Hidden gems from London's ecclesiastical past - and present - are uncovered through a new project exploring the capital's Anglican chapels through the eyes of a unique chronicler of church buildings.
London’s Unseen Chapels: From the Notebooks of Canon Clarke, a Heritage Lottery Fund-supported project, will leaf through the pages of Canon Basil Fulford Clarke’s (1907-78) notebooks.

The project uncovers the ways in which institutions such as Temple Church and Charterhouse Chapel provided spiritual care to those from all gradations of society, and continue to do so successfully today.

In the spring of 2017, volunteers from across the country are following in the footsteps of Canon Clarke, exploring some of London's most historically important chapels with the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England, Lambeth Palace Library, and the Church of England Record Centre.

The project will illuminate the impact that chapels have had on the regional and national history of the United Kingdom, as well as investigating their architectural forms.

Canon Clarke, minister of St Peter’s, Knowl Hill in Berkshire, visited nearly 11,000 churches in his lifetime, keeping notes and postcards recounting both the architecture of the buildings and his own experiences.

During the summer of 2016, the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division recruited two archiving students to work alongside the Church of England Record Centre. They catalogued and digitised the Canon Clarke Collection, which is available to search as part of Lambeth Palace Library's online catalogue.

The project is now in its second stage; a group of seven volunteers and one apprentice are working to create digital resources and organise two separate events. An evening lecture at Lambeth Palace will be complimented by an exhibition featuring the notebooks of Canon Clarke alongside material from Lambeth Palace Library and the Church of England Record Centre. While a ‘church-crawl’, will enable participants to discover the history of chapels which are nestled within London's streets.

Dame Caroline Spelman MP, Second Church Estates Commissioner, said: "This project, which began in April 2016 with the digitisation and cataloguing of the collection, has offered nine volunteers and one apprentice the chance to develop new interests in our country's places of worship, explore the Church's fascinating history, and learn a series of practical skills. Thanks to funding provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund toward projects like this one, our nation's churches and chapels will continue to make an impact in people's lives."

Becky Clark, Director of Churches and Cathedrals, said: "The notebooks of Canon Clarke show us a side of London that is otherwise hidden - a world of worship built not around visible churches but on providing for people wherever they might be. From school chapels to the hospital chapel at Bedlam, this project unearths not just historical gems but also fascinating stories of past lives."

Julie Patenaude, Digital Projects Manager at the Church Buildings Division said, "Canon Clarke began his journey documenting our churches at the age of 15. The collection is a testament to his passion for these buildings and their treasures as much as an important twentieth century record of their condition."
Volunteer Gokce Ozkan said, “Being able to get involved in the Canon Clarke project has been a fantastic opportunity in terms of understanding the importance of teamwork and collaboration. When we first started, the only thing we had was the collection of Canon Clarke’s notebooks and a project waiting to be shaped. Now when I look at our progress so far, I realise that as a team we have achieved so many great things.”

What's new?

Online Resources:

- The Canon Clarke Notebook Collection is now searchable on the CERC Catalogue
- Digital images of 31 of the notebooks are available on the Lambeth Palace Library Image catalogue.
- Two new written features on ChurchDays (a website which encourages and enables tourism of the Church of England's 16,000 churches).
- Further historical information is also now available on the Church Heritage Record.

Events:

- Evening Event with lecture given by Dr. Jennifer Freeman OBE - Former director of the Historic Chapels Trust. “London Churches and Chapels: A Miscellany” as well as exhibition of Canon Clarke’s Notebooks alongside Lambeth Palace Library and Church of England Record Centre collections, and a wine reception. 22 March 2017 17:00 - 20:30 in the Great Hall at Lambeth Palace. To book places for the evening event please visit: [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/londons-unseen-chapelsfrom-the-notebooks-of-canon-clarke-tickets-31716408632?aff=erellivmlt](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/londons-unseen-chapelsfrom-the-notebooks-of-canon-clarke-tickets-31716408632?aff=erellivmlt)