral by on the 29th December 1170. Many miracles were reported following his death and Canterbury became the one the chief European centres of pilgrimage for centuries until the Reformation.