

SOMERSET

There are excellent thirteenth century tiles to be seen at Cleeve Abbey (Washford) and Muchelney Church (from its adjoining Abbey), but the great strength of Somerset lies in its Victorian church tiles. Research by Philip and Dorothy Brown has provided detailed information on the many churches in the county with encaustic tile pavements and also wall tiling, which appears to have been especially popular in Somerset; even with an extended roundup section, there are many more churches with substantial ceramic interest than it is possible to list here. Hornblotton Church, with its rare - in an ecclesiastical context - Aesthetic Movement interior, is the outstanding example of wall tiling with its De Morgan reredos. Local tile production is represented by Sir Edmund Elton's turn-of-the-century Sunflower Pottery at Clevedon; some of the few examples of Eltonware in architectural use are the Jubilee Clock Tower at Clevedon and East Clevedon Church. From the twentieth century, one of the county's highlights is the seminal 1931 mural by Sylvia Packard at the Royal High School, Bath, which was followed by the formation of the tile manufacturers Packard & Ord. From the postwar period, in what might be seen as a continuation of the anglo-catholic tone set by Tyntesfield's ornate Victorian chapel, comes the ceramic triptych (1956) by the artist Adam Kossowski in the Sacred Heart Chapel of Downside Abbey, Stratton-on-the-Fosse. The county's ceramic tradition is currently being upheld by several contemporary makers including Rosie Smith (based in Weston-super-Mare), Bronwyn Williams-Ellis (Bath), and Philippa Threlfall (Wells). Suggested reading: Philip Brown, TACS Tour Notes *Somerset* (1995). The *Gazetteer* entry for Somerset covers the administrative areas of Bath & North East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council and Somerset County Council.

BARROW GURNEY

Barrow Minchin Nunnery was founded around the end of the twelfth century on land about a mile west of Barrow Gurney. Following the Dissolution the site was eventually sold and the domestic buildings converted into a residence, Barrow Court, which was acquired in 1881 by Antony Gibbs of Tyntesfield House, about three miles to the north west (see below, Wraxall). The estate was sold on to Antony's younger brother, Henry Martin Gibbs (1850-1928) in 1883 and the house carefully restored by the gentleman architect Henry Woodyer, who was already known to the Gibbs family. Woodyer also restored the parish church, **St Mary and St Edmund**, BARROW COURT LANE, which originated in the twelfth century but had been mostly rebuilt in 1825. Woodyer's work, carried out during 1886-91, resulted in the creation of an elaborate, neo-medieval interior including the Gibbs family chapel in the south aisle; a covered passage connects it to Barrow Court.¹ The altar in the Gibbs chapel has a ceramic inlay.

By 1897, the only remaining part of Barrow Minchin Nunnery was a stone barn, but during work on the grounds west of the church an area of early fourteenth century Wessex tiling was found. This appeared to be the covering of

a tomb, possibly that of an unnamed prioress who died in 1316. The tiles, many bearing coats of arms, were left exposed and began to deteriorate, so in 1911 they were relaid and a small building was erected to shelter the pavement. The tiles were rediscovered in 1995, beneath matting in a rarely used room of the church.²

BATH

Sylvia Packard (1881-1962), founder with Rosalind Ord of the tile manufacturers Packard & Ord, later Marlborough Tiles, created her first tile mural at the **Royal High School**, LANSDOWN ROAD. Packard retired from her post as art teacher at the school in 1929 (she was succeeded by Ord), and immediately began work on designs for the mural, which was to cover a wall joining the Memorial Hall (opened 1925) and the domestic economy wing (opened 1930).³ The hand-painted figurative mural, installed in 1931 and almost seventy feet long, represented the occupations of the 'Virtuous Woman' of *Proverbs* 31: 'her price is far above rubies'; the school magazine called it 'the Bayeux Tapestry of our day'. Mural painting had once again become popular between the wars, and the scale of this mural, as well as the use of staff and students as life models, places the work directly in the arts and crafts tradition, although the imagery is rather more modern in style. It comprises nearly 1,000 tiles, probably Carter's blanks which were fired in Poole. The mural is of great significance in the history of twentieth century British tile manufacturing, as it led to the start of the Packard & Ord collaboration around 1933, but was in poor condition by the mid-1990s.⁴ There is no public access to the mural, which it is hoped will eventually be restored and housed in the Holburne Museum of Art, Great Pulteney Street, Bath.

Nearly a mile south of the school, right in centre of Bath, is **St John's R. C. Church** (1861-3), SOUTH PARADE, which has a Minton tile pavement. Continuing south, in **Perrymead R. C. Cemetery**, off BLIND LANE, is the mortuary chapel of the Eyre family (1861, architect C. F. Hansom), which has a porch pavement incorporating Eyre armorial tiles by Minton's.

Twerton

The ceramicist Bronwyn Williams-Ellis designed a brilliantly colourful floral-themed tile installation for the jacuzzi and shower areas of the RNID's **Poolemead Centre**, WATERY LANE, in 1997.

CHARLTON MACKRELL

St Mary's Church was heavily restored around 1847 by Benjamin Ferrey; the chancel has a lavish Minton polychrome encaustic tile pavement including many heraldic symbols. Nearby is **Charlton Mackrell School** (1852), built in memory of the Revd. W. T. Parr Brymer, who died in 1852 and set up a trust for the school in his will. The main school hall and an adjoining room have unusual block-printed dust-pressed wall tile decoration by Minton Hollins, including plain tiles in white, buff and red, patterned tiles in red/white and blue/white, and horizontal strings of texts.

CHEDZOY

The tile pavement in the chancel of **St Mary's Church** (restored 1884-5) combines inlaid tiles designed by Carter, Johnson, & Co with plain tiles having a glistening, almost scintillating, glaze. The tiles were chosen by the architect Spencer Slingsby Stallwood (1842/3-1922).⁵

CLEVEDON

On the seafront, almost opposite Clevedon Pier in ALEXANDRA ROAD, is the splendid little Doulton glazed stoneware **drinking fountain**, erected by Mr T. Sheldon in 1895 and restored in 1992 (Fig 234). This colourful fountain was one of a number of standard designs available from Doulton's, and is marked 'Doulton Lambeth' near its bottom right corner. Inland, over the hill and down in the commercial centre of Clevedon, all life revolves around the Eltonware-decorated **Jubilee Clock Tower** in THE TRIANGLE. It was presented to the town in 1897 by the local artist potter Sir Edmund Elton of Clevedon Court to mark the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Sir Edmund began experimenting with mosaics in 1879 and was producing pottery, known as Eltonware, at his Sunflower Pottery by 1881. The Jubilee Clock displays a roundel of Father Time and strings of rich ornament featuring birds, beasts and fishes in deep greens and reds.

East Clevedon

Sir Edmund Elton's ancestral home, Clevedon Court (NT), a fourteenth century manor house wedged into the hillside just beyond the eastern edge of the town, has a good collection of Eltonware. About half a mile west of the house is **All Saints Church** (1860), ALL SAINTS LANE, built and endowed by Dame Rhoda Elton and Sir Arthur Hallam Elton. The tiling on its baptistery wall appears to be Eltonware.

DUNSTER

During G. E. Street's restoration of **St George's Church** in 1875-7, inlaid medieval tiles were relaid in a small chapel. The east end of the church was paved by Godwin's with a lavish arrangement of their own plain and inlaid tiles, some of which were copies of medieval tiles found on the site.⁶

EAST WOODLANDS

St Katherine's Church, Woodlands, on the ridge west of Longleat Park, was mostly rebuilt by the architect John Loughborough Pearson in 1880. Its tile pavement includes an enlarged version of the Bishop Ken monogram tile usually found as a single four-inch or six-inch tile, but here designed for multiple tile settings.

FELTON

St Katherine's Church (just east of Bristol International Airport) was designed by the Revd. J. Hardman. There are polychrome inlaid tiles on the face of the stone chancel screen, as well as memorial tiles, some painted and some inlaid.

FROME

St John's Church, BATH STREET was almost totally rebuilt in 1844 (chancel) and 1852-66. Its fine anglo-catholic interior has an assortment of tile pavements, some including a twelve-inch polychrome tile bearing the monogram of Bishop Ken

(d1711). These tiles also cover the grave of Bishop Ken, which is in the churchyard immediately east of the church; its canopy was designed by Benjamin Ferrey and added in 1844. Also in Bath Street, at number 19, is a good **butcher's shop** with a tiled facade dating from the 1920s.

HORNBLUTTON

St Peter's Church was rebuilt in 1872-4 to the designs of the architect Sir Thomas Graham Jackson (Fig 235). Its Aesthetic Movement interior is spectacular, with walls covered in pink sgraffito work by Heywood Sumner and contemporary furnishings decorated with natural forms such as sunflowers. Sumner (1853-1940) was an artist, illustrator and wallpaper designer who decorated eleven churches with sgraffito between 1887 and 1897.

The chancel pavement is an elaborate mosaic of opaque glass, some elements of which are rectangular pieces in two sizes: a 4½ inch square with a running interlacing pattern in white on a dull red background, and a rectangle a little over 6x8 inches which borders the choir pavement and is decorated in blue and grey with paired fish. The reredos and east wall have tiles by William De Morgan: the central cross is made up of strips of tile glazed in red lustre, and around this are tiles painted in blue, white and yellow with leaves and flowers or the sacred monogram and, at the sides, unusual figurative panels of the Evangelists in mostly blue and white. The accounts for the rebuilding of the church contain bills from James Powell & Sons in 1873 and 1874 for the 'Chancel pavement in opaque glass', and a bill from William de Morgan for 'Execution on earthenware of Reredos painting for Hornblotton Church'.⁷

MUCHELNEY

The present remains of **Muchelney Abbey** (EH) date mostly from the twelfth century, although the best-preserved element, the Abbot's Lodging, was completed in 1539. There are a few thirteenth and fourteenth century tiles still *in situ* at the Abbey, but a more impressive display may be found at the adjoining parish church of **St Peter and St Paul**.⁸ Near the font are two re-set arrangements (concentric circles) of mid-thirteenth century tiles found in the cloisters of the Abbey during the 1880s (Fig 236). The tiles were probably made by tilers who had worked on Henry III's new chapel at Clarendon Palace before moving on to Somerset.⁹

NYNEHEAD

Inside **All Saints Church** are two plaques of the Virgin and Child attributed to the Florentine della Robbia workshop, one sited near the former rood stair, the other in the south aisle. They were given to the church by the Revd. John Sanford, vicar of Nynehead, resident of Florence and a notable art collector; the Sanford family home was Nynehead Court. In addition, the reredos includes two Powell's opus sectile panels dating from 1881-2.

PRISTON

The attractive east wall tiling at the **Church of St Luke and St Andrew** comprises four nine-tile groups, two either side of the stone reredos (which dates

from after 1863), each showing a multicoloured angel, above a dado of mainly floral patterned tiles. They are painted over-glaze and are probably the work of a church decorating company, quite likely Heaton, Butler & Bayne, the London stained glass house which is known to have produced tiles for churches and is said to have been responsible for the stained glass of St Luke and St Andrew's post-1869 east window.¹⁰

STOGUMBER

St Mary's Church was restored in 1873-5 by the architect J. D. Sedding; the cost of £2,400 was borne by Prebendary Edward Jones, vicar of Stogumber during 1871-1907 and a follower of William Morris. The design of the chancel wall tiling is attributable to Sedding, although Jones was responsible for the stencilled decoration of the roof and walls; the chancel floor is also tiled.¹¹

STRATTON-ON-THE-FOSSE

Downside Abbey, also a school, stands just to the west of Stratton-on-the-Fosse; it occupies the former Mount Pleasant estate at Downside, which was bought by the Benedictine community in 1814. Extensions were made to the existing Downside House from 1823, then new and larger buildings including part of the church were erected from 1872. The present chancel dates from 1901-5 and the nave from around 1923-5; the 166' high tower was completed in 1938. In the Sacred Heart Chapel, immediately to the right of the Lady Chapel, is a colourful ceramic relief triptych by Adam Kossowski installed in 1956. The central and smallest section, above the altar, shows the crucifixion, while the two adjoining parts combine inscriptions, four small reliefs and larger pictorial panels.

WASHFORD

The Cistercian foundation of **Cleeve Abbey** (EH) dates from 1198, although the remaining buildings date from between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Abbey had extensive tile pavements, laid from the mid-thirteenth century, when locally-made tiles were used to pave the east end of the church, to the early fourteenth century.¹² The major visible pavement is that of the former frater (refectory), which may have been laid as early as the 1270s; it was relaid during the 1960s (Fig 237). This Wessex pavement includes large (about 8" square) heraldic tiles bearing the arms of England, Cornwall and de Clare, probably made to commemorate the 1272 marriage of Henry III's nephew Edmund of Cornwall to Margaret de Clare.

WELLS

The thirteenth century floor tiles relaid in the Corpus Christi Chapel (north quire aisle) of **Wells Cathedral** show heraldic images associated with Richard of Cornwall (1209-72), younger brother of Henry III, including the coats of arms of the Count of Poitou and the Clare family. On a rather larger scale are the early Minton encaustic tile pavements in the (partly carpeted) quire and Lady Chapel. The quire pavement comprises diagonally-set 36-tile blocks, formed of either single designs or nine 4-tile groups, with the dais pavement including monogrammed and fleur-de-lys designs. The Lady Chapel has an unusual

pavement arrangement based on an eight-pointed star, with letter tiling on three step risers and roundels of the evangelists.

Immediately east of the Cathedral in TOR STREET is the terracotta workshop of **Black Dog of Wells** (set up by Philippa Threlfall and Kennedy Collings in the 1960s), with a Threlfall-designed ceramic relief in the gable end dating from around 1999.

WESTON-SUPER-MARE

The brutal **Odeon Cinema** (1935, architect T. Cecil Howitt) stands plumb in the centre of Weston-super-Mare on the corner of LOCKING ROAD and Walliscote Road. This huge structure is made up from rectangular forms topped by a tower whose flat roof is supported by twelve stubby columns. The whole is clad in faience by Shaws of Darwen, all buff with the exception of four thin parallel green bands tracking around the top of the facade.¹³

With the exception of some minor sites, such as tiled stall risers and the like, the remainder of Weston's ceramic locations are modern and produced by local tile decorator Rosie Smith, who undertook a series of commissions for Weston's public buildings beginning in the mid 1980s. Smith's work normally involves the production of large-scale tile panels using the painstaking technique of building up colours with on-glaze enamels applied over several firings to standard white glazed tiles; the result is akin to a watercolour painting. At the **Winter Gardens Conference Centre**, on the seafront at ROYAL PARADE, are five of her tile panels of panoramic landscapes (1991), while just inland at the **North Somerset Museum**, BURLINGTON STREET, is a series of three panels (1986) by Smith showing the historical development of Weston's swimming pools. In GROVE PARK, on the northern edge of the town, is **Jill's Garden**, created in 2001 in memory of the murdered television presenter and journalist Jill Dando, who grew up in Weston; it features a nine-tile panel by Rosie Smith on the theme of forget-me-nots.

Back in the town centre is the **Churchill Sports Centre**, CHURCHILL GROVE, where a 1994 refurbishment of the swimming pool included the addition of over 1,600 of Smith's hand-stencilled tiles on a theme of the 'formal garden'. Out in the southern suburb of Uphill, in the main entrance of the **Weston General Hospital** (1986), GRANGE ROAD, is a tile panel by Rosie Smith showing the 1928 Queen Alexandra Memorial Hospital; there is another Smith panel, of Weston's Winter Gardens, in the outpatients waiting area. The hospital's Long Fox Unit (1992) has a large tile scheme developed by Smith in collaboration with its architect, David Gould of Bristol's Kendall Kingscott Partnership; there are twelve works in all, mainly seascapes and landscapes, with border tiles having a common colour theme reflected in the palette used by the architect throughout the unit. Finally, in the main reception area of the Quantockhead Rehabilitation Unit (1993) is a Smith tile panel showing a view of Weston's promenade.

WEST QUANTOXHEAD

The **Church of St Ethel Dreda** (or St Audrey) was put up in 1856 and designed by the architect John Norton (1823-1904), best known for his lucrative country house practice although he was also involved, with his partner Philip Masey, in a series of rather shady attempts to build seaside winter gardens during the 1870s. The Minton encaustic pavement in the chancel includes tiles with coats of arms of the Aclands, for whom the church was built; Norton also designed their nearby mansion, St Audries.¹⁴

WRAXALL

Tyntesfield House (NT), just east of Wraxall in a beautiful setting overlooking the Yeo Valley, was extensively remodelled by John Norton in 1863-5 for the successful merchant William Gibbs (1790-1875), who made his fortune in the guano trade. The tiled pavements of the porch and entrance corridor probably date from the 1860s, although they could have been added during alterations made by the architect Henry Woodyer in 1887-90 for William's son Antony Gibbs (1841-1907), which included installing new floors throughout the house. Off the entrance corridor is the library, which has Minton-tiled window seats. The main ceramic interest of Tyntesfield is its magnificent chapel, added in 1873-5 and designed by Arthur Blomfield. Gibbs, an enthusiastic high churchman, had already funded the construction of several new churches as well as contributing to the restoration of Exeter and Bristol Cathedrals; Butterfield's Keble College Chapel (1873-6), Oxford, was built entirely at his expense. The stone-vaulted Tyntesfield chapel is very different from Keble, but still strongly anglo-catholic, with ornate decoration including Powell's mosaic and opus sectile work, and mosaics by Salviati & Co (designed by Henry Wooldridge) at the east end. Also in the chapel is one of the first opus sectile panels produced by Powell's, a *Head of Christ*, which was made in 1864 and sold to Gibbs in 1865. Outside, in the Old Rose Garden, are two summerhouses, both in poor condition and with internal pale green and floral glazed wall tiling, probably by Minton's.

YEOVIL

There are several installations by Rosie Smith, a tile decorator based in Weston-super-Mare, at **Yeovil District Hospital**, HIGHER KINGSTON. The Queensway Day Hospital (1995) has tile panels which act as entrance signs and show images of the countryside, while in the main hospital are five panels of tiles (1996) with the winning designs from a children's art competition. The reception area of the Children's Unit has a tile scheme (1998) by Smith incorporating delightful flying pigs, and more tiling in the adjacent roof garden shows views of Yeovil.

Somerset Roundup

The nave aisles of St John Baptist, **Ashbrittle** are laid with a crazy paving of mixed Victorian inlaid tiles. The tiled stall riser of the butcher's at 9 High Street, **Axbridge** has a blue bull's head at its centre. There is a nineteenth century tin-glazed tile mural of a biblical scene at Barrington Court (NT), **Barrington**; the tiles are probably Portuguese. The east wall of St Michael's Church, **Brent Knoll**

is decorated with a strange mixture of tiles.¹⁵ The tile pavement, perhaps by Maw's, at St Mary's Church, **Bridgwater** was probably laid in 1878 and is unusual for its inclusion of line-impressed tiles in a region without medieval examples of this type. St Mary's Church, **Cannington** has an encaustic tile pavement in the chancel and a Powell's opus sectile reredos (1893) of *Christ in Glory*, which includes portraits of its donors, Mr and Mrs Philip and Joanna Pleydell Bouverie; the cartoon was by E. Penwarden. Holy Trinity Church, **Chantry** (1846, Scott & Moffat) has an encaustic tile pavement throughout the chancel. St Mary Magdalen Church, **Chewton Mendip** has Victorian east wall tiling including Maw's majolica. St Mary's Church, **Clatworthy** has excellent tile pavements by the Architectural Pottery Co. St Thomas Church, **Cothelstone** has a nave encaustic pavement and a Maw's mosaic of curvilinear plain tiles in its chancel.¹⁶ Christ Church (1839), **Coxley** has pavements of plain and inlaid tiles with notably rich orange glaze; they were made by Craven Dunnill and probably laid in 1884.¹⁷ The Powell's opus sectile and glass tile reredos at St John's Church, **Cutcombe** dates from 1896. St Michael's Church, **East Coker** has a reredos including lettered tiles and symbols of the Evangelists. The east wall decoration of All Saints Church, **East Pennard** includes mosaic along with plain and inlaid tiles in soft colours. Some thirteenth century two-colour tiles still remain *in situ* at the Abbey in **Glastonbury**; they are protected by hinged wooden boxes. St John Baptist, **Heathfield** has majolica tiles on its east wall, possibly dating from the 1870 restoration by the Exeter architect Edward Ashworth.¹⁸ Striking majolica tiles flank the reredos of St Peter's Church, **Huish Champflower**. St Mary's Church (restored 1893), **Leigh Woods** has lavish Godwin tile pavements. The Church of St Peter and St Paul, **Maperton** and St Catherine's Church, **Montacute** have very similar east wall tiling including Minton roundels; they were restored by Henry Hall in 1869 and 1870-1 respectively.¹⁹ The Tesco store (2002) on Stockway North, **Nailsea** has a pair of large ceramic murals by Ned Heywood which show historical scenes of the local glass industry. The tiles, including some with a large angel motif, on the curtained east wall of **Norton St Philip** parish church probably date from its 1847-8 restoration by George Gilbert Scott. St Andrew's Church, **Old Cleeve** has inlaid medieval tiles around the font (and framed on the wall) as well as rich, possibly Minton, encaustic pavements with designs unlike those of the medieval tiles. The children's pool (1996) at the Parish Wharf Leisure Centre, **Portishead** has ceramics designed by Rosie Smith on a nautical theme including pirates, sea creatures and hidden treasure. St Barnabas Church, **Queen Camel** has an elaborate chancel tile pavement (1886), probably by Godwin, and a lavish reredos of around 1907 with a Powell's opus sectile panel (Fig 238) and glass tiling (Fig 239).²⁰ Many worn decorated medieval floor tiles, some with unusual designs, have been relaid in the main doorway of St Michael's Church, **Raddington**. Some Chamberlain tiles from a larger scheme survive around the font at Christ Church, **Redhill**.²¹ The *Central Somerset Mural* (1978) by Philippa Threlfall and Kennedy Collings occupies the wall of the High

Street walkway connecting a car park and a supermarket in **Street**; in shows local architectural and landscape features in ceramics and slate. On the floor of the chancel at the Church of St Decuman, **Watchet** are several medieval tiles, relaid in 1886; others are framed on the north aisle wall. St Mary's Church, **Witham Friary** was rebuilt in 1875 by the architect William White; there are good Maw encaustic pavements. St Mary's Church, **Yarlington** was mostly rebuilt in 1878; its opus sectile reredos of the Annunciation dates from 1921.²²

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