

A MEDIAEVAL INLAID TILE FROM LITTLE PICKLE, BLETCHINGLEY,SURREY

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Part of an inlaid tile of perhaps late Mediaeval date and possibly of foreign manufacture (?Spain) was submitted for thin section examination under the petrological microscope. The tile is a surface find from Little Pickle, Bletchingley. The inlaid decoration appears to consist of a lozenge-shaped pattern formed of pinkish-red (between Munsell 10R 6/3 and 6/4) clay set in a creamy-white clay and presenting a flat surface. This is keyed onto a thicker coarser white clay.

Thin sectioning shows that the backing fabric of the tile consists of a fine-textured matrix containing silt-sized quartz grains, flecks of mica, limestone and some plagioclase feldspar. In this there is a scatter of fairly well-rounded larger quartz grains up to 1.5mm across, perhaps deliberately added to act as a tempering agent. The red clay used for the lozenge-shapes contains a high proportion of limestone and iron ore. The latter may explain the colour of the clay if fired in an oxidizing atmosphere. The white inlaid clay resembles the matrix composition of the coarser clay backing but is finer-textured.

The range of non-plastic inclusions noted are all fairly common and it is not possible to suggest likely origins on this information alone. A limestone-rich clay was found to be characteristic of samples of Sixteenth century Spanish Cuenca tiles examined by the writer from a number of sites in the south-west of England, and considered stylistically to be from Seville. However, texturally this material is

different to the fabric of the Little Pickle tile.