

## BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

The tiliary which functioned during the 1330s to the 1380s at Tylers Green, Penn, near High Wycombe, was the best known and most successful of all the medieval commercial tileries, while there was also a tiliary in the north of the county at Little Brickhill, on Watling Street, which worked in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Ironically, much more evidence remains in situ of the work of these medieval tileries, especially Penn, than of the Medmenham Pottery, established at Marlow Common by the soap manufacturer Robert Hudson around 1897. Victorian church restoration provided the opportunity for the installation of numerous tiles pavements, and the most frequently used manufacturer turned out to be Godwin's, although examples of Maw and Minton pavements also survive. There is, however, little significant use of terracotta, in secular or ecclesiastical contexts. The county's ceramic highlights include a Little Brickhill medieval pavement at Great Linford church (Milton Keynes); good Victorian church tiles at Edlesborough, Hughenden and Westcott; modern ceramic church furnishings at Coffee Hall (Milton Keynes); and a 1979 tile mural at Stantonbury (Milton Keynes). Suggested reading: Elizabeth Eames, *English Tilers* (British Museum Press, London, 1992); Miles Green, *Medieval Penn Floor Tiles* (Penn, 2003); Robert Prescott Walker, 'Conrad Dressler and the Medmenham Pottery', *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, 18, 1994, pp50-60. The *Gazetteer* entry for Buckinghamshire covers the administrative areas of Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council.

## CALVERTON

**All Saints Church** stands at Lower Weald, just outside Milton Keynes, although the remainder of Calverton lies within the city. The church was initially rebuilt in 1817-18, but much more reconstruction work was carried out later, probably in the 1850s, when much emphasis was laid on the interior, which is full of carved naturalistic decoration. A Minton tile pavement was laid in the chancel, whose walls have *sgraffito* patterns, while the mosaic reredos was probably added during further alterations made by E. Swinfen Harris in 1871-2. Harris, from Stony Stratford (now Milton Keynes), was a good and prolific architect who worked on numerous houses, churches and schools in the north of the county.

## CHEDDINGTON

The little church of **St Giles** was restored by G. E. Street in 1855-6; the Minton tiles probably date from this period, while the east wall decoration (1870) is by Powell's of Whitefriars.<sup>1</sup> The opus sectile reredos, portraying the Last Supper, was exhibited at the South Kensington Museum before installation at St Giles; it was the first large figurative opus sectile panel made by Powell's.<sup>2</sup> The reredos is flanked by panels of patterned glass tiles in very subdued tones, characteristic of Powell's early experiments in this field.

## DRAYTON BEAUCHAMP

**St Mary's Church**, delightfully sited outside the village, was restored in 1866-7 by the appropriately-named pair of London architects Slater & Carpenter. The abundant Minton tiles in the chancel were added during the restoration, their designs being copied from those of medieval tiles found during construction work.<sup>3</sup> Part of the tile pavement is set in an uncommon chevron pattern, while some tile designs, in particular the combination of a fleur-de-lys with a pair of stylised birds, are most unusual; these Minton designs have not been recorded elsewhere.

#### DROPMORE

**St Anne's Church**, Boveney Wood Lane, was built in 1865-6 and although small is Butterfield through and through, from its flint and brick banded exterior to the frieze of glazed red and black bricks inside. William Butterfield also designed the timber screen separating chancel from nave, and much of the other furnishings. The polychrome interior scheme includes a small number of Minton tiles in the reredos; they have a buff pattern on red ground, the design being made to appear more emphatic by the use of a majolica glaze over the inlay. Minton tiles with glaze over the inlay are not unusual in themselves, but the Dropmore tiles appear to be very late examples of this technique.

#### EDLESBOROUGH

The tower of **St Mary's Church** stands proud on its hill above the A4146, aloof from the straggling village of Edlesborough away to the north. Clamber up the hill to find a rewarding interior with a sprinkling of fourteenth-century tiles, although the Victorian work dominates, especially in the chancel, restored in 1875. The Godwin encaustic chancel pavement incorporates single tiles bearing a decorative 'B' for Lord Brownlow, but more unusual is the dado tiling, with pink and red tiles in a zigzag pattern topped by biblical quotations. Best of all is the reredos of 1895 by W. B. Simpson & Sons, comprising seven sections of mosaic and painted tiles within a stone surround. The large central panel shows a figure of Christ, while to either side are three panels with strong imagery of the Four Evangelists, ears of wheat and a bunch of grapes, the latter pair a reference to the bread and wine of the Eucharist. The church is in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust.

#### GREAT MISSENDEN

The church of **St Peter and St Paul** is one of those interesting cases where the Victorian tiles in the choir - made by Godwin's and possibly introduced during the 1899-1901 restoration by John Oldrid Scott, or perhaps earlier - mimic some designs (notably a shield bearing three crescents) of the remaining medieval tiles, located north and south of the altar; these originated at the nearby Penn tiler via Missenden Abbey.

#### HORSENDEN

**St Michael's Church** is an odd structure which combines the chancel of the ancient church, restored in 1855, with a mini-chancel, all of six feet long, built on to its east end in 1869. The architect of this addition, the polychromatic brick

enthusiast William White, also decorated the reredos and east wall with colourful Godwin tiles, complementing the many medieval tiles which survived the destruction of the original nave. The reredos includes two portrayals of a six-winged lion.

#### HUGHENDEN

**St Michael's Church** lies halfway up the broad slope leading to Disraeli's home, Hughenden Manor; his grave is in the churchyard. The church is medieval in origin but was restored and partly rebuilt by Sir Arthur Blomfield in 1874-5, when the chancel pavement of Godwin tiles was probably installed, a brilliantly colourful contrast to the pervading gloom of the remainder of the church. At **Hughenden Manor** (NT) itself, there is a Maw geometric encaustic pavement in the loggia (1874) and odd grey-green hexagonal wall tiling - possibly by Minton Hollins - in the stables.

#### LITTLE KIMBLE

The nave walls of little **All Saints Church** are almost completely covered by early fourteenth century wall paintings, showing a large collection of saints as well as the devil at the mouth of hell. Continuing the pictorial theme in the chancel are several thirteenth century floor tiles made in the kilns of Chertsey Abbey, Surrey; here the images - on four-tile roundels - include a pair of fighting knights and a king with his dog.

#### MARLOW COMMON

The pretty woodland of Marlow Common became something of an artists' colony during the late nineteenth century. Conrad Dressler, sculptor and art potter, moved into the White Cottage (now **Monks Corner**) around 1897, to work as director of the Marlow Common-based Medmenham Pottery, founded and funded by the soap manufacturer Robert Hudson of nearby Medmenham. Dressler used the cottage, which is near the west end of the hamlet, to display trial runs of items commissioned from the pottery. On its exterior is the 25' polychrome ceramic frieze *Industry* (showing women working), later to be seen on Sunlight Chambers in Dublin, as well as portrait roundels and other panels, while a few of Dressler's tiles remain inside. The service wing (now **Jerome Cottage**) displays another fine Medmenham piece, a plain frieze of laundrywomen.

#### MEDMENHAM

During 1895-6, the wealthy soap magnate Robert Hudson bought Medmenham Abbey, the remains of a Thames-side Cistercian foundation once used by Sir Francis Dashwood for meetings of his Medmenham Club (popularly known as the Hell-Fire Club). Hudson brought in the architect W. H. Romaine-Walker (later mainly a designer of town houses) to restore and enlarge the abbey in 1898. Romaine-Walker went on to create a series of estate buildings, and in 1899-1901 built Danesfield House, a new and vast home for his client. Hudson was an admirer of the Arts & Crafts theories of William Morris, and around 1897, in true *News from Nowhere* style, put up pottery workshops and kilns by the clay pits of

Marlow Common (two miles north-east of Medmenham) in order to foster rural crafts and encourage local talent. This concern became known as the Medmenham Pottery, and the sculptor Conrad Dressler, who had previously been employed at the Della Robbia Pottery in Birkenhead, was brought in as its director.<sup>4</sup> The individuality and handmade look of Medmenham tiles soon attracted the attention of architects, and they were used in prestigious locations such as the Law Society's Hall in London and Sunlight Chambers in Dublin. Presumably Hudson must have been quietly satisfied when the Medmenham Pottery obtained the latter commission, as the building was the Irish headquarters of his rivals, Lever Brothers.

Despite these successes, Dressler became disillusioned with the entire project and by 1905 production at Medmenham had ceased, although a few architectural remnants still survive in the village (and at Marlow Common) to remind the observer of the unusual and high-quality output of this little pottery. As originally built, all the many bathrooms of **Danesfield House** were decorated with Dressler's early handmade tiles, exotic and richly colourful cuenca-style designs including an especially striking fish, all scales and attitude; however, conversion of the house to an hotel, along with a series of fires, has resulted in the loss of all but a single tiled bathroom. A happier fate befell **Westfield Cottages**, a little west of the village off the main Marlow-Henley road; these six pairs of picturesque estate cottages were built around 1900 and probably designed by Romaine-Walker (Fig 7). Over each front doorway is a semicircular tympanum of low relief Medmenham ware, showing the labours of the months, from gathering firewood (January) through the corn harvest (June) to ploughing (November) and digging (December).

#### MILTON KEYNES

The new city of Milton Keynes was designated in 1967, taking in an area stretching from Bletchley in the south to Stony Stratford and Wolverton in the north. The uninspiringly-named centre is known as Central Milton Keynes, and the city was laid out around it on a rough grid square system incorporating the existing towns and villages.

#### Coffee Hall

The residential grid square Coffee Hall, south of the centre, was developed at speed during the 1970s and early 1980s. **Our Lady of Lourdes R.C. Church** was built in 1974-6; as with many of the city's early buildings, it was designed by Milton Keynes Development Corporation's own architects, in this case Derek Walker (Chief Architect and Planning Officer) and Peter Barker. The circular exterior of the church hides a square interior, in which the furnishings - altar, font, pulpit and Stations of the Cross - are of sculpted glazed stoneware by Norman and Anna Adams. The font, with its pastel imagery of flowers and birds, is relatively restrained but the altar frontal is altogether more hectic, with pale blue angels descending from above through a jagged network of white crosses.

### Galley Hill

Galley Hill was developed from 1971, and was the first major housing scheme in Milton Keynes. Covering the gable end of one of the buildings at **Watling Way County Middle School** is the tile mural *Climbing Frame* which was designed and made by the painter John Watson and installed in 1978. Its flowing brushwork depicts children, many holding animal masks, weaving their way around a prominent white frame; it includes the names of individual children.

### Great Linford

**St Andrew's Church** stands on the northern fringe of Great Linford and thus of Milton Keynes itself, not far from the Grand Union Canal. It is a medieval church, and at the east end of the nave is a pavement of Little Brickhill tiles, made at the tiling (its site now just south-east of the city limits) which was in production during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Its products were two-colour tiles of relatively primitive design, but the addition of small amounts of copper or brass to the glaze made for bright and attractive pavements.<sup>5</sup> A memorial brass records that the St Andrews pavement, which is normally kept covered, was bequeathed to the church by Roger Hunt (d1473).

### Stantonbury

The Stantonbury grid square was developed from 1972; over a third of it is devoted to the **Stantonbury Campus** which includes a shopping centre where the *Bicycle Wall* tile mural was installed in 1979. The artist John Watson created the mural with the help of children from one of the local comprehensive schools; many pupils (as well as bicycles) are depicted on the mural, which is intended to portray 'childhood happiness and enthusiasm'. The 60' by 24' mural comprises around 1,200 tiles, which were made and fired in the school's art department, decorated and glazed in the artist's studio, then refired at the school before being fixed directly to the brick wall.<sup>6</sup>

### Wolverton

Wolverton was a railway town, involved first in building locomotives (from 1845) and then carriages (from around 1865); the works dominated the town until the early 1960s. The church of **St George Martyr**, CHURCH STREET, was built in 1843-4 to cater for the railway workforce; transepts were added in 1895-6 and the chancel was extended in 1903. The opus sectile reredos, showing four angels on a gold ground, was bought from Powell's of Whitefriars in 1887, so presumably was resited when the chancel was altered.

### PENN

Penn, and the adjacent settlement of Tylers Green, formed a major centre of tile production during the fourteenth century. As part of the millennium restoration of **Holy Trinity Church**, Penn tiles which had been found in the churchyard and the neighbouring area were built into the altar platform of the Lady Chapel. Tiles with twenty-five different designs were used to make a mosaic in combination with an area of reproduction Penn tiles made by Diana Hall.<sup>7</sup>

### SHALSTONE

**St Edward's Church** was rebuilt in 1861-2 by George Gilbert Scott for Mrs Fitzgerald of Shalstone House. He spared the chancel much improvement, although its tile pavement and the tile and mosaic reredos of the Evangelists both probably date from the time of the reconstruction.

#### WESTCOTT

**St Mary's Church** was built by G. E. Street in 1866-7. Its stark interior is given some warmth by the use of pale pink brick throughout, while there is a surprise in the chancel in the form of an east wall decorated by pretty tiling bearing the Lord's Prayer and Creed on a cream ground.

#### **Buckinghamshire Roundup**

At the church of St James, **Bierton**, are many fourteenth and fifteenth century floor tiles. Urns and balustrades on the garden front of **Cliveden** were restored in 1985-8 using terracotta by Istock Hathernware.<sup>8</sup> The church of St James, **Great Horwood**, has an opus sectile reredos of the Crucifixion designed by Bladen for Powell's and installed in 1886; there is also a Godwin encaustic tile pavement. The Powell's opus sectile reredos at St Mary's Church, **Hardwick** dates from 1901; its design, by H. J. Strutt, includes six angels with shields. The polygonal chancel added to St John Evangelist, **Lacey Green**, in 1871 by the architect and tile designer J. P. Seddon has brightly coloured floor tiling in red and yellow - complementing the polychromatic brickwork - and green and blue. William Butterfield installed a Minton tile pavement in the chancel of St Michael's Church, **Lavendon**, during restoration in 1858-9. The Powell's opus sectile reredos of the Nativity was installed at **Leckhampstead** church - the Assumption of the Virgin - in 1899; it cost £145. In the sanctuary of St Nicholas Church, **Lillingstone Dayrell**, are several groups of four medieval tiles with relief designs. St Mary's Church, **Mursley** was restored in 1865-7 when the colourful Godwin tile pavement was added. There are colourful Minton tiles in the sanctuary of Holy Trinity Church (1849), **Penn Street**. The chancel of St Mary's Church, Church End, **Pitstone** (now in the care of the Churches Conservation Trust) is floored largely with fourteenth and fifteenth century tiles. St Mary's Church, Church Lane, **Princes Risborough** (restored 1867-8) has a sanctuary pavement by Maw & Co, probably dating from the 1880s; rather more unusual is the mosaic floor beneath the altar, probably also by Maw's. The colourful tiles in the side panels of the reredos (1871) at St Mary's Church, Church Lane, **Wendover** are by Frederick Garrard, while the sanctuary encaustic pavement is by Godwin's. St Laurence's Church, **Winslow**, was restored by John Oldrid Scott in 1883-4, when the richly patterned Godwin chancel pavement was laid.<sup>9</sup>

#### **References**

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2. Philip Brown and Dorothy Brown, 'Glass tiles', *Glazed Expressions*, (1994) 28, pp2-3; D. W. Hadley, 'From Rees mosaic to opus sectile: the development of opaque stained glass', *Glass Technology*, (2004) 45, October, pp192-6.
3. *The Builder*, vol 25, 2nd March 1867.
4. Robert Prescott Walker, 'Conrad Dressler and the Medmenham Pottery', *Journal of the Decorative Arts Society*, (1994) 18, pp50-60.
5. Elizabeth Eames, *English Tilers* (British Museum Press, London, 1992), p58.
6. *Ceramic Industries Journal*, vol 88, February 1979, p10.
7. Miles Green, *Medieval Penn Floor Tiles* (Miles Green, Penn, 2003).
8. Michael Stratton, *The Terracotta Revival* (Victor Gollancz, London, 1993), p222.
9. *The Builder*, vol 48, 10th January 1885, p85.