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Stone Tiles

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STONE TILES

The stone tiles, roofs of which are such an essential feature of the Cotswolds and the Oolite belt, were used by the Romans. It seems to be generally believed that conditions in the succeeding periods did not see any building of a high enough standard to carry, or even to need, such roofs. Manorial papers examined recently make it possible to fix accurately part of a boundary defined in a Saxon charter, and one result is to suggest that stone tiles were being used after all.

The charter in question¹ defines the bounds of a grant in 'Wudetun,' which was formerly vaguely and wrongly identified, but proves to be Wotton-under-Edge: Grundy considers it to be a copy of an even earlier document than its date of 940. The part of the boundary relevant to this question starts at the eastern corner of the area, and runs down its south side: the description, with Grundy's translation, reads:—

1. *Aerest of thaem Aesce and long Aege on Tigel Leage:* 'First from the Ashtree along the top of the Ridge Slope to the Lea where Tiles are made.'
2. *And swa ondlonges thaes Gemaeres that hit cymeth to thaem Torre:* 'And so along the Balk (or Boundary) till it comes to the Rock.'
3. *Thonne on tha Dicon thaet Londe Gaemaere on Medestran:* 'Then to the Dyke to the Balk of the Ploughland to Medestran (stream).'

'Ashel Barn,' now near the starting point, suggests the former presence of the mark-ash mentioned. The 'Aege' or Top of Ridge Slope at first sight would seem to be the ridge followed by the London Road, which is of Roman origin, and the end of which must be the 'edge' that Wotton is under. 'Tigel Leage' obviously suggests Tyley: the valley to the south of the above ridge is Tyley Bottom, and the name occurs in woods and parcels in the valley: and, for a clay-field at which tiles could be 'made' one would look in the valley bottom in this area. At any rate the valley must have been crossed to attain Tor Hill.

¹ B764, K1137 of Grundy's *Saxon Charters*.

Ekwall's interpretation of 'Aege' is unmistakably this northern ridge, and 'Tigel Leage' he as unmistakably places in Tyley Bottom.¹ Grundy chooses the water-shed south of the Bottom, but gives no reason beyond finding the name Tyley used for features on this slope, including a Tyley Cottage near the point at which he places 'Tigel Leage' 'about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile west of Ashcroft Farm,' where there is no sign or possibility of a clay-field, or for that matter of tile quarries.

The present Wotton boundary starts at what is the above starting point: but instead of taking the northern ridge, after crossing the very head of a valley leading south, it takes the ridge on the south of Tyley Bottom: it is then continued by the boundary between the Wortley tithing and the rest of the parish, down that ridge, down Tor Hill, through a belt of fields in which the name 'The Mears' still survives, and down to the stream. Above Tor Hill it is seen on the map of Wortley in vol. LXVIII of these *Transactions*, to pass through the area of Tile Pitts constantly mentioned in manorial documents which exist back to 1540, both as a landmark and as being rented: while the main area of workings is in the Tile Plantation, a big pit is marked adjoining the road which constitutes the boundary, and the small triangle of the tithing on the other side of the road is also full of pits.

One conclusion is to confirm Grundy's placing of the boundary on this and not on the northern ridge, though his placing of Tigel Leage is corrected by local data of which he was not aware.

The other conclusion is that as Tigel Leage must be the Tile Pitts, where tiles were 'quarried' and not 'made', so they must have been used then or before: no Roman buildings are known of in the vicinity, and in the conditions of the time distant happenings were less likely to pass into tradition. So there are grounds for considering that the tiles were then, or quite recently, used: they are not suitable for any 'tile' use but roofing.

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¹ Note, unpublished ?