

David Gaimster and Roberta Gilchrist (eds), *The Archaeology of Reformation 1480-1580*

Maney Publishing, 2003. 492 pp, 220 line and h/t figs, 4 full colour plates, 14 illus.
ISBN 1904350003 (978-1-904350-00-2).
Price: £75.00. Hardback

The second joint conference of the Society for Medieval Archaeology and the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology was held in February 2001 in London. The 30 papers that emerged encompass not only archaeology, but history, architecture, and art history. They cover public worship and iconoclasm, private devotion and material culture, dissolution landscapes and secular power, corporate charity and Reformation, and burial and commemoration.

Traditionally the Reformation has been viewed as responsible for the rupture of the medieval order and the foundation of modern society. Recently historians have challenged the stereotypical model of cataclysm, and demonstrated that the religion of Tudor England was full of both continuities and adaptations of traditional liturgy, ritual and devotional practice.

This is a mighty volume provided a magnificent, archaeological overview of the reformation, although the portion that be regarded as consideration of ceramic artefacts is quite low. Hugo Blake *et al* consider the Cult of the Holy Name of Jesus but consider the evidence from all sources whether written, extant or archaeologically recovered. The blending of archaeological and historical sources is a theme of this volume, and should be applauded.

David Gaimster plots the changes in influence among glazed earthenware and devotional pipeclay figurines, in which the rise of new mould technology and printed inspirational sources which enabled the cult of Saints to change, in time, to that of secular imagery. These in turn inspiring and influencing other ceramics such as London produced tin-glazed ware.

Sarah Tarlow writes 'What Happened to Catholic Things in a Protestant World?' and examines how when changes of this nature are made that people either re-interpret or resist directives. Hypothesis that potentially can be applied to other major historical events, for instance is the English Civil War mirrored in a ceramic assemblages? The reuse of has been divided by Stocker into 'casual', 'functional and 'iconic' contexts, these are contexts that can be applied by ceramists.

This volume is generally to be applauded as it blends archaeology and history in an immensely satisfying fashion, but I am sure that MPRG member should like to have seen more ceramic coverage.

Roy Stephenson

Barbara J. Lowe, *Decorated Medieval Floor Tiles of Somerset*

Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2004. 160pp, 17 b/w illus.
ISBN 086183366X. Price: £14.95. Paperback

'Decorated medieval floor tiles of Somerset' brings together over 40 years of research on the floor tiles found in the historic (pre-1974) County of Somerset. Barbara Lowe has collected evidence from museum collections and excavations and has visited most churches and former religious houses in the county. A total of 624 different decorative designs are illustrated and in addition there are 65 small insets reconstructing the appearance of four, nine and sixteen tile panels.

The first part of the book comprises an introduction section which discussed among other things, tile production, manufacturing technique, evidence of production sites and the various design groups and schools. This is supplemented with various line drawings and photographs showing the layout of *in situ* tile pavements. The author has identified seven major tile groups/schools and a number of these have been split into various sub-groupings based on decorative design, location and date. The most common floor tile types in Somerset are the 13th to 14th-century inlaid designs of the Clarendon/Salisbury branch of the so-called 'Wessex school'.

The introductory text is informative and well written, but there are sections which would have benefited from updating, notably the discussion on early decorative tiles. The list of sites with Saxon tiles is incomplete, London for example is not mentioned, and the author states that there was no further development of glazed tiles until the introduction of ceramic roof tiles in the late 12th century. This overlooks the use of glazed wall tiles in Westminster Abbey during the late 11th century (Betts 1996, 19–24) and the evidence for the use of ceramic roofing at various sites in England, such as Beverley (Armstrong, Tomlinson and Evans 1991, 28), Lewis Priory (Lyne, 1997, 101) and London (Betts 1990, 220–9) by the mid 12th century. Similarly, discussion of the origin of the South Worcestershire/Droitwich group refers to a possible origin in south Worcestershire or the lower Seven valley but there is no reference to their manufacture at the Silver Street tile kiln in Worcester (White and Brown 1990, 16–23).

The second part of the book comprises descriptions of each of the 624 decorative designs known from Somerset. This catalogue includes details of the decorative pattern, size, keying (where present) and lists parallels from other sites in Somerset and neighbouring counties. This is followed by the illustrations and a gazetteer of sites listing the design types present at each. There is also a useful concordance list of sites by tile group/school, although it would have been helpful if a list of individual designs allocated to each group/school had been

included.

One major omission, which the author herself acknowledges, is any detailed discussion of fabric type. Such analysis can often be used to confirm where individual tiles belong to the various designated groups. For importantly, without such analysis it can be very difficult to identify the origin of plain glaze glazed tiles. One suspects that the absence of any detailed work on fabric type is one reason why the book is principally concerned with decorated tiles, although plain glazed tiles are briefly discussed in the main text and their presence is listed by site in the gazetteer.

There also seems to be some mis-understanding concerning what is required for fabric analysis. The author says that no sensible grouping by fabric can be undertaken 'until thin section petrological analysis can be carried out on all Somerset tiles', but this overlooks the option adopted by many ceramic tile and pottery researchers of identifying fabric type by the use of a lower power binocular microscope.

Despite the absence of detailed fabric analysis, 'Decorated medieval floor tiles of Somerset', is bound to become an invaluable reference guide to archaeologists, museum curators and anybody with an interest in the diverse range of decorative designs found on the floor tiles of Somerset and those of surrounding counties. One can only hope that the detailed painstaking work undertaken by Barbara Lowe over such a long period and its subsequent publication will inspire other floor tile researchers to publish the results of the work in their own areas.

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Ian M. Betts

Terence P. Smith 'Architectural Terracottas' in Barney Sloane and Gordon Malcolm, *Excavations at the priory of the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, Clerkenwell, London*

Museum of London Archaeology Service Monograph 20. London: Museum of London, 2004. xix + 434pp. 202 figs, 102 tabs, index. ISBN 1901992233. Price: £31.95. Paperback

Much of the priory and precincts of the Knights Hospitaller at Clerkenwell was excavated between 1986 and 1995. This revealed not only a good deal of the priory church and its conventual buildings but also details of the use of the site following its dissolution in 1540. The site at Clerkenwell is important enough in itself to merit considerable interest as the priory of the Hospitallers in England, but it is another aspect of the site which attracts interest here. This was the construction on the site of a brick-built house, called in this report B22, which was apparently fitted with architectural terracotta, decorated with Italianate *all'antica* motifs, similar to material used on those well-known Henrician courtier houses at Layer Marney and Sutton Place.¹

The early Tudor period was marked by a fascination for Italianate styles that pervaded almost every aspect artistic and architectural endeavour. The first, and in many respects the most significant work in this new style – generally termed *all'antica* or 'antick' – occurred with Torrigiano's tomb for Henry VII in Westminster abbey, completed by 1517.² This emphatically Italianate work was nonetheless set amidst an otherwise wholly Gothic setting, and this, as Terry Smith notes (page 314), in general characterises the early use of Italianate motifs in decorative and architectural contexts. Henry VII's tomb, together with Giovanni da Maiano's terracotta medallions of Roman Emperors and histories of Hercules, executed for Thomas Wolsey's Hampton Court sometime before 1521, were quite probably the inspiration behind a fashion for the use of architectural terracotta to embellish and ornament prestigious building projects. Much of this terracotta was exuberantly decorated with motifs in the *all'antica* style. While the fashion for *all'antica* lasted late into the century, the desire to use Italianate decorative terracotta faded away by c.1540-45. Henry VIII's break with Rome, and thus a perception that it was politically unacceptable to use a style seen as being 'Romish', has been cited as a reason for the abandonment of decorative terracotta.³ This conclusion does not however take into account a central fact of the Dissolution – the destruction of the monasteries themselves. Many were converted into country houses for courtiers and gentry, perhaps the only common factor being the need to possess the necessary wealth enabling the conversion of the monastic buildings. In virtually every case these men used the material most readily available to them: stone. Architectural terracotta was virtually synonymous with brickwork and, within the market of luxury courtier housing, there was now little call for either material.⁴