

September 2022, **Fulham Palace: Significance of the Bishops and the development of the Palace as a residence from 1150 onwards**, Dr Alexis Haslam

Fulham Palace has a long history, the recording of which has been patchy. To try to fill in the gaps in our knowledge, Alexis has been using a mixture of background research, archaeological investigation and building surveys. Bishop Waldhere (693-705/716) acquired the Manor of Fulham from its previous landlord, the Bishop of Hereford, in AD 704. Where were the original early medieval buildings? In the early 2000s a dig in the North Lawn found the square metre-wide, pitched-tile hearth of a building, a Saxo-Norman hall – part of the first structure on the site. The first evidence of a bishop actually on the site of Fulham Palace is Robert de Sigello (died 1150), who perhaps built this dwelling. Later, into the 13th century, this hall went out of use, and a new manor was built with a new courtyard. There is a first reference to a chapel, 1231; opposite this was a new Great Hall (perhaps in the location of the present hall), plus a kitchen – a typical medieval manor. There are no drawings, no pictures of these buildings, but parch-marks on the east lawn in summer show the outline of the chapel (Alexis would love to dig there), perhaps resembling Croft Castle Church, Herefordshire. Later in the area of the North lawn were State Apartments where elite visitors were housed. In 1402-3, it is known Queen Joan of Navarre stayed at the Palace, in 1439-40 Henry VI and his entourage and Elizabeth 1st stayed twice. But by 1580-1600 a garderobe discovered there had gone out of use.

The 15th century was generally a time of magnificence - ostentation was expected.

The pious and monk-like Henry VI was a disappointment! The style of architecture at the time tended to be a series of courtyards including gardens and lodgings, tennis courts, tiltyards, so Fulham Palace fits in well.

Dendrochronological investigation has been carried out in the present Great Hall roof and the timber of the gate to the Tudor courtyard, results: roof: 1493; gate: 1495, so during Henry VII's reign. (On some timbers in the roof of one wing around the Tudor courtyard, Alexis found marks indicating their importation from the Baltic.) Henry was for a time in financial straits, so no major Royal projects until the 1490s when he started to repair Richmond Palace. But the work at Fulham Palace, e.g., the new inward-looking Tudor Courtyard, predates Richmond. So medieval Fulham Palace transitioned into Tudor. The Tower in the Tudor Courtyard resembles that at Old Hatfield House, built by the Bishop of Ely c. 1485. So the Tudor buildings were perhaps built by Bishop Richard Hill? (1489-96). This was an interesting period: the arrival of brick in this country. Noblemen returning from the Wars in France had seen brick used on the Continent (e.g., at Bruges – stone was not available in the Low Countries); from 1410 Flemish and Dutch masons were building in brick in England.

In the 16th century came the "three-gabled extension" which bears Bishop Fitzjames' (1506-22) coat of arms. Possibly the Tudor Courtyard may also have been built by him, and he also designed a Tudor garden – there had

once been a gallery alongside the original chapel for viewing these gardens. Katherine of Aragon, sent twice to Fulham Palace for her health, had a close relationship with Fitzjames; a screen at Steyning Church in Sussex which may have formerly been at Fulham Palace depicts her marriage to Henry VIII. By the time of a Parliamentary Survey of 1647 the Tudor gardens were gone, but some of the Tudor wall (with bee boles) survives plus a gateway bearing Fitzjames' Coat of Arms, incorporated into the 18th century walled garden.

A 2017 excavation in the grounds found moulded plaster, perhaps from a ceiling similar in style to one at Ham House of 1638 by Inigo Jones. This may have been installed by Bishop Juxon (1633-36) who was also Lord High Chancellor and a rich man. But by 1750-60 the ceiling had been dumped. During the Commonwealth Fulham Palace was purchased by Colonel Edward Harvey, who was popular in Fulham. A 2018 Conservation Project included "Room 109", where a daubed wall was found behind modern plasterboard. A paint analysis suggested a mid-17th century date, perhaps in Harvey's time. At the Restoration, the Palace was handed back to the bishops. Bishop Sherlock (1748-61) wasn't happy with the house and demolished parts of it. He built himself a new dining room in Rococo style, with a fine Rococo ceiling containing a depiction of himself and his wife. He also changed the Great Hall, raising the ceiling. A succession of Bishops made a number of changes. Architect Stiff Leadbetter quoted a price for repairs, but Bishop Terrick (1764-77) decided to demolish the medieval (café) frontage and rebuilt it in Gothic style. The Tudor Gardens were swept away to a

Brownian landscape, and he also built the present Walled Garden. Bishop Howley (1813-28, it may be his and his wife's stone face on either side of the Main Door into the Palace) also made drastic changes. Terrick's Gothic frontage was "flattened" into a more Georgian style, the medieval kitchens were knocked down and Sherlock's Rococo room was turned into a kitchen – later restoration has tried to bring it back, especially the ceiling. A chapel which had replaced the medieval one and which had never been consecrated became a library. Bishop Tait (1856-68) built the present Chapel, 1867.

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