

## SOME NOTES ON THE ANCIENT ENCAUSTIC TILES IN TEWKESBURY ABBEY.<sup>1</sup>

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In this part of England we pride ourselves very much on the beauty and interest of the ancient pavements of our churches. Tewkesbury was doubtless rich in this form of ornament, but comparatively little remains of its ancient grandeur. Some, however, is still *in situ*, and many tiles were rescued by Mr. Collins, to whose careful drawings I am indebted for much information.

Foremost in interest are the tiles in the Founder's, and in the Beauchamp Chapel, which have never been disturbed since the day they were laid down. In the former, is the extremely fine armorial scutcheon of the lion rampant of Fitzhamon, the Re-founder, impaled with the cross ragulé, the Arms of the Abbey. The head of a crosier appears above the shield. The date is 1397. The next pavement dates from somewhat later, and is in the chapel erected by Isabella, Countess of Warwick, for the repose of the soul of her first husband, Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Worcester, who was killed at Meaux, in 1421. The chapel was dedicated on August 2nd, 1438, a year before the Countess' death. The design is a fine one of sixteen tiles, and repeats the Earl's Arms four times, "a fess between four cross crosslets with a crescent for difference," arranged in the lozengey fashion so much in vogue at that period.

None of the rest of the tiles are *in situ*, and we have to go to other churches, notably to Broadwas, in the neighbouring county, to gain a clear understanding of the way in which the different patterns were originally arranged. The finest of these were in sets of sixteen of exquisite foliage design; in some the arms of the Beauchamps of Warwick, of Powick and of Holt are introduced; others are found with the bear and ragged staff with griffins and wyverns and other badges of noble houses. The decorations of all these sets are of a most varied and elaborate character, the oak, the vine, the ivy and other leaves are gracefully introduced, and twining stem, calyx, and tendril are represented with the utmost faithfulness and beauty.

On a fragment is to be found one of the curious shields bearing "the instruments of the passion," which seems to have been a common device in the middle ages. This "shield of salvation," as it is sometimes called, bears the cross, the scourge, the ladder, the nails, the spear, and the rod with hyssop. At Malvern, the number of the instruments is

<sup>1</sup> Read at Tewkesbury Aug. 13th, 1890.

## 84 ANCIENT ENCAUSTIC TILES IN TEWKESBURY ABBEY.

greater than is found here; in some cases the dice are represented, numbered one, two and three. Another set of sixteen tiles, which is not complete here, bears on the four tiles in the centre the favourite badge of Edward the Fourth, a rose with rays of the sun issuing from it; it is to this that Shakespeare refers in the opening lines of his play of Richard the Third.

"Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by the Sun of York."

The heraldic tiles are very interesting, and date from 1370 to 1450, unless we are to suppose that the arms "on a chevron, three fleur de lys" are those of Thomas de Cobham, Bishop of Worcester from 1317 to 1328. I have an impression of his seal of dignity with these arms on it.

One tile bears the arms of England and France modern, quartered as usual, except that the lions are in the first and fourth quarter which is contrary to common usage. Another, England impaling France modern, for a long time puzzled me greatly. I of course suspected that some day I should find a tile bearing France modern impaling England, and that the two tiles would make the quartered coat. It was not, however, till after this tile had been found, not only here but also at Malvern, Holt Strensham Warndon and Canynge's House at Bristol, that I discovered its fellow in a fire place at Naunton Beauchamp Court. As it bore a label I did not hesitate to assign it to Henry, Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V., and to fix its date at about 1412.

You will find also among the tiles here the arms of de Clare Le Despenser, Berkeley, de Warrenne, de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, and Corbet. There is a fine example bearing the arms of Somerville of Aston Somerville. "Three leopards' heads in fess between as many annulets," and another "quarterly per fess indented, in first quarter a lion passant guardant," which I refer to Sir Richard Crofts, who took Prince Edward prisoner at Tewkesbury, in 1471. I gather from Mr. Collins' book that there is a monument to a member of this family with the same arms in the church at Chipping Norton.

The last tile to which I shall refer bears Le Despenser impaling Burghersh. If I remember right you will find the same arms on a shield over the doorway of the chapel built by Isabella, Countess of Warwick. This evidently refers to Edward, Lord Le Despenser, who married Elizabeth Burghersh. He died in 1375, aged 39, and was buried at Tewkesbury.

If any of my hearers are interested in old heraldic tiles, let me advise them to visit the splendid church of Bredon, which is about four miles from here. They are the finest set of purely heraldic tiles which England can produce, and date from 1372 to 1375.