The Grey Friars Project

Medieval Floor Tiles

- Resource Pack -
When we built our church in the 13th century we tiled the floor with decorated tiles such as this one.

Archaeologists found this floor tile in the Greyfriars church in Leicester when they were looking for the remains of King Richard III. It is decorated with a picture of an eagle spreading its wings.

The eagle is on a shield because it is the emblem of a man called Richard of Cornwall (1209-1272). Richard was the second son of King John. He was Count of Poitou in France and Earl of Cornwall in England. He was a famous crusader in the Sixth Crusade and eventually became King of the Romans (from 1257). Because archaeologists know what the picture means they can date the tile to the late 13th century, after Richard had become famous.

Tile makers were skilled tradesmen in the medieval period. They travelled around England making tiles for important buildings such as cathedrals, churches and abbeys. One building they made tiles for was the Greyfriars church in Leicester.

I make the floor tiles by carving the pattern on a block of wood and then impressing it carefully into the tile whilst the clay is still wet. I then fill the impression with a different coloured material called 'slip' and let it dry. Then I cover the tile with glaze and fire it in a kiln. My tiles can last for hundreds of years.

Tile Identification

On the next page you will find 6 pieces of inlaid medieval floor tile. These all date to the 14th century and they were all found in Leicester. Can you match the tile pieces with the complete pictures?
The Search for King Richard III
Educational Resource

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

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Have a go at designing your own tiles

Tile identification: 1e, 2c, 3a, 4f, 5b, 6d
Print on card, cut out and make your own medieval floor
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