

BERKSHIRE

Berkshire might be described as the home of polychromy, with the strength of anglo-catholicism in the county reflected in its brilliantly colourful churches by G. E. Street (Boyn Hill, Maidenhead), William Butterfield (Beech Hill) and Henry Woodyer (Clewer Convent), as well as (in secular terms) Reading's mix of local terracotta and coloured brickwork. An undoubted highlight is the eighteenth-century Coade stone screen at St Mary's Church, Langley Marish, Slough, while the delightful Royal Dairy at Frogmore (Windsor) is a building of international importance to ceramic history, although access is highly restricted. In addition, Reading's Civic Centre houses John Piper's ceramic frieze of the town's coat-of-arms. Suggested reading: Charles Handley-Read 'Prince Albert's Model Dairy', *Country Life*, vol 129, 29th June 1961, pp1524-6; John Elliott and John Pritchard (eds), *George Edmund Street: A Victorian architect in Berkshire* (University of Reading, 1998); John Elliott and John Pritchard (eds), *Henry Woodyer: Gentleman Architect* (University of Reading, 2002); TACS Tour Notes *Reading* (1992), *Windsor* (1991). The *Gazetteer* entry for Berkshire covers the administrative areas of Bracknell Forest Borough Council, Reading Borough Council, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council, Windsor and Maidenhead Borough Council, and Wokingham District Council.

BEECH HILL

At the hamlet of Beech Hill, a few miles south of Reading, is **St Mary's Church** (1866-7), its bright interior violently colourful even by William Butterfield's standards (Fig 3). In the chancel, and especially the sanctuary, Butterfield carried polychromy to an extreme. The base of the east wall is faced with diagonal bands of Godwin tiles in black, red and buff on red, the latter with fleur-de-lys and bird motifs. Above this dado is a horizontal strip of bright red brickwork with black and white stone inserts, and piled still higher is the uppermost layer, comprising red, white and black headers laid chequerboard-style. More tiles, some forming a cross, decorate the tall white stone reredos, while the sanctuary pavement and tiling in the sedilia continue the theme; recently-embroidered kneelers, taking tile designs as their motifs, provide a modern echo.

BRACKNELL

Tower blocks in Bracknell's apparently tree-lined centre are portrayed on attractive 1960s industrial tiling in the HIGH STREET walkway leading to the shopping precinct; just south on STATION ROAD is the **Railway Station**, where another modern panel - showing steam engine 488 - welcomes passengers. On a rather grander scale, and about a mile further south, is the **Church of St Michael and St Mary Magdalene**, Easthampstead. It was reconstructed in 1866-7, the architect being J. W. Hugall, who worked on several local churches. Aside from exceptional stained glass, the real delight here is a pair of colourful reredoses in tiles, mosaic, opus sectile, marble and mother-of-pearl made by Powell's of Whitefriars. The main east end reredos (1873), which shows the crucifixion, was

designed by H. J. Burrow; its side panels, showing the evangelists, were designed by Henry Holiday and installed in 1877. The north aisle reredos (1905) portrays the *Walk to Emmaus* and was designed by John W. Brown.¹

ETON

Construction of the College Hall at **Eton College** began in the mid fifteenth century, although it was given a classical makeover in 1720-1; the medieval look was restored by the architect Henry Woodyer in 1856-8. Visitors (guided tours only) will see a fine tile pavement whose layout was possibly designed by Woodyer himself.² It includes many standard Minton patterns as well as specials with armorial and other symbolic motifs.

In the centre of Eton at 110 HIGH STREET is the **Christopher Hotel**; its pleasing 1902 facade of lime and lemon faience includes good lettering.

MAIDENHEAD

In the centre of Maidenhead on MARLOW ROAD is the former Technical School (1895-6), now **Social Services Department**, designed by local architect E. J. Shrewsbury. There is much good red terracotta detailing on its porch and on the unusual, oversized Dutch gable-like pediment; the manufacturer was the Measham Terra Cotta Company.³ West of the centre on ST MARK'S ROAD is the Shrewsbury-designed Maidenhead Union Workhouse, now part of **St Mark's Hospital**. It was built in 1896 and again shows ornate terracotta detailing, but in pink rather than the red of the Technical School.

Slightly north of Maidenhead's centre, amidst the Victorian villas of NORFOLK ROAD, is one of the town's pair of exotic churches, **St Luke**, built in 1866 and designed by the little-known architect George Row Clarke. Running above and across the whole of its chancel arch is a striking tile painting entitled *Jacob's Ladder* and featuring many colourful angels (Fig 4). The painting, which was obscured by dirt for many years and only revealed by cleaning in 1991, dates from 1885 and was produced by W. B. Simpson & Sons; the firm's name, written in dark script, is beneath the foot of the angel furthest to the right. The tiles were presented to the church by Thomas J. Nunns in memory of his mother.

Even more surprising is **All Saints Church**, BOYN HILL ROAD in Boyn Hill, a mile or so west of the town centre; it was described in Betjeman & Piper's *Murray's Berkshire Architectural Guide* as the 'Tractarian Cathedral of an Upper-class Suburb'.⁴ Its architect, George Edmund Street, was appointed by Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, as architect to the Diocese of Oxford in 1850. Wilberforce, who was reasonably sympathetic to the ideas of the Oxford or Tractarian Movement, had also instigated a Church Building Society in order to provide accommodation in new or restored churches for the rapidly expanding population. In architectural terms, the Oxford Movement expected churches once again to symbolise Catholic principles, with the emphasis laid upon the altar and chancel rather than the pulpit. The crusade to restore continuity with the Catholic past was led by *The Ecclesiologist*, the journal founded in 1841 by the

Cambridge Camden Society, which had considerable influence over church design.

Generous local benefactors donated land and funds for a church at Boyn Hill, and also enabled Street to produce a collegiate-style quadrangle of buildings comprising vicarage, stables, school, schoolmaster's house and clergy house. These harked back to the medieval idea of communal living, to which Street was attracted. The church, one of Street's first major commissions, was erected in 1854-7, while the final part of the associated complex was completed in 1859; he added the campanile tower in 1864-5. Street visited Italy just before beginning work on Boyn Hill, and his design, which reflected the colour and warmth of Venetian buildings, was a personal and very English version of what *The Ecclesiologist* described as 'Geometrical Middle Pointed'. The exterior of the church is banded in red brick, yellow Bath stone and black brick, while the remainder of the complex is made almost equally polychromatic in appearance with varying designs of diaper work in black brick. Inside the church, the unique chancel is a tour-de-force of the art of polychromy, its walls banded horizontally in green, yellow, red and buff tiles alternating with alabaster slabs. The tile pavement is by Minton, with floral and geometric designs in green, black, red and cream. And then there is colourful stencilling, stained glass, wrought ironwork, sculptures and ornate woodwork, all carried out to Street's designs.⁵ Not surprisingly, *The Ecclesiologist* approved.

NEWBURY

Inside the **West Berkshire Museum**, situated right in the centre of Newbury at THE WHARF, are over 150 Dutch tiles, probably dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which were installed in the museum as skirting in 1902-3 and remain in place; the building housing the museum is a seventeenth century house. To the north, hidden away in an obscure corner of **Victoria Park**, PARK WAY is a salmon-pink terracotta statue of Queen Victoria protected by four reclining lions; the memorial was modelled for Doulton by the sculptor and designer John Broad (1873-1919) around 1901. Broad was a prolific artist whose output included several monumental statues. This Queen Victoria statue was given to Newbury by Lord George Sanger and originally stood in the Market Place, but was removed in 1933 to allow the traffic to flow more freely. The statue (and lions) were re-erected at nearby Greenham Park, but the construction of a by-pass caused them all to be moved again, this time ending up at the council depot; two of the lions then escaped to Beale Park, a wildlife park in Lower Basildon (see Pangbourne). Queen Victoria and her two remaining lions were finally re-sited in Victoria Park in 1966 and, with the assistance of the Child-Beale Trust, the missing lions were returned to Newbury as part of the Queen's Jubilee celebrations in 2002. A happy ending indeed.

PANGBOURNE

A couple of miles north-west of Pangbourne is **Beale Park**, Lower Basildon, a wildlife and fun park beside the Thames which is run by the Child-Beale Trust;

the park was created by Gilbert Beale (1868-1967), a benefactor renowned for his eccentricity and love of the countryside. In the park is a large sculpture collection, including the unglazed white Doultonware groups of *Commerce* and *Britannia*, sculpted by John Broad, which flanked the entrance of the Birkbeck Bank (1895-6), a thoroughgoing ceramic extravaganza which stood near the north end of London's Chancery Lane until its demolition in summer 1965.⁶

READING

The most memorable tiles in Reading are hidden away in the Council Chamber of the **Civic Centre** (1975), which is dominated by a large and dramatic tile frieze centred on a ceramic version of the town's coat-of-arms. This was designed by the artist John Piper (1903-92) and made by the artist-potter Geoffrey Eastop (b1921), then lecturer in ceramics at Reading College of Technology. In 1969 Eastop helped to establish a pottery at Piper's home in Fawley Bottom, about ten miles north of Reading, and the two collaborated on the production of ceramics until the early 1980s.⁷ There are few other tiles in Reading, but much colourful local brick and terracotta, the latter largely produced by Collier's (1848-1929), the only firm to use Reading clays for making terracotta on a large scale. John Piper approved of the town's abundance of terracotta facades, saying that 'The washable, weather resisting surface that will hardly change with centuries of wear changes its look constantly with the different lights of different days and has plenty of delights to satisfy an unprejudiced eye'.

The most notable manifestation of Collier's products is the **Town Hall** (which also houses the Museum of Reading), just south-east of the station in **BLAGRAVE STREET**. The central towered section was designed by Alfred Waterhouse and built in 1872-5 of local red and grey brick, with some terracotta supplied by Gunton's of Norwich. The adjoining concert hall (1879-82, architect Thomas Lanson) uses deep red and blue bricks with terracotta dressings by J. C. Edwards, but the most striking part of the municipal ensemble is the museum and art gallery (1894, architect W. R. Howell) curving round the corner into Valpy Street, with several buff carved terracotta reliefs showing local historical scenes.⁸ Another highlight is the orangey-red terracotta canyon of nearby **QUEEN VICTORIA STREET**, which has an extensive display of lofty facades dating from the early 1900s; in adjoining **BROAD STREET**, the terracotta front of **W. H. Smith's** was restored by Hathernware in 1989. Turning into **WEST STREET**, the **Palmer Memorial Building** and the **West Street Hall** display beautiful terracotta frontages, the latter by Collier's. There is a reset panel of medieval floor tiles (from the Penn tilery) in **Greyfriars Church**, which began life as a thirteenth-century Franciscan foundation. West of the centre in **DOWNSHIRE SQUARE** is **All Saints Church** (1865-74); its ornate interior was completed in 1891-6 by the addition of several substantial panels of Powell's opus sectile work.⁹

Tilehurst

St Michael's Church was almost completely rebuilt in 1854-5 by G. E. Street, who specified the decorative and colourful Minton tiles which form the chancel

pavement; the nave tiling was relaid in 1975, using tiles similar in design to those of the original pavement.¹⁰

SLOUGH

In the town centre is **St Mary's Church** on CHURCH STREET, its chancel dating from 1876-8. The sanctuary walls are faced with bright blue and white floral-pattern glass tiles by Powell's; gold mosaic with red and unusual green glass tiles enhance the overall effect. The east wall tiling is topped by a row of opus sectile cherubic heads encased in angel wings on a background of more gold mosaic, making a rather odd reredos. The sanctuary's encaustic tiled pavement, which includes some mosaic work, is by Minton Hollins. Also in the centre is the **Robert Taylor Library**, HIGH STREET, where the stairs are hung with three tile panels designed in 1988 by the artist Geoffrey Carr, working with local schoolchildren. The scratched designs on unglazed, 40-tile orange panels show local buildings and activities, with motifs ranging from Concorde to a multistorey car park by way of the railway station and the Mars factory.

To the east in Langley Marish is **St Mary's Church**, ST MARY'S ROAD, where the presence of mid nineteenth-century east wall tiling by Minton & Co (the evangelists, albeit set in unusual circular borders) and fourteenth-century tiles in the sanctuary pavement is completely overshadowed by the glorious additions to the church made by Sir John Kedermister in the early seventeenth century. Sir John was granted the manor in 1626, but had already begun to build the Kedermister chapel in the south transept. This is now entered through an airy, vaulted Gothic Coade stone screen, added by the Harvey family (to whom the manor eventually passed) in 1792; it was probably designed by Henry Emlyn (c1729-1815), an architect and builder from Windsor.¹¹ On the south side of the chapel is the Kedermister pew, an entrancing family pew whose latticework openings ensured privacy. Its interior is painted to resemble marble, with several all-seeing eyes implying God's presence. More amazing still is the tiny library, just behind the pew, where the Kedermister book collection, generously donated to the parish, is kept; over 200 books and medieval manuscripts are stored behind the elaborately painted panelled doors of its book cupboards.

WINDSOR

The stunning fan-vaulted Coade stone screen in St George's Chapel, **Windsor Castle**, was designed by the architect Henry Emlyn in about 1788 as a replacement for the original stone screen, which was removed during alterations. This remarkable work features vaults springing from unbelievably thin columns rather than from the wall. As Alison Kelly put it, Mrs Coade's camouflage was perfect and few visitors to the Chapel guess they are looking at 'a vast piece of pottery'.¹² Adjacent to the Chapel are the collegiate buildings of the College of St George, founded by Edward III in 1348. Its main entrance, built in 1353-4, is the Porch of Honour or Aerary Porch, which took its name from the treasury (or errarium) housed on its upper floor. The Aerary itself is now used as an archive room (no public access) and has a complete but badly worn and much-repaired

floor of two-colour decorated Penn tiles dating from 1355. The building accounts of Windsor Castle provide a wealth of detail on the purchase, transport and laying of these tiles.¹³

For a view of Windsor as it was, seek out the narrow passageway running west from THAMES STREET, for here is a blue and white tiled picture entitled *Prospect of Windsor Castle based upon the engraving by Wenceslaus Hollar AD1663*. This attractive panel, which is dated 1918 and measures about 6' by 12', is by the artist Leslie MacDonald Gill, known as Max, who was the oldest of Eric Gill's six brothers. MacDonald Gill specialised in decorative graphics, and was the designer of the *Wunderground* map for London Underground. Apart from the detailed drawing of town and castle, the panel also indicates the future position of 'Boots Cash Chemists'; it appears that the panel was commissioned to mark the opening of a branch of Boots in the adjacent building, which is dated 1917.

Clewer

Clewer Convent, HATCH LANE, was set up in 1849 by Mrs Tennant, a clergyman's widow, as a House of Mercy - a home for 'fallen' girls. It soon became clear to the local vicar that a larger organisation was necessary to undertake the task of caring for the girls, and a sisterhood was then founded. Its convent was designed by the architect Henry Woodyer, who began working on the complex of buildings in 1853 and continued, without ever charging a fee, until his death in 1896.¹⁴ The original plan for a quadrangle of red brick buildings (including a chapel which still has a colourful geometric Minton pavement) was completed in 1858, then extra wings were added during the 1870s and a grand new chapel was erected in 1881. The chapel's interior features spectacular stained glass and ironwork, as well as polychromatic red and black brick, with monogrammed terracotta panels in the choir and a Minton pavement; the latter is mainly of plain tiles in red, yellow and black but includes a few patterned tiles in early Minton designs. There are also two ceramic plaques on the chapel's exterior, one commemorating Woodyer. This ornate 1881 chapel is now listed II*, although its future is uncertain, as Clewer Convent was undergoing a change of use in 2002.

Nearly a mile north-east of Clewer Convent is **St Stephen's Church**, VANSITTART ROAD, built in 1870-4 to cater for Clewer's rapidly expanding population. The architect was Henry Woodyer, who also designed most of the fittings, which were added when funds allowed. The east wall decoration (1881) includes two pairs of mosaic figures of saints, while the chancel pavement - probably of around the same date - is elaborate patterned Minton tiling.¹⁵

Frogmore

Stretching south of Windsor Castle is the Home Park, where the **Royal Dairy** (no public access) stands about half a mile south-east of Frogmore House, at the Prince Consort's HOME FARM. The picturesque Dairy, which includes a two-storey house and offices as well as the tiled creamery, was built in 1858, though its internal decoration was not completed until 1861 (Fig 5).¹⁶ The Dairy was built

under the Prince's personal direction, with John Thomas (1813-62), a sculptor and occasional architect who was a protégé of Prince Albert's, acting as executive architect; the buildings were erected by the Board of Works. Behind the anticlimactic facade, all is light and bright, as the pristine Minton tiles emanate cleanliness and coolness. The generous use of colour is surprising, as earlier tiled dairies were generally plain-tiled, but here Minton's used new majolica glazes to enrich the overall effect.

The creamery's painted timber roof shelters a series of long marble tables which carry the separating basins. A ceramic frieze of sea horses with relief portraits of the Royal children runs above the windows, which are framed by block printed border tiles in five different patterns, while relief panels in orange and white portray cherubic, idyllic versions of rural activities. Pierced tiles assist with ventilation and the decorative non-slip floor tiling has white glaze recessed into the buff body of the tiles.¹⁷ Most striking of all are the two exotic majolica fountains, with deep, rich green glazes, and motifs of herons supporting a shell, surmounted by figures of a mermaid and merman. Both *The Builder* and the *Illustrated London News* reported on the completion of the Royal Dairy in 1861, and versions of its design were emulated elsewhere; it remains an early example of a polychromatic ceramic secular interior, with an atmosphere completely different from the many churches which incorporated tiled decoration from the 1840s.

WINKFIELD

The unusual wooden nave roof (1592) of **St Mary's Church** is supported by a central row of piers, dividing the nave into two, but the chancel, rebuilt in 1858 to a design by G. E. Street, is tripartite.¹⁸ This apparent east-west dislocation may have been ameliorated by the architect Henry Woodyer's alterations of 1888, which included lowering the floor of the choir, and the lavish chancel decoration which was added shortly afterwards (Fig 6). Above a geometric pavement, all three walls of the chancel were decorated from dado level upward with painted tiling depicting gothicised biblical figures, some angelic, in colour reddish-brown on an off-white ground. This unexpected scheme, signed E. I. and bearing the dates 1889, 1890 and August 1891, was carried out at the behest of the vicar's wife, Mrs Daubeny, who bought tiles and pigment from Powell's of Whitefriar's; after decoration, the tiles were then fired by Powell's.¹⁹ *Pevsner* suggests the tiles were designed by Henry Woodyer and painted by Mrs Daubeny, although it seems just as likely that Mrs Daubeny could have been the designer.²⁰

WRAYSBURY

An extremely high-relief terracotta panel designed by George Tinworth for Doulton & Co can be found on the outside wall of the tower (1880) of the polychromatic brick **Baptist Church** (1862) in the HIGH STREET. This unusually-sited panel depicts *The City of Refuge* and is signed with Tinworth's 'GT' monogram.²¹

Berkshire Roundup

The sanctuary pavement at St Bartholomew's Church (1863), Church Lane, **Arborfield** is by Minton; the church was designed by the architect and antiquary James (later Sir James) Allanson Picton of Liverpool (1805-89). The encaustic tile pavement in the chancel of St Peter's Church (rebuilt 1869-72), **Brimpton** was manufactured by Maw & Co and laid by Simpson's.²² Out of sight in the disused late Victorian chapel at **Datchet** Cemetery on Ditton Road (near the Queen Mother Reservoir) is a blue, white and yellow-tiled memorial panel, probably Iberian and dating from 1924, as well as several terracotta panels. At St James the Greater (1851-3, architect G. E. Street), **Eastbury**, there is a decorative encaustic tile pavement in the chancel and sanctuary. There are good sixteenth century floor tiles in the chancel of the now-redundant St Thomas Church, **East Shefford**. St Mary's Church (1864-6, Street), **Fawley**, looks northward over the downs; the encaustic tile pavement in the chancel is by Godwin's. St Mary's Church, **Purley** (rebuilt 1869-70, design by G. E. Street) has an elaborate chancel pavement of Godwin tiles with motifs based on patterns used at the medieval Penn tiler.²³ St Nicholas Church, **Remenham** has mid fourteenth-century Penn tiles around the pulpit and an encaustic tiled chancel pavement, probably from one of the Minton works, added during restoration in 1870. There are unusual fourteenth century tiles at the church of St Denys, **Stanford Dingley**; the tiles are thicker than normal, with inlaid designs on two sides. St Paul's Church, Reading Road, **Wokingham** (1862-4, architect Henry Woodyer) has rich Minton tiling in the chancel.

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