

THE OLD CHURCH, STRATFIELD SAYE

By GEORGE C. BOON

In the summer of 1954, exploratory excavations were carried out, at the instance of the late Duke of Wellington, in an attempt to locate the exact site of the medieval church of Stratfield Saye, that 'ugly and uncouth structure, like many that disgrace this part of Hampshire', as the 18th century account, quoted by Christopher Hussey (1948) in his description of Stratfield Saye House, has it. This church is known to have stood close to the House. The church was pulled down in 1758 and the present church was built by Lord Rivers at a more suitable distance. The most important monuments were transferred from the old to the new building. The traditional position of the old church was on the site of a shrubbery immediately southwest of the stable-block which, with balancing coach-house, stands before the west front of the House, Jubilee Drive now running between them. The *Victoria County History* (Page 1911, 57, 61) misdates the erecting of the new church by Lord Rivers to 1784, and misplaces the site of the old church on the 'north-west' of the stables instead of the south-west.

The excavations were of a very slight extent, but revealed the existence of a wide robber-trench running about 25° S. of E. at a distance of 10.6 m from the south (rear) angle of the stable-block, and so roughly parallel to the modern line. It was clear that the building had been completely erased, and from the very shallow depth at which a number of interments occurred further to the west of the shrubbery, it appears that the grave-yard was also considerably levelled.

Finds from the excavation were very few, the most important being a much-worn Edwardian penny (bifoliate crown) which seemed to come from undisturbed ground at the inner edge of the foundation-trench, as if sealed by the former structure. Unfortunately, it was not practicable to define the relationship of the erased wall to the church-plan, and the coin itself does not now survive for a closer identification. It argues for some 14 or 15th century work on the building. Among a few other items, such as opacified fragments of window-glass, calmes, and the like, there were some pieces of glazed floor-tile, mostly dark and light plain varieties. One fragment, however, was of patterned type (Fig. 1) and is worth putting on record here. The tile was about 14 cm square and 3 cm thick, and was not keyed on the back. It was one of a set of four: the quadrant contained a lion to right, the raised tail and outline of the back alone surviving, the glaze and colour not having taken properly on the right. There is no tile of this sort in Revd. Knapp's extensive series from the Alton area (Knapp 1954) and I have not been able to trace another example locally in what published sources there are. Loyd Haberly (Haberly 1937, 294, no. cclvii; quoting Manning, MS Bodl. Top. Oxon. D. 194 for Osney), however, shows a very similar tile from Queens' College, Oxford, and alludes to another at Osney. Possibly, therefore, the tiles of the type used at Stratfield Saye came from that direction. None of the inlaid type was represented in the finds, and it is interesting to note that the stratified coin relates to about the same period



Fig. 1. (Scale $\frac{1}{2}$).

as the tile-fragment. The only other find was a single shard of medieval pottery, in an abraded state, a reddish sandy fabric with part of a 'pie-crust' lug-handle (?) attached. This and the tile-fragment have been presented to Basingstoke Museum by the Duke of Wellington (1972).

Acknowledgement

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