

Between 1977 and 2002 Canterbury Urban Studies Centre and Canterbury Environment Centre published around 30 guides and city trails describing various aspects of Canterbury's past. Both organisations were based in St Alphege church.

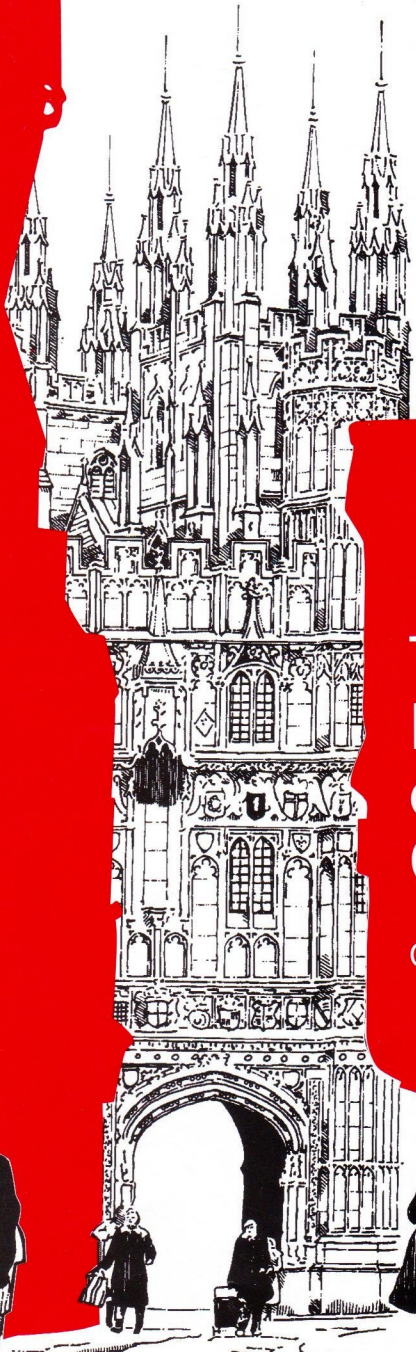
Between them they produced 14 titles in the 'Trails' series, and a further 16 titles outside the main series. All are now out of print and many are difficult (a few impossible) to find through normal second hand sources. Many contain information that is not readily available in other printed or on line sources.

CHAS (Canterbury Historical and Archaeological Society) is scanning a selection of these publications for uploading to the CHAS website as PDFs. In this way a new generation of readers and researchers can have access to this unique resource.

A full list of these publications appears on the CHAS website:

<http://www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk>

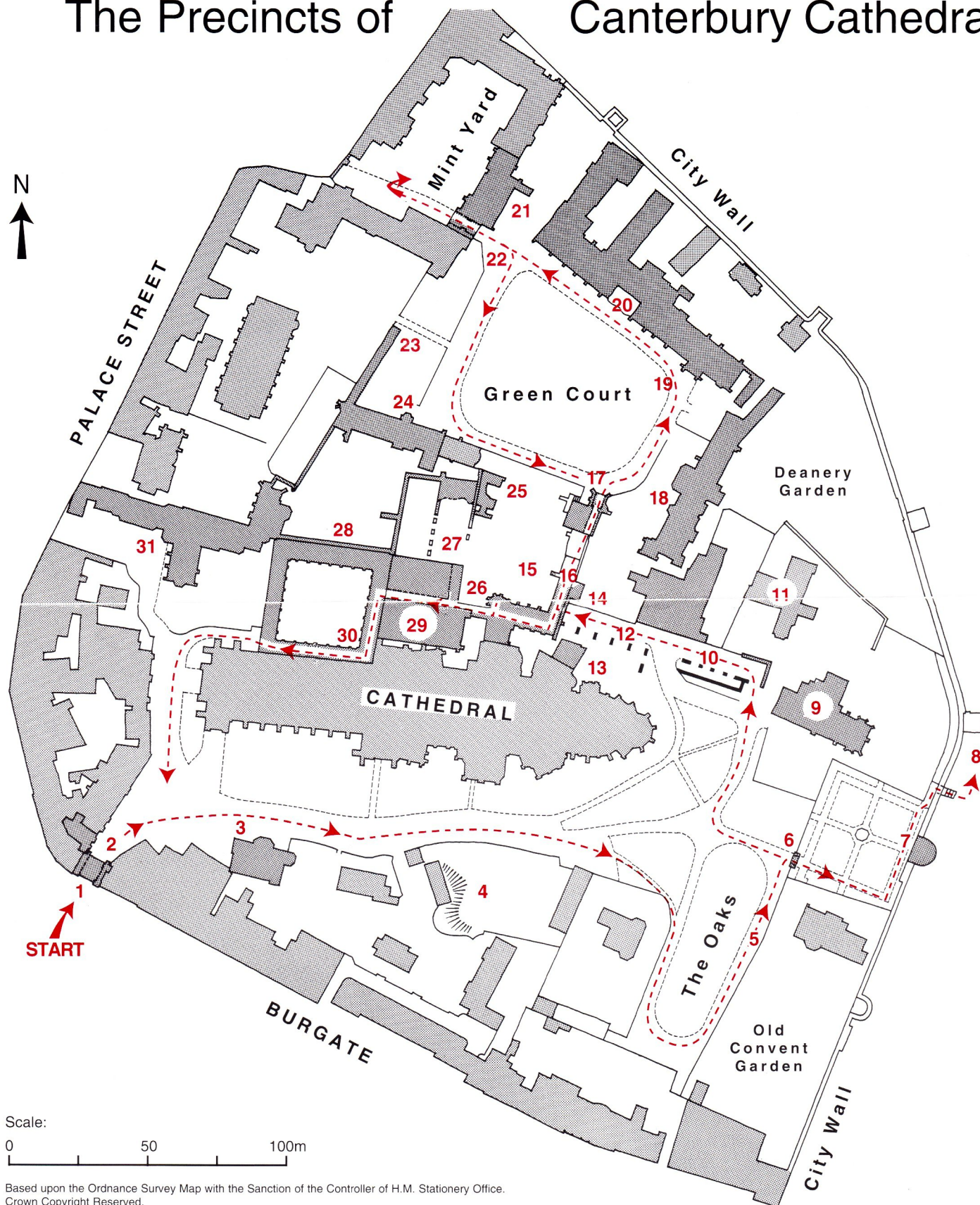
Slight liberties have been taken with this leaflet to prepare it for displaying on a screen. The original was on a folded, large single sheet which a visitor could refold while following the route round the precincts. To prepare for screen display the sheet has been divided into pages, some of double size, to accommodate illustrations and the flow of the text. One caption has been moved to keep it with its picture. The text is in English but the captions are in French.



The PRECINCTS of Canterbury Cathedral

CITY TRAIL NUMBER 3

The Precincts of Canterbury Cathedral



Scale:
0 50 100m

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Map with the Sanction of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.
Crown Copyright Reserved.

Begin at Christ Church Gate

Christ Church Gate (1) is now the principal entrance to the Precincts of Canterbury Cathedral. It stands in the Buttermarket which contains several inns of the medieval period. The present gate replaced an earlier entrance which stood some way east along Burgate.

The large niche in the centre of the gate once contained a figure of Christ, but this was destroyed by the Puritans in 1642, however it has been replaced with a modern one by Klaus Ringwald. The turrets on top of the gate were pulled down early in the 19th century to make the Cathedral clock visible from the local bank in the main street! The whole gate was restored in the 1930s by the Friends of Canterbury Cathedral. Notice the beautiful carved doors. These were made in 1660 to replace those destroyed in the Civil War. The arms on the door are those of Archbishop William Juxon.

The gate is rich in heraldry and was built to commemorate the marriage of Prince Arthur, the eldest son of Henry VII, to Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the King and Queen of Spain. The gate was begun about 1502 but was only finished about 1520 - Henry VII having lost interest in the scheme after the death of Arthur. If you look up, you will see the shields of King Henry in the centre, together with those of Arthur, Catherine and many of the leading families of the Tudor Court. The upper row has shields with emblems of the Passion (sponge, spear, crown of thorns, etc.). Inside, look up again at the splendid vault, which contains arms of a later period with those of Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey most prominent, and at the Tudor rose forming the boss of the vault. Do not miss the tiny portrait heads up on the right as you leave the back of the gate. They are thought to represent the young Arthur and Catherine.

You now see one of the loveliest views in England, with the whole Cathedral stretched out before you. The Cathedral was the church of the monastery of Christ Church. A Cathedral is where a bishop has his throne or where he is based. The work of the Cathedral was largely done by the monks, and the Precinct is the area where



(1) Portrait en tête sur le Portail de Christ Church, soi-disant du jeune Prince Arthur et de Catherine d'Aragon.



(2) La petite maison du Portier.

(3) No. 11 The Precincts - le pourtour de la cathédrale - début 18ème siècle.

To your left is the **Gate Keeper's Cottage (2)**. By tradition, the Precincts of the Cathedral are locked up every night at 9, and only opened again early in the morning. It may seem strange to find houses and even shops inside the Precincts but this was a feature of medieval times



Moving on to the right you will see a very grand house, **No. 11 the Precincts (3)**, with a large upstairs window projecting towards the Cathedral. This was the Canon's house of the early 18th century, which was extensively modernised about a hundred years later. The great hanging window lights a first floor drawing room with marvellous views of the church.

Passing along the south side of the Cathedral you come to South Close with its flint wall. Just behind the wall you will notice that the ground level is very much higher, so that quite small plants pop over the wall almost above your head. This is the **Campanile Mound (4)** where a great bell-tower once stood on a mound of earth. The Cathedral's bells were very large and it was dangerous to hang them all inside the towers of the church. So a special tower called a *clocharium* was built in the 12th century which could house even the heaviest of bells. The bell-tower was badly damaged in an earthquake in 1382 but was subsequently restored. It was finally pulled down in 1540 when five bells weighing over 12 tons were sold off.



(6) *La porte du cimetière, vers 1160; a l'intérieur - une ruche pour abeilles (5).*

Continuing along the flint wall you arrive at the Oaks, a large area of grass pointing south towards Burgate. This was the monastic fish pond in the middle ages, for remember, fish played a more important part in the religious observances of the time than it does now. If you walk around the Oaks to the far side you will get another splendid view of the Cathedral, this time from the south-east. Notice too the **bee-boles (5)**, which housed the bees, along the old brick walls. Honey was an important source of sweetening long before sugar came on the scene. The unusual tree is an oriental plane probably planted in the 1850s.

At the top of the Oaks, you will find the old **Cemetery Gate (6)** that leads into the Kent War Memorial Garden. This gate once stood further to the west and separated the monks' cemetery from the common burial ground along the south side of the church. The gate was built about 1160 by the great builder Prior Wybert. Inside the garden, you can see the back of the city wall.



Kent War Memorial Gardens - Le jardin en mémoire des morts de la guerre.

The Precincts of Canterbury Cathedral fill one complete corner of the city which is roughly circular, so that long sections of the medieval city wall enclose the north and east sides of the Precincts. Dominating the garden is a large **bastion tower (7)** which was built towards the end of the 15th century. Just to the north, through a tiny door, you will find another bastion, this time square, which stands next to the Queningate through the city wall. The tower was called 'new' in 1409, but the present gate is 19th century. If you go outside and down the steps, on the right you will find, embedded in the wall, a portion of an arch in red brick and stone. This was the **Roman gate-way (8)**, and the tradition is that it was the one Queen Bertha used when she went to church at St. Martin's. Don't forget to look over the road at the great early 14th century Fyndon Gate of St. Augustine's, the Benedictine monastery and mausoleum for the Kings of Kent established by St. Augustine. This was almost the rival of Christ Church in size, numbers and wealth.

Passing back into the garden you will notice an old mulberry tree traditionally planted by Charles II. See too the beautiful wisteria trailing along the ancient wall. As you make your way back through the Cemetery Gate you will have another marvellous view of the Cathedral.



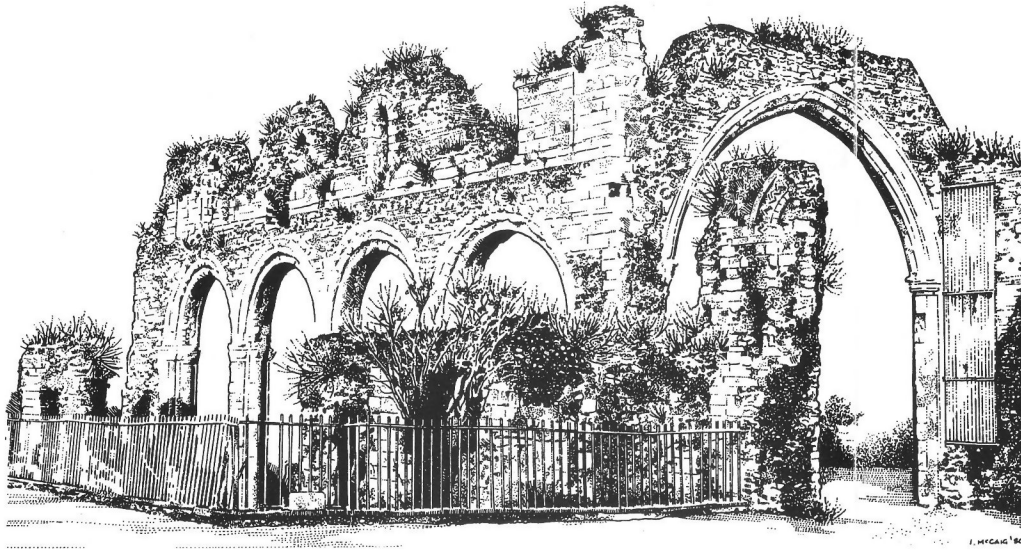
(8) Restes du portail romain.

Now turn right towards the group of houses and ruins. You are approaching the old monastic Infirmary or hospital and on the right, one of the large guest houses that the monks used for entertaining their important visitors. The present house, called **Meister Omers (9)**, was built by Prior Chillenden about 1395. It has a huge fireplace more than 17 feet wide in the old kitchen. Cardinal Beaufort, the brother of Henry IV, was one of the many famous residents of Meister Omers. It is now part of the King's School.

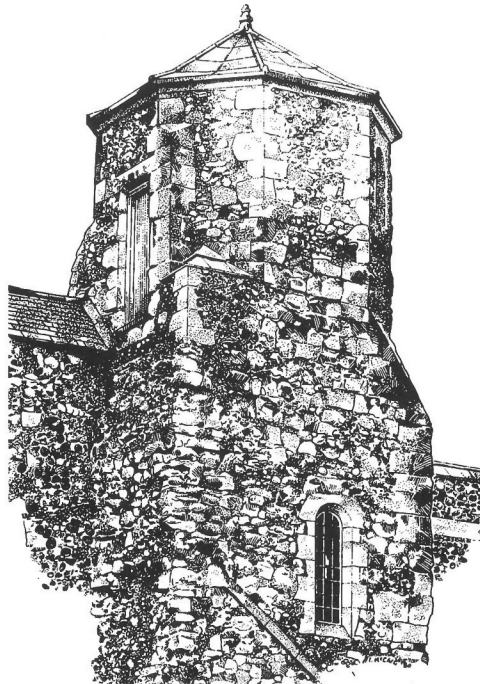


(9) Meister Omers. Hôtellerie d'un monastère, environ 1395.

To the left of the house are the ruins of the **Infirmery chapel (10)** where the monks who were too sick to go to church could attend mass. The chapel was built in the middle of the 12th century but was altered and repaired many times. Notice the magnificent window on the north side dating from about 1330 and the fine series of carved capitals along the southern arcade. You can also see bits of the destroyed building piled up along a flower bed, and part of the original floor.

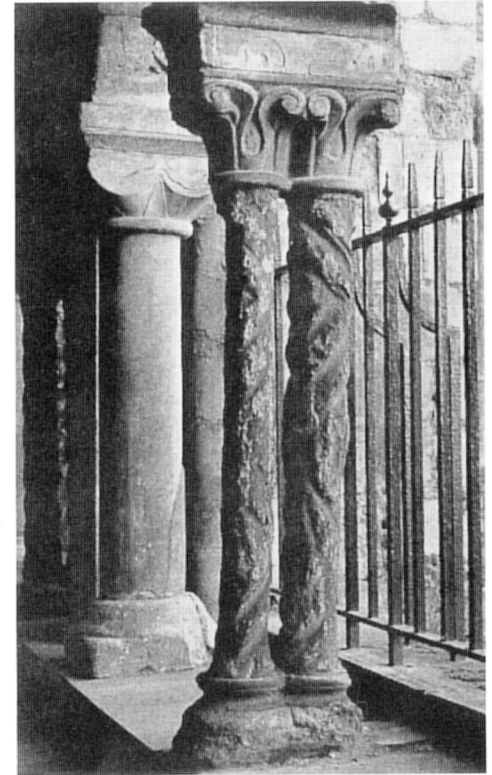


(10) Ruines de la Chapelle de l'Infirmerie, milieu 12ème siècle.



(14) La Tour de l'Echiquier.

(15) Colonnes du 12ème siècle dans le cloître de l'Infirmerie.



Behind the chapel is **Linacre House (11)** with its 18th century facade concealing an older building. Just to the left you can see a flint hall with a high roof. This is the 14th century hall for the Infirmary, who had to do his share of entertaining the important visitors. It was for many years the home of the Cathedral choir boys.

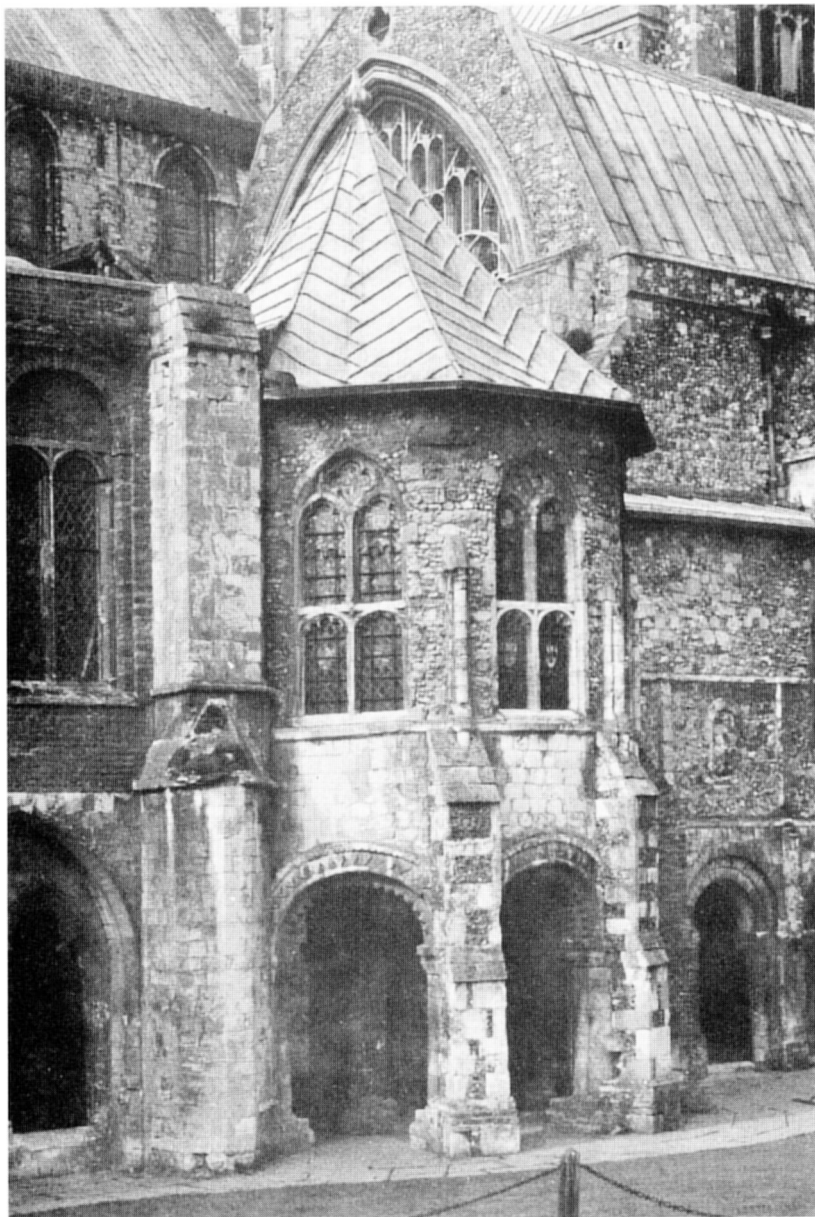
As you walk along the main body of the **Infirmery (12)**, you will pass the massive columns that once held up the great roof. To the left is **Wybert's Treasury (13)**, built about 1160. Note the original iron work around the windows.

At the west end of the Infirmary stands the **Chequer Tower (14)** that once gave access to the Chequer, the official 'counting house' for the Cathedral revenues. The Chequer was demolished in the 19th century leaving only the tower which now forms an entrance to the new Wolfson Library built on the site.

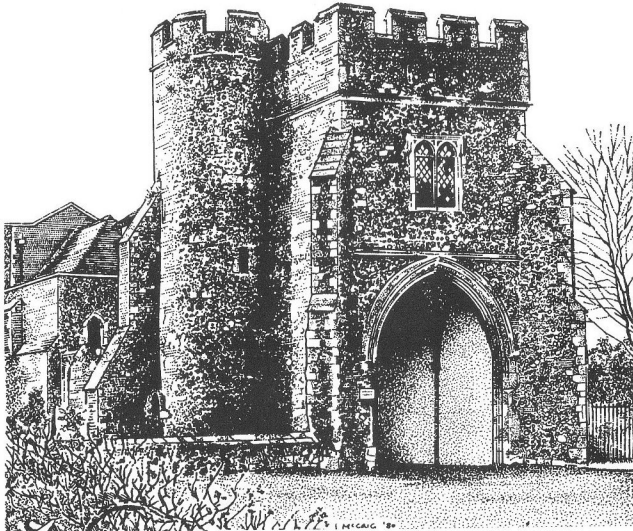
When you pass through the west door of the Infirmary you find yourself in the **Infirmery Cloister (15)** where the monks grew herbs and spices in the enclosed garden. These were for medicine as well as for the kitchen. The tiny twisted columns of the cloister date from the 12th century.

Now open trail, fold back and then re-fold.
Ouvrez maintenant le dépliant, pliez-le et repliez-le.

If you look through into the garden you can see the Water Tower (26) on the left, that held fresh drinking water for the whole monastery. This was built in about 1160 by Prior Wybert. The water supply came through a complicated series of pipes and tanks from outside the city. It was stored in the upper part of the tower, from which pipes distributed it all round the Precincts. When the dirty water was thrown away it was directed through channels to clear out the drains and to flush the monastic toilets. We shall see the remains of these later on.



(26) *La Tour de l'eau du Prieur Wybert, environ 1160.*



(17) Maison-portail du Prieur Selling, fin 15ème siècle.

Turn right and walk through the so-called **Dark Entry (16)**. This passage is supposed to be haunted by the ghost of Nell Cook who, in Tudor times, poisoned the old Canon she worked for and was according to tradition walled-up in the Precincts. Fortunately this is only legend. At the far end of the passage you arrive at what remains of the medieval Prior's house. The **Gate House (17)** leading into the Green Court which was built by Prior Selling late in the 15th century.

The Green Court was the principal 'business' sector of the monastery and contained many of the important offices. Just to your right is the **Deanery (18)** which contains part of Prior Goldstone's new mansion of the early 16th century. This house became the Dean's home at the Reformation, and has been substantially rebuilt and repaired many times - most especially after a bad fire in the reign of Elizabeth I.

Passing the Deanery you will see in front of you a range of grey flint buildings containing a gate (19). This range once contained the monastic brewery and granary, as well as the monks' stables. It was built in the early 14th century, but has again been restored and rebuilt. Just under the gate you will see a pair of fire hooks, a rather primitive form of fire extinguisher. You didn't so much put the fire out as pull the house down before it set fire to any more.

As you walk along the north side of Green Court you will enjoy the spectacular view of the north side of the Cathedral. This is the only place in the Precincts where you can appreciate the great length and complexity of the church and its adjoining buildings. Don't miss the tiny **Cromwellian house (20)** on your right. The house is dated 1659 in a brick pattern along its front.

You are now approaching the great gate of the monastery and as you reach it, a famous view opens up on your right of the **Norman Entry Staircase (21)**. This staircase, built in the middle of the 12th century, once led up to a magnificent hall. It was another guest hall belonging to the Cathedral and was called the High, or Hog Hall, because it was raised up on arches. The hall was destroyed about two centuries ago, but the stairs and some of the arches that supported the southern end of the hall were by good fortune preserved and now form part of the King's School buildings.

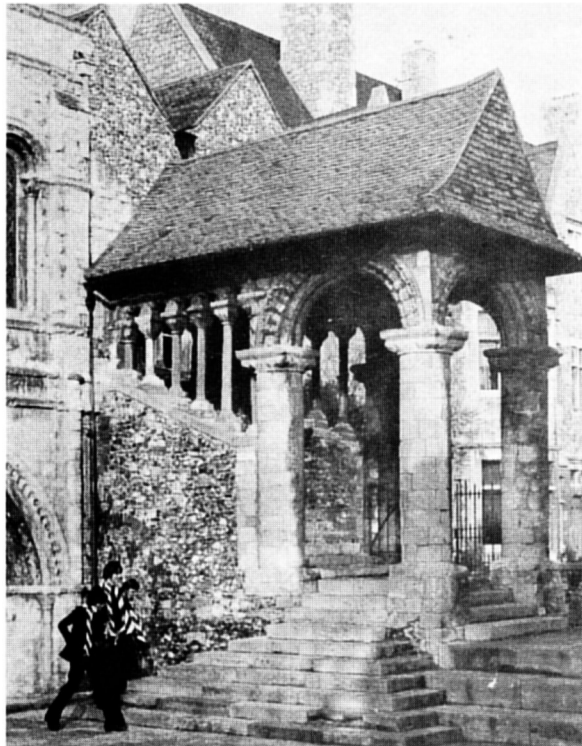
Behind the staircase you can see the city wall and the jumble of Canterbury beyond.



(19) Brasserie, grenier et étables des moines, début 14ème siècle - faisant partie maintenant de King's School.



(20) Maison de l'époque de Cromwell 1659.



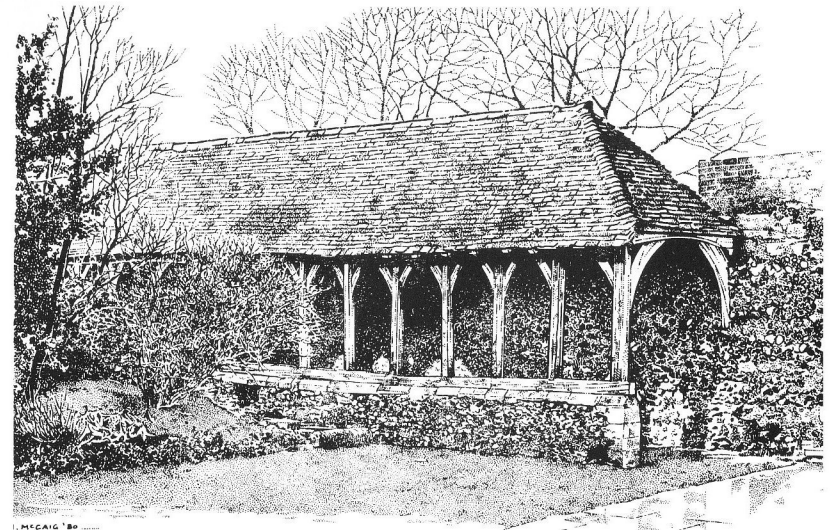
(21) Escalier de l'entrée époque romane, milieu 12ème siècle.

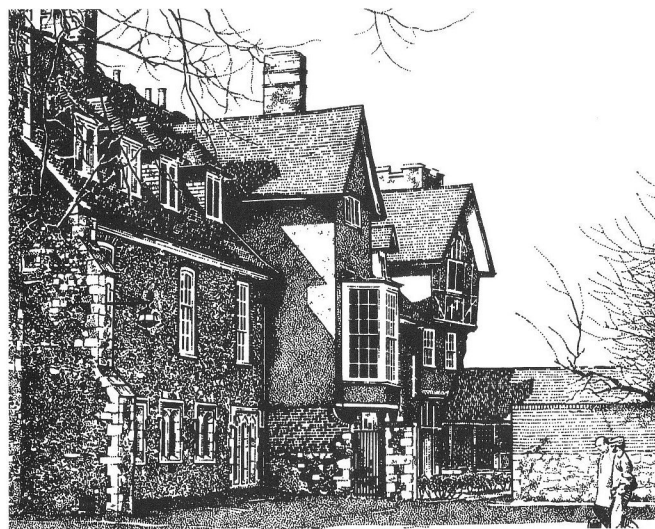
The great **Court Gate (22)** was built at the same time as the Norman Entry Staircase and contains a high tunnel vault. The division of the gate into one large and one small entrance was done in the 14th century to allow the use of smaller doors. Just think how big the original ones must have been. Proceed through the gate and notice its fine decorated stonework.

You have now entered the Mint Yard, or Almonry Yard as it was called earlier. This once contained a large Chapel built by Prior Henry of Eastry in the early 14th century. The old chapel became the first building of the new King's School founded by Henry VIII, and although it has long since been destroyed, the present King's School buildings are still gathered around this Yard. Just to the left is a doorway with a modern representation of the arms of Cardinal Pole, Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Mary Tudor. He is commemorated for ensuring the survival of the school in those difficult times.

Turn back through the gate and then go right. You are following the line of the old wall that separated the monks' property from that of the Archbishop. If you look through the gate on your right you will see the **Pentise (23)**, which dates from the end of the 14th century. It is a wooden covered way running from the Court Gate to the Cellarer's Hall. It was provided by Prior Chillenden for the convenience of important guests, and is a rare example of its kind. At the southern end of the wall you can see another fine range of buildings that make up **Chillenden Chambers (24)**. This house was built by Prior Chillenden in the late 14th century as a guest house for the most important visitors. Now it is the house of the Archdeacon. So marvellous were the rooms compared with the accommodation of the monks that they dubbed two of them 'Paradise' and 'Heaven'. The house also contains sections of other important monastic buildings, including the monks' kitchen, larder and store house.

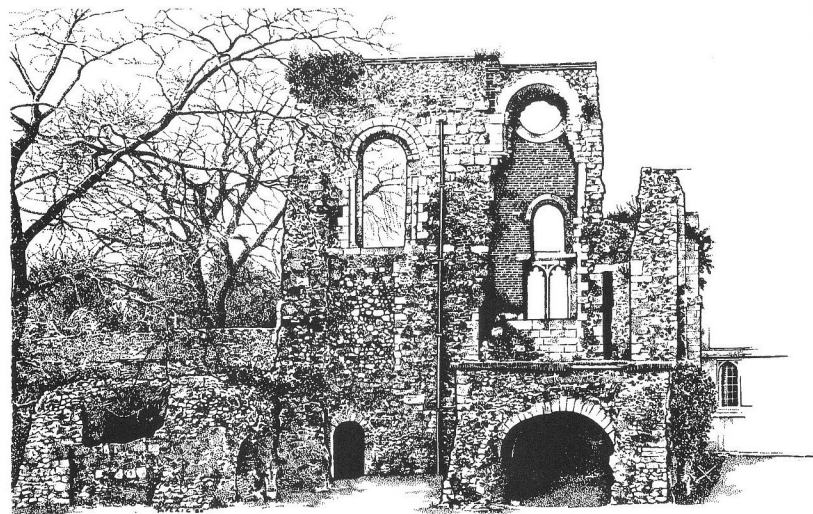
(23) Le "Pentise", entrée couverte, fin 14ème siècle.





(24) "Chillenden Chambers", maintenant la maison de l'Archidiacre.

As you walk back towards the Dark Entry and the Deanery you will see on your right, through the railings, part of the main Dormitory and the so-called *Necessarium* (25). The latter building was aptly named for it was the monks' lavatory. There were fifty-six seats placed back to back up on the first floor of a long narrow building. Underneath was constructed a drain with water flowing continuously to flush out the lavatories. Considering that the whole system was built about 1160, it was surprisingly modern and hygienic. Pass back through the Dark Entry and catch the view of the Cathedral from the first gate. Move on through the Infirmary Cloister but this time turn right towards the Water Tower.



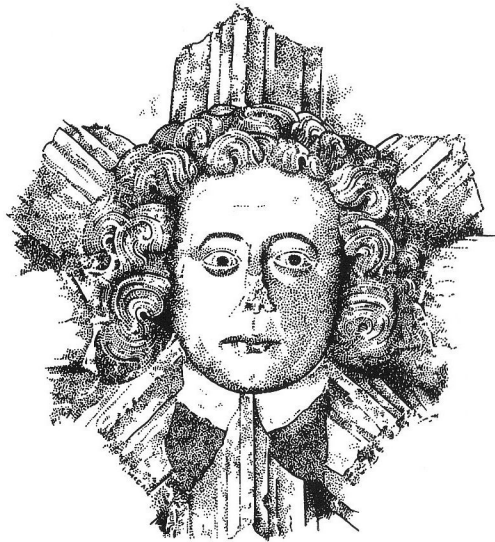
(25) Les ruines du "Necessarium", cabinets des moines.

You are now under part of the Cathedral Library that was once the Prior's private Chapel. The first section with the odd arches was built after 1221 but soon you come to a much older part containing the lower section of the *Water Tower* (26). Underneath the tower are complicated rib vaults and curious capitals. See especially the beautiful leaf design on one of them. The upper parts of the tower were converted into a room in the late 14th century when the water was put into underground pipes. The raised passage above and next to the tower was the monks' night entry. This walkway connected the Dormitory directly with the monks' choir with the result that they could pass in the dry and stay warm when they had to attend services in the middle of the night.

The *Dormitory* (27) has mostly been destroyed but you can see a section of it over to the right. It was built by Archbishop Lanfranc about 1080 and is one of the oldest buildings that you will see in the Precincts. Much of the site of the Dormitory is now taken up by the new Cathedral Library.



(26) Arcs de style roman sous la Tour de l'eau.



Une des nombreuses "Bosses" du Grand cloître.

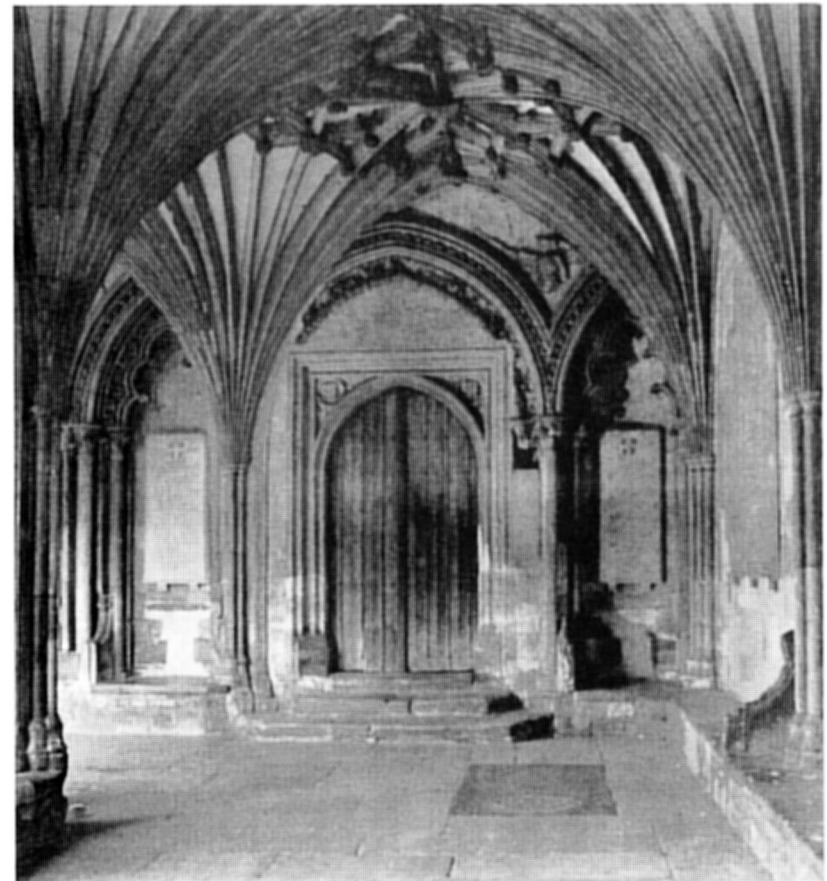
Pass under the Library through the gloomy passage. Don't miss the late 11th century decorated columns all along the right side.

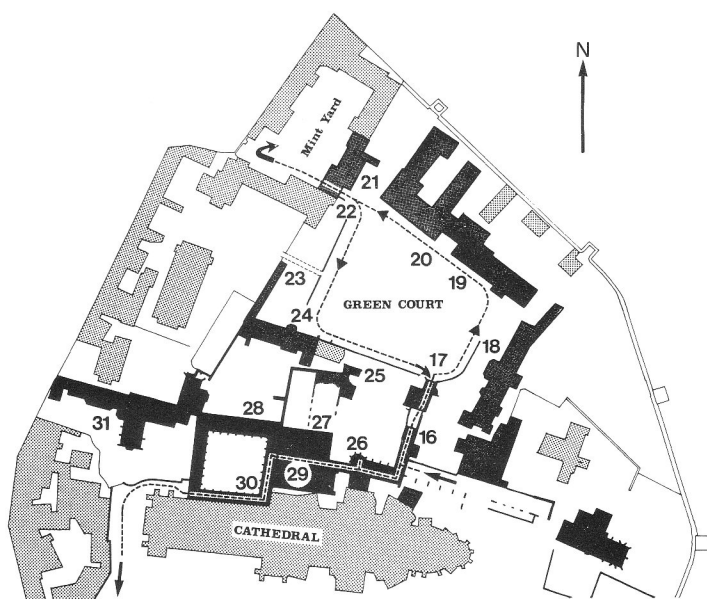
You now arrive in the early 15th century Great Cloister with its hundreds of roof bosses decorating the vaulting. The Cloister was the 'main road' of the monastery, connecting all the major buildings with the church. It has been upon its present site since the earliest days of the monastery. The coats of arms in the vaulting are of families or individuals who gave money for the rebuilding of the Cloister between 1396 and 1414. The other bosses are very varied; grotesque portraits, scenes from medieval life, natural objects, religious symbols and the like. When you walk around the Cloister you pass the remains of the Dormitory on the east, the **Refectory (28)** or dining hall on the north, the Archbishop's Palace **(31)** in the north-west corner, the main stores along the west. The church is along the south. Between the church and the Dormitory you will find the **Chapter House (29)**, the most complete building to survive from the monastery. It is a huge hall, nearly 100 feet long and covered by a splendid lattice-work roof made of bog oak. This dates from about 1400, but the building dates back to at least the early 14th century, and stands on the site of the Norman Chapter House of about 1080. The Chapter House was used for all the important functions of the Monastery, as well as for the daily meeting of all members to discuss and organise the business of the day. Don't be surprised at the great size of the Chapter House; the monastery was designed to house 150 monks. At the far end you can still see the grand throne used by the Prior as head of the house, and all around the walls are low stone seats on which the monks used to sit. Next to the Chapter House notice the **elaborate door (30)** that led into the Maryrdom where St. Thomas of Canterbury was murdered in 1170. This door was especially revered in the middle ages and King Edward I was married here in 1299. As you leave the Cloister by the triple doors at the west end, you enter the old area of the **Archbishop's Palace (31)**.

If you peep over the wall on the right you can see the present Palace that was built in the 19th century. It contains several sections of the medieval one which was burnt in 1544. That Palace was very much bigger and it extended southwards to join up with the north-west tower on your left. That part of the building was destroyed only in the 19th century so that now you can walk right round the western towers from the Cloister back to the main Cathedral Gate. As you pass the west front you can see to your right the masons' yard where all the stone for the various restoration work is prepared. In the middle ages this must have been a common sight within the Precincts for there was always some major building work in hand and the whole area must have been filled with the noise of construction. Don't be misled by the present serenity of the Precincts; in earlier days it must have been bustling, dusty and noisy.

You have now arrived back at the Christ Church Gate. We hope that you have enjoyed this trail and will keep it as a souvenir of your visit to Canterbury. If you have time, why not pick up another Trail by the Canterbury Environment Centre and set off on a walk around the City Walls and Gates, or trace the footsteps of Chaucer's Pilgrims through the City?

(30) La porte du Martyre de St. Thomas Becket.





3rd edition 1999

This Trail is produced and published by Canterbury Urban Studies Centre © 1980. Text by Dr. Francis Woodman. Line drawings by Iain McCaig. Photographs by Trevor Stroud. French translation by Marie-Reine Blackett. Printed by White Horse Press Ltd.

The Canterbury Urban Studies Centre runs The Canterbury Environment Centre in a converted twelfth century church (St. Alphege). There you will find exhibitions, information and resources about Canterbury and urban environmental education.

The Canterbury Environment Centre, St Alphege Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2EB
Tel/Fax: (01227) 457009 E-mail: cantenv@rmplc.co.uk

