

The Ancient Font of Smalley Church.

BY PERCY H. CURREY, HON. SECRETARY.



WHEN the ancient chapel at Smalley was demolished in 1790, the old font was removed, and disappeared. The Rev. T. B. Charlesworth, Vicar of Smalley, has, however, recently discovered, and proposes to restore to the church, what would appear to be the bowl of this old font. It was used as a cattle trough on the farm of Mr. Barber, who bought it at the sale of the effects of the late Mr. Purvis, of Flamstead; and we know that other stones from the church have been sold and used in neighbouring buildings.

The bowl in question is a plain, circular vessel, 2 ft. 1 in. in diameter, and 1 ft. 9 ins. in height, pierced for a drain, and the lower part has apparently been dressed off to give it a flat base. In a description of the original, supplied by an old inhabitant to the Rev. Chas. Kerry, and given in *Dr. Cox's Churches of Derbyshire*, there is said to have been an ornamental band round the top. But such sources of information are often unreliable, and, in view of the great lapse of time since the font was removed, it probably is so in this case; or it is even possible that the top of the bowl may have been dressed down in a similar way to the base. On the one hand, it is certainly difficult to believe that this heavy circular bowl, drained in the centre, can have been made for a cattle trough

or for any secular purpose; and, on the other, it has every appearance of being in reality the ancient Norman font. Another font (now disused), made by a mason who remembered the old one, is said to be an imitation of it, yet its bowl is quite plain.

[Mr. Currey's description of the newly-discovered bowl would seem to tally almost exactly with that of the ancient font at Mottram in Longdendale, which, curiously enough, has passed through similar vicissitudes.—ED.]