

THE EAST WORLDHAM BAPTISMAL BOWL

I FEEL insufficiently qualified to give a description of this, as the Hon. Editor has asked me to do. But I can make use of a description by an expert. For no sooner had I put a short paragraph in our Parish Magazine about it (soon after I came last year) than I received a letter from Mr. Howard Cotterell, a Founder of the Society of Pewter Collectors, asking me for a photograph and rubbings. It seemed best to send it for his thorough inspection, as he seemed most interested in the few particulars I had given, and especially in the date, *viz.* 1641. I had gathered from parishioners that it had once been taken up from the bottom of a disused well, and then had got into the hands of an antique dealer who offered it at a price to a former Vicar, Rev. G. H. Palmer, who claimed it as belonging to the Church, and so recovered it to East Worldham free. Mr. Cotterell describes it as "a treasure recovered for a Hampshire Church : remarkably deep basin of unusual section." He announced his intention of writing an article on it in the *Antique Collector*, which appeared January 23rd, 1932, and of which he sent me a copy.

"The dimensions of the bowl are : Diameter $14\frac{1}{4}$ in. ; total depth $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. ; depth to bottom of sloping rim $2\frac{3}{8}$ in. ; width of rim $1\frac{3}{4}$ in."

"Stamped on the back of the rim is the maker's touch, which is the one shown at No. 6022 in my *Old Pewter : Its Makers and Marks*."

"In Fig. 3 I give a careful rubbing of the inscription which appears around the rim, and which reads as follows :

H

E.M THE GIFT OF EDWARD HEIGHES TO STAND IN THE FONT
OF THE CHURCH OF EAST WORDLEHAM FOR THE BAPTIZING
OF CHILDREN WHO DECESED ANO DOMI 1641."

About this inscription we learn an interesting thing, *viz.* that the upper letter in the triangle of the donors' initials is always the surname ; and also that the M stands for the name of the donor's wife.

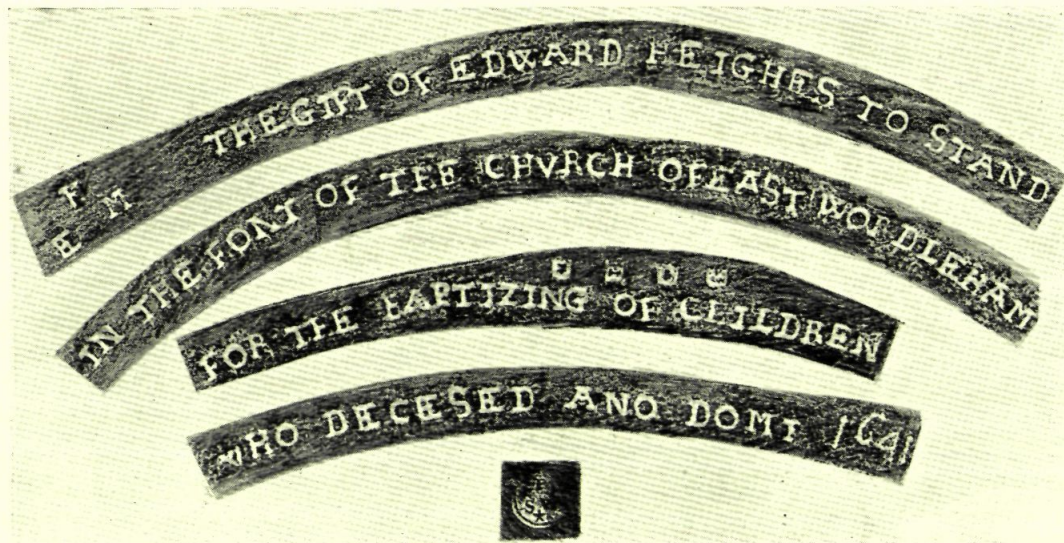
He notices the "muddling of the name" of our Parish ; but I find a good many old inhabitants always pronounce it "Wordle-ham," and my wife pointed out to me that Gilbert White, close to whose beloved Selborne we are situate, mentions hearing some shots from a gun reverberating "as far as Wordle-ham."

Another thing that only an expert could throw light on is as to two little excrescences on the inside of the bowl, which he



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THE EAST WORLDEHAM BAPTISMAL BOWL: THE INSCRIPTION.

says show that it originally had "drop-handles for lifting the piece when full to empty the contents."

Acting on Mr. Cotterell's advice, I have hung the bowl in our house, as he says that damp in a church wall would cause decay. But I should be so pleased if we could provide a good glass case with a lock, so that visitors might see our interesting relic.

I may mention that our church is not deficient in interest. A little round door in the north side of the chancel is said to have originally been that leading to the winding steps up to the rood-loft: now it leads to a modern vestry; but in the great depth of the wall one may easily imagine the steps to lie hid somewhere where the sexton goes to ventilate our stove. There is a very fine semi-effigial tomb (or rather slab, for this alone remains) of "a lady in a wimple," *vide Victoria County History*. This we gather was found in the floor at the time of the Restoration (about 1860) upside down (I suspect used as part of the floor). The Rector who restored the church had a modern arch made for it in the south wall of the nave, which was a commendable restoration, giving an idea of how the tomb may have originally appeared. Some think the lady was the wife of Thomas Chaucer, son of Chaucer the poet; but it may be a little earlier, perhaps of the Venuz family.

I have a framed list of Rectors and Vicars, not complete, but for which Rev. Canon Goodman kindly gave me some material.

The blocks of the Bowl are kindly lent by the *Antique Collector* Magazine Editor.

R. C. BATES.

April 1932.

P.S.—Since writing the above I have placed the Bowl in Church secure in a mahogany and glass case, and also had a print made, copies of which may be had from me at 1d. The Bowl was exhibited at the Alton Loan Exhibition last year, and will probably be exhibited at the "Six Counties" Loan Exhibition this summer at Wilton House, Salisbury.

R. C. B.

May 1933.