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GRAND DESIGN: Lloyds and Santander banks now occupy the building



ON THE WALL: Founding date 1788



CARVED IN: Possibly the construction date of 1888



CLEAR INITIALS?: Architects Cowell and Bromley

Architect who made his mark

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Architect who made his mark on Canterbury

THE architect John Green Hall arguably made more personal impact on the appearance of the city centre than any other individual (leaving aside Adolf Hitler).

Born in 1835 in Hampshire, John started his career in his teens as a cabinet maker, working for his father, Thomas Hall. But his future aspirations lay elsewhere. He studied for the Royal Institute of British Architects exams and by his early 30s was managing clerk at the Winchester practice of John Colson, a successful church architect.

John was also active as a non-commissioned officer in the 1st Hants Volunteers. His big break came in 1866 when he, along with 30 other hopefuls, was interviewed for the post of Canterbury city surveyor, advertised with a salary of £150 pa. John, just 31 years old, was successful, and spent the next two decades making his mark on the Canterbury street scene.

Here are the main buildings he designed or influenced: the Roman Catholic church in Burgate (1875), the city cemetery chapels (1877), the Congregational church in Guildhall Street, now part of Debenhams (1877), the Masonic Temple in St Peter's Street (1880), the Presbyterian church near Canterbury East railway station, erected in 1881 but demolished to make way for the city ring road, his

Way we were



David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society

architect's office at 4 St Margaret's Street (1882), what is now Westminster bank in The Parade (1885), Santander bank in High Street – originally Pool's boot makers (1887 designed by Cowell and Bromley but John Cowell had served as John Hall's pupil), and, his most prestigious work, completed in 1888 after his early death in 1887, the building that since 1918 has been Lloyds bank.

This impressive list omits one of John's most appreciated contributions – sorting out the city's sewage system that was clearly falling apart at the time of his appointment.

Each of these buildings has interesting clues to its past – we'll look at a few examples.

In St Margaret's Street, high in a gable of Lloyds bank, the year 1788 is clear enough – this denotes the founding of the original bank 225 years ago when George Gipps and James Simmons opened a branch

on this site. A second date stone nearby is more difficult to decipher but must surely be 1888, the construction date for the present bank building 125 years ago.

More detective work is needed to decipher letters on Santander bank next door. AD 1887 is evidently the construction date, but what of P&S and C&B? P&S must be for the boot makers Pool and Son whilst C&B can only be the architects Cowell and Bromley. Their shop front obligingly offered two doors on to the High Street – one for men and the other for women!

John Hall died an early death, aged 52, in London following surgery there. His remains were brought back to Canterbury cemetery, where in May 1887 he was buried close to the cemetery chapel he had designed just a decade before.

I've looked hard for any signs of his memorial stone (in block E), but can find nothing.

Perhaps readers can succeed where I have failed – surely the indefatigable John Green Hall at least deserves a well-marked resting place?

John Cowell, his former pupil, died the following year, aged just 33 years, a victim of typhoid, leaving a widow and four young children.

■ For more on these buildings see the CHAS web site at canterbury-archaeology.org.uk