

## Hertfordshire Fonts.

BY THE REV. HARRY P. POLLARD.

SOME years ago Mr. Gerish suggested to me the idea of writing some notes on the Ancient Fonts of Hertfordshire. I commenced this work under the impression that very few months would suffice to see the end of my labours, since I could visit several places myself, and with regard to places I could not visit, there were always the invaluable collections of Mr. W. F. Andrews; the County Histories, and, as a final resort, the clergy of the various parishes to apply to; but hope, indeed, told a very flattering tale. Mr. Andrews' Collection was really remarkable from the fact that very few among the number of those who had written a description of a church had taken any notice at all of the font. We found the heating apparatus and similar interesting objects constantly mentioned, but strict silence preserved as to whether the church possessed a font. We found architects, the clergy—in one case a clergyman describing his own church—even the "ecclesiastical reporter" describing a re-opening, all omitted reference to the font; the County Histories were about equally useful. I could find no description in Chauncy; but one or two in Salmon, an illustration of six in Clutterbuck, and a few mentioned by Cussans. It was obvious, therefore, that as far as Hertfordshire was concerned, the subject was untouched practically, and it became evident that the only course was to personally visit each font. This, however, is a work of time, and in spite of the help I have received from three or four friends, I am still seeking information; if the Members of this Society would assist me with regard to fonts in this district, about which I have not been able to obtain any information, I shall be very grateful.

As my search for information extended, I found that the subject of fonts was an unexplored one, not only in regard to Hertfordshire, but in regard to England generally. Five years ago there were only two books dealing with English fonts—Simpson's "Series of Baptismal Fonts," and Paley's "Fonts." Within the last

few months a work has appeared on the Sussex fonts, with a general introduction and a book on fonts, by Mr. Bond,<sup>1</sup> has just been issued.

In the course of my visits to the various churches there have been two or three comical incidents—in two cases the guardians of the keys accompanied me to their churches, apparently thinking that the parish would shortly be mourning the loss of its font if I went unattended. When we arrived at the church of the first village, the good man asked if I had come to clean the font. At the second place, the Rector, having presumably discovered that I was not a burglar in disguise, unlocked his church and favoured me with a discourse on the modern font in the style of “A poor thing, sir, but mine own.” At one unlocked church, I pointed out a rather unusual detail of the font to a man in the church. He brought his wife to look, and said, “Look here, my dear, I have never seen this before.” His family had been in the place for generations. At one place I found a very early font, decorated for Christmas, I think, in such a manner that I was obliged to remove the decoration in order to see and measure the font. Unfortunately before I had finished my notes, the lady who had “done” the decorations came into the church! I will now give you in as short a form as possible the results of my labours.

The Sacrament of Baptism was administered by the early British Church in rivers (following its institution in the River Jordan), springs, or sacred wells; but when oratories or churches came to be erected, they were provided with a vessel for baptising. This vessel was supplied with water from a spring or well near the church, and retained the name of “fount,” a term by which it is known to the parishioners of Datchworth at the present time. One of these early oratories is still standing at Trillo in Rhôs, Denbighshire. The entrance is at the west end and at the entrance is a perennial spring. In the church of St. Andrew, Bramfield, there is a well under the tower; at Hexton the well of St. Faith is but a short distance south of the church; and Emma’s Well at Amwell is about two hundred yards north of the church. These probably mark the site of early oratories in Hertfordshire. When Augustine arrived in England in 597, his com-

<sup>1</sup> “Fonts and Font Covers,” by Francis Bond, 1908.

panion, Paulinus, baptised in rivers in Yorkshire and Northumberland, "for as yet oratories, or fonts, could not be made in the early infancy of the Church in those parts" (Bernicia and Deira). There was a considerable difference between the way Augustine and his companions baptised and the method by which the British Church administered that rite; Augustine immersed the candidates three times; the British Church once. This was one of the points of divergence discussed at the "Synod of the Oak," held at an uncertain period between the years 599 and 603 at a place probably near Aust, Gloucestershire. There is a form for the dedication of a font in an Anglo-Saxon Pontifical, and in the Pontifical of Edmund Lacey, Bishop of Exeter, it is directed that crosses are to be made on the font with the oil of the chrism. The crosses graven upon the altar were intended to mark the spots anointed with chrism. A leading authority on the subject suggests that the crosses on fonts were cut with a similar intention. The only instances of such crosses on a font in Hertfordshire—as far as I am aware—are at Much Hadham, Stanstead Abbots, and (possibly) Elstree, in each case in roughly the same position on the south side of the font. As there is no mention of Baptism in the Ten Articles of Archbishop Theodore at the Council of Hertford, 24th September, 673, it may reasonably be assumed (as this Council was a most important one) that a satisfactory working arrangement had by that time been arrived at. The practice of immersion continued in use till the time of Henry VIII., if not later, for a Missal published in 1528 directs three immersions; but by the time of Elizabeth the sprinkling method seems to have gained ground, as in "A Book of Certain Canons, etc.," printed by Day, 1571, on p. 19, is the following:—"Last of all (the churchwarden) shall see that in every church there be a holy founte, not a bason, wherein baptism may be ministered, and it be kept comely and clean."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> From "Victoria County History of Herts," Vol. IV., p. 346:—"One of the articles of inquiry of 1668 was whether there was 'a decent Font of stone with a cover' standing 'at or near the neather end of your Church, in such manner as anciently and usually Fonts have stood for the baptizing of children,' or whether it had 'been removed and converted to any profane or private use.'" (Footnote)—Articles to be enquired of within the Archdeaconry of St. Albans . . . 1662, p. 1.

The original position of the font was at the west end of the nave, just inside the principal entrance (generally the south door), to symbolise the truth that Holy Baptism is the Sacrament of admission to the Christian Church. Although some writers assert that fonts were placed in the porch, there is no evidence whatever to show that this was the case, and as Mr. Paley points out, "Norman churches very seldom had porches, and as later buildings often retain their original fonts in their original positions in the interior of the nave, we must conclude that though some part of the baptismal rite was performed before entering the church, the font itself was never placed in so inconvenient a place; especially as no vestige seems ever to have been observed of such having been the fact." The font at Westmill has one side of its bowl plain, which stood against a pier, coeval with it.

One of the earliest directions relating to the font is that of the 37th Canon of Elfric, contained in a collection of Ecclesiastical Laws, A.D. 957: "Let no oil be put into the font except a child be there baptised." The oil mentioned here is that of the chrism. From the early ages of the Church a small quantity of simple oil was poured on the head of the person baptised. The Council of Durham, A.D. 1220, ordered that the chrism should be kept secure in a similar manner to the font. In the year 1297, the Church of Furneaux Pelham possessed a tin chrismatorium with a lock; in the time of Edward VI., Braughing had "a crismatorrie of silluer," Sarrat one of latten, while Chipping Barnet had a chrismatory of, or rather as Mr. Cussans suggests, covered with, silk.

The early fonts will, with scarcely an exception, be found with a lining of lead; the reason for this was that they were kept filled with water. Archbishop Edmund, A.D. 1236, ordered that the water should not remain more than seven days after the baptism of an infant, and that a font of stone or other competent material<sup>3</sup> should be

<sup>3</sup> Leaden fonts, and in some cases fonts of wood, were allowed as "competent material." St. Albans Abbey No. 2 was of brass; St. Albans Abbey No. 3, All Saints', Hertford, No. 2, and Oxhey Chapel, of wood. The latter is still in use. [The numbers given in this Note refer to a very important series of Notes on Hertfordshire Fonts, giving details of each Church in the County, which was compiled by the Rev. H. P. Pollard, and appeared in "Hertfordshire Archæological Notes and Queries" column, in the *Hertfordshire Mercury*, in 1904 and 1905. The List has never been reprinted, unfortunately, but there are Files of the *Hertfordshire Mercury* for those years in the Hertfordshire County Museum.—Ed.]

provided in every baptismal (*i.e.*, parochial) church furnished with a cover kept under lock and key. The cover seems frequently to have been a flat board, fastened down by an iron bar secured to staples fixed on opposite sides at the top of the font. Traces of these iron fastenings are to be seen at Braughing, Datchworth, Great Hornead, and Widford, the last instance being an unusual method of securing the cover. At Westmill the hinge and hasp remained till about 1876, when the font was "restored." Rushden still retains its hasp, but the only instance in the county which has entirely escaped is the Early Norman font at Stanstead Abbots, where two hasps remain, practically as serviceable as when they were inserted. A more elaborate form of suspended cover succeeded these plain examples, the counterpoise being in some cases a silver dove, so that as the cover ascended, the dove descended. Stevenage and Bygrave possess covers of this later type, but have no counterpoise.

In the second year of Edward VI it was directed that the water was to be changed every month at least. Up to the reign of Queen Mary, 1553-8, there was a ceremony of hallowing the font on Easter Eve. Cranmer mentions this as being a laudable custom, and Bishop Ridley enquires in his Visitation Articles "whether any useth to hallow the font on Easter even." At Elstree, on the north-west rim of the bowl, is a deep drilled hole about seven-eighths of an inch in diameter, which may have been used for the font candle or "light about the font," which was used for its hallowing on Easter and Whitsun Eves. At Little Munden a small bracket projects from the wall above the spot where the old font stood. This, perhaps, was used for the font candle.

Some of the fonts of very early date consist of a large stone block with a hollow to contain the water; of these and fonts of the Saxon period, Hertfordshire possesses no examples. It has been suggested, however, that the stem of Meesden font is Saxon, recut to accord with the Perpendicular bowl. Radwell has been described as Saxon; but Cussans dates it as about the middle of the fourteenth century, which is a much more probable date. In the early Norman Period, *circa* 1066, fonts began to assume a definite circular shape, roughly resembling a tub. Ardeley, Buckland, Sandridge, and Wormley are

examples; nearly all of these are of sufficient size for immersion, but none equals in size the enormous bowl shown in Royal MS. 2 B vii., in which the mother of St. Thomas à Becket was baptised. A' Becket, it will be remembered, was Rector of Bramfield.

These were followed by an externally square bowl supported on a column, as at Aldenham, Stevenage, and Albury. In Miss Walker's work on the Sussex fonts, she suggests that the forms of fonts were copied from well-heads, chalices, altars, and columns. The Sandridge font is of the circular well-head type, Kensworth of the chalice type, and Aldenham—which has a square bowl supported on a central pillar, with shafts at the angles—is of the altar type. Three very early Norman fonts are those of Stanstead Abbots, Anstey, and Watford; later examples occur at Bishop's Stortford, Broxbourne, Clothall, Gilston, Great Hornead, St. Ippolitts, Kensworth, Puttenham, Harpenden, Furneaux Pelham, Stevenage, Thorley, and Great Wymondley; Baldock is of the Transition Period.

#### **STANSTEAD ABBOTS (Norman).**

The bowl is circular, of very hard stone, nine inches deep externally, and about twenty-seven and three-quarter inches in diameter; on the east and west of the rim are iron staples for fastening the bar of the original cover. Each staple is about two inches high and one and a half inches wide. In spite of the attempts that have been made to smash out these fastenings, they are practically as serviceable as when they were inserted. The basin is circular, roughly lined with lead, with drain, diameter nineteen and three-quarter inches at top, fifteen and three-quarter inches at the bottom, and eight inches deep. There is a plain roll moulding at top and base of bowl; on the south-west is a plain consecration cross about one and a half inches high, and at about a distance of three inches on either side is a smaller cross faintly marked.

#### **ANSTEY.**

With regard to Anstey font, Mr. Gerish, in his description of the church in the "Antiquary" for April, 1904, says:—"The font, according to Cussans, belongs to the Early English Period, but I am of opinion that it is earlier. My friend Mr. Whitford Anderson dates it from the early

part of the twelfth century, assigning as his reason the peculiar shape and the symbolic use of carving as distinct from the sacred numbers of which so much use was made in later times. The octagonal bowl is ornamented at the corners with men grasping in either hand the prow of a boat, probably a Norman galley. It apparently symbolises either the Ark or the waters of baptism, and is, I think, the work of a Norman mason, who copied it from some similar design in use in Normandy. . . . The Rural Dean, I understand, makes the suggestion that the figures are symbolical of the admitted believer to baptism in the ark of Christ's Church. I should be glad of information respecting similar fonts elsewhere. The bowl rests upon a central column surrounded by five smaller shafts, but I am inclined to think these supports are a comparatively recent addition." In reply to the request for information as to similar fonts, Mr. W. C. Banks writes that the square Norman font of St. Peter's, Cambridge, has very similar figures to those of Anstey; unfortunately, the present stem of the Cambridge example is a made-up affair; but in a plaster model he bought in 1868 it has an apparently make-shift stem about fifteen inches square, with a wide splay stopped chamfer at each angle, with a six inch plinth about the same size as the bowl. The diameter of the bowl is twenty-seven and a half inches, and there is a cable moulding round the top; the basin is circular. With regard to the figures on the bowl, Mr. J. Romilly Allen, F.S.A., speaking of symbolism in the catacombs at Rome, says there comes "a series of scenes from the Old Testament which are used as types of those in the New, the most common being: Noah in the Ark; where the Ark symbolises the Church of Christ, by means of which believers may be saved from the destruction of the surrounding world. The ship has a double meaning, and is taken either, like the Ark of Noah, to represent the Church in which Christians are carried safely through the perils of this world, or to symbolise the prosperous ending of a voyage when the soul enters its haven of rest. Sometimes the dove with the olive branch, the messenger of peace, appears on the prow, and the mast takes the form of the cross."

**ST. IPPOLITTS.**

With regard to the font at St. Ippolitts, two sketches of this font are given by Pridmore. The octagonal base supports four very short clustered columns, having a bold keel shaft inserted between the round members on north, south, east, and west. This is the only instance in the county where this curious arrangement occurs in a font; but an example of its use on a larger scale can be seen in the south arcade of the choir at Royston. I am unaware of the use of a keel shaft in any other church in the county. The bowl is of Purbeck marble, octagonal, with plain sides, which batter very slightly, and a chamfer at the base. The basin is circular and unlined, the drain is stopped; on the edge of the bowl are remains of iron fastenings on east and west, also on the north and south-west, which probably indicate that the font cover was secured by two bars—an arrangement not very common—the bowl has been repaired on the west and south-west.<sup>4</sup> Although the font has been whitewashed at some period, there seem to be traces of colour on the west face. The base and small columns are of a hard white stone; the columns have been broken horizontally and roughly repaired. The dimensions are as follows:—Height of base five and a quarter inches, of columns twelve and a quarter inches, depth of bowl (exterior) seventeen and a half inches, diameter of bowl twenty-seven and a quarter inches; the basin has the uniform depth of eleven and a quarter inches and a diameter of twenty-two and three-quarter inches. Total height of font thirty-five inches. With regard to the date of the font, Canon Davys, in his paper on the church,<sup>5</sup> says: “The font appears to belong to the same period as these nave arcades, and is an excellent example of that date,” *i.e.*, Early English; the base and shaft are undoubtedly of that period, but the bowl appears more to resemble the Norman clerestory windows of the nave and to be some sixty to one hundred years earlier than its shaft. The date given by Mr. Cussans,

<sup>4</sup> This is a small horizontal fissure about two inches from the base, a feature which also occurs at Bishop's Stortford, Gilston, and in other Purbeck marble fonts; it is perhaps due to too much force in lining the basin with lead. Two of the Norman fonts are nearly identical in design, and they belong to the adjoining parishes of Walkern and Bennington.

<sup>5</sup> St. Albans Archæological Society's Transactions, 1890-1, p. 38.

viz., *circa* 1350, most probably is a hundred years too late; the styles at these two periods were quite dissimilar, and 1250 is, roughly, the date of the base and shaft. There is also a modern portable font.

There is a considerable similarity in design between the fonts of Broxbourne, Bishop's Stortford, Clothall, Gilston, Sawbridgeworth, Thorley, and Wallington (old), all of which belong to the Transition Period from Norman to Early English, *i.e.*, about the reign of Richard I., 1189-1199. In the "Home Counties Magazine" for October, 1903, it is stated that the form of a square bowl generally with parallel sides . . . set on five round shafts, the centre one being thickest, and the whole resting on a square plinth, is found all over Surrey, Sussex, Kent, and, in a lesser degree, Middlesex, Essex, and Herts. "It has been asked why is the design so common, and a reply has been hazarded that in the twelfth century there must have been somewhere in the Weald of Sussex a 'font factory,' and that when a church was built a font was ordered, and the article was supplied in due course." The writer then states the connection between village churches and monasteries, and remarks, "Now while the reverend brethren of the monastery were their own architects, it must be remembered that their own churches never required a font," and goes on to suppose that when a vicar of a church dependent on a monastery wanted a font in his parish church, orders were given for one to be manufactured, and the Abbot paid the bill; adding, "This is, of course, conjectural, but not a little of ancient church usage is conjectural also." With regard to this supposition, if it be correct, it must be presumed that several Norman churches were built by pious founders without fonts, and handed over to the monasteries in that state; or, that in churches held from monasteries, the Saxon fonts had worn out, and that the Abbots of different monastic establishments all ordered their goods from the same font factory; all of which ideas seem improbable. As to the font factory itself, may we not as reasonably presume a factory for lancet windows? The commercial idea is totally opposed to the spirit of individuality of the early and mediæval artificer. The idea held in those days by the architect down to the humblest worker, either for the fabric of the church or its furniture, was that the

work should be exceeding magnificent. At the end of the eighteenth and during the greater part of the nineteenth century, the ideal of the church builder and furnisher seems to have been that the work should be exceeding cheap.

Examples of the next period—Early English, 1200-1307—are rare in England. In our own county, Standon is perhaps the only one that can be definitely assigned to that period; but many older fonts had pillars added at this time, *e.g.*, Broxbourne.

#### STANDON.

This font is the only one in the county that can with certainty be ascribed to the Early English Period; it stands on a dwarf octagonal step one and three-quarter inches high, which does not appear ancient. The octagonal bowl is supported in the centre by a short ancient shaft, and round the sides by eight small modern arches of stone replacing the original Purbeck marble arches, the bases of which remain. The bowl is of unpolished Purbeck marble, it has a diameter of thirty-one and a half inches; round the sides is a bold conventional Early English foliage design. The basin is circular, lead lined with drain, twelve and a half inches deep, twenty-five inches in diameter; on the rim are remains of the fastenings of the original cover. The height of font, exclusive of step, is forty-one and a half inches. The flat oak cover is modern. At this time the shape of the font had changed, and hexagonal and octagonal forms made their appearance, the latter being the favourite, either from the ease with which the stone could be shaped or from a symbolic idea of the seven days' creation of the natural world and the new creation.

Over the font of St. Tecla at Milan, is an inscription by St. Ambrose, assigning this latter reason for the octagonal form. The Decorated Period in English architecture, 1307-1377, has few examples in the county. Hitchin, Offley, and Ware are fine specimens of this style, while Abbot's Langley, Datchworth, Throcking, and Westmill belong to the Transition Period.

#### HITCHIN.

The font, a fine example of the Decorated Period, has twelve sides, and "hath the twelve Apostles round

it; but they have been assaulted and battered by those that exceeded them in Pretence of Sanctity." These full-length figures are about twelve inches in height, and stand on small brackets composed of two octagonal steps; they are separated from each other by buttresses, which reach the base and terminate at the height of the figures in pinnacles enriched with crockets. The figures of the Apostles round the font seem to be as follows:—W., St. Matthew; W.N.W., St. Peter; N.N.W., St. Andrew; N., St. James the Great; N.N.E., St. John; N.E., St. Thomas; E., St. Matthias; E.S.E., St. Bartholomew; S.E., St. Simon; S., St. James the Less (?); S.S.W., St. Philip (?); W.S.W., St. Jude. The faces and emblems of the Apostles are much damaged, rendering their recognition very difficult. The bowl is of greater diameter than the stem, and projects about four and a half inches, forming ogee crocketed canopies over the figures; at the angles of the bowl are half figures of angels, in open tunics which they are clasping with their hands; these small figures form terminations to the sides of the canopies. Between the canopies, above the angels, are small crocketed niches with an ornamental finial. The basin is circular with a modern lead lining, but no drain. The height of the font from the top of the steps is forty-four inches, and the material is Ketton stone. The font "has lost all its old steps, which added so much to its dignity. These were formerly three in number, and were taken away by the Rev. J. P. Morgan, vicar 1755-1788." "In the south parvise is preserved a post-Reformation font cover of simple but good design; the present one is very recent, in memory of the late Mr. Francis Lucas. What was the old cover like? Was it a lifting one as at present, or was it a cupboard arrangement? Judging from marks at the angles of the top of the font, one is inclined to favour a cupboard arrangement." An illustration of this font appears in Clutterbuck's "History of Hertfordshire."

A full description of Ware font is impossible in the time now remaining. There are several prints in the Lewis Evans' Collection. It is the most interesting font of its period in the county, and makes a very good second to Anstey in general interest. On the east face is the figure of St. George with the dragon, on other panels are

St. Catherine, St. James the Great, St. John the Baptist, St. Margaret with her dragon, the Legend of St. Christopher; the Annunciation is depicted in two panels.

Fonts of the Perpendicular Period, 1377-1546, are the most numerous. Ayot St. Lawrence, Bygrave, Caldicote, Elstree, Flaunden, Great and Little Hadham, Little Hormead, Meesden, Newnham, Norton, Rushden, Sawbridgeworth, Great Gaddesden, Layston, St. Paul's Walden, St. Stephen's (St. Albans), Welwyn, and Wheathampstead belong to this period. They are nearly always octagonal and enriched with panelling; some, *e.g.*, Ayot St. Lawrence, Wheathampstead, Newnham and Much Hadham were painted; in the two latter instances, however, the painting was probably only on shields round the bowl.

During the reign of Edward VI., churches were robbed of their portable goods either by their own parishioners or by the State; in the reign of Elizabeth even the fonts began to disappear. In the year 1583 the Bishop of London ordered the Archdeacon of St. Albans to find out those clergymen in the archdeaconry who did not keep strictly to the Prayer Book. About twenty questions were sent to the various parishes, which were to be answered by the churchwardens or anyone in the congregation disposed to inform. One of the answers returned from Watford was: "Our font is removed, but by whose orders we know not." In the "Advertisement for due Order in Public Administration of Common Prayer, etc., 1584," is the following entry: "Item, that the font be not removed, nor that the curate do baptise in parish churches in any basons, nor in any other form than is already prescribed."

After the end of the Perpendicular Period, fonts began to get less rubrical and more inelegant down to about the year 1840; when the revival in the study of architecture affected everything connected with the church, and fonts began once more to assume the dimensions, if not the beauty of workmanship, of earlier days. While some churches have retained the font which served for the earliest building on the present site, *e.g.*, Anstey, Buckland, Sandridge, Stanstead Abbots, and Wormley, others have had more than the original one; St. Albans Abbey has had five, Digswell, All Saints' (Hertford), Hertingfordbury, and Willian, four each; Amwell, Ayot

St. Lawrence, Great Berkhamstead, St. Peter's (St. Albans), Stapleford, Tewin, Watford, King's Langley, Shenley, Essendon, and Great Munden, three each. More than fifty fonts in the churches of Hertfordshire are modern. There are three chief causes to account for this : (1) Upon the abolition of the use of the Liturgy in 1645 by the ordinance of the Houses of Parliament, all fonts were ordered to be removed out of churches and basons to be used in their places. This command does not seem to have been carried out energetically, the defacing of carving being apparently deemed sufficient even in those places where the order was obeyed. The font of St. Albans Abbey was destroyed at this time ; the figures of the twelve Apostles on the Hitchin font, and the carvings on Layston font were defaced. In 1640, Edmund Aylee, a glazier, of Bishop's Stortford, confessed that he and seven other impressed soldiers did enter Rickmansworth Church in the morning and broke down the altar rails ; in the afternoon they broke down part of the cover of the font. This font had already been attacked, over a hundred years earlier, by the parishioners, in the year 1527. About the year 1683, a complaint was made that the church possessed no font. At Hemel Hempstead, during the Commonwealth, the question of baptism was very hotly discussed, a fact which may account for the disappearance of the ancient font. (2) After the Great Fire of London, 1666, the authorities in some country parishes seem to have replaced their ancient fonts with bowls similar to those placed in the city churches re-built by Wren. The present font at Cottered may belong to this period. The third cause of destruction is modern "restorers." When Mr. Cussans wrote, "Modern restorers have as much to answer for as the popularly abused soldiers of Cromwell, destroyers as they were," he was only stating, with regard to the Hertfordshire churches, a simple fact. The "restorations" of the last fifty years have, without an exception, been accompanied by the loss of some article or articles that are irrecoverable. Bramfield, Barkway, Braughing, Codicote, Sacombe, Hertingfordbury, Bushey, Hinxworth, Little Munden, and Watton are only a few recorded instances of the loss of a font. When at a "restoration" the font has not been used as road material, it has been trimmed up to accord with its surroundings.

Aspenden had one side sawn off, Flamstead has been so transformed that one architect described it as modern and another as "said to be original," Hunsdon has been completely re-cut by a skilled hand, Therfield cut about to accommodate it to the various positions in which it has been placed, and Widford, presumably in rivalry of Hunsdon, has been re-cut, but by a prentice hand. Welwyn and a portion of Albury were buried. Royston disappeared, but in a neighbouring summer-house the font cover is fixed, while the lead lining of the basin protects the roof from rain. Braughing is an instance of what occurs at a "restoration." Surprise has been expressed that in many instances the font is far older than the church containing it; the explanation of this fact is that the mediæval church restorer had a reverence for the church and its belongings which is sadly lacking in the present day.

**BRAUGHING (Modern, 1888).**

In the Rev. P. G. Ward's "History of Braughing Church" it is stated that "the old font was unfortunately so damaged when it was taken down that it was not thought capable of repair"—[one wonders by whom]—"re-erected outside the church on south side of tower." It was still in this position on January 22nd, 1904; but has since been replaced in the church. The base of clunch is slightly moulded, and supports a plain octagonal stem of the same material; the octagonal bowl is of hard, shelly sandstone, eighteen and a half inches deep externally, ornamented on each face with an ogee panel containing a trefoil headed arch; the circular basin, which was full of water, is about twelve inches deep, twenty-three inches in diameter, and lead lined; on the rim are remains of the iron fastenings for securing the cover. There is a kneeling-stone and a broken flat modern oak cover. The font is forty-four and a half inches high. Beyond a crack on one side of the stem and a piece off the other, it is difficult to see what restoration is necessary, even after sixteen years' exposure to the elements. The bowl probably dates from the early part of the Decorated Period.

At Hinxworth, a parishioner rescued the font when it was being carted away with some rubbish. Some churches have recovered their fonts. Bishop's Stortford

was found under a floor; Thorley rescued from a farm-yard; Throcking, which was lying broken in the tower, is repaired and now in use. Remains of Redbourn have been found during a recent restoration. One of the disused fonts is that of Albury, near Bishop's Stortford, which was buried in the churchyard by a former rector. Others are still in existence, viz., Northaw, Kelshall, Sarratt, and Shephall in their respective churchyards; Great Berkhamstead in the church; Hinxworth, Rickmansworth, Stocking Pelham, Reed, King's Walden, and Weston in gardens. During the restoration of Watford Church in 1870, on the rough-cast being removed, some portions of the very early Norman font were found in the tower and under the clock. These were carefully preserved and placed in the Church of St. James, where they form part of the present font.<sup>6</sup> Sawbridgeworth (1) has been given away, by and to whom is apparently unknown. The assertion that Thundridge is still in existence is unverified. With regard to the other ancient fonts which have been removed from their churches, nothing seems to be known as to their existence or non-existence. A sketch remains of St. Andrew's, Hertford, and short notes on Digswell and St. Albans Abbey (2). Pridmore has sketches of fifteen more that have now disappeared; but with regard to the remaining twenty-nine, no information whatever has been available.

Mr. Wilton Hall kindly copied his notes on Pridmore's sketches of fonts. These notes have been of the greatest value to me. The fonts of Bovingdon, Digswell, St. Andrew's (Hertford), Stapleford, and Wallington were Norman; while Barkway, Codicote, Graveley, Kimpton, Pirton, Ridge, and Sandon seem all to have belonged to the Perpendicular style. As eighteen of the

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<sup>6</sup> In November, 1575, the churchwardens, schoolmaster and sacristan [of Watford] were summoned before the Archdeacon to explain how the font had been pulled down. They declared that they had not noticed it. The case was adjourned for inquiries, which were especially to be made by Nicholas Colborne, "because he kept the schole in the church." One witness declared that "beinge in the church with the vicar he perceyved that the font was ryven and in decay whereupon he toulde the same unto the vicar, then the vicar came to it and stirred it with his hand." Before 24th November, 1575, the font had been restored. (Hale, *Precedents in Causes of Office*, 79).—*Victoria County History of Herts*, Vol. IV., 322, footnote.

fifty-eight fonts described by Pridmore<sup>7</sup> have disappeared, it is only reasonable to assume that to obtain the total number existing in his time one-third must be added to the twenty-eight ancient fonts still preserved which he did not sketch; in other words, there were, in or about the year 1797, one hundred ancient fonts in the county; and in 1904, after a little over one hundred years' interval, sixty-eight only remaining, being a loss during that period of thirty-two. Fourteen sketches of the following fonts, all of which have now disappeared, viz., Aston, Bengoe, Bovington, Codicote, Graveley, Ickleford, Kimpton, Pirton, Ridge, Sandon, Stapleford, Thundridge, Willian, and Little Wymondley, form the only information concerning them.

The shaft of Elstree is curious. It consists of a large hollow octagonal shaft pierced by eight small panels, separated by projecting buttresses; within this outer shaft is a small inner shaft, which carries the drain. At Hadham, on the south-east face of the bowl, is a plain shield, base upwards. The Northaw font has concave faces to the bowl—a most unusual feature. The design of the south-east panel on Throcking appears to be unique among the fonts of this county; it is diamond shaped, with semi-circular projections at the angles. The fonts of Ardeley, Buckland, Furneaux Pelham, Stanstead Abbots, and Wymondley were raised during the Perpendicular Period. In a large number of instances an unrubrical, pseudo-Gothic, or classical erection of little or no interest forms a very poor substitute for the original vessel, which in some cases may be but a few hundred yards away in a farmyard or garden. It has been stated that the bowl of Thundridge font is being used as a basin for a pump. Although during the compilation of these notes no instance of an inscribed font has been recorded, there is an inscription relating to baptism on the south pier of the tower at Ashwell.

The notes from the Pridmore Collection have a

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<sup>7</sup> Pridmore, as nearly all the members of this Society are doubtless aware, was a schoolmaster of Tewin, who, about the year 1797, went over the county making sketches of the churches, fonts, rood screens, stained-glass windows, country houses, and generally any object of antiquarian interest. The collection fills nine thick volumes, and belongs to Baron Dimsdale, and is now at Meesdon Manor, Buntingford.

unique value in showing what the county has lost since Pridmore's time; the thirty-nine ancient fonts which still remain are accurately described by him, except in two places; the first is entitled, in pencil, "Font in Bygrave Church," but a query has been affixed to this; there is no resemblance between this description and Bygrave font. The sketch seems to be somewhat similar to Hexton, and as there are sometimes two views of the same subject, *e.g.*, St. Ippolitts, this may be another instance. The second place where the description is at fault is called Clothall. It would be interesting to learn to what church the font here described does belong. Sixteen of the fonts have entirely disappeared, and three have lost their bowls—Ayot St. Lawrence, Kelshall, and Weston. The sketches of the seventeen missing examples may be regarded as accurate, taking into consideration the fact that for one wrong description there are thirty-nine correct notes. Two fonts now in Hertfordshire churches belong to other counties—the font at Little Gaddesden belongs to Ivinghoe, and the St. Saviour's (St. Albans) font came from Malden.<sup>8</sup>

In concluding these notes on the ancient fonts of Hertfordshire, I may mention that no description of any kind of the following has been discovered:—\*Albury (near Tring), Amwell, \*Ayot St. Peter, Bengeo, St. Peter (St. Albans), \*Barkway, East Barnet, \*Bramfield, \*Bushey, Little Gaddesden, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, \*King's Walden, Great Munden, \*Little Munden, \*All Saints' (Hertford), \*North Mymms, \*Brent Pelham, \*Royston, \*Sacombe, St. Margaret's, Totteridge, King's Langley, Tring, \*Watton, Wiggington, and \*Wyddial. Sacombe and North Mymms are particularly tantalising instances. In the former, it is said that several inhabitants remember the old font, but cannot give a description; in the latter, although the structure appears to be quite new, it is said that nothing is known as to the original font.

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<sup>8</sup> Co : Essex.

\* These fonts have been replaced well within the memory of persons now living.