

## GazNews 17 Tiles in Gloucestershire - Hideous? Tasteless? April 2003

The latest county to be written up for the *Gazetteer* is Gloucestershire, where I have come across a couple of enjoyably acerbic opinions on tile installations. The first concerns the Godwin tile pavement laid in Gloucester Cathedral in 1871 to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott; it combined marble and tiles, the motifs of the latter being copies of medieval tiles from the neighbouring fifteenth century Seabroke pavement. Seen from above, this is a dramatic pavement, full of life and colour, but opinion following its installation was not all in its favour. An observer writing in 1899 gave this verdict:

'New tiles, ostensibly copied from the old ones, but of a different size, with an excessive glaze, and very stiff design and execution have been put down. It is hard to judge what the effect of the tiles would have been, as it has been quite killed by the white marble which has been mixed with them. The glaring white marble in the floor of the presbytery has been inlaid with biblical scenes filled in with black cement. It is possible from the triforium to get a general idea of the crudity and tastelessness of the pavement, which is so composed and arranged that time - the softener of all things - can never make it look appreciably better.'

Just over 100 years later, a recent book on churchyard memorials noted two unusual examples at Twynning Church in Gloucestershire: buff-coloured ceramic hearts dating from the early twentieth century. These were described as being 'of unbelievable hideousness and unsuitability'; in addition 'they have failed to weather or attract lichens and can only be left as an example of inappropriate materials'. Sadly I have no photograph, but I look forward to visiting.....

It is hard to tell what posterity will make of current ceramic creations, for instance the Gaudiesque blue ceramic bench installed in the churchyard of St Peter ad Vincula, Stoke-on-Trent (near the tomb of Josiah Wedgwood) to mark the Queen's Jubilee in 2000. Its design, by artists Helen Sayer, Philip Hardaker and Edgar Ruddock, was based on ideas suggested by local schoolchildren; the images, which include the footballer Stanley Matthews, relate to St Peter's and to Stoke's industrial history. Even more up to the minute is the colourful 28 metre long ceramic mural at Hulme Library, Manchester. Using over two tonnes of clay, it shows the uplifting history of Hulme and its regeneration, featuring the nearby Hulme Arch, and was made by Hulme Urban Potters in 2000-2002. Both these modern installations are attractive and are wearing well, although there's doubtless someone out there who thinks they are hideous! Work on the *Gazetteer* is progressing well, with Hampshire next to be written up, and we are still on target to meet the summer 2004 deadline required for spring 2005 publication.

Lynn Pearson, Gazetteer Editor



*George Gilbert Scott pavement, Gloucester Cathedral*



*Jubilee Bench, Stoke-on-Trent*



*Hulme Library, Manchester*

**There are now 5,155 locations in the TACS site database, and the Gazetteer is 34% complete with over 92,000 words written.**

Please send site information to Lynn Pearson,  
Gazetteer Editor, 9 The Poplars, Gosforth,  
Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 4AE  
0191 285 2863

e-mail: [lynnpearson@gosforth3.demon.co.uk](mailto:lynnpearson@gosforth3.demon.co.uk)

[www.tilesoc.org.uk](http://www.tilesoc.org.uk)

The Tiles and Architectural Ceramics Society would like to thank the following organisations for supporting the Gazetteer Project:

**School of Art & Design,  
University of Wolverhampton**

**The Pilgrim Trust  
The Manifold Trust  
Cumming Ceramic Research Foundation  
The Scouloudi Foundation**

## Tiles in Gloucestershire - Hideous? Tasteless?

The latest county to be written up for the *Gazetteer* is Gloucestershire, where I have come across a couple of enjoyably acerbic opinions on tile installations. The first concerns the Godwin tile pavement laid in Gloucester Cathedral in 1871 to the designs of Sir George Gilbert Scott; it combined marble and tiles, the motifs of the latter being copies of medieval tiles from the neighbouring fifteenth century Seabroke pavement. Seen from above, this is a dramatic pavement, full of life and colour, but opinion following its installation was not all in its favour. An observer writing in 1899 gave this verdict:

'New tiles, ostensibly copied from the old ones, but of a different size, with an excessive glaze, and very stiff design and execution have been put down. It is hard to judge what the effect of the tiles would have been, as it has been quite killed by the white marble which has been mixed with them. The glaring white marble in the floor of the presbytery has been inlaid with biblical scenes filled in with black cement. It is possible from the triforium to get a general idea of the crudity and tastelessness of the pavement, which is so composed and arranged that time - the softener of all things - can never make it look appreciably better.'

Just over 100 years later, a recent book on churchyard memorials noted two unusual examples at Twyning Church in Gloucestershire: buff-coloured ceramic hearts dating from the early twentieth century. These were described as being 'of unbelievable hideousness and unsuitability'; in addition 'they have failed to weather or attract lichens and can only be left as an example of inappropriate materials'. Sadly I have no photograph, but I look forward to visiting.....

It is hard to tell what posterity will make of current ceramic creations, for instance the Gaudiesque blue ceramic bench installed in the churchyard of St Peter ad Vincula, Stoke-on-Trent (near the tomb of Josiah Wedgwood) to mark the Queen's Jubilee in 2000. Its design, by artists Helen Sayer, Philip Hardaker and Edgar Ruddock, was based on ideas suggested by local schoolchildren; the images, which include the footballer Stanley Matthews, relate to St Peter's and to Stoke's industrial history. Even more up to the minute is the colourful 28 metre long ceramic mural at Hulme Library, Manchester. Using over two tonnes of clay, it shows the uplifting history of Hulme and its regeneration, featuring the nearby Hulme Arch, and was made by Hulme Urban Potters in 2000-2002. Both these modern installations are attractive and are wearing well, although there's doubtless someone out there who thinks they are hideous! Work on the *Gazetteer* is progressing well, with Hampshire next to be written up, and we are still on target to meet the summer 2004 deadline required for spring 2005 publication.

Lynn Pearson, Gazetteer Editor

**There are now 5,155 locations in the TACS site database, and the Gazetteer is 34% complete with over 92,000 words written.**