

A Wykehamist Tile in Timsbury Church, Hampshire

by THE REV. G. E. C. KNAPP

HIDDEN away at the end of a farm lane, 200 yards off the main Romsey—Stockbridge road, and about two miles from the town of Romsey, is the little 12th century Church of Timsbury. Nothing now remains of the earlier timber (?) church which was probably built by the Abbey of St Mary, Winchester, which held Timsbury in 1089, and 'always held it'—the Domesday Book phrase which can be taken as meaning that Timsbury was included in the Abbey Foundation Charter of King Alfred. The fact that the present church is oriented towards the N.E. suggests that it was built on the foundations of an earlier Anglo-Saxon building. The advowson was transferred from the Abbey of St Mary, Winchester, to the Abbess of Romsey some time before 1212. As it stands today, the church consists of a nave of about 1200, with chancel, wooden porch and bell-cote of early 15th century date.

Set in the sill of the north-east window of the nave are a few encaustic paving tiles, relics of the 13th century pavement of the chancel. Only three patterns are represented, but one of these is of very exceptional interest, and, as will be shown, has played an important part in tracing the history of the church. The other two are not uncommon in Hampshire, and are illustrated in the present writer's paper on the 'Tiles of the Alton Area of Hampshire' (Hants Archaeological Society *Proceedings*, Vol. XVIII, part 3) where they are Nos. 17 (also recorded by the writer at Winchester College, Faringdon and Kingsclere) and No. 26 (also at Faringdon, Winchester Cathedral and College, and Kingsclere).

The third tile (Fig. 1), which is the top left-hand section of a four-tile design, is remarkable for its size, 8½ in. square, but more especially for its subject. In size and general layout it is only comparable with the well-known 'Have Mynde' pattern, recorded by the writer at St Cross, Winchester Cathedral and College, Weeke, Headbourne Worthy and Barton Stacey (No. 6 in the writer's 'Tiles of Winchester Cathedral', *Win. Cathedral Record*, No. 25, 1956).

The Timsbury tile shows three concentric quarter circles, with a leaf design occupying the corner. Within the outer circle is the inscription 'MANER MAKYTH'; within the second circle are three objects which, despite the worn condition of the tile, can be distinguished as a bishop's mitre between two croziers; the innermost circle contains the quarter of a shield, the blazon of which has, unfortunately, worn off. (It is possible that, contrary to the usual medieval practice, the design may have been *painted* on, and not *stamped* into the clay; no trace of the impression can be seen.)

The first problem set by the discovery—or re-discovery—of this tile was to establish the identity of the missing coat of arms on the shield. With the evidence of the well-known motto of Bishop William of Wykeham together with the mitre and crozier, it would seem reasonable to assume that the arms would be those of that Bishop; but in research of this kind, nothing can be taken for granted, so it was necessary to investigate any clues which might throw light on the problem. An enquiry made to the Rector of Timsbury, the Rev. P. Fleetwood-Jones, resulted in the loan of a copy of the *Proceedings* of the Southampton

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Rambling Club for 1933, in which the late Mr W. J. Andrew, F.S.A., in a paper on Timsbury Church, relates the first discovery of this tile. When visiting Timsbury in 1913 with the late Dr Cox, who was then revising his Hampshire volume of the well-known *Little Guides*, he climbed up to the main roof beams of the church in order to try to date them, and to his surprise he found this tile hidden on one of the roof timbers. The lord of the manor, Mr Wilson-Wood, had the tile set in its present position in the sill of the N.E. window of the nave to preserve it.

To such a keen antiquary as Mr Andrews the finding of this Wykehamist tile in such an unexpected place provided a welcome problem to solve. In his article he writes: 'This naturally put me on inquiry as to any connection of Bishop Wykeham with Timsbury. From a family settlement made by Sir Thomas de Wykeham in 1433, as great nephew and heir to the Bishop and nephew to the Master Nicholas de Wykeham, I found to my surprise that the Bishop had owned lands all round Timsbury, namely at Stanbridge, Oke, Romsey, Mainstone, Ashfield and Grove Place.

'I then turned to the life of the Master, Nicholas de Wykeham, the favoured nephew of the famous Bishop, and I am afraid he proved a sad pluralist. Under the influence of his uncle, the Bishop, he was appointed by the Crown to the Mastership of St Nicholas, or "God's House", Portsmouth, from which he derived the title of Master, together with four prebends, the Church of Witney, and Archdeaconry of Wiltshire. He was made Warden of New College, Prebendary of Thorpe, of Waleton, of Boseham and of Bedwynde, Sarum, but also, and this is more important to us, Patron and Vicar of Romsey and Prebendary of Timsbury.

'As Patron and Vicar of Romsey and Prebendary of Timsbury, it was his duty to restore the chancel of this church whenever necessary, and I think that this was done upon his death by his heir, Sir Thomas de Wykeham, of the settlement of A.D. 1433, and the present east window dedicated to his memory and that of his great uncle, the Bishop.

'In proof of this I would call your attention to two little fragments in glass of the original inscription at the foot of the window, which is of this date. They are disconnected. I read the one as "Orate p . . .", and the other as "Magistri", so we get certainly "Pray for the soul of the Master", who must have, therefore, been the Master Nicholas de Wykeham, but it is more likely that the dedication was in the plural and included the Bishop and the Master. This title and "Magistri", coupled with the armorial tile, clenches the whole story of the general restoration of Timsbury church in or about 1430, the restoration of the chancel, the charming screen, the early benches, the old roof and bell-cote, and the picturesque oaken porch. Truly the manner was worthy of the man.'

The extract from Mr Andrews' paper has been given in full as, although all may not agree with his suppositions, it gave the writer a foundation on which to base further research. It is strange that this very interesting connection between Timsbury and the great founder of Winchester College does not appear to have been communicated to the College authorities at the time of Mr Andrews' discovery of the tile. When in the course of his survey of the Tiles of Hampshire the present writer saw and recorded this tile, he got in touch with the College Archivist, Mr John Harvey, F.S.A., F.R.S.L., who was very interested and most helpful in continuing the further research on the tile.

The quest now before the writer was to discover, if possible, other tiles of the set, and thus confirm the supposed arms and supply the missing part of the inscription. It would seem probable that if any similar tiles were in existence they would be found either among the large variety of designs in the retro-choir of the Cathedral, or among the tiles still existing at the College. The writer had already completed his record of all the Cathedral tiles, and

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the missing designs were neither there nor at the College, which the writer very carefully examined with Mr John Harvey. (In passing, it may be well to point out that Kirby, in his *History of Winchester College* (p. 145) is mistaken in his statement attributing these College tiles to Flanders manufacture; all the patterned tiles in the Audit Room and Exchequer Room in the tower are of the same series as those in the Cathedral and St Cross, and indeed in most of the Hampshire churches and monastic buildings. The tiles imported from Flanders, of which Kirby writes, must have been the large plain, pale cream and dark green tiles still *in situ* in many parts of the College. Mr Harvey suggests that these plain Flemish tiles came on to the English market because they were handy ballast for ships coming over to take back wool, etc. (see also the writer's 'Flemish Paving Tiles in Hampshire', p. 32 of Vol. XX, *Proceedings of the Hants Arch. Society*). Mr Christopher Hohler has drawn attention to this mistake of Kirby, in his paper on the 'Medieval Paving Tiles in Buckinghamshire', corrigendum, pp. 131-2, Vol. XIV, *The Records of Bucks.*, 1942. In Kirby (*op. cit.*, p. 47) mention is made of tiles being manufactured at Otterbourne for the College, with clay from Farnham. As there was clay suitable for tile and brick making at Otterbourne, it is suggested that the 'Farnham clay' was the white clay used for the 'slip', and that the patterned tiles now in the College may have been made in the Otterbourne kilns. With the help of Mr W. Hartas Jackson, of Marwell Manor, the writer is trying to find the site of this kiln—'Kiln Farm' and 'Kiln Lane' are local place names which suggest a possible site, although this may refer to the brick kilns of the time of Charles II.)

William of Wykeham appointed Nicholas Wykeham to the management of the Hospital of St Cross during the sequestration of 1375 (pp. 94-102, *Life of William of Wykeham*, Moberly). The Church of St Cross did not contain any trace of the missing tiles, nor were they found in the series at Romsey Abbey, nor in the many churches, priories and abbeys of Hampshire surveyed by the writer. The collections in the British Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum were searched without result, and the tiles and fragments stored in the Museums at Winchester, Southampton, Christchurch, Alton and Salisbury, while producing many interesting examples of other tiles, provided no further examples nor fragments of the Wykehamist tile.

There remained the possibility, provided by the slight clue of the various Prebends held by Nicholas Wykeham, that the missing tiles might be found in one of those churches. Thorpe, a very common village name, has not been identified. The possibility of 'Waleton' being identical with Waltham, closely connected with Bishop Wykeham, was investigated, but Lord Cunningham of Hyndhope courteously replied that any tile pavements still existing in the ruins of the Bishops' palace are still buried under masses of rubble, which the Office of Works hopes to be able to clear during the next few years. The Vicar of Great Bedwyn, Wilts., wrote that a fine tile pavement existed in that church until 1854, when it was destroyed during a drastic 'restoration'. Fortunately, the tiles were recorded about ten years before, by the then Vicar, the Rev. John Ward, and were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1854, but the Wykehamist tile is not amongst those recorded. Mr H. K. Gordon Bearman, County Librarian, Chichester, investigated the clue 'Boseham', but no trace of the Wykehamist tile now exists in Bosham Church. (The records of the Prebendary of Bosham are now held at Exeter.)

It was hoped that William of Wykeham's other foundation, New College, Oxford, might prove a fruitful field. Through the courtesy of R. L. Rickard, Esq., Assistant Librarian of the College, the tiles there were examined. This indeed did produce a small tile bearing the Founder's arms, executed by an unskilled or ignorant stamp cutter; this design is repro-

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Fig. 1.
The Timsbury Tile,
with suggested completion
of the whole design.

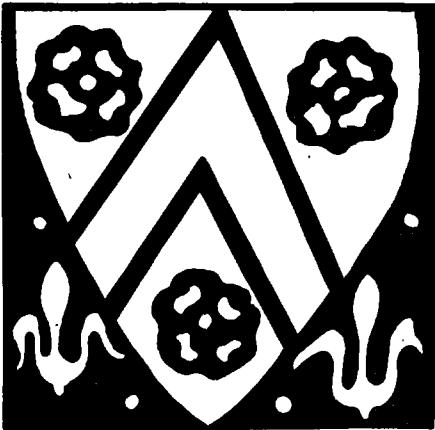
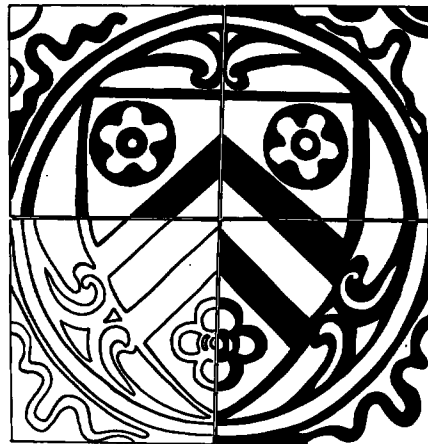


Fig. 2.
Wykehamist Tile
from New College, Oxford.

Fig. 3.
Wykehamist Tile
from Nuffield, Oxon.



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duced (Fig. 2). It will be noticed that in this tile a single chevron takes the place of the correct two chevrons. No trace of the large tile with the inscription was found at New College.

The writer is indebted to Christopher Hohler, Esq., of the Courtauld Institute of Art, for criticisms and suggestions, and particularly for the tracing of three tiles in his collection from Nuffield, Oxon., part of a four-tile design bearing the arms of William of Wykeham, and reproduced in this paper (Fig. 3).

And so, having investigated all probable and improbable sources of information, it would appear that the problem of the exact reproduction of the complete Wykehamist tile at Timsbury cannot be solved with absolute certainty, unless indeed, as the writer hopes, the publicity given by this paper may lead to further information. The writer would express his thanks to the Archivist of Winchester College, John Harvey, Esq., F.S.A., for all his help, and particularly for the drawing of the presumed complete design (Fig. 1), together with the suggested completion of the inscription: MANER X MAKYTH X MAN X QUOD X WILLIAM X DE X WYKEHAM X. Mr Harvey suggests this on the evidence of inscriptions in the 16th century windows in New College, Oxford, 'Maner Makyth Man Qd Bishop Wykeham',¹ and in Bradford Peverell Church, Dorset, 'Manare Makyth Man. Q' Willam Wykkam'.

Although the writer cannot claim to have solved the problem of this most interesting tile, it is thought that what has been done should be put on record. It should prove of interest, especially, to all Wykehamists, as the College Archivist informs the writer that, if one can accept the date of 1433, as suggested by Mr Andrews as the date of the tile, it provides the earliest known example of the famous motto of the Founder in the English language, all previous inscriptions up to this date having been in Latin.

In conclusion the writer would express his thanks to all those already mentioned for their help in his investigation, and in particular to Mr John Harvey, to Mrs Eames of the British Museum, and to Miss Trout, of Southampton, for her research in the Museum and Library of that town.

1. C. Woodforde: *The Stained Glass of New College, Oxford*, 1951.