

## Notes and News

### TWO LATE ANGLO-SAXON TILES AND THE EARLY HISTORY OF ST LAWRENCE JEWRY, LONDON (Figs. 1, 2)

The first fragment of late Anglo-Saxon tile found in the London area came from excavations at Westminster Abbey in 1986.<sup>1</sup> A second fragment was recovered from excavations by the Museum of London Archaeology Service just south-west of the medieval Guildhall in the City of London in 1993.<sup>2</sup> Both belong to a distinctive group of predominantly decorated tiles found elsewhere at Canterbury, Coventry, Bury St Edmunds, St Albans, Peterborough, Winchester and York.<sup>3</sup> The designs on the majority of decorated examples are formed by raised ribs on their upper surface between which have been added areas of different coloured lead-glaze. This produces a polychrome effect, hence the tiles in this series are frequently referred to as polychrome relief tiles.

The relief designs on the two London tiles are very similar, although the lentoid element of the Guildhall tile (Fig. 1, Nos. 2 and 3) is formed by two parallel lines in contrast to the single line of the Westminster example (Fig. 1, No. 1). The position of the brown glaze is similar on both, the only difference being in the colour of the second glaze which is green on the Guildhall tile and brownish-yellow on the Westminster fragment. The designs on the London tiles have not been found elsewhere, although the lentoid element is paralleled on late Anglo-Saxon tiles from other areas such as York, Bury St Edmunds and Winchester.

No late Anglo-Saxon tiles have been found in their original position, so that it is far from clear exactly where they were used. Neither London tile shows any evidence of wear on its upper surface to suggest that they were used as flooring. It has been suggested<sup>4</sup> that they were used as either facing to an altar, as part of a retable, or as walling on either side of an altar. It is also possible that such tiles may have been used in different positions in different buildings.

#### *Fabric Type*

The Guildhall tile has a light brown clay and pale pink coloured clay matrix with a light grey core. The Westminster tile on the other hand has a white and pale pink coloration. Both are characterized by the presence of frequent sub-rounded to sub-angular quartz grains (mostly 0.1–0.5 mm) which give the fabric a granular appearance. There is a scatter of bright red and orange iron oxide inclusions (mostly up to 0.7 mm with occasional larger inclusions up to 2.5 mm). Occasional quartzite grains (up to 1.5 mm) are also present.

The fabric of both tiles are so similar that there is very little doubt that they originate from the same production site, which would also account for the close similarity in both decorative design and application of glaze. This source is very unlikely to have been London as their fabric is totally different from Roman and medieval ceramic building material believed to have been manufactured using local brickearth deposits.

The fabric of the two London tiles matches very closely that used to make the late Anglo-Saxon tiles found at Winchester, St Albans and Bury St Edmunds. It would seem highly likely that these tiles originated from a single kiln source, which may have been located in the Winchester area. Biddle and Barclay<sup>5</sup> have already pointed out the probable

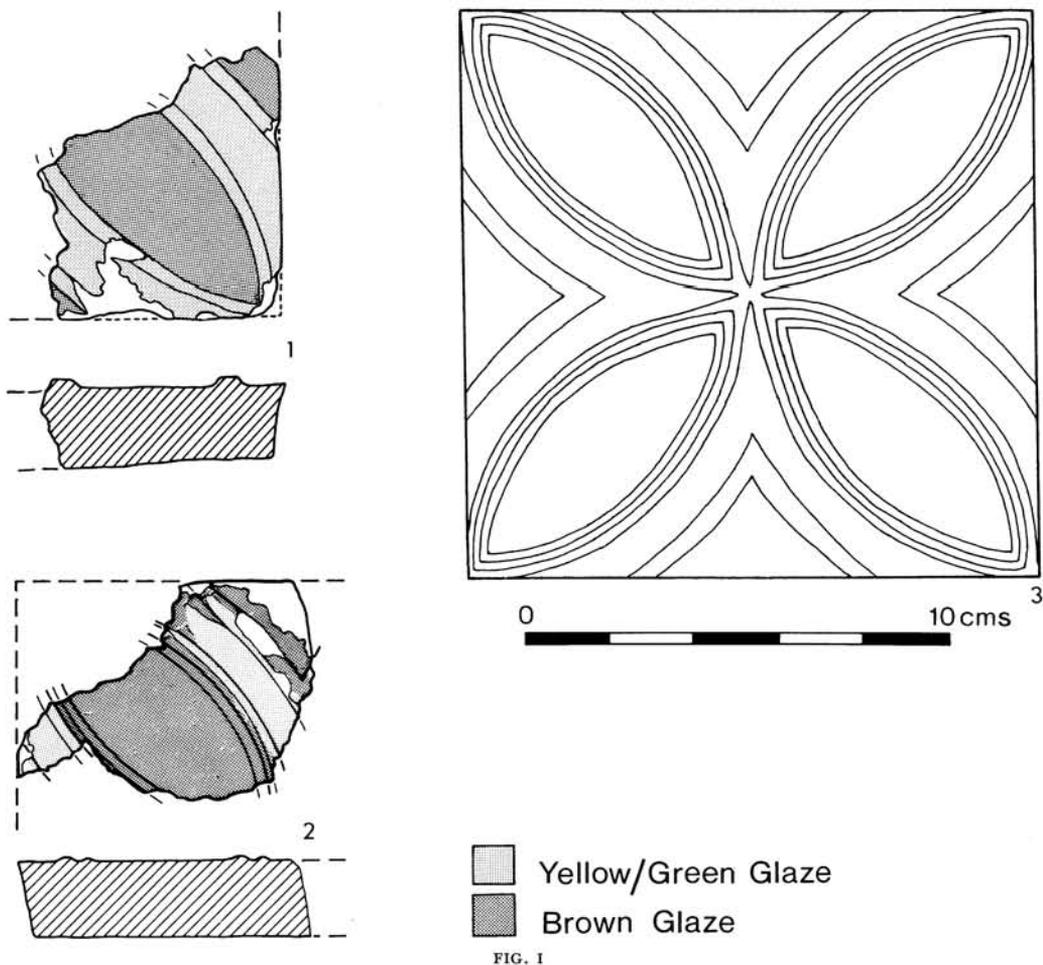


FIG. 1

Late Anglo-Saxon polychrome relief tiles: No. 1 Westminster, No. 2 Guildhall, No. 3 Reconstruction of Guildhall tile. (Nos. 1 and 3 drawn by Ian Betts; No. 2 drawn by Susan Banks)

link between late Anglo-Saxon polychrome relief tiles and locally produced Winchester Wear glazed pottery of similar date.

#### *Discussion*

Anglo-Saxon floor tiles were manufactured sometime during the period mid 10th to the later 11th century. Keen<sup>6</sup> tentatively suggests that those found in southern England may be early 11th-century in date. Unfortunately, no additional dating evidence is available for either London tile.

The use of late Anglo-Saxon tiles seems to have been restricted to major ecclesiastical buildings. An apparent anomaly is the presence of such tiles found reused in the parish church of All Saints, Pavement, in York, the earliest documentary record of which dates to 1086. Keen,<sup>7</sup> however, has recently discussed the possibility that there may have been an earlier, more important minster church here before the Conquest in which the tiles were originally used.

*Westminster Abbey Tile*

The Westminster Anglo-Saxon tile (Fig. 1, No. 1) came from excavations in the dorter undercroft at the abbey, which is located on the E. side of the main cloisters S. of the chapter house. The dorter undercroft formed part of the 11th-century rebuilding of the abbey which began around c. 1050 under Edward the Confessor and continued until c. 1090.<sup>8</sup>

The decorated tile came from the backfill of a broad shallow ditch which is believed to have served as a short-term drain during construction of part of the 11th-century abbey.<sup>9</sup> This ditch predates construction of the dorter undercroft which is dated on stylistic grounds to the late 1060s or early 1070s.<sup>10</sup> A number of layers in the ditch and the backfill contained pottery broadly dated to the period 1050–1150, but more likely to be 1050–1100.<sup>11</sup> This would indicate that the ditch was infilled only a short time before construction of the undercroft commenced.

It is not certain which abbey building was adorned with decorated tiles. They may have been brought into London for use in Edward the Confessor's church, construction of which started in c. 1050 and continued until the 1070s;<sup>12</sup> in that case the example found may represent a broken tile discarded during building work. A second possibility is that the introduction of glazed tiles may be associated with building work which followed the refoundation of Westminster as a Benedictine Abbey in the mid 10th century.<sup>13</sup> Decorative tiles could have been added at any time prior to the building's demolition, which took place upon completion of Edward's 11th-century church.

*Archaeological context of the Guildhall Tile*

The tile fragment (Fig. 1, Nos. 2 and 3) was found in a dumped deposit within the burial ground of St Lawrence, immediately to the S. and W. of, and contemporary with, a group of 11th-century timber buildings. This settlement lay just to the S. of the area that later became the Guildhall, and appears to have been contained within the boundary described by the arena of the recently discovered Roman amphitheatre (Fig. 2).<sup>14</sup>

The buildings on the E. side of the churchyard are in the so-called bulwark style,<sup>15</sup> with horizontal planks slid between notched staves; other buildings to the N. have wattle and post walls. Floors are of brickearth or beaten earth, usually with at least one centrally placed hearth. External metallated areas, yards, alleyways, middens, and areas of contemporary pitting have also been identified, demarcated by wattle fences, boundary ditches and drains. Some wattle buildings were clearly not for domestic occupation, having no obvious floors or hearths. Interestingly, it was only these buildings which had internal aisled divisions. They may therefore have been used for stabling animals.

This occupation was very intensive (over 1.5 m of stratigraphy) with many of the buildings and property shapes expanding and contracting over little more than a decade. It is therefore unclear at present exactly how many buildings (as opposed to extensions, repairs or modifications) there were, although there were at least three or four main structures in existence at any one phase. The date for the beginning of the sequence is not yet established, but was probably c. 1040.

The end of the settlement is clear: all the wattle and timber buildings were summarily cleared in the mid 12th century to make way for the redevelopment of the area as an open space S. of the new Guildhall. This space, Guildhall Yard, was enclosed on the W. side by a series of buildings which later belonged to Balliol College, Oxford,<sup>16</sup> and on the E. side by Guildhall Chapel and Blackwell Hall, the main wool and cloth market of medieval London.

The churchyard in the SW. corner of the area under excavation was clearly associated with St Lawrence Jewry, the earliest mention of which goes back to the 12th century. Nearly all the City parishes had been established in their medieval form by the end of the 12th century<sup>17</sup> and the first certain documentary references to the parish of St Lawrence Jewry date from c. 1180 and c. 1197.<sup>18</sup> There is also mention of a Lawrence Lane leading

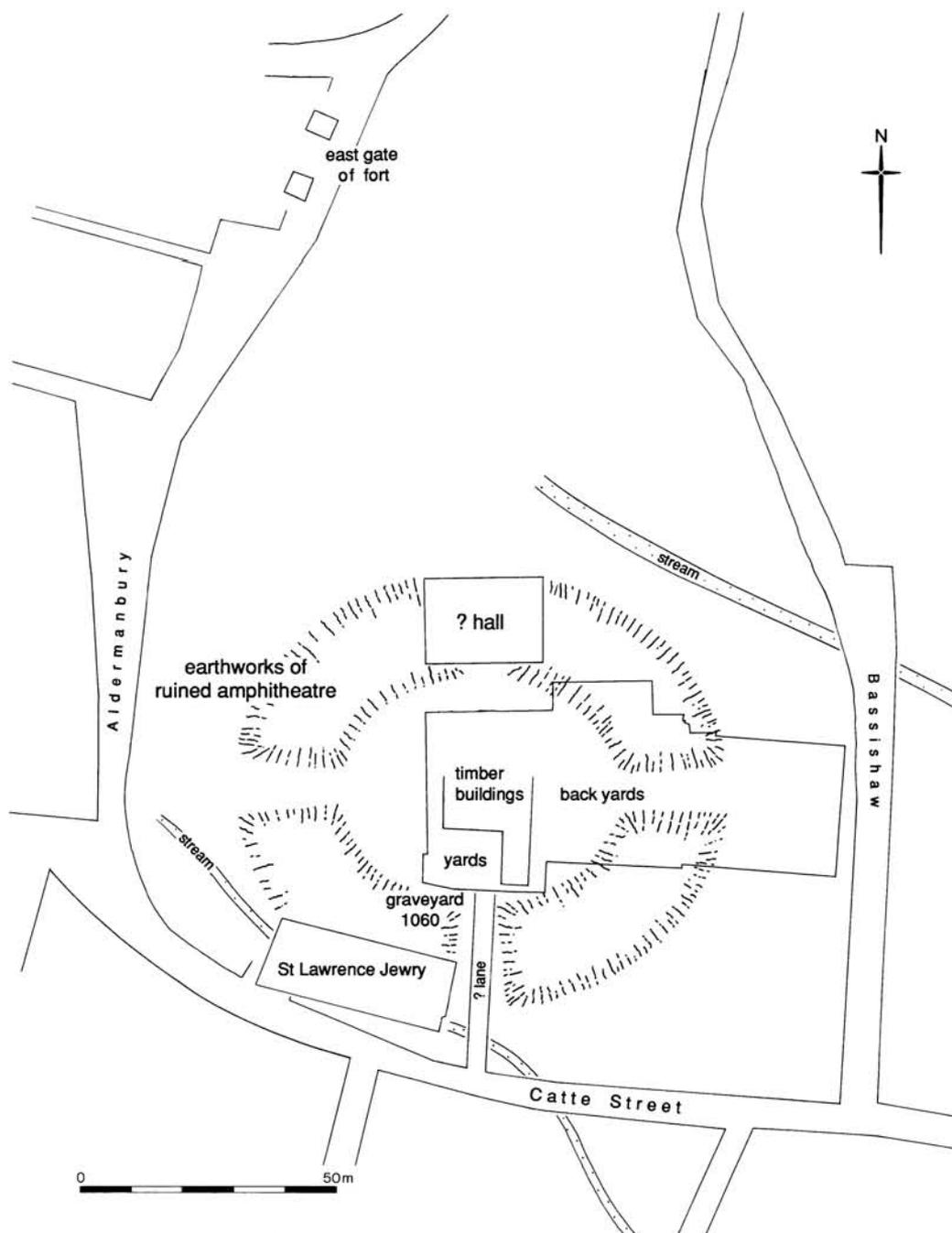


FIG. 2

Plan of the Guildhall area in late Saxon times. (Drawn by Alison Hawkins, modified by Julie Carr)

from Guildhall to Cheapside in the late 12th century.<sup>19</sup> There is an unsubstantiated tradition that the church was founded in 1136, and indeed a suggestion has been made that it was even older, being given by William I to the convent of Montreuil.<sup>20</sup>

Like the domestic buildings to the E. and N., the churchyard went through several different phases, in which its boundaries were encroached upon or expanded again, although broadly speaking the same size and shape was maintained. That part of the churchyard which lay within the site did not always function as a burial ground: there was an apparent hiatus when wholesale dumping and levelling occurred and the area perhaps existed as a grassy open space. The busiest phase of the churchyard as a burial ground produced over 50 interments, most of which were found within very well preserved proto-coffins, or lying on biers with timber planks laid over them. Dendrochronology provided a date for some of these graves of c. 1140. The earliest phase of the graveyard was clearly differentiated from the 1140 phase by the hiatus period and has also been dated by dendrochronology to c. 1040,<sup>21</sup> thus implying that a church or chapel was in existence by at least that date.

The tile fragment was found in a dumped deposit which formed during the hiatus between the 1040 and 1140 phases of the graveyard, and dated by pottery to c. 1100.<sup>22</sup> The pottery group did not contain much residual or redeposited material. All the deposits associated with the hiatus phase were brought in from outside to raise the ground level, which raises the question of the provenance of the tile fragment. The most obvious suggestion would be that it originated from St Pauls, 350 m to SW.; there was a well documented and highly destructive fire in St Pauls (and much of the city) in 1087.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the relative lack of other residual material in the dump, and the lack of obvious redeposited burnt material, suggests that there is no *prima facie* evidence for it being brought from afar, and lends weight to a suggestion that the tile fragment could have come from the church on the site.

St Lawrence may have had decorative tiles of such quality at such an early date because of its proximity to a late Saxon palace immediately N. and W. of Guildhall.<sup>24</sup> The church may have been the nucleus of an adjacent private estate of relatively high status like the nearby *Staninghaga* and *Basinghaga*.<sup>25</sup> Late Saxon kings had property in this part of London which was gradually disposed of to a variety of landowners. The recent discovery of a Roman amphitheatre directly beneath the Guildhall, and the possible post-Roman uses of the deserted arena and banks<sup>26</sup> suggests that the area of such a late Saxon private estate may have been focused on the decaying but probably still visible earthworks of the amphitheatre. It may be no accident that St Lawrence is located directly over the western side of the S. entrance way into the old amphitheatre arena. The street pattern of this area,<sup>27</sup> which probably emerged before the building of the Guildhall in the early 12th century,<sup>28</sup> seems to show both Basinghall Street and Aldermanbury curving round to avoid a shape which bears a strong resemblance to the amphitheatre. A church associated with such an estate might well have been adorned with finely decorated tiles such as the fragment illustrated here. The ecclesiastical and historical significance of the church of St Lawrence needs to be revised in this light.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I. Betts, N. Crowley and J. Keily, 'Recent Work on Medieval and Later Building Materials in London', *Medieval Ceramics*, 15 (1991), 37–38. The excavation was carried out by the Department of Greater London Archaeology of the Museum of London.

<sup>2</sup> The excavation was carried out between October 1992 and April 1994.

<sup>3</sup> L. Keen, 'Pre-Conquest Glazed Relief tiles from All Saints Church, Pavement, York', *J. Brit. Archaeol. Assoc.*, 146 (1993), 67.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>5</sup> M. Biddle and K. Barclay, 'Winchester Ware' 152 in V. I. Evison, H. Hodges and J. G. Hurst (eds.), *Medieval Pottery from Excavations* (London, 1974).

<sup>6</sup> Keen, *op. cit.* in note 3, 81.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> C. Wilson, P. Tudor-Craig, J. Physick and R. Gem, *Westminster Abbey* (London, 1986), 14.

<sup>9</sup> P. Mills, 'Westminster Abbey Undercroft Excavation', Museum of London Archaeology Service, forthcoming.

<sup>10</sup> Wilson et al., *op. cit.* in note 8, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Betts et al., *op. cit.* in note 1, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson et al., *op. cit.* in note 8, 15.

<sup>13</sup> It may be significant that the most likely source of the Coventry Anglo-Saxon tiles is the Benedictine Priory of St Mary founded in 1043. The most suitable building to house such tiles was the first priory church which was rebuilt, if not entirely replaced, around 1105. These tiles are discussed in M. A. Stokes, 'A Group of Late Anglo-Saxon Floor Tiles From Coventry', *Medieval Ceramics*, 10 (1986), 29–36.

<sup>14</sup> N. Bateman, 'The London Amphitheatre', *Current Archaeol.*, 137 (1994), 164–71.

<sup>15</sup> The original term *bulvaerk* is used for the description of certain ancient standing buildings in G. Benzon, *Gammeltidansk bindingsværk* (1984), 49. Archaeological examples of this technique are not documented.

<sup>16</sup> C. Barron, *The Medieval Guildhall of London* (London, 1974), 17.

<sup>17</sup> J. Davis, 'Ecclesiastical History: Part I', *Victoria County History for London*, 1 (London, 1909), 180 ff.

<sup>18</sup> H. Harben, *A Dictionary of London* (London, 1918), 341.

<sup>19</sup> R. Wilson, *The Parish of St Lawrence Jewry with St Mary Magdalen Milk St* (London, 1938), 14. In the later part of the 12th century the church appeared to belong to the convent of St Savve and St Guingalaens of Montreuil; E. and W. Young, *Old London Churches* (London, 1956), 95. The parish of St Lawrence Jewry was known as the Soke of St Winwaleus in the Liber Albus; Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 8. In 1247 the advowson for the church was given by the Abbot of Montreuil to a Canon of St Pauls, Sir William Facet. In 1294 the advowson was given by Hugh de Vienne, Vienne or Vienna, a.k.a. Hugo de Wickenbroke, Canon of St Martins-le-Grand, to the Master and Scholars of Balliol College, Oxford. Immediately following this in 1295 it was made a vicarage; Harben, *op. cit.* in note 18, 341. The advowson remained with Balliol College throughout the succeeding centuries, as indeed did the possession of the properties immediately to the N. on the western side of Guildhall Yard.

<sup>20</sup> Wilson, *op. cit.* in note 19, 7.

<sup>21</sup> I. Tyers, unpublished MoLAS Dendrochronological Report, and pers. comm.

<sup>22</sup> The date of the group is placed firmly within Ceramic Phase 5 (1080–1150) by the presence of a few sherds of LOGR LCOAR and LOND, which constitute 9% of the group. The early development of these wares is clear but the seated rim forms present in all three fabrics are unlike those previously published for the late 12th century and point to an early date within the industries (Lyn Blackmore MoLAS, pers. comm.).

<sup>23</sup> C. Brooke, 'The earliest times to 1485', 19 in W. R. Mathews and W. M. Atkins (eds.), *A History of St Pauls Cathedral* (London, 1957).

<sup>24</sup> This argument, first set out by T. Dyson in *Archaeology of the City of London* (London, 1980), 42, and subsequently in T. Dyson and J. Schofield, 'Saxon London' in J. Haslam (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Towns in Southern England* (Chichester, 1984), suggests that the E. gate of the nearby Roman fort was used as part of a late Saxon palace, and that this association was later to give rise to the name 'Aldermanbury' 'the burh of the alderman' for the parish and its principal street.

<sup>25</sup> *Staeninghaga*, within the old Roman fort area, was given to Westminster Abbey by Edward the Confessor (Dyson and Schofield, *op. cit.* in note 24, 307). Bassishaw ward and Basinghall St both recall the *haga* (hall) of the men of Basingstoke. It is interesting to note that Bassishaw is the only ward within the Walls that was virtually co-terminous with the parish; C. Brooke and G. Keir, *London 800–1216: the shaping of a City* (London, 1975), 154.

<sup>26</sup> Bateman, *op. cit.* in note 14, 170–71.

<sup>27</sup> Recent work has shown that the street pattern N. of Cheapside, the main thoroughfare and market, seems to have emerged in the 11th century, while much of the street pattern to the S. was significantly earlier, being associated with the Alfredian refoundation in the 9th century; J. Schofield, P. Allen and C. Taylor, 'Medieval buildings in the area of Cheapside', *Tran. London and Middlesex Archeol. Soc.*, 41 (1990), 178 ff.

<sup>28</sup> The earliest references to the Guildhall indicate that it was first built sometime in the 1120s. At this time the citizens of London also won the right to elect a sheriff. The new hall was used as the centre of medieval government by the leaders of the wards, called aldermen by derivation from the original 'alderman'; Dyson and Schofield, *op. cit.* in note 24, 308.