



# CHRIST CHURCH PRIORY

Christ Church Priory, Canterbury was one of the largest and best documented Benedictine monasteries in Britain.

The surviving buildings went up over a period of 470 years (1070–1540). At the Dissolution it was the third richest ecclesiastical house after Westminster and Glastonbury abbeys, having a gross income in 1535 of nearly £3,000. As well as this, Christ Church had, after his murder in 1170, the shrine of Thomas Becket, (the most important shrine in Britain) which also brought in a large amount of money. Consequently rebuilding and enlargement work was often taking place at the Priory and much of this work is very well documented. After the initial work of Lanfranc, the Priors who carried out major work were Ernulf (1096–1107), Conrad (1107–26), Wibert (1151–67), Eastry (1285–1331), Chillenden (1390–1411) and Goldstone II (1495–1517).

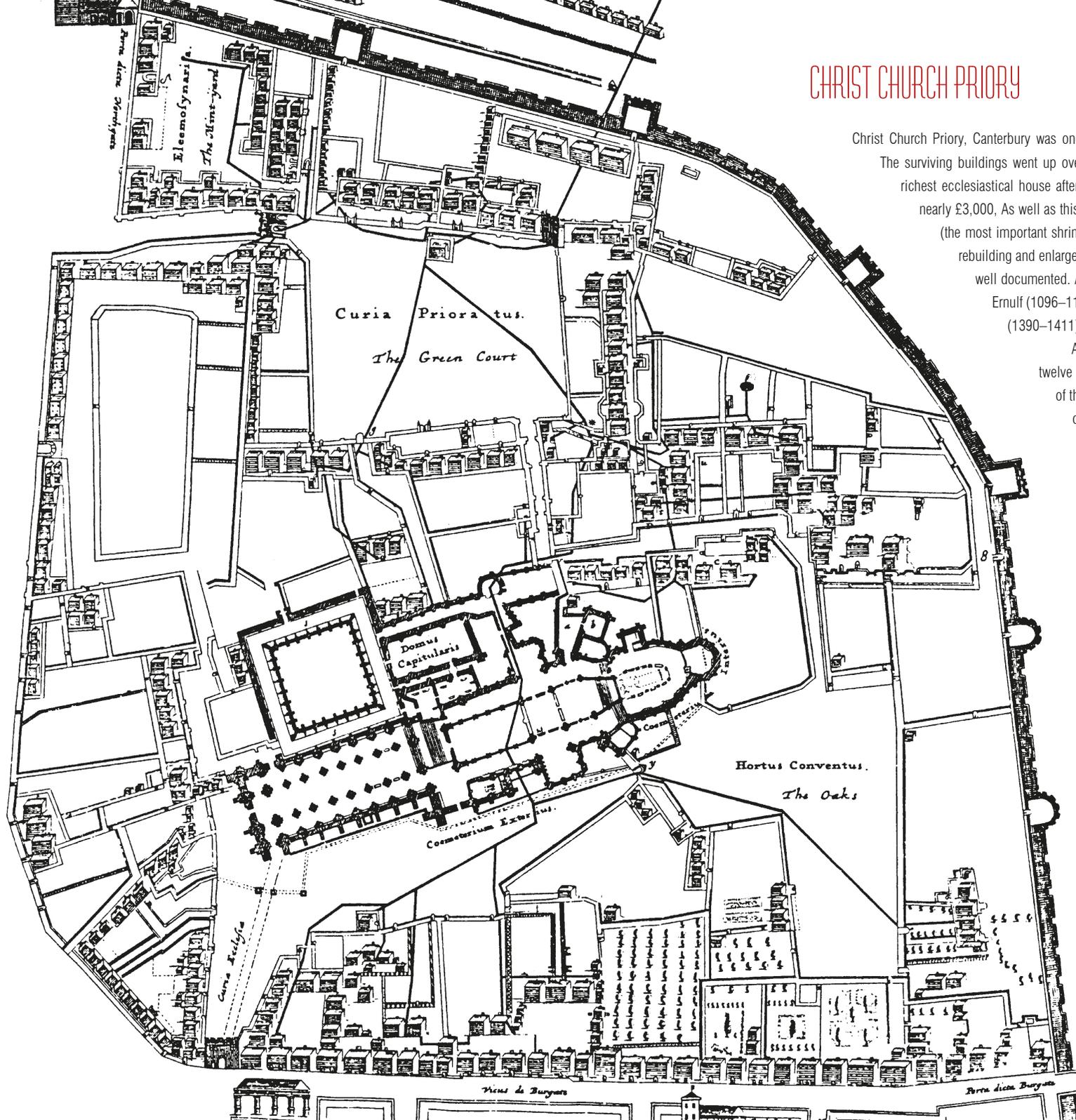
After the Dissolution, Henry VIII set up in 1541 a 'New Foundation' for a Dean, twelve Canons, minor canons, six preachers, lay clerks, porters, masters and pupils of the school, etc., and many of the Priory buildings were adapted for the houses of the new officials. Only the major communal buildings (dormitory, refectory, etc) were not used. However, even here only the roofs were removed and many of the walls were left as ruins. Consequently a large number of Priory as well as 'New Foundation' buildings have survived. These were first studied in detail by Professor Robert Willis in the 1860s (when Victorian demolitions were removing several of the buildings) and more recently they have been studied in more detail by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust both below and above ground.

New maps have now been prepared by John Bowen of both the medieval buildings (which show the phases of construction) and of the houses and gardens of the 'New Foundation'. Many of the non-extant details on the latter map come from 17th–19th century maps, plans, engravings and photographs and one of the finest of these is Thomas Hill's map of c 1680 reproduced here, which was first published in N Battely's *Cantuarua Sacra* (1703).

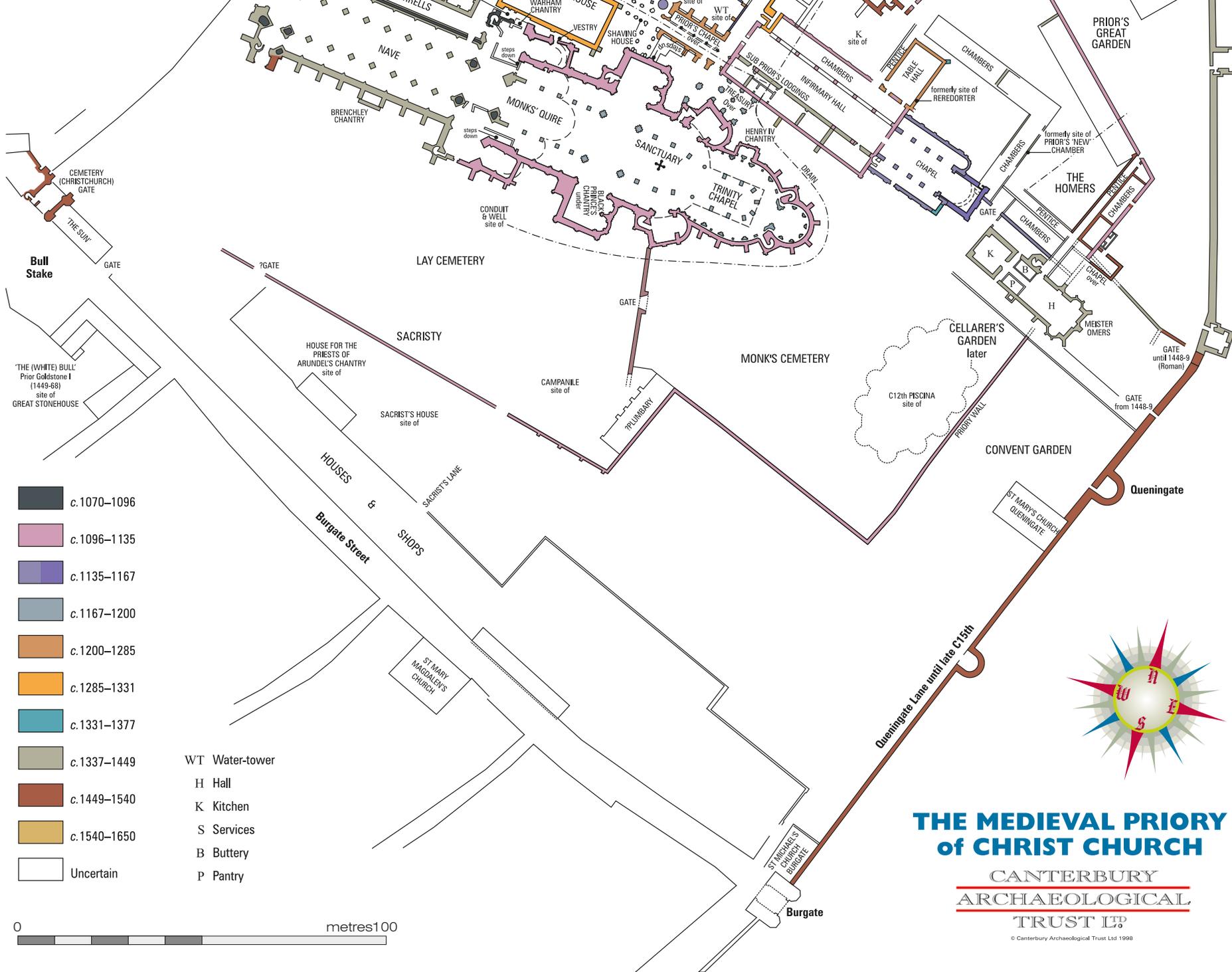
The Archbishop's Palace was first constructed in the 1070s by Lanfranc, and it was he who demolished twenty eight houses and made the kink (to enlarge the site) in St Alphege (later Palace) Street. The great complex of Palace buildings survived until c1650 when Parliament ordered the systematic demolition of the Palace. By far the most important building in this complex was Hubert Walter and and Stephen Langton's Great Hall (c1206–1220) which was the second largest Great Hall in Britain after Westminster Hall. Lanfranc's (and Becket's) Hall was the smaller hall to the south.

Tim Tatton-Brown, April 1984

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# THE MEDIEVAL PRIORY of CHRIST CHURCH

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