

## Tiles from Reading Abbey.

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Just before the War the Corporation of Reading had agreed that the room over the Inner Gateway of the Abbey should be used to exhibit the ten historical Abbey pictures<sup>1</sup> and also as a museum for storing the few relics of this once beautiful building, of which King Henry I. laid the foundation stone in June A.D. 1121, and which for over 400 years was the centre of the religious, commercial and social life of the Town. Soon after the execution of the last Abbot, Hugh Cook *alias* Faringdon, in 1539, the demolition of the Abbey Church took place, and a record in the British Museum<sup>2</sup> gives a long list of the various parts which were sold and the prices paid for them. This destruction of the Abbey was so complete, that not only the fittings of the Church and Abbot's buildings, but practically every stone was wrenched away, leaving only the ruins as we see them today, which are only the core that filled in the massive 6ft. walls.

It will thus be seen how very little of the Abbey is left to us to-day, and when recently I was told that some pieces of paving were being dug up at the back of Abbot's Walk, I at once went where the digging was in progress. A number of broken pieces of tiles had been found, which I saw was part of an encaustic tile pavement, most of the pieces being very small. I carefully uncovered as much as possible and found about 60 pieces which I tried to put together and was able to make out an almost complete quarter of two different tiles, which measured  $6\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{4}$  inches square. From these I was able to make a drawing of the whole tiles  $12\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$  inches as illustrated.

A tile in the Museum  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches square has the same design as Fig. "A," which shows two dragons. Fig. "B" shows a geometrical design.

From measurements which I have made there is no doubt these tiles made a very beautiful pavement in the passage leading into the Abbot's apartments.



FIG. A.

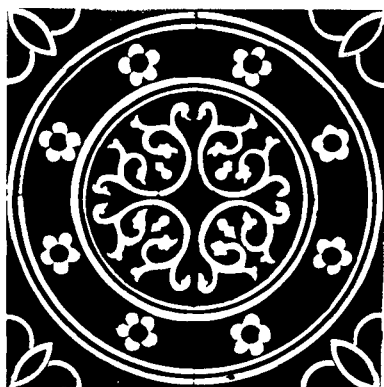


FIG. B.

<sup>1</sup> Presented by the late Dr. J. B. Hurry.

<sup>2</sup> *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XXXIX (1935), 107-144.