

ICOMOS

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES
CONSEIL INTERNATIONAL DES MONUMENTS ET DES SITES
CONSEJO INTERNACIONAL DE MONUMENTOS Y SITIOS
МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОВЕТ ПО ВОПРОСАМ ПАМЯТНИКОВ И ДОСТОПРИМЕЧАТЕЛЬНЫХ МЕСТ

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

N° 496

A) IDENTIFICATION

Nomination : Cathedral, St. Augustine Abbey and St. Martin's
Church at Canterbury

Location : County of Kent

State Party : United Kingdom

Date : December 30, 1987

B) ICOMOS RECOMMENDATION

That the proposed cultural property be included on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria I, II and VI.

C) JUSTIFICATION

Within the urban perimeter of Canterbury, the United Kingdom proposes three distinct cultural properties: the modest St. Martin's Church; the ruins of St. Augustine Abbey; and the superb Christ Church Cathedral. These three monuments-- whose size, condition of preservation, qualities and, moreover, reputation do not meet the same standards-- are milestones in the religious history of the regions of Great Britain. They bear testimony to the beginnings of Christianity, the mission of St. Augustine, apostle of the Heptarchy, and to the murder of Thomas a Becket, which are just a few of the events which preceded the Reformation.

St. Martin's Church, to the east, located outside the Roman Durovernum enclosure, existed in 597 when, according to Bede, the monk Augustine was sent from Rome by Gregory the Great to bring Christianity to the Saxon kingdom of Kent, whose king, Ethelbert, had married a Frank princess, Bertha. Because of successive changes to the structure, any definitive chronology is hypothetical. The very simple plan and the masonry appear to prove that the existing church was built for the most part before the 8th century. It undoubtedly includes a Roman structure from the 4th century.

Of the church located within the city walls, which St. Augustine made his cathedral-- probably at the very spot where Christ Church stands-- nothing has been documented. However, within the abbey where, according to Bede, the apostle of the Anglo-Saxons established the forty Benedictine monks who accompanied

him, are still visible, half-way between St. Martin's Church and the Cathedral. The abbey was dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul. It included oratories and chapels; excavations have revealed parts of the plan. The primitive institution, veritable cradle of Benedictine monasticism in England, was restored following Scandinavian invasions by St. Dunstan who, in 978, dedicated a new structure to St. Augustine. Modifications made during the 11th century, both before and after the Norman Conquest, have not erased the plans of earlier churches which, like a palimpsest, can still be read. Conversely, the abbey buildings virtually disappeared in their entirety following dissolution of the Community by Henry VIII in 1538. The royal Palace which stood in their place was located against the northern side aisle of the nave. It included the gutter wall and a few old portions, but this structure too has disappeared.

The main element of the nomination, Christ Church Cathedral, a major building of medieval architecture, is striking first of all in the vastness of its size (168 m long from east to west), but also in the special conceptual approach adopted. Two distinct structures seem to appear, marked inside by prior Chillenden's roodscreen (1411) crossing the nave on the west transept, and outside by the tall Bell Harry Tower.

To the east, partially covering a huge Roman crypt with admirably carved capitals, which was enlarged in the direction of the sanctuary, is some of the most beautiful architectural space of Early Gothic art : the choir, the east transept, an unfinished apse, on either side of which stand Romanesque chapels dedicated to St. Andrew and St. Anselm, Trinity Chapel - a veritable apse which was added to the earlier apse- and the circular Corona Chapel. The coherency and almost perfect homogeneity of the architecture of the east portion of the cathedral, whose strength, balance and brightness bring to mind models found in northern France, illustrate from west to east, the successive work of two architects, as described by a contemporary, Gervais. The two architects, William of Sens, a Frenchman, and William the Englishman, worked at the site from 1174 to 1184. This period corresponds to when Archbishop Thomas a Becket was murdered (1170), then canonized (1172). This made the Cathedral a site of frequent pilgrimages, which brought to the city ever larger congregations of people. Construction continued toward the east at the same time pilgrims and offerings poured upon the site. The Corona, where the relics of St. Thomas of Canterbury displayed, mark the logical culmination of this prosperous period.

To the west the nave (ca. 1380) and the façade (the south-west tower, ca. 1420), with their very pure Perpendicular style, provide balance to the constructions on the eastern side. The

architecture and remarkable stained glass and furnishings of Canterbury Cathedral thus provide a complete panorama of Gothic Art, from its earliest beginnings to its culmination and decline.

ICOMOS recommends inclusion on the World Heritage List of the three Christian monuments of Canterbury, which are nominated on the basis of criteria I, II and VI, though the three criteria do not apply equally to all three monuments.

- Criterion I. Christ Church Cathedral, especially the east sections, is a unique artistic creation. The beauty of its architecture is enhanced by a set of exceptional stained glass windows which constitute the richest collection in the United Kingdom.

- Criterion II. The influence of the Benedictine abbey of St. Augustine was decisive throughout the High Middle Ages in England. The influence of this monastic centre and its scriptorium extended far beyond the boundaries of Kent and Northumbria.

- Criterion VI. St. Martin's Church, St. Augustine's Abbey and the Cathedral are directly and tangibly associated with the history of the introduction of Christianity to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

ICOMOS, July 1988