

CORNWALL

There are no grand ceramic gestures in this part of the world, well away as it is from the major tilemaking areas, although there is a good example of post-medieval Barnstaple tiles at Launcells church. Victorian tile pavements and wall tiles, including Butterfield tiling at Mawgan-in-Pydar, may be found throughout the county, while other highlights are Coade stone decoration at the Egyptian House in Penzance, and Bernard Leach tiles on the tomb of Alfred Wallis at St Ives. Such is the paucity of research on tiles and architectural ceramics in Cornwall that it is hard to suggest anything useful to read which is specific to this neglected county. The *Gazetteer* entry for Cornwall (Kernow) covers the administrative areas of Cornwall County Council and Isles of Scilly Council.

BODMIN

A brilliant blue glazed brick wall bearing the name **Bodmin Hospital** in large, coloured ceramic letters greets visitors to the hospital, which stands in WESTHEATH AVENUE and opened in 2002. The ceramic wall, a product of the Percent for Art scheme, is the work of Camelford-based potter Roger Michell, the hospital's artist in residence.

HAYLE

Near the harbour is an old butcher's shop (1894, architect Samson Hill of Redruth) which is now the **Carnsew Gallery**. Its unusual facade includes a series of high-relief gold and green ceramic panels bearing three-dimensional sheep heads, and full-height Staffordshire-made porch tiling showing a handsome horned cow in a floral cartouche. Another cow's head is the central image of the well-preserved doorway mosaic, while a broad row of geometric encaustic tiles (perhaps by Minton Hollins) separates the shopfront from the pavement. The derelict former **Palace Cinema**, COPPERHOUSE TERRACE, was built around 1900 as a drill hall (St George's Hall) and later converted into one of Cornwall's earliest cinemas. The cinema closed in 1983, but its richly decorative salmon-pink terracotta facade, which features a set of unusual conical finials, is to be incorporated into a new arts centre development.

ISLES OF SCILLY

The **Abbey Garden**, on the island of TRESKO, was created by Augustus Smith, who leased the Isles of Scilly from the Duchy of Cornwall in 1834. Although the islands reverted to the Duchy in 1920, Smith's heirs, the Dorrien-Smith family, still lease Tresco and continue to improve the gardens. The Shell House (1994), a pretty shell grotto designed and made by Lucy Dorrien-Smith, has a shell-themed tile floor, and individual tiles commemorating members of the family can be seen amongst the shells on its internal walls.

KINGSAND

On the edge of Kingsand is a **bus shelter** with a spectacular ceramic interior. Along with highly glazed, colourful tiles by Sarah McCormack are tiles made by schoolchildren, all showing locally-related scenes.

Cawsand

Not far from Kingsand, the **ferry shelter** (1999) in the nearby hamlet of Cawsand is also tiled. Here tiles by Zoe Coles are combined with more work from local schoolchildren.

LAUNCELLS

Rare sixteenth-century Barnstaple relief tiles form the sanctuary pavement of **St Swithin's Church**; the designs include a fleur-de-lys, Tudor rose, pelican and lion. The post-medieval Barnstaple tilers were the last to use relief decoration, producing tiles long after they had become unfashionable elsewhere. The fabric was coarse thus motifs were necessarily bold, and only a clear lead glaze was used; the resulting tiles (many with a reduced grey body) appear olive-green or - if the glaze has oxidised - brown.¹ The designs were created with a wooden stamp, which was placed on the dried tile and struck. Relief tiles were produced at Barnstaple from the late sixteenth century until the early eighteenth century.

PENZANCE

The town's architectural star turn is undoubtedly the **Egyptian House** in CHAPEL STREET, its colourful facade a delicious example of the style popular following Napoleon's 1798 campaign in Egypt (Fig 21). It was built around 1835 and its elevation is a copy of the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly (1812, architect P. F. Robinson); either Robinson or John Foulston, Plymouth's leading architect of the time, may have been responsible for its design. The original purpose of the building, whose facade is heavily enriched with Coade stone, was to act as a museum and geological repository; the Coade ornamentation includes Egyptian figures and winged serpents. To the west of Chapel Street is MORRAB ROAD and the late nineteenth-century **Public Library** (architect Henry White), with a facade displaying much terracotta decoration, including swags, roundels and tiles with foliate motifs; the tiles may have been made at nearby Marazion Marsh, where brickmaking was carried out.

The **Railway Station** lies just east of the town centre, at the north end of WHARF ROAD. A tile mural designed by Cornish ceramicist Genevieve Val Baker - a huge map of Cornwall featuring lighthouses, tin mines and much more - was installed inside the trainshed in 1999; the tiles were made, painted and glazed by local children. Outside the station, a group of artworks (2003) marking the **Penzance Passenger Transport Interchange** includes a pair of oval bench seats with ceramic tops by Teena Gould, the Carmarthenshire ceramicist. These comprise 140 hand-moulded blocks in white clay, with low reliefs of shells, leaves and Celtic patterns decorated with a variety of black and white glazes; similar ceramic inserts can be found on the adjacent planters. The muted colours and mysterious shapes complement the constantly changing seaside light. These benches, together with a pavement map of Cornwall in granite and marble, and twin steel sculptures-cum-signposts, have transformed the previously messy station forecourt into an unexpectedly attractive public space.

QUETHIOCK

The Reverend William Willimott was rector of the **Church of St Hugh of Lincoln** during 1878-88, and was responsible for the appearance of many of its furnishings. He initiated the tiling of the east wall of the chancel, which includes the ten commandments amongst its decorative motifs, and was also in office when the chancel floor was relaid with Minton encaustic tiles in 1878-9; tiles from Webb's Worcester Tileries were laid throughout the remainder of the church at the same time.

ST IVES

Above Porthmeor Beach and not far from the Tate St Ives is the town's **Old Cemetery**, where the primitive artist Alfred Wallis (1855-1942), inspiration of many of the St Ives School, is buried beneath a grave cover of painted stoneware tiles made by Bernard Leach around 1942. The seven-by-three tile grave cover (which tops a low brick tomb) shows a lighthouse and seascape, and describes Wallis as an *Artist & Mariner*.²

Cornwall Roundup

The late fifteenth-century chapel at **Cotehele** (NT), the seat of the Edgcumbe family, has an original green and white tile pavement. There are tiles by Maw & Co at St Peter's Church, **Dobwalls**. At 31 Church Street, **Falmouth** is a shop with an art nouveau relief-tiled stall riser showing fish in grey, blue and green glazes. The floor of **Germoe** church was paved with Bridgwater tiles during its restoration by the priest-architect Ernest Geldart of Essex in 1889-91. The aesthetic movement architect E. W. Godwin designed the fairly plain encaustic pavement in the Church of St Grada (1862), **Grade**; he also designed some of its furnishings.³ Just south-west of **Lostwithiel** church is a butcher's shop whose tiled stall riser proclaims it as Liddicoat's; the name and art deco tulips on its central panel were apparently hand-painted by a local artist, but the flanking panels of floral relief tiles are by Maw & Co. There is a nineteenth-century encaustic tile pavement in the sanctuary of All Saints Church, **Marazion** (1861). St Mawgan's Church, **Mawgan-in-Pydar**, which originated in the thirteenth century, was restored and partly rebuilt in 1860-1 by William Butterfield; his work included typically colourful tiling on the north and east walls of the chancel. Pretty blue and white six-tile panels of boats on Stevenson's buildings in **Newlyn** identify the company's fishing fleet; the tilemaker is Peter Ellery. The Church of St Probus and St Grace, **Probus** has the tallest tower in Cornwall; in its cell-like chancel is a substantial Powell's opus sectile reredos, dating from 1886 and showing the Crucifixion.⁴ St Anthony's Church, **St Anthony-in-Roseland**, was rebuilt around 1850 by Samuel Spry, to whose family home - the Place - it is connected; restoration included the installation of Minton floor tiles. Unusual features of St Michael's Church, **St Michael Caerhays**, are the attractive commandment tables of nineteenth-century tiles. St Pynnochus Church, **St Pinnock** has Maw & Co floor tiling while St Tudius Church, **St Tudy** has a Powell's tiled altar surround dating from 1874. There is a Powell's tile and

mosaic reredos, probably installed in 1873, at St Wenna Church, **St Wenn**. The Godwin encaustic tile pavement at St Sancredus Church, **Sancreed** includes many of the firm's common motifs - fish, fleur-de-lys, Tudor rose - as well as a four-tile group showing a jaunty lion. At St Sidinius Church, **Sithney**, the encaustic tile sanctuary pavement is mainly buff and brown designs, but there is also a black tile initialled *JL* in memory of the vicar John Lidman. There is an excellent terracotta panel by George Tinworth of *Via Crucis* in the north choir aisle of **Truro** Cathedral; there are also a few gothic revival tiles in St Mary's aisle.

References

1. Elizabeth Eames, *English Medieval Tiles* (British Museum Publications, London, 1985).
2. Michael Tooby, *Tate St Ives* (Tate Gallery Publications, London, 1993), pp34-5.
3. Catherine Arbuthnott, *E. W. Godwin and Ceramics*, in *E. W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer*, Susan Weber Soros, Editor, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1999) pp297-311.
4. Dennis W. Hadley, *James Powell & Sons: A listing of opus sectile, 1847-1973*, (2001).