

TWO LANDMARKS IN CANTERBURY'S HISTORY

The year 2023 sees anniversaries of two different but equally fascinating events which are landmarks in our Cathedral's history.

On 8 June 2023, a millennium ago, the remains of Archbishop Alphege were moved (or 'translated') from his tomb in St Paul's Cathedral in London to Canterbury Cathedral. Alphege had been murdered by the Vikings at Greenwich in 1012, having been taken captive in Canterbury the previous year, as shown in the Cathedral's stained glass. There is a detailed account of the translation by Osbern, a monk of Christ Church Canterbury, written in 1080, two years after Alphege's canonisation¹. Osbern related that King Cnut gave instructions for the translation, and was present with the Archbishop of Canterbury and two Canterbury monks when the tomb was opened. The remains were found intact, and were transported over the Thames to Southwark in a royal barge, and then by road. They were welcomed outside the City of Canterbury by citizens and Christ Church monks, and brought to the Cathedral, where they were placed in a tomb on the north side of the High Altar.



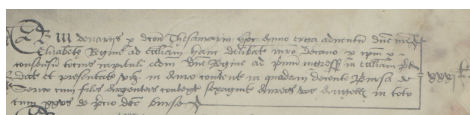
A window in the Trinity Chapel

Alphege was the first Archbishop of Canterbury to be martyred, and the only one before the murder of Thomas Becket. Becket preached on Saint Alphege in his sermon on Christmas Day 1170, days before his own death. Saint Alphege and Saint Dunstan were both revered at Canterbury throughout the Middle Ages, with their tombs remaining on the north and south side of the High Altar respectively when the Quire was rebuilt after the 1174 fire. Nearby, stained glass windows illustrated scenes from their lives; the feast of Alphege's translation was commemorated in medieval times as well as the feast of his martyrdom on 19 April. In 1988, the names of Alphege and Dunstan were carved into the paving by the High Altar, near where it is thought their tombs stood.

This year also sees 450 years since the visit of Queen Elizabeth I to Canterbury. Elizabeth visited the city as part of a 'progress' with her household, staying here for 15 nights from 3 September 1573. She had come after visiting Sandwich, where she had been entertained lavishly, including with pageants and military demonstrations; she stopped in Wingham for lunch on the way. Elizabeth stayed at the royal palace on the site of St Augustine's Abbey. Royal progresses were a particular feature of Elizabeth's reign; she made 23 such journeys during the 44 years of her rule, usually in the summer months. Progresses meant that she could engage with her subjects in their localities, and escape the hot months in the city. For the hosts, much planning, preparations, and expense were required.

The then Archbishop, Matthew Parker, aged 70, clearly saw The Queen's visit to Canterbury and its Cathedral as a means of demonstrating the uniformity of religion under the 'Elizabethan Settlement', of which he had been architect. Due care was taken with the ceremony of Elizabeth's arrival at the Cathedral. She was received at the west end by Parker and the Bishops of Lincoln, Rochester, and Dover, with a Scholar of the King's School delivering a Latin oration. The Queen then walked into the Cathedral under a canopy borne by four of her knights to attend Evensong. She returned to the Cathedral for Services on the two Sundays during her stay, with the Dean, Thomas Goodwyn, preaching on the first Sunday, and Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Lincoln, preaching on the second².

On 7 September, The Queen's 40th birthday, Parker hosted her at a banquet at his palace in The Precincts, which he refurbished at great expense during the 1560s. Elizabeth sat in Saint Augustine's Throne, which now stands in the Trinity chapel; it was moved from the Cathedral for the occasion and draped with golden cloths. The banquet was attended by ambassadors from France, the Mayor and Aldermen of the city, and the nobles of the county.



A record of the Cathedral's expenditure on a silk purse filled with money

As was usual, the various hosts presented The Queen with gifts. Parker gave her a horse and a golden salt cellar containing money. The City of Canterbury gave

her £30 in cash, and also gave money to courtiers and officers, including musicians and the jester. The civic records also show that much was spent on tidying up the streets and building in the city. The Cathedral presented The Queen with a silk purse containing £30 in gold and gave over £21 to members of her entourage. Expenses incurred by the Cathedral amounted to over £155. This included costs for entertainment and also outlay on rich fabrics, used presumably for vestments, canopies, and curtains³.



In 1952, British Rail released this poster promoting Canterbury Cathedral as a tourist destination



Alphege's tomb and the fine textiles bought for Elizabeth's visit no longer survive, so we rely on written evidence to understand these two splendid occasions. To use words taken from this poster depicting the 1573 visit, history lingers here at Canterbury Cathedral. A little bit of imagination is needed to bring it to life.

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¹ For details of the translation using Osbern's account, see <https://aclerkofoxford.blogspot.com/2012/06/translation-of-st-alphege-yes-again.html> (accessed January 2023)

² For contemporary documents relating to the visit to Canterbury, including an account by Matthew Parker and records from the City's and Cathedral's archives, see Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke, Jayne Elisabeth Archer et al (eds), *John Nichols's The progresses and processions of Queen Elizabeth I: a new edition of the early modern sources* (Oxford, 2014) and James Gibson (ed), *Records of Early English Drama: Diocese of Canterbury* (Toronto, 2002)

³ These expenses are detailed in the Treasurer's Accounts, DCc/TA/7, which have to date only been partly transcribed and translated, in Gibson, *Records of Early English Drama*, as above.

IMAGES: Cathedral Record, reference CCA-DCc/TV/7 Canterbury Cathedral; Railway poster reproduced by kind permission from the Science Museum Group