

LIONEL GREEN has drawn up a table of

## CHRONOLOGICAL EVENTS CONCERNING THE BUILDINGS OF THE PRIORY AND THEIR USE BY THE CROWN.

- 1117 Chapel and claustral buildings constructed of wood on new site. (M&B. I. 245; Colker p 242)
- 1117 Founder's mother buried in priory church. (Colker p.244)
- 1118 Founder Gilbert provides a second wooden chapel much larger than the former one. (Colker p.243)
- 1118 Queen Matilda and Prince William visit the new Priory. (H.4)
- 1121/2 New church given royal protection. (M&B.I 243; H.12) Now 23 canons. (Colker p.243)
- 1125 "Beautiful & sturdy church begun". (Colker p 245). Founder Gilbert dies and buried in priory. Now 36 canons. (Colker p.245) Building work ceased.
- 1132 Completion of church in stone (took 15 years to build). (H.3/4)
- 1136 Claustral and other buildings completed. (*Decem. Script.* Col.1664; VCH Vol.ii p.95)
- c1156 Becket persuades Henry II to complete east end and transepts rebuilt further east (SAC 71 (1977) p.95; D Knowles *Thomas Becket* 1970 p.41)
- 1161 Infirmary chapel dedicated. (H.21)
- 1162/3 King assists 'works of the church'. (Pipe Roll- 6/62)
- 1165 King completes and endows the priory. (SAC 71 (1977) p 98)
- 1174 Feb. Altar of St John the Baptist dedicated. (H.26)
- c1175 ?Guest house built. Norman entrance arch now at parish church.
- 1194 Nov. Altar of St Stephen and St Nicholas dedicated. (H.49)
- 1196 Enlarged priory completed.
- 1197 Oct. Altar of the Holy Cross dedicated. (H.50 with date corrected)
- 1202 King John visits priory.
- 1204 King staying at Merton June 14-18. (H.60)
- 1208-14 England under Interdict.
- 1215 King at Merton (June 8) issuing safe conduct to barons for meeting at Runnymede.
- 1217 Priory providing accommodation and used for confirmation of Peace Conference at Kingston. (SAC 36 (1925) p.53)
- 1222 Dec. Storm destroys tower of church. (Ann. Monas.- Dunstable III 76)
- 1225 King gives priory 6 oaks from Windsor Forest 'for the work of their church'. (H.86)
- 1227 King gives priory 10 oaks from Windsor Forest (H.90) (?major repairs to tower and presbytery constructed. See also next entry).
- 1227 King at Merton - May/June. Lodgings for king and chancery provided (see 1258/9)
- 1229/30 King at Merton. (Cal. Lib. Rolls I (1226-40) p 153)
- 1232 Hubert de Burgh claiming sanctuary at High Altar.
- 1233 King at Merton. (Cal. Pat. Rolls III (1232-47) p 14)
- 1236 Parliament held at Merton. King and nobles accommodated Jan 20-27. (Cal. Pat. R. III (1232-47) p.134 &163).
- 1237 King at Merton at Easter. (Cal. Lib. Rolls I (1226-40) p.262; Close Rolls No.526)
- 1239 King at Merton. (Cal. Lib. Rolls I (1226-40) p.379)
- 1240 Stone memorial erected outside precincts to mark death of John Warenne, Earl of Surrey.
- 1241 The priory possesses its own quarry. (H.106)
- 1230x1260 Lady chapel built in the reign of Henry III. (Lambard *Topographical Dictionary* 1730 p 212)
- 1241 New silver seal depicts gothic style building.
- 1243 Severe tempest in June, "as had not been seen at Merton for many years before". (H.112)
- 1245/6 King at Merton. Christmas and Easter. (Cal. Pat. Roll Vol. III (1232-47) p 468/9)
- 1249 King at Merton (Cal. Pat. R. IV (1247-58) p )
- c1250 Major rebuilding of infirmary. (Monas. Res. Bul. 4 (1998) p.3). See 1161 above.
- 1252 May King at Merton. (H.124)
- 1253 Feb. King at Merton. (H.125). Silver statue of Blessed Virgin Mary ordered by King for Merton.
- 1255 April King at Merton. Gives cope of red samite to the priory. (H.130)
- 1255 Dec. 600 marks bequeathed to buy land to build chantry chapel in priory church. (H. 130)
- 1256 Jan. King at Merton. (H.131)
- 1256 Sept. King at Merton. (H.131)
- 1257/8 King at Merton (Christmas and Easter each year) (Close Roll Vol.X p 287 & 470/1)

- 1258/9 King's chamber and chimney and chambers for chancery and wardrobe repaired. (H.136)
- 1259 April King at Merton. (H.136)
- 1263 Murderer seeks sanctuary in church and thief in infirmary chapel. (H.139)
- 1264 Armed militia from London intent on destroying Chancellor's property at Merton.
- 1260x70 Chamber built in precinct *juxta Beaulieu* by Prior Gilbert. (H.193)
- Members of the Hansard family buried in priory church. (H.120)
- 1273 Archbishop Kilwardby of Canterbury consecrated at Merton. (H.154)
- 1275 Pippes Mill bought from Crown for £23-6s-8d. (H.157)
- 1286 Jan. Site near sacristy bounded by ditches granted to build house. (H.168)
- 1305 Prior forced to resign but given place of residence in the precincts. (H.195)
- 1310 Merton pleads that it is "manifestly oppressed with poverty". (H. 202)
- c1330-40 Windows inserted in Decorated style. (see 1867 below)
- 1346 King attends a play at Merton. (*Archæologia* xxxi p.43)
- c1380-90 Road access to area south of kitchen. (SAC 64 (1967) p 40 & 44)
- 1382 June Faculty granted to dedicate three altars and two smaller altars in church. (H.264)
- 1387 Sept. "Some dwellings...in deficient repair". (H.270)
- 1393 Lady Chapel and nave of church needing repairs. (H.284)
- c1394 Dormitories and old houses require repairs. (H.287)
- 1412 Henry IV holds Privy Council at Merton. (H.296)
- 1437 Nov. Henry VI crowned at Merton. (H.298)
- 1485 Cellarer occupying an upper chamber near the dormitory. (H. 305)
- 1485 "Great Chapel of Blessed Virgin Mary" within the priory church referred to. (H.306)
- 1530 Lower chamber of the infirmary referred to. (H.331)
- 1535 Sept. Commissioner Leigh at Merton.
- 1538 April Merton Priory dissolved.

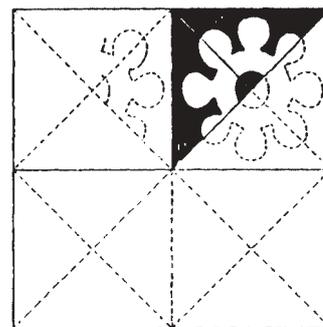
#### Subsequent Events

- 1538 April Claustal buildings demolished and 3050 loads of stone taken to Cuddington to build Nonsuch Palace.
- 1538 May John Whytokers of Merton paid 13s.4d. for "uncovering the body of the church of Merton Abbey" (Dent p.272)
- 1538 Amery mills leased to William Moraunt. (H.338)
- 1541 Labourers on site sorting Caen stone for Nonsuch. (Dent p.49 &80)
- 1558 Derelict site granted to the reformed convent of Sheen.  
Amery mills and gardens leased to John Benson.
- 1559 Three loads of stone supplied to St Mary, Battersea. (Churchwardens' Accounts)
- 1568 Abbey House and estate leased to Gregory Lovell. (Lysons *Environs*...I 1792 p 347n)
- 1571 Queen Elizabeth visits Abbey House.
- 1586 Merton Abbey and estate leased to Gregory Lovell for 21 years.
- 1609 Priory mill sold to Edward Ferrars.
- 1613 Priory mill bought by George Cow.
- 1624 Priory mill purchased by Rowland Wilson for £800.  
Heavy flooding and attendant collapse of water management in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. (MoLAS Report CCC 97 (1998) p.6)
- 1648 Priory buildings still existing. Parliament makes them secure against roving royalists.
- 1660's Precinct used as bleaching grounds.
- 1680 Merton Abbey for sale, containing "several large rooms and a fine chapel". (*Domestic Intelligence* May 1680)
- c1690 Flint walls contain 65 acres. Stream runs through and passes kitchen and drives a mill. "Here were seven rings of bells and several chapels" (J Aubrey *The Natural History...of Surrey* 1718/9 Vol.I p.226)
- 1724 Calico printing works set up in precincts. Chapel utilised as print room. (Thorne *Handbook to the Environs of London* 1876 p.247)
- 1733 G.Vertue visits site and reports "chapel entire". (BL Addtl. MS. 23086)
- 1752 Second calico printing works opened nearer the High Street, Merton.

- 1774 Stone coffins discovered and used as drinking troughs for horses used at Abbey Works. (Croydon PS 895 (821) COX 1844)
- 1797 Sculptured stone head with gilded head band found in precinct wall in grounds of Mr Halfhide. (Announcement by Society of Antiquaries 23 April 1803)
- 1815-20 Merton Abbey House empty.
- c1862/5 Western section of Abbey House demolished. (E Walford in *Gentleman's Magazine* June 1884 Vol.256 p.66)
- 1867 The last of seven chapels pulled down. (Jowett p.130. See c1690 above.)
- 1868 Merton Abbey railway built across priory site.
- 1914 June Abbey House demolished. House breaker discovers Norman arch, ashlar walls, heavy timbers, encaustic tiles and coins.
- 1919 Aug. Two stone coffins found during the laying of gas pipes along north side of Station Road.
- 1921 Skeleton found in grounds of Trafalgar Works (bones not coffined), and 14<sup>th</sup> century spur.
- 1921/2 Bidder's excavation. Church, cloisters and chapter house found. (SAC 38 (1929) p.49-66).
- 1923 Corbel with sculptured head found in precinct wall. (SAC 38 (1929) p.53).
- 1956 May Many pieces of worked stone found in river. (west of Savacentre)
- 1959 M. Biddle excavation at Nonsuch. Carved, painted and gilded keystone roof boss weighing 4½ cwt found. (Dent p.101, plate III. now on public display at Museum of London).
- 1962/3 Cobbled roadway beside ditch. See c1380-90 above. Tiles discovered. (Turner, SAC 64 (1967) p.35-70).
- 1971 Building stone and tiles from river. (Brooks, SAC 69 (1973) p.212/3).
- 1973 July M & MUDC and MHS arrange dedication of garden beside site of high altar.
- 1976-8 McCracken excavations. Chapter house site revealing two building phases.
- 1983 McCracken excavations. Infirmary site.
- 1986 Feb Planning enquiry for projected Savacentre on priory site.
- 1986/7 MoLAS excavations (Bruce & Mason). North transept and nave.
- 1988-90 MoLAS excavations (Bruce & Mason). Infirmary and reredorter sites
- 1992 MoLAS excavations (Saxby). Reigate stone footings of 16<sup>th</sup> century buildings along High Street with one aligned N-S. Tiles and medieval ditch found near High Street.

#### Abbreviations:-

Colker	M L Colker, <i>Studia Monastica</i> Vol.12 (1970)
<i>Decem. Script.</i>	R Twysden, <i>Decem. Scriptores</i> 1652
Dent	J Dent, <i>The Quest for Nonesuch</i> 1970
H	A Heales, <i>Records of Merton Priory</i> 1898
Lysons	D Lysons, <i>Environs of London</i> 1792
M&B	Manning and Bray, <i>History of Surrey</i> 1807-12
MoLAS	Museum of London Archaeological Service.
Monas. Res. Bul.	Monastic Research Bulletin, York University.
SAC	Surrey Archaeological Society Collections



#### SUGGESTED BUILDING DATES

##### Work involved

Wooden church and buildings.

Dates

1117-24

Style

Rebuilding in stone.

1125-36

Norman

Reconstructed church, central tower and claustral buildings including chapter house and infirmary.

c1156-96

Late Norman

Restoration of tower. Presbytery, lady chapel, reredorter and great drain.

c1225-50

Early English

Building improvements including larger windows, floors repaved and additional buttresses.

1320-50

Decorated

Serious lack of maintenance but some floors repaved.

1385-1400

Restoration.

1400-1410

?Perpendicular

Dormitory rebuilt.

15<sup>th</sup> cent.