

## **Pottery and Ceramic Building Material from St Leonard's, Ludlow (sII97): Assessment Report**

***Alan Vince***

### **Summary**

A number of fragments of medieval ceramic ridge tile and floor tile were found, in context 1006. They come from a number of sources, mainly to the south of Ludlow. The majority are of a type known previously from Ludlow at St Peter's church, within the castle. Petrological study of these tiles suggests that they were produced in central Herefordshire, probably in or around Hereford. A study of the heraldry used on these tiles suggests that they belong to two phases: the earlier perhaps dating to the later 13<sup>th</sup> century and the later to the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century (Vince and Wilmott 1991; Vince 1997). Only two pieces retained any trace of their decoration and both appear to be unique to the St Leonard's site (Figs 1 & 2). One tile with a worn surface is of a smaller quarry size than others produced at this tiler.

A second group of floor tiles was produced in south Worcestershire, including at St Mary Witton, Droitwich, where a tile kiln was found in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Both plain and decorated tiles were present at St Leonard's. Of the two designs present, one is definitely found elsewhere (Fig 3) whilst the other is similar in style to a group known from several sites in the Welsh Borderland but cannot be precisely matched (Fig 4). These Droitwich-type tiles were produced using a very thin slip and it is consequently impossible to say whether or not the same die was employed from one site to another.

The ridge tile comes from Malvern Chase and Herefordshire.

A small quantity of post-medieval and early modern pottery was also found, in contexts 1006, 1008 and 1015. The earliest material dates to the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the form of two sherds from a wheelthrown Staffordshire slipware dish decorated in the style of Thomas Toft and his contemporaries. Two unusual finds are a sherd from a hollow ware vessel in Agate ware and a sherd of what appears to be a pedestalled bowl, or tazza, in Jackfield ware, produced in south Shropshire in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the assessment was to identify the pottery and tile and to produce a catalogue and concordance tables. This data was then used to assess the archaeological significance of the site and any further work required on the material from the evaluation excavation.

### **Description**

The range of pottery and ceramic building material types found is show in Table One.

**Table One: List of wares present and codes used in the catalogue**

Common Name	full name	period	earliest date	latest date	broad source	narrow source	source
MISC NY	Misc handmade with no common inclusions	nk	1450	1750	England	Welsh Borderland	Local (mudstone sand is found on the tile base)
A7B	Hereford Fabric A7B	med	1230	1550	England	Welsh Borderland	various
B4	Malvern Chase glazed ware	med	1250	1550	England	Worcestershire	Malvern Chase
BREDON	Bredon-type floor tiles	med	1320	1360	England	Welsh Borderland	Hereford?
DROIT	Droitwich-type floor tiles	med	1350	1450	England	South Worcestershire	Droitwich
STRE	Staffordshire redware	pmed	1630	1750	England	Staffordshire	various
STCOAR	Staffordshire coarseware	pmed	1650	1900	England/Wales	Staffordshire/Buckley	various
STCOAR	Staffordshire coarseware	pmed	1650	1900	England/Wales	Staffordshire/Buckley	various
STMO	Staffordshire/Bristol mottled-glazed	pmed	1690	1800	England	Staffordshire	
AGATE	Agate ware	emod	1730	1770	England	Staffordshire	various
JACKFIELD WARE	Jackfield ware	emod	1750	1900	England	South Shropshire	
TPW	Transfer printed ware	emod	1770	1900	England	Staffordshire	? numerous sources

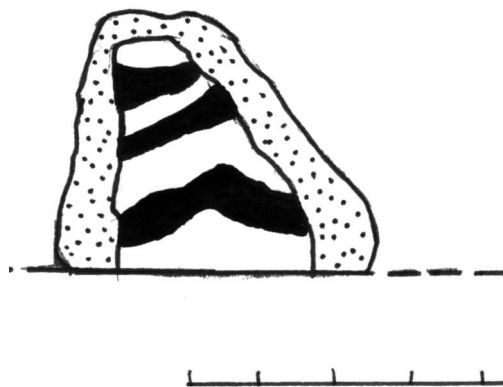
## Date

The Bredon-type floor tiles are probably to be dated to the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century, although there is evidence that similar tiles were being produced in the preceding half century (Vince 1991). The Droitwich-type tiles are of two types. The first (Fig 3) has a small quarry size, typically 100-110 mm square, and simple designs. Examples are known from the Singing School pavement at Worcester Cathedral, laid in the 1370s, but it is possible that the tiles were already old when used in that floor. Their designs can be traced back to the Westminster Tiler school of tile manufacture, operating in the London area in the late 13<sup>th</sup>/early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The second (Figs 4 & 5) is larger and includes designs which are typologically later than those used in the Worcester Singing School pavement. Many of these designs occur at Keynsham Abbey, Avon, and from that site and others they appear to date to the later 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is likely, therefore, that the Ludlow floors contained two batches of Droitwich-type tiles, one of mid-late 14<sup>th</sup>-century and the other of late 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century date. The ridge tiles are likely to have been contemporary with or later than the floor tiles.



**Figure 1 Bredon-type floor tile from context 1006 (AGV Design No 1215)**

This fragment comes from close to the corner of the tile. The curved edge is not completely circular and might be from the lower part of a heraldic shield although no similar designs are known.

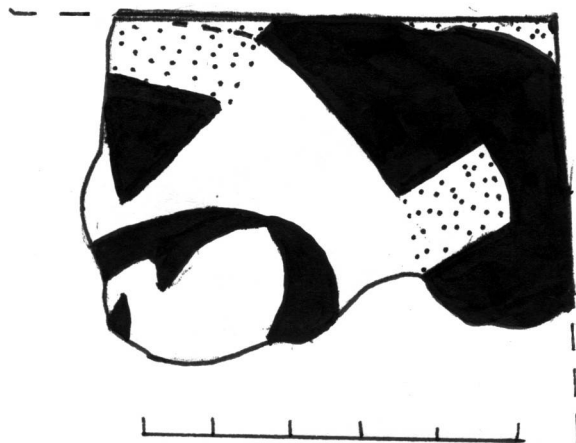


**Figure 2 Bredon-type floor tile from context 1006 (AGV Design No 1230)**

The design is one of a number bearing grotesque animals and foliage within a double-banded quatrefoil. No precise parallel can be found, but several of these designs are only known from fragments, and so this example may be from an unknown part of a known design

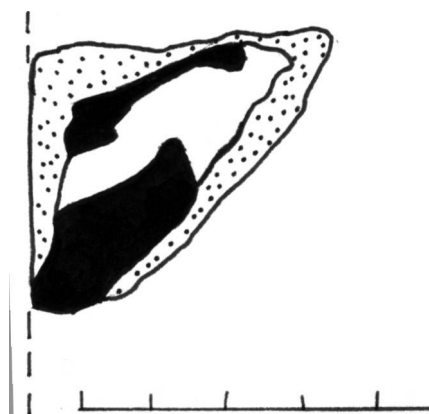


**Figure 3 Droitwich-type floor tile from context 1006 (AGV Design No 1218)**



**Figure 4 Droitwich-type floor tile from context 1006 (AGV Design No 912)**

Part of a four-tile pattern, the complete design of which was a quatrefoil containing foliage



**Figure 5 Droitwich-type floor tile from context 1006 (AGV Design No 1229)**

The tile was scored diagonally before firing and the design was probably a large fleur-de-lis set diagonally on the tile.

The dating of the early modern pottery is described above (see **summary**).

### **Source**

The floor tiles and ridge tiles are of types which are widely distributed in Herefordshire but rare or absent further north in Shropshire (eg Much Wenlock, Shrewsbury). It seems, therefore, that Ludlow obtained its ceramic building material overland from the south, via the Lugg and Teme valleys.

The post-medieval ceramic building material, by contrast, includes some locally-produced material (the untempered roof tiles) whereas the pottery was probably obtained from Staffordshire, although it may include some material produced in south Shropshire (eg the Jackfield Ware vessel).

### **Function**

The medieval material is all building material, from the church floor and, presumably, the church roof. The post-medieval pottery is in the main of standard forms and functions, except for the ?tazza, which was probably used either as an ornament or an elaborate table setting.

### **Recommendations**

The floor tiles are of some importance since they provide evidence for the trade of floor tiles around the Welsh borderland and indicate that the church was being re-floored during the mid 14<sup>th</sup> and late 14<sup>th</sup>/early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Should further disturbance to archaeological levels take place an attempt should be made to place the floor tiles in their architectural and stratigraphic context. They indicate that as far as building materials were concerned Ludlow can be treated as a part of Herefordshire, whereas Shrewsbury had a completely different supply network. A note should be published in an academic journal so as to announce their existence to a wider audience. The post-medieval finds are of less interest, but should be retained and deposited in a recognised archaeological repository.

### **Bibliography**

Vince, A G & Wilmott, T (1991) A Lost Tile Pavement at Tewkesbury Abbey and an Early Fourteenth-Century Tile Factory, *Antiq J* **71**, 138-73

Vince, Alan 1997 The Medieval Floor Tiles, in Shoesmith, R & Richardson, R (eds) *A Definitive History of Dore Abbey* Logaston Press, 77-84

## Appendices

### Catalogue

Context	cname	Form	Nosh	Description	Drawing ID
1006	A7B	RIDGE	35		
1006	AGATE	HOLLOW WARE	1		
1006	B4	RIDGE	1		
1006	BREDON	FLOOR TILE	1		1215
1006	BREDON	FLOOR TILE	2	PLAIN	
1006	BREDON	FLOOR TILE	1	DEC?	
1006	BREDON	FLOOR TILE	1	DEC	1230
1006	BREDON	FLOOR TILE	3	WORN	
1006	BREDON	FLOOR TILE	1	DEC	
1006	DROIT	FLOOR TILE	1		1229
1006	DROIT	FLOOR TILE	4	WORN	
1006	DROIT	FLOOR TILE	5	PLAIN	
1006	DROIT	FLOOR TILE	1	DEC	912
1006	DROIT	FLOOR TILE	1	DEC	1218
1006	MISC NY	FLAT TILE	1	MUDSTONE SAND	
1006	STCOAR	BOWL	1	UNGLAZED	
1006	STMO	BOWL	1		
1006	STRE	DISH	2	TOFT STYLE	
1008	STCOAR	BOWL	3		
1015	JACKFIELD WARE	TAZZA	1		
1015	TPW	CUP	4		
1015	TPW	DISH	1		