

# Medieval Floor-Tiles from St. Frideswide's Priory

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## SUMMARY

*Tiles (now in the Ashmolean Museum) from the Latin Chapel, Cathedral Gardens, 'watching chamber' and Meadows Building site are analysed and discussed, and previously unpublished designs are illustrated. The Latin Chapel tiles are mostly of 'Stabbed Wessex' (c.1280-1320) and 'printed' (c.1330-80) types, with a few printed tiles of c.1500. It is suggested that they may represent three floors: (a) associated with the 1289 shrine; (b) associated with the rebuilding of the Latin Chapel c.1330-50; and (c) the late medieval floor of which fragments remained in situ.*

The excavations in the Latin Chapel produced over 400 floor-tile fragments, and those in the Cathedral Gardens 35 fragments. In addition, the floor-tiles from the 'watching chamber' and those found on the site of the Meadows Building in 1862-4 have been included in this report. A draft report was prepared in 1971 by Michael Trend, David Ganz, Margaret Mullet and Brian Prescott-Decie which, with the accompanying card-index and notes, has proved useful in the preparation of this account. Unfortunately some tile fragments appear to have been mislaid since the draft report was written, and only the tiles now in the Ashmolean Museum are included here. The tiles have been re-examined to record details of their fabrics; I am grateful to Maureen Mellor who kindly arranged a loan of the Oxford Archaeological Unit's tile fabric series to ensure compatibility with their reports.

## LATIN CHAPEL AND CATHEDRAL GARDENS

The tiles from these two excavations have been dealt with together as they are very closely related as groups. The majority of the tiles from the Cathedral Gardens, which were found in unstratified deposits, may have originally been laid in the Latin Chapel and removed from there during 19th-century restoration work.

### *The general character of the tiled pavements*

As described above by David Sturdy, the Latin Chapel excavations revealed the existence of at least two successive tile pavements, the later 25 cm. higher than the earlier. The first ('Stabbed Wessex') pavement had been destroyed by the laying of the



Fig. 46. Latin Chapel: *in situ* fragment of tile pavement, looking S.W.

later pavement, and its design thus lost. Table 1 gives the occurrence of particular designs. Nearly fifty different tiles of 'Stabbed Wessex' type are represented, so the overall design must have been complex.

Sturdy discusses the design of the later pavement (above, pp. 97–100). Unfortunately, there is very little stratigraphical evidence for most of the tiles from this later floor, so an accurate reconstruction of the design is impossible in most cases. The exception is the fragment of pavement illustrated by Emden and republished here (Figs. 46–7).<sup>1</sup> It is the junction between two sections of floor, one square-set and one diamond-set (cf. Fig. 37). The *in situ* tiles consist of Haberly designs CXXI and CXXII (arms of Archbishop Chichele), a variant of CXXIII (LC18, arms of Burghersh) and a new design (LC15, illustrated Fig. 49 No. 15).<sup>2</sup> Enough of the tiles retain their locational information for it to be possible to reconstruct a small section of this floor.

Over twenty designs were present in the later pavement as a whole (see Table 1). Table 2 gives the numbers and percentages of two-colour decorated tiles, mosaic tiles and plain floor-tiles. As the main purpose of this table is to demonstrate the small number of mosaic and plain tiles in relation to two-colour decorated tiles, a division between 'inlaid' and 'printed' tiles has not been made.<sup>3</sup> The one relief tile from the Cathedral Gardens (Fig. 48) has been omitted from the table, as it does not fit in with the rest of the group and may be a stray from a different part of the Priory.

<sup>1</sup> A.B. Emden, 'Some Patterned Paving-Tiles in the Latin Chapel', *The Christ Church Cathedral Record* (1964), 13–16.

<sup>2</sup> L. Haberly, *Medieval English Paving Tiles* (1937).

<sup>3</sup> The term 'printed' is used here to define the technical development from the method of inlaying solid clay, following Haberly. The precise method of manufacture requires extensive further study. Mrs. Eames decided to abandon the distinction and refer to both types as two-colour decorated but I feel that the development is important. (Cf. E. Eames, *Catalogue of Medieval Lead-Glazed Earthenware Tiles in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum*, i (1980), 45–8).

TABLE I DISTRIBUTION OF DECORATED FLOOR TILES

Cutting 1

Type	No.	Type	No.
XXII	1	LIV	6
XXIII	1	LVI	1
XXIV/V	2	LIX	1
XXV	1	LXI	2
XXVIII	1	LXX	1
XXXI	1	LC3	6
XXXII	2	LC4	2
XXXVIII	3	LC7	1
XL	1	LC8	1
XLIV	1	LC11	4
XLIV/V/VI	4	LC12	1
LVI	1	LC13	1
LC3	1	Unid.	5
LC10	1	<i>Inlaid</i>	104
LC11	2	LXXX	1
LC14	1	CXIV	1
HOHLER W9	1	CXXI	5
HOHLER W35	1	CXXII	2
Unid.	5	CXXIII	4
<i>Inlaid</i>	31	CCXLVI	1
CXXI	2	LC15	3
LC18	2	LC17	1
Unid.	1	LC18	7
<i>Printed</i>	5	LC21	2
<i>Total</i>	36	LC22	3
		Unid.	9
		<i>Printed</i>	39
		<i>Total</i>	143

Cutting 2

Type	No.	Cutting 3	No.
IX	1	Type	
X	1	I	1
XI	1	III	1
XXII	6	XXII	1
XXIII	4	XXIII	1
XXIV/V	9	XXIV/V	1
XXV	3	XXVII	1
XXV/VI	1	XXIX	1
XXVII	2	XXXI	2
XXVIII	2	XXXII	1
XXXI	6	XXXV	1
XXXII	2	LII	1
XXXIII/IV	1	LIV	1
XXXV	6	LCI	1
XXXVI	1	LC3	1
XXXVII	3	LC8	1
XXXVIII	1	Unid.	1
XL	1	<i>Inlaid</i>	17
XLIV	8	CXXI	1
XLIV/V/VI	7	Unid.	2
XLV	1	<i>Printed</i>	3
XLVI	1	<i>Total</i>	20
L	1		
LII	3		

Cutting 4		Type	No.
Type	No.	LC17	2
		LC18	7
XLIV	1	LC19	1
LC4	1	LC20	9
<i>Inlaid</i>	2	LC21	2
<i>Total</i>	2	LC22	10
		Unid.	11
		<i>Printed</i>	72
		<i>Total</i>	158
Cutting unspecified			
Type	No.	Cathedral Gardens	No.
I	5	Type	No.
III	1	XXIV	1
XXII	9	XXIV/V	2
XXIII	3	XXVI	1
XXIV	2	XXVIII	1
XXIV/V	12	XXIX	1
XXVI	1	XXXI	1
XXVII	3	XXXII	2
XXVIII	5	XXXV	1
XXXI	3	XXXVI/VII	1
XXXII	1	XXXVII	1
XXXVIII	2	XL	1
XL/I	1	XLII	1
XLII	1	XLIV	1
XLIV	1	XLVI	2
XLIV/V/VI	4	LIV	2
XLV	1	LVI	1
XLVI	1	LC1	1
LIII	1	LC10	1
LIV	2	LC11	1
LVI	2	Unid.	8
LXI	1	<i>Inlaid</i>	31
LXVII	1	LXXX	1
LXIX	2	C	1
LXX	1	Unid.	1
LXXIII	1	<i>Printed</i>	3
LC2	1	CG23	1
LC5	1	<i>Relief</i>	1
LC6	1	<i>Total</i>	35
LC9	1		
LC11	3		
HOHLER W9	3		
Unid.	9	Watching Chamber	
<i>Inlaid</i>	86		
LXXIX	2	Type	No.
IC	1	XXVII	1
CXXI	4	XXVIII	1
CXXII	2	XXXI	2
CXXIII	8	XXXII	3
CLXVIII	3	XL	1
CLXX	3	XLI	1
CCXXXVI	1	XLII	1
CCXLIII	1	LXI	1
CCLIX	3	LC11	1
LC15	1	WC24	1
LC16	1		

Type	No.	Type	No.
WC25	1	XXXVIII	1
WC26	1	LIV	1
HOHLER W39	3	MB29	1
Unid.	1	MB30	1
<i>Inlaid</i>	19	MB31	2
CXXI/II	1	MB32	1
LC18	2	MB33	1
WC27	1	Unid.	1
WC28	1	<i>Inlaid</i>	12
Unid.	2	MB35	1
<i>Printed</i>	7	<i>Relief (early medieval)</i>	1
<i>Total</i>	26	<i>Total</i>	13

Meadows Building

Type	No.	Legend
XXIV/V	1	Roman Numerals = Haberly types
XXVI	1	Hohler = C. Hohler's types from Bucks.
XXXI	1	LC = Latin Chapel types (illustrated Figs. 49-50)
		CG = Cathedral Garden type (illustrated Fig. 48)
		WC = Watching Chamber types (illustrated Fig. 50)
		MB = Meadows Building types (illustrated Fig. 50)
		Unid. = Unidentified fragments

TABLE 2 Proportion of two-colour, mosaic and plain floor tile fragments

	Two-colour		Mosaic		Plain		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Cutting 1	36	68	12	23	5	9	53
Cutting 2	143	85	16	10	9	5	168
Cutting 3	20	83	3	13	1	4	24
Cutting 4	2	50	0	-	2	50	4
Cutting unspecified	158	90	9	5	8	5	175
Cathedral Gardens	34	89	1	3	3	8	38

*Two-colour decorated tiles*

Table 1 shows that no one design or group of designs dominated either of the tile pavements, and that many designs are represented by only very few fragments. As Sturdy (above, p. 98) estimates that the later pavement alone would have consisted of more than 2000 tiles, and only c.425 were recovered during excavation from sections of both pavements, it is impossible to say whether this represents a true picture of the design.

Almost all the tiles illustrated in Figs. 49-50 are designs not previously published from the area, or variants of ones which have been published.

*Relief tiles*

The one relief tile from the Cathedral Gardens (CG23, Fig. 48) resembles Haberly CCXLIII, but this was published as a 'printed' tile.

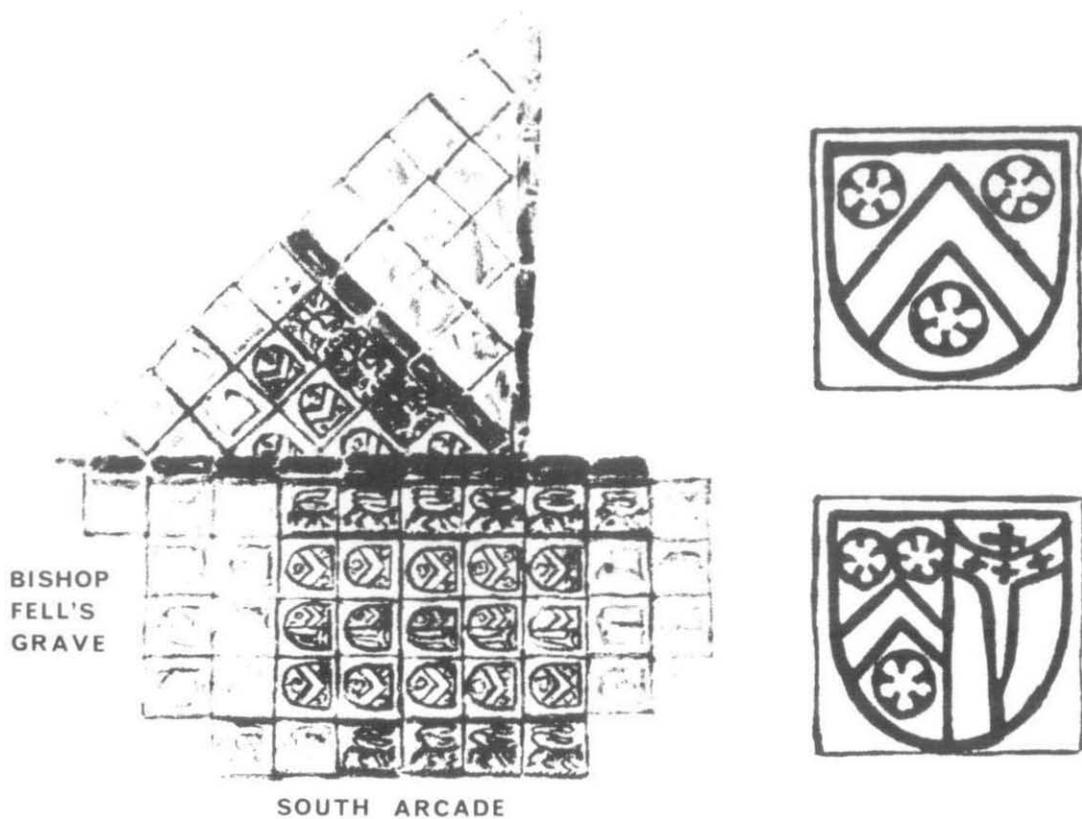


Fig. 47. Latin Chapel: A.B. Emden's drawing of the fragment of pavement shown in Fig. 46, reproduced from *Christ Church Cathedral Record* 1964.

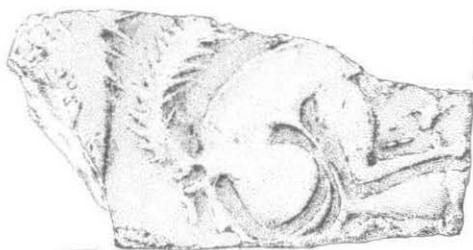


Fig. 48. Relief tile from Cathedral Gardens (tile No. 23). *Scale 1:2*. (Drawing by Sarah Blair.)

*Mosaic tiles*

About 40 fragments of mosaic tiles were found, of which three are rectangular ?border tiles. The rest are small square and triangular shapes, all but three of which are in Fabric IIIB which equates with the earlier pavement of 'Stabbed Wessex' type tiles. The small square tiles are either *c.*67 mm. or *c.*77 mm. square, and the triangular tiles were made from diagonally scoring and breaking the squares. Most of the mosaic tiles are worn, but where evidence of glaze colour remains, yellow, brown and dark green are represented in roughly equal proportions. No record of how these tiles were laid remains.

*Plain tiles*

Of the 28 plain tile fragments recovered, 12 are in Fabric IIIB and may be parts of mosaic tiles, but the fragments are too small to determine this. The other plain tile fragments are equally divided between Fabrics IVb and IVc. These fabrics belong to the later pavement of 'printed' tiles. Only seven of the fragments retain any trace of glaze, and of these six have green glaze and the other has yellow-brown glaze.

*The dates of the Latin Chapel pavements*

The earlier pavement seems to have been made up exclusively from 'Stabbed Wessex' tiles, which are usually assigned to the date-range *c.*1280-1320. The tiles relate well to those from St. Peter's-in-the-East, dated by Emden to *c.*1330,<sup>4</sup> and if the Decorated rebuilding of the Latin Chapel can be assigned to the 1330s (rather than the '40s or '50s), it seems possible that they represent its original floor. However, this stretches the dating somewhat, and the floor might more convincingly be associated with the installation of the new shrine in 1289.

The 'printed' tiles of the second floor include several Penn-type designs, datable to *c.*1330-80. The presence among these of tiles with the arms of Burghersh (LC18) suggests a connection with Bishop Burghersh's chantry, founded in 1338 (below, p. 245). On the other hand, the *in situ* section (Figs. 46-7) included tiles with the arms of Archbishop Chichele (Haberly CXXI and CXXII) also used in All Souls College chapel,<sup>5</sup> and a minority of the *ex situ* tiles are of *c.*1500. Probably the best explanation is that a complete floor of Penn-type tiles was laid after the rebuilding of the Latin Chapel in the 1330s or 1340s, and that a high proportion of these were re-used in the new floor of *c.*1500.

## THE 'WATCHING CHAMBER'

The Ashmolean Museum contains a collection of 26 two-colour decorated tiles and four plain tiles found in the filling of the tomb-chest under the 'watching chamber' in 1889. Many of the designs reflect those in the Latin Chapel and it is possible that they were

<sup>4</sup> A.B. Emden, 'Medieval Floor Tiles in the Church of St. Peter in the East, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, xxxiv (1969), 32; cf. Eames *op. cit.* note 3.

<sup>5</sup> Emden *op. cit.* note 1.

either laid at the same time or that they are wrongly labelled and in fact are part of the Latin Chapel pavements. Three new designs of 'Stabbed Wessex' type tiles and two of 'printed' tiles are illustrated in Fig. 50. Table 1 gives the occurrence of particular designs.

#### MEADOWS BUILDING

This collection of 13 tiles in the Ashmolean Museum was found during the digging of foundations for 'New Buildings' (i.e. Meadows Building), Christ Church in March 1863 (see below, p. 229). All except one are 'Stabbed Wessex' types and five new designs are represented (see Fig. 50). The other, an important late Anglo-Saxon relief tile, is discussed below (pp. 259–63) by Martin Biddle and Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle. Table 1 gives the occurrence of particular designs. The fact that only one design is represented by more than one tile suggests that recovery was selective. The discovery of decorated floor-tiles at this site implies that buildings other than the church in St. Frideswide's Priory were laid with tile pavements, and this would parallel the findings at the Dominican Priory, Oxford.<sup>6</sup>

#### CATALOGUE OF ILLUSTRATED TILES

The two-colour tiles in Figs. 49–50 are designs not previously published from Oxfordshire, variants of known designs, or more complete examples of designs known only fragmentarily. Two of the Latin Chapel tile designs (LC1 and 10) have been illustrated by combining fragments from the Latin Chapel with fragments from Cathedral Gardens where this enabled a more complete design to be recorded.

The following abbreviations have been used:

Ash:	Ashmolean Museum Accession number
Eames:	E. Eames, <i>Catalogue of Medieval Lead-Glazed Earthenware Tiles in the Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities, British Museum</i> (two vols., 1980).
Haberly:	L. Haberly, <i>Medieval English Paving Tiles</i> (1937).
Hinton:	D.A. Hinton, 'A New Tile Design from Abingdon', <i>Oxoniensia</i> , xxxiv (1969), 106–7.
Hohler:	C. Hohler, 'Medieval Pavingtiles in Buckinghamshire', <i>Records of Bucks.</i> xiv (1942).
Lambrick and Mellor:	G. Lambrick and M. Mellor, 'The Tiles', in G. Lambrick, 'Further excavations of the Dominican Priory, Oxford', <i>Oxoniensia</i> I (1985), 179–86.

#### LATIN CHAPEL (Figs. 49–50)

##### *Inlaid 'Stabbed Wessex' tiles*

1. Three fragments (composite illustration). Two fishes depicted head to tail, apparently joined by a line, and within a square frame. Similar to a tile from Abingdon (Hinton). Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 3, Ash. 1985.185 (two fragments); CG 1961, Ash.1985.188.)
2. Seven fragments which join to form c.70% of one tile. A five-petalled flower and a group of oak-leaves with the same design reversed above. Similar to Lambrick and Mellor No. 12. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash. 1976.475.)
3. Eight fragments (composite illustration of three). Hunting scene showing a huntsman blowing a horn and a dog chasing a stag. Hohler W2 from Notley Abbey; these fragments give additional detail of the design. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 2, Ash. 1985.185.)

<sup>6</sup> G. Lambrick and M. Mellor, 'The Tiles', in G. Lambrick, 'Further excavations of the Dominican Priory, Oxford', *Oxoniensia*, 1 (1985), 179–86.



Fig. 49. Two-colour tiles. Scale 1:4. (Drawing by Sarah Blair.)

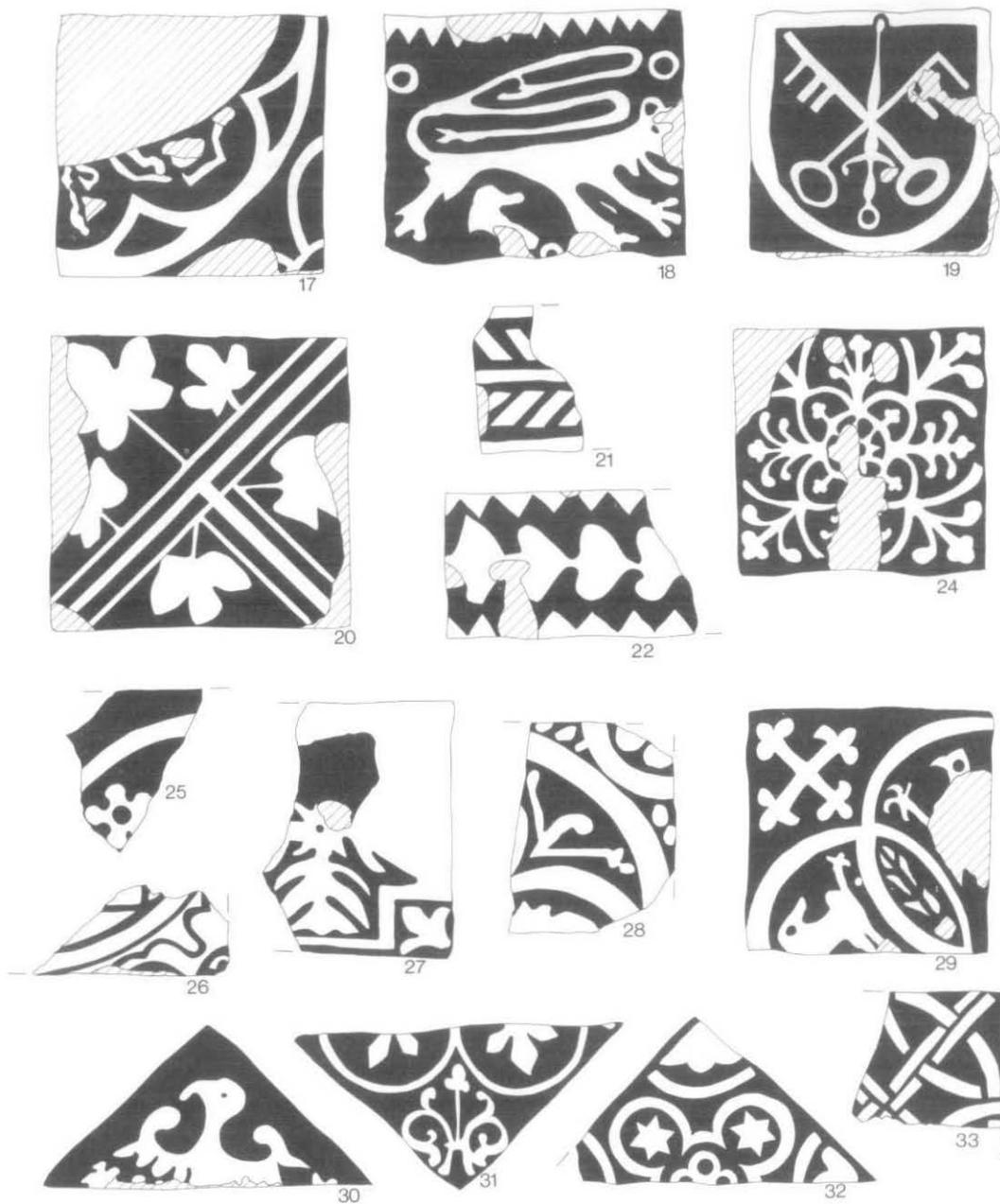


Fig. 50. Two-colour tiles. Scale 1:4. (Drawing by Sarah Blair.)

4. Three fragments (illustration is of two which join). Variant of Haberly XI/XII with the inner corner blank. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 4, Ash.1976.203; Cutting 2W, Ash.1976.203.)
5. Virtually complete tile in five pieces. Variant of Haberly XXIV which has piercing in the main band and a circle in the corner, here replaced with part of another ring. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1976.228.)
6. One fragment. Variant of Haberly XXIV/XXV with larger lobed foliage in the inner corner. Similar to Hohler W39. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1976.230.)
7. One fragment. Probably a variant of Haberly XXIX with the base of the foliage altered. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1976.278.)
8. Two fragments. Variant of Haberly XXXII which has a quatrefoil piercing the fleur-de-lys. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 3, Ash.1976.302.)
9. One fragment. Variant of Haberly XXXIII which has triangular piercings in the band around the central flower. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1976.303.)
10. Two fragments (composite illustration). A griffon. A reversed version of Haberly XXXVI. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 1, Ash.1976.315; CG I, Ash.1976.312.)
11. Ten fragments (composite illustration). Variant of Haberly XLVIII where the flowers in the centre of each side are formed of inlay, not outlined by it. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 2, Ash.1976.366-7.)
12. One fragment. Variant of Haberly L which has a piercing in each lobe of the quatrefoil. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 2W, Ash.1976.369.)
13. One fragment. Border tile. The design has been stamped off-centre. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 2, Ash.1985.185.)
14. One fragment. Letter I placed diagonally. The edges are scored and broken on two sides, indicating that these small letter-tiles were made in groups on larger tiles and then divided for use. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Cutting 1, Ash.1985.185.)

#### 'Printed' tiles

15. Four fragments (composite illustration of one complete tile and one fragment). Lion mask with protruding tongue. The complete tile is very worn, with only traces of the design remaining. Unkeyed. Fabric IVa. (*In situ* tile 9, Cutting 2W, Ash.1985.187; Cutting 2, Ash.1985.188.)
16. Complete tile, very worn. An eagle displayed with a block of slip on either side of tail. Scored diagonally. Unkeyed. ?Fabric IVb. (Ash.1985.187.)
17. Three fragments (composite illustration of one complete tile and one fragment). A ?dragon with leafy tail in a cusped quadrant. The complete tile is very worn with only traces of the design remaining. Similar to Hohler P119-24 and Eames 1398-9. Unkeyed. Fabric: moderate amounts of subrounded quartz, sorted, 1 mm. (Cutting 2E, Ash.1985.185; Ash.1985.185.)
18. Sixteen fragments (composite illustration of three). Variant of Haberly CXXIII which has wavy-edge borders and no circles. Unkeyed. Fabric IVb. (Ash.1976.440; Cutting 1, Ash.1976.439; *in situ* tile 1, Cutting 2W, Ash.1985.188.)
19. Complete tile. Worn. Variant of Haberly LXVII (arms of See of Exeter), which has fleur-de-lys in the two lower corners and a slightly different positioning of the sword. Unkeyed. Fabric IVa. (Ash.1985.187.)
20. Nine complete or near-complete tiles. Variant of Haberly CCXXVIII, which has a five-pointed star between two five-lobed leaves with two similar leaves below. Five of the tiles have been diagonally scored. Unkeyed. Fabric IVc. (Ash.1985.184-5, 188.)
21. Four fragments (composite illustration of three). Border tile. Unkeyed. ?Fabrics IVa and IVb. (All Ash.1985.186.)
22. Thirteen fragments (composite illustration of two which join). Border tile. Unkeyed. Fabric IVb. (Both Cutting 2, Ash.1985.188.)

#### CATHEDRAL GARDENS (Fig. 48)

#### Relief tile

23. One fragment. Squirrel, possibly holding a nut. Good green glaze. Similar to Haberly CCXLIII. Unkeyed. ?Fabric IVb. (Ash.1985.188.)

## WATCHING CHAMBER (Fig. 50)

*Inlaid 'Stabbed Wessex' tiles*

24. Complete tile. Variant of Haberly II, which has three-part foliage in the centre of each side instead of the five-part foliage on this tile. Worn. Keying obscured by mortar. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.554.)
25. One fragment. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.569.)
26. One fragment. Uncertain design. Unkeyed. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.575.)

*'Printed' tiles*

27. One fragment. Variant of Haberly CLXXIX, which has quatrefoils in the corners instead of fleur-de-lys. The design is badly executed, the slip having smeared and obliterated part of the design. Unkeyed. Fabric IVb. (Ash.1970.576.)
28. One fragment. Variant of Haberly CXVIII, which has a trefoil design within the quadrant. The back of the tile has sheared off and so no evidence of keying remains. Fabric IVc. (Ash.1970.571.)

## MEADOWS BUILDING (Fig. 50)

*Inlaid 'Stabbed Wessex' tiles*

29. Complete tile broken into three pieces. Part of a four-tile design of animals (?griffons) set within a quatrefoil. Trifoliate cross in outer corner, and stylised ear of corn enclosed by the intersection of the foils. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.543, 547.)
30. One fragment. An eagle displayed. Half-tile with scored and broken edge. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.544.)
31. Two fragments of scored half-tiles (composite illustration). Foliate spray in outer angle with floral or foliate motif beneath. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.545-6.)
32. One fragment. Scored half-tile. Variant of Hohler W18, which has circular piercings in the centre motif and all the stars pierced. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.550.)
33. One fragment. Similar to Eames 2084-8. Stabbed keys. Fabric IIIB. (Ash.1970.551.)