

probably of 1151,<sup>51</sup> in which King Stephen purchased the loyalty of Ranulph, earl of Chester, who vacillated constantly between the two leading parties of the Anarchy. The charter gave Ranulph leave to "strengthen one of his towers in the Castle of Lincoln" and to hold it until the king gave him possession of Tickhill Castle; the earl was then to be allowed to retain possession of "the tower which his mother [the Countess Lucy, who died c. 1136] had fortified when she was constable of Lincoln Castle".<sup>52</sup> Two towers were thus already in existence in the castle by 1151, though not necessarily the two at present under discussion. (It is just possible that the small tower now standing in the NE. corner of the castle (Cobb Hall) had an origin earlier than its present 13th-century appearance, but this seems unlikely); nor does the existence of a tower necessarily imply more than a surface-built structure. The phrasing of the charter appears to show that the Lucy Tower (and presumably the name still attaches to the same structure) and the tower that Ranulph was to fortify were not one and the same. The implication seems to be, therefore, in the state of our present knowledge, that Ranulph's reaction to the licence given him by the charter was to raise a motte in the SE. corner of the castle. The construction of such a watch-tower over the approach up-hill from the city seems a wise strategical move in view of the steadily worsening relations between castle and city caused largely by the military manoeuvrings between Stephen and Ranulph.

It is impossible at present to say anything of the superstructure associated with the motte; it may possibly have been of wood, as Rigold suggested for the Totnes example. A brief examination of the present structure seems to suggest that the second phase of building is represented by the continuous E. to W. cross-wall, incorporating two round-headed arches, with the working of the stone carried out in short vertical lines. This wall, as all the others in the present structure, rests on the ground surface slightly above the level of the surviving top of the masonry core (some parts of the later, 14th-century, work sit directly on top of the core wall). It may be suggested that this phase of construction is part of a programme of reconstruction following the accession of Henry II, who appears not to have allowed any of the earl of Chester's claims to the castle.<sup>53</sup> The W. arch of this second phase, the entrance to the present tower staircase, is apparently cut by refacing of the exterior, attributed to the 14th century on the basis of the style of its pointed arches and the head corbels on which they rest. Most of the present exterior of the tower seems to belong to this period, except where it has been added to and buttressed within the last two centuries. Any analysis of the structure above ground-floor level is beyond the scope of the present note; and many of the ideas here mooted will only be satisfactorily established by further extensive excavation of other parts of the castle.

NICHOLAS REYNOLDS

#### A MEDIEVAL TILE PAVEMENT FROM SWORDS CASTLE, CO. DUBLIN (PL XVI, A; FIGS. 80-1)

The castle of Swords, about 13 km. N. of Dublin city,<sup>54</sup> was built probably around the beginning of the 13th century by John Comyn, the Anglo-Norman archbishop of Dublin. For over a century it served as the manorial residence for the archbishops, until

<sup>51</sup> Surviving only in a poor summary dating from the reign of Edward II, reprinted in C. W. Foster (ed.) *Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral of Lincoln*, 1 (Hereford, 1931), 287-8.

<sup>52</sup> "... Quo facto idem rex concessit firmare vnam de turribus suis de castro Lincoln'. de qua comes habebit dominium donec idem rex liberet ei castrum de Tichehilla tunc remanebit eidem regi turris civitatis Lincoln'. Et dicto comiti remanebit turris sua. quam mater sua. firmavit cum constabulacione castelli Lincoln' . . ."

<sup>53</sup> Brown and Colvin, however (op. cit. in note 47), note that Henry II spent very little on the maintenance of the castle. £13. 6s. 8d. was spent in the reign of Richard I on "putting the castle in order" and £82 on "strengthening the bailey". A further £20 was spent in 1199-1200 on the repair of the "new tower" (which ?) and of the castle gaol.

<sup>54</sup> The site lies in the townland of Townparks, parish of Swords, barony of Nethercross, co. Dublin, O.S. 6 in. sheet 11, Nat. Grid Ref. C 184470.

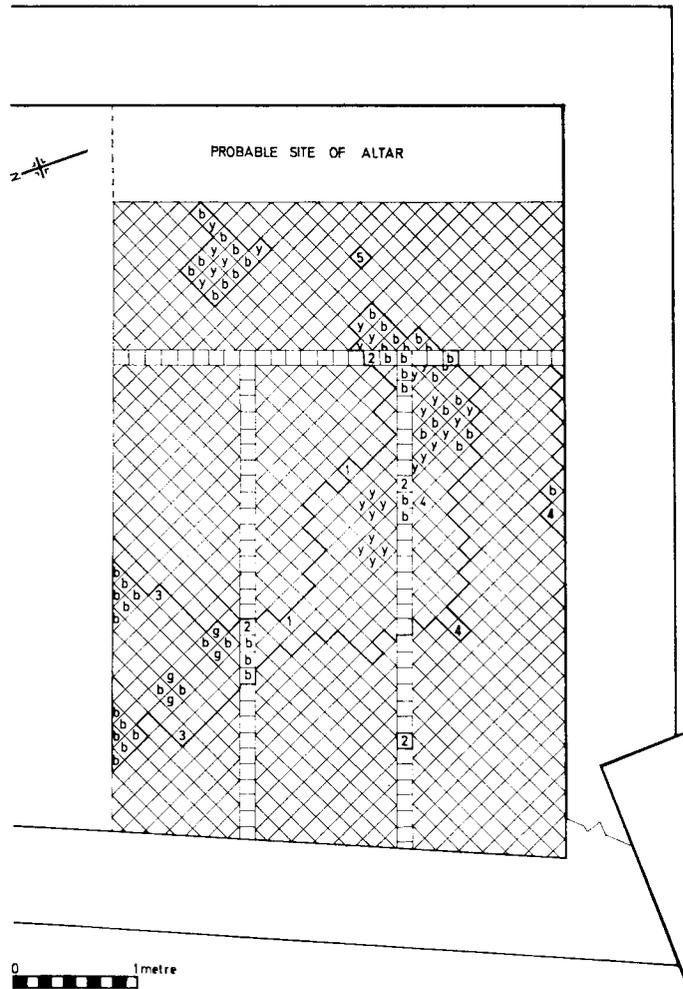


FIG. 80

## SWORDS CASTLE, CO. DUBLIN

Plan, partly reconstructed, of tile pavement. Numbers 1 to 5 refer to FIG. 81.  
 b = black, g = green, y = yellow (pp. 207 ff.)

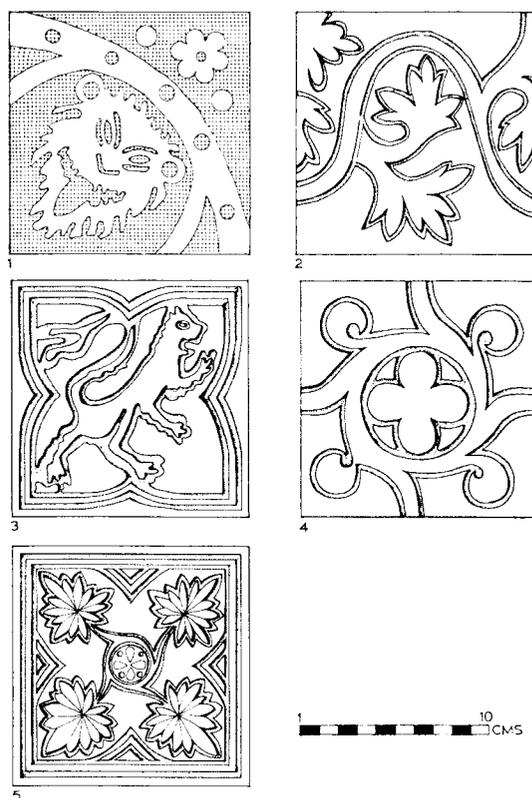


FIG. 81

## SWORDS CASTLE, CO. DUBLIN

Tile patterns used in pavement. Sc. 1: 4 (p. 208)

in 1324 under Archbishop de Bicknor the manor was moved to Tallaght on the S. side of the city. From an inquisition taken in 1326 and recorded in the document known as the *Liber Niger Alani*<sup>55</sup> it is clear that after the transfer to Tallaght the buildings at Swords fell quickly into ruin. They were probably repaired and in part refurbished for the use of a constable and his staff until at least the 15th century. The site is now National Monument no. 340 in the care of the Commissioners of Public Works. In the late autumn of 1971 a small excavation was undertaken at the castle by the National Parks and Monuments Branch of the Office of Public Works under my direction. The excavations were confined to the tower and adjoining chapel, which lie E. of the castle gateway, and to a small area in the SE. angle of the curtain wall. In the latter the almost complete ground plan of a small chamber came to light, within which lay the remains still *in situ* of a decorated, medieval tile pavement (PL. XVI, A).

The pavement lay concealed beneath an accumulation of roofing-slate and rubble and because of its isolated position had escaped total destruction from modern gardening. Where the tiles were missing, the mortar bed in which they had been set still survived

<sup>55</sup> 'Calendar of Archbishop Allen's Registrar', *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, extra vol. (1949), 175.

so that it was possible to determine the approximate original extent of the pavement. It measured 5 by 3.5 m. extending to both the S. and W. walls of the small chamber. Its N. limits were clearly defined by a row of half-tiles. The pavement was composed of four separate panels divided by a border of single tiles. Three of the panels ran from E. to W., while the fourth was placed at the E. end at right angles to the other panels. This eastern panel was separated from the E. wall by a band of loose dark soil on which a wooden or stone dais had clearly rested. The overall impression was, therefore, of a small pavement laid out on an E. and W. axis to form the floor of a private oratory.

The individual tiles are of a standard size averaging 127 mm. sq. and 20 mm. thick. They are laid diagonally in relation to the borders with triangular-shaped half-tiles completing each panel. None of the panels had escaped undamaged, the E. panel having suffered the most, and many of the surviving tiles, particularly in the central panel, show traces of heavy wear and loss of glaze (FIG. 80). Two types of tile, inlaid and line-impressed, were used by the paviour. The central panel is of inlaid tiles depicting a lion's face within a quatrefoil surrounded by a circular frame (FIG. 81, no. 1), laid down in units of four. The lead glaze used on these tiles contained a small amount of copper so that the yellow is streaked with green. The remaining three panels and the border are of line-impressed tiles. The border consists of black tiles with a running vine-leaf motif (FIG. 81, no. 2). The N. panel is of both green and black tiles with a lion rampant within a double quatrefoil frame (FIG. 81, no. 3). In the S. panel two contrasting colours, yellow and black, are used for a simple quatrefoil within a circle containing springing scrolls (FIG. 81, no. 4). Black and yellow tiles are also present in the remains of the E. panel. Here the lightly impressed design shows a foliate motif springing from a central quatrefoil design, the whole surrounded by a quatrefoil within a square frame (FIG. 81, no. 5). The use of the two distinct types of tile, coupled with the manner in which the contrasting colours of the line-impressed tiles were alternated in chequer-board fashion in the N. panel and in alternate rows in the S. panel, not only adds to the decorative effect but gives the pavement a fine polychrome appearance.

The Swords pavement, although incomplete, is of considerable importance as few, if any, of the decorated medieval floor-tiles found in Ireland have been left *in situ*. For several reasons connected with restoration the pavements uncovered during the last century at the cathedrals of Christ Church and St Patrick's, Dublin, were removed and only minute portions relaid as part of a modern tiled floor. A number of Cistercian abbeys, such as Mellifont (Co. Louth), St Mary's, Dublin, and Duiske (Co. Kilkenny), have also yielded quantities of medieval tiles, some of which must have been discovered *in situ* but removed. My excavations at the Augustinian priory of Kells (Co. Kilkenny) have produced many floor-tiles, including some new designs, but only a few tiles have been found *in situ*. Small collections or individual specimens are known from other Cistercian and Augustinian houses and from a few medieval parish churches in Dublin and the adjacent counties.<sup>56</sup>

From a preliminary survey of the available evidence it appears that the following types of tile were used in Irish pavements: inlaid; line-impressed; mosaic (both inlaid and line-impressed); relief; and plain glazed. Line-impressed and inlaid designs were by far the most popular. Initial distribution plots show that their occurrence is confined to the territories acquired and held by the Anglo-Normans in Leinster and to some extent in Ulster. The designs and probably some of the actual tiles were imported from England, the most likely source being the W. midlands around Chester, which had a considerable trade with Ireland in early medieval times and where good parallels exist for some of the patterns used on the Irish tiles. It is almost certain, however, that

<sup>56</sup> Much of the earlier material can be found in T. Oldham, *Ancient Irish Pavement Tiles* (Dublin, n.d.), and in W. Frazer, *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, xxiii (1893), 357-66, xxiv (1894), 136-8, and xxv (1895), 171-5.

within a relatively short time of their introduction a local tile industry using local clays grew up around Dublin and Kilkenny.<sup>57</sup>

In considering a possible date for the pavement at Swords there are difficulties in the almost total lack of evidence from Ireland and the fact that comparable types and designs in England are in general not closely datable.<sup>58</sup> The internal evidence from the site itself where there is a probable *terminus post quem* of 1324 appears to indicate a date in the first quarter of the 14th century. The excavations at Mellifont Abbey yielded some evidence for the use of inlaid tiles in the late 13th or early 14th century in Ireland.<sup>59</sup> On the other hand the designs on the line-impressed tiles in the Swords pavement are generally ascribed to the earliest to the end of the 14th century in England, a dating also applied to the tiles from near Chester. Further, a number of fragments of line-impressed mosaic were found within the chapel at Swords, probably of the early 14th century. These fragments were associated with a group of line-impressed tiles similar to those used in the pavement. As this material only occurred at the E. end of the chapel they probably represent the remains of a small mosaic pavement laid out around the altar. Line-impressed mosaic in England is quite securely dated first half of the 14th century;<sup>60</sup> its appearance in Ireland could be placed as early as the beginning of that century. The evidence from Swords suggests that the line-impressed tiles found there may be contemporary with the mosaic and thus belong to the early 14th century.

If it is proved that tiles of the type found at Swords can be dated early 14th century then it seems likely that the room in which the pavement was found was the archbishop's private oratory. If the tiles cannot be earlier than 1326, it seems that more structural work than has hitherto been thought was carried out on the domestic buildings at Swords after it ceased to be the archbishop's residence. It is apparent that the defences were modernized in the 15th century, so that it is possible that modernization of the domestic quarters was undertaken at the same time.<sup>61</sup>

Pending further excavation and conservation the pavement at Swords has been provided with temporary but effective protection against the weather and possible interference.

THOMAS FANNING

#### DECORATED 14TH-CENTURY TILES AT NORTHILL CHURCH, BEDFORDSHIRE (FIGS. 82-4)

Northill is the only parish church in Bedfordshire which contains a large number of early 14th-century line-impressed and incised floor-tiles *in situ*. They are laid in a pavement in the vestry, which is N. of the chancel. A piscina on the S. wall of the vestry indicates that it was originally a chapel. The pavement has almost certainly been relaid and is associated with Victorian tiles.

Line-impressed and incised tiles have been found in Bedfordshire in a limited area extending 11 km. SE. from the centre of Bedford, Northill being the easternmost site. The area is bounded on the N. by the R. Ouse and on the E. by the R. Ivel and its tributaries. Most line-impressed and incised tiles from Bedfordshire have been found

<sup>57</sup> In Co. Kilkenny, both at St Canice's and Kells priories, evidence for the manufacture of tiles in the form of fused fragments has been noted.

<sup>58</sup> During recent excavations at Norton Priory, Runcorn (Cheshire), P. Greene has recovered tiles of this type and has kindly sent copies of the designs to me. When his work on the site is finished more exact dating of the English material will be available.

<sup>59</sup> See L. de Paor, *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 68c2 (1969), 131 and 152.

<sup>60</sup> E. Eames and L. Keen, *Jnl. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, xxxv (1972), 60. I am grateful to Mrs Eames for much help and advice in the preparation of this note and to Kevin O'Brien for the finished drawings.

<sup>61</sup> For a short description of the castle see H. G. Leask, *Jnl. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, xlv (1914), 259-63.