Join us for three days of exciting papers, 28-30th April 2021, examining the history, visual and material culture, archaeology, architecture, literature, liturgy, musicology, and reception of Becket's cult at Canterbury, across Europe and beyond, with keynote papers by Rachel Koopmans, Nicholas Vincent, Paul Webster, and Alec Ryrie. Be guided by experts on a series of Virtual Tours taking you right into the heart of Canterbury Cathedral and the surrounding area, allowing you to get up close with some of the stunning architecture and artefacts from Becket’s long and storied history.

The conference takes place over three days and each day has a specific focus.

The cult at Canterbury
This first day will focus on the architecture and art of the cathedral, with an examination of the material culture of Becket. It will consider the building- its floors, its windows, its construction, the shrine, its graffiti. It will also look at reliquaries and pilgrim badges. Speakers include Dr John Crooks, Dr Ryan Eisenman, Isabelle Bardiès-Fronty, Dr Kathleen Doyle and Dr Rachel Koopmans and Prof. Nicholas Vincent.

Thursday 29th April: Day Two
Perceptions of Becket
The second day will focus on perceptions of Becket, from diplomacy to mythology, examining devotion, both local and global and looking at how Becket was pictured in the medieval church. Speakers will include Prof. Leidulf Melve, Dr Katie Hodges-Kluck, Dr Zachary Stewart and Dr Paul Webster.

30th April: Day Three
Becket, a global cult
The third day will explore the spread of the cult of Becket, how it developed and how it was broken during the English Reformation. Speakers include, Dr Christopher Lakey, Professor Anne Lester and Professor Alex Ryrie.
The conference will cost £25 per day, £10 per day for students, and free for students of Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent.

Practical Information
Feel free to peruse the website, which contains links to all of our partner's Becket themed resources. Once you’ve bought (or redeemed) your tickets on Eventbrite, you will receive an email containing the link to the conference and the link and password to the digital tours page, so you can watch them at your leisure for the duration of the conference.

Hashtags & Social Media
We encourage you to Tweet about the conference beforehand as well as while it’s happening. Please remember to tag @no1Cathedral and use the #ThomasBecketConference hashtag in your posts.
On 29 December 1170, four of King Henry II's knights murdered Archbishop Thomas Becket inside Canterbury Cathedral. News of this sacrilegious violence spread quickly and, in a matter of months, this merchant’s son from Cheapside had transformed into one of the most famous martyrs in medieval Europe. Supported by the circulation of new liturgies, miracle stories, sacred objects and holy relics, the cult of Becket dominated the sacred landscape of Christendom, stretching from Trondheim (Norway) to Monreale (Sicily) and reaching from Reykjavik (Iceland) to Tarsus (Turkey).

His cult also attracted devotion from all ranks of society. Before the destruction of his shrine during the Reformation in 1538, innumerable pilgrims, including peasants, kings, lepers, monks, prisoners, mothers, and soldiers, ventured to Canterbury and returned with their very own relics and souvenirs. From Geoffrey Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales to T. S. Eliot’s Murder in a Cathedral, the stories of Becket’s martyrdom and of the pilgrims who journeyed to Canterbury have continued to captivate the public imagination.

The year 2020 marks the 850th anniversary of Becket’s martyrdom and the 800th anniversary of the translation of his body into the Trinity Chapel of Canterbury Cathedral. To commemorate his extraordinary life and legacy at Canterbury, scholars at Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury Christ Church University, and the University of Kent will co-host an academic conference to be held online via the Zoom Video Conferencing website.
The Canterbury Journey represents a seven year project and a major five-year development of the Cathedral. The programme conserves and safeguards this beautiful building and its heritage for future generations and enriches the experience of those who visit. It will help create opportunities for local and international diverse audiences to enjoy the rich history and heritage of the Cathedral, engaging with it in interactive, new and exciting ways.

This essential work is possible thanks to a National Lottery Heritage Fund total grant of £13.8 million and the generosity of trusts and individuals in the UK and USA who have given £10.9 million through the Canterbury Cathedral Trust, £250,000 was donated by The Friends of Canterbury Cathedral.

During the course of The Canterbury Journey, the western end of the Cathedral is being restored and enhanced with repairs to the West Towers, Nave roof and Christ Church Gate and landscaping designed to significantly improve access and bring visual coherence to the South Precincts. Check our interactive physical works timeline here.

A new Visitor Centre provides information, ticketing services and a shop with a free to enter Viewing Gallery offering stunning never-before-seen views of the Cathedral and Precincts and interpretation. (maybe include a link to a short video of the welcome centre?)

A purpose-built Community Studio will host a range of community activities and events. While social distancing measures are in place, it will serve as a creative hub where interactive materials will be created.

New interpretation trails, exhibitions, online resources and Media Guide will open up access to the Cathedral’s historic treasures.

A wide-ranging programme of events and activities is bringing the Cathedral closer to new and diverse audiences, and a new pass scheme will be available to those who live or work in the Canterbury area or belong to an East Kent faith group.