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## SOME EARLY CLAY ROOF TILES FROM BISHOP'S WALTHAM PALACE, HAMPSHIRE

### Introduction

In 1991 John Hare published the results of his research into the development of the roofing industry of later medieval Wessex (Hare 1991, 86–103). He showed that in central and southern Hampshire, slate was the predominant roofing material from the late 12th century through to c. 1350–75 when a ceramic roof-tile industry was swiftly developed. In north-east Hampshire and west Surrey a different picture is emerging. Slate hardly appears in the archaeological record at all, whereas ceramic tile makes its first appearance c. 1175.

### Roofing materials from Bishop's Waltham Palace

As part of a programme of research into the development of early medieval roof-tile kilns and their products, a detailed study of the roofing materials recovered by the late S. E. Rigold from his excavations at Bishop's Waltham Palace (SU 552173; Fig. 1) was undertaken by the author. The aim was to ascertain whether there were any parallels between the ceramic roofing materials excavated by the writer at the Quarr Abbey tiler, Isle of Wight and similar material used at Bishop's Waltham (Riall *et al.* 1996). This revealed that 'pie crust' style crested ridge tile used in conjunction with a slate-roofed structure at the Quarr tiler (dated to c. 1280–1300) was matched by similar tile at Bishop's Waltham where slate was, at this period, the predominant roofing material (*ibid.*, note 1). However, amongst the Bishop's Waltham material there were also a number of fragments of ceramic roof tile which can be dated to the mid to late 12th and early 13th centuries, and some of this tile can be shown to be derived from tile kilns in north-east Hampshire and west Surrey.

At Bishop's Waltham the earliest buildings appear to have been covered with ceramic roof tile of the so-called 'Roman type'. This system of roofing used flat *tegula* tiles, with a flange running down each edge, and the joint between each pair of *tegulae* covered by a curved *imbrex* tile. Some of the material recovered by Rigold is undoubtedly Romano-British tile which may have been re-used, since there are

fragments of combed hypocaust tile in the assemblage, but much of the material is certainly medieval. Similar tile was recovered from the nearby Palace Stables site (Lewis 1985, 108–109). Traditionally, this style of roofing material is dated in Southampton and London to the mid to late 12th century (Platt and Coleman-Smith 1975, 189–90; Armitage *et al.* 1981). At some point in the later 12th century the use of 'Roman type' tiles was supplanted by the introduction of 'bat' tiles, so-called from their shape (also called 'shouldered tiles'), with these in turn being replaced by a complex sequence of peg tiles and peg-and-nib tiles. Bat tiles are currently known only to occur on sites across London and in association with the roof-tile kilns at Farnham and Guildford in Surrey and Lewes Priory in Sussex. Both the Surrey kilns have been dated to the early 13th century, the kiln at Borelli Yard, Farnham, falling out of use before 1220 (Riall 1995), whilst that at Guildford was abandoned before 1230. These kilns produced a surprisingly complex sequence of roof tiles encompassing both peg tile and peg-and-nib tile.

### Tile types

Two forms of the Guildford-produced peg-and-nib tiles have been recognised amongst the Bishop's Waltham material, along with a further tile type, an ornate, knife-cut, crested ridge tile, which is perhaps from the Borelli Yard tiler, Farnham.

*BW Type 1*: peg-and-nib tile, represented by three fragments, none of which provides either a full width or length (Fig. 2).

The key diagnostic feature in this tile type is the method in which the nib was formed and, in particular, the presence of two finger-marks on the tile-head. The nib was formed from a separate piece of clay and applied to the back of the tile, the joint between the nib and tile being reinforced by pulling part of the tile-head down to the nib and merging the two together. This very unusual, perhaps unique, manufacturing technique left a 'dent' or 'notch' in the tile-head, making this tile type very recognisable. The nib has traces of pinch-marks on either side and is sub-triangular in shape when viewed from above. A key feature of this process is the presence of two finger impressions on the tile-head in the base of the 'notch'. These impressions are so slight and narrow that they seem to indicate that the nibs were made by a younger person, possibly a child.

The Bishop's Waltham tile exactly matches examples from Guildford (there termed GCP T3) where complete tiles were found. These were c. 375 mm long and 215–225 mm wide with a thickness of 17–21 mm. Although rectangular, these tiles have rounded corners. Many have a bright, glossy glaze, brown or orange in colour, applied to approximately the lower third of the tile. The great majority were made with the peg-hole on the left of the struck face and the nib to the right. Less than 10% of the tiles were made with the peg-hole on the right and nib to the left. The Bishop's Waltham tiles are all of peg-and-nib type.

*BW Type 2*: a second peg-and-nib tile type, this is represented by at least six fragments, but again no complete widths or lengths survive.

The nibs on these tiles are set very close to the tile-head and are rather wider (80–90 mm on BW Type 2 and 50–60 mm on BW Type 1 tiles), but a little more protuberant than those on BW Type 1 tiles (20–25 mm on BW Type 2 compared to less than 20 mm on BW Type 1). In two cases a line was scored across the tile just below the nib and parallel to the tile-head. A similar feature occurs on the Guildford tiles. The BW Type 2 tile nibs are more geometric in shape than BW Type 1, being better formed and perhaps

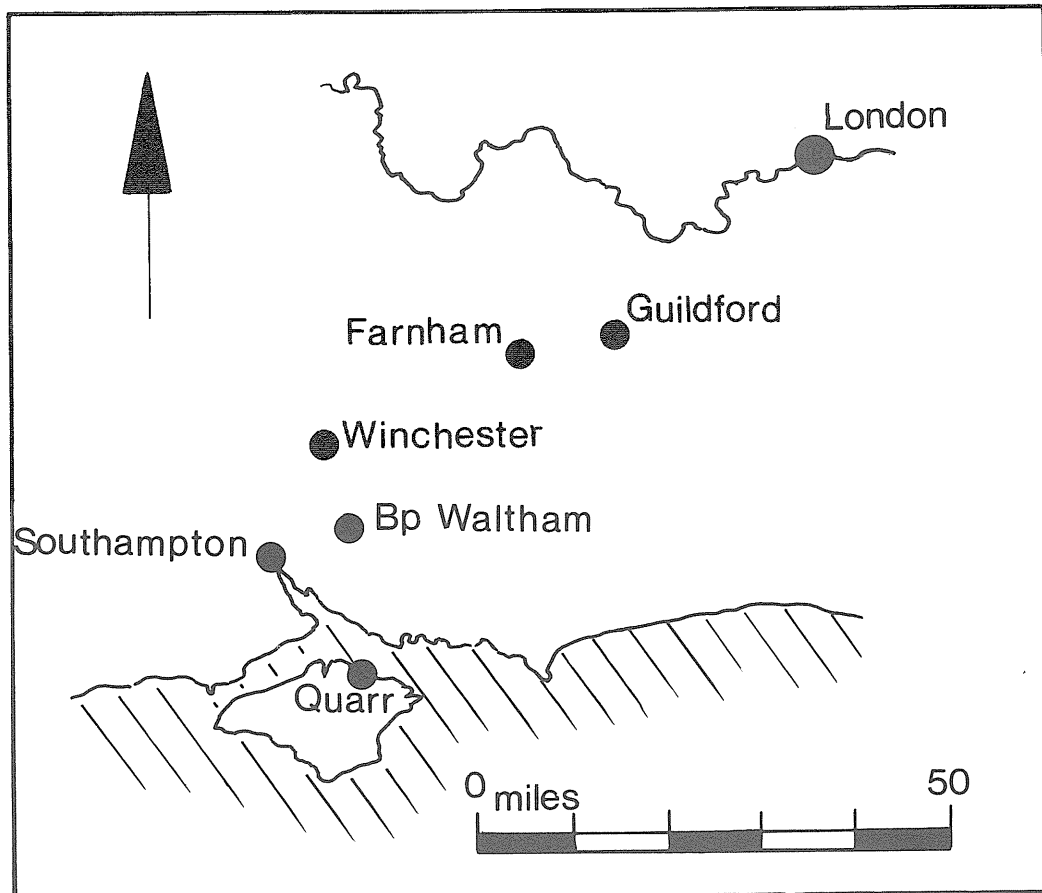


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Bishop's Waltham Palace and tile kilns mentioned in the text.

finished with a trimming-knife, unlike the BW Type 1 nibs, which were much more free-form and randomly made. Three discernible forms are present in the Guildford assemblage (GCP T7, GCP T8 and GCP T9) of which the T8 and T9 variants provide a close parallel to the Bishop's Waltham tiles. Similar tiles were recovered from the excavations at Battle Abbey where they are dated to the mid 13th century (Streeten 1985, 96–7). The Guildford T7–T9 tiles were made between 1210 and 1230. Peg-and-nib tile was also manufactured at Borelli Yard, Farnham where it is thought to have been the last variation in the tile sequence and thus dates to about 1215–1220. The Borelli Yard peg-and-nib tiles are, however, quite different in form. The real difficulty with this type of tile is that it enjoyed sporadic, if short-lived, bursts of popularity and was produced in a variety of forms, few of which have or can be closely dated. Indeed, were it not for the presence of the Type 1 tiles at Bishop's Waltham then it would be very difficult to suggest a connection with Guildford for the Type 2 tiles.

*BW Type 3:* fragment of crest from a knife-cut, crested ridge tile (Fig. 3). The decorative form of this fragment matches similar material produced in the Borelli Yard tile kiln and is similar to ridge tile from the Farnham Park tile kiln, although the material from that kiln does not include any glazed fragments (Riall 1997). The Bishop's Waltham crest can thus be dated to before 1220.

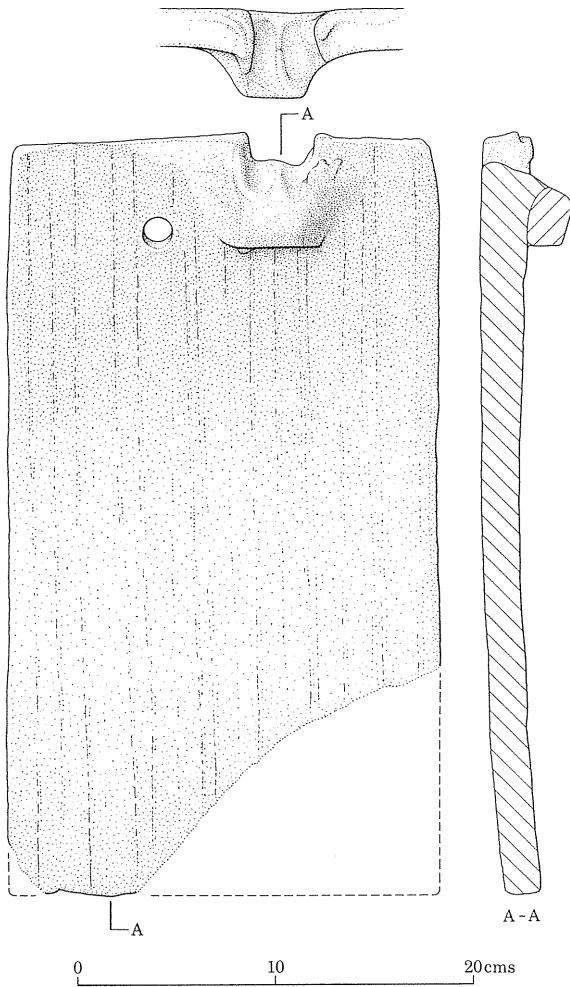
### Discussion

Of some interest is an entry in the Pipe Rolls of the Bishops of Winchester for 1213/14 where, by order of Bishop Peter

des Roches (1205–38), *Three shillings and ten pence spent at Farnham buying ridge tiles ('crest') sent to Winchester* (Vincent (ed.) 1994, 109). It is conceivable that the Bishop's Waltham crested tiles are of a similar date. We may also note in the same Pipe Roll, *6s 9½d spent at Farnham in making shingles . . . sent to Winchester to cover the cloister* (ibid., 108).

What emerges from all this is that while the archaeological evidence provides much support for Hare's thesis regarding the use of slate on the bishop's buildings, it is clear that ceramic tile may also have seen some limited usage. It has to be said that the early Bishop's Waltham tiles could very easily have been used as fire-resistant materials for the construction of, for example, kitchen ovens and fireplaces rather than as roofing material. Furthermore, the occurrence of these pieces at Bishop's Waltham underlines Hare's comment about the bishop going to the market place to buy tiles rather than, at this period at least, manufacturing them nearby on his own estate.

One connection between Farnham and Bishop's Waltham is that both were episcopal manors. There may also have been a link between Bishop's Waltham and Guildford through the person of Peter des Roches who, as King John's chief minister, would undoubtedly have witnessed John's construction work at both Guildford and Odiham whilst he himself was undertaking building work at Farnham. This connection survived into the reign of Henry III (1216–72). Remaining questions include the extent to which the almost exclusive use of slate penetrated into central Hampshire and the date at which it was fully replaced with ceramic tile. In north-east Hampshire and west Surrey it is clear that clay tile production was in full swing by the start of the 13th century.



Notes

1. The material excavated at Bishop's Waltham Palace is stored at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport. I am grateful to Mr Nicholas Moore, of English Heritage, for permitting me to examine the material. Rigold's excavations have not been published, but annual summaries appeared in *Medieval Archaeology* from 1957 to 1965 (Wilson and Hurst 1957, 154; Wilson and Hurst 1958, 194; Wilson and Hurst 1961, 317; Wilson and Hurst 1962/3, 319; Wilson and Hurst 1964, 248; .
2. The writer is producing reports on both kilns and their products, having directed the Borelli Yard excavation in 1985-86 (cf *Medieval Archaeol* 30, 1986, 164-5 and 166), and is associated with the Guildford work.

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Fig. 2. Peg-and-nib tile from Guildford (GCPT3) which matches the BW T1 tile from Bishop's Waltham Palace. Drawn by Jim Farrant.

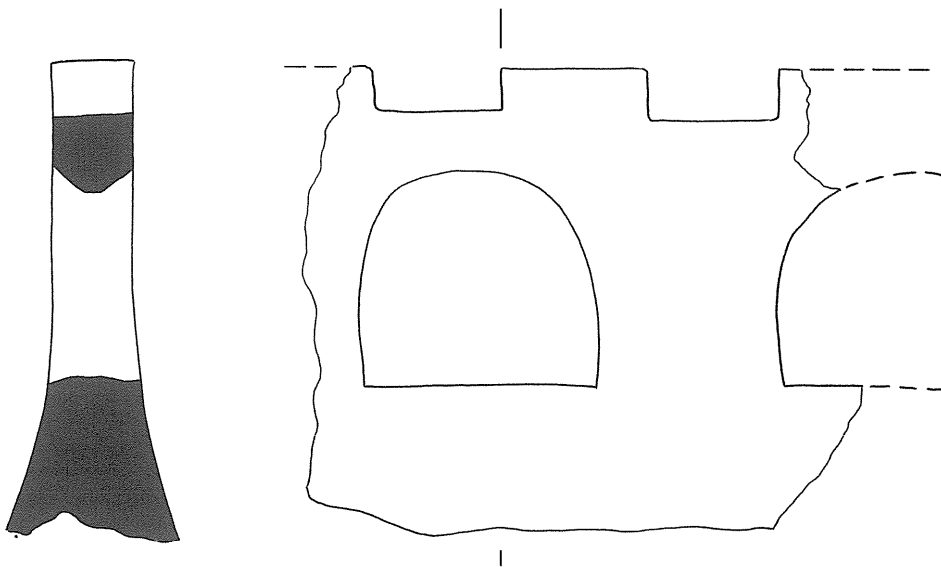


Fig. 3. Knife-cut crested ridge tile from Bishop's Waltham Palace. Drawn by Nicholas Riall. Scale 1:2.

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### MEDIEVAL EUROPE BRUGGE 1997: AN INSIDE VIEW

The last issue of *Medieval Ceramics* (21, 1997, 116–18) included a report on the Medieval Europe 1997 international conference of medieval and later archaeology, held at Bruges, 1–4 October. Apart from a survey of the sections and lectures – with a particular emphasis on lectures related to medieval and later ceramics — the comments also formulated a few criticisms which as one of the principal organisers I feel deserve a brief reply.

1. Some papers were perhaps not up to standard, outdated or consisted of a repeated version of contributions already presented elsewhere; as the comments in *Medieval Ceramics* suggest, a more rigorous selection of papers is needed. It should not, however, be forgotten that the Medieval Europe conferences are *open* conferences, with an *open* call for papers. The organisers of the York 1992 and the Bruges 1997 conferences have learned that there is often quite a substantial difference between the abstracts sent in by the prospective speakers and the papers actually presented. By the time the programme has been finalised and the conference opens, it is too late to intervene. Indeed, some of the authors of the comments in *Medieval Ceramics* were leading a particular section and must have had the same experience. That quite a few speakers did not ever send in their written text or sent it at a very late date — the last one arrived at the beginning of September — did not help to avoid “accidents”. In short, the professionalism of at least a number of (medieval) archaeologists leaves something to be desired, a point further illustrated by the fact that some proposed speakers never even bothered to reply and/or simply did not turn up, something which the organisers of any conference regret but are powerless to do much about. It is perhaps the price to pay in the case of an open international conference, where one of the basic philosophies is to provide the maximum number of archaeologists with an opportunity to present and discuss their work and to exchange ideas across the boundaries of particular specialist fields.

2. This exchange of ideas is important. Though one can see why the comments in *Medieval Ceramics* focus mainly

on pottery, regrettably other subjects receive less attention. If archaeologists continue to avoid more holistic approaches to the medieval and later material — and therefore also social and economic — world, we should not be surprised that the archaeological evidence is not always taken sufficiently seriously by other disciplines. In this respect, ‘networking and exchanging views across the board’ was and is one of the main reasons to organise this kind of event — as was explicitly emphasised in the opening addresses.

3. Finally, difficulties associated with linguistic obstacles and indeed even with mitigated forms of nationalism still seem to be quite prominent; the comments in *Medieval Ceramics* refer — repeatedly — to the difficulties with languages other than English, emphasising the papers given in English and on UK material while advocating more interaction “between French- and German-speaking delegates and the English-speaking fraternity”. The York and Bruges conferences provided an opportunity for networking across linguistic and geographic as well as subject-related barriers, but delegates could be somewhat more pro-active in this respect — as indeed (and very fortunately) some have been with good prospects for future co-operative ventures. For those less open to that opportunity as well as for the linguistically impaired, the world will always be a more difficult place and so will medieval and later archaeology.

The *Medieval Europe* conferences at York and Bruges can best be seen as starting points, and other forms of such conferences should definitely be considered. Perhaps Basel will provide another approach, which will have its own advantages and possibly also its own drawbacks. But not only the organisers but also the delegates have responsibilities. This is one price of seeking a European approach and a European unity, a process which clearly is not always easy.

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### CORRIGENDUM

Note on **Maureen Mellor**, *Pots and People that have shaped the heritage of medieval and later England*, reviewed in *Medieval Ceramics* 21, 125–6.

In the last *Medieval Ceramics* volume, David Hinton kindly reviewed *Pots and People*. In the penultimate paragraph he wrote:

‘The large pot from Swindon described as without an accession number in the caption to Fig. 30, is actually 1955:496 — the showcase is not so badly lit that the labels are unreadable’.

The accession number he quoted refers to a Thetford greyware; the labels in the showcase do not include the Swindon pot. Found on a property in Wood Street, Swindon, and, with another large vessel, presented to the museum by A. D. Passmore, the Swindon pot in question bears the accession number 1955:405.

Maureen Mellor