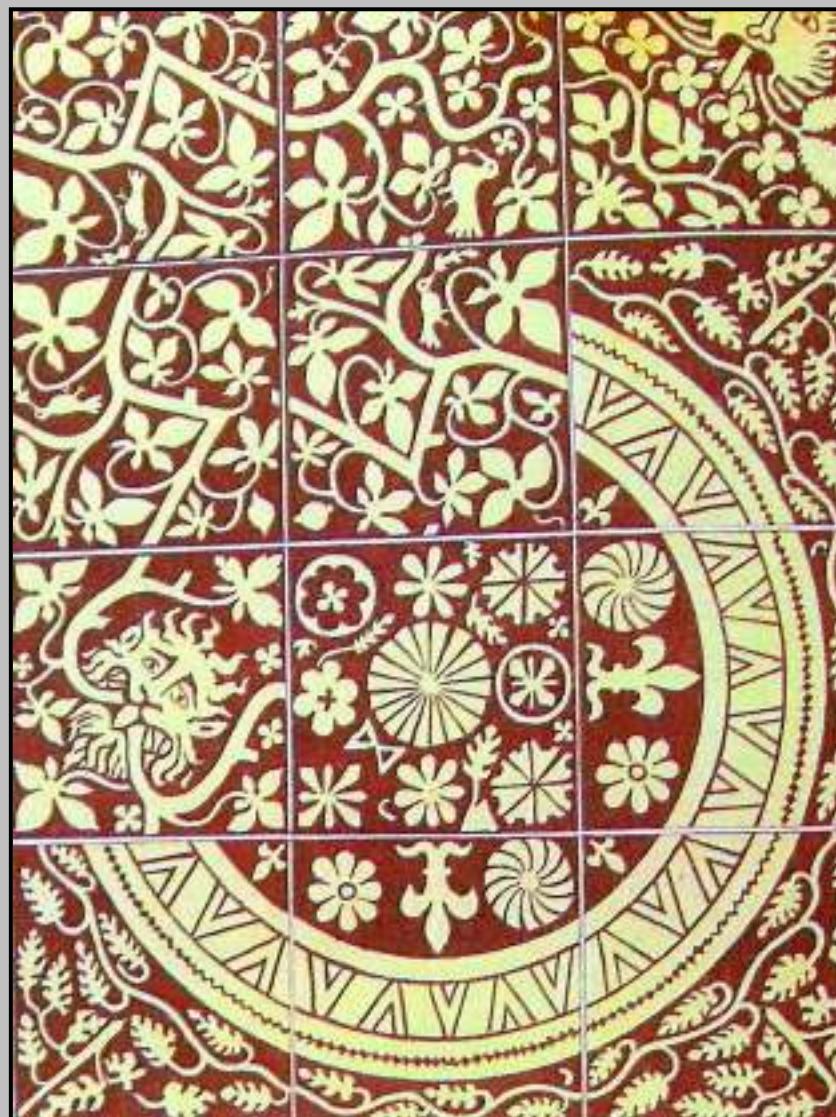


**Weoley Castle:
The Medieval Floor Tiles**



by

Stephen J. Linnane

An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham

Summary

Weoley Castle is a fortified, medieval manor-house situated four miles to the southwest of Birmingham city centre in the historic county of Worcestershire (National Grid Reference SP 02158275). The site entered into the ownership of Birmingham City Council in c.1930 and thereafter two campaigns of archaeological excavation were undertaken; between 1932 and 1940 and 1955 and 1962. More recently the site has been subject to an ambitious initiative, “*The Weoley Castle Development Project*”, joint funded by Birmingham City Council, The National Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. The aims of the project were to consolidate the surviving masonry, to increase community understanding of and involvement with the monument and to re-assess the finds collection and surviving archaeological archive. The following reports form the third strand of the initiative, “*An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham*”. The project was undertaken by Barbican Research Associates, managed by Stephanie Rátkai and monitored by Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery and was submitted in final form in August 2011, consisting of a series of reports on the archaeological archive, the ceramic finds and the small (portable) finds etc. The reports were presented in PDF format and will be available on-line, hosted by BRA (see www.barbicanra.co.uk for links). Hard and digital copies of the reports will be held by BMAG at selected museum properties. It is intended that the reports will form the basis for a synthesised monograph publication intended to bring knowledge of this important monument and the results of its past excavations to a wider audience.



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An Archaeological Overview of Weoley Castle, Birmingham consists of the following reports; the high-highlighted titles indicate which section the reader is currently examining.

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- Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.1 The Trenches
- Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.2 The Moat
- Weoley Castle - the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.3 The Western Interior
- Weoley Castle – the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.4 Periods I-III
- Weoley Castle - the reduced archive, 3.0 Post-war Excavations, 3.4.7 The Wooden Kitchen

Ceramics

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Weoley Castle: The loose architectural stones, an assessment by Dr. Richard K. Morris

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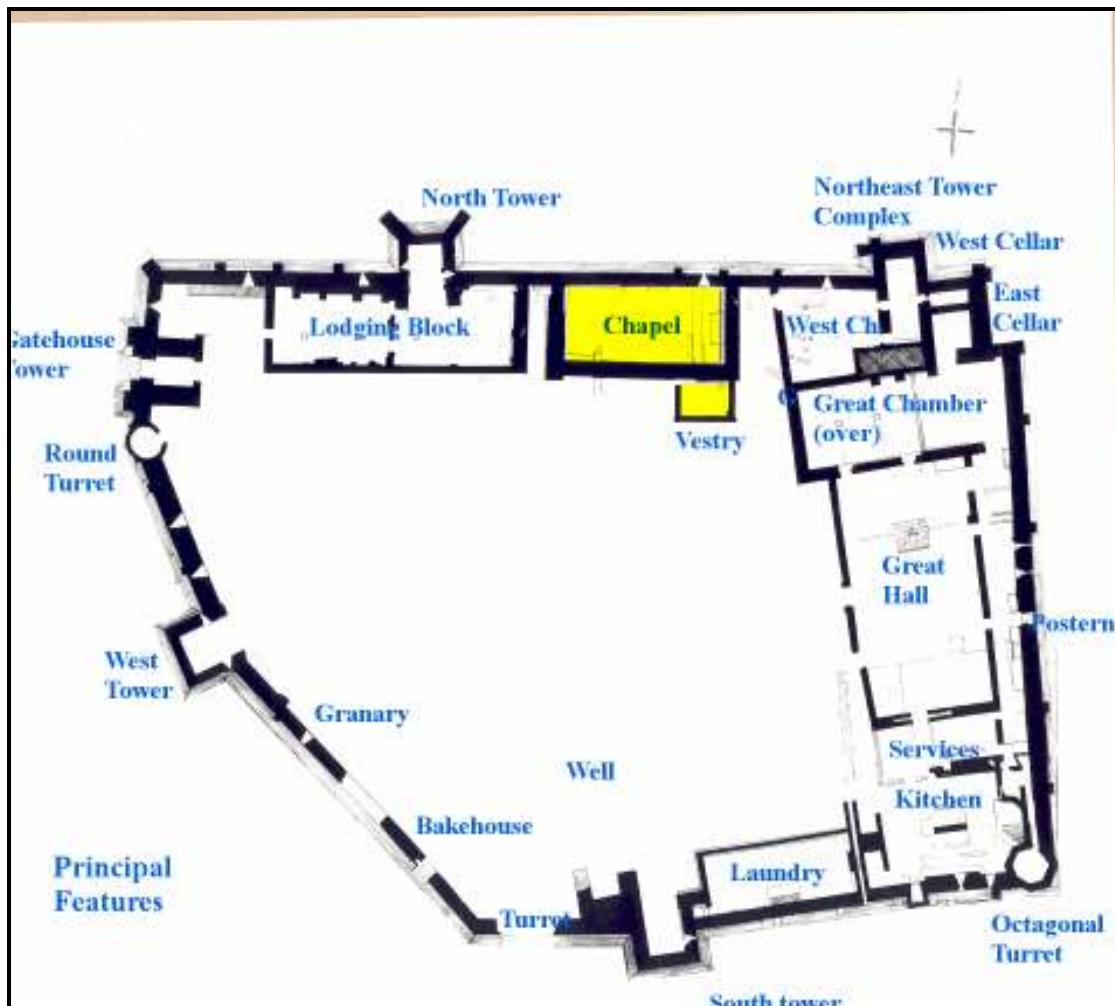
Weoley Castle: The Medieval Floor Tiles by Stephen J. Linnane

Weoley Castle: The Medieval Floor Tiles

by

Stephen J. Linnane

Introduction



Weoley Castle, location of the chapel (Scan 030, modified)

The important survey of Weoley Castle, dated to 1424, includes the following

“.. a chapel set by itself on the north part of the said castle covered with lead and a vestry ..”

thus it was known that such buildings were to be found at the castle when the excavation campaign undertaken by G.M. Bark for Birmingham City Council commenced in 1932. The chapel was identified when two spreads of *in situ* tile paving were recovered within a building on the north side of the courtyard. These tiles must contribute a substantial element of the tile collection which forms part of the castle archive. It is certain that more will have come from rubble layers overlying the *in situ* tiles and probable that still more will have come from elsewhere in the castle

due to disturbance during demolition etc. in the post-medieval era. P.B. Chatwin collaborated in the castle excavations during this period and he incorporated them in his paper of 1936 “The Medieval Patterned Tiles of Warwickshire” published in Transactions of the Birmingham Archaeological Society. More recently the tiles are referred to by E.S. Eames in her “Catalogue of Medieval Lead-glazed, Earthenware Tiles in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum of 1980. Most recently, in 2008, an M.A. dissertation for the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity of the University of Birmingham was presented based on the Weoley Castle tile collection (Student No. 605607). The dissertation provides a more detailed analysis of fabric, dimensions etc. than given in the following report which attempts to provide a catalogue of the tiles, describes their probable provenance from within the castle and notes sites where comparable designs have been found.

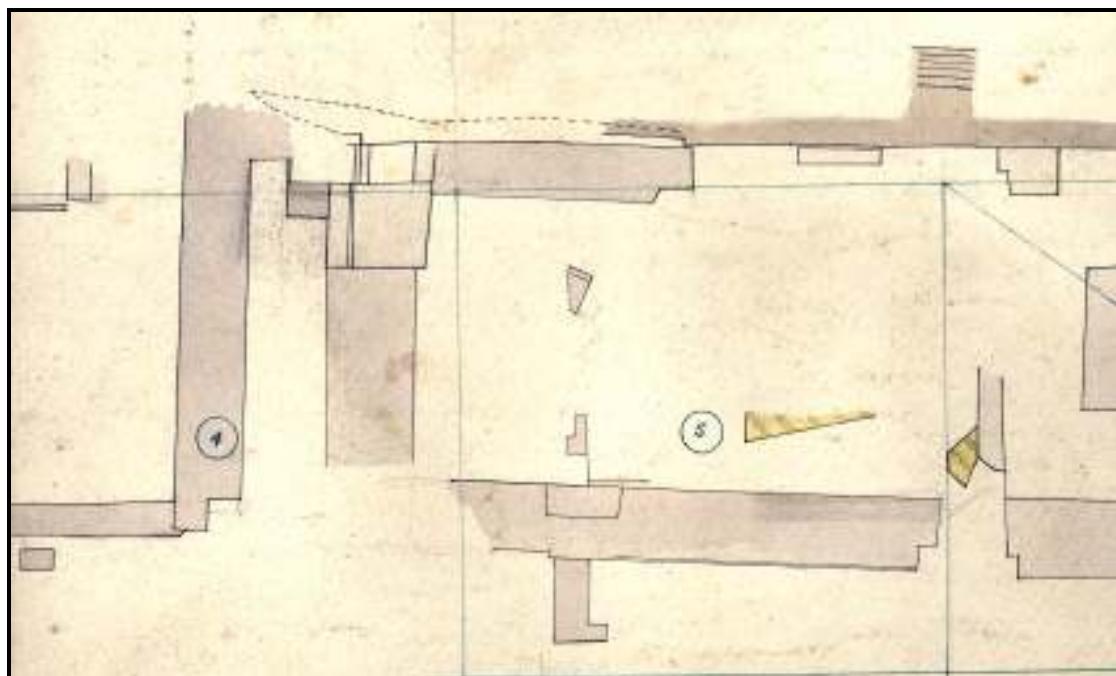
The Chapel



The chapel in mid-excavation, looking west; the block of masonry interpreted as an altar can be seen in the centre along with surrounding walls. In the distance the Lodging Block can be seen, apparently already consolidated and grassed (Scan 944).

The following description of the chapel is based on the surviving masonry and on scans of plans within the site archive, notably Scans 073-077.

A building, without doubt correctly identified as the chapel, was located 1.90m to the east of the Lodging Block, forming part of the northern range encircling the castle courtyard. This building had internal measurements of 16.00m from west to east by 7.67m, narrowing to 7.00m at the western end. The wall foundations were 1.60m wide whilst the masonry above would have been 1.40m wide. Within the western gable the northern door jamb is shown and if the door was central to the wall it would have been 1.50m wide. Two further doors are shown; one in the eastern gable end to the north of the altar block giving access to an open area c.4.00m wide and facing a door giving access to the northwest chamber of the solar block, the second between the northwest corner of the vestry and the nave immediately west of the steps dividing nave and chancel. A single splayed arrow loop within the Outer Wall was located to the west of the steps separating the altar area, at 1.90m wide, from the nave. The rubble base of the altar block survived against the east wall measuring 3.00m by 1.40m. Two areas of tiled flooring and window glass were recorded as having been found within the chapel, helping to confirm its usage. The flimsy footings of a building constructed against the southeast corner of the chapel have been identified as a vestry with internal dimensions of 5.20m, west to east, by 3.00m. The stone footings probably served as a support for a timber superstructure. A fireplace had been inserted into the west end of the south wall of the nave, although at what date is unknown.



Survey of chapel showing location of in-situ tiles in yellow (Scan 068).

Tile Spread 1



In situ tiles, looking east (Scan 129).

This group was located to the southern centre of the chapel and consisted of more than twenty tiles set diagonally across the nave. The southern edge of the spread is finished with triangular half tiles suggesting that there was a break in the design or that the tiles were laid up to a physical obstacle since removed. The edge is c.1.00m in from the southern wall. There appears to be some paler tiles (yellow) amongst the patch of mostly dark tiles (green) and only one tile can be identified as patterned, Design 1b.

Tile Spread 2



In-situ tiles, looking east (Scan 909)

This spread was laid in the south-eastern corner of the nave, against the lower step of the chancel division. The tiles were laid diagonally to the body of the nave and three triangular half tiles survived, forming the eastern edge whilst two half tiles formed the western edge. This section of tiling would have measured c.0.70m wide from east to west and possibly ran the width of the chapel. It is not known what feature formed the western boundary.



*Detail of Scan 909, showing tile Design 1b located irregularly within the pavement
and at least two copy of tile Design 2b.*

Note: Although the tiles were designed and made to be laid in recognisable patterns it is not uncommon to find that all recognition of the pattern was ignored once it came to laying them on a floor. It is possible that the tiles have been re-laid and that it was only at this time that the intended patterns were ignored.

The Catalogue

Design 1

This design was the most common within the decorated design assemblage, consisting of a nine tile design composed of three tile designs, corner (1a), middle edge (1b) and centre (1c). The completed design consists of two circular bands with an outer band having small conjoined diamonds along its length and an inner with zig-zag decoration. The interior of the design contained a complex design of flower and leaf motifs whilst the outer corners were filled with vegetation. Whilst similar designs have been noted elsewhere this particular design appears to be exclusive to Weoley Castle and Maxstoke Priory.

Design 1a



WC278



Chatwin 6.01

The corner tile of a nine tile design; excavated tiles WC243, WC271-WC278.

This tile is recognised in Holliday and in Chatwin as 6.01 but does not appear in Eames.

Design 1b



WC279



Chatwin 6.02, Eames 2865

This tile is the middle edge tile of a nine tile design with excavated examples WC229 and WC279-290A-G.

Design 1c

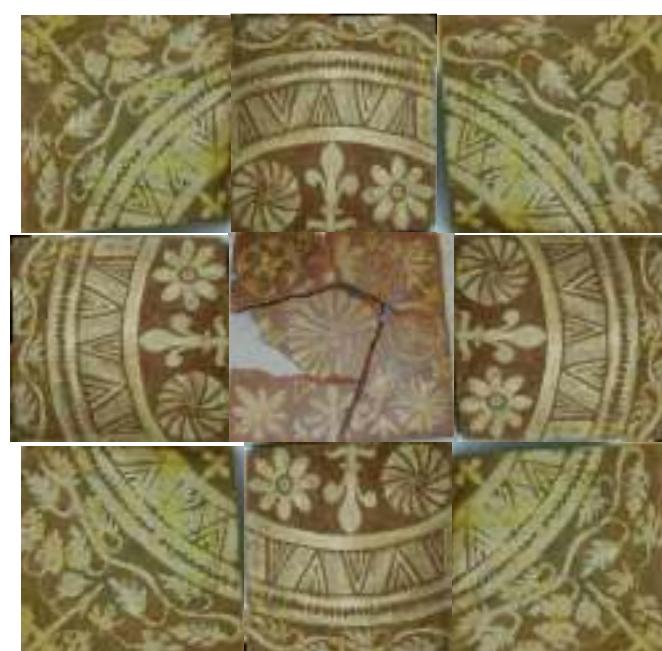


Chatwin 6.05 Eames 2432



WC223A-E

Central tile of nine tile design with excavated examples WC223A-E and WC257



Re-construction of the nine tile design

Design 2

One very interesting design on 6 1/2in. tiles, Nos. 3, 6 and 9, starts with a human-like mask in one corner, from which three stems spread out in such a way that the design is passed on to the next tile and so on to an unlimited extent, thus covering a space of any size that might be required; it is finished on the edges with a special tile which has leaves and no stems to complete the pattern. A decorative floor was therefore obtained with three patterns only.

Chatwin pp. 8-9

The complete design is shown by Holliday on a colour plate in his report on excavations at Maxstoke Priory partially reproduced here on the report cover.

Design 2a



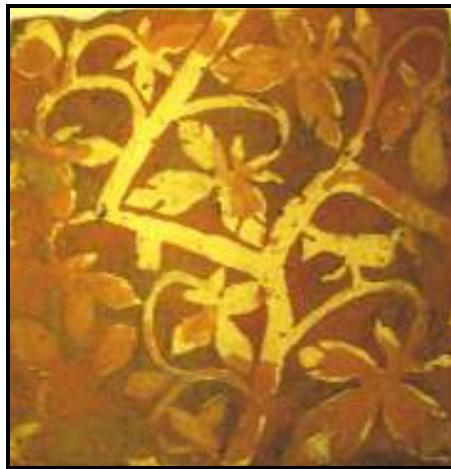
WC300



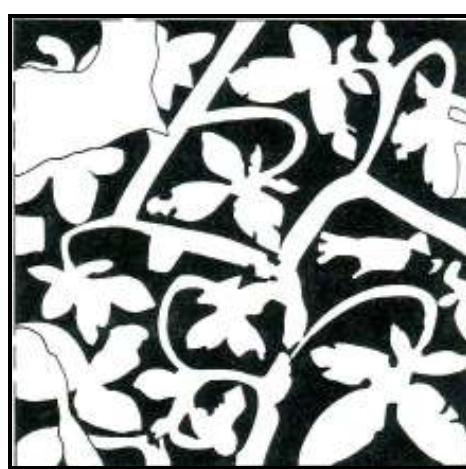
Chatwin 6.09, Eames 2875

Despite some confusion in the catalogue and it is probable that there were three examples of this “green man” image; WC230, WC241 and WC300.

Design 2b



WC228



Chatwin 6.06, Eames 2874

There were six examples of this tile; WC224, WC225, WC226, WC228, WC231 and WC239. Note the bird within the foliage at centre right.

Designs 2c and 2d

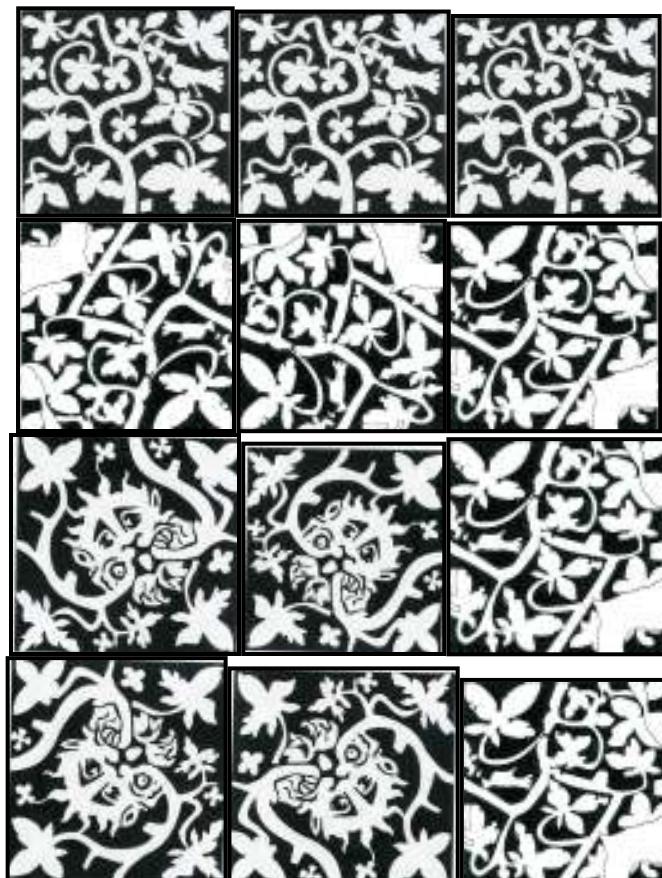


2c Chatwin 6.03, Eames 2873



2d

These two designs were not represented within the Weoley assemblage but were part of the full design as shown by the Maxstoke Priory excavations, see cover.

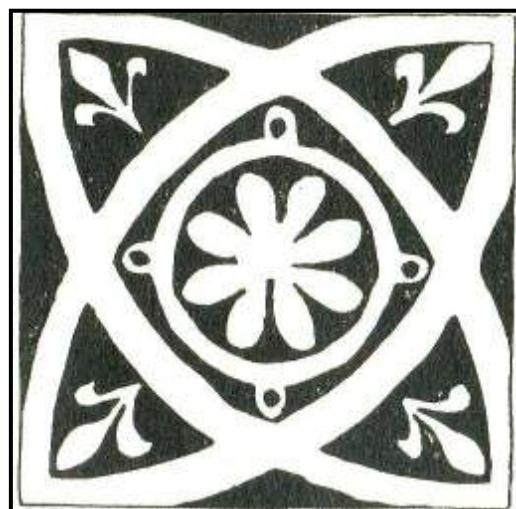


An attempted reconstruction of Design 2

Design 3



WC265

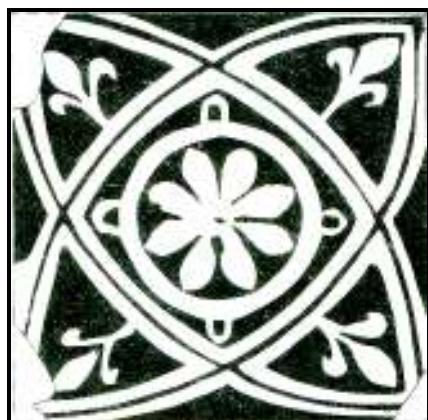


Chatwin 6.8

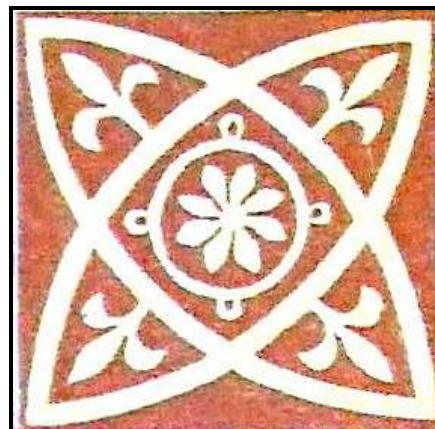


Complete design

Six fragments with this design were found: WC265 - WC270. Chatwin states that this design came only from Weoley Castle, however, Eames illustrates a similar design (2379) which only differs in that the principal quadrant bands are divided into two along their length whereas the Weoley examples are un-divided. The Eames design came from Maxstoke Priory and it seems probable that the Weoley fragments are merely a variant on Eames 2379.



Eames 2379



Holliday

Design 4



WC262



WC263

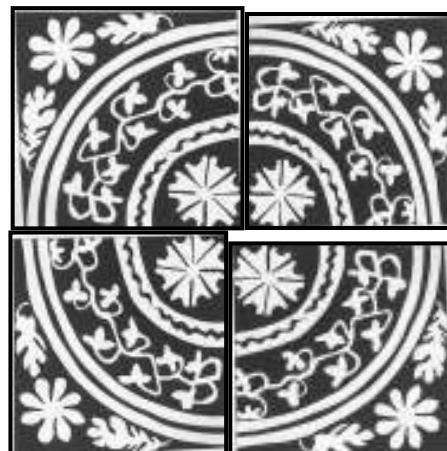


Eames 2802



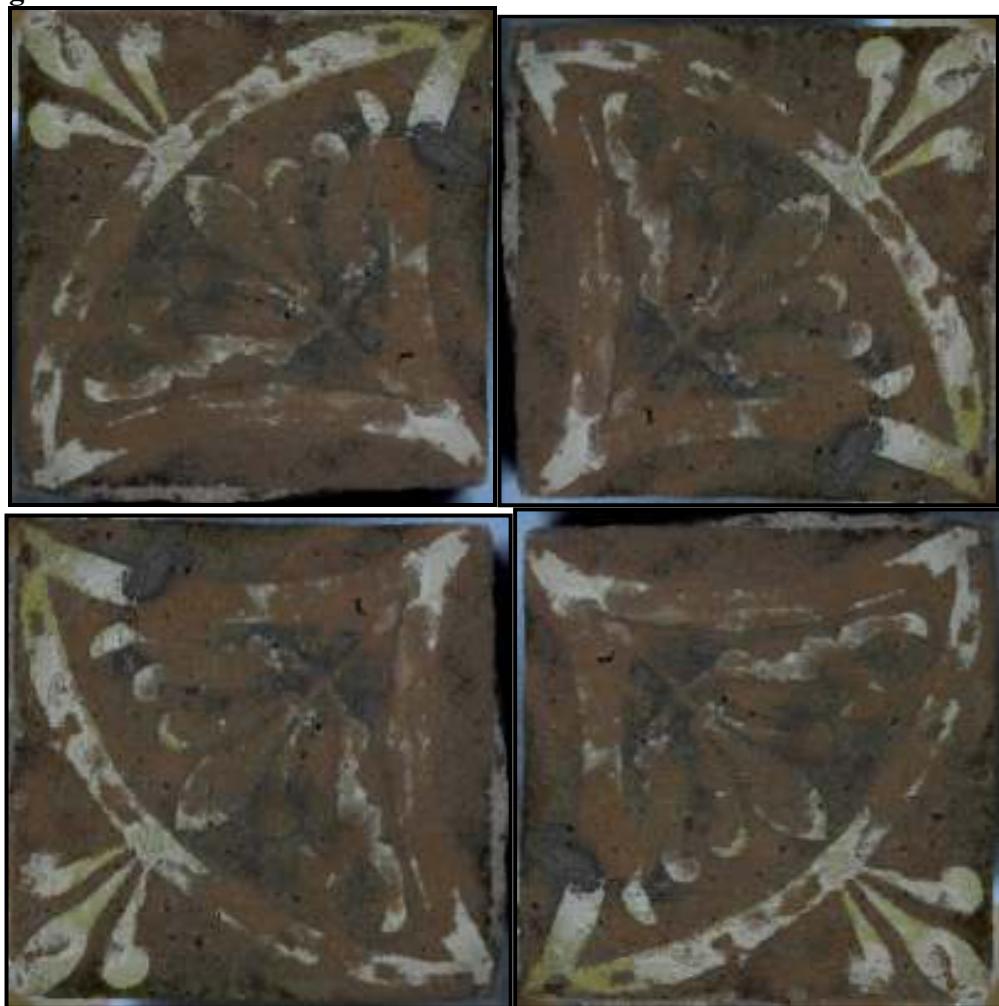
Holliday

These two fragments were identified as elements of Eames Design 2802 which came from the infirmary floor of Maxstoke Priory. Strangely, the design does not appear in Chatwin but Holliday does illustrate the design within his report.



Completed design

Design 5



WC292 (complete design)

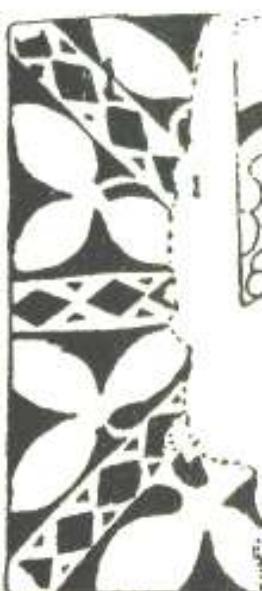
A single complete version of this tile was excavated and no fragments. The tile differs from the main Maxstoke Priory group, although it is of the right dimensions, possibly

because its glaze is mostly missing. The design has not yet been identified in either Eames or Chatwin.

Design 6



Tile WC 261



Chatwin 38.1

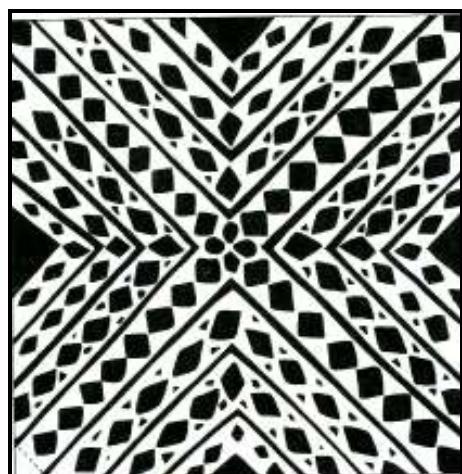


Only one fragment with this design was recovered during the pre-war excavations. Chatwin does not name any other find locations but the tile appears in Eames, Design 2562, although only as a fragment. The Eames example came from Maxstoke Priory.

Design 7



WC264



Eames 2450

Only a single corner fragment of this design was recovered and the design does not appear in Chatwin's work but does in Eames as Design 2450 where it is described as

from the Maxstoke Priory, infirmary floor group. Strangely neither Designs 7 or 8 appear within Holliday's report.

Design 8



WC293



Chatwin Plate 3, Figure 2

Chatwin claims that this archer design derives from a tile recovered from the Chapter House, Westminster - the designs are not that similar. Note that the archer holds the bow in his left hand in the Westminster tile, which would be normal, and in his right hand in the Weoley tile. The precise design has not been noted elsewhere. The tile pattern has been printed onto the normal 163mm square tile but Chatwin noted that the design was made to fit a 130mm square tile, leaving an unusual blank area around the edges.

Border Tiles

Two designs were found on tiles intended to form repeated running patterns as borders to more extensive panels. Design 9 consisted of scrolling foliage between borders of repeated diamonds. Design 10 consisted of a repeated fleur de lys running along the length of the tile (two per tile) between three lines running along the long edges. The tiles measured 116mm by 158mm and these tiles are part of the principal group of tiles measuring c.160mm square. Chatwin does not name any other find site other than Weoley whilst the designs do not appear in Eames at all.

Design 9



WC255



Chatwin 30.3

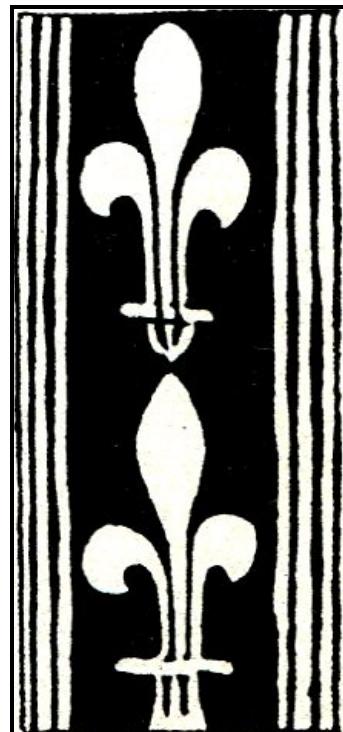


There were two complete tiles (WC255 and WC256) and two fragments with this design (WC253 and WC254).

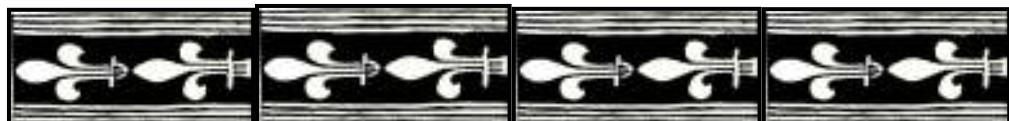
Design 10



WC251



Chatwin 30.5



There were eight examples of this design WC244-249, WC251 (complete) and WC252.

Design 11



WC220



Chatwin 38.9

Three tiles with this design were excavated; WC220, WC221 (3 fragments) and WC258. The design does not appear in Eames and Chatwin does not identify its

occurrence anywhere other than at Weoley. The design may have been intended as heraldic with a lion passant or rampant? Lions appear in the de Somery coat of arms.

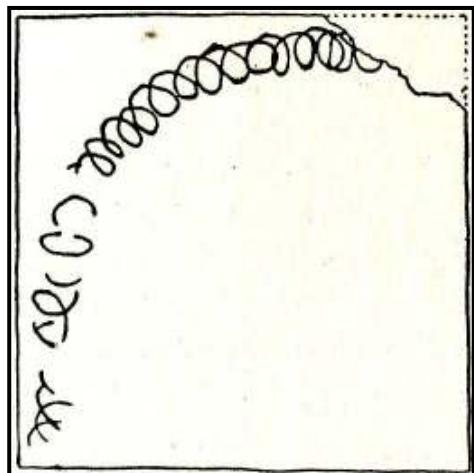
Unusual Designs

Within the whole assemblage the majority of the tiles form a group readily identified by their size, nature of design and manufacture and similarity to a near identical group from Maxstoke Priory. There are, however, a small number of tiles which do not fit in with this group due to size, appearance or design. These tiles are generally unique designs *i.e.* only one copy of a design has been excavated, which would be unusual if they had been a part of a regular floor design commissioned for the castle. It is possible that they came from earlier floors which when replaced were disposed of elsewhere – beyond the castle's confines.

Design 12



WC260



Chatwin 36

"There is another, a somewhat rare type of patterned tile. It is an ordinary white tile on the surface of which the design was etched with a pointed stick or some such implement before the "slip" was quite dry. The only one so far recorded in Warwickshire was found at Weoley Castle; it is executed in a most amateurish way and is little better than a scribble (Chatwin. Page 36)."

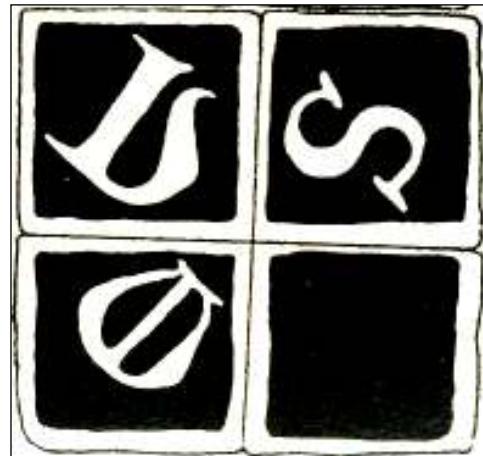
This tile has been decorated in a similar way to WC291 with white slip and a glaze of very similar pale yellow colour, however its dimensions of c.165mm square place it within the same size range as the majority of the two colour designs. The tile may

well be a unique doodle onto a plain pale yellow tile rather than a serious attempt at creating a design.

Design 13



WC259



Chatwin 32.01

This was the only tile of this design recovered and measured 125mm square. The tile was divided into four quadrants by deeply scored incisions and the letters ?, S and M in a lombardic script along with a blank were inlaid into these quadrants. The tile was presumably intended to be broken into four and along with similarly lettered tiles used to make inscriptions.

Design 14: Fleur-de-lys



WC219



Reverse

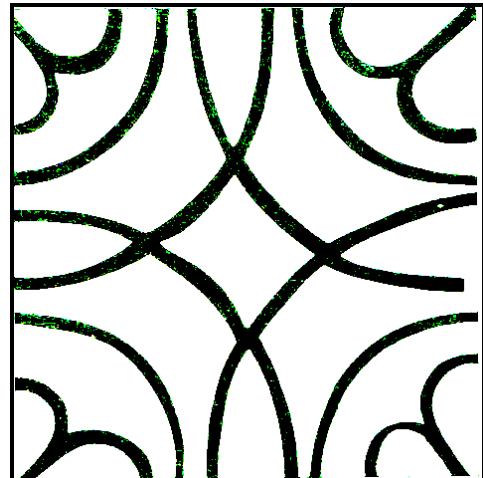
The reverse of the tile is notable for the only example of keying marks where four scoops, one at each corner, have been dug out of the clay body in order to aid in keying the tile to a mortar floor bed. The tile is the only one of its type excavated and is darker in hue than the rest. The closest design within Eames is 2174 which is of

unknown provenance but is claimed to have been manufactured at Clarendon 2 (Wiltshire) and dated to the late 13th century – contemporary with the major de Somery reconstruction of Weoley Castle. Interestingly the Eames tile also has four keying scoops on its reverse. The tile is 130mm square which does not correspond with major grouping with matches from Maxstoke Priory which are larger at 163mm.

Design 15

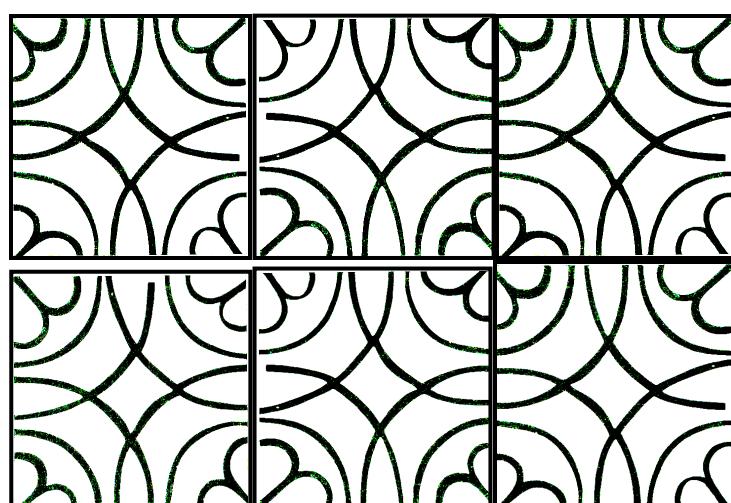


WC291



Eames 183

This tile is extraordinary within the collection being only 115mm square and having had the design of interlocking circles impressed into the tile which was then given a white slip over which a pale yellow glaze was applied. The design has been identified at Dudley and Sandwell Priories and is shown in Eames as Design 183, of unknown provenance and possibly made in Cheshire in the 15th Century. The tile was used as packing for levelling the sill timbers of the Northwest Bridge



Unidentified Designs

No comparable designs have been identified for the five fragments illustrated below. In general appearance they appear to belong to the main group associated with Maxstoke Priory.



WC270A



WC227



WC222



18.52 (WC no .not identified)



WC242

Plain Tiles

The collection of plain tiles consisted of green and yellow tiles with some variations from near orange/brown to black. The tiles had frequently been cut diagonally to form triangles as can be seen on Scan 909. The sizes vary but average 120mm square with occasional larger pieces e.g. WC299 with a side of 165mm.



WC292



WC295B



WC297

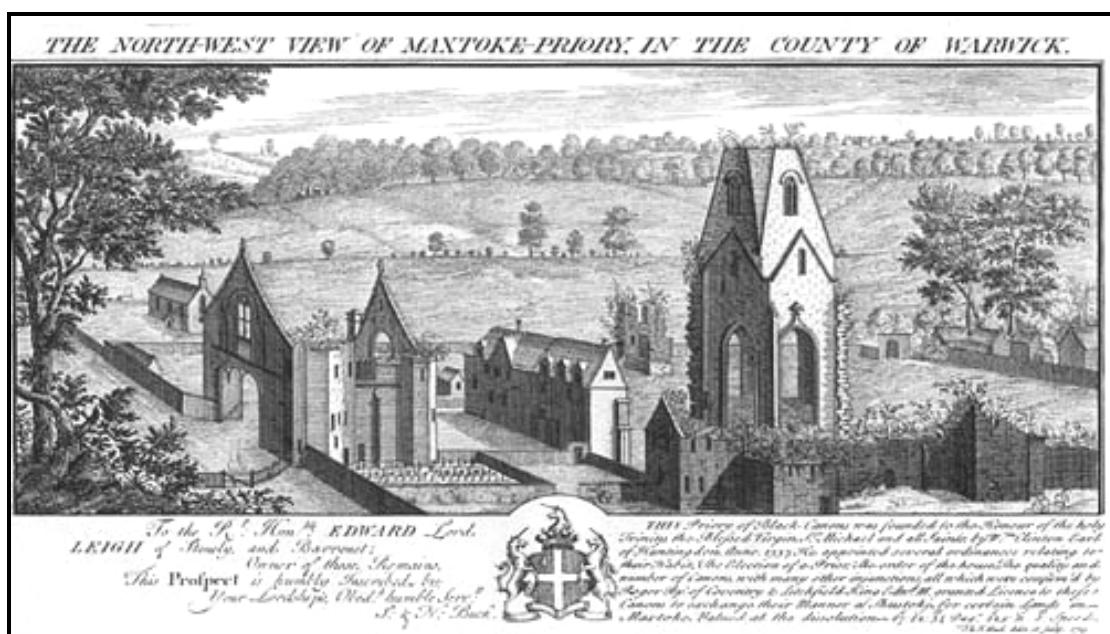


WC299

Conclusions

The interesting collection of tiles from Weoley Castle bears a striking resemblance to a collection of tiles excavated at Maxstoke Priory by J.R. Holliday in 1874 and without which the castle tiles would have nearly no parallels.

Maxstoke Priory, Warwickshire, was initially founded as a Chantry Chapel by Sir William de Clinton in 1330 but quickly became a Priory of Austin Canons in 1336. The priory is 13.5 miles to the east-northeast of Weoley Castle. The tiles from Maxstoke were first commented upon by J.R. Holliday after excavations at the priory in 1874. Further excavations were undertaken in 1929 and 1939 by the Duke of Rutland. The Rutland collection became part of the British Museum collection and it is this collection that Eames studied in her definitive work. There were various styles of tile excavated at Maxstoke dating from the mid 14th to the later 15th centuries. The particular group of tiles common to both Maxstoke Priory and Weoley Castle was initially dated to the later 14th century by commentators including Chatwin but Eames noting that the majority of the tile designs came from the floor of the infirmary where they had been found *in situ* and also aware of a cartulary, dating to 1448, which noted the purchase of tiles for the infirmary floor at a cost of thirty shillings and three shillings and two pence for transporting them, has dated the tiles to that date; although allowing of some doubt. Unfortunately no kiln site has yet been excavated revealing the designs and their production site is left as Midlands, presumably in Warwickshire where commercial tile kilns have been excavated at Stoke and Chilvers Coton.



Maxstoke Priory (no copyright obtained)

It is interesting to note that the stained glass with which the chapel windows were decorated dated to the early 14th century and it is difficult to believe that a chapel would be so expensively adorned without an equally decorative floor surface which could be obtained at less cost than stained glass windows. Although the dating will remain debatable it is tempting to place the glass, tiles and some architectural detail together as a unified scheme of decoration dating to the development of the castle by its most powerful owners, the de Somery family of Dudley Castle, in the early 14th century.

The most striking design within the collection is the green man design with spreading foliage (Design 2). The symbolism of the green man has been discussed at length elsewhere but is common in both tile and sculpted elements within church decoration and requires no further elaboration.

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Appendix A

The following table attempts to relate the various information sources used within the report.

WC Cat. No.	Eames Design No.	Chatwin Drawing No.	M.A. Thesis No.	Museum Cat. No.	Design No.
219	2174	-	49	18.49	14
220	-	38.09	27	18.27	11
221	-	38.09	4	18.04	11
222	-	-	3	18.03	Unident.
223A-E	2432	30.05	19	18.19	1c
224	2874	6.06	5	18.05	2b
225	2874	6.06	5	18.06	2b
226	2874	6.06	7	18.07	2b
227	-	-	1	18.01	Unident.
228	2874	6.06	18	18.59	2b
229	2874	6.02	32	18.32	1b
230	2875	6.09	9	18.09	2a
231	2874	6.06	8	18.08	2b
232	-	-	62	18.62	P/Y/W
233-238	Not part of tile catalogue				
239	2874	6.06	11	18.11	2b
240	2875	6.09	?	?	2a
241	2875	6.09	10	18.10	2a
242	-	-	12	18.12	Unident.
243	-	6.01	33	18.33	1a
244	-	30.05	-	157	10
245	-	30.05	18	18.18	10
246	-	30.05	17	18.17	10
247	-	30.05	-	-	10
248	-	30.05	15	18.15	10
249	-	30.05	16	18.16	10
250	?	?	?	?	?

WC Cat. No.	Eames Design No.	Chatwin Drawing No.	M.A. Thesis No.	Museum Cat. No.	Design No.
251	-	30.05	-	1950A77	10
252	-	30.05	-	1950A78	10
253		30.03	14	18.14	9
254	-	30.03	13	18.13	9
255	-	30.03	-	1950A75 also 44	9
256	-	30.03	-	1950A76 also 45	9
257	2432	6.05	20	18.20	1c
258	-	38.09	2	18.02	11
259	-	32.01	55	18.55	13
260	-	36	51	18.51	12
261	2562	28.01	54	18.54	6
262	2802	-	48	18.48	4
263	2802	-	47	18.47	4
264	2540	-	53	18.53	7
265	2379	6.08	41	18.41	3
266	2379	6.08	42	18.42	3
267	2379	6.08	44	18.44	3
268	2379	6.08	43	18.43	3
269	2379	6.08	45	18.45	3
270A	-	-	46	18.46	Unident.
270	2379	6.08	46	18.46	3
271	-	6.01	34	18.34	1a
272	-	6.01	35	18.35	1a
273	-	6.01	38	18.38	1a
274	-	6.01	37	18.37	1a
275	-	6.02	36	18.36	1a
276A-H	-	6.01	39A-H	18.39	1a

WC Cat. No.	Eames Design No.	Chatwin Drawing No.	M.A. Thesis No.	Museum Cat. No.	Design No.
277	-	6.01	40	18.40	1a
278	-	6.01	-	1950A80	1a
279	2865	6.02	-	1950A81	1b
280	2865	6.02	-	1950A82	1b
281	2865	6.02	22	18.22	1b
282	2865	6.02	21	18.21	1b
283	2865	6.02	24	18.24	1b
284	2865	6.02	23	18.23	1b
285	2865	6.02	25	18.25	1b
286A-B	2865	6.02	26	18.26	1b
287A-B	2865	6.02	29	18.29	1b
288	2865	6.02	28	18.28	1b
289	2865	6.02	30	18.30	1b
290A-G	2865	6.02	31A-L	18.27/31	1b
291	183	-	-	156	15
292	-	-	50	18.50	5
293	-	-	-	-	8
294A-H	-	-	59A-H	18.59	P/Y/W
295A-B	-	-	60A-B	18.60	P/Y/W
296	-	-	60	18.61	P/G/W
297A-F	-	-	56A-F	18.56	P/G/W
298A-D	-	-	57A-D	18.57	P/G/T
299	-	-	58	18.58	P/G/T
300	2875	6.09	?	?	2a
?	-	-	52	18.52	Unident.

Key to plain tiles

- P plain
- G green
- Y yellow
- W whole
- T triangle