

Canterbury during WW2



© Fisk-Moore; used with permission



© Imperial War Museum, Copyright R Williams



This photograph shows the aftermath of a bombing raid on Canterbury.

What can you see going on in the foreground and what do you notice about the Cathedral?

What do you think the photographer wanted to show with this picture?

How do you think this would compare to the same view of Canterbury and the Cathedral today?



These photographs show some of the precautions taken inside the Cathedral.

What do you think is happening in each picture and why?

Who do you think took the pictures and why?

Do you think everything inside the Cathedral would have been protected?

What do you think would have been the most fragile part of the Cathedral during the bombing raids?

What would you choose to protect inside the Cathedral?

Canterbury during WW2



This is an extract from an account of someone living inside the precincts during one of the bombing raids.

Diary entry

At about quarter to one I noticed that the room was getting light. Of course this was extraordinary because we had very strict blackout rules. It got lighter and lighter, slightly pink. I thought there must be somebody out there defying the blackout. I watched it and it got still lighter so finally I got out of bed and went to look out of the window and the whole of the Precincts was shimmering in this wonderful pink light...

Pandemonium broke loose, so we dashed down to the kitchen into the broom cupboard. I snatched up a kitchen chair for my cousin to sit on holding the baby and my mother and I stood clinging to each other making an arch over the baby. And it went on absolutely continuously, no let up at all. The most fearful din! Planes roaring and diving and this most terrible scream of bombs. They made the most fearful screech and then, at the end of the screech there would be a weird noise and then, of course the explosions which shook the whole row of houses. Glass smashing, plaster falling on our heads, doors coming off their hinges and sometimes, from time to time in the intervals of the din, the Cathedral clock striking the quarters and the half hour. This was very strange because one thought every time, well, it's still there, it's still there, though we could hardly believe that is was. Then after a time another noise

|

Canterbury during WW2



How do you think Lois and her family were feeling during the bombing raid?

Why did the family go to the broom cupboard and why do you think Lois was praying when the bombs were falling?

Why were they pleased to hear the Cathedral clock chiming amid the other noise?

At the end, Lois describes the Cathedral as beautiful, why is this and do you think it is a good word to use?

Diary entry

was added to all the din which was the roaring of flames, and the red flickering came through the window. We could hear and see that the whole place was alight outside.....

Around three o'clock it stopped and we could hardly believe it. We just stood there waiting. It had stopped but the 'All Clear' didn't go. But they had obviously gone. I found my throat, my mouth was absolutely dry. My hands were sopping wet. And then we had Mrs Gill the Gatekeeper's wife calling to us and she said 'You'd better pack some things at once because this row of houses may catch fire at any minute.'

But the first thing I did actually was to go out the front door, which was off its hinges anyway, and look and see what had happened to the Cathedral. I have never seen anything more beautiful than the Cathedral was that night. There was a black pall of smoke behind it and it was blood red from end to end. This wonderful sight, the fires all around reflecting on the stones.

Lois Lang - Sims

Aged 24, Living at No 4 the Precincts

The long view



Canterbury Cathedral has been at the centre of some very important events during its long history. Some of the most dramatic events are listed here.

Can you arrange these events in order?

a. A fire destroys the Anglo-Saxon Cathedral.

b. Baedeker Raids destroy large parts of Canterbury and the Cathedral is damaged but survives thanks to the bravery of its Firewatchers.

c. A great plague – later called The Black Death – sweeps the country. The city's burial ground has to be enlarged to take the dead but most of the monks survive.

d. A Viking called Thorkell the Tall and his army besiege Canterbury and kidnap the Archbishop, Alphege. The city and Cathedral are plundered and burned.

e. Saint Augustine is sent by Pope Gregory the Great to re-establish Christianity in England. He establishes his cathedral on this site and becomes the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

f. Archbishop Thomas Becket is murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by four of King Henry II's knights. He is buried in the Crypt and soon after his death, numerous healings and other miracles are reported. He is later made a saint. Canterbury Cathedral becomes an important and very popular place of pilgrimage.

g. Archbishop Lanfranc – the first Archbishop after the Norman Conquest, orders the Cathedral to be rebuilt in the Norman style.

h. Geoffrey Chaucer begins writing the Canterbury Tales, a series of stories shared by a group of pilgrims as they travel together from London to Saint Thomas Becket's Shrine in Canterbury Cathedral.

i. In the 1530s King Henry VIII breaks with the Pope... Canterbury Cathedral's monastery is dissolved by royal command during the English Reformation and its monks are forced to leave. It is the last monastery to close.

j. The Cathedral's interiors are damaged and 'blasphemous art' destroyed by the Puritans during the English civil Wars from 1642 to 1643.

k. The North West Tower of the Cathedral is built. The Cathedral building now looks much like it does today.



Now pick which event you think of as the most important. You can discuss this with others, but you must be able to explain and present why you made this choice.

1.E 2.D 3.A 4.G 5.F 6.C 7.H 8.I 9.J 10.K 11.B