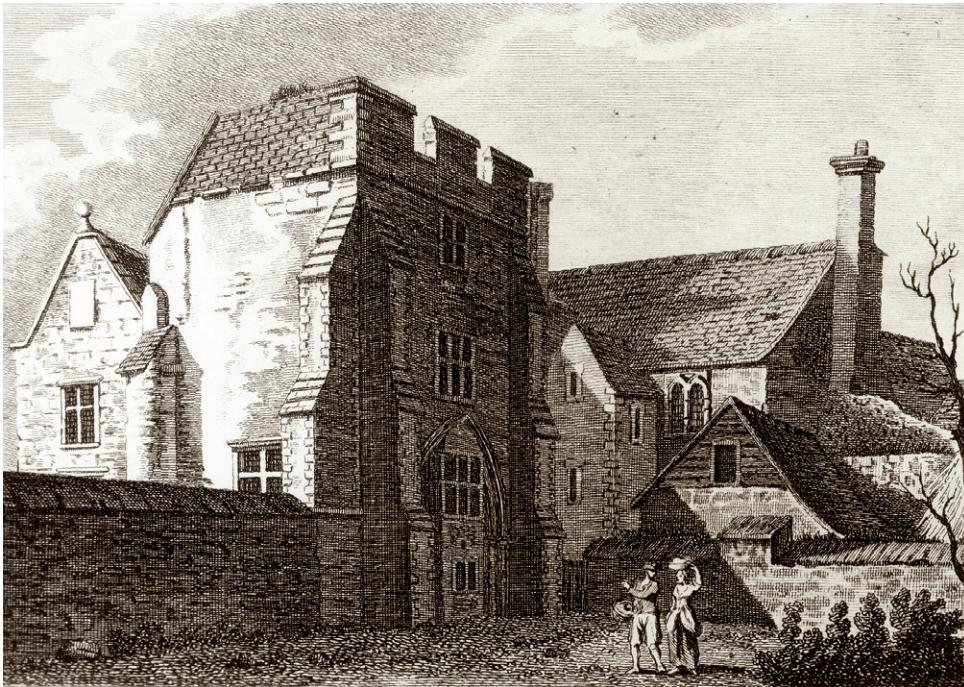


# THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE



View from the east of the porch of the Great Hall by S Hooper in 1784. Note the surviving crenellations (now gone) and the Tudor kitchens behind the wall beyond the porch. © Canterbury Museums.

## THE ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE

The Archbishop's Palace in Canterbury was not only one of the great residences of medieval and Tudor England but also the earliest of the Archbishop's many palaces. Until its destruction in c1650, after about 570 years of continuous use, it was also probably the most important of the palaces. Lambeth was not acquired until the very end of the twelfth century, and it was only in the post medieval period that the London house of the Archbishop became his principal residence.

The first 'palace' at Canterbury, called the '*nova hospitatio archiepiscopi*' in Domesday Book, was built by Archbishop Lanfranc in c. 1080. Earlier Archbishops probably lived with the monks in their monastery north of the Cathedral. When Lanfranc arrived from Normandy in 1070 he rapidly rebuilt the Cathedral and principal monastic buildings and then went on to demolish 27 houses in Palace Street (as Domesday Book tells us) in order to make a new archiepiscopal precinct north-west of the Cathedral. It is almost certainly Lanfranc who was responsible for the large dogleg in Palace Street/The Borough.

Lanfranc's Palace buildings were all in the area immediately west of the north-west tower ('Lanfranc's Tower' until 1832) of the Cathedral, and they are all described in the many accounts of the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170. These buildings consisted of a great hall with a porch on the north, a kitchen on the west, and the private chamber of the Archbishop on the east. In which Becket was sitting on that fateful afternoon of the 29th December 1170. There was also probably a private chapel just the east of this. None of this group, sadly, now survives, though part of the undercroft of Lanfranc's north-south range has recently been excavated.

By the end of the twelfth century these buildings were far too small for a man of Archbishop Hubert Walter's stature and when he eventually settled his quarrel with the monks, he started to build for himself in c1200 a vast new hall further to the north. This structure, which was to be second only to Westminster Hall in its huge scale, was designed to fill the whole area from Palace Street on the west to the Priory boundary wall on the east, a distance of about 200 feet. There was also to be a detached kitchen on the north side of the west end of this hall, and parts of this kitchen (40 feet square internally) with buttressed corners (and probably a stone vault inside originally) still survive.



Reconstruction by John Bowen of the Great Hall of the Palace from the north-east, when it was newly completed in c1220.



The Archbishop's Palace area on the c1640 map of Canterbury (CALC 123) This is the only plan of the Palace before it was demolished. Note the huge lead roof of the Great Hall.

The Great Hall itself, which was probably completed by 1220 (during Stephen Langton's archiepiscopate and in time for the great festival translating Becket's remains to the new shrine) was not only built on a monumental scale but also using the latest architectural style from France. It was aisled and eight bays long and each bay had magnificent buttressed transverse gables with two double (transomed) windows and quatrefoiled windows above. In each gable was a circular window also containing aquatfoiled, and quite large fragments of these splendid window still survive incorporated into later buildings. The best surviving bay is in fact that on the north immediately to the west of the large contemporary porch. The hall itself, which measured c165 by 61 feet internally had pillars made up of clusters of nine slender shafts of Purbeck marble set on large diamond-shaped bases. At the east end was a dais, and beyond this was an east wall, now demolished, which contained "Gothic canopies of Sussex marble supported by pillars of the same, probably designed for beaufets or sideboards" as one eighteenth century writer described them. East of this wall and contemporary with the rest of the structure was a large vaulted undercroft (with a line of five central pillars). Above must have been the Archbishop's great chamber though all traces of this, except for a spiral stair in its west side, have now gone.

During the later medieval period many areas were rebuilt, including the north-south range (in the fifteenth century) which connected Lanfranc's hall with the thirteenth century Great Hall. The whole of the northern part of this range including the roof still survives, and it is now part of the present Archbishop's Palace. In 1349, a document mentions the Great Hall, Chapel, a small chamber for the archbishop, the Great Chamber, the kitchen for that chamber, the Great House called the Hall of St.

Thomas (presumably Lanfranc's Hall), the chamber next the Great Hall, two other chambers between the Great Hall and Great Chamber, the Great Kitchen and the Great Gate with Stables. Many of these rooms cannot now be identified, but it is clear that by 1349 the Palace already had a very large complex of extra buildings to the south of the Great Hall range.

Many great events took place in the Great Hall including King Edward I's wedding feast in September 1299 (for four days!). The Palace continued to be used throughout Tudor times though a serious fire in 1544 (which killed Archbishop Cranmer's brother among others) meant that for a time the new Palace at nearby Bekesbourne was used. In 1560-6, however, Archbishop Parker spent £1,406 15s. 4d. on repair and enlargement work (using red bricks mainly) and quite a lot of this work survives (notably the Great Gatehouse to Palace Street). On September 7th 1573, Parker gave Queen Elizabeth I a great birthday party in the Great Hall with many notable guests.

In 1645 Archbishop Laud was beheaded and Parliament then abolished the office of Archbishop and confiscated all the Archbishop's estates. A survey of the Palace and valuation was carried out for Parliament two years later and systematic demolition started soon after. This meant that, although the new Archbishop in 1660 had his estates restored to him, all his palaces were in ruins and only at Lambeth (and to a lesser extent at Croydon) did he carry out repairs. Hence no Archbishop lived in Canterbury again until 1900 when Archbishop Frederick Temple had a new small Palace (called the 'Old Palace') constructed in the area immediately south of the ruins of the Great Hall.

Tim Tatton-Brown, January 1986 (revised)

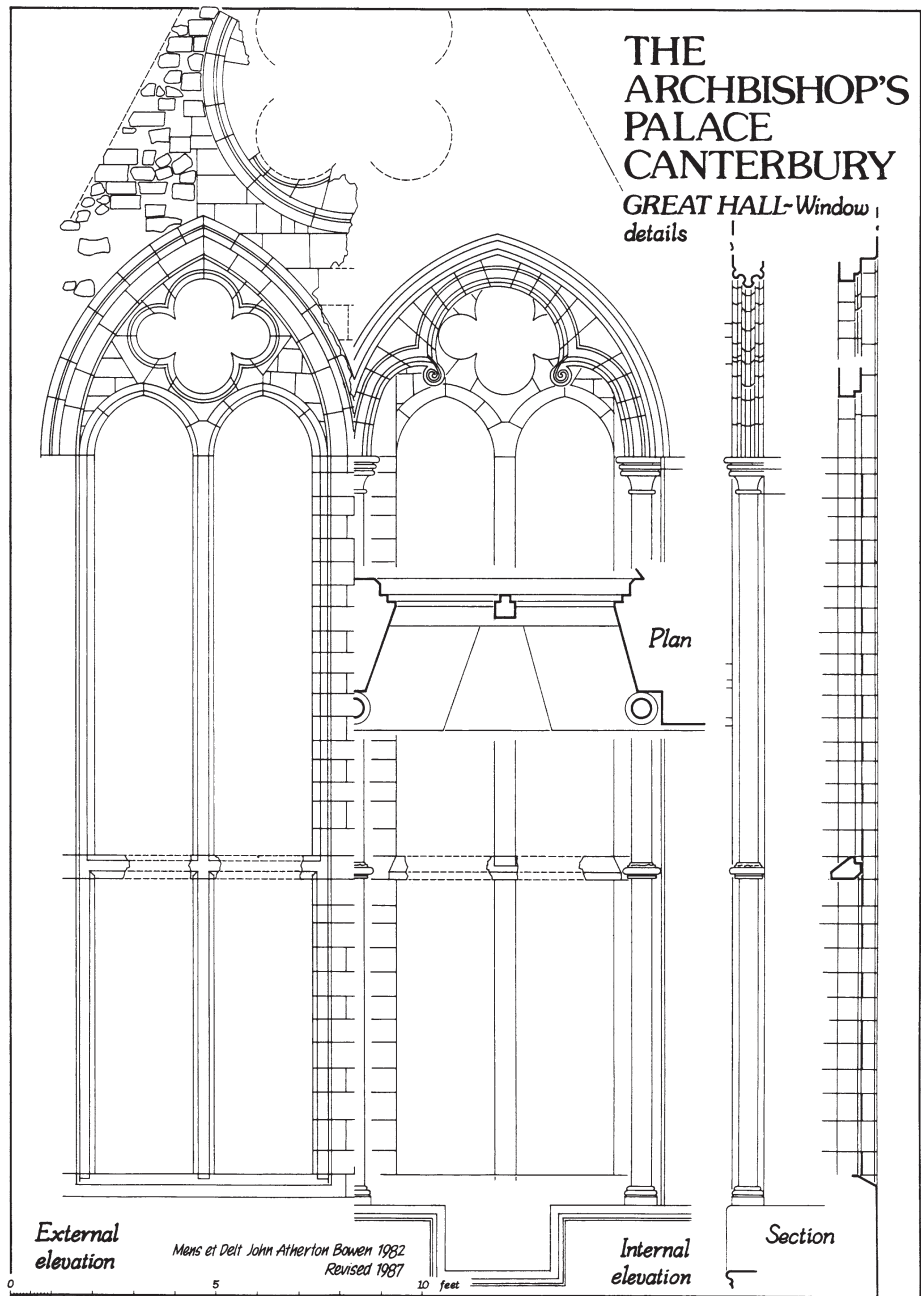
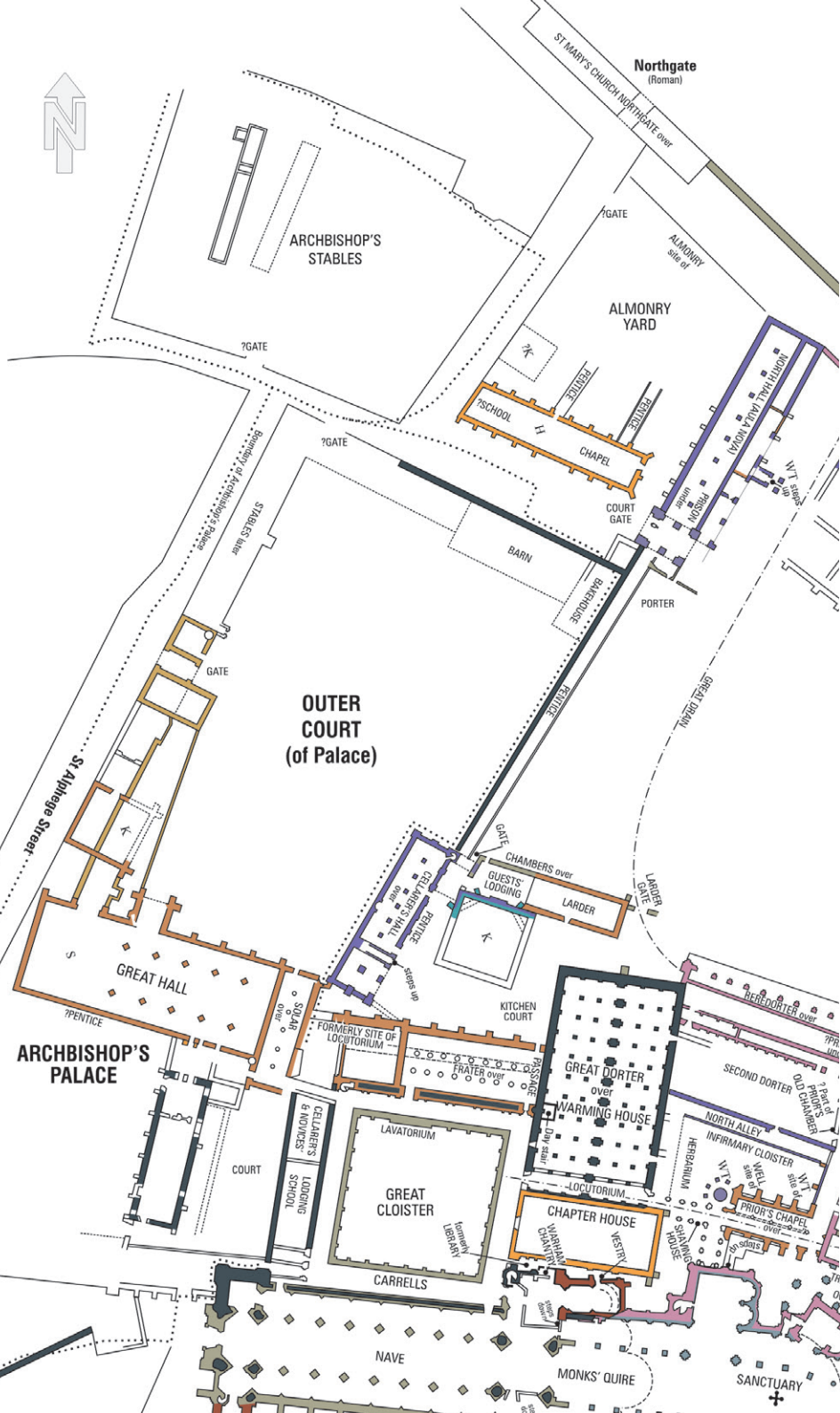
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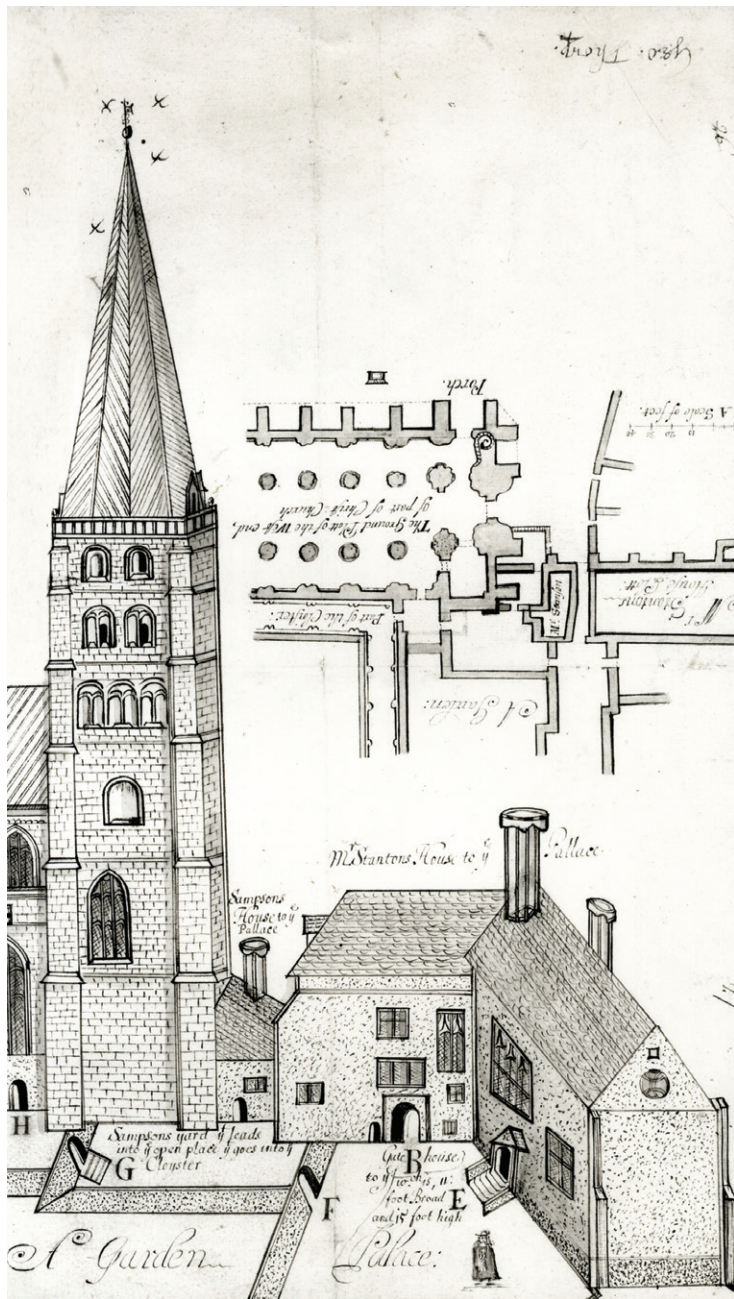
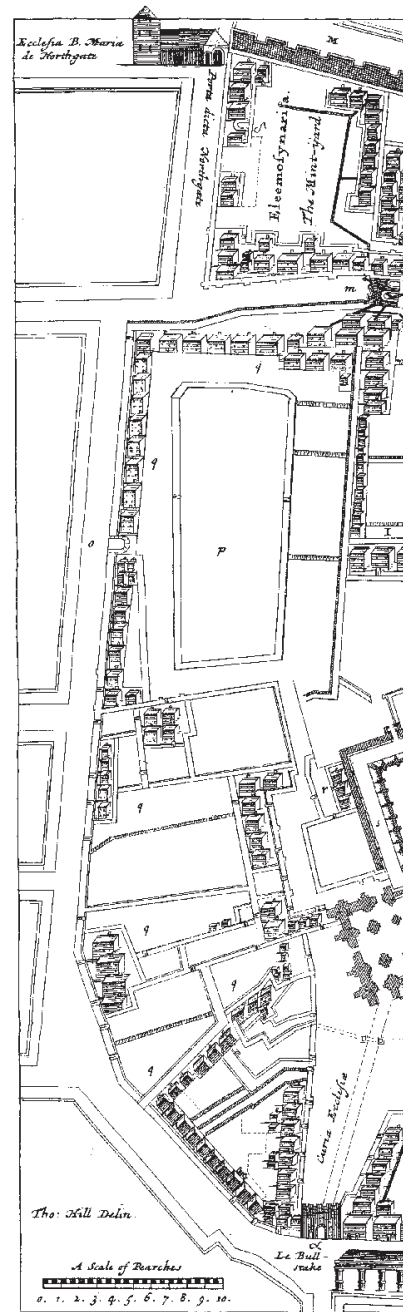
The north-south range, tinted lithograph by LL Razé dated 1864. ©Canterbury Museums.

- c.1070–1096
- c.1096–1135
- c.1135–1167
- c.1167–1200
- c.1200–1285
- c.1285–1331
- c.1331–1377
- c.1337–1449
- c.1449–1540
- c.1540–1650
- Uncertain

- WT Water-tower
- H Hall
- K Kitchen
- S Services
- B Buttery
- P Pantry



Measured drawing by John Bowen of one of the early thirteenth century windows in the Great Hall.



Left: Part of Thomas Hill's plan of the Precincts showing the Archbishop's Palace area in c1680. Published in Nicholas Batteley's 1703 edition of William Somner's 'Antiquities'. Above: Two tinted drawings of the southern area of the Archbishop's Palace in 1683 in the Bodleian Library (Tanner MSS cxiii, 22-24). These show the area of Lanfranc's original nall (as well as his north-west tower of the Cathedral) which had been repaired by Archbishop Matthew Parker in 1565.