

Costrel found in Darley Dale Church.

By EDWARD TRISTRAM.



THE interesting costrel, or pilgrim's bottle, represented in the accompanying photographs, recently came into the possession of the writer. It is made of yellow-glazed ware, and is nine inches in height, and, as will be seen from the photographs, is irregular in shape. The white marks on the photographs are merely the effect of light shining on the glazed surface. The letters "B B" are roughly traced on one side of the bottle, as may be detected from one of the photographs. The form of the costrel is unusual, and the British Museum does not possess a similar specimen. It probably dates from the sixteenth century, but may be earlier.

Attached to one side of the costrel is a paper, bearing the following inscription, written in a clerkly hand, but the ink has so faded that the words are barely legible: "This ancient bottle was found in Darley Dale Church, in the year of our Lord 1808, by the late Mr. Thos. Gregory, Clerk to the above Church, whilst making a vault for the remains of the late Rev. W. R. Rave, rector of the aforesaid Church."

The correct name of the rector is Sir W. U. Wray, Bart., and, according to the mural tablet to his memory fixed to the south wall of the chancel, he died on the 9th August, 1808. The writer has not been able to ascertain the exact situation of his vault, the chancel having been restored in 1854 and all traces removed; but, presumably, it was in the chancel, not far from the tablet.

It is difficult to imagine that a bottle of this size could have been inadvertently lost and buried in a church. Mr. Wright, the curator of the Colchester Museum, to whom the writer forwarded photographs of the costrel, suggested that possibly it might have contained holy water, and have been intentionally buried during some alterations or repairs to the church. It appears, from the excellent paper written by the Rev. J. Charles Cox, LL.D., F.S.A., on "The Church of St. Helen, Darley Dale," and printed in the *Journal* of our Society for 1905, that the church underwent extensive renovations about the end of the twelfth century, and also about 1330, and he considers that "the archway into the chancel is also of this period, as well as the external buttresses and general features of that part of the church." Dr. Cox does not mention that any alterations took place in the sixteenth century. If there is any ground for Mr. Wright's suggestion, then the question arises whether the costrel might not date back to the fourteenth century.

The history of the costrel can be satisfactorily traced from the clerk, but it seems unnecessary to set it out here.