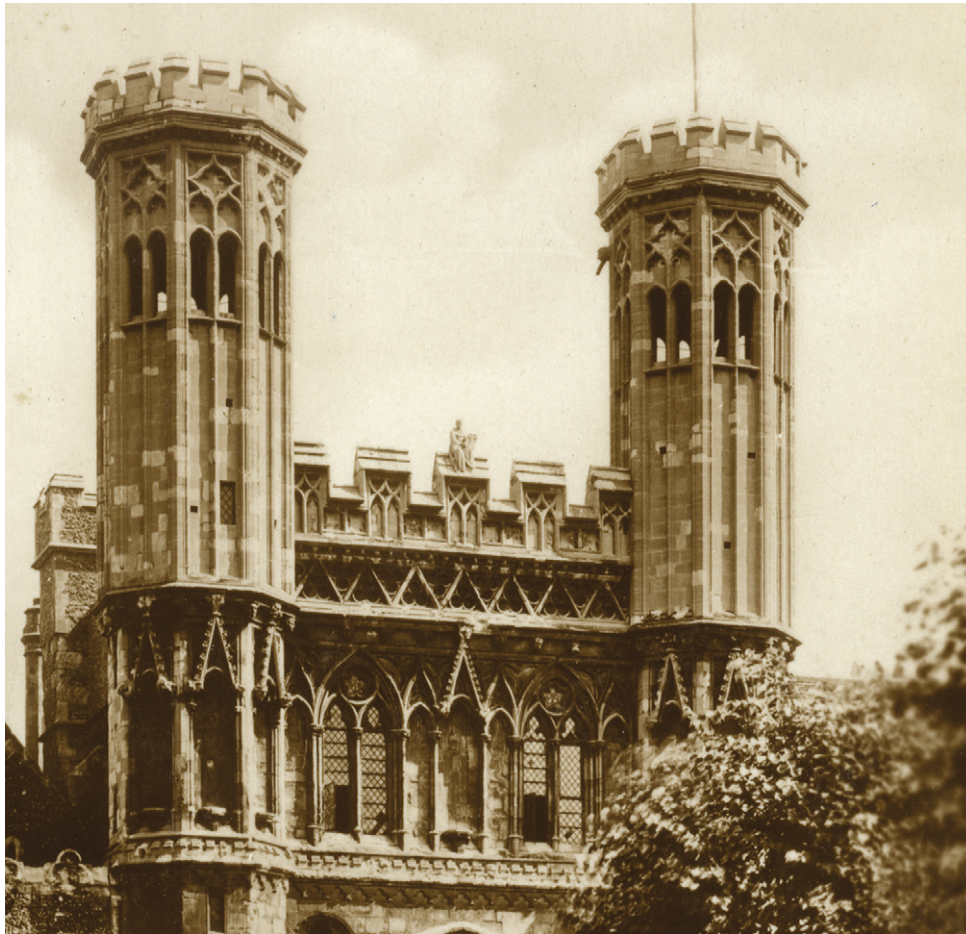


# ST AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY & THE ROYAL PALACE



Upper part of the Great Gate, from an early 20th century photograph.

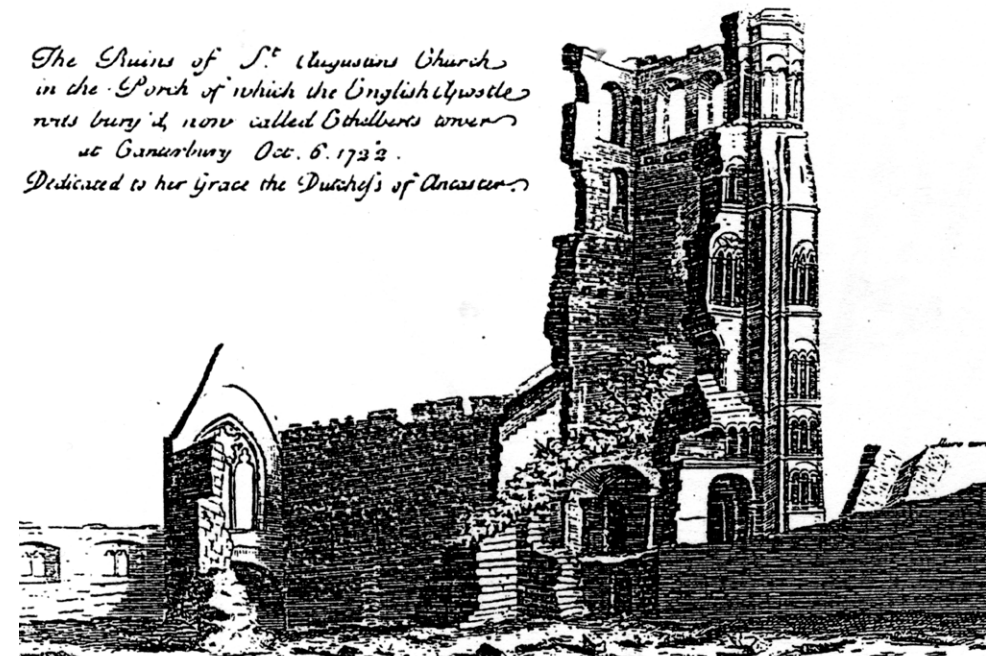
	<b>CANTERBURY ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST LTD</b>	t: 01227 46 20 62 f: 01227 78 47 24 e: <a href="mailto:admin@canterburytrust.co.uk">admin@canterburytrust.co.uk</a> w: <a href="http://canterburytrust.co.uk">canterburytrust.co.uk</a>	
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## ST AUGUSTINE'S ABBEY

The abbey of Saints Peter and Paul, which is situated outside the eastern walls of the City of Canterbury, is the oldest Anglo-Saxon abbey in England. It was founded by St Augustine and King Aethelbert in about 598, and from its earliest years was intended as a burial place for the archbishops of Canterbury and the kings of Kent. As it housed the monks sent from Rome for the conversion of the English, it became a great centre of learning.

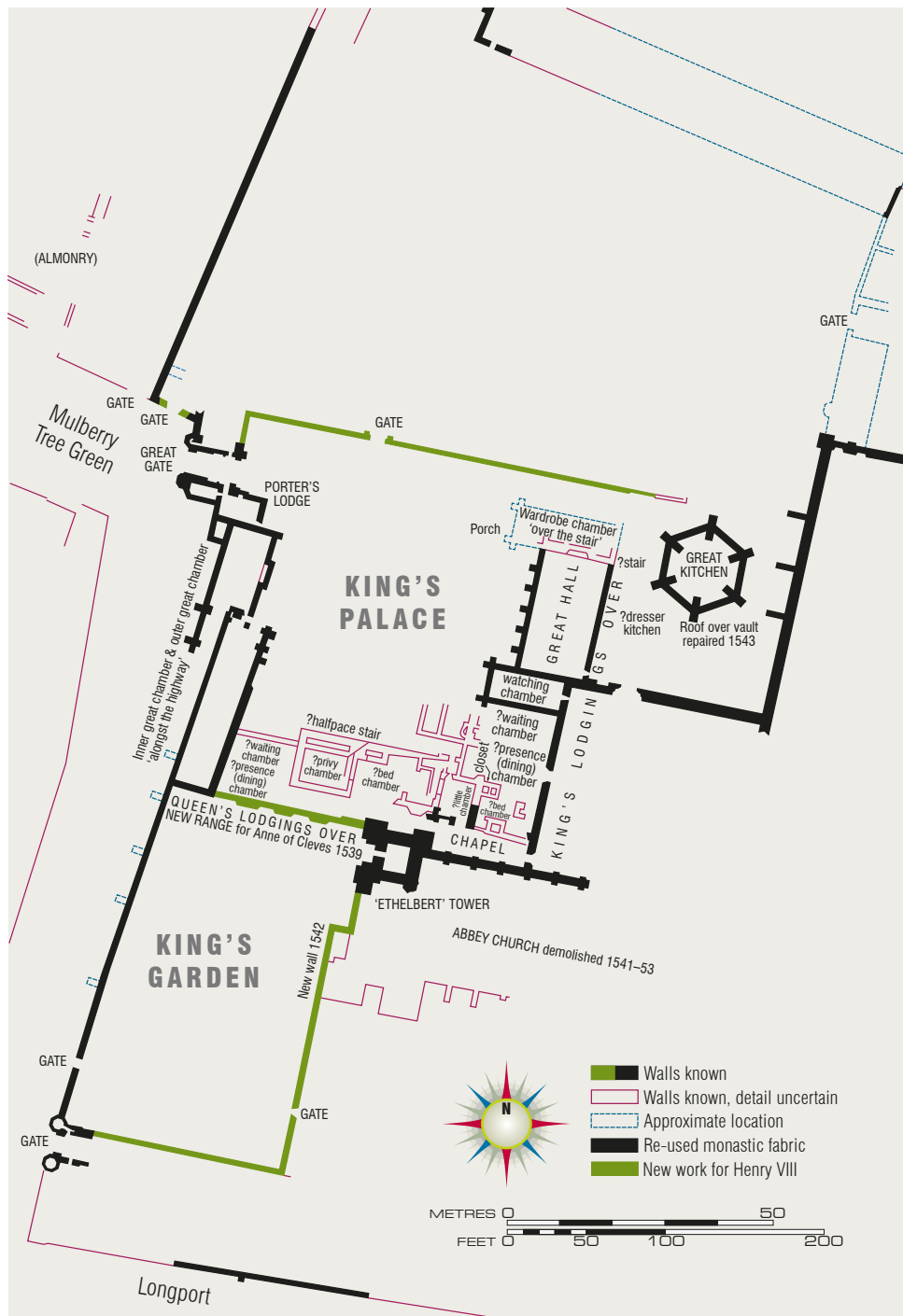
After the chaos of the Viking invasions, it re-emerged in the tenth century as the only surviving monastery in Kent, since all the others had been destroyed by the invaders. In 978 a new enlarged abbey church was re-dedicated by Archbishop Dunstan to 'Saints Peter & Paul & St Augustine of England'.

The foundations of the original church lay under the nave of the later abbey. To the east was the chapel of St Mary, destroyed in the making of the later crypt. In 1055 these two small buildings were joined by an octagonal tower into one larger church. Further east again was the chapel of St Pancras, the only pre-conquest structure to survive in part above ground until the dissolution.



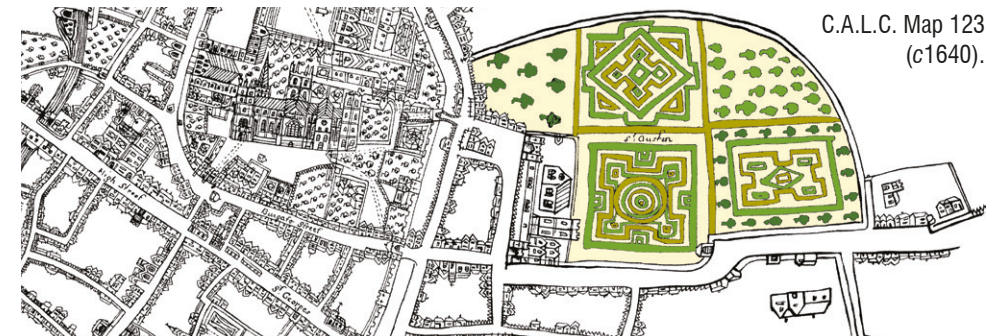
The ruins of Aethelbert's Tower, drwn by William Stukeley in 1722.

With the coming of the Normans a new era began. A Norman abbot was appointed in 1070 and by about 1100 a great Romanesque church had been built. The Anglo-Saxon church had to be destroyed in the process and in 1091 the bodies of the early archbishops were moved from the north side of the old church to the eastern part of the new one. New monastic buildings were constructed around a cloister aligned to the new church (chapter house, dorter, reredorter, frater, cellarium) and to the east was the infirmary with hall and chapel. To the south of the church was an ancient cemetery, which was expanded south into Longport, the abbey's market outside the wall, and the Sacrist's office was beside the cemetery. To the west outside the gate an Almonry was built in 1154.



After a pause in the late twelfth century (except for the east end of the church having to be rebuilt after a fire in 1168), there was a great period of reconstruction and expansion from the mid thirteenth century. The cloister, lavatorium, frater and kitchen were totally rebuilt and the cellarium in the west cloister range was replaced by a very grand new abbot's lodging, and the range was extended to provide a great hall. A new crenellated Great Gate opposite completed the Inner Great Court in 1309. On the north the monks were able to close a lane and take in much more land in the North Holmes area, which provided space for a new outer court with cellarer's range, brewhouse, bakehouse etc, and ultimately in 1320 a new walled vineyard. There was also expansion on the east where a series of lodgings were added to the east side of the infirmary and a new walled cellarer's garden was enclosed.

After another pause during the plague years, more reconstruction took place in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, particularly after the 1382 earthquake had cracked several buildings. The surviving cemetery gate was built in 1390, and near it at the south west end of the church a large bell-tower was added in the late fifteenth century. The last addition was a new lady Chapel east of the apse of the church: this chapel and the bell-tower lasted for less than fifty years.



The abbey was the fourteenth richest in England according to a valuation of 1535, with a gross income of £1,733. At the dissolution in 1538 this income and the great complex shown on the plan were ripe for exploitation by Henry VIII. As it happened, the king decided to keep the abbot's lodging as a new royal palace in Canterbury. He later ordered that a new adjoining range of buildings be constructed on the south side of the Inner Great Court where the east and west ranges had been adapted for his use. This was for his new queen, Anne of Cleves, who was expected in England shortly. Three hundred or so workmen consequently worked day and night from 5th October to 21st December 1539 (thirty one dozen extra candles were ordered and charcoal in earthenware braziers was used to dry out the plaster in a hurry). All was just ready for the Lady Anne to stay there one night on 29th December before moving on to meet the king at Rochester. After this the palace was rarely used by Henry VIII and his successors (Elizabeth I briefly in 1573, Charles I in 1625 and Charles II in 1660). It was granted to Cardinal Pole (1556-8) and later part of the palace was leased as a nobleman's house, to Lord Cobham for thirty years from 1564, and to Edward Lord Wotton from 1612. He employed John Tradescant the elder to lay out the gardens east of the palace, as shown on the fine plan of Canterbury of c1640 (above).

The palace remained intact, though becoming increasingly ruinous, until the end of the seventeenth century, and it was perhaps the great storm of 1703 which finally destroyed the buildings, since it caused the fall of the northern half of 'Aethelbert's Tower'. Stukeley's drawing of 1722 and all the subsequent views show the south and east ranges of the Inner Great Court as ruined and being slowly demolished (the rest of the tower was taken down in 1822).

The plans in this leaflet were drawn by John Bowen and show all that is known to date of the topography and buildings of both the medieval abbey and the king's palace.



