

John Pecham (alternative spellings Peckham, John de Pecham) was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1279-1292. He was a member of the Franciscan order and a scholar and teacher before he became archbishop. His intellectual interests included optics, astronomy, philosophy and theology and he taught in Paris for years. He trained friars to work all over Europe

I started the search for archival records in the National Archives. A search on the name John Pecham, filtered by date range 1200-1299 produced 102 results.¹ A search on the name John Peckham, date range 1200-1299 produced 22 records². A search on the name John de Pecham, date range 1200-199 produced 108 records.³

These records appear to cover a range of situations but it is not possible to be entirely sure what any of them contains without visiting the archive. They have not been digitised and the records online only give a brief indication of their content. For example:

London

The National Archives

Special Collections: Ancient Correspondence of the Chancery and the Exchequer.

SC 1/24/42

This record says 'John Pecham, archbishop of Canterbury, to Robert Burnel, Bishop of Bath and Wells. Chancellor: on... Dated 26 January 1280.

There is no more information as to what it is about.

Richmond, Surrey

The National Archives

SC1/24/45

This record says

John Pecham, archbishop of Canterbury, to Robert Burnel, bishop of Bath and Wells, chancellor: a document discovered on Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, showing disaffection among the marchers; the execution of clergy; homeless clergy in North Wales; arrests in the diocese of Exeter. Dated 17 December 1282.

¹ The National archives,

https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_q=John+Pecham&_sd=1200&_ed=1300&_hb=

²https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_dss=range&_sd=1200&_ed=1300&_q=John+Peckham

³https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?_dss=range&_sd=1200&_ed=1300&_q=John+de+Pecham

And a more prosaic topic:

Richmond, Surrey
The National Archives
Special Collections
SC 1/24/44

John Pecham, archbishop of Canterbury, to Robert Burnel, bishop of Bath and Wells, chancellor: deer for the Christmas feast. Dated at Leominster. 3 December 1282

Richmond, Surrey
The National Archives
Special Collections
SC 1/19/188

John de Pecham to Edward I: Robert Burnel's claim to the archbishopric of Canterbury. Dated at Rome. 30 December 1278

Richmond, Surrey
The National Archives
Miscellaneous

E36/274, folio 295, recto

This is an interesting document. The council held at Reading in June 1279 dealt with many matters, including Pecham's intention to regulate church affairs. His plans caused dissension both within the church itself and with the King, both of whom saw certain of their privileges being threatened. But by the end of 1279 Peckham had excommunicated anyone who did not agree to adhere to the Reading statutes.

The other significant thing about this document is the marginal doodle it contains of Thomas Becket being martyred. It shows the bishop, holding out his arms in blessing while his mitre is knocked from his head and a sword pierces his skull.⁴

Richmond, Surrey
The National Archives
Special Collections

SC/1/63/7

⁴ P. Dryburgh, 2020. *Art for Art's Sake?*
<http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/heritage/archives/picture-this/art-for-arts-sake/>

Edward I to John de Pecham, Archbishop of Canterbury: he is to postpone visitation of royal chapels in Coventry and Lichfield diocese until parliament, at which he must appear. Dated 1279-1280

John de Pecham was frequently at odds with the King, Edward I, particularly over the issue of lay and ecclesiastical jurisdiction and at one point, Edward refused to let Pecham visit the royal chapels.⁵

After looking at the National Archives, I looked at the website for Canterbury Cathedral.⁶ The online catalogue, under Archives and Library, returned 102 records.

Canterbury
Cathedral Archives
CCA-DCc-ChAnt-Chartae Antiquae
C - Chartae Antiquae C
115 - Profession of Obedience

The catalogue would only allow 5 records at a time to be shown, although it offered the option to choose all of them, so this made progress slow. The records I looked at had more details than I could access from the National Archives, so potentially very useful when limited to an online only search.

I then did a simple Google search on Archbishops of Canterbury - records, which took me to Lambeth Palace Library.⁷

Lambeth Palace library has a series of Pecham's registers,

London, Lambeth
Lambeth Palace Library
Archbishops' Registers

P.D. 79e
Nicholas IV 18 February 1290

Pecham was often in debt⁸, as he was a friar and owned no property, and in this Papal document of 1290, Nicholas IV granted 'first fruits of all benefices in the diocese, vacated within three years, for the payment of the debts of the see.' Circa curam quarumlibet.⁹

I also searched on John Peckham, which returned 89 records but only 2 of these referred to the archbishop, and they used the Pecham spelling of his name and were the same as entries found in the previous 102 records.

⁵ B. Thompson, 2004. 'Pecham [Peckham], John', in Carradine, Prof. Sir D. (ed.) *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP), no p. nos.

⁶ <https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/heritage/archives-library/catalogues/>

⁷ https://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/calmview/?_ga=2.238678272.1671822.1604414135-1608146433.1603982803

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Description of the document in the archive record

I then did a Google search on Medieval Mss John Pecam and found an entry for medieval mss in Oxford University Libraries.¹⁰

The Bodleian library has a number of manuscripts of Pecham's writings.¹¹

Oxford
Bodleian Library
MS. Ashmole 341

A composite manuscript containing Pechum's work on optics, *Perspectiva*.

Oxford
Bodleian Library
MS. Digby 28
Summary Catalogue no. 1629
Part 2

Contains Pecham's *Philomena*, a meditation on the life of Christ.

Oxford
Bodleian Library
MS Lat. Misc. c. 75
Part 4, fos. 88v - 89v.

Letters concerning a dispute over the right of Friars Minor to hear confession.

Merton College Library contains Pecham's Quodlibet II, *de Natali* ¹²

Oxford
Merton College Library
MS. 96
S. XIII ex. 3 fold. 265-270 v.

¹⁰ <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/libraries>

¹¹ <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley>

¹² <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives>

Bibliography

Bodleian Library <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley>

Canterbury Cathedral Archives <https://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/heritage/archives-library/catalogues/>

Dryburgh, P. (Canterbury 2020) *Art for Art's Sake?*
<http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/heritage/archives/picture-this/art-for-arts-sake/>

Lambeth Palace Archives <https://archives.lambethpalacelibrary.org.uk/>

Merton College Library <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/library-and-archives>

Oxford University Research Libraries <https://www.ox.ac.uk/research/libraries>

Thompson, B., '*Pecham [Peckham], John*', in Carradine, Prof. Sir D. (ed.) *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), no nos.

Vatican Library, *Tractatus pauperis contra insipientem*, https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Borgh.161

VIAF <https://viaf.org/viaf/88794405/>

For future archival searches I would possibly go to the National Archives to read the actual documents, as it is sometimes difficult to know what they are about from the brief online catalogue entries. If I were interested in Pecham's intellectual ideas, I would go to the Oxford libraries where there are manuscripts of some of his writings. Looking at these documents might bring to light other resources to follow up as well. The Virtual International Authority File contains a large number of references to John Pecham that I have not pursued, and the Vatican Library has a digitised manuscript, *Tractatus pauperis contra insipientem*, that I have not looked at in any detail.