

## On Derbyshire Plumbery, or Workings in Lead.

BY J. CHARLES COX, LL.D.

**L**T is more than probable that the dressing and smelting of lead ore were among the first arts known and practised in Derbyshire. There can be no doubt that the lead mines of Derbyshire were known and worked before the Roman invasion. The Romans made great use of lead. Several pigs of Derbyshire lead have been found at different times, bearing inscriptions stamped upon them by their Roman founders.\* They used the material for the baths that they constructed in every villa they erected, and for the larger ones at the hot springs, such as those at Buxton. Coffins of this metal were also occasionally used by the same people; an ornamental Roman coffin of lead was found at Sittingbourne in 1879.† Derbyshire lead was used for the burial of St. Guthlac in the eighth century, and for the roofing of Canterbury Cathedral in the ninth century. The Pipe Rolls of Henry II. show how wide was the use of Derbyshire lead in the Norman period; within three years in that reign, we find it being used for the castle at Windsor, and for the churches of Boston and Waltham.‡

But our present concern is not with the smelting of lead, or the extensive use of the metal from this county in early and medieval

\* Wood-cuts and descriptions of these pigs were given in the *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. vii., pp. 63-69.

† *Archæologia Cantiana*, Vol. xvi.

‡ *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, Vol. viii., p. 41.

days, but rather to put together a few notes and illustrations on the ornamental working of lead, and the specimens that now remain in Derbyshire. We should expect to find that plumbery, or the art of casting, preparing, and working lead, and using it on buildings, and for various purposes, would reach to much perfection in the county that was essentially the home of the raw material. The comparatively small amount of research that we have been able to give to the subject, amply confirms this expectation. Lead is an exceedingly malleable metal, and as its hardness is increased by hammering, it soon commended itself to designers as an ornamental as well as a useful and almost essential part of a builder's materials. It is easily worked into any shape from its great softness, and is sufficiently malleable to permit of two edges folding over each other, so as to make it watertight without soldering. Hence its very early use for roofs and cisterns.

Roofs were not only covered with lead, but the art-workman put forth his cunning to treat it as a material capable of embellishment. "The gutters," says M. André, "were sometimes formed of leaden troughs, stamped with a flower pattern, as at Lincoln Cathedral; and the ridges of the roofs were crested with a running fleur-de-lis design in lead, as at Exeter." Sometimes, on old roofs, patterns may be noted that are always out of sight, save to the builder or adventurous antiquary. Thus we noted a neat scalloped bordering to some of the old lead ridges of the Perpendicular roof of the nave of North Winfield church, when superintending its removal in 1872.

A good deal of careful ornament was bestowed upon lead coffins in mediæval days, as proved by various instances that have been accidentally brought to light; names, inscriptions, crests, coats of arms, as well as set patterns, being worked in relief. There is a certain amount of simple ornament on the wedge-shaped coffin of the Countess of Shrewsbury, the celebrated Bess of Hardwick, who died in 1607, as we noted when the Cavendish vault at All Saints', Derby, was opened on August 28th, 1879.

But the most important and interesting use of ornamental lead work in connection with churches, is its occasional appropriation

for baptismal purposes. The lining of the stone font with lead was an invariable necessity, for the font used always to be kept filled with water, and this could not have been done without the use of such a lining. But lead sometimes played a still more important part in this connection. The material of a font, according to the Council of Lerida and Ivo the Canonist, was to be of hard stone, without porousness or any fracture; the bowl was never to be of wood which is absorbent, or of brass, which is subject to tarnish with rust, but if of metal, tin was to be used. Bronze fonts, however, became common in Germany and Belgium, and there are some specimens of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; but they were rare in England and France. There was a celebrated one of copper at St. Alban's, brought there in 1644, from Holyrood Chapel, wherein the royal children of Scotland used to be baptized. England has a single and most interesting example of a brass font at the church of Little Gidding, near Oundle. There used to be a font of silver at Canterbury, which was carried to Westminster Abbey for royal Christenings; there is also a small silver font in the church of St. Mary de Castro, Guernsey. Queen Elizabeth gave two presents of golden fonts, one to Mary Queen of Scotland, and the other to Charles IX. of France, each costing one thousand pounds.

In England, however, at an early date, another metal was occasionally used for fonts, namely, lead. The only other part of Christendom, so far as we are aware, where lead fonts were ever in use is the north of France, and these seem to have been imported in a finished condition from England, and are found in districts where we know that there was considerable intercommunication between the Religious Houses of the two countries. There are some good examples of leaden fonts in the museums of Rouen and Amiens.

English fonts of lead are chiefly of the Norman period; recent attention to the details of ecclesiology has considerably extended the list. About the beginning of the present century, it was stated in the *Antiquarian Itinerary* that only five were known. In Simpson's *Ancient Baptismal Fonts* (1828), eight are mentioned.

In Paley's *Illustrations of Baptismal Fonts* (1844), the list is increased to eighteen, but it is somewhat faulty. The sixth volume of the *Archæological Journal* (1850-1), gives the total number of English leaden fonts as twenty-two; whilst *Notes and Queries* (1867-8) brought the list up to twenty-four. Mr. J. Lewis André, who has recently written excellent articles on the lead fonts of Sussex\* and Surrey,† enumerates no less than twenty-nine; and now that we are able to add to the number that of Oxenhall, Gloucestershire, the total reaches thirty.

The following list seems likely to be a complete one, and is, at all events, the fullest yet published:—

- Berkshire*.—Childrey; late Norman.  
 Clewer; Norman.  
 Long Wittenham; late Norman.  
 Woolhampton; Norman.  
 Woolstone; Norman.
- Derbyshire*.—Ashover; late Norman.
- Dorsetshire*.—Wareham; Norman.
- Gloucestershire*.—Clunbridge; c. 1640.  
 Frampton-on-Severn.  
 Llancourt; Norman.  
 Oxenhall; Norman.  
 Siston.  
 Tidenham, Norman.
- Kent*.—Brookland; Norman.  
 Chilham; Post-reformation.  
 Eythorne; 1628.
- Lincolnshire*.—Barnetby-le-Wolde; Norman.
- Norfolk*.—Brundal; Norman.  
 Great Plumstead; Norman.  
 Hasingham; Norman.
- Oxfordshire*.—Clifton.  
 Dorchester; Norman.  
 Warborough; Norman.
- Somersetshire*.—Pitcombe.
- Surrey*.—Walton-on-the-Hill; Norman.

\* *Sussex Archæological Collections*, Vol. xxxii., 1882.

† *Surrey Archæological Collections*, Vol. ix., 1885.

*Sussex*.—Edburton ; late Norman.

Parham ; Decorated.

Pilcombe ; late Norman.

*Wiltshire*.—Avebury ; Norman.

Chirton.

Derbyshire, though probably furnishing the material for most of the leaden fonts of England, only possesses a single example, namely, that of Ashover. But the Derbyshire specimen (Plate V.) is one of which the county may be proud, for it is far superior to many of the leaden fonts, and may fairly be described as a good example of true art-workmanship, both in design and execution. The one that it most resembles is that of Walton-on-the-Hill, the bowl of which is encircled with an arcade of nine arches over as many seated figures. The font at Dorchester has also arcaded figures ; and the one at Childrey has twelve effigies of mitred bishops in as many recesses. The most elaborate specimen is that of Brookland, which has two rows of arcading, the upper having the signs of the zodiac, and the lower the labours of the month.

The Ashover font attracted some little attention from archæologists at a time when other leaden fonts were altogether unnoticed. Mention is made of it in the treatises relative to fonts by Gough, Simpson, and others. It is engraved in the second volume of the *Topographer* for the year 1790, and another equally poor and ill-proportioned wood-cut appeared many years later in the second volume of Glover's *Derbyshire*. The font stands on a singularly plain and unsuitable stone base of octagonal shape, probably of fifteenth century workmanship. The circular leaden bowl is divided into twenty arcades, in each of which stands an upright male figure, somewhat gracefully draped. Each figure holds a book in the left hand, and at first sight they all seem similar. But closer observation shows that there are two sets of figures, which are repeated alternately. Ten of them have the open right hand raised with the palm outwards, but the other ten have the right hand placed against the breast close to



LEAD FONT, ASHOVER.

the book. All that we can say of the figures is that they are probably intended to give a general idea of apostles or Christian missionaries. Above the arcade is a narrow cable moulding that is wanting in several places. Below each figure are two well-shaped kind of escallop shells with a central dot or pearl in each; these are separated by three curved lines of moulding below the base of each shaft of the arcade. Below this again is a continuous band of moulding, the lines of which are cunningly twined round into repeated fleur-de-lys. The whole treatment of this lower work is most delicate, and must have produced a graceful effect when fresh from the designer's hands. The date of this lead work is undoubtedly late Norman. The dimensions of the font are as follows:—Diameter,  $23\frac{1}{2}$  in.; depth, 14 in.; height of figures,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  in.

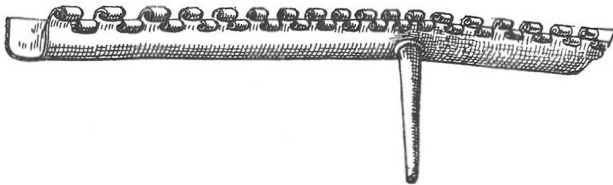
The Ashover font used to stand at the west end of the north aisle of Ashover church, and a part was lost to sight by its being placed against the wall. But, among other improvements recently effected by the present rector, is the moving of this font to a far more worthy position, just under the western archway into the tower, which is now opened out.

Although this is the only leaden font in Derbyshire, there is another one in the South of England that has a striking link of connection with Derbyshire stamped upon it. The church of Parham, Sussex, possesses a singular leaden font, supposed to be the only known example of fourteenth century date. It is divided into compartments by perpendicular and horizontal panels of oblong shape, each bearing the legend, "IHC NAZAR," in Lombardic capitals. In the spaces between these bands are small shields, bearing *gironny within a bordure charged with roundels*, the arms of Peverell of Sussex. Andrew Peverell was Knight of the Shire in 1351, and in many subsequent years; he was probably the restorer of the church, and undoubtedly the donor of the font. When seeking a design for the font of his gift, what more likely than that his mind should revert to a county that had been the cradle of the ancestors of his family,

and that he should decide upon the use of a material so peculiarly associated with that midland shire? \*

The way in which these leaden fonts were constructed seems to have been to cast them flat in the first instance, and then to bend them into the required circular shape. The join, where the edges were soldered up, is usually obvious, as at Ashover, and sometimes not a little interferes with the pattern. The figures and ornaments are often mere repetitions, a single one being most likely carved in wood and then impressed on the sand as often as required to complete the design, which would be a great saving in the expense. Thus, at Ashover only two figures were carved, but each were re-used ten times.

Lead found not only its chief use but its chief capacity for ornamental treatment in English domestic work, in connection with the conveyance of rain from roofs and walls. It was not, we believe, until the sixteenth century that the idea of continuous downcast rain-pipes attached to the walls was conceived; at all events, it was not until that century that it came into anything like general operation. The object previously was to discharge the water into the air by projecting pipes, usually passing through gargoyles, at some little distance from the walls. The way in which this was sometimes accomplished by a lead spout from a lead gutter is shown in the accompanying drawing of one of the gutters and spouts above the projecting or oriel windows of Mr. Gadsby's old house at the back of Tenant Street, Derby.



\* There is a good drawing of this font in the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, vol. xxxii., p. 78.

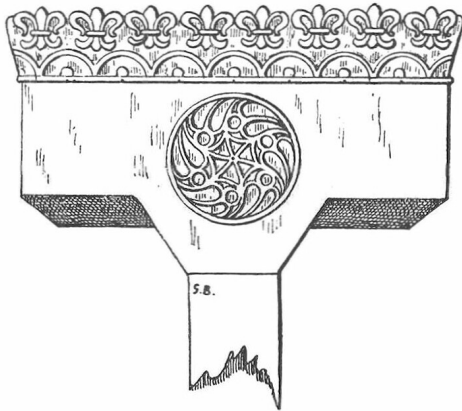


There seems good reason to assign the date of this house, (and the lead-work is clearly co-eval,) to the last quarter of the fifteenth century.\* The gutter is also well worthy of reproduction, as showing a most effective though simple pattern, easily produced by nicking the edge of the lead, and curling it down in alternate depths. Surely this design might well commend itself to modern builders and architects.

At Haddon Hall there is a remarkable display of elaborately-treated down-cast leaden pipes, with richly-ornamented cistern-heads, of varying dates and of much diversity. We are inclined to think that there is no other house in England so rich in art-work of this description. †

The earliest in date of these details at Haddon is the one here engraved. The

highly effective fleur-de-lis band, as well as the circular ornament, have been applied and soldered on after the ordinary moulding has been completed. This cistern-head might easily escape the visitor's attention, but it is to be seen from the short wooden gallery

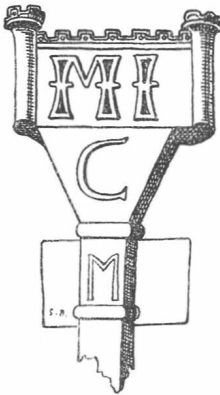
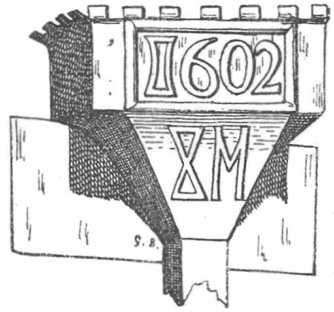


that leads across a very small open court, formed by some alterations in the building, to certain of the private apartments at the north-west angle of the upper court. The date seems to be of the first half of the sixteenth century, possibly of the time of Sir Henry Vernon, who died in 1515.

\* See drawings and account of this house by Mr. George Bailey, in the 2nd volume of the *Derbyshire Arch. Journal*, pp. 29, 30, plate ii.

† The *Building News*, of August 30th, 1878, gave a lithographed sheet of sketches of the lead-work at Haddon Hall, but the drawings in the letterpress, by Mr. George Bailey, are more accurate.

The next illustration is from the head of one in the upper court, of a far simpler design. The letters and date tell their own tale. Sir John Manners, renowned in romance for his marriage with Dorothy, second daughter and co-heiress of Sir George Vernon, resided here from the death of his father-in-law, in 1577, to the time of his own decease, in 1611.

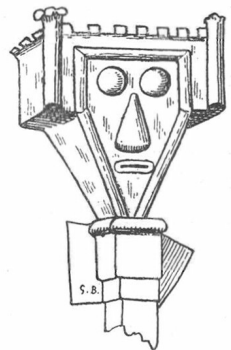


He was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir George Manners, who was married on the 2nd of April, 1594, to Grace, eldest daughter of Sir Henry Pierpoint. Possibly the G, between the M I (for John Manners) and the M on the pipe below, as shown on this other head, which is also from the upper court, refers to Sir George, and to his wife Grace.

In the same court is another embattled pipe-head, evidently of about the same date as the last, and which,

by a simple arrangement of plain mouldings, produces a quaint caricature of a human countenance, reminding us somewhat of the well-known Norman "mask" so often used in the stone corbel-tables of our Norman churches.

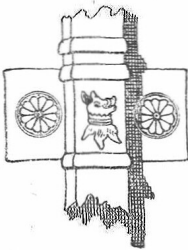
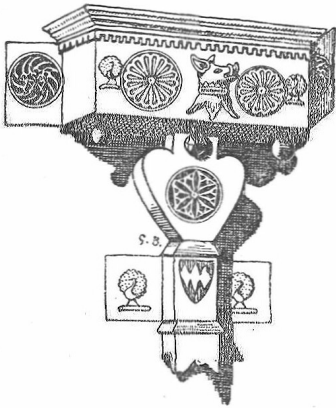
On the death of Sir George Manners, in 1623, he was succeeded by his eldest son John, who afterwards succeeded to the earldom of Rutland. Sir John was married, in 1628, to Frances, daughter of Edward Lord

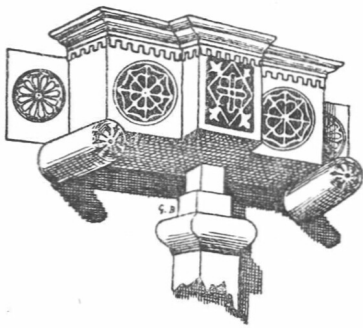


Montagu. The highly elaborate work of the down-pipe, with

its large cistern head and embossed wall fasteners, to be noted near the entrance in the lower court, must have been cast and placed here after this marriage, for the shield on the highest joint of the pipe bears *three lozenges in fesse* for Montagu. Otherwise we should have been inclined to have assigned to this work a somewhat earlier date. The respective crests of the Vernon and Manners families — *a boar's head erased*, and *a peacock displayed* — occur frequently upon this and other pipes of the lower courtyard. There is one very remarkable feature about this cistern head, which is shared by others at Haddon, but which we have not noted nor heard of elsewhere, namely, that it has a false front, which enables some of the patterns to be cut through and pierced, so that the pattern shows sharp and clear against the shade of the

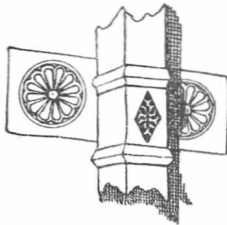
inner and true cistern head. This arrangement adds much to the effect. The three upper circular ornaments of this illustration, namely, those on each side of the upper boar's head and the one immediately below, are thus treated.



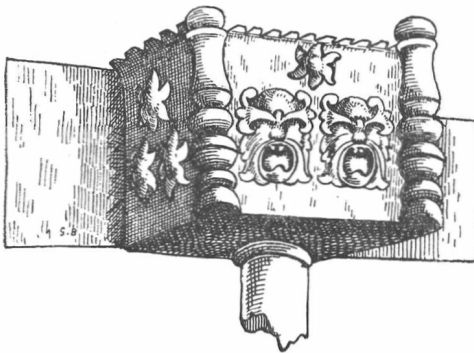


There is considerable variety and beauty of design in this other head and pipe, which are also to be found near the entrance in the lower court. The five upper ornaments are pierced in the way already described, but not those that press against the wall.

We are also able to give drawings of two good pierced designs from another pipe in the upper court, which is otherwise plainly treated, the plain part being new.



The last of our engravings of the Haddon lead work is another



effective cistern head in the upper court, apparently of somewhat later date than the others. Whether the stars or estoiles have any heraldic signification or not we are unable to say, but incline to the latter opinion. We

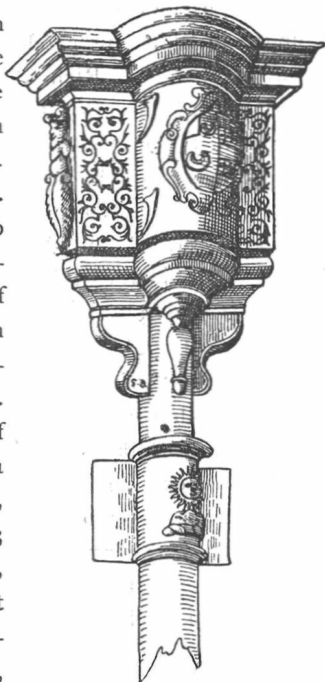
believe it to be post-Restoration work of the second half of the seventeenth century.

In Shaw's *Elizabethan Architecture* there are some drawings of

beautiful lead work in pipes and pipe-heads from the Prebendal House at Winchester, and also some plainer examples from Sherborne, Dorset, and from Claverton, Somerset; but we think it may again be safely repeated that there is no other place in England that can be compared in this respect with our famed Derbyshire Haddon.

At Chaddesden Hall there are two downcast leaden pipes, with the lion and unicorn on the cistern heads, and the letters  $\begin{matrix} W \\ R \\ J. \end{matrix}$ . There are also devices, such as a pelican and a cock, on the joints of the pipes. The initials obviously refer to Robert Wilmot, father of the first baronet, who married Joyce, daughter and co-heiress of William Sacheverell, of Morley. He rebuilt Chaddesden Hall early in the reign of Queen Anne.

The finest leaden pipes and cistern heads of the time of Queen Anne that are in the county of Derby, are to be found against the little church of Trusley. It was rebuilt by Mr. William Coke, and opened on Aug. 6th, 1713. The zincotype gives so good an idea of the massive, well-moulded head and wall fasteners of these pipes that detailed description is unnecessary. The engraving represents one close to the south entrance. The arms are those of Coke, of Trusley (*gules*, 3 crescents and a canton, *or*) impaling Ballidon (*argent*, 2 bars, *vert*, each charged with 3 cross-crosslets, *or*). William Coke, of Trusley, the only son of Robert Coke, was born in 1679. He married his first cousin, Catherine, daughter and heiress of Paul Ballidon, of Derby, in 1693. He was at that time only 13 years of age, whilst his bride was more than double his age, being 29. They had a son born to them in

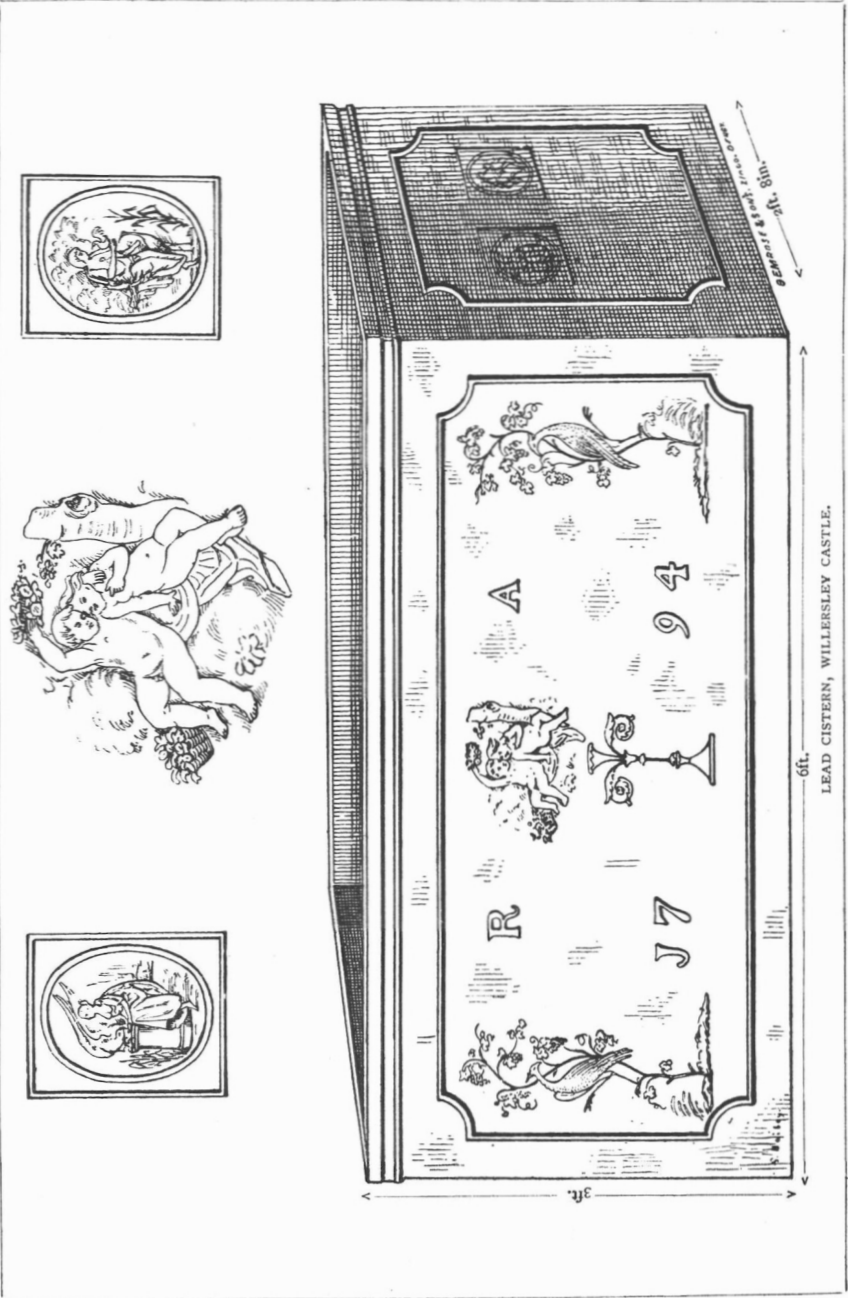


1694, but of their eight children, only two of the daughters, co-heiresses, survived their parents; Cassandra, who married Edward Wilmot, of Spondon, and Frances, who married her kinsman, D'Ewes Coke.

The crest of Coke of Trusley, a sun in splendour, will be noticed on the wall-fastener of the engraving; the crest of Ballidon, a demi lion, appears in other places. "It is generally supposed that the crescents on the coat of arms, and the sun as crest, were adopted by the family at the time of the Crusades to Palestine, when Richard introduced the custom of wearing armorial coats, and of having them engraved upon seals. His own broad seal, when he embarked for the Holy Land, contained two crescents (the Turkish ensign), and they seem not to have been uncommon emblems, as we read of another Prince (according to Speed) who, going against the Turks, adopted this motto, *Plenior redibo* ('I will return more full'). Richard I., after his return from captivity in Germany, ordered a new broad seal to be engraved bearing a full moon, which Speed thinks was done emblematically. The adoption also of one of the heavenly bodies as a crest strengthens the probability of this coat of arms originating with the family in the manner described, and that they took arms from the badges of Richard—the moon and stars—which were emblazoned on all his standards, and cut upon his Great Seals."\*

Cisterns of lead were also at one time, chiefly during the last century, objects of much decorative art. We have seen various cisterns much ornamented, in large gardens in different parts of the kingdom, of dates varying from 1740 to 1800. Mr. André mentions an excellent example that remains in use at The Cedars, Broad Green, Croydon; it has three panels in front and one at each end. The centre division has the date (1768), the others contain vases of flowers, a rich foliated cornice completing the design. But the best art that we have noticed in connection with cisterns is in Derbyshire, and occurs in an exceptionally handsome lead cistern in the grounds of Willersley Castle, Cromford. (Plate VI.) Its size is 6 ft. by 2 ft. 8 in., and it is 3 feet deep. The

\* *Coke of Trusley, a Family History*, privately printed, 1880, pp. 6, 7.



6ft.  
LEAD CISTERN, WILLERSLEY CASTLE.

3ft.

6ft.

9 ft. 4 in.

front and back of the tank are alike in their ornamentation, and so, too, are the ends. In the centre of the larger sides, above a conventional piece of foliage, is a well-designed group of two seated *amorini*, the boy, at whose feet is a basket of flowers, holding a wreath of roses over the girl. At each side is a bird on the tendril of a grape-vine, pecking at the fruit; the bird is perhaps intended for a pea-hen. On each of the ends are two medallions, the one representing a female feeding an eagle, and the other a female feeding a stork. The larger sides also bear the initials R. A., and the date, 1794. It is almost needless to remark that the initials stand for the celebrated Sir Richard Arkwright.

The manner of making these cisterns or tanks was as follows:—The size of the four sides was measured out, and the dimensions of the side first to be cast having been taken, slips of wood on which the outer mouldings had been previously cut, were pressed upon the sand, thus leaving their impression; and in the same way figures of birds, of foliage, or of whatever was required were pressed upon the internal surface of the smoothed sand from carved moulds, usually of wood, but sometimes of lead. The casting-table was of wood bound with iron, and was covered with fine smooth sand, on to which the lead was run.

In the Hall garden, at Chaddesden, Derby, is a leaden tank 4 ft. 6 in. by 2 ft. and 2 ft. deep; on a leaden plate on the pump above it is the Wilmot crest, with the initials, R. M. W., and the date 1773. These are the initials of Sir Robert Mead Wilmot, Bart., who died in 1793.

It is very possible many excellent specimens of lead work in the county of Derby are here left unnoticed; it will be a pleasure to learn from correspondents of particulars of any others, which may perhaps lead to a supplementary article. But however unfinished or imperfect this article may be, it may certainly, we believe, lay claim to this—that it is the first attempt made in any county or district of putting together that which is beautiful or interesting in the old art-treatment of a now too neglected material, which might be put to so many effective uses by builders and architects.