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Sample pieces of Giallo Siena Uniforme & Connemara marbles.



A trial section of new replacement tesserae laid dry.

New tesserae cut from Giallo Siena Uniforme marble.



The yellow stone is a very fine-grained porcellanous limestone (not a marble), with little or no porosity - so ideal for a hospital floor. The black/green coloured stone is Serpentine, possibly from Cornwall. So we now had to find the best possible matches for these two stones. Through her contacts, Lynne sourced Giallo Siena Uniforme marble (unlike the original) from Tuscany – one piece reclaimed from a sink vanity unit! And the best match for the black/green stone was a Connemara Serpentine marble from Ireland which has greenish flecks in it, just like the original. This is one of the rarest marbles in the world and dates back some 600 million years.

In all there are about 140m² of mosaic floor, which equates to over half a million individual tesserae, but we estimate that only 2.5m² have needed to be replaced. Interestingly, the individual tesserae, which are about 12mm square, vary quite considerably in depth, and so they cannot have been laid on a backing sheet of paper or mesh as is the case with modern mosaic tiling. Instead, the paper/mesh must have been on the top face of the tesserae, and so the variable depths were then bedded in a sufficiently flexible mortar to take up the variation in depth. The paper would then be removed, the floor grouted and then polished up to its final finish.

The recovered mosaic flooring was then cleaned using proprietary products to remove soiling. A poultice was required to remove the remnants of the adhesive, particularly where the carpet was stuck to the curved skirtings. This was then neutralised. Badly worn or scratched tesserae have been individually sanded to get back to a better surface finish, whilst accepting that this inevitably means that there will be some ‘dips’ and pitting to the floor, embracing the existing character and natural wear and tear, whilst also avoiding making the floor look new – but most importantly, it has meant that the vast majority of the original floor has been saved. A consolidant has been applied in selective areas such as by the entrance hall fireplace, where it would appear that the coal scuttle had caused quite a bit of damage over the years. Finally the floor has been sealed with a Lithofin sealer (stain-stop) which provides an easily maintainable finish for the Housekeeping team but remains permeable and so won’t trap moisture within the floor.

We believe this to be the only mosaic floor that Voysey ever specified – but we would be interested to know from readers if they know otherwise. The nearest equivalent is something like the fireplace at Garden Corner which is tiled in rather larger mosaic squares (which contain gold leaf). Visitors to Winsford will be able to judge for themselves, but we are proud of the end result achieved, and of the enormous amount of time and energy put towards salvaging Voysey’s mosaic floor. We hope that he too would approve.

Voysey’s Tile Designs

Tony Peart

Britain was the leading producer of tiles from the mid-19th to the early 20th century, satisfying a huge worldwide demand. The Victorian and Edwardian boom in housebuilding saw tiles used to decorate everything from floors, walls, and bathrooms to kitchens, fireplaces and furniture. In the public sphere, tiles rapidly became mandatory in all contexts where public health and hygiene were of paramount concern such as: hospitals; swimming pools; laundries; dairies; restaurants; public houses etc. Where serviceability or decoration were key, tiled interiors were to be found in public buildings; from town halls and churches to theatres and hotels.

Tiles first became subject to popular fashion with those designed by the architects of the Gothic Revival and in particularly AWN Pugin (1812–1852). Later, the motifs of the Aesthetic Movement proved popular with progressive manufacturers and the public alike as, in turn, did those of the Arts and Crafts movement. As one of the leading architects and designers of his generation, it is unsurprising that Voysey became involved with tile design.

Although Voysey’s tiles constitute only a small proportion of his total design output, they demonstrate the essence of his design vocabulary and many of these tiles have become well-known and highly collectable. However, as this area of his professional life is relatively little documented, much confusion has arisen among curators and collectors alike over which tiles are (or are not) by Voysey. With that in mind, the primary aim of this article is to chronologically catalogue and illustrate all the known tile designs for the six companies with which he worked commencing with Maw & Co. in the late 1880s through to his final designs for Dunsmore Tiles in the 1930s.

Maw & Co.

Voysey’s first recorded tile designs were created c.1889 for the specialist tile manufacturers Maw & Co. of Jackfield, Shropshire. The company was initially founded in 1850 in Worcester but by the late 1880s, relocated to Iron Bridge Gorge, it had massively expanded to become one of the largest manufacturers in the world. The company was progressive, commissioning “fashionable” designers such as Lewis F Day (1845–1910) and Walter Crane (1845–1915) and exhibited their tile designs at the very first Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition at the New Gallery, Regent Street in 1888. Both Crane and Day were known to Voysey through their common membership of The Art Workers’ Guild and The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society and it may have been through their recommendation that he was commissioned to produce designs

The author’s catalogue of tiles referred to in the article can be found following the text

1 Maw & Co. “Persian” tile panel as illustrated in *The Journal of Decorative Art*



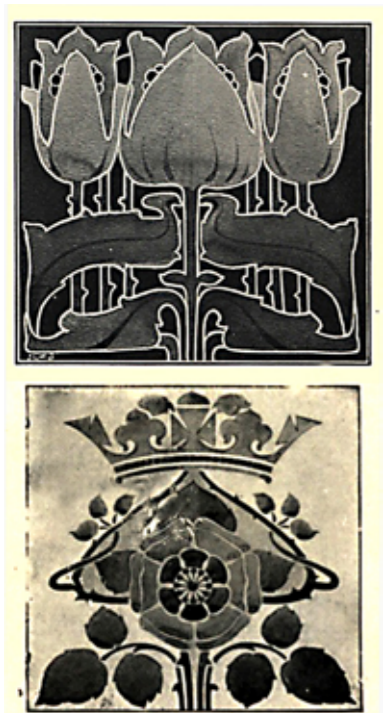


2
"Bird and Tree", probably designed by J G Mowbray Jeffrey for The New Marsden Tile Co.

for Maw, which were exhibited at the second New Gallery Arts and Crafts Exhibition in late 1889. It should be noted that at this early stage of his career Voysey was little known; he had yet to find his individual "voice" as a designer of pattern and, in respect of his architectural career, had only designed and built one house, The Cottage, Bishop's Itchington the previous year.

Maw exhibited three major tile panels at this exhibition, previously only known through written descriptions in the exhibition catalogue and contemporary reviews. However, during research for this article, line illustrations of each have been discovered in the January 1890 issue of *The Journal of Decorative Art*.¹ One panel featured a design of agricultural labourers by Walter Crane, surrounded by free-flowing, floriate decoration created by Lewis F Day. In contrast, the second was a neoclassical piece, designed throughout by Day, featuring three panels of individual putto placed against a background of formalised, foliate decoration. However, it is the third panel (figure 1), described as "Persian" in the catalogue and contemporary reviews, that concerns us here. Undoubtedly the "lion's share" of this design - most likely the central panel - was designed by Day however the exhibition catalogue also records that tiles marked "B" were designed by C Grove Johnson, those marked "C" were designed and painted by CH Temple and finally those marked "D" were designed by CFA Voysey. It is frustrating not to be able to identify those tiles within the scheme designed by Voysey but they are most likely to be found within the outer border or possibly, those at the corners of the inner panel.

3
Tiles designed c.1900 by J G Mowbray Jeffrey for The Marsden Tile Co.



This appears to be Voysey's only, fleeting involvement with Maw as this was the only occasion they exhibited tiles to his design and there is no reference to the company in either Voysey's address book or his "Black Book", a chronological (if incomplete) record of his work. However, a set of four, tube-lined tiles commonly referred to as "Bird and Tree" (figure 2), have long been attributed to Maw and Voysey purely on stylistic grounds. On closer examination, a few tiles from this series have been found to carry a "NMT" backstamp (most are unmarked), this is for The New Marsden Tile Co. Ltd., the c.1908 re-establishment of the earlier Marsden Tile Co. of Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. There is no record of Voysey having any involvement with this company however, they did produce many other highly 'Voyseyesque' tile designs in the early 1900s (figure 3). These are all the work of their young, in-house designer JG Mowbray Jeffrey, the person most likely to be responsible for the "Bird and Tree" panel.² Although many notable collections own examples of these tiles, evidence strongly indicates that they were not designed by Voysey nor were they manufactured by Maw.³

J C Edwards

The discovery of large quantities of high-quality Etruria Marl clay in the Ruabon area of North Wales in the mid-nineteenth century heralded the beginning of a ceramic industry that would ultimately

grow to employ approximately 2,000 people. The scale of the industry was such that the village of Ruabon gained the nickname "Terracottapolis". James Coster Edwards (1828–1896) established his company there in 1870, manufacturing a range of earthenware goods and bricks. The company quickly expanded and he built the Tref-y-Nant Works where he also began to manufacture sanitary pipes and firebricks. By 1896 the firm had grown to be the largest in the area, employing a thousand workers and producing some two million items per month and by the 1890s was producing a wide range of glazed tiles alongside its terracotta wares.

Lewis F Day began to provide designs to J C Edwards in the late 1880s and continued to do so until he signed a contract of exclusivity with the Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Co. in 1896.⁴ It is likely that Voysey's involvement with the company (as with Maw & Co.) came about through this personal connection with Day and it is no coincidence that Voysey, too, transferred his allegiance to Pilkington's at the same time as Day. This fact, when taken into consideration with the dates of the original designs upon which the tiles for Edwards are based, indicates that Voysey's involvement with the company took place within the years 1890–95.

Although no documentary evidence survives of Voysey's professional relationship with J C Edwards, several tiles exist that can be confidently attributed to Voysey on stylistic grounds.

The most commonly encountered of these is "The Demon" (catalogue 1) a six-inch, moulded teapot stand produced in a wide range of colourways. First designed in 1889 in a vibrant palette of reds, yellows and oranges, Voysey intended "The Demon" pattern to be used as wallpaper (figure 4) but unsurprisingly it did not find a manufacturer brave enough to put it into production. However, a diabolical figure surrounded by warming flames does seem a much more appropriate motif with which to decorate the surface of a teapot stand and due to the numerous examples that survive, a large number must have been made.

Voysey also designed a pair of relief-moulded, semi-stylised "Tulip and Leaf" (catalogue 2-3) tiles intended to be displayed in a vertical arrangement within a dado or fireplace. This design would later be revised (in a more conventionalised manner) and be put into production by Pilkington's.

J C Edwards were also responsible for the only known Voysey tiles executed in lustre. The pioneer ceramicist William De Morgan first introduced his lustre tiles in the late 1870s. These highly influential tiles proved popular with wealthy clients but were very expensive. By the late 1880s many other manufacturers had introduced their own, cheaper versions, primarily the firms of Maw & Co. and Craven Dunnill, (both of Jackfield, Shropshire) followed by J C Edwards. An Edwards catalogue described their lustre tiles as "*Rivalling the finest Mediaeval Italian and Spanish examples, combining with*



4
"The Demon" design for a wallpaper, 1889 (courtesy RIBA Collections)



5
Pilkington's "Voysey Wall" from the 1900 Exposition Universelle, Paris

the gorgeous effects of burnished metals the iridescent colours of the rainbow".

Lustre tiles were most commonly used to decorate fireplaces, the metallic glazes producing pleasing effects when lit by firelight. It seems appropriate therefore that the "Demon" design was also reinterpreted as a lustre tile (*catalogue 4*) by J C Edwards. The company also produced a mirrored pair of lustre tiles featuring a bird amongst scrolling garden foliage (*catalogue 5 a & b*). This rhythmic design was an adaptation of a textile design that was sold to G P & J Baker Ltd. and produced as a printed cloth around 1893.⁵

Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co. Ltd.

In 1889 the Clifton and Kersley Coal Company, owned by the Pilkington family, sank two new shafts at Clifton Junction, a site located a little to the north of Manchester. Unfortunately, large quantities of water flooded the workings and the attempt to extract coal had to be abandoned. A positive outcome of what could potentially have been a financial disaster was the discovery of a bed of high quality, red marl clay. This was initially considered for the manufacture of glazed bricks but after testing it proved unfit for this purpose. Fortunately, the secretary of the company knew William Burton (1863–1941), a skilled chemist then working for Josiah Wedgwood and Sons, Etruria who, after examining the clay, suggested that it would be well-suited to the manufacture of ceramic tiles. Pilkington's Tile and Pottery Company was founded in 1891 with Burton persuaded to join the fledgling venture as general manager

in 1892 and full-scale tile production commencing the following year. Burton, a leading authority of ceramic history and glaze chemistry played a pivotal role in the success and rapid growth of the company surrounding himself with a team of highly talented, in-house, artists and designers. The company also actively commissioned famous "names" such as the great, Czech, Art Nouveau designer Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) and closer to home, fashionable designers such as Walter Crane, Lewis F Day and CFA Voysey who, by the mid-1890s, had a reputation that was rapidly eclipsing that of both Crane and Day. It proved to be a fruitful relationship, with Voysey designing more tiles for the Manchester company than for any other he was associated with.

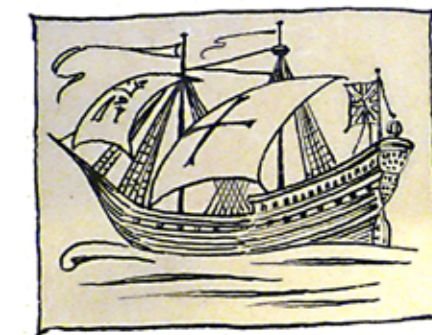
Voysey's earliest design for Pilkington's was a pair of moulded, dust-pressed tiles titled "Tulip Tree" (*catalogue 6-7*), designed to be

laid in the brickwork manner (i.e. each row offset by half a tile), a panel of which were exhibited by the company at the fifth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society exhibition in 1896 and illustrated in *The Studio*.⁶ Further designs followed with the company able to create a "Voysey wall" (*figure 5*) as part of their ambitious display at the Exposition Universelle held in Paris in 1900.

The top section of the "wall" was composed of the "Viking Ships" frieze (*catalogue 8-9*) – something of a misnomer as the vessels depicted are actually based on medieval galleons. Two different designs of ship were arranged amongst plain tiles whilst above them were a run of single tiles depicting distant mountains. The whole scheme being surmounted by tiles containing a single, highly stylised bird. The overall effect is reminiscent of Voysey's famous painted clock (of a similar date) and unusually in the case of Voysey's designs for Pilkington's, preliminary sketches of the galleons survive (*figure 6*). Below these were displayed "The Labours" tiles (*catalogue 10-18*) printed in blue underglaze, the set comprising a total of eight individual roundel designs on the theme of work with an associated central tile depicting a tree with cartouche inscribed "Laborate et Amate" (love work). These designs were a development of decorative elements taken from a prize certificate (*figure 7*) designed for The Home Arts and Industries Association a few years earlier. "The Labours" were Voysey's only printed tiles, a technique the factory was eager to promote as they were a little cheaper to manufacture than moulded majolica tiles and allowed the company to target a wider market, particularly the lower-middle classes.

Placed at the centre of the display was "Lemon Tree" (*catalogue 19*) an elaborate, mural design comprising twenty individual tiles each separately impressed set into a field of undecorated tiles. This was flanked to the left and right by the earlier "Tulip Tree" design and placed immediately below, Voysey's most playful design for the company, the pair of tiles that comprise "Fish and Leaf" (*catalogue 20-21*), a subject well suited for use in swimming pools and public baths.⁷ The remaining space was infilled with panels of the company's "onyx" tiles. These showcased William Burton's genius for creating rich, single colour glazes which showed subtle variations on every tile. They were described in a promotional colour brochure (*figure 8*) as exhibiting "charmingly broken colour" and certainly appealed to Voysey as he used them extensively in many of the tiled fireplaces he designed for his houses.⁸ A final design was showcased elsewhere on the company stand, this was the six by three-inch "Tulip" tile (*catalogue 22*) based on an earlier textile design for Turnbull & Stockdale showing tulips and birds in flight. This was available like all Voysey's impressed tiles for Pilkington's, in a confusingly wide variety of colour combinations.

The Glasgow Exhibition of 1901 saw two new Voysey designs introduced on the Pilkington's stand, these were two pairs of tiles on a similar theme: "Bird and Lemon Tree" (*catalogue 23-24*) and the more formalised mirrored pair that comprised "Vine and Bird"



6
Original ink designs for "Viking Ships" (courtesy RIBA Collections)



7
Home Arts and Industries yearly awards certificate (detail) c.1898

(catalogue 25 a & b). Both were much closer in style and theme to the designs he was producing contemporaneously for both textile and wallpaper manufacturers.⁹ A tile featuring a stylised tree (catalogue 26) was registered in September 1902 and can be confidently attributed to Voysey as it is an adaptation of an earlier textile design entitled “Scutari” (figure 9) manufactured by G P & J Baker.¹⁰ Judging by the large number that still survive, this must also have been Voysey’s best-selling design for the company.

The 1903 “Arts and Crafts” exhibition showcased a few new tile designs by Voysey. For this event select designers were allocated small booths in which to create room settings with Voysey choosing to include one of his characteristic wooden fire surrounds (figure 10) inset with narrow six-inch by two-inch tiles. The design was favourably reviewed by *The Art Workers’ Quarterly*:¹¹

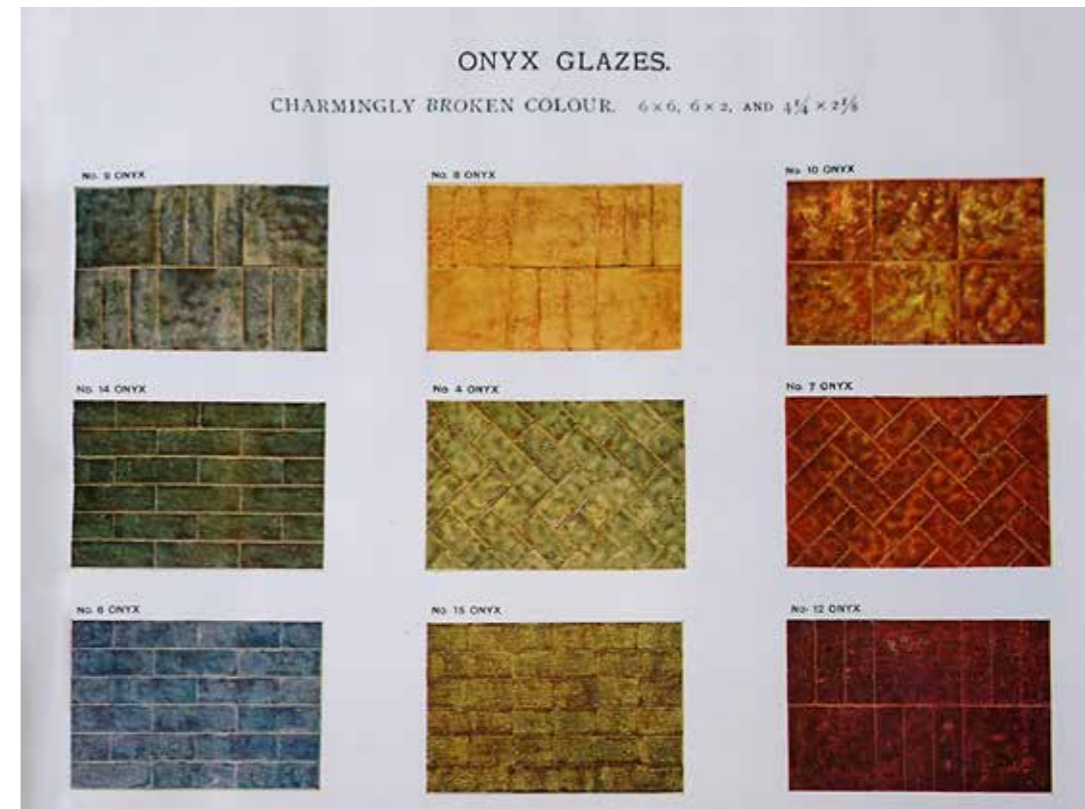
The chimney piece... ..is one of C. F. A. Voysey’s most successful productions. It is severe, with an air of breadth and ease, – a perfect specimen of simplicity. The woodwork is painted white, and the tiles – by Pilkington’s Tile and Pottery Company, – are in alternating stripes of plain yellow and white, the latter decorated with a vine ornament in green and black.

On the fireplace mantel were displayed three, hand-painted Pilkington’s tiles featuring individual flower studies although it seems probable that these designs were never put into general production. Elsewhere in the exhibition a tile panel was displayed which could have been “Tulip and Leaf” (catalogue 27-28), as this pair of tiles carries registration numbers which date them to September 1902.¹² These were a more stylised re-working of the design originally manufactured by J C Edwards a decade or so previously.

In 1908, the Austrian art journal *Kunst und Kunsthandwerken* in a long article devoted to Voysey, featured two new tile designs related to Pilkington’s.¹³ The first was a large (probably nine-inch by six-inch) impressed tile featuring hearts and swans (catalogue 29) that was certainly manufactured by the firm.¹⁴ The second, a hand-painted tile showing a farmer ploughing (catalogue 30), although credited to Pilkington’s in the article, is now known to be a tile personally decorated by Voysey on a glazed Pilkington’s “blank” joining two other Pilkington’s tiles known to have been hand-painted by Voysey.¹⁵ The first of these was also photographed for the *Kunst und Kunsthandwerken* article but in the event was not illustrated and shows a thatched cottage surrounded by trees (catalogue 31), whereas the second depicts a fruit tree (catalogue 32).¹⁶

Unexecuted tile designs for Pilkingtons

There are a few drawings of tiles speculatively designed with Pilkingtons in mind that exist in various public and private collections, but no examples of corresponding tiles have been recorded to date. These include: two, three by six-inch tiles depicting birds, foliage and a heart, submitted to the firm in



October 1901; a design featuring a pair of mirrored birds arranged around a crown and heart and finally; an elaborate design entitled “The Ornamental Tree”, depicting a lemon tree, on a pale ground.¹⁷ Within the Chambers Archive there is also a photograph showing a full set of Voysey designed numerals (figure 11), perhaps intended for use as transfer printed, ceramic house numbers.¹⁸

8
Pilkington’s catalogue c.1900 featuring “Onyx” glazes (courtesy The Chambers Archive, Lancaster Arts, Lancaster University)

Pilkington’s tiles in the style of Voysey

Other Pilkington’s tiles have, from time-to-time, been attributed to Voysey purely on stylistic grounds. This is problematic as the in-house artists and particularly the firm’s chief designer John Chambers (1869–1945), could produce work that can easily be mistaken for Voysey’s. The same is true for F C Howells, whose fully documented tiles for the Victoria Baths Manchester are extremely “Voyseyesque”.¹⁹ This is not to say that none of the tiles within this category are by Voysey, simply that caution is required!

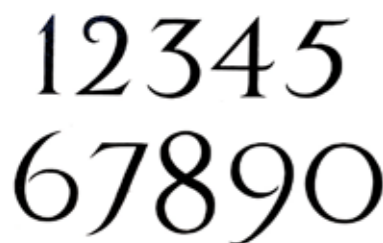
Of the seven tiles illustrated in Annexe A it is the author’s opinion that only the first four are potentially by Voysey, whereas the three “Art Nouveau” flower tiles (annexe 5-7) are much more likely to have been designed by Chambers or Howells. “Fleur de Lys” (annexe 1) a design first registered in September 1903 exhibits similarities with Voysey’s “Tree” tile and is a motif much used elsewhere in his wallpaper and textile designs. A pair of tiles used in a frieze at Lister Drive Swimming Baths in Liverpool (annexe 2-3) are clearly a variation of the “Fish and Leaf” design which were also used in this lavishly tiled interior. Mirrored pairs of the characteristically dynamic “leaf” design (annexe 4), complete the scheme, being

9
“Scutari” textile manufactured by G P & J Baker





10
Fireplace and tiles at the 1903 Arts and Crafts Exhibition



11
Voysey designed numerals (courtesy The Chambers Archive, Lancaster Arts, Lancaster University)

featured in the entrance hall of the building although these were first registered on 28 September 1901, a date tiles known to be designed by Howells were also registered!

Medmenham Pottery

Robert Hudson, a wealthy soap manufacturer, bought Medmenham Abbey, Buckinghamshire, the remains of a Thames-side Cistercian foundation, in 1895 and engaged the architect W H Romaine-Walker to restore and enlarge it. Romaine-Walker also built a large home, Danesfield House for his client who was an admirer of William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. By 1897 Hudson had established a pottery on nearby Marlow Common with the aim of fostering a local, ceramic industry. The sculptor Conrad Dressler, who had previously been employed at the Della Robbia Pottery in Birkenhead, was appointed its director.

The tiles developed at Medmenham exhibited a unique, granular quality to their glazed surface, differentiating them from all other British manufacturers. This individuality, combined with their handmade look, soon made them popular with architects and they were used in many prestigious decorative schemes. Despite being successful, Dressler became disillusioned with the project and by 1905 had left the pottery going on to develop revolutionary tunnel kilns for the mass manufacture of ceramic tiles.

Voysey had known Dressler, a fellow member of the Art Workers' Guild, since at least 1891 and the following year, Dressler had commissioned Voysey to design a row of four studios in Glebe Place, Chelsea.²⁰ This project did not come to fruition because shortly afterwards Dressler left London for Birkenhead, to help establish the Della Robbia Pottery with Harold Rathbone. Voysey,



12
Bespoke Medmenham tiles depicting the Conant family arms at The Pastures

who was hyper-sensitive to all sensory experiences, would have appreciated the tactile and visual contrast that vertical bands of the narrow, single-coloured Medmenham "fillet" tiles gave when used alongside larger, smooth surfaced tiles such as Pilkington's "Onyx" range. Certainly, by the early 1900s, Voysey had enthusiastically adopted their use in the bespoke, tiled, fire surrounds he favoured for his houses. Alongside the use of these 'stock' items, Voysey also occasionally commissioned Dressler to execute unique pieces. At The Pastures, North Luffenham (built 1901-1902), tiled fireplaces in two of the principal rooms (figure 12) contained heraldic designs by Voysey featuring the owner's family crest and initials.²¹ Sadly, these are now lost although some of the simpler fireplaces, exploiting various combinations of undecorated Medmenham and Pilkington's tiles do remain in situ.

Two further, moulded and decorated tiles designed by Voysey for Medmenham are known to exist. These may well have been produced on a limited commercial basis although rather surprisingly, both were versions of tiles concurrently in production at Pilkington's. The first, another variation on the "galleon" motif (catalogue 33) would later serve as the basis for a bookplate (figure 13) designed for Robert Donat in 1929. The second is a moulded version of the "Carpenter" tile (catalogue 34) from "The Labours" series of transfer-printed tiles manufactured by Pilkington's however, it is unknown if others from this series were also produced.

Martin van Straaten & Co.

An active member of the Jewish community in London and of joint Dutch-British nationality, Martin van Straaten (1866-1915), enjoyed many business interests. Some knew him as a high-end antiques dealer and art collector, to others he was a dealer in oil whereas, in the architectural community, he was best known as a specialist importer of Dutch, tin-glazed, "Delft" tiles available from his showrooms on Little Britain near St. Paul's Cathedral. Van Straaten was not a manufacturer but acted as an agent for various Dutch tile factories. He died with the sinking of the Lusitania on 16 January 1915 and in his obituary, *Country Life* commented: his "distinction in life was to have revived in England the use of Dutch tiles."

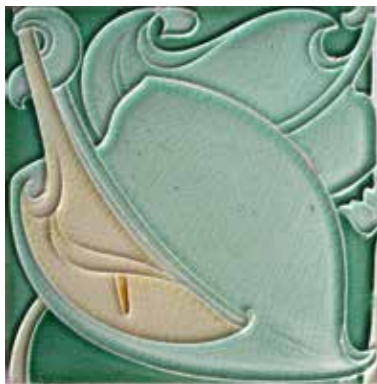
Voysey frequently specified van Straaten's six by two-inch, single-coloured, undecorated tiles in many of his fire surrounds including those of his own home, The Orchard, Chorleywood built in 1899. When it came to undecorated, white-glazed tiles for use in either service areas, or where light and durability were at a premium, Voysey almost exclusively used van Straaten tiles, an example being Garden Corner, Chelsea Embankment (1906), *The Studio* noting: "The basement has been rearranged and lined throughout with van Straaten's white Dutch tiles, and light captured wherever possible."²²



13
Bookplate for Robert Donat (courtesy RIBA Collections)

14
Marsden tile in the "manner" of Voysey





15
Alfred Meakin Ltd, "Lily" tile

To add coloured "accents" to these large fields of white, Voysey supplied van Straaten with a few decorative designs which were hand-painted onto the white, delft tiles. Three designs have been recorded to date: one depicting a bird (*catalogue 35*); the other two featuring single roses (*catalogue 36-37*) with examples of their use being found at The Homestead, Frinton-on-Sea (1905) and at Wilverley, Holtje Common, Sussex (1906-07).²³

It is well documented that Voysey was at his most prolific both as an architect and as a designer of pattern during the years straddling 1900 and this position is also reflected in his designs for tiles. However, as the new century progressed, all areas of his design activity (including tiles) declined as his work fell victim to changing tastes and fell out of fashion, so much so that by 1910 he had stopped designing tiles and would not do so again for over 20 years.

Dunsmore Tiles

(Mary) "Polly" Brace and Kathleen Pilsbury met while students at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in London and afterwards established Dunsmore Tiles at 2 Hillsleigh Road, Campden Hill W8 c.1925–26. Always a small enterprise, the pair were prolific decorators of "blanks" bought in from other manufacturers such as Minton & Co. and pioneered a decorating technique involving a combination of stencilling and hand-painting. From evidence in Voysey's expense book it would appear he provided the company with designs between 1933–34, although it is not known which party made the initial approach. By the 1950s Pilsbury had left and the studio was being run by Polly Brace and Gwyneth Fisher aided by two paintresses. Ultimately, the venture was unable to compete with mass-produced tiles from large scale manufacturers and closed in 1964.

The most well-known of Voysey's Dunsmore tiles is the "Alice in Wonderland" series (*catalogue 38-49*) featuring twelve adaptations of characters created by Sir John Tenniel for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. All but one of these figures (the "White Rabbit" in waistcoat being an addition) were taken from Voysey's "Alice in Wonderland" textile design supplied to Morton Sundour Fabrics in 1930.²⁴ Each character was supplemented with small sprigs of Voysey's characteristic flowers or foliage to help balance the composition and, because they were stencilled, each can be found as a mirror image. The war halted all decorative ceramic production and it seems likely that manufacture of this range reached its height in the early 1950s, a few years after Voysey's death.

Other designs for Dunsmore are held in the RIBA Drawings Collection of which at least one, a 4-inch "Galleon" design (*catalogue 50*), was put into production.²⁵ Although currently unrecorded, it is likely that others from this series were also manufactured.

Tiles misattributed to Voysey

As previously mentioned, the Marsden Tile Co. of Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent – a firm with which he had no connection – produced many tiles, including the well-known "Bird and Tree" quartet, that have frequently been attributed, purely on stylistic grounds to Voysey. Their designer is most likely to have been one J G Mowbray Jeffrey who must serve as a reminder that by the early 1900s, Voysey was a major influence on a generation of younger, decorative designers associated with the "New Art" movement. However, as a general rule, the work of the followers shows far less restraint than the hand of the "master" a good example being yet another Marsden "Bird and Tree" tile in the manner of Voysey (*figure 14*).

Alfred Meakin Ltd., another Stoke manufacturer also produced many plausible "Voyseyesque" tiles. The most commonly encountered is "Lily" (*figure 15*), a design first registered in December 1904 but clearly an "adaptation" of the lower tile in Voysey's "Fish and Leaf" pair for Pilkington's.

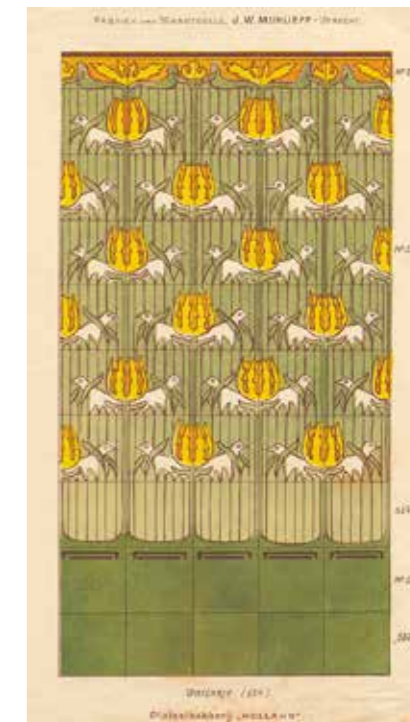
Tiles also exist closely resembling Voysey's "Tulip and Bird" ²⁶ woven furnishing fabric of c.1896 (for Alexander Morton & Co.) and these, quite understandably, have been attributed to Voysey.²⁷ However, recent research has proven they were manufactured by J W Munlieff of Utrecht to a "design" (*figure 16*) supplied by the well-known Dutch designer, Jac. van den Bosch (1868–1948) and are therefore an example of unabashed plagiarism!

Summary

Although tiles only account for a small proportion of Voysey's output as a decorative designer, the specific challenges of working within this medium allowed him to simplify and refine his design vocabulary to its key elements. The stripped-down aesthetic he employed also allowed him to bring visual symbolism to the fore. In that respect, it places this aspect of his oeuvre much closer to his graphic and bookplate designs than to his wallpaper and textile designs. It should also be noted that, apart from the occasional use of those sparsely decorated tiles supplied by Martin van Straaten, Voysey did not use tiles of his own design within his houses. This is also reflected in his wallpaper and textile designs which rarely appear in those interiors for which he was directly responsible.

Above all else, Voysey favoured simplicity and tranquillity, relying on such subtleties as quality of material, surface texture, tone and hue; rather than surface pattern. This achieved the restful, harmonious qualities he desired. Voysey's greatest achievement, in respect of tiles, was undoubtedly his connoisseurship, selection and inventive use of those undecorated, single-coloured "stock" tiles of varying glaze, proportion and size supplied by a handful of manufacturers. These were creatively arranged in the endlessly inventive, bespoke fire surrounds found in most of his houses. It could even be argued that Voysey the designer "with" tiles deserves to be better known than Voysey the designer "of" tiles.

16
Tiles manufactured by
J W Munlieff of Utrecht to a
"design" of Jac. van den Bosch



Voysey's tile catalogue starts opposite

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Richard Smith, curator of Lancaster Arts, for his patience and help in accessing the Chambers Archive at Lancaster University and to Pilkington's tile experts Angela and Barry Corbett for guiding me through this extensive collection. Chris Blanchett is a man who knows most everything about British tiles, their designers and manufacturers and has published extensively on the subject. He has patiently answered my questions and our e-mail correspondence has happily revealed some previously unrecorded Voysey tiles "lurking" in his remarkable collection. Finally, Marjolein van Zuylen brought to my attention those tiles in the Voysey manner designed by Jac. van den Bosch.

- 1 *The Journal of Decorative Art*, vol. 10, January 1890, pp. 13-15.
- 2 *The Artist*, vol. 30, March 1901, pp. 160-162.
- 3 Examples of these tiles are in the collection of: The Victoria & Albert Museum; The Jackfield Tile Museum; and the Crab Tree Farm collection – see Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. *Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 286.
- 4 Hansen, J. M. Lewis Foreman Day, *Unity in Design and Industry*. Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 2007, pp. 185-201.
- 5 Illustrated in *From East to West; Textiles from G P & J Baker*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, p. 57.
- 6 *The Studio*, vol. 9, December 1896, p. 192.
- 7 A fine example being the Lister Drive Public Baths, Liverpool opened in 1904 and lavishly decorated throughout with Pilkington's tiles. The building and interiors survive but are now run as a tropical fish business.
- 8 As can be found at The Pastures, North Luffenham.

- 9 "Vine & Bird" was also supplied to the textile manufacturer Alexander Morton & Co. The design, dated October 1899, is in the collection of the V&A (E.180-1974).
- 10 *From East to West; Textiles from G P & J Baker*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1984, pp. 77-78.
- 11 *The Art Workers' Quarterly*, vol. 2, April 1903, p. 79.
- 12 The reverse of this tile features the registration number 397656 and the letter 'P' for Pilkington's.
- 13 *Kunst und Kunsthandwerken*, monatszeitschrift XI, heft 2, 1908, pp. 93-106.
- 14 Original design illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. *Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 291.
- 15 The British Government Exhibit at the New Zealand International Exhibition (1906-07). London 1908, p. 314.
- 16 MAK, Vienna (KI 9479-1-1)
- 17 Illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly,

- M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. *Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, pp. 280, 288, 291.
- 18 John Chambers Archive, Lancaster University.
- 19 Illustrated in Corbett, A. & C., *Pilkington's Tiles 1891-2010*. Manchester, 2013, p. 73.
- 20 "Black Book", RIBA VoC/1/1.
- 21 *The Studio*. vol. 31, March 1904, p. 127
- 22 *The Studio*. vol. 42, October 1907, p. 24
- 23 A photograph of two of the tiles and a drawing of the bird are in the RIBA (BrJol box 2/13 and SKB[458]3)
- 24 Illustrated in Livingstone, K., Donnelly, M. and Parry, L. C.F.A. *Voysey Arts & Crafts Designer*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2016, p. 103.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 288, 292.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 286.

J C Edwards



1 Unless otherwise stated all tiles are 6" X 6"



2



3



4



5a



5b

Pilkington's Tile & Pottery Co. Ltd.



6



7



8



9



10



11

Voysey's tile catalogue



12



13



14



24



25a



25b



15



16



17



26



27



28

96



18



19 Panel comprising forty 6" tiles



20



29 6" X 9" (approximately)



30



31

Medmenham Pottery



21



22 3" X 6"



23



32



33



34



35



36



37



47



48



49

Dunsmore Tiles



38



39



40



50 4" X 4"

Annexe: Pilkington Tiles in the Style of Voysey



1



41



42



43



2 8" X 8"



3 8" X 8"



4



44



45



46



5



6



7