

@a2 Chapter I

@a3 The British Isles

Paley wrote,¹ ‘Perhaps there is no subject in the whole range of Ecclesiastical Antiquities so difficult to arrange and discuss in all its departments, historical, architectural and decorative, as that of baptismal fonts.’ He goes on: ‘In truth, from . . . the obscure and symbolical character of the earlier examples, the progressive changes in shape and detail and, above all, from the boundless variety of design, for which the baptismal fonts of this country are remarkable . . . result difficulties of classification . . . which can only be fully overcome . . . by the collection and comparison of almost countless examples. Again, when . . . any apparently consistent theory shall have been formed . . . , we sometimes find the exceptions so numerous, that we are compelled . . . to regard as an unsafe and therefore a valueless system, the conclusions at which we may have arrived. For it is manifest that the date of the church in which it may be placed is the most unsafe and unconvincing evidence that can be followed in deciding that of the font.’²

Britain does possess a far wider diversity of types of font than any other country, indeed it is true to say that Britain is the only country in which every single format may be found, with the single exception of the two-tier bases of certain Swedish fonts. It is also true to say that the cylindrical bowl, rounded to meet the support, is much more common than the cylinder, with a flat bottom or with the lower part sloped down at 45°, though both are found.³ The greater variety of form is balanced by there being far fewer major groups demonstrating a line of evolution in shape and decoration than in Germany, Scandinavia and the Low Countries. Apart from the ‘mass-produced’ hardstone type of so-called Sussex or Purbeck marble, there are no groups which anywhere near equal in number those of Tournai, the Meuse, Bentheim or Gotland. The Bodmin and Launceston groups each number around a dozen only, and only in the

¹ F. A. Paley, in his introduction to *Illustrations of Baptismal Fonts*, 1844, pp. 8–9.

² How right Paley was and how much I have become convinced that, however detailed the research, it is impossible to be certain about the dates of so many of the fonts which survive. Had Paley been writing about the fonts of almost any country, he could safely have made the same remarks, except perhaps in the breadth of types of font found in the British Isles.

³ For example, Stone has a flat-bottomed cylinder and Bideford slopes to the shaft.

fifteenth century did the Seven-Sacrament fonts introduce an English group of more than twenty examples. These were all (bar two) concentrated in East Anglia and no comparable innovation occurred elsewhere in the British Isles. This is not surprising as the demand had been satisfied long before the fifteenth century and it was only the greater wealth and sudden expansion of the population in the eastern counties, brought by the wool trade, which presented the opportunity for an outburst of fresh creativity in baptismal art and iconography. In place of the widely distributed major groups familiar in some countries, the British Isles are a treasure-house of major individual pieces and of small clusters which share so many common features that they must be the products of a single workshop or of the same itinerant mason. Also to be found are cases where a new acquisition in one parish has been copied by a less skilled hand for a church not far away. Given the widespread availability of good stones in the British Isles, none of this should cause surprise. What is perhaps more of a puzzle is to encounter repeatedly just two or three pieces of a common pedigree; why was a successful design or iconographic programme not replicated in greater numbers? The ready availability of good stone must have led to a large number of small quarries being worked at the same time, with our Romanesque fonts being produced by workmen of contrasting ability. This picture of widespread simultaneous activity would not generally have been conducive to long production runs and lines of evolution, and it is noteworthy that the long-lasting hard limestone group in southern England, originating mainly from the Isle of Purbeck, is spread across that part of the country largely lacking in freestone, the chalklands between Dover and Exeter, their northern limits looping across the downlands of Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Sussex and Kent. Differences of quality are far more likely to be a function of the hand of the carver than of the date of manufacture.

It is extremely difficult to formulate an ideal way of grouping the fonts of the British Isles, for the very reason of their variety, and almost any font in Britain could be placed in at least two categories. Without clear groups, the confusing mass of detail must be approached in a different way, using broad divisions where it seems appropriate to do so and also devoting space to more detailed consideration of font ‘families’ (even when some are quite small), and to examination of individual pieces.

@c Tub Fonts

Outside the British Isles tub fonts are not common in any country except Germany. Britain is endowed with an unusually large number; they are mainly round but many are square, or nearly so. There is quite a wide variation in overall height and many have been mounted at a later date on a plinth or even on a base nearly as tall as the bowl; sometimes the new support consists of both stub-shaft and base, virtually transforming the tub into a goblet.

@e The Square Form

The square tub is especially rare, except in England, where they occur all over the country, though only as isolated examples.⁴ Such is the variety of proportions and decoration that it is little more than their square form which they have in common, though almost without exception the excavated basins are cylindrical or at least round; the square basin found in some Swedish groups is almost unknown in Britain. Square tubs are usually smaller than the round and, while there is none which is completely devoid of decoration, few have anything other than formal ornament, either empty arcading, like Broughton, or multiple geometrical motifs, like Reighton [4],⁵ a substantial piece of high quality in both structure and decoration. The integral plinth is slightly chamfered at the top and a little larger in plan than the tub itself, though care must be exercised in deciding just how much of the apparent plinth is original; the bottom section may be of brick made to look like stone. At the rim is a narrow cable above three plain narrow bands. Above the plinth is a plain band on which stand the bases of the engaged corner columns, their capitals finishing directly beneath the three plain bands at the top. In the centre of each face is a different pattern: one side has four slender, engaged shafts with scallop capitals, another is covered with a diagonal lattice, another has two vertical rows of four discs containing different devices and in the centre of the last are two discs with eight-petal rosettes, three rows of cross-in-square above and two larger rows below. The basin is a hemisphere.

Aston-le-Walls [5] also has different decoration on each face. Capping broad vertical bands at the corners, one carved as a barley-twist, are a bird's head and three human masks, one of them crowned. On one side is interlaced arcading without bases or

⁴ See Appx 1A. A number which are basically square have been cut in a curve between the engaged corner columns, as at Coleby and Helpringham. Hendon is markedly rectangular.

⁵ Broughton (Cambridgeshire) has low-relief arcading while at Brooke (Leicestershire) it is so deeply cut that the supporting columns are almost free-standing. Great Casterton, which flares, has saltires and concentric lozenges, on some faces less well executed than on others. Staunton is very roughly made, with large triangles and a frieze of bezants as decoration, and Edith Weston is plain. Some forms of ornament, notably the chevron and billet, are very characteristic of 'Norman' (English Romanesque) architectural decoration.

capitals and on the next is a pair of concentric rings around a central square boss from which radiate the arms of a double saltire. The third side has a chequer-board of six-by-six rows of squares each containing a saltire and four bezants between the arms. This pattern is off-centre, leaving an undecorated vertical panel on the right. The last side has two panels separated by a pair of straight stems, from each of which sprout three shoots ending in leaves which fill the panels. Coleby [6] is square in plan but shows the first attempts at articulation. At each corner is an engaged column, the capitals forming part of the upper rim of the font, and between these columns the face of the block has been cut back in a curve to give the impression of a cylinder framed by four free-standing columns. The shafts have been separated from the central drum by undercutting but they remain integral with the capitals and bases which are all part of the whole. The drum is decorated with elegant interlaced fully tectonic arcading, the round-headed arches beaded. Helpringham is similar but less sophisticated, with no separation of the column shafts. It is also rounder and with no 'plate' at the top, so that its appearance is more of a round tub with applied shafts, though the plinth is square.

There are also square tubs with figure decoration and the two outstanding specimens are those in the churches of Bridekirk [7] and Lenton [8]. Bridekirk, which consists of a slightly flaring tub standing on a later plinth, is by far the smaller, the decorated tub proper standing no more than 60cm high. It is in fact rectangular rather than square, measuring 42cm x 34cm externally and the basin 39.5cm x 31.5cm, with a depth of 22cm. There is a plain roll-moulding at the top and another divides the font into two tiers. The upper part has vertical sides and is larger in plan but the smaller lower section flares slightly upwards and is taller by 4cm. All eight panels are filled with decoration, with both pagan and sacred scenes. One upper panel is filled with a two-headed dragon with an enormous curling tail which terminates in large pointed leaves; in the centre at the top is a demirosette. In the panel below is a tree at the left and on the right Christ is baptised by John, the Holy Spirit descending on His head from the top right-hand corner; Christ wears a cruciferous nimbus and His arms are by His sides. On the next side to the left the top panel is occupied by a pair of confronted basilisks which seem to be eating a fleur-de-lis-like motif between them. The lower register has a horizontal band of inscription separating two tiers of tendril with small human figures entwined in the stems; in the lower tier a man is shown carving the beading on the stem. The runic inscription records 'Rikarth he me iwrokte and to this merth gernr me brokte'.⁶ On the

⁶ Translated by Bond, *Fonts and Font Covers*, London, 1908, p. 107, as: 'Richard wrought me and carefully brought me to this beauty.' The inscription is unusual for being in English rather than a Scandinavian language, even though the runic characters are of a Scandinavian alphabet of the eleventh to twelfth century (M. D. Forbes and B. Dickins, *Burlington Magazine*, XXV, Jan. 1982, pp. 24–9). In an article in *Archaeologia*, XIV, 1824, p. 113, the inscription was interpreted as referring to the conversion of a Dane, but W. Hamper, 'The Runic Inscription on the Font at Bridekirk Considered and a New Interpretation Proposed' in *Archaeologia*, XIX, 1829, pp. 379–82 saw it as 'the signature' of the mason.

third side the upper panel contains a very complex design made up of two crosses, the smaller superimposed on the larger. On the larger cross all four arms divide at the ends once but on the smaller only the horizontal arms divide and do so twice, each branch terminating in a large leaf. The lower register has a central panel in which two griffins appear to support between them a large rosette with a cable-rim and central disc; the panel is framed with demirosettes, their diameters along the four outer edges. The fourth side, lower panel, shows the Fall.⁷ On the right Eve kneels beneath the Tree and seems to clasp the trunk. Adam, facing away from Eve, is confronted by St Michael brandishing a sword, so that the scene embodies both the Temptation and the Expulsion. The upper register displays a rude figure of a centaur in the centre, fighting off with his bare hands the dragon and basilisk which assail him from left and right.

Lenton [8] is much larger than Bridekirk but again rectangular, rather than square. The overall height is 76cm, the plan 84cm x 76cm and the depth of the basin 37cm. The shape of the basin itself is a great rarity, being an irregular quatrefoil, two large lobes and two small, all outlined in a roll-moulding with eight fleur-de-lis florets, four in the corners of the top surface and the other four at the points where the four lobes meet. The quatrefoil basin is found quite frequently in Scandinavia but only in bowls of the same external shape and still uncommon as a percentage of the total number of surviving fonts.⁸ The font, which stands upon a low modern plinth, is covered with decoration on all four sides between the tall engaged tectonic columns which form the vertical arris; a band of foliate ornament runs below the rim. Three sides include one or more Biblical scenes but the fourth has a large Maltese cross as the sole ornament. The cross itself has the usual flaring arms of its type but divided in a curve, not in a straight bifurcation. The edges of the arms are notched to look like bark and a line of the same ornament runs down the centre of each arm so that it is clear that it represents the Tree of Life, in the same way that many medieval crucifixions show the cross as a tree. The terminals of the arms curve outwards and sprout large leaves which fill the corner spaces, with smaller leaves filling the voids between the bifurcations, emphasising the sense of a living tree. In the centre of the cross is a large rosette with three concentric rings of small petals around the boss. The lower half of this face is badly worn, probably from contact with earth when the font had been put out of doors.

⁷ This side is now against the wall and the description is taken from Rev. W. S.

Claverley, 'Notes on the Early Sculpted Crosses, Shrines and Monuments in the Present Diocese of Carlisle', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, Extra Series, 1899, pp. 68–71. Dianne Bilby of the Victoria and Albert Museum Sculpture Department kindly confirmed this information from the plaster cast in the collections. An excellent photograph of the font is in *Angleterre Romane*, II, Zodiaque, La pierre qui vire, 1988, pl. 148, with the hidden side revealed in a mirror and thus reversed.

⁸ The fonts in Stafford (St Mary) and Westwell, Oxfordshire, conform to the Scandinavian pattern.

The second side is taken up with Christ crucified. The upper arms of His cross are also bifurcated but without the leaf ornament; instead there are half-circles which enclose the split arms and have their diameters on the edge of the panel. The upper corners are each occupied by a winged angel holding a phylactery. This face is also badly worn but it is possible to see that Christ is shown with a bearded face *en face*, with no inclination of the head, the arms stretched out almost straight and the feet side by side; His torso is bare and He wears a short kilt-like garment. In the lower space on the left Longinus stands directly beside the cross, with his spear touching Christ's side, while further away the converted thief hangs on a 'T'-shaped cross, while a tiny figure representing his soul, hands in the *orans* position, flies upwards to heaven. On the other side the unrepentant thief hangs on a similar cross, but next to Christ so that there is room to show his soul vanishing into the maw of a monster symbolising the mouth of hell.

On the next side is a cross of twin slender roll-mouldings which expand into demilunes at the ends of the three upper arms and into a double ring at the crossing; the half rosettes at the ends of the arms have six petals but the complete rosette in the centre has eleven. The four spaces between the arms are filled with narrative sculpture. At bottom left the three Maries, nimbed, wearing wide-sleeved robes and carrying pots of ointment for embalming, are shown with bent legs to denote movement as they go to the sepulchre in the right-hand panel. This is depicted as a tomb inside a building with an elevated dome topped with a small cross, and at the far right stands the Angel of the Resurrection. Zarnecki has drawn attention to the two tiny pricket candlesticks placed on the top corners of the building which, he suggests, emphasise the role of the tomb doubling as the altar on which Christ is the sacrifice.⁹ The right-hand top panel portrays the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. Christ, His right hand raised in blessing, stands in the centre behind the coffin, with three onlookers at the left, while a figure at the far right raises the lid to reveal the dead Lazarus wrapped in his grave-cloths. The opposite panel contains Christ blessing again, on the left a seated figure *orans*, female from the large sleeves, and on the right twelve more male figures shown as heads or head and shoulders. This scene is less easy to identify. Zarnecki sees it as an earlier stage of the Lazarus story, where Christ at Bethany is greeted by Martha, and draws the parallel with the Chichester screen relief. An alternative reading interprets the scene as Christ's own Ascension watched by the seated Virgin and by His disciples. Either would fit

⁹ G. Zarnecki, 'The Romanesque Font at Lenton', *British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions*, XXI. 1998, pp. 136–42.

iconographically.¹⁰ In both upper panels Christ's cruciferous nimbus lacks the disc, as at Kirkburn.

The last side has two registers of arcading separated by a band of fleur-de-lis in rings. In the upper tier of six arches busts of angels float on swags above standing angels, the one at the extreme left apparently a seraphim, though he has four wings, not six. The lower register is of the same height and has a double-width arch in the centre, flanked by two normal arches on each side with two tiers of angels as above. The central arch portrays the baptism of Christ who stands on the right in the Jordan, *orans*, with the Baptist on the left and the Hand of God emerging from the top of the arch, in place of the more common dove of the Holy Spirit. The outer pair of angels turn inwards, half-facing the baptism, and the two who flank Christ and John are *en face* and hold cloths before them. Christ's own baptism, the repetition of scenes of death and resurrection, and the repeated use of the cross are all chosen to remind us of the way the catechumen dies with Christ in the waters of the font and is born again with Him through baptism.

Stoke Canon [9] has a monolithic font which does not fit readily into either category, round or square. It is shaped to show that it consists of both bowl and base, with a strong cable-moulding between the two sections of roughly equal height. The top is slightly wider than the base, which is square, while the bowl is round between engaged lions, head downwards, rump in the air. This is very much in the style of some tub fonts on which the bowl has been cut away in a curved outline between corner colonnettes still engaged with the block, for example at Coleby. The lions' heads extend below the central cable-moulding and grasp in their jaws the heads of the four figures who stand at the corners of the base and support the bowl by grasping the cable. The plinth on which these corner figures stand is chamfered at the top and the vertical panels between them are decorated with different figures, a man holding a staff in his right hand, a man with a book in his left hand, blessing with his right, a seated man with a book in his left hand and his right in his lap, and finally a man enthroned. The ornaments on the sides of the bowl are all based on forms of the saltire, two interlaced with a single circle, one with two concentric circles and the fourth with no ring but with the ends of the arms divided

¹⁰ John 11: 20: 'Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him; but Mary sat still in the house.' G. Zarnecki, 'Lenton', p. 138, seems to discount the Ascension version specifically because he counts thirteen heads to the right of Christ but I believe that there are twelve. Although not as badly worn as the Crucifixion scene, the carving is not entirely clear and there could be twelve, thirteen or even fourteen heads. One possible head I see as Christ's own elbow as He holds a book against His chest and another, closest to His feet, the torso of the lowest head. One of the features of Ascension scenes is the way the spectators are all shown on a lower plane than Christ and look upwards, perhaps most clearly seen in the corner pillar of the cloister at San Domingo de Silos. This upwards gaze is certainly evident at Lenton and I therefore incline to identify the Ascension, rather than Christ with Martha at Bethany.

and curled back on themselves.¹¹ The only possible parallel would seem to lie in Norway, in the Museum of the University, Bergen, a font originating from Os [282]. Like Stoke Canon it is monolithic, square at the bottom and with a round bowl cut from the square, but there are no decorative similarities except for the figures standing proud at the corners.

@e The Round Form

Round tub fonts are common in all parts of Britain, in small ‘family’ clusters and as individual pieces. The basic outline is a cylinder but there are also several beaker fonts where the silhouette flares to the top, as at Tangmere [10] and in the considerable group in Gloucestershire, all of which are either entirely plain, like Coln Roger, or may have a decorated band at the rim like Notgrove.¹² The degree of flare is variable, in most cases giving a difference of only a few centimetres between top and bottom diameters, but with others, for example Brobury, the ratio can be as much as 1.75:1. In some cases the cylindrical form is modified by a central swelling to give a barrel-shape reminiscent of the wooden casks first used for baptism, as depicted on the gold altar at Sahl [3]. Others are waisted, with or without an encircling roll- or cable-moulding, as at Little Billing and West Winterslow respectively. The ‘waisted’ fonts in Devon have been described as ‘girdled’, that is the narrow waist is encircled with a moulding, usually carved with a cable or other ornament.¹³ Most commonly there is decoration on both sides of the waist but occasionally only above. On the relatively small number of tub fonts with a marked curve to the sides of the bowl the decoration

¹¹ Kate M. Clarke, ‘The Baptismal Fonts of Devon’, pts I–IV, *Report and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, XLV–XLVIII, 1913–16 and pts V–IX, L–LIV, 1918–22, pt I, ‘Plain Tub fonts’, XLV, 1913, pp. 325–6.

¹² The same variety of decoration is found on cylindrical or beaker tubs as on any other form but the greater uninterrupted surface area available has influenced not only the choice of ornament but also how it is applied. A large number of round tubs are completely without ornament, a few are plain except for one or more horizontal bands like hoops round a cask, in its extreme case at Ellington.

¹³ K. M. Clarke, ‘Baptismal Fonts of Devon’, pt II, ‘The Girdled Tub Font’, XLVI, 1914, pp. 428–35.

is applied as if the sides were straight, with inevitable distortion where there is arcading.

@e Formal Ornament as Decoration

Among the ‘girdled’ tubs the decoration of Cheriton Bishop [fig. 4] has a certain similarity to the version of the Aylesbury group seen at Pitstone. The flutings, rounded at top and bottom, extend in equal measure above and below the girdle and the upper part is encircled by a narrow band of beading beneath a broad band of leaf ornament. Huxham is among those which are plain below the girdle, while the fluting above is cut more deeply and taken in a spiral around the bowl; a band of bezants in rings completes the area below the rim.¹⁴ Bere Ferrers is completely *sui generis*, in one sense girdled but with many of the characteristics of a capital. The single block of stone is square at the bottom, has a prominent girdle and is roughly chamfered at the top as if in the initial stages of conversion from a cube to a cylinder. Incised lines run up from the base, vanish ‘behind’ the girdle and then reappear above to branch out into four quasi-Ionic volutes. Unlike other fonts of this type, the volutes finish well short of the top of the bowl, around half the height of the section above the girdle.

A relatively small number of bowls have formal designs which may either be spaced around individually or repeated all over, forming patterns. All-over decoration may be confined to a single device repeated *ad infinitum* or may consist of a variety of individual motifs displayed in tiers, in panels or at random. Puddletown is a beaker with a repeated palmette design, framed in its own stems, beneath a narrow frieze of five-leaf fans at the rim, and at Nafferton and Weaverthorpe are bands of small round or polygonal motifs. Another form of identical all-over decoration is created not by repeated motifs but by an interplay of straight or curved lines, for example at Cusop in Herefordshire which has a frieze of saltire in rectangle around the rim and is covered with latticework below. Lattice, or the pattern of concentric lozenges developed from it, is not especially common but examples do occur in different parts of the country, often in pairs or small clusters. Almost invariably the individual examples of a pair are of different quality and it can only be supposed that one is a copy of the other, perhaps commissioned by a less wealthy parish. For example, at Lewes (St Anne) [11] and at nearby Denton, are two tub fonts with what is, in effect, a lattice-type decoration, but where the lines are interwoven like a form of basketwork. These two are closer than most pairs in being almost identical, with plaitwork around the bottom and large, widely spaced bezants on a band below the rim, but the Lewes font, as befits the standing of the town, is both better-executed and larger than its village sibling. The same paired similarity is found twice in Yorkshire, at Great Smeaton and Bainton, where the lines of the lattice are more widely spaced, so that the effect is of a pattern of diamonds framed

¹⁴ Huxham is much restored.

in multiple lines, and at Flamborough and Thwing, where the same basic pattern is developed into one of concentric lozenges. These forms of decoration place great demands on accuracy of setting-out and of execution and none of the masons responsible was completely successful though, of the three pairings, Flamborough, Lewes and Great Smeaton are clearly the better products. At Siddington in Gloucestershire is another example of this ornament, but with a narrower and taller bowl, two narrow cable-mouldings at the rim and a broad cable at the bottom,¹⁵ while the same pattern is used on several fonts in Leicestershire, worked in a way that emphasises the concentric lozenge or diamond inherent in the design.¹⁶ St Enoder has a broad band of open lattice encircling the top of the bowl just below the rim but the surface is otherwise plain.

A few further examples will show the variety of all-over formal decoration. At Hambleton is a large tub with a saw-tooth band over three slender mouldings at the rim and a broad plain band at the bottom; the main face is covered with a series of three-stranded saltires which have a bezant at each crossing and at the ends of the arms where they meet at top and bottom. The triangles above and below the arms are occupied by fleur-de-lis inverted and the right way up respectively, and the double triangles in the spaces between each pair of saltires contain crosses, with fleur-de-lis terminals to the arms of equal length.¹⁷ Edgmund [12] is a beaker with cable round the rim above a shallow plain moulding. Below that the full height of the face is covered in a series of tiers of formal ornament. First comes a row of billets, then squares containing pairs of right-angle triangles aligned along the hypotenuse and then other square motifs with various fillings. At the bottom is a mixture of Nordic interlacing and chevron. This arrangement covers the whole face except for a broad panel of double-stranded open interlace in three tiers. West Chelborough resembles Edgmund in having formal decoration in tiers, though the motifs used are all different: a broad band of foliate designs in overlapping semicircular frames above a cable-moulding with one beaded strand, below which is a broad band of saltires between vertical ribs. At the bottom are two narrow bands of saw-tooth and small quatrefoils. Bradely and the badly worn Church Eaton are similar, with the six-pointed star in a square, the Greek key, the billet and the pairs of concentric triangles again; the last motif also occurs on the Lilleshall bowl below an arcade and with billet-friezes at top and bottom. In Shropshire two fonts with varied motifs share a common decorative feature with the Hereford School of carving: beaded rings are tied together, not with straps but with lions' masks. Morville [13] is a beaker font with a cable-moulding at the rim, below which are two single rings with foliate motifs and five pairs of concentric beaded rings enclosing rosettes; the space

¹⁵ Western Sweden has two fonts, at Resteröd and Valla, again relatively close neighbours, with similar decoration all over the face, though on them the multiple lines are curved.

¹⁶ For example, Peckleton and Rothley.

¹⁷ A much smaller font with the same decoration but much less skilfully executed is at Dorney, no more than ten miles to the south-east. The height of the bowl has been much reduced.

between the concentric rings is filled with a band of saw-tooth. Four of the rings pass through the flat tops of the lions' masks and emerge through the jaws, so positioned that the outer edges of the rings would be seen to touch tangentially if not hidden by the masks. The junction of another pair is effected through a human mask and three of the rings overlap like a chain, with no mask used. In the spaces between the rings and the upper rim are four-leaf fans and the similar areas at the bottom of the font are ornamented with a criss-cross of finely incised lines. Linley, a few miles away, is a poor relation. Not only is the carving of lower quality but there are no inner rings here, just a variety of foliate and other motifs. There have again been problems with the preparation, so that the pattern has had to be varied as it moves around the font. Two of the rings overlap, two butt against each other and the others are tied with lion-mask straps. There is no ornament below the line of rings and there are various leaf ornaments below the cable at the rim. This font is waisted rather than beaker-shaped.

The chevron is very common in England as an architectural ornament, with examples in all parts of the country, so it is hardly surprising that it makes frequent appearances on English fonts.¹⁸ Around the rim, or as a band of ornament encircling any part of the font, where in Germany there would be a pair of contra-rotating cables, the chevron will be narrow, turned on edge and tightly packed to produce a herring-bone effect, as at Eydon. Winterbourne Monkton has the related zig-zag applied in a triple band, at Bromyard it occupies half the height of the face and at Holdgate a single line encircles the shaft. At Bushbury a broad zig-zag takes up the whole height of the face, except for a narrow band of ornament at the rim, and the triangular spaces between the lines are filled with large leaf-fans, except for one which is occupied by a seated figure blessing.¹⁹ Wyre Piddle uses the chevron on edge around the rim and a continuous band of zig-zag encircling the lower part of the bowl. What is less common is for the zig-zag in close-packed tiers to cover the whole face of the font but this does occur at Grinton and Woodborough. The crude and now badly damaged font at Gunwalloe has a roughly shaped arcade of round-headed arches with a band of zig-zag cut so that the lower points coincide with the bottom of the supporting columns and each angle within an arch contains a broad arrow, point upwards. The mason who made the Upton Scudamore font superimposed one line upon another to produce an angular version of paired undulating lines.

¹⁸ Contrary to what F. Bond states, p. 157. Chevron is a device which is often confused with saw-tooth but there is a simple way of differentiating between the two: saw-tooth consists of two separate planes with a zig-zag edge between them, while chevron is a zig-zag line which may be raised or incised.

¹⁹ S. A. Jeavons, 'The Fonts of Staffordshire', *Transactions and Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, LXVII, 1947–8, p. 21, places this font in the sixteenth century though he quotes Gardner's 'History of Staffordshire', p. 177, as describing it as ancient. From the dimensions and style Gardner's view is the more likely but the bowl may have been recut.

On some fonts where the decoration is based upon repeated use of certain motifs, the overall design is of such sophistication that its repetitive nature is concealed. At Stoke Abbott [14] is a very unusual monolithic, slightly flaring, cylinder font. At the top is a plain section formed of two roll-mouldings and the integral plinth is formed of multiple mouldings, also plain. Between the two the ornament is unusual for being in two distinct planes. The wider part at the top gives the effect of a row of canopies, created by a Lombard frieze of eight arches decorated with tiny quatrefoils; there are leaf motifs in the spandrels, bearded lions' masks for capitals and in each arch is a human face. In the narrower section below is a continuous band of beaded hexagons which are not quite joined at the lateral angles but are connected to those on either side by double horizontal lines; the hexagons are placed beneath the arches and the linking horizontals beneath the capitals. Every hexagon but one contains a twelve-petal rosette and below the horizontal links are seven-leaf fans. In the case of the hexagon without a rosette, the upper outline is missing and the space is filled by the spreading of the beard of the mask above.²⁰

@e Arcading as Decoration

Blind arcading, normally simple but often interlaced, forms one of the most common forms of Romanesque decoration. Though common on square fonts too, it creates a pattern peculiarly suited to the cylinder and lent itself to works of very different quality, suitable for rich parishes and poor alike. The number of arches in the arcade varies from one font to another, from as few as six to as many as thirteen. The arches may be empty, or filled with figures, beasts or foliate ornament, though the narrower panels created by interlacing lead to this type of arcading being more often empty, except for a few examples, such as Ingleton. Where it is empty, it is reasonable to look upon arcading as a form of single repeated device, whether simple, as at Butterwick, or interlaced as at Burton Agnes and Wetwang. Some arcades lack any embellishment, either of the arch itself or of the associated areas. At Caversfield it is plain, partly interlaced, partly simple, occupying only half the height of the bowl, while Upton Cresset has a simple arcade to the full height. Walsgrave-on-Sowe is unusual in having pairs of columns carved in the half-round, rather than flat, and the arches are treated in the same manner. The richly decorated beaker font at Claverley [15] has

²⁰ I do not know of any other font of quite the same design in the area covered by this study but there appear to be a few of similar shape in northern Spain, in the province of Palencia. They lack arcading but have figures in high relief below a prominent moulding at the rim and flare to the top but more markedly than at Stoke Abbott. Calahorra de Boedo and Colmenares are the closest but the others, while of the same silhouette, lack the prominent rim and the high-relief figures.

simple arcading almost the full height of the bowl. Around the bottom is a band of beading and the plain arches are supported on tectonic columns, the shafts bearing a great variety of decoration. The spandrels are filled with large inverted, five-leaf fleur-de-lis, each motif framed by the curves of its shoots which are connected to the next on either side. It is rare for arcading to contain any form of ornament other than figures or leaf-scrolls but at Bessingby each arch is filled with geometrical ornament in low relief, not always appropriate to the shape of the arch. Chevrons, diamonds, saltires and scrolls are among the motifs used and the arcade itself, both arches and column-shafts, is covered in ornament.

Several cylindrical fonts of similar size in Derbyshire are carved with interlaced blind arcading. Kirk Hallam's arcade is more finely cut and in lower relief than the others and at the bottom of each arch is a lunette with fleur-de-lis.²¹ At Somersall Herbert the thickness of the supporting columns leaves little space between the shafts; above the arcade run two undulating lines, the cross-over points framed in rings. The surface of the upper part of the Chesterfield bowl is divided into six panels by columns with the capitals near to, but not at, the rim.²² The surface is very worn but it is still possible to discern in three of the arches a foliate cross in a ring, a long-staff cross *paty* and a luxuriant foliate pattern. In the same county is a small group of squat cylindrical tubs with a section of enlarged diameter at the bottom, and with similar crudely drawn incised decoration.

Whether occupied or void, the arcade is frequently the sole decoration, except perhaps for narrow strips of ornament at top and bottom, but in other cases there may be a significant secondary tier. At Alphington [16] and Portchester broad bands of double undulating tendril encircle the bowls above the arcading and in the loops are figures. Some figures are entirely independent of those in the other loops but in other cases two adjacent figures may be associated with each other. At St Marychurch, where the band is of interlinked rings, two hunters and two animal prey occupy four of the rings grouped together, a dove is alone, and a harpist and a dancing girl are in adjacent rings. A similar picture emerges at Alphington, where in one pair of loops St Michael is depicted slaying

²¹ There are similar fonts at Hognaston, Ockbrook, Pentrich and, G. le Blanc Smith says, 'Derbyshire Fonts', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, XXVII, 1905, p. 55, at Bradbourne too, but this is not mentioned by Pevsner.

²² G. le Blanc Smith, 'Derbyshire fonts', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, XXVII, 1905 and XXVIII, 1907. Smith, 1905, p. 47, believes the height has been reduced by about 25cm, but many fonts have columns supporting lintels rather than arches and the dimensions of this bowl match others with undamaged rims very closely (Kirk Hallam and Church Broughton; only Somersall Herbert is significantly bigger).

the dragon and in another pair an archer shoots at a goat; the occupants of the remaining eight rings all stand alone. Lullington has a highly sophisticated programme, with two bands of ornament and an inscription above interlaced decorative arcading [17]. Below the rim is a band of human and animal masks, some with beaded stems emerging from their mouths, and above the arcade is a frieze of rosettes with prominent centres. Between the two is an inscription in majuscules which reads: ‘HOC FONTIS SACRO PEREUNT DELICTA LAVERO’.²³ The arcade itself is interlaced, the arches triple-stranded and supported on twin columns with capitals but no bases, the pairs of shafts carved as contra-rotating cables. A similar but much simpler interlaced arcade is placed at the bottom of the bowl at East Haddon but occupies less than one third of the face-height. Above it is a plain roll-moulding and then a very expansive band of tendril with large leaves on the side-shoots; smaller foliate motifs fill the spaces beneath the rim. At Avebury the tub font combines foliate ornament, arcading and figure sculpture. The tectonic arcading is interlaced and encircles the bottom half of the bowl. Above the ordered calm of the arcade all is a chaos of undulating tendril surrounding the figure of a man who holds a crosier in his right hand while he presses a book against his chest with his left. Damage at the top of the bowl makes it impossible to see whether the man is nimbed or wears a mitre.²⁴ The butt of his staff is in contact with the head of a serpent or dragon on his right and the head of another touches his left foot, a scene symbolic of Genesis 3: 15 in which God addressed the serpent: ‘It shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.’

@e Symbolic Figure Decoration

Figure decoration, whether human or animal (if the latter, either real or mythical), is common on fonts throughout the medieval Christian world, indeed in England it is far more common than any formal ornament, whether geometric or foliate. It may be used in a representative fashion to depict narrative but it is also common in an abstract mode, symbolically conveying its message, which is often hidden from the modern observer. The figures on any particular font may be all symbolic, all narrative or a combination of the two. Non-narrative human figures may include the apostles or clerics, often portrayed as statues, and may either occupy every arch of an arcade or alternate with foliate motifs. Around the top of the Stoneleigh bowl [18] is a Lombard frieze containing human masks, with leaf motifs in the spandrels. The springing of the arches in this frieze rest on the centres of the twelve full arches below. These are

²³ ‘Sins perish in this holy font.’

²⁴ A. G. Randle Buck, ‘Some Wiltshire Fonts’ Part I, *The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine*, LIII, 1950, pp. 463–4 and pl. II/3, says that this pose symbolises the Christian Church. Buck quotes Paley saying, in 1844, a mitre and J. R. Allen, in 1887, a halo.

supported on fully tectonic columns, the shafts ornamented with chevron and spiral. In the main arcade stand the apostles, their names inscribed around the arches emphasising that they are both saints and apostles, e.g. 'SCE PETRE APOSTOLE'.²⁵ Peter alone carries his attribute, a single key, while all the others carry books, some open, others closed, or they stand *orantes* with, in some cases, a scroll hanging from one hand.²⁶ Along the bottom of the bowl is a frieze of different leaf motifs.

Avington has a cylindrical font on a plain round plinth which may or may not be contemporary; the plinth is made of several stones. The upper rim of the bowl is slightly set back from the vertical plane of the face and is ornamented with a cable-moulding. At the bottom are two narrow roll-mouldings resting on a castellated section about one third of the total height of the font. The main decoration consists of an arcade of eleven depressed round-headed arches, supported on shafts with square bases, and with double abaci as capitals. The arches contain figures of very crude execution, many of which are badly worn and hard to identify. In nine there are single figures, at least three of them from their dress apparently clerics, though one with a key must be Peter. A badly defaced figure carries a crosier in the left hand but the right is missing. He seems to be wearing a heavily quilted robe but, from the way in which the pleats of the right sleeve are depicted, it could be taken for a wing. One arch contains a pair of figures, the devil speaking evil into the left ear of a man *orans*. He is bearded and wears a beaded Byzantine head-dress and a long robe with the hem of an undergarment showing at the bottom, while around his waist is a broad cummerbund of four rows of zig-zag. The devil has bandy legs and is naked except for the beaded belt about its waist. In the last panel a figure is crouched to half the height of the arch, with what appear to be four or five smaller figures on its head. One characteristic of all the figures is the way in which the tiny feet are placed close together, toes pointing downwards.

In the western counties of Herefordshire and Gloucestershire is a small group of tub fonts with figures standing in an arcade. These are at Hereford Cathedral, Mitcheldean (which survives only as fragments), Newnham and Rendcombe [19]. They differ from most other round tubs in that the sides of the bowls are *bombés*; while this shape is sometimes found decorated with concentric bands like the hoops on a barrel, it is unusual with arcading or figure decoration because of the distorting effect of the curvature on a vertical design. There are various details which make it clear that these fonts are by the same hand. First, immediately below the bowl is a curved, slightly flaring extension and the figures in the arcade, each *en face*, are drawn so that the hems of their garments coincide with the junction between bowl and extension and the lower

²⁵ The use of the vocative indicates invoking the intercession of the apostles on behalf of the catechumen as he presents himself for admission to the Christian Church.

²⁶ It seems common practice, when all the apostles are portrayed together, for Peter to be the only one shown with his attribute; compare, for example the fonts of Newnham and Dorchester Abbey. The same is found in the Benedictional of St Æthelwold, Folios 4–7, showing that it is a convention not limited to sculpture.

legs and feet are below this point. Second, the round-headed arches are plain but the capitals and the shafts of the columns are liberally decorated with chevron and spiral beading. The spandrels have inverted fleur-de-lis and the extension has upright fleur-de-lis tied together with cords, so placed that the points of the motifs come directly beneath the supporting columns of the arcade. Hereford Cathedral has no fleur-de-lis on the extension but shares the Greek key frieze around the top of the bowl with Rendcombe, though this is absent at Newnham where the top band is plain. The figures all hold books against their chests with their left hands and seem in many cases to hold attributes in their right hands. As befits its location, the cathedral font is placed upon a tall round plinth from which jut out the foreparts of four crouching lions. Newnham is on a round plinth made of separate stones, vertical at the bottom and sloping above and Rendcombe is on a modern base.²⁷ Another Herefordshire font with statuesque figures in arches is to be found at Orleton, but there is no parallel with the four just discussed. The cylindrical bowl stands on a round plinth and there is no ornament above or below the tectonic arcade of nine arches of three orders which stands to the full height of the cylinder. The nine figures are different but all are without nimbus and all hold books against the chest with their left hands.

Not all non-narrative figures are religious or even human. Darenth [20] has a low cylinder font around 90cm in external diameter and 68cm tall. At the top is a broad plain band and at the bottom a thin roll-moulding above a narrow concave band. In the broad space between is an arcade of eight round-headed arches carried on columns with Attic bases, cushion capitals and a boss in each spandrel; each arch contains one or more figures or a mythical beast. One bay depicts an infant baptism; the figure on the left, in profile, is clearly female, with prominent bosom and hair down the back in a long plait. The second figure could also be female, in which case the scene might depict Christ's first bath. However, nothing else on the font suggests this interpretation so it is more probably to be taken as a baptism with the officiating priest assisted by the mother or god-mother. The tiny child between them is immersed in a round pedestal font, arms by the sides, with no nimbus and nothing to indicate that it might be Christ. In the next arch

²⁷ These fonts are described by A. C. Fryer in *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, XXXIV, 1911, pp. 199–200. (His series of articles, 'Gloucestershire Fonts' was published in the *Transactions*, XXXI–XXXVI, 1908–14.) There are some discrepancies between text and tables, for example the number of arches at Newnham, twelve or thirteen (there are twelve) and whether every one of the twelve arches at Rendcombe contains a figure or only eleven, leaving one empty 'for Judas'. I am indebted to Rev. Kim Taplin for the information that one is empty but that the feet have already been carved on the flared extension. From the way that the stone is proud of the surrounding arch, no figure has been carved and then erased. Hereford Cathedral font is covered in G. Marshall's *Fonts in Herefordshire*, published by The Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, Hereford, 1949, pp. 20–2 and pls. 20a, b and c.

to the right is a crowned king with long hair, holding a short spear, then comes a strange composite beast with two legs and two pairs of wings, a bearded human face on its chest and the upper part of a cockerel growing out of the shoulders. The tail ends in a head with gaping jaws. (An alternative reading could be a cockatrice sitting on the shoulders of a dragon with human head.) Next is King David enthroned, playing a harp, a centaur *regardant* drawing a bow at the winged lion in the next arch and then a lion *rampant*. Finally, a figure previously thought to be St Margaret of Antioch leads a beast by a cord; sadly the figure is male and so the identification must be wrong.²⁸

There are smaller fonts which are now supported but which were almost certainly originally tubs. That size is not the only criterion for assessment is clear from tubs such as Toller Fratrum which are of modest dimensions but unequivocally stand directly on the floor. The clue to the original form lies in the true cylinder shape, with neither curve nor slope at the bottom; the bowl tends to be of lesser diameter than many other tubs and of greater height relative to diameter than is common on pedestal fonts. The narrative decoration is also less common on supported fonts, probably due to the two factors of curvature and area available. A number of these fonts will be considered in this section. Armitage font, a rough cylinder, has two figures in each of the round-headed beaded arches and the tectonic columns are decorated with cable ornament. All the figures except one are male and have heads grossly out of proportion to the bodies, with bulging eyes. All stand, apart from one seated on a stool, who is almost a caricature, so grotesque are the head and mouth. About half are clean-shaven but the rest sport large moustaches. Some are bare-headed, others wear crowns or early bishops' caps without side peaks. The dress is depicted with considerable consistency, especially the close parallel vertical pleats on most of the robes. There is really no clue to the identity of any of these figures, other than that four may be bishops, several may be minor clerics and two, including the woman, seem to be wearing elaborate costume, suggesting high social status.²⁹

The Hutton Cranswick font originated in the part of Yorkshire north and west of Beverley noted for four important examples of historiated fonts still in their parish

²⁸ As the church is dedicated to St Margaret, the parochial church council would like to be able to identify their patron on the font and, in the king brandishing a spear, Stephen who was on the English throne at the time the church was built. While the latter may be true, the beard seems to rule out St Margaret. Rev. A. H. Collins, 'The Iconography of the Darenth Font', *Archaeologia Cantiana*, LVI, 1943, pp. 6–10, identifies the centaur as Sagittarius, which was the armorial badge of Stephen, though Sagittarius has a human head and torso and the creature here has a human torso but an animal's head with long ears and mane.

²⁹ See S. A. Jeavons, 'Armitage Font and Cross Shaft', *Transactions and Proceedings of the Birmingham and Midlands Archaeological Society*, LXI, 1941–2, pp. 137–40 and pls. XI – XII.

churches.³⁰ The bowl is divided by arcading into ten panels, each containing a design, none of which seems to be associated with any other of the images shown. The Agnus Dei carries the usual cross of sacrifice in its crooked foreleg, but with the unique features of a spear-head extending from the top of the pennant and two others from above the head and the tail of the Lamb; at the foot of this arch is a panel with chevron ornament. Circling the font to the right there are, successively, a man holding a severed head (not his own), a schematic Tree of Life, a lion *rampant regardant* and a winged dragon with a curled tail. There follow a bearded man, a figure appearing to wrap itself in a heavy cloak and then an almost unique image in baptismal iconography, otherwise known only at Belton in Lincolnshire [65], a bell-ringer. Two small bells are hung on a curved bracket from which two ropes hang down on the same side. The man stands directly beneath the pair of bells, looking up at them as he pulls on one rope with each hand. The meaning of such an image is hard to decide but bells were thought to have an apotropaic effect, making it very suitable for display on a font.³¹ The last two arches contain a pair of wrestlers, drawn almost identically with those at Cowlam, and an archer facing the Agnus Dei.³²

Now on a modern support, Ilam has a very misshapen bowl with six arches containing crude figures. One, with an enormous head, staring eyes, large nose and prominent drooping lips, is shown on its knees, arms clasped across the belly, and is followed by another kneeling man who lacks the strange proportions and dismal air of the former, and whose arms hang down by his sides. Next a *regardant* beast, from its tail probably a

³⁰ Cowlam, Kirkburn, North Grimston and Cottam. The last church is now derelict and the font has been moved to Langtoft, only a few miles away. Hutton Cranswick font is in the Yorkshire Museum, York. It is in a parlous state, having been found in pieces in a rockery (*The Handbook to Antiquities in the Yorkshire Museum*, 1889, p. 78, quoting Rev. C. D. Pudsey, 1880). I am grateful to Elizabeth Hartley, of the Museum, for the information.

³¹ J. R. Allen, *Early Christian Symbolism in Great Britain and Ireland: Norman Sculpture and the Mediaeval Bestiaries*, from the Rhind Lectures in Archaeology 1885, London 1887, on pp. 323–8 explores the symbolism of the image of the bell-ringer. See description of the font at Belton (Lincolnshire), which also has the bell-ringer motif, in the section on supported fonts.

³² Rev. E. Maule Cole, ‘Ancient Fonts on the Wolds of the East Riding’, *Transactions of the East Riding Antiquarian Society*, X, 1902, pp. 107–17, at p. 114 states that the spearhead springs from the head of the cross but there seems to be a clear space between the two motifs. Cole also reminds us of the frequency with which the signs of the Zodiac are used and suggests that the wrestlers may be identified as Gemini and the archer (although not a centaur as usually shown) as Sagittarius.

lion, holds a severed human head in its mouth; the paws have strong claws. In the succeeding arch is a pair of figures, male and female, holding hands, while the man has his right hand beside his ear. They both wear long kilts and are naked above the waist. The Agnus Dei is depicted in the conventional fashion but with an additional and uncommon detail, a bird atop the cross. In the last arch is a second *regardant* quadruped, very like the first except for its tail which turns down. It holds a severed human head between its paws and another in its mouth. The arcade has capitals and bases and all the columns, bar one, are decorated with different designs.

Some fonts with statuesque figures have one or two narrative scenes as well. Coleshill font [21] is a tall cylinder supported on a later but probably medieval base. Although lacking the complex ornament of the Stoneleigh arcade, the decoration is more finely and deeply cut. Between narrow plain bands at top and bottom is an arcade of nine arches interrupted by a large panel as wide as three of the others, the springing of the outer arches which it replaces visible to right and left. In this main panel is the Crucifixion, with Mary and John flanking the cross. Christ's feet are apart, His arms are stretched out horizontally and His head inclined to His right, a disc on either side probably representing sun and moon, though no details are visible. Mary and John stand on the bottom frame, as does the foot of the cross, but Christ's feet are higher and set at the point where a broad ring, drilled to look like beading, cuts the lower arm of the cross. This ring is centred on Christ's hips, touches the inside of the top and sides of the panel, and cuts across the Virgin and John at knee level.³³ Between the mourners and the columns supporting the adjacent arches are two small trees which grow out of the ground beside their feet, with the branches appearing at the level of their heads. Five of the nine arches contain intricate vertical foliate scrolls, all different, reminiscent of the scrolls on some lead fonts of the period. Alternating with them are four nimbed figures, three men and a woman with an ointment pot, probably Mary Magdalene. Two of the men carry, respectively, a key and a flabellum, Peter and possibly Paul; the third is dressed as a cleric. Ingleton, a smaller cylindrical tub on a modern support, is rare in having figures within interlaced arcading, two figures in each whole arch, though they are separated by the supporting columns of the adjacent arches. All the shafts are complete with base and capital which further reduces the space available. The figures are all *en face* and seem to be mainly from Biblical texts, among them Christ exhibiting His wounds, a rare scene in early medieval sculpture. The other uncommon feature is the frieze of lions' and human masks around the rim, separated by foliate motifs; each mask comes immediately above the point where one arch crosses over the next. The bottom of the cylinder is finished off with a double roll-moulding above a plain band. At Oxhill the slightly flaring bowl stands on a modern base. The round-headed arcading of eight arches is interlaced, forming sixteen panels, in three of which the Tree is flanked by the naked Adam and Eve who cover themselves with small leaves. The serpent coils around the trunk, its head about the height of the shoulder of Eve in the next bay. In the other thirteen panels are vertical foliate designs in low relief, almost precisely the same as the Tree, even including the spread roots.

³³ This form of the crucifix within a ring only partially enclosing Mary and John is also found in a twelfth-century window of the cathedral of Châlons-sur-Marne. In the window it carries an inscription and passes behind the attendant figures.

Wansford has a cylindrical bowl with a band of billets beneath the rim and below this a tendril with leaf-shoots. The arcade has thirteen tectonic arches with twinned supporting columns and in the spandrels are trefoil motifs. The feet of the figures in the arcade all overlap the plain narrow band around the bottom of the bowl and their gestures often cross the dividing columns, though not the two confronted armed soldiers with round shields, the classic *milites pugnantes*, in adjacent panels. The next panel has two stems with inward-facing leaves, like wrists with cupped hands, palm inwards. There follows a nimbed figure with a book in the left hand, the right raised and crossing the dividing column in the gesture of speech or teaching, making it natural for the next figure, who is not nimbed, to be shown facing him; he too carries a book. He is succeeded by a nimbed figure *en face* blessing, his left hand crossing the capital of the adjacent column to where the unnimbed figure is repeated. After a Tree of Life follows a nimbed figure wearing a robe with beaded hem, a book in his left hand. This is the Baptist who reaches across the column shaft with his right hand to Christ who is immersed to His waist, His head only at half the height of the others. The dove of the Holy Spirit flies down upon Him and from the other side of the Saviour's head runs a rectangle crossing diagonally the capital of the column on that side; could this originally have acted as a scroll, painted with the words of approval spoken by the Father at the time of Christ's baptism? The arch opposite to the Baptist contains a formal leaf scroll, then comes a figure dressed in a garment with full sleeves, right hand across the waist and, strangely, the left raised in blessing; the next arch contains a figure in mirror image. A feature of all the figures, except for the *milites pugnantes*, who wear close-fitting helmets, are the rounded curls of hair which frame the heads.

Only the bowl survives at West Haddon and, though it has suffered considerable peripheral damage, it is possible to make out a beaded band at the rim. The iconography is specifically Biblical and the scenes portrayed, each in a quite idiosyncratic manner, are the Baptism of Christ, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Nativity and the Majestas Domini. In the Baptism virtually all the usual elements are absent, no Baptist, no Holy Spirit, no River Jordan. The nimbed Christ is shown in a round tub font, arms by His sides, submerged to His waist. On the left an angel advances holding up an open book and on the right a second angel holds up a straight tunic with the sleeves spread out horizontally, calling to mind Christ's sacrifice to come upon the cross. Between Christ's head and the knee of the left-hand angel is a carved boss which must represent the star often used to emphasise the importance of certain figures; a small four-loop cross of about the same size and at the same height fills the space between the body and left wing of the opposite angel.³⁴ The Majestas portrays Christ in a mandorla flanked by the symbols of two of the Evangelists, St John and St Matthew, each image taking up a third of the side of the bowl. The eagle on the right is set in a ring but the angel is framed partly in a ring and partly by his own wings which have been drawn to fit the shape of the panel. In the Nativity scene the face is divided in two equal parts by two beaded arches with an off-set supporting column which doubles as the foot of the Virgin's bed

³⁴ J. Romilly Allen, fig. 109, shows a drawing of this scene and illustrates the danger of taking such drawings literally, even when used by a scholar of Allen's standing; he shows the right wing of the right-hand angel above the tunic which he holds up for Christ but on the font this is a pair of lines filling the space.

and the end of the crib; the spandrel is filled by a human mask wearing a pointed hat, the attribute of the Jew. Both arches are broken at their outer extremities by the heads of the Virgin on the left and on the right Joseph who completes the scene, sleeping in a chair, head on hands, behind the Saviour's head. Mary sleeps in a bed with elaborately pleated coverlet and an arcaded support.³⁵ The Child, who lies feet to feet with His mother, is watched over by the ox and ass and lies in a crib raised up on a platform like an altar. The Entry into Jerusalem is generally rare in baptismal iconography and this scene is unique in England [22]. At the left is a palm-tree and then comes a man riding astride, a star behind his back above the crupper of his mount; smaller palms show behind and below the figures. Confronting the rider, a man holds palm branches. The rider is not nimbed but the star at the left seems to point to the presence of Christ. The riding position is uncommon for this scene in the West but was well known in Byzantine art and is in line with the Byzantine arrangements of the Nativity scene, the Virgin abed and Joseph's sleeping presence. The pose of the second figure is a clear visual representation of the words of the Apocryphal Gospel.³⁶

Until it was rescued and placed in the new church, the barbaric-looking font at Kirkby [23] was used for at least a century as a rain-water butt in the school-yard. Its excellent state of preservation is in no small respect due to the thick layer of lime-wash with which it was then covered.³⁷ Both bowl and base are contemporary but the short shaft of spiral cable is a modern addition. The base is formed of a massive rough cable-moulding with a brief smooth extension at the top. The bowl is cylindrical with some damage to the rim, due no doubt to the former locking arrangements. At the rim is a narrow plain band of uneven width and at the bottom is what at first may be taken for a powerful cable-moulding, out of all proportion to the bowl but a clear echo of the base. Close examination reveals that this cable is in fact a pair of entwined serpents coiled round the holy water vessel, a clear implication of the threat of evil. There are in fact three serpents' heads; two of them, one upturned, are face-to-face and the third, also upturned, is a short distance away. The main surface of the bowl is decorated with an arcade of eleven round-headed arches of very irregular width and design, but all the supporting columns are provided with base and capital. The spandrels contain motifs of three leaves and the arches are of double strands. Two of the bays display the Fall, the supporting column between them carved to represent the Tree, with the serpent coiled around the trunk and branches forming the two adjacent arches. At the top is a bird and there are apples on the branches. The snake, a beaded band around its neck like a collar, faces Eve with an apple in its mouth. The bearded Adam is on the left, while Eve, her hair in a

³⁵ The bottom part of this side of the font is badly damaged, with considerable loss, but this description seems likely from the four somewhat uneven arches which are just visible.

³⁶ 'and the children of the Hebrews held branches in their hands and cried out'.

The Gospel of Nicodemus, Acts of Pilate, pt I.

³⁷ In 'The Kirkby Font', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society*, LIII, 1901, pp. 59–80, F. C. Larkin gives a detailed survey of this font and of possible explanations of the iconography.

heavy plait reaching almost to the ground, offers him an apple with her left hand. Both cover their nakedness in shame. In the arch to the left, standing on a plinth, is an angel with a flaming sword, symbolising the Expulsion. The next figure to the left is set lower than the others, his feet interrupting the bottom plain band, and he thrusts the end of his staff into the gaping, upturned mouth of the serpent below him. Still circling the font to the left there follow seven figures wearing clerical dress.³⁸ They are all largely the same but display variations of detail, though the pointed shape of the chasuble is seen on every one. The first, who is tonsured, stands upon a plinth and holds a closed book against his chest; the second has a staff and an open book in his left hand. The third, who wears the early form of mitre with peaks at the sides, holds a short staff in front of his body and blesses with his right hand; beneath his feet is the second upturned serpent's head and below the next figure is the third serpent's head. This figure wears the same type of mitre but has a book in the left hand, held against his chest like the others. In his right hand he holds aloft what appears to be a staff with a pennant, though the bottom end of the shaft is crooked; Larkin suggests that this may be a rather inaccurate rendering of Peter's key, the wards held up.³⁹ The next two figures are also tonsured, the first with a short staff and both holding books. The last figure is much like the other bare-headed figures, except that he appears to carry something in the crook of the left arm and his left hand is laid upon it. Larkin suggests that this is an infant brought to baptism, but it is impossible to verify.

Southrop in Gloucestershire [24] and Stanton Fitzwarren in Wiltshire are similar in form and share an iconographical programme which features figures in arcading. In this case the figures are in clearly statuesque pose but conveying a very definite message. The Southrop font is a slightly flaring cylinder and stands on a square plinth which is probably not original. Below the plain rim a broad band of formal decoration consists of an undulating beaded stem interlaced with another similar stem to form oval outlines which contain leaves growing out of the lower stem. Each point where the tendrils cross is framed by a square buckle. The main decoration consists of an arcade of eight three-centred arches supported on tectonic columns and with inscriptions around each arch. In the spandrels are towers and other architectural motifs. In five of the arches stand armed soldiers, with shields alternately round and kite-shaped, who trample dragons and human figures beneath their feet. The figures represent the Virtues with the defeated Vices underfoot; the Virtues are named in inscriptions around the arches and the name of each Vice is incised backwards, vertically, beside the standing figures. Misericordia slays Invidia with a sword, Temperentia uses a spear on Luxuria, Largitas pours coins

³⁸ Roberts, *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society*, 1853–4, p. 46, believed that these figures represented the orders of the Saxon clergy according to the Canons of Ælfric, Archbishop of Canterbury 985–1005, but to Larkin, pp. 65–8, this seems unlikely for a variety of reasons which he sets out at length.

³⁹ F. C. Larkin, pp. 71–2. J. R. Allen, fig. 115, illustrates a carving on the door of the church at Hoveringham, in which Peter is shown brandishing aloft a single key held in his right hand, though there the handle is the usual ring, in contrast to the half ring at Kirkby.

out of a large bag onto the head of Avaritia, Patientia brandishes a whip with three knotted thongs over Ira and Modestia plunges her sword into Ebrietas. In the remaining three arches are Moses, shown with his 'horns', flanked by Ecclesia and Synagoge. Moses holds the tablets of the Law in his left hand while with his right he points to Ecclesia who is crowned and holds a chalice in one hand and a long-shaft cross in the other. Synagoge is depicted as a drooping figure, her eyes blinded by the pennant of her broken staff which has knocked her crown askew; the lamp in her left hand is inverted showing that the light has gone out. The font at Stanton Fitzwarren is almost identical. The band of decoration beneath a plain band at the top is the same but the spandrels here are filled with leaf motifs and the arches are depressed. The names of the Virtues and Vices are in the same positions but here the naming of the Vices, while again vertical, is not in mirror script and each letter is the right way up. Moses and Synagoge are not included and Ecclesia is shown killing a serpent, with the inscription: *serpens occiditur* (the serpent is killed). Additional figures are a cherubim with drawn sword, Pietas trampling on Discordia, Pudicitia on Libido and Humilitas on Superbia, giving ten arches instead of the eight at Southrop.

Dunkeswell is a complex variant of the girdled group, though crudely carved. Below the girdle, which is here carved as a plait, the surface is worn but seems to have two or perhaps three rows of overlapping 'scales'.⁴⁰ Above, the formal ornament has been replaced by figures in an irregular arcade of eight arches supported on tectonic columns. Major damage and reassembly make it hard to see precisely what is depicted in each of the arches. A bishop with crosier blesses with his right hand and the next arch contains a pair of figures, from the beard one certainly male, but it is impossible to be sure about the other. The third arch seems to contain part of a ship, and in the next is a very rare subject in medieval iconography, an elephant, the ignorance of the mason shown by its scaly skin. This image is followed by an archer shooting an arrow towards the elephant, then come a man with a sword, a king with sword and shield, and a man in chains, the last probably representing St Peter (*ad vincula*). All the figures have heads which are grossly oversize.

Not all figure decoration is framed in arcading. Mellor displays a large horse ridden by a man whose head has been lost, almost certainly through damage to the rim. There is also a large beast, from its tail possibly a lion, but positioning of the font close to the wall prevents identification of the other scenes.⁴¹ Tissington, a cylindrical tub font standing on a round plinth, is also damaged at the rim but there seems to be no loss of decoration, which here is incised rather than the more common relief, and includes an Agnus Dei, a beast biting its tail, a beast with the head of a man in its mouth, a large bird, perhaps an eagle or a dove, and two men.⁴²

⁴⁰ The scale or shingle effect is also found at Drewsteignton. The upper part of the font has been replaced but the original cable girdle survives, here double, and below it is a triple row of scales above a frieze of six-petal flowers in discs.

⁴¹ G. Le B. Smith says, 1906, p. 221, that one is a pig.

⁴² G. Le B. Smith says, 1906, p. 221, that there was a similar font, now broken, at Thorpe.

In the Roman Catholic chapel of Everingham Hall is an early medieval tub font.⁴³ Although there is an unbroken (except where damaged) band of herring-bone ornament encircling the whole rim, the main face of the bowl is only decorated for about half its circumference. A channel has been cut around the outline of the chosen subjects, leaving the major part of the surrounding area *in situ*. Moving round the bowl from left to right, the first two scenes appear to be framed by rough arches, the pillar between them being incised with the picture of a tree. In the first arch a man shoots an arrow across the tree at an animal standing on its tail so that its four feet and beak-like mouth are towards him. There follows a tree in relief with a bird in the topmost branches looking away from the first scene, succeeded in turn by a group of four animals of differing sizes. On the back of the creature at the top stands a bird like a crow. This bird and all the animals face right, where another bird, facing left, is perched at the top of a third tree; from its bare branches it appears to be dead. The scene is completed by the small figure of a rider approaching the tree from the right.

The shape of South Milton [25] is quite irregular and lop-sided, with a massive cable-moulding separating the entirely plain lower half from the near-hemispherical bowl which has decoration in two registers of equal width. The upper register is a broad cuff which has suffered damage from the former locking arrangements. Around one quarter of the circumference of the cuff is a pair of undulating lines which cross and terminate in a pincer-shape at each end. The remainder displays a single human figure, from its long, pleated robe probably female, and a mixture of birds and beasts. The woman's feet are on a line of ground and her body is bent at the waist so that her head, held in both hands, touches the ground. This is the classic image of the acrobat or dancer and is found at Östra Hoby in Sweden, where it portrays Salome dancing before Herod, seated with his Queen at a table laid for a feast. No such additional details are present here, or on the font of St Marychurch, Torquay, where the image also appears. The woman is succeeded by a bird with detailed feathers and a large curved beak, in turn followed by an animal which has lost its head but, from the way the tail is depicted, must be a lion; it stands confronted with a dragon, also without its head. The lower part of the bowl has a line of large triangles, points uppermost, with slightly curved sides and standing on the cable. Four of the seven intervening spaces are filled with similar leaf motifs and the other three with quite dissimilar human masks. One, directly beneath the bird in the upper register, is bearded and has a large domed head which intrudes into the cuff; its neighbour is smaller and clean-shaven with a much younger look. The third, which occupies the space immediately below the missing heads of the confronted dragon and lion, is human but with pointed animals' ears.

There is a group of fonts in the western marches of England which, while differing in many details, nevertheless have a strong family likeness both in silhouette and in the Nordic interlacing which fills the background. These are at Castle Frome, Chaddesley Corbett, Eardisley and Stottesdon [26–9]. They are all of a squat goblet shape and monolithic, though with a clear differentiation between bowl and support, and Castle

⁴³ It is of substantial size, about 75cm tall, 30cm deep and with external and internal diameters of 90cm and 63cm respectively. Rev. J. T. Fowler, 'On a Twelfth Century Font at Everingham in Yorkshire', *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal*, XX, 1909, pp. 487–9.

Frome alone has a separate contemporary base with corner figures. All have a band of loose plaitwork below the rim and intricate interlacing at the bottom, and the first three have a band of figure sculpture between. Castle Frome has no moulding between bowl and support where at Eardisley there is a slender cable and at Chaddesley Corbett a powerful plait. At Castle Frome the top band of plaitwork is like a cuff, almost vertical, and then the side of the bowl curves round and down again to form a short extension. Formed of several separate stones, the triangular base here is carved at the corners to reveal three crouching men, their heads thrusting out of the block and their wrists and hands resting on the ground. The rudimentary legs and feet sketched out of the block are set so far back as to be anatomically impossible, relative to the upper part of the body. The main band of figured decoration around the bowl depicts the symbols of the Evangelists and the Baptism of Christ. The signs of the Evangelists are all winged and nimbed but only the angel carries a book, to which he points with the other hand. The Baptism is instantly recognisable but has certain quite specific traits of its own, not least the absence of an accompanying angel for whom there would have been no room. At the left stands the Baptist, nimbed, a cloth draped over his right arm like a maniple. His body faces to the right but he is *en face*. Both his arms are extended above Christ's head, the first two fingers of the right hand in the form of the blessing. Christ's body is visible through the water which is carved as a ring around Him and His arms are in front of His body; He shares the water with four fish. The dove of the Holy Spirit flies down from the right onto the head of Christ which is, surprisingly, not nimbed. In the top centre the hand of God completes the presence of the Trinity.⁴⁴ To the right of the Baptism two birds face each other, perhaps representing the souls of the baptised. The different images around the bowl occupy spaces of varying height and the network of interlacing cords is so arranged that it takes up what is left of the surface.

Eardisley differs in certain details from Castle Frome. It has a bowl which is more of a hemisphere, the extension below the slender cable-moulding is shorter and there is no sign of a base. The plait below the rim is tighter, as is the cord-ornament on the support, and the subject matter of the decoration, which occupies the whole height of the bowl between plaitwork and cable-moulding, is quite different. Here the main scene represents the Harrowing of Hell. Christ, wearing a cruciferous nimbus, holds a long-staff cross in His right hand, planted upright on the cable-moulding; the cross *paty* against the plaitwork at the top. With His left hand He drags a small figure by the wrist out of the coils of interlace which pluck at its legs and must represent the toils of Hell; His body is bent sideways with the effort and a bird sits on His left shoulder. On the other side of the cross-staff is a second figure, identical in dress, hair and beard, except for the absence of a cross on the nimbus. He clasps a book in both hands across his chest, suggesting he may be one of the Evangelists. Like the figure of Christ, he is *en face*. On the far side of the toils of Hell is an enormous lion looking out from the font,

⁴⁴ This font was dismantled and taken to the Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London in April–July 1984. Professor Zarnecki noted in the catalogue of the exhibition, *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200*, p. 178, that the head of the dove of the Holy Spirit had been lost since the publication of George Marshall's *Fonts in Herefordshire* by the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club in 1949.

its shoulders carved with a luxuriant mane. Between the lion and the two nimbed figures are two men fighting, one armed with a sword brandished above his right shoulder, the other thrusting a spear into his opponent's leg. Both seem to be assailed by long snakes which clutch at their arms and legs, but this is probably no more than an extension of the ubiquitous liana-like cords which fill every spare space on the font. The garments worn by all the figures are full, long-sleeved robes without fastening, crossed over the body and secured with a sash. The fighting men also wear small conical helmets. Chaddesley Corbett is probably by the same hand as Eardisley. The bowl has the same rounded shape and the base the same profile and proportions; only the moulding between the two, here a heavy plait, is very much larger. The plaitwork at the rim and the interlace on the base are the same on both fonts. The main decoration, however, is different and unusual in being repeated. It comprises three dragons, jaws apart and showing their teeth, as coils of twin cords emerge from their mouths to wrap around themselves and to fill every available space.

Stottesdon has a bowl of shape similar to the others but supported upon a conventional round base and a shaft which is not quite a cylinder but tapers to the bottom. The decoration, though superficially the same is in fact quite different and appears on all parts of the font. The sides and upper surface of the base both have continuous vine tendrils with side-shoots of leaves, but the ornament on the shaft is more complex and of greater refinement, being constructed of a band of undulating triple parallel lines.⁴⁵ The side-shoots do not terminate in the usual leaves but curl back on themselves in a brief spiral and each is interlaced with a sinuous cross with curled ends, of the same triple bands. At the top of the bowl is a broad band of ornament made of the same triple lines as on the shaft, but looser and less disciplined. Two undulating lines cross each other at regular intervals and each cross-over point is framed in a three-stranded ring. The main area of the face is occupied by a series of beaded rings formed of double strands with nail-head ornament. The rings do not quite touch tangentially but are strapped together by lions' masks in the manner of the Herefordshire School. One strap is missing and the gap between the rings is wider at this point, filled by a human demifigure; the hands are apparently *orantes* but close inspection reveals that the right hand is not held palm to the front but grasps the stem of a short branch of foliate ornament. The 'spandrel' ornaments are a form of fleur-de-lis, inverted at the top, the right way up below the rings.⁴⁶ In the rings are the following motifs: Agnus Dei, a lion *passant*, a looped cross, a cross formed of four linked rings with a central boss, a raptor pecking at the head of a smaller bird held in its talons, a bird swallowing a snake, a nine-petal rosette, a lion *regardant* biting its tail and a winged dragon. The demifigure is inserted between the snake-eating bird and the rosette.

⁴⁵ I am grateful to Professor Zarnecki for drawing my attention to pls. 107–17 in A. Peroni's *Pavia, Musei Civici del Castello Viscontino*, Bologna, 1975. These show fragments of stone all bearing decoration based on the same triple line format.

⁴⁶ The term 'spandrel' is used here not in its true sense but to describe the top and bottom spaces between adjacent rings, effectively the same shape as the true spandrel above an arcade of round-headed arches.

@e Narrative Figure Decoration

Narrative sculpture requires freedom of space to express effectively the story to be told and the constraints of an arcade can be very limiting. Different sculptors have tackled the problem in many ways, some doing away with arches altogether, others placing supporting columns only where it is appropriate to separate one scene from another and a third group using neither arches nor columns and achieving separation where required by the use of trees or architectural features. There are also those who accept the arcade and its restrictions, though often they may allow their figures' gestures to cross from one arch to the next or adjust the widths of the arches according to the scenes planned for them.

In Yorkshire are four tub fonts covered with important narrative sculpture, North Grimston, Cottam, Cowlam and Kirkburn [30–3].⁴⁷ The first is unusually squat, scarcely 80cm high, against a diameter of 98cm, and has no plinth, though there is a powerful cable-moulding around the rim. In an unusual portrayal of the Last Supper, Christ is seated in the centre of His disciples, beneath a misshapen canopy of honour supported on columns. He wears a cruciferous nimbus with the arms of the cross extending beyond the circumference of the disc. Both hands are raised *orantes*, palm towards the viewer, though the right hand has the last two fingers closed in the gesture of blessing. Beneath the table His feet rest on a rainbow and His outer garment is caught back to reveal the vertical pleats beneath. The nimbus round each disciple's head stops level with the ears so that it has the appearance of a framing arch without columns. Their feet are visible beneath the table and the bottom sections of their garments are shown as rectangles with rudimentary decoration. They all hold books against their chests with the left hand and with the right hold knives in front of them on the table, where there are standing dishes, covered pots and what look like flat pieces of bread. To the left of the Last Supper is an arch in which a figure *en face*, with a plain nimbus the same shape as those of the disciples, stands upon a rainbow, blesses with the right hand and holds a crosier in the left. Further to the left is a narrow vertical band of formal ornament separating the figure from the Deposition which follows. Here Christ, His head inclined to the right, has His feet on a *suppedaneum* and the left hand is still nailed to one flaring arm of the cross. His right hand is already free and the arm is supported by the figure standing on that side, while his companion on the other holds the Saviour tenderly round the waist. Next comes the other end of the Last Supper, with no break between the two scenes. The craftsmanship is extremely maladroit throughout; there is no modelling of the bodies, and the eyes and mouth are barely indicated on the flat oval faces, all with long chins and prominent noses.

At Kirkburn [33] the font is also a cylinder but much taller, permitting a completely different approach to the decoration, with figures in two registers separated by a narrow

⁴⁷ Cottam is derelict and the font is now in Langtoft church, about two miles north-east.

band of plaitwork.⁴⁸ The way the figures are sculpted and the crude treatment of the whole decorative programme are reminiscent of the cylinder font at Toller Fratrum. Unlike North Grimston the heads are round but there is no attempt at depicting facial expression nor at any delineation of features. There is evidence that the rim, now worn and repaired, was originally adorned with a cable-moulding and below this is a broad (18cm) band of varied formal ornament which changes its nature as it progresses round the bowl. The major part consists of interlaced non-tectonic arcading but there is also plaitwork, a looped chain and a group of eight depressions of varying size, like huge thumb-prints. There is no clear space between the figures and the framing bands, indeed some heads are cut off at the top. The scenes in the upper register include Christ standing, *orans*, in a rough, pear-shaped mandorla held by two figures; He has the cross of His cruciferous nimbus but no disc and no other figures on the font are nimbed. There is a group of four standing figures holding books, one of them with a crosier. A seated figure, who must be Christ, hands two enormous keys linked by a ring to a standing Peter. A figure immersed to the shoulders in a cylinder is baptised and marked on the head by another with the thumb of his right hand (a pose seen at Toller Fratrum too), while holding a book in his left. The scenes in the lower register are more mixed and less easy to explain. The Agnus Dei seems to be pursued by a man with an axe over his shoulder while approached from the other side by another man with a shouldered club who leads an animal by a cord attached to its collar; behind the first man an asp looks the other way. After the asp comes a cat with a snake's head in its paws, a coiled serpent and a square with enlarged corners, in the centre of which is a pair of interlinked triquetras. Round the bottom is a plain narrow band.

Cottam and Cowlam [31–2] are also cylinders and both stand on low modern plinths. The rim at Cottam is encircled by a cable-moulding but that at Cowlam is plain. The carving is in lower relief at Cottam and the scenes are depicted much more freely, each in a wide space which is almost square and separated from the next by a slender column. At Cowlam the heads are framed in an arcade though some of the vertical supports are omitted. With one exception, the two fonts have no common iconography. At Cottam three of the themes are hagiographic: St Margaret is depicted entering the dragon's maw head first and bursting out again from the back of the monster's neck. Beside this scene, and included in the same space, St Lawrence lies on his gridiron, pinned down by the pole held by his torturer. Separated by columns from the scenes on either side, St Andrew is martyred on his saltire by two men. In the portrayal of the Fall the Tree is in the centre, Adam stands on the left and Eve on the right, her hair trailing down her back as she takes the apple from the mouth of the snake entwined around the Tree; both cover their nakedness with palm-fronds. The final space is filled with another complex panel of vegetation, perhaps intended as the Tree of Life.

Cowlam also portrays the Fall but the two figures are reversed, with the bearded Adam on the right appearing to pluck an apple from the lower branches himself, while Eve, here identified by her breasts and the absence of a beard, rather than by long hair, stands on the left and takes an apple from the mouth of the serpent. Eve's head is framed, not by an arch but by the branch above her. Although the leaves in the two scenes are drawn differently, there are certain points of similarity about the trees: they both have roots which splay out at the foot, the trunks are vertical and straps encircle them at a point

⁴⁸ Both height and external diameter are 98cm.

immediately below the spreading of the branches, but these are the only shared features to suggest a common provenance. The remaining scenes at Cowlam are taken from the story of the Nativity, not entirely in sequence. To the right of the Fall a man with a sword faces a king enthroned, *en face*, which can only represent Herod giving orders for the Massacre of the Innocents;⁴⁹ each has his head, as has Adam, framed by an unsupported arch. Next, in two separate tectonic arches, come two of the Magi, the first in profile and the second *en face*, each carrying his gift in a swag. The following scene has two arches (one smaller than the other) but no columns and consists of the third of the Magi proffering his gift to the Child enthroned on His mother's lap, both facing the donor. The Infant Christ is crowned and blesses, while Mary steadies Him with her left hand about His waist. Beneath the feet of these figures are four demilunes filled with foliate ornament. *En face*, immediately behind the Virgin's back, is a bishop holding a crosier in his left hand and blessing with his right. He is followed by two wrestlers who are identically dressed in quilted costume, in profile and grasp each other at the waist. Their identity of dress, beards and position and the way their bodies cross in a saltire at the shoulders and again at the legs makes them more a formal design than representative figures. What do they symbolise? Their very identity of design undermines any view that they might represent a form of Psychomachia, the struggle between good and evil for the human soul. The programme is completed by a seated figure, right hand raised, left hand at his waist. Although there is a considerable degree of modelling on these figures, they are also markedly angular and statuesque.

Brighton (St Nicholas) [34], a cylinder, is smaller than many tub fonts of the period. It is now on a modern support and its sculpture has been recut.⁵⁰ At the top is a wide band of saltires and at the bottom is a broad band of foliate ornament which changes its pattern as it encircles the bowl. Between the two bands is narrative decoration in four unrelated scenes. The Last Supper occupies about one third of the circumference and the table, unusually, is carved so that it appears as it would with the top at eye level; the pleats and swags of the cloth, and the cups and dishes with which it is laid, are shown realistically, from the side. Christ blesses with His right hand and the disciples' hands furthest away from Christ are held up, palms forward, while their other hands hold cups or lie on the table. The cloth is drawn in the same plane as the decorative band below, which hides the feet of the disciples, and the heads and upper bodies are in high relief, the figures appearing as if seated in a theatrical box, a fiction which is emphasised by the curved undercutting of the band above. There is no room for more than six disciples and Christ, with cruciferous nimbus, is shown seated, with three on either side. The opposite third of the bowl depicts one of the legends of St Nicholas. The main feature of the scene is a sailing ship on a wavy sea, sail furled on the cross-tree of the central mast. There are two men in the ship, one on either side of the mast and, standing on the surface of the water at the prow is St Nicholas dressed as a bishop and carrying a crosier. Another man stands at the stern, while a third may be seen behind the vessel, near the saint. It is not clear which of the many St Nicholas legends is depicted here. It cannot be the

⁴⁹ At Ingleton, in the same county, the Massacre is in greater detail, the king himself with a sword and a soldier with an axe both shown about to slay a child.

⁵⁰ G. Zarnecki, *Later English Romanesque Sculpture: 1140–1210*, London 1953, p. 58, says in 1853.

posthumous miracle of the noble who promised a golden cup if granted his wish for a son, as there is neither a goblet nor a boy in the water as shown at Winchester and Zedelgem [122]. It is more likely to refer to one of two miracles relating to the sea, performed during the lifetime of the saint. During the Council of Nicaea, the bishop learned of certain mariners threatened by stormy weather who prayed that he would intercede for them. He appeared to them and stilled the storm, and they instantly recognised him later, when they came on land, though they had never seen him in life before. The other miracle concerned the Devil wishing to send to a holy man whom he hated a magic oil that burned; he gave it to pilgrims to carry for him, unbeknown. The saint, sailing in another vessel, met the pilgrims, asked what they were transporting and then told them to empty the bottle into the sea where it burned fiercely. There is no detail in the sculpture to aid a precise identification. Between the extreme right of the Last Supper and the beginning of the St Nicholas scene is a square panel in which a man kneels in profile before a seated figure *en face*, his right hand raised as a clenched fist. This is perhaps a symbol of power, with the liegeman offering tribute to his lord. At the other end of the main scenes is a larger panel, divided into three by columns, portraying the Baptism of Christ. He stands in the Jordan in the centre section, blessing; an angel holding a cloth stands on His right and a female figure carrying a small pot on His left, while the waters of the Jordan flow out across the lower part of the columns on either side. There is no Baptist, dove or *dextera Dei*. Perhaps this is Mary with her embalming ointment looking to the death of her Son to come and thus emphasising the sacrificial aspect of the rite of baptism, our death with Christ in the waters of the font.

Toller Fratrum [35] is a cylindrical tub with crude carving that is very similar in style to that at Kirkburn in Yorkshire, very round heads, characterless faces with prominent eyes and noses, but otherwise almost featureless. At the top is a broad band of well-executed squared plaiting, reminiscent of basketwork, above a strong cable-moulding.⁵¹ A thicker cable encircles the bottom above the modern plinth. The main face of the font is peopled with human figures and animals of very obscure meaning. In one place there are three figures who seem to walk to the right, the leader carrying a long-staff cross. After this group comes a figure who may be female, as the only one shown with hair and wearing a long robe with a decorated hem. She holds a shaft with a disc at the top, rather like a school-crossing patrol; to judge from the decoration of the shaft it may be intended to represent a decorated column with a plain cushion capital. Her left arm is held up by a short figure cut off at the waist, followed by a full-length figure, both hands grasping the cable moulding at the top and a second demifigure reaching up to the right arm of the full-length figure next in line; this has its right hand placed on the head of the demifigure and with the left grasps the cable-moulding. Beside the raised left arm of the central figure a head peers out below the cable moulding. Moving further round the bowl to the right brings an astonishing scene in which two beasts which share a common head stand

⁵¹ In a letter to me G. Zarnecki says that, in his view, this is Italian work. His paper 'Sculpture in Stone in the English Romanesque Art Exhibition', *Art and Patronage in the English Romanesque*, ed. Sarah Macready and F. H. Thompson, Society of Antiquaries, 1986, pp. 7–25, discusses the connections between Italian and English sculpture of the period.

on three short columns; from the way their tails are passed between the hind legs and across the flank, they may be lions. The left-hand beast has all four feet on a single column, while the other has two feet on each of a pair of shorter columns. Between the taller single column and the shorter pair is a third beast drawn sideways, four feet against the shaft of the taller column and head to the top. Among this creature's legs are three human heads and there are two more on the other side of the column. These scenes have been interpreted as Moses inspiring the Israelites in their battle with the Amalekites, Moses and the Golden Calf, and the Harrowing of Hell, but only the last is convincing.⁵²

Hook Norton [36] is a straight-sided cylinder with most unusual iconography set between decorative bands. At the top is a continuous tendril above a narrow band of saw-tooth ornament and at the bottom are two bands, the lower plain and the upper of large bezants within rings. The main decorative programme is dominated by a very idiosyncratic version of the Fall, with a large schematic Tree, the trunk and branches beaded, but with no snake. On the right stands Eve holding the apple and she is separated from Adam by a formalised saltire with squared ends, placed at shoulder height. Clearly the reason for placing Adam and Eve together, and for the use of a divider, is that Adam is depicted in a later stage of the story, after the Expulsion. In his right hand, his foot upon the blade, he holds a spade and in his left, held at shoulder height, is a rake. So that there is no mistake, the two figures have their names inscribed on their chests between the shoulders. The next image is a dragon *regardant* appearing to speak to the head at the end of its tail, which is curled round to face forwards. The dragon wears a beaded collar from which a line of beading runs the full length of body and tail. Next follows a lion *regardant*, smaller than the dragon and oriented in the opposite direction, its tail threaded through the hind legs and the plume displayed above its back; a small piece of decoration represents the mane. The lion, pushed up against the saw-tooth band, stands on a short piece of 'ground' and the space below is filled with a spreading leaf motif. The next, human, figure is in profile, stands on a small block with saw-tooth underside and faces left. In front of the face is a disc and the arms are raised to shoulder height in front of the body, one hand holding an axe with long shaft and the other a staff which rests on the shoulder and from which hang the two ends of what looks like a bag or water-skin. There is a short pig-tail at the back of the head but no inscription or other indication of identity. It has been referred to as Aquarius, from the skins over the staff, but why, then, the axe? Finally, identified as Sagittarius from the inscription along its back, comes a centaur moving left but *regardant*, aiming a bow and arrow at the previous figure. The only details are a beaded belt at the waist and the shape of the feet which are quite clearly intended to be seen as hooves. The story of the Fall is quite common in Romanesque iconography and there are good reasons for its inclusion in a baptismal context. The dragon is a common symbol of the threat of evil, as the lion may be of good, and the image of the centaur is also quite frequently found but not often specifically shown as Sagittarius. The water-carrier, if that is who the figure is, could be part of the water symbolism but would be unique in that role and still there would be no explanation for the axe or for the disc in front of the face. There may be no significance in the small platform on which he stands, any more than in that of the lion's 'ground'.

⁵² W. B. Yapp, 'The Iconography of the Font at Toller Fratrum', *Dorset Natural History and Architectural Society*, CIX, 1987, pp. 1–4. See Exodus 17: 8–16.

All the other figures stand directly on top of the lower band of ornament and the mason may have felt unhappy with the two figures placed higher on the face having no means of support and seeming to float in mid-air.

@c Supported Fonts

The vessel into which an adult could step for a baptism of partial immersion and partial affusion would have stood directly on the floor but, once adult baptism had ceased to be common, this arrangement would have been most inconvenient for the priest faced with lowering an infant into the water. The bowl no longer needed to be as big and it was required to be of a height which placed the rim at about the level of the elbow of a man of average height, in other words at something a little less than a metre. This would have required no more than a bowl on some form of shaft but in most cases the shaft is set into a base, rather than directly into the pavement; shafts may be single or multiple. The other solution, more common in Scandinavia than elsewhere, was to support the bowl upon a high base without the intervention of a shaft. Almost invariably the supports are set beneath the bowl but there is a rare type, found only in Britain and Germany, where the bowl appears suspended between the supports.

@e The 'Purbeck' Fonts

The British Isles' answer to the Mosan font, and the largest British group, is the genus of square, so-called marble, fonts made of dark limestone quarried in the Isle of Purbeck and in parts of Sussex.⁵³ They are of the same type of hard, dark limestone capable of taking a polish but generally with a far higher crinoid content than the equivalent materials on the Continent. The English products are almost invariably smaller than the Mosan but still supported on the one-plus-four arrangement of a large central pillar with a slender colonnette at each corner, like Merstham [37], though there are examples which have been modified to stand on a solid block, like West Grinstead, and one at least, at Ewhurst, was designed for a single support. Generally, the English fonts of this type differ from the Continental 1 + 4 pieces in having very little by way of capitals for the colonnettes carved on the underside of the bowls. As with the Mosan products, some have vertical sides and some flare to the top. They

⁵³ There are also a few in Yorkshire made of Frosterley (Durham) marble, e.g. Beverley Minster.

were clearly made over an extended period, like those on the Meuse, but there was no development equivalent to the late ‘chess-piece’ version of which so many were made around Namur and in the other centres of production. The variety of the arcading with which the English fonts were often decorated points to their long-lived popularity, but the limit of their exploitation seems to have been to move from a square to an octagon; they are virtually unknown with a round bowl. They were very much more simple in their decoration than the products of the Mosan school, many being completely plain and others having no more than simple arcading or recessed panels. Examples may be found with round-headed and pointed arches, even a few with trefoil arches, but interlacing is strangely absent. Of fabulous beasts and human figures there is no sign, though there is a large fish on one side at Slaugham which also, with a few others, has a formal foliate design on one face. Steyning has a large saw-tooth frieze the full height of the face, Bondleigh [38] the same on one side and two rows of semicircles on another, their diameters on the top and bottom rims; on a third side there are tall, narrow arches like the Irish Ossory fonts. Where decoration occurs on the upper surface it is always based on the fleur-de-lis but is rare, though there are four examples quite close together in Devon.⁵⁴

These ‘mass-produced’ fonts are common right across the counties along the south coast of England from Devon to Kent and also in Wiltshire. They must have been shipped, ready-made, along the south coast to be brought up the rivers into the hinterland. The likelihood that this happened, rather than that the stone was delivered uncut, can be confirmed by one example: a design in which a thin saltire is surrounded by an outline of the same shape but with square ends, like a leaf, is found in Devon, Dorset, Hampshire and Sussex.⁵⁵ In Herefordshire, at Kilpeck, Bredwardine and Madley, are three round multisupport fonts of a similar hard limestone, but quarried locally; the last has lost its original supports. The bowls are unusually large and wide for their height, all around 1.2m in external diameter and 37cm high. They have rounded sides externally, with no ornament of any type. The Kilpeck font seems to be unique for the survival of its original stone plug for the drainage hole, though it is carved from a different material, a local sandstone.⁵⁶ Given the complete lack of iconographic features or of any figure

⁵⁴ Bondleigh, Clyst Honiton, Coldridge and Hemyock.

⁵⁵ Bondleigh and Clyst Honiton (Devon), Goodworth Clatford (Hampshire), Sidlesham (Sussex). A similar but flatter version occurs on the worn Mosan font in the possession of Milo Jacquemyn, Sint Andries, near Bruges.

⁵⁶ See G. Marshall, *Fonts in Herefordshire*, 1949, p. 34 and pl. 44b.

decoration, these hardstone fonts are almost impossible to date, further than ascribing them to a half-century. The majority must have been made between 1150 and 1300.⁵⁷ A quite different multisupport font is to be found at Newenden in Kent [39]. It is fashioned in a creamy limestone and more in the style of examples found around Boulogne made of the Marquise stone of the Boulonnais. The heavy square bowl has a vertical face and rounded lower part in which are fashioned leaf capitals for the corner colonnettes. The central column is massive and touches the colonnettes. The base is square, with the upper surface carved to provide locating sockets for the five supporting shafts but there are no corner spurs or other ornaments. The decoration on the vertical sides of the bowl, framed all round with plain narrow bands, is also quite unlike any of the Purbeck bowls. On one side is a series of four roundels, three containing mythical beasts and the fourth a six-petal flower in a ring. Moving to the right is a face with geometrical ornament consisting of two large saltires, all the spaces between the arms of the two crosses occupied by flowers and fruit. The next side displays a winged dragon and a lion, both facing right, the lion's head framed in a luxuriant mane and glaring out of the bottom right-hand corner. The fourth side is undecorated. The basin is round and there is no ornament on the upper surface.⁵⁸ From the pale limestone of which it is made and the low silhouette Newenden is very much in the style of the fonts in the Pas de Calais – Boulonnais area. Both Tubersent and Hesdres fonts, for example, are of the same form and both have sides with beasts in four roundels, while Tubersent has one side with saltires and vegetal motifs in the interstices. On fonts of other groups with roundels they invariably number three.

@e The Box Type

This term 'box' is used to describe those fonts where the shape of the bowl is much closer to a cube than is commonly the case with square bowls. In fact measurements show that the width is always considerably more than the height, but it is the straight bottom edge and the flat underside of the bowl which help give it the appearance of a near-cube, unlike the table fonts of the Tournai and Mosan groups. The contrast lies in the articulation of the lower part of the bowl which at Tournai is sculpted into capitals

⁵⁷ See Appx 1B for a (non-exhaustive) list of 'Purbeck fonts.

⁵⁸ If it could be proved that the Newenden font is of Marquise stone, this would be evidence that at least one English font had been imported across the Channel, apart from the eight Tournai examples (or that a French mason had worked in Kent, if the source of the stone was English). Rye lies at the mouth of the River Rother and Newenden lies only a short distance from its upper reaches, no more than ten miles away. The font was removed for a period to St Mary's, Rye, and, following its return to Newenden, a remarkably faithful modern copy was made for Rye. For this information I am indebted to the Rev. R. H. Dengate, rector of Sandhurst with Newenden.

for the corner colonnettes, and of the upper surface of the base with its sockets in which the colonnettes are located. The actual vertical face on the Tournai bowls is typically only around half the total height of the bowl, including the colonnette capitals.⁵⁹ On the box fonts the bases and capitals are integral with the shafts and the flat bottom of the bowl rests directly upon them, two quite separate elements, whereas in the Tournai fonts there is a tectonic link between the base and the capital through the shaft of the colonnette. The whole 'box' style is emphasised by the stubby nature of the supports which are all of the same diameter, not a large central column surrounded by slender colonnettes.

It is probably too simplistic to talk of a Norfolk group.⁶⁰ Though there is a definite concentration of Romanesque fonts in the north-west corner of the county, there are certainly several different types, even within the generic grouping of the 'box' fonts. There are also several box fonts in the neighbouring county of Suffolk and in Essex but virtually nowhere else, so that it would appear that this is largely an East Anglian trait.⁶¹ None of the square East Anglian fonts has a square basin. At Fincham it is hemispherical, at Little Fransham, Scarning, Warham I and Burnham Deepdale they are cylindrical and the others are all cylindrical, rounded at the bottom. All have drain-holes. Within the overall box-like silhouette there are variations of detail. Some have engaged columns at each corner, running up the vertical edge, and different panels of decoration on the faces, usually a mixture of some form of arcading, geometrical patterns or looped motifs. The arcading is normally carried to the full width of the face, but with the other forms of ornament the main motif is typically framed between narrow vertical panels of cable, plaitwork, tendril or rosettes. At Little Fransham three faces have arcading, on one

⁵⁹ Typical measurements of the box fonts give a mean ratio (length to height) of 7:5 compared with, say, the Tournai School at 16:7 for the full height of the bowl and between 3:1 and 3.5:1 taking the height of the vertical face alone.

⁶⁰ See articles Rev. H. J. Dukinfield Astley, 'A Group of Norman Fonts in North-West Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology*, XVI, 1907, pp. 97–116, and additional notes on Breckles font, *ibid.* p. 329. Anon., 'Fonts baptismaux du Conté de Norfolk', *Congrès archéologique*, LXXV/2, 1908, pp. 648–51.

⁶¹ See Appx 1C. Pentland is now on a rubble base but should be included from the proportions. Boulge has a bowl of similar proportions but devoid of all decoration except for the leaves beneath the corners. The Yorkshire font at Crambe has a bowl of the box proportions but the underside of the bowl is carved to fit the 1 + 4 supports. Cornwall also has a few 1 + 4 box fonts, though with the proportions tending more towards the table.

side round-headed, on one simple Gothic and on the third three-centred; the fourth has a central device of pairs of leaves in a mandorla framed by vertical panels of rosettes. Great Bricett has arcading on all four sides, two round-headed and two three-centred. Breckles has four arches containing figures on one face, possibly the Evangelists, though there is no evidence to support this identification, not even nimbi. Militating against it is the detail overlooked by most writers, that the second figure from the right has his arms round the pillars on either side of him, suggesting that he represents Samson about to pull down the palace of the Philistines. The other sides have interlaced arches, a Tree of Life between two vertical panels with zig-zag and leaf ornament, and two masks with prominent ears and tongues, foliage trailing from their mouths. These are placed one above the other, with the lower mask inverted; the two outer ends of the foliage of each mask end respectively in leaves and in a fleur-de-lis in a ring, carved so that like is above like.

Warham All Saints church has two Romanesque font bowls, one complete and the other in fragmentary state.⁶² Warham 1 (in use) stands on modern supports. On the east-facing side a looped cross is framed by two vertical panels, one of tendril and one of a vertical stem with multiple pairs of wavy side shoots. The other sides all have non-tectonic round-headed arcades of six arches, two simple and one interlaced. Similar to Little Fransham and Warham I is the font at Bagthorpe; three sides are absolutely plain but the fourth has a circle interlaced with cable between engaged corner columns. Heckingham has a box font on five short supports, the bowl entirely plain. Hunstanton (St Mary) is also on five-supports but, from the illustration in Paley,⁶³ it appears to be in the form of the more common 'table' format, with a thicker central column and corner colonnettes, and the under-surface of the bowl shaped to meet the supports. Like the others it has recessed columns along the arris and one face is decorated with an oval of saw-tooth ornament. Preston St Mary [40] has tall interlaced arches on one side but the other three faces all have central panels of formal ornament based on the cross, framed by plaitwork, cable, eight-pointed stars and formal tendril. This arrangement is clearly analogous to Sculthorpe and Toftrees [41–2] but the execution is quite different, simpler and more controlled. Kettlebaston has no arcading and the crude designs on the four sides are all different and created from horizontal, diagonal and vertical bands, some plain, others with cable and saw-tooth ornament.

The two finest of the box fonts, which must be by the same hand, are Toftrees and Shernborne [43], about fifteen miles apart. These are similar to the others in general silhouette and in some of the decorative details but they are altogether more detailed and have a quite frenzied, almost pagan, air, especially Shernborne. Toftrees is closer to those previously discussed, as the bottom edge of the bowl is straight, in contrast with Shernborne where it is raised in the centre but, this difference apart, the two are otherwise very similar both in general appearance and in detail. The height of the supports is virtually the same on both fonts, about 40cm, including the integral cushion capitals and quasi-Attic bases. The fact that there are now five colonnettes at Toftrees but only four at Shernborne is not conclusive evidence of the original arrangement, as

⁶² It is not known where the two fonts were originally located; one may have belonged to Warham St Mary.

⁶³ Paley, the plates and notes are unpaginated.

there are no sockets on the underside of the bowls to accommodate the heads of the supports.⁶⁴ On both fonts there is a decorative band at the rim, different on each side at Shernborne, the same all round at Toftrees, where a tendril passes through the mouths of the rams' heads which top each corner. Shernborne also has a band of decoration at the bottom of the bowl, while Toftrees has a plain band. On the arris of the corners both have deeply inset engaged columns, Shernborne slender, with capital and base in proportion, Toftrees much thicker and with massive capitals and bases. Each face at Shernborne is framed vertically with different narrow bands of ornament and at the bottom centre a semicircle of plaitwork frames a monster's mask. The space above is filled with a different design on each side, vine tendril with grapes, an interlaced cross and, on two sides, a mix of leaf and interlace. The ornamental panels at Toftrees are flanked by plain bands and occupy the whole height of the bowl. All faces have different decoration based on interlacing with rings and loops.

Fincham [44] has three-arch arcades on all four sides, a single figure in each panel. On three sides are the Fall, the Nativity and the Baptism of Christ, and on the fourth three men who may be the Magi carrying gifts, though this explanation does not reveal why they all hold their right elbows in their left hands.⁶⁵ The Fall shows Adam hiding his genitals as he turns away from the Tree and Serpent in the centre arch; in the third Eve also covers herself with her left hand, while she holds an apple in her right and faces the Serpent. The Nativity is quite unusual; on the left Joseph stands *en face* and holds a staff in his left hand. In the centre the Virgin also stands looking out, her arms by her sides. On the right the Infant Christ lies in the crib beneath the heads of ox and ass, a star over all. On the fourth side Jesus is in a square tub font, the Holy Spirit flying vertically down upon His head; He is flanked by (left) a bishop with crosier and (right) a man looking towards Him and stretching out his right hand, surely the Baptist. None of the figures is nimbed.

At Burnham Deepdale [45] the bowl has a raised cuff at the top, a little over one third of the face height, and the remainder of the height on each face is taken up with four round-headed arches. On the cuff on one side two lions face outwards, their tails intertwined, sharing their heads with the single lions on the two adjacent sides. The remainder of the cuffs on those two faces and on the whole of the fourth is covered with leaf tendrils. On three of the faces the arcade contains figures illustrating the Labours of the Months, in six cases (marked *) with the names of the months, in Latin, still visible. The Labours shown are: January* – a man drinking from a horn; February* – a seated man warming his feet; March* – a man digging; April – a man pruning or hedging; May – a woman with a banner beside a tree; June* – a man weeding; July* – a man scything; August* –

⁶⁴ Of the two fonts Toftrees is slightly the larger, 88.5cm high overall, bowl 48.5cm high, 74cm square, the basin diameter 51cm and depth 24cm. Shernborne is 83cm high overall, bowl 50.5cm high, 62cm square; the basin is bigger, diameter 55cm and depth 33cm.

⁶⁵ They look like three men brandishing clubs but both the *Congrès archéologique de France*, LXXV/2, 1908, p. 648, and *Norfolk Archaeology*, XVI, 1907, p. 108, identify them as the Magi.

a man tying a sheaf; September – a man flailing; October – a man hand-milling or, more likely, pouring wine from a skin; November – a man killing a pig; December – four men feasting. On the remaining face the four arches contain different leaf motifs. In the north transept at Warham All Saints is a mutilated bowl. It has lost the upper rim and about half the bottom of the face, to say nothing of the vandalism of an earlier age which converted the bowl to an octagon by cutting across the corners. This bowl must have been closely related to Burnham Deepdale as, despite the massive damage, it is possible to see that it too had arcading all round, with the Labours on three sides and with formal motifs including leaves on the fourth, though this last had a variation in at least one arch as it is possible to make out what looks like the head of a peacock. Warham and Burnham Deepdale are no more than ten miles apart.⁶⁶

Associated with these two fonts, and slightly closer in style to Toftrees, is Sculthorpe [41], of a very much coarser limestone.⁶⁷ There are ornamental bands top and bottom, different on all sides, and the engaged columns at the corners are recessed beneath rams' heads. Plaitwork decorates the top rim and various motifs adorn the bottom edge. On three faces, two of them divided in two registers, there are various forms of interlacing, similar to Toftrees. One side has a chain of three complete and two half rings of twin strands, with two double-stranded horizontal bands laced through the centre; through the bottom half of the rings runs a cord in loose half-hitches. On another are two tiers of ornament, without formal separation but quite distinct. At the top are three separate motifs, a six-petalled flower in a disc, a looped square and a cross-in-ring; in the lower register is an undulating tendril. On the third side the two tiers are separated by a double-stranded band; above are interlaced half-circles wreathed with foliate ornament and below is a cross-shaped device made from two three-stranded, interlaced ovals in the centre of a complex arrangement of cords and leaves. The east face displays five interlaced arches with Joseph, the Virgin and Child, and the Magi. The arcading and figures on this side establish a link with Fincham and Burnham Deepdale, as the formal designs do with Breckles, Little Fransham etc. There is a link too with the now vandalised font of Ingoldisthorpe which was transformed many years ago into an octagon by cutting off the corners. What remains shows that, like Sculthorpe, one side had, between two bands of plaitwork, a chain of large rings interlaced with two horizontal bands and a vertical band through the centre. The other sides have, respectively, a round-arch arcade, beaded scrolls with leaves, and beaded scrolls in diamond outlines with fleur-de-lis.

Locking in Somerset [46] has a box font, now on later supports. Each corner is chamfered vertically and in the chamfer stands an armed man, his feet splayed out in an exaggerated balletic position. The arms are extended unnaturally along the two adjacent sides in shallow grooves which widen in the centre to accommodate the hands. Above and below the arms are irregular beaded bands which terminate at the corners of the

⁶⁶ Short-hand for the Labours of the Months are images of the Seasons and at Thorpe Salvin are four clear scenes to illustrate them: a man warming himself at a fire, a man sowing seed, a rider on a horse and a reaper.

⁶⁷ The bowl dimensions are 45cm high, 68cm square, the basin diameter 55cm and depth 34cm.

bowl in pointed ornaments like the loose end of a belt. In all the spaces formed by the undulations of these bands are leaf motifs of varying size.

@e The South-Western Groups

In Cornwall, a county rich in medieval fonts, there are two distinct families, generally referred to as the Bodmin [47] and Altarnun groups. The former type is ‘suspended’.

The bowl, shaped like an orchestral kettledrum, is ‘framed’ at the top so that square corner protrusions act as flanges beneath which the supporting columns are located; these flanges are not thin plates but embody the capitals for the supporting shafts.

Where the corner columns have bases these are Attic. The bowls appear to hang between the four shafts, an illusion which is not marred by the stubby central support.

The only parallel to this group is in the Rhineland and Eifel, where the supports are more numerous. On almost all the Cornish fonts the whole of the rounded surface is decorated with foliate ornament, dragons, birds and other beasts. The capitals are integral with the corner protrusions and are decorated with human or angels’ heads, the latter with the wings extending onto the face of the bowl. In keeping with its status as the name-bearer for the group, which numbers more than a dozen and a half (including variants),⁶⁸ Bodmin is the finest in all respects and its decoration is mainly foliate, with strange beasts flanking the Tree of Life motifs which appear on two sides.

St Austell font is slightly smaller than Bodmin and foliate ornament only occurs on one side, a palm-like branch with six pairs of fronds on each side of the beaded stem. Two sides have dragons above a creature like a monkey on all fours, flanked by birds like owls with shield-shaped heads. On the face with a dragon which bares its teeth and has a second head at the end of its tail, the flanking birds face inwards, while on the other both face left. Filling the remaining space at the bottom are fleurs-de-lis and various mythical beasts. The fourth side has another dragon, with the tail ending in a head, and two lion-headed birds; three quatrefoils fill the void around the dragon’s feet. The ‘plates’ at the top of the corner heads are round and a frieze of ribbed leaves curves over the rim. Luxulyan, where only the bowl and central support are original, the same frieze of ribbed leaves curves over the rim and the sides of the bowl are profusely decorated. On one side is a Tree of Life, on the others various combinations of dragons and other beasts. St Ewe has no decoration apart from the corner heads, which here have no ‘plates’; only the central support is original. Roche, one of the smaller examples, has Tree of Life motifs, knotted cords and a rectangular panel with a saltire. St Wenn is similar in size, the Attic bases of all five supports have corner spurs and the only

⁶⁸ See Appx 1D. St Cury and Grade are variants. E. H. Sedding, *Norman Architecture in Cornwall*, London and Truro, 1909, pp. 86–91, pl. XXXIV, pp. 159–60, pl. LXXII.

decoration consists of a blank shield on each face beneath a triple row of zig-zag. The corner heads have bobbed hair. St Cuby is also quite small and its distinguishing feature is the massive size of the central support. Gorran [48] is the smallest of the group and differs from the others in being square at the top rather than round between the salient heads. It also has a different approach to the decorative programme, with a distinct central motif on each side, three of them below a horizontal band of ornament between the corner heads. One face has a saltire with curved arms, above a five-leaf fleur-de-lis, another crossed bars of cable above a disc with twelve-leaf flower, and another displays a single spreading foliate motif. The fourth side has a cross made of four semicircles joined at their diameters above a lion *passant gardant* with a human head. In the centre of the cross is a feature which has led this font to be given a far later date than its fellows, a shield with three diagonal bars; armorial bearings are not found on fonts earlier than the fourteenth century. In fact close examination shows that this shield and its markings were almost certainly carefully inserted at a later date and all the other motifs are consistent with a date in the late twelfth century.

The Altarnun type [49] is single-support, massive in appearance and with very thick walls to the bowl⁶⁹ which is shaped like a cushion capital rounded at the corners, with well-defined demilunes on each side. The powerfully carved heads in the top corners are all male and very similar but not identical, even on the same bowl; Lezant has no corner heads. Despite the close match of the design, the quality of execution varies, with Altarnun and Launceston very much better carved than the others, and they are not all of the same stone. Jacobstow, for example, is granite, Launceston and Lawhitton are of polyphant and Laneast, of limestone, is very much the smallest of this group and far from square, measuring 65 x 75cm, with the basin slightly oval to fit the outer shape. There are only three corner heads and in the fourth space is a branch with seven leaves. The rim, plain on the rest of the group, differs in having a frieze of dots framed by triangles in rings. With the exception of Ashwater the demilunes all have discs containing flowers of six or eight petals; Callington and Warbstow have eight petals, the latter having a four-petalled flower on one side, while on one face at Callington is a plant enclosed in a semicircle, three leaves on each side of the stem. Ashwater has a different motif in each demilune, a lion *passant*, a leaf and saltire, a leaf motif in a ring and an extended fleur-de-lis. The lunettes are encircled by pairs of snakes with shared bodies and, at the top, heads with gaping mouths and long, protruding forked tongues. Altarnun, Callington and Warbstow have cable mouldings round the bottom of the bowl. The fonts are supported on low octagonal shafts on large plain octagonal bases, except for Launceston, where the shaft is fluted, Bratton Clovelly where the base is

⁶⁹ See Appx 1E. They are of variable quality and not all of the same stone. Lezant now lacks corner heads. A. C. Fryer, 'A Group of Transitional Norman Fonts in NE Cornwall', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, ns VII, 1901, pp. 215–18. Ashwater and Bratton Clovelly, both in western Devon, belong to this group. They vary in size and the average dimensions are: overall height 95cm; depth of basin 25cm; bowl height 51cm; basin diameter 53cm; top square 81cm. But often the sides differ in length by more than 3cm. See also Sedding (n. 15).

round and Lawhitton which has a shaft but no base; at Ashwater the bowl alone is original. The Altarnun base is modern and the shaft and bowl are of one piece. At Lifton [50], in Devon but close to the border with Cornwall, is a font with some of the characteristics of the Altarnun group but unlikely to have been by the same workshop. The bowl is more box-shaped and the attempted transformation of the cube to a capital has achieved no more than a chamfering of the bottom edge and the corners, so that the sides are rectangular and the plan an irregular octagon with alternate short and long sides. In consequence the heads at the top of the corners are smaller and there are no demilunes on the sides. Around the rim is a band of formal tendril, different on each side, below which are two different versions of interlaced arcading paired on opposing sides, two containing pellets and two variations of the fleur-de-lis. Like the Altarnun group it is a single-support font with octagonal shaft and base with chamfered top. Marystow⁷⁰ is very like Lifton in all respects but the bottom edge of the bowl is not chamfered and three of the faces have a fourth bay in the arcade. Stowford may be a late variant and though the outline is the same, the protrusions at the corners are not detailed as heads and the four sides of the bowl each have pairs of three-centred arches. The shaft is a two-stage cylinder on a later plinth.⁷¹

@e The Palmette Type

In Devon (with three in Cornwall) is a small group of round pedestal fonts all in red sandstone, with a main band of palmettes.⁷² They are similar (in decoration but not in form) to a Swedish group in Skåne, but differ in having simpler motifs, with fewer stems and a stiffer fan of leaves. On most of the English group the main design is framed between lines of ornament, usually cable at the rim and saw-tooth below. The cable is occasionally replaced by a cross-in-box or sunken star frieze, like Cornworthy [51], and Bishopsteignton has two interlaced, undulating cords. Only Buckland-in-the-Moor and Denbury, where the palmette frieze is untypically narrow and set high up on the bowl, have no framing bands of ornament. The bowls are near-hemispheres and have cable-mouldings at the bottom of the bowl. Ugborough is flatter and more dish-shaped but it has been the subject of major alteration (all bar one complete and two

⁷⁰ K. M. Clarke, pt VIII, LIII, 1921, pp. 228–9, says ‘Maristow’. This not an alternative spelling but a separate village which does not have a font of this type.

⁷¹ At Tickencote in Rutland is another isolated example of this type.

⁷² See Appx 1F. K. M. Clarke, XLVIII, 1916, pp. 312–18, pls. VI–XI. There is also a variant at Lanreath. E. H. Sedding, p. 455, says the Cornish examples are of a hard limestone analogous to Purbeck which differentiates them from their Devonshire equivalents. Pevsner adds St Mewan but only a base survives which may be a former bowl inverted, in which case it is not of this group.

half palmettes have been cut away) and the absence of cable at the rim suggests it may have been cut down following damage from the locking arrangements. There is a saw-tooth band below the palmettes.

The palmette frieze comes in three quite distinct forms. Type (a), the most common, has four distinct points at the top and a scroll on each side, all enclosed by twin stems which are joined at the top to the adjacent motifs by pointed leaves. Type (b) has the same outline and pointed leaves between motifs, but the enclosure is only a single stem and, instead of a single palmette, the stems curve inwards and terminate in two triple-finger leaves which curl outwards and down. Type (c) is very close to (b) but there are no pointed leaves between adjacent motifs and the separate triple leaves in the centre point upwards like the fingers of cupped hands placed back-to-back. There are also variants: at Plymstock there is neither saw-tooth nor cable, and there are fans of long leaves, points down, between the inverted palmettes. Coombe-in-Teignhead has the same outline and the same framing bands but the palmettes are replaced with roundels, each containing a different motif. Loddiswell is similar but the palmettes here are replaced by pairs of spiral rams' horns; West Anstey has the same decoration but differs in being a monolith. The support consists normally of a cylindrical shaft on a round base. The base at Paignton is very much later and at Buckfastleigh four colonnettes have been added in a most inappropriate fashion, obviously copied ignorantly from a multisupport font and set at an angle against the normal support for this type. Lanreath, a few miles across the county boundary into Cornwall, can only be included on the evidence of the palmette frieze. The bowl is shaped like many Gotland fonts, cylindrical above a sloping lower section with a short extension. The support, also round, consists of a tall, plain plinth above which the stone slopes inwards at about 60° to meet a prominent roll-moulding. The sloping section has large concentric triple triangles, bases on the top of the plinth, with small single versions based on the roll-moulding descending between the lower set. The moulding has saw-tooth at the top and plaitwork on the vertical surface. It is either a monolith or extremely well assembled and is a piece of excellent quality

@e The Aylesbury Group

In Buckinghamshire is a group of fonts which are probably the most elegant and beautifully executed to be found anywhere. Known generically as the 'Aylesbury' type, they are one of the very few types in the British Isles which are truly two-piece; bowl and base are distinct but there is no trace of shaft between the two. They do not follow a precise template but certain elements, notably a cuff above vertical fluting, are common throughout and they are all recognisably a family.⁷³ The characteristic

⁷³ See Appx 1G. At Buckland only the bowl survives and at Great Missenden and Wing only the base. There are three further examples in Bedfordshire and two in Northamptonshire. For a discussion on this group and their possible sources see

base is normally a square inverted cushion capital with demilunes on each side, single at Weston Turville and Little Missenden, and pairs at Aylesbury, Great Kimble and Wing; the lunettes contain foliate ornament. Monks Risborough may be a variant of the design or may have lost its original support. It stands now on a round base made up of a succession of roll-mouldings diminishing in diameter upwards and finishing in a frustum of a cone. Pitstone is like some of the Danish fonts of the Central Fyn type, having a round base/shaft with the fluting continued below a central cable-moulding.⁷⁴ The separate round plinth is later.

The bowl approaches a hemisphere, with a flattened bottom, though the upper part may be extended to a greater or lesser extent beyond the diameter of the hemisphere.

Aylesbury [52] is the most ambitious of them all; the side of the bowl briefly adopts a concave profile below the cuff so that there is a dip in the fluting. At the bottom of the bowl is a narrow roll-moulding and short, plain extension. Between this and the top of the base is a separate cylindrical section with a double, contra-rotating cable-moulding in the centre, the nearest thing to a shaft in any of this group. Irrespective of the degree to which the bowl may become cylindrical at the top, the decoration is in two parts, fluted below and a band of repeated ornament on a cuff at the top. This may be a continuous tendril, as at Weston Turville, large palmette leaves at Little Missenden, a double tendril with leaf motifs in the oval spaces created where the two stems cross, at Monks Risborough, and a highly developed foliate frieze at Great Kimble [fig. 1]. Pitstone is unusual in having a variety of motifs occupying parts of the top frieze, interlaced arcading, rosettes and connected leaves placed on their sides. Below the vertical fluting are one or more cable-mouldings. The surviving base at Wing, shows that the cable-mouldings are an integral part of the base, not of the bowl. Haddenham has a bowl which slopes, rather than curves, from the bottom of the cuff to meet the support and has beasts occupying the cuff instead of leaf ornament; the base is lost. Chearsley has a cable at the rim and repeated leaf motifs in the cuff above the fluting, but is supported on a hexagonal shaft on a round plinth which looks original. Eydon [53] has a bowl which flares, though the same pattern of cuff over fluting holds and, below the cable-moulding, the base with its demilunes is octagonal.

Some goblet-shaped fonts in Skåne have more than a passing likeness to this design but the proportions of the fluted section vis-à-vis the band of foliate ornament at the rim are quite different and in the Aylesbury group there is no undecorated space between the fluting and decorated band. Malcolm Thurlby mentioned 'one font at Tikjøb in . . . Denmark . . . undoubtedly belongs to [this] group' and Roosval⁷⁵ suggested that it had

Malcolm Thurlby, 'Fluted and Chalice-shaped: The Aylesbury Group of Fonts', *Country Life*, January 28th, 1982, pp. 228–9.

⁷⁴ Sønder Broby, Rørup, for example, though these are not monoliths, and Ørslev which is.

⁷⁵ J. Roosval, *The Burlington Magazine*, 1918, pp. 85–94. M. Thurlby, p. 229.

been imported from England. Though there are similarities sufficiently close to indicate that the Swedish mason responsible may have had sight of a pattern from the Aylesbury group, there are differences enough in the proportions and in the deployment of the decorative elements to make it clear that there is no question of its belonging to this type. Tikjøb is a Swedish import into Denmark and has a clear affinity with other goblet-shaped fonts in Skåne, whereas the connection to Buckinghamshire is slender.

@e Fonts with Beaded Rings and Leaf-Fans

In the same central southern area of England, with examples in Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, is another family of fonts, the common feature being more to do with their decoration than with the shape. The family likeness resides in beaded bands framing similar types of foliate motifs. On the bowl of the pedestal font at Maid's Moreton is a single row of inverted demilunes containing fans of leaves, with five-leaf fans in the spandrels. Weedon Lois is almost identical but Paulerspury is a tub font and the space between the bottom of the series of demilunes and the lower rim of the bowl is very much larger, allowing room for the five-leaf fans to grow out of a stem. At Green's Norton the demilunes are replaced by a beaded lattice; at top and bottom the triangular spaces left between the lattice and the edges of the bowl contain the familiar five-leaf fans but the diamond-shaped spaces in the centre of the bowl are filled with eight-pointed flowers. Dodford font [54] has something of the last example and of the first three. Here the beaded demilunes are in two tiers, their diameters formed by the top and bottom of the bowl and they contain the five-leaf fan motifs; the spaces between them, best described as 'curved diamonds', contain the eight-point flower. The half-circles of the upper and lower tiers are tied together by beaded straps where they butt against each other tangentially. Unfortunately the setting-out of the work before carving began was very poor or, more likely, it was not prepared at all but attempted free-hand. One pair of demilunes is precisely aligned but from there, as the design was taken round the bowl, the pattern slipped progressively further out of alignment, with the result that the curved diamonds became ever more distorted and the eight-point flowers were forced to adopt increasingly bizarre forms in order to fit within the frame.

In north Oxfordshire are two tub fonts with beaded rings. At Berwick Salome [55] there are no foliate ornaments and the rings overlap but do not touch tangentially, so that the beading is the only feature in common with those described before. Lewknor has patterns which change; at one part of the surface there are rosettes in three rows of rings which do touch tangentially and are tied with beaded straps to the rings on either side

and to those above and below, with small quatrefoils in the intervening spaces. Another area of the surface is like Berwick Salome, with empty overlapping rings which are neither tied together nor butt against each other.⁷⁶ The same type of ornament is found at Canterbury (St Martin), a rare example of a medieval tub font made of many separate pieces of stone; it is a slightly tapering cylinder with a salient rim and set on a deep round plinth with chamfered top. The rim has the appearance of not having been made for its present position, as the various beaded rings and straps are in many cases incomplete. The topmost of three main registers of ornament presents an interlaced arcade of round-headed, beaded arches supported on triple pilasters, some of which are also beaded. The centre register, which is broader than the others, displays beaded rings in two tiers, doubly linked; each ring is linked with those on either side and with those in the adjacent tier. On some of the individual stones the rings are complete, in others the diameters are greater and part of one tier is missing. The bottom row of decorated stones is the width of a single row of beaded rings but with small sections of linked rings showing either above or below. Not only is it clear that the stones were carved before assembly but it appears that they are not placed as originally intended and have been reassembled.⁷⁷

@e Fonts with Fluted Bowls

In northern Devon is a small group of eight pedestal fonts with fluted bowls. They are closer to the ‘mussel’ bowls of Gotland than to the Aylesbury group, but lack the curved shaft and base so characteristic of the Gotland fonts. Within the group six, like Abbotsham [56], have fluting all over the bowl while on the others it is only on the lower, curved section. It is common for there to be a cable at the rim and a roll-moulding at the bottom of the bowl, usually carved in a plait. At Twitchen the fluting is half and half with herringbone ornament above and at East Putford the proportion is two thirds and one third with interlaced arcading.⁷⁸ In the same area Harberton and Bideford also have fluting on part of the bowl but these are of a quite different shape, a cylinder with a sloping lower section which is the fluted part. A similar subordinate form of fluting is also found on two tub fonts in the same county, at Exeter (St Mary Steps) and Farringdon. In the southern part of the county are three related variants of

⁷⁶ Another example of this type of decoration is to be found at East Dean in Sussex.

⁷⁷ They may originally have formed something other than a font – but what then? It would be interesting to take a rubbing of each separate piece of stone, lay them all out and seek to fit them together in a way that allowed the pattern a unity.

⁷⁸ Full fluting: Abbotsham, Beaford, Bradford (oval), Clayhanger, Monkleigh and Parkham. Partial fluting: East Putford and Twitchen. (A few miles away in the neighbouring county of Somerset, Withypool is an almost precise match of Twitchen.)

the main group in the north. The bowl is of the same shape and proportions but the base is square instead of round, the fluting is in much lower relief and is combined with a series of incised mushroom shapes. At Fordington St George the slightly *bombé* bowl has a row of ornament round the lower part which is the same shape as the fluting on the fonts like Twitchen. Because fluting is, by definition, concave it would probably be more correct to describe the Fordington font as gadrooned.

@e Fonts with Scalloped Bowls

Scalloped bowls on single-support pedestal fonts seem to be common in the West of England, with small groups in Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall as well as in southern Wales, and isolated examples in other counties, such as Bradfield Combust in Suffolk and Westerhope in Gloucestershire, the latter unusual in possessing sculpted ornament also.⁷⁹ The main variations seem to be in the number of scallops on each side and the angle at which they are set. Some are no more than a line of semicircles along the lower edge of an otherwise flat-bottomed bowl and in other cases they run down at an angle on the sloping underpart of the bowl so that this is fluted while the vertical face is scalloped at the bottom. In Wiltshire the bowls are round, as at Longbridge Deverill [57], while those in other counties are mainly square with flat bottoms, and the scalloping is confined to the edge. Gloucestershire has a round scalloped bowl at Quinton but most are square, as are the majority in Devon and South Wales. There is a unique example of a scalloped font in Berkshire at West Shefford. The foliate decoration is in four registers, separated by slender horizontal lines. The upper pair are filled with leaves which shoot from the line between them thus transformed from a simple divider into a plant stem. In the third layer from the top is a form of undulating tendril but the lowest register is formed of scallops framed in horseshoes strapped together and each filled with an inverted fleur-de-lis.

In Wiltshire is a cluster of some eight round pedestal fonts of which the majority have the scallops beneath the bottom edge of the bowl. The lower part of the bowl slopes and has been carved so that the final effect is of modelling like straight trumpets, with the bell visible at the bottom edge of the vertical face. In most examples these are only half-circles but at Stockton they are full circles and ornamented, while at Cholderton and Yatesbury they have been developed into foliate motifs; the others are almost entirely without ornament. At Bratton and Winterbourne Monkton [58] the scallops have been

⁷⁹ See Appx 1H and see section on Welsh fonts.

moved up onto the face of the bowl which has a complex pattern of decoration, including chevron, cable and leaf motifs. They are carved like a cornucopia, growing up out of the bottom of the bowl, or from one of the lower bands of ornament, and displaying about half their circumference at the top. Tytherton Lucas, a tub font, has the same arrangement. Two fonts in Gloucestershire, at Eastington and St Briavels, are also scalloped, but on the underside of the prominent flat-topped girdle encircling the waist, not on the bowl.

The scalloped bowls of Devon have been described as subdivided cushion capitals.⁸⁰ However, it is probably better to see them as plain table fonts with scalloped bottom edges to the bowl, especially as only Berry Narbor has sloping cones, and a single cone at the corner terminates in a scallop on each face, producing the curving chamfer at the corner characteristic of the cushion capital. The norm is three scallops on each face, as at Halberton [59], with single examples having four, five and six.⁸¹ All are plain except for Stoke Nectan which is richly decorated over much of the bowl. The bosses of the scallops on two sides have lyre or ram's horn ornament, while those on the others are plain. Around the rim on the same two sides runs a band of small irregular arches. The main decoration consists of interlaced, beaded arcading, left overlapping right, with the rare feature that it is continued round the corners of the bowl. Below the bowl is a prominent cable-moulding and the shaft is decorated with inverted interlaced arches. The base has a depressed demilune on each side and the corner spurs are grotesque masks glaring up at the bearded faces concealed on the bottom of the bosses of the corner scallops. Merton also has masks on the tops of the corners of the base.

@e The Capital Type

Capital fonts are reasonably common in all parts of the country, especially in the south.⁸² These fonts are usually in the form of a cushion capital and may be plain or with decorated demilunes. The ornament may consist of no more than outlining of the lunette in cable or some other continuous motif, or there may be some device in each of the curved panels, usually (as with the Agnus Dei at Thames Ditton) in a disc. The bowl at Alverdiscott is unusual in having large fleurs-de-lis carved upon the rounded corners, where sometimes, too, there may be salient heads, like the Altarnun group. Thames Ditton [60] has a true cushion capital shape, with the added refinement of the

⁸⁰ K. M. Clarke, LII, 1920, pp. 327–34.

⁸¹ Three scallops: Berry Narbor, Christow, Halberton, Merton, Molland, Wear Gifford and West Down. Four at Berrington, five at Netherexe and six at Stoke Nectan (now in Hartland church).

⁸² See Appx 1J. This list is by no means exhaustive.

rounded portion beneath the corners being grooved down the line of the corner.⁸³ The lunette on each side is outlined with cable which turns outwards horizontally below the top corners to meet the cables from the adjacent sides, giving the top the sense of a square table; beneath the corners are human masks. In the centre of each lunette is a different motif, a long-staff cross *paty*, the Agnus Dei, a six-pointed star and an inverted deer; the last three all framed in discs. Similar, but without angle tucks, are Inwardleigh and High Bickington and there are plain cushion capital fonts at North Tidworth and Dyrham. There are no fewer than ten in northern Devon, half plain and half decorated. They all stand on tall, slender supports and are of modest size, none of them with a square greater than 60cm.

Although the cushion capital is the most common model, there are versions, for example at Stanstead, where the junction between round shaft and square top is achieved through no more than chamfering of the corners; where the chamfers have been made to flare, a protrusion almost like an Ionic volute is produced at the corner.⁸⁴ At Market Overton [61] the same effect is achieved by treating the top of the bowl as an enlarged square cuff, with the lower part rounded off beneath in similar fashion to the Little Belt fonts on Fyn in Denmark.⁸⁵ Toller Porcorum has a small Tudor polygonal bowl on top of the Romanesque block which is square at the top. At the bottom is a round base with chamfered upper stage from which grows a cylindrical shaft. Spaced equally on the round section are four flat ribs which divide at mid-height and branch into what look like volutes but are not salient; they are merely drawn on the square corners of the top. The one exception is the ram's head which takes the place of the volute on one of the corners. In the central triangular spaces between the rim and the branching of the flat ribs are different designs, two based on the triangle, one defaced and one looking like a three-branch candlestick.⁸⁶ At Ingham the transition from round shaft to square top is achieved simply by creating a wide chamfer at each corner, a little less than half way up the block. These curves almost meet below the centre of each side at a point level with the bottom of the bowl. It is crude but effective, quite unlike any capital seen in its

⁸³ I am grateful to Dr Richard Plant, Middlesex fieldworker for the British Academy's project 'A Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland', for the term 'angle tuck' to describe this feature.

⁸⁴ Other examples of this form are very similar despite being widely spread, e.g. Bosbury, Compton and South Kilworth, Welsh borders, Surrey and the Midlands respectively.

⁸⁵ For example, Sandager and Udby.

⁸⁶ Rev. G. B. Lewis, 'Amalgamated Fonts at Toller Porcorum, Dorset', *Proceedings of the Dorset Association*, pp. 329–31.

normal architectural setting. Almost invariably English fonts of this type were made as fonts in the form of capitals but at Buttington is a beautiful piece with the basin hollowed out of the top of a Transitional capital from the former abbey of Strata Marcella, founded in 1170.⁸⁷ The decoration consists of free-flowing leaves of a form entirely different from the normal formalised foliage of the early Middle Ages.

@e Fonts with Corner Heads

While no English fonts have the strongly salient heads on circular bowls of the Mosan School, almost in the round, there are many examples of heads at the corners of four-sided bowls. On the Altarnun and Lifton types which have been considered separately in detail, the heads are in medium relief but occupy prominent positions and stand out because they face no competition from other figure sculpture. There are others, like West Haddon [22], where the sides of the bowl display vigorous figure sculpture and the heads are thus less obvious. At Luppitt [62] two of the corner heads are bearded men, one is clean-shaven and the fourth, with a very prominent nose, seems more likely intended as a monster, especially as stems emerge from its broad mouth. One side is quite worn but appears to show a number of animals, perhaps a hunt with dogs, and in the centre of the next are the familiar *milites pugnantes*, between them a severed head. They are dressed in close-fitting garments with short kilts, the bodies and sleeves carved so that they appear quilted but probably intended to represent chain-mail. The shoes are shown wider at the top than the legs above them, emphasising in a rare manner that the feet are indeed shod. The men hold round shields aloft in their left hands, guarding their heads, and are armed with clubs or perhaps axes; certainly the weapons have heads. An unusual detail is the way one man holds his weapon in his right hand across his body, as if about to deliver a back-hand blow. At the left is a huge monster's mask, its mouth engulfing the top of a human head, and at the far right are hind-quarters and tail, apparently of a lion, disappearing round the corner, where they are seen in fact to belong to a centaur holding a spear in both hands as it attacks an astonishing monster, part lion, part dragon. It is a quadruped, *regardant*, and its tail passes between its legs and across the flank, developing into a large plume, like a typical Romanesque lion, and the neck and shoulders are carved to give the appearance of a mane. However, the tail-plume ends in a head, the common feature of a dragon, muzzle to muzzle with the creature's

⁸⁷ Country Life, 9 July, 1953, p. 132.

proper head. The corner with the monster's head lies between this side and the next. On one side the stems from its mouth extend into large tassels which become confused with a mythical beast and on the other transmute into a Tree of Life which occupies the whole of that face of the bowl.

Curdworth [63] is square but with a circular cable-moulding extension at the bottom of the bowl. The sides of the bowl flare slightly but this is disguised by the heavy figure carving on all four sides and the large corner figures along the line of the arris. The top edge has been lowered at some time by about 10–12cm, probably because of the damage commonly caused by the locking arrangements. The corner figures appear to represent two clerics and a man seated, right hand on knee and the left raised and holding something which can no longer be made out due to the loss at the top; the fourth figure is altogether lost. The seated man appears to have another figure on his back but the damage makes it impossible to be certain, though there seems to be a grinning mouth with broken teeth looking over his left shoulder. On one side is a very woolly Agnus Dei, the Lamb's hooves standing on a monster's head. The next has a large bird, its head close to the head of one of the corner figures.⁸⁸ The south and west faces each display two figures which are all similar in pose, blessing with their right hands while their left hands hold books against their bodies, but their garments are differently drawn. All the figures have overlarge heads. A strange detail found on both of the sides with animals, repeated three times below the bird and twice below the Agnus Dei, is shaped like a rough coronet with beading around the edge from which parallel lines run down to meet the bottom rim, the whole looking something like a crude comb.

@e Small Clusters and Unique Fonts

In the south-west are a few pedestal fonts of no great distinction which share a feature reminiscent of the most common form of Danish base. They have plain round bowls and cylindrical shafts and at Tetcott and Clawton on each side of a square base are demilunes, some of which contain foliate motifs; at the corners grotesque heads look outwards. Treneglos is the same but without ornament on the lunettes and Newton St Petrock lacks the corner masks as well. This type of base is also found on the Stoke St Nectan font.

Fonts shaped like the earliest of the Bentheim group, where the whole is monolithic and cylindrical, but the bowl is of greater diameter than the lower part, are rare in Britain. At Mevagissey and, to a lesser extent Shawbury, strong mouldings encircle the lower part, as at Emsbüren [156], but Chickerell and Fordington St George are more like Ochtrup [157], where the lower part is plain. Berrington has a very crude font, monolithic, but

⁸⁸ F. T. S. Houghton, 'Warwickshire Fonts', pt I, *Transactions of the Birmingham and Midland Institute*, XLIII, 1917, pp. 41–61, says a winged dragon, but the clear tail feathers make this unlikely. Houghton seems never to have published Part II.

visually bipartite in the same manner as the early Bentheim model. It has a thick cable at the rim and a massive plain moulding at the bottom of the bowl, below which the lower part tapers slightly to meet the circular base which is made of several separate stones. More or less equally spaced around the bowl are seven crude heads, wide at the brow and with pointed chins. The only visible features are the eyes, nose and mouth, in most cases turned down at the corners. Interspersed with some of the heads are a lion *passant*, a bird, shaped unmistakably like a farmyard hen, and a lighted candle in an elaborate holder.⁸⁹

The round bowl at Conway is a rare form which can best be described as ‘clasped’ by the powerful ribs which frame it at top and bottom with four others equally spaced around the bowl. The appearance is of a bowl in a cage. A similar piece is to be found at Little Torrington, but without the rib at the rim. Both are otherwise plain.⁹⁰

There are relatively few English fonts with disciplined foliate ornament encircling a round bowl to the exclusion of other forms of decoration. Little Snoring stands on a clustered-column support, the four engaged shafts having capitals and bases also clustered, all on a high, round plinth. The font is in two parts; the bowl and extension which includes the capitals, and the support consisting of base and shafts combined. The decoration of the cylindrical bowl is a tightly looped tendril. Also on a clustered column is North Newbald [64], but here the decoration consists of a chain of a single, repeated leaf motif laid sideways. East Tuddenham is made of a fine-grained limestone and in such excellent condition that it may well have been recut. Beneath a cable-moulding at the rim and above multiple plain mouldings at the bottom, the bowl is carved with a continuous finely drawn line of slender vine tendril with frequent side-shoots terminating in small leaves. The support is modern.

In the church at Bisley is a very distinctive pedestal font in three pieces, all round. The bowl flares slightly to the top and has a flat bottom and short extension in the form of a cable-moulding. The base is vertical at the bottom, without decoration and then slopes gently up to meet a prominent cable-moulding around the socket in which the shaft is located; the sloping section is decorated with a motif which resembles hand-shears in a frieze of arches. At the top of the bowl is a powerful moulding of plaitwork and the bottom edge is encircled with a slender cable-moulding. The main height of the face is divided into unequal panels by vertical dividers which are a mixture of cables and double-stranded bands.⁹¹ In the panels are looped cross and interlaced beaded oval motifs, rosettes within rings and various foliate devices based on the fleur-de-lis. At the top of the shaft is a broad band of multistrand basketwork and at the bottom a slender cable-moulding. Between these formal bands the shaft is decorated with two narrative scenes, in itself most unusual for a font, and the subjects themselves are unique in baptismal art. One depicts three nimbed figures pulling in a net full of fish and the other

⁸⁹ The candle is a rare motif on fonts; I only know of one other, in north-east Germany, at Gielow.

⁹⁰ The only other example I know is in Sweden at Ör where the panels between the vertical ribs are carved with figures.

⁹¹ This division into square panels with strips of cable is also found at Bideford (St Mary).

portrays Christ as the Good Shepherd, nimbed, holding a lamb in the bend of the left arm and a crook in His right hand; a group of sheep stands between Him and a tree. Both subjects are well-chosen for the baptismal context and it is perhaps surprising that they have not, especially the fishing scene, been used on other baptismal fonts.⁹² The symbolism of the fish is continued by the rare idea of carving two large fish in the bottom of the excavated basin.⁹³

The octagonal font at Belton [65] has a number of rare scenes in arches. Two bells are suspended below a horizontal bar from which ropes hang either side of a man *en face* who pulls one with each hand. This font has other uncommon motifs beside the bell-ringer. Moving right, is a cowed monk wearing a long cloak thrown back to reveal his hands raised in front of his chest *orans*. His head is turned to his left facing a rectangle with a groove running across the centre, perhaps representing an open book. The next figure is *en face*, again *orans*, and arrayed in episcopal vestments, with a clearly depicted high collar. He is followed by another figure *en face*, a round cap on his head and ‘tubular’ sleeves to the tunic with a high neck-line in which there is a short vertical split. A lion *rampant* is succeeded by a soldier with square head slaying a smaller figure with a sword, perhaps a representation of the Massacre of the Innocents. This is followed by a crouching man leaning on a stick, while perched on his shoulders is an enormous bird, and in the final arch is a formalised Tree of Life. Most of the figures are drawn in a very schematic manner.

Among the many English fonts with obscure iconography, that at Stone [66] holds the prime position. Many of the more difficult fonts to read are of rough construction and decoration but Stone is a work of high quality, well planned and of excellent workmanship, including much beaded decoration. Immediately below the rim is a wide band of loose beaded plaitwork and the vertical face below displays a series of five major motifs of beaded knotwork. Two of these are slightly different versions of the same pairs of looped squares, one superimposed diagonally upon the other and the centre filled with beaded crosses and small intricate knobs, each carved with a face. There is also a roughly rectangular panel of loose interlace, and two rings, each looped through a cross made of four semicircles; one of the rings goes beyond the normal form of this motif and instead of the semicircles meeting in a point, they are joined in a loose knot. The interstices on both of these motifs are filled with human and animal masks.

⁹² This must be related to Matthew 4: 19: ‘I will make you fishers of men’. A. C. Fryer’s ‘Gloucestershire Fonts’ was published in six parts between 1908 and 1914. He first described this font in *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, XXXIII, 1910, pp. 293–4 and only in a later article, in XXXVI, 1914, p. 117, did he state that ‘The archaic-looking sculpture on the pedestal . . . is modern work’. He gave no reasons or sources for the statement and I have not been able to examine the font myself to verify his opinion.

⁹³ I would have said ‘unique’ except that E. Tyrrell-Green, p. 68, fig. 39, tells of four fish carved at the bottom of the basin at Ramsbury (Wiltshire); he does not refer to a date for this font.

The remaining area of the bowl is filled with a complex scene of full-length human figures, fish and mythical beasts. In the centre stands a man with prominent rib-cage, arms stretched out on either side to hold the upper jaws of a wolf with clawed feet, tongue lolling out of its mouth, on the left, and a dragon *regardant* on the right, unusual for the period in having four legs. Its scales are clearly delineated and the tail ends in a large curl. Both beasts have their tails to the bottom of the bowl, heads to the top and legs to the right. This leaves a space between the main figure and the dragon which is filled by a smaller human figure similar to the first but with the right arm by the side and the left hand raised to thrust a short spear into the neck of the dragon. To the left of the wolf's back is a large fish and to the right of the dragon's head a bird pecks at its neck, while other spaces are filled with smaller fish and serpents. This font is a prime example of the *horror vacui* of the period, almost every space around and between the motifs being filled with human masks, animals and fish. Below a short plain extension the shaft is encircled by two beaded bands, one undulating like a regular vine tendril, the second laced through it and diverging into multiple loops in each major curve of the main band. Sadly, the font at Walton, Liverpool, has been greatly abused over the centuries; for at least fifty years it was in use as a mounting-block outside an inn opposite the church and was then retrieved for the churchyard where it stood for nearly a century more.⁹⁴ At the time of the building of the present church it was placed on stubby tectonic columns with spirally fluted shafts and leaf ornament on both bases and capitals. The sandstone of which the bowl is made had already suffered considerable wear through exposure to the weather but, as can be seen in a photograph of around 1908,⁹⁵ it must still have been possible to identify many of the scenes carved on the vertical surface. The church was bombed in 1942, leaving the font broken and buried in rubble. The supports were destroyed and considerable damage was caused to the surface of the bowl, to the extent that it is now very difficult to discern the iconographic programme. The damage is particularly regrettable because of the unusual nature of some of the details and care is needed to ensure that too much credence is not placed upon restoration work. At the bottom of the bowl is a very worn concave section without ornament and around the rim is a variety of motifs, predominantly bezants separated by narrow billets. The main part of the face is divided into panels of unequal width, some containing foliate scrolls, like Coleshill but much less finely carved, and others with historiation. Alternate panels are raised so that, in plan, the bowl is like a cog-wheel with square teeth. It is possible to identify the Fall, crammed into one panel, and the Annunciation, with the Virgin taller than the angel, occupying two but there are three panels together which are hard to interpret. Left to right, the first contains an angel looking to the right, one hand raised in the gesture of speech; then comes a nimbed figure seated, side-saddle, on a donkey and the third panel contains another nimbed figure, walking and holding a nimbed infant. The last two have been interpreted as the Flight into Egypt, with the unusual feature of Joseph carrying the Infant Jesus as he walks ahead of the ass, but there are certain details which force this to be questioned. Behind the head of the rider flies a nimbed bird,

⁹⁴ J. W. Ellis, 'The Medieval Fonts of the Hundreds of West Derby and Wirral',

Proceedings of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historical Society, LIII, 1917, pp. 59–80

(read in December 1901).

⁹⁵ See F. Bond, p. 164.

unquestionably the Holy Spirit, and above the donkey's ears is a cross; the figure holding the infant is *en face* and stands beneath an arch between two columns. Could the whole scene represent the Angel of the Annunciation pointing the Virgin on her way to Bethlehem, accompanied by the Holy Ghost, with the sequence completed by the common western image of the Virgin and Child enthroned representing the Nativity? The cross above the ears of the ass could be a pointer to Christ's eventual sacrifice towards which He was already journeying, though yet unborn. This is highly speculative but it is impossible to assume the validity of the Flight interpretation without explaining the presence of both cross and nimbed bird and the inclusion of a canopy of honour above the adult figure holding the nimbed infant.

It is unusual for arcading to be combined with other decoration unless this consists of a foliate band above or figures standing within the arches, but there are a few cases where the normal rule is broken. Little Hinton has a round bowl of unusual height, perhaps indicating that it is a converted tub font. Two broad bands of decoration are separated by a narrow frieze of 'saltire-in-box'. Immediately below the rim is a tall round-headed arcade supported on tectonic columns, some single and others double, the latter with interlaced arches. The main element in the lower decorative band consists of a continuous maze of cord based on repeated figure-of-eight motifs interlaced with those on either side. At the left it ends abruptly in a '3' and towards the right-hand end it becomes looser and narrower, loses the shape of the '8' and is turned back on itself before being closed off from the remaining decoration by an almost vertical bar. With its four feet on this bar an unidentifiable animal looks back over its shoulder and from the open mouth emerges a short flat band of tendril with the customary side-shoots. Standing on the bottom framing band below the head of this animal is a bird, facing right. There are only three complete undulations of the tendril and the remaining space is occupied by a looped serpent, two birds standing on its coils and its head framed by a pair of fish. The bottom band is double herring-bone above a band of rings which overlap through the centre of those on either side.

The whole surface at Harpole is covered with ornament, a frieze of tendril below the plain band at the rim, and two major foliate arrangements on opposite sides of the bowl. The space between them is covered with imbrication. One of the two main motifs consists of a beaded tree-trunk from which palmate leaves branch out at two levels. The other is far more chaotic and naturalistic and to the right is a creature which may be the Agnus Dei, though it is difficult to be certain. The animal is *regardant* and the tail curves up and forward above the back. A vertical bar which crosses the animal's flank originates at the bottom from a horizontal bar which may be the usual crooked leg of the Lamb; the top of the staff may be a cross or a floret. Thus there is enough evidence for the identification of the Lamb to be correct, except that there appears to be a second head with open mouth at the end of the creature's tail.

The South Wooton bowl was designed for the nine columns on which it now stands. Like the Tournai group, the underside is shaped as capitals for the colonnettes and the supports have Attic bases integral with the top of the square plinth on which the whole font stands. At each corner is a massive monster's head, the mouth stretched open so that the lower lip forms the abacus of the corner capital. In the centre of each side triple scallops radiate up from the abacus above the centre colonnette and over all, filling the centre of the bowl, is a motif like a rectangular buckle with a horseshoe extension on the bottom edge.

Holdgate is crude and roughly executed. The base consists of two integral parts, a square plinth with animal heads on top of the corners and a raised circular platform equal in diameter to the length of the straight sides; it touches the centre point of each side of the plinth and butts up against the backs of the corner heads. In the centre is a flattened roll-moulding into which fits a short shaft, slightly barrel-shaped and decorated with a thick chevron carved in high relief. The rim of the bowl is ornamented with a thick cable, below which the sides are vertical until they are rounded down to meet the flat moulding at the bottom. The bottom of the bowl has continuous tendril and the main part of the face is decorated with animal and foliate motifs interspersed with formal ornaments, including the ring and saltire found at Inistiogue in Ireland.

Stafford (St Mary) is unusual for the British Isles in having a quatrefoil bowl and a matching basin. Around the top is an incomplete inscription in Latin⁹⁶ above a band of foliate ornament and in the groove between each pair of lobes is a human figure.⁹⁷ One stands on the back of a crouching lion, his hand raised in blessing, another is a woman in a wimple, naked above the waist, the third is a man with arms raised, while curled around his legs is a snake with head raised to strike. The last is damaged below the waist but above depicts a wild man with arms raised. The support is built up in two stages, both including animals. Below the quatrefoil bowl is a deep concavity before the integral support swells out to a shelf and is then cut away to a round central shaft with two pairs of engaged confronted lions, their heads flanking a chamfer which produces an octagonal plan at the bottom. Their manes are beautifully detailed and the heads rest on the forepaws. Along the edge of the shelf is the often-quoted Latin inscription: DISCRETUS NON ES SI NON FUGIS. ECCE LEONES.⁹⁸ The separate base is square and figures lie along the sides, looking out from each corner, framed by the heads of the lions above. They include a monkey, a ram, and two men. This may be a later addition, though it is undoubtedly medieval. A font with lions set on the base in a similar manner to Stafford lies in the neighbouring county of Shropshire at Shobdon. The bowl is severely damaged and what survives gives little idea of the original state, though it looks as though there was fluting on the curved underside.

At Crick [67] is a strangely proportioned cylindrical bowl, unusually broad in diameter for its height; the flat underside rests directly on supporters almost like a round version of a box font. Three Atalants are seated on small mounds and hold up the bowl with their hands above their heads. Encircling the rim is a band of chevron and around the

⁹⁶ ‘Tu de Jerusalem ror . . . alem Me faciens talem tam pulchrum tam specialem’ which S. A. Jeavons, in ‘The Fonts of Staffordshire’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the Birmingham Archaeological Society*, LXVII, 1947–8, p. 15, says may be construed as either ‘Thou bringest the water of life from Jerusalem, endowing me with beauty and grace’ or ‘Thou bearest from Jerusalem the divine fount endowing me with beauty and grace’.

⁹⁷ In north Sjælland, Denmark, is a group of quatrefoil tub fonts, some of which have figures placed in this manner: Esbønderup and Græsted [233] for example.

⁹⁸ ‘You are unwise if you do not flee; see the lions!’

bottom of the bowl are twin cable-mouldings. The vertical surface between has a form of decoration unknown elsewhere. It is covered with three rows of rings containing rounded bosses, like the studded protective wrist-band worn by a gladiator. A font of very similar shape and proportions, but different decoration, is at Swinford, no more than five miles distant. The rim is worn, so that it is not possible to make out the details of the band of decoration, and the mouldings at the bottom are much wider, taking up nearly half the height of the face below an arcade of arches without bases and with extended abaci as capitals; the shafts splay to the bottom. In place of the Atalants the bowl is supported by three stubby columns with crude capitals and bases with a massive cable-moulding in place of the shaft, the three parts of equal height. Manton has a bowl of more orthodox proportions but again flat underneath and supported on stubby columns, here five in number and one in the centre.

Youlgreave has a font ‘with appendage’ [68].⁹⁹ It consists of a slightly barrel-shaped bowl with rounded bottom supported on a central shaft and four colonnettes, all later but a reconstruction of the original arrangement. At the top is a double roll-moulding and the bowl is plain apart from three relief motifs based on the fleur-de-lis, and a winged dragon, all evenly spaced. At one point on the circumference, about 10cm below the line of the rim, is a small receptacle carved out of the same block as the bowl. It has similar mouldings at the rim and seems to be supported below by the dragon which lies on its back. The dragon’s open jaws are beneath the small bowl and its long looped tail reaches as far as the leaf motif to the left. The purpose of this addition has been much debated but is now generally believed to be to receive the water which runs off the head of the catechumen having, in theory at least, been contaminated by the sin which is washed away in the baptismal rite; it should therefore not be permitted to fall back into the main bowl with the consecrated water. A similar, but slightly smaller, supplementary bowl extends from the rim of the font at Odiham, almost certainly of the thirteenth century. There are numerous fonts in which the metal liner is in two separate sections for the same reason, but these inserts are all much later than the early Middle Ages and an Irish font, at Carrick-on-Bannow, has its bowl divided by a modern marble liner. In Sweden, however, there are at least two fonts with supplementary bowls, with separate drainage, which are coeval with the fonts themselves. These are at Björlanda [343] and Säfve, and there is a similar case in Germany at Dattenfeld. The difference, however, between these examples and the subsidiary bowl at Youlgreave is that it alone has no drainage hole. Like Odiham it has the appendage on the bowl itself, whereas the others all have it on the base.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ See article by E. Swann, ‘Fonts of Unusual Shape with Appendages’, *Oxford Architectural and History Society*, V, 1886–93, pp. 68–82 and G. le Blanc Smith, ‘Derbyshire Fonts: The Late Norman Font at Youlgreave’, *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, XXVI, 1904, pp. 141–52. Wirksworth has a bowl of similar shape and identical supports but there is neither ‘appendage’ nor decoration.

¹⁰⁰ E. Tyrrell-Green, *Baptismal Fonts Classified and Illustrated*, London, 1928, p. 49, suggests the purpose of this appendage is for the chrism or for the baptismal spoon.

@c Fonts of Reused Material

There are several fonts which are constructed of reused material but the two best known are at Dolton [69] and Melbury Bubb. Both began their existence as the shafts of churchyard crosses and thus taper quite strongly, so they were inverted at the time of their conversion to fonts in order that the wider part should be at the top. The clue lies in the inversion of the images sculpted on them. The two fonts are quite different and it is only their common origins which link them. Dolton is square and in two quite distinct parts. The base is almost a cube and what is now the bowl flares strongly to the top. The decoration on all four sides of each half is based on tight arrangements of knotwork framed in plain narrow bands. The base has these formal patterns alone, with two designs paired on opposite faces. One design is formed of three rows of five motifs based upon the figure of eight, each joined to those above and below, and framed right and left between plain vertical bands at the corners. The other two opposing faces have a broad centre panel of looser knotwork between two narrow bands of the same design, but on a smaller scale, from which it is separated by plain vertical bands. One side of the bowl is similar to the base, all formal knotwork though of a different design, embodying large and small rings linked by straight diagonal lines, but the other three sides include human and animal motifs. One has a central motif akin to the Altarnun group, where the demilunes of the cushion capitals are outlined by snakes with two heads. On those fonts the snakes' heads face each other at the top but here they are placed on the bodies so that they would face away from each other if they were not also crossed at the neck. The bodies of the snakes are decorated and the tongues are not visible. The third side has a pair of winged dragons, facing outwards and with crossed tails. In the centre of the last side is a human mask with two slender dragons growing out of the nostrils and curving up (when not inverted) to face outwards; the tongues are extended to fill the empty spaces. On all the sides the background is filled with interlacing and similar ribbonwork.

More care was taken over the conversion of the section of round shaft used at Melbury Bubb, for it has been placed on a round plinth with sloping top, carefully shaped to fit the bottom of the bowl. The lead lining has been given a deckled edge and folded over to cover part of the decoration below the rim but it looks as though this may have been the lower part of the shaft in its original state, with a band of equally spaced raised rectangles below a concave strip and a plain narrow band. Above this are various beasts, lions, a stag, a dragon and smaller quadrupeds, their tails elongated into writhing bands

which fill every available space.¹⁰¹ Above the heads of the larger lions (now at the bottom of the bowl) is a slender cable-moulding, so it is clear that those responsible for the conversion cut out a complete section of the shaft. Another, but less well known, round font made of reused material is in Derbyshire at Wilne. Like the others, it is inverted, as can be seen from the six arches which contain dragons or other beasts and a single Tree of Life. Across the heads of the arches a plain band encircles the bowl and the space below (now) is divided into six panels which have been found to contain pairs of feet and the hems of robes, indicating that the original layout displayed six arches containing human figures above a similar arcade with beasts.¹⁰² At Penmon the basin has been hollowed out of the narrower cross-section of a tapering square shaft.¹⁰³ The font at Deerhurst may also be of reused material, but whether or not it was a cross shaft is unclear. It is certainly of early date from the form of its decoration, which consists of both vertical and horizontal lines with tight spiral terminals; these spirals are formed by twisting the ends of adjacent lines together.¹⁰⁴ The round tub at Wroxeter purports to be made from the base of a column from the former Roman town.

@c Scotland

J. Russell Walker¹⁰⁵ said that he was ashamed that many of the few medieval fonts which survived in Scotland at the end of the nineteenth century were sadly neglected and in very bad condition, many ‘exposed to the weather, mischief and accident and they are certain to gradually perish and disappear unless more attention is paid to their safe keeping’. Sadly, little heed was taken of what he said and Bond, writing twenty-

¹⁰¹ J. Romilly Allen, *Early Christian Symbolism*, fig. 145, talks of a crocodile but this is more likely to be a dragon with elongated jaws.

¹⁰² G. le Blanc Smith, ‘Derbyshire Fonts’, *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, VII, 1885, pp. 185–94.

¹⁰³ E. Tyrrell-Green, fig. 6, shows that two of the sides are decorated with: (a) two triquetras in the centre of a block of Greek key ornament and (b) a pattern based on both saltires and normal equal-armed crosses. The terminals are embellished with arrowheads. F. Bond, p. 100, shows a third side with a pattern formed of crosses *potent*.

¹⁰⁴ For a detailed discussion of this font and its antecedents see A. E. Hudd, ‘On the Saxon Font in Deerhurst Priory’, *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, II, 1886–7, pp. 84–104, and A. C. Fryer, ‘Gloucestershire Fonts’, pt II, *Transactions*, XXXII, 1909, pp. 302–8, which is largely based on the former article.

¹⁰⁵ J. Russell Walker, ‘Scottish Baptismal Fonts’, *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, XXI, 1887, pp. 346–448.

one years later, has very few references to Scotland and all those are quoted from Russell Walker; he introduces no new material at all. The Scottish fonts, like those of Ireland, are generally smaller than those in Wales and England, though not so small as to be seen as reused stoups. The majority which survive are plain and seemingly of good workmanship, though it is hard to judge from the fragments which, in many cases, are all that survive.¹⁰⁶

At Dunrood there was a square bowl with five scallops on each side, carved out of the sloping lower section of the bowl; the outermost scallops on each side are shared with the next, adding to the complexity of the work. At the bottom of the bowl is a cable-moulding, with no further extension. The support is a truncated pyramid, with a neat bevel at the top, but the overall height of 1.1m suggests that the tapering block support is not original and that the bowl may originally have been supported, like others of this type, on a base and single shaft. The remains of a second scalloped bowl existed at Herdmanston but its support was of a quite different format, a clustered column shaft on a compound Attic base.

Linton has a circular bowl with straight sides rounded at the bottom to the cylindrical shaft; the basin follows the external outline. From a plain narrow band at the rim round loops hang down like an inverted arcade, to the level where the rounding-down begins and secondary double loops fall to the bottom of the bowl. This font is unusually small and the absence of a drain may indicate that it was made as a stoup.¹⁰⁷

At Dryburgh Abbey is a rectangular bowl with a basin of the same proportions; there are no supports. The top of the bowl is rounded at the corners and bordered by a plain band. The original plain extension at the bottom is damaged but seems to have sloped at the corners. The decoration on each side is of the same basic design with minor differences of detail. On each face stand two winged dragons, back-to-back, their feet level with the mid-height of the face. Their tails curve downwards, cross and then split in two. One half of the tail is shorter than the other and curves up to lie on the dragon's wing. The longer half describes a large single spiral and terminates in an open palmette, while the leaf terminal of the shorter half is folded along the central axis. The long neck of each beast is turned down along the vertical edge and in at the bottom, so that the heads look inwards and their jaws grasp the tails. The bottom of the basin is flat and the sides do

¹⁰⁶ I have to reveal here that, contrary to my practice regarding other areas, where I have personally inspected almost all the fonts which I describe, I have been unable to carry out research in Scotland and have been forced to rely on J. Russell Walker's article and on information provided by kind friends in Scotland. The only Scottish font which I have seen personally is that now conserved in the former Chapter House of Dryburgh Abbey.

¹⁰⁷ Fragments of fonts of similar type were also known at Kelso, Lilliesleaf, Beil and Benvie.

not curve at the bottom. The drain-hole is towards the end of one of the long sides and runs horizontally instead of venting in the centre bottom. It is now closed on the outside. Two churches in Forfar possess pedestal fonts with common features. They are not far apart geographically, but the differences in execution suggest a considerable gap in the dates of production. Aldbar has a cylindrical bowl with a hemispherical basin. Around the bottom edge is a cable-moulding and below that a short plain extension of reduced diameter. Above the cable and at the top are smooth bands framing an arcade of non-tectonic round-headed arches. The pattern has been cut by paring away the interior of the arches and also the curved triangles which form the spandrels. Restennet font is an octagon. The sides of the bowl are vertical and there is a cable at the bottom but no extension.¹⁰⁸ The arches here are smaller and should be described more as inset panels rather than as an arcade.

Tub fonts are not common in Scotland but a few examples do exist. Whithorn Priory has a beaker-shaped tub with a strong roll-moulding at the bottom. Spaced equally around the rim are eight salient bosses but none is decorated, either as a head or as a flower, nor is there any other ornament. At Isle of Whithorn is a small articulated tub font of the type where the basic block is beginning to be separated into distinct parts. The piece is a monolith but, visually, the round tub is distinct on its square base and flanked by four engaged columns. This is like the French font at Breuil-le-Vert [131] and the type is also found, but in a more sophisticated form, in Lincolnshire at Coleby [6]. The Priory font is of normal proportions but the Isle font is very small for a tub.¹⁰⁹ Polwarth has a substantial round bowl supported on two thick round plates, the upper of about the same diameter as the bowl and the lower much larger. The bowl flares slightly to the top but the flare is much more accentuated in the form of the basin. Balquhider has a roughly oval, misshapen bowl out of which the basin has been excavated with great care and precision. It, too, is oval but not placed centrally in the block, suggesting that there had been an intention to produce a properly finished exterior.

From Loch Eynort, Skye, came the only surviving early medieval Scottish font with Biblical iconography.¹¹⁰ The bowl is basically a cylinder for two thirds of its height and turns down at an angle below to meet the support. This angle is disguised by the four figures which are the full height of the bowl and it is only between them that the sloping section is visible. On the underside, beneath the figures, are rudimentary capitals of what must have been four supporting colonnettes; there would hardly have been space for a central shaft. The figures are evenly spaced around the bowl and show the following: Christ hangs on the cross, His head inclined to His right and His feet crossed; He wears a short *collobium*. St Michael brandishes a sword in his right hand as he tramples a dragon, his right foot on its body and the other on its neck, while he thrusts the butt of a long-shaft cross into the beast's mouth. The third figure is a bishop holding in his left

¹⁰⁸ It is not clear from the drawings if the cable runs in a ring or is laid along each side of the octagon, although the comment in the text that it is 'unusual' suggests that the latter might be the case.

¹⁰⁹ If Russell Walker's figures are accurately drawn, as the scale would suggest, the block is no more than an approximate 2 foot (60cm) cube.

¹¹⁰ It is now in the museum of the Antiquaries of Scotland, in Edinburgh.

hand, diagonally across his body, a crosier but he does not seem to bless with his right. Finally the Virgin, her hair escaping in plaits from beneath her crown, holds the Infant Jesus in the crook of her left arm. All the figures are *en face*. On three of the four sloping sections between the figures' legs are small trees with leaves and fruit and on the fourth a large rosette. The upper half of the Crucifixion is framed in a panel of Nordic interlace but elsewhere the upper spaces between the figures are blank.¹¹¹

@c Wales

In south Wales few early medieval fonts survive, mainly along the coast. In the Gower peninsula they are generally of no structural or decorative distinction, such as may be found in many areas, and the majority are square, plain and supported on a short cylindrical shaft with a square undecorated base, giving an unusually squat appearance for pedestal fonts. Those at Bishopstow and St Llennydd have square basins. At Llandewi is a plain tub font of beaker shape.¹¹² There is a cluster with imbrication on the bowl along the coast between Cardiff and Swansea. Mawdlam has five courses of scale ornament below a strong cable-moulding at the rim. Llantwit Major has four courses and St Donats two. This group is most unusual in the high relief of the carving of the scale pattern, so that it looks like the surface of a shingled wooden spire. In Pembrokeshire in particular, for example at Newport (St Mary) [70], and also in Cardigan, Glamorgan and Carmarthen, there are square bowls scalloped along the under edge, most sloping to the shaft but some flat-bottomed. Jordanston has a round bowl with scallops.¹¹³

The situation is quite different in the north, especially on the island of Anglesey, where there is a substantial number of early fonts concentrated in a very confined area.¹¹⁴ They are generally of unsophisticated workmanship, ornamented with various motifs which are sometimes used together on the same font. At Llaniestyn, for example, there is a crude, non-tectonic round-headed arcade along the bottom of the roughly cylindrical

¹¹¹ Walker says that there are signs of erased inscriptions. If that is the case it would be an argument, taken with the crossed feet of Christ on the cross, for ascribing a later date to this piece than would be thought from the remainder of the decoration.

¹¹² A. C. Fryer, 'Ancient Fonts in Gower', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, ns V, 1899, pp. 315–22.

¹¹³ See Appx 1K for a list of fonts in South Wales taken from E. Tyrrell-Green, pp. 86–7. See also A. C. Fryer, 'Ancient Fonts in Gower'.

¹¹⁴ *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, LXXXV, 1930, pp. 250–6, an extract from H. Howard Hughes, 'The Churches of Anglesey', the President's address.

bowl and above it, separated from the arcade by a double zig-zag, are various formal designs in square panels. These include chequer pattern, equal-armed crosses, ring-and-dot and interlaced crosses. Cerrig Ceinwen [71] has motifs based mainly on the cross, including an interlaced cross *paty* and another in which each of the arms terminates in a triquetra. The same is found at Newborough, though badly distorted through unskilled workmanship; this font has other motifs too, based on knotwork and loops. At Llangristiolus, unusual in tapering slightly to the top, there are six panels, of which two are filled with four-strand plaitwork, one with a pair of diamonds and one with a ring-chain. The fifth has a pattern reminiscent of a chain-harrow or perhaps chain-mail and the last a complex maze which seems to be a continuous outline with seven loops and another cord laced through and across the main design. It is hardly surprising that the mason has become muddled. The panels which frame these designs are square, with three round-headed arches like a Lombard frieze at the top, except for one panel which has four.

Llanfair-yn-y-Cwmmwd font is quite different, beginning with its very uneven shape. It is basically a cylindrical tub, but with a prominent raised portion round the lower part, a feature found on some Derbyshire fonts.¹¹⁵ The upper part is plain except for four equal-armed crosses *paty* below a small roll-moulding at the rim. The top of the enlarged section has a rough cable-moulding and there are five salient human heads spaced around it at irregular intervals. Between the heads are small crosses and a snake.

Tregaiian is strongly barrel-shaped, of clean workmanship and has as decoration an inset band of chevron slightly above the centre-line; despite the generally better execution, the chevron itself is not free of errors. A group of five fonts all have arcading, in some cases associated with other motifs, as at Llanbeulan, where the lower part of the bowl has a band of diaper pattern.¹¹⁶

The final small group in Anglesey, apart from a number of rough undecorated tubs, displays a higher standard of setting-out and decoration. They are round and have an integral plinth of superimposed roll-mouldings which give them a finished, balanced appearance foreign to all the others in this area. Their decoration consists of repeated foliate designs not unlike the palmette. Llanidan [72], for example, has a design which consists, at the top, of five leaves, the outer pair turning down and the others touching the rim. The leaves are tied with a double strand at mid-height and two stems drop like swags to join those on either side. The outer pair of leaves which turn down again join those of the adjacent motifs and are tied where they meet; the lowest part of the conjoined leaf is visible between the two curves of the swag referred to above. It is an elegant model.

@c Ireland

If one judges by the quality of workmanship evidenced by the magnificent standing stones and other surviving Romanesque artefacts, one might expect to find Ireland

¹¹⁵ Mellor, Thorpe, Tissington.

¹¹⁶ Llanbeulan itself and Llanfechell are square and Heneglwys, Llanbadrig and Llandeusan are round, the first-named tapering to the top, as at Llangristiolus.

rich in baptismal fonts of the twelfth century.¹¹⁷ Sadly this is not so and the preponderance of post-Romanesque examples suggests that perhaps the Irish were later than other countries in western Europe in delegating baptism to parishes. Indeed there are comparatively few medieval fonts of any date still extant, as there are churches which date from the Middle Ages, and few of those fonts which survive are associated with their original churches. Of those that are, a distressing number lie abandoned in cemeteries and churchyards, or are set as stoups into external walls beside doorways; the church at Ballyhale actually has two fonts reused in this fashion. There is one group which does claim inclusion, though it appears that they are a Transitional product, rather like the Mosan School, where production followed a basic model, with variations in detail highlighting the passage of time. The Ossory group [73], as they are known from their concentration in the diocese of that name, are of a dark hardstone capable of taking a polish and were originally in seven pieces, bowl, base, central shaft and four corner colonnettes, like their siblings of so-called marble in the Mosan, Tournai and Purbeck Schools.¹¹⁸ As can be seen from a surviving example leaning against the wall of the cathedral of St Canice at Kilkenny, the design of the base was just like the Continental five-support fonts: square, with five hollow mouldings in the upper surface to provide sockets for the shafts, but with a more slender central column than is found in the Mosan or Tournai groups. Also unlike these fonts, the underside of the bowl was often flat and, where capitals for the corner colonnettes are carved out of the underside of the bowl, they are small and simple and

¹¹⁷ The bibliography on Irish medieval fonts is very thin but Helen M. Roe did publish in 1968, through the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society, *Medieval Fonts of Meath* and I am indebted to H. K. Joan Pike, widow of a former Bishop of Meath, for a copy of her unpublished study, *Medieval Fonts of Ireland*. Unfortunately this is only illustrated with line sketches but her clear descriptions enabled me to plan a research campaign covering the majority of the pre-thirteenth-century Irish fonts, with examples of all the different types.

¹¹⁸ See Appx 1L. Of the twelve fonts known, five have round-topped fluting; one has two sides with round and two with pointed fluting and on the remainder all the fluting is pointed.

there is no sign of the large belly familiar from the Marquise and Tournai Schools. Dunnamaggan and Kilkenny Friary have capitals fashioned out of the bowl, Callan and Old Leighlin Cathedral have rudimentary sockets and at Freshford the underside is flat like the East Anglian box fonts. The other difference was in the proportions of the bowl which are far closer to the box than to the normal table font, though the supports are taller. One feature which they do share with their Continental siblings is the decoration of the upper surface of the bowl; the fonts of better quality have concentric stringing around the basin and fleurs-de-lis in the spandrels. On most fonts the upper rim is articulated with a pair of mouldings, below which the face curves gently inwards, falls vertically and curves inwards again at the bottom, giving lightness and elegance. The dimensions at the top are almost always greater than below. The basin is a cylinder with flat bottom.

As in southern England, but unlike the Continental schools, their decoration was simple and repetitive. In Ireland the common feature was a pattern of narrow vertical fluting on the sides of the bowl. The number of grooves varied from five to ten and their shape at the top became less round, more pointed, as time passed, though it is hard to describe the grooving as a true arcade. In no case is there any question of a tectonic form; there is not even a pretence of a base or capital and the divisions between the grooves are often too slender to be seen as columns. One of the bowls at Ballyhale has an unsuccessful attempt at interlacing and at Dunnamaggan the mason did only slightly better. The font in the Franciscan Friary at Kilkenny has a double concave fluting either side of a thin spine running up the centre of each groove. The corners are also usually included in the arrangement, with a groove placed slantwise across the arris. The second of the Ballyhale reused bowls has fluting in two tiers, the upper row lower and offset so that each groove straddles the springing of the arches below.

In the churchyard at Maddoxtown stands a complete five-support font, probably of the Ossory group but with certain differences. The sides flare to the top and there is an inset 'skirt' at the bottom of the bowl into which the supports are set. Unfortunately a combination of weathering and lichen on the surface makes it difficult to make out the decoration but there appears to be fluting on three sides, with foliage and a triquetra on the fourth. Two opposite corners have small heads in relief at the top.¹¹⁹ It is probably safe to call it an Ossory variant, but this cannot be so with two other 1 + 4 fonts. Kinsale and the second font in Old Leighlin Cathedral have almost cubic bowls devoid of all decoration and without any form of articulation, though Kinsale has a spirally fluted central shaft and the colonnettes have bases and capitals. Askeaton is also a cube but, from its much smaller size, is almost certainly a stoup. The decoration, consisting of two tiers of six-petalled flowers, is restricted to the whole of one side and half of another. Square box fonts, further removed from a cube, also occur with decoration. None is on

¹¹⁹ H. K. J. Pike, p. 22, says that this information was discovered when the font was cleaned.

its original supports and such is the state of weathering that it is only possible at Killaloe to be certain that it was originally on five supports; this font is unusual for its square basin. Three sides are plain and the elaborate decoration on the fourth has plainly never been finished. The carved area runs from top to bottom in the centre but is cut back at the bottom corners, where it is rounded and left plain. The central device is a cross, considerably offset to the right and filling the whole height of the face. The arms are formed of four outward-facing semicircles, hollow in the centre. The horizontal and lower arms have square ends but at the top the lines open out and curve to the rim like a pair of cupped hands. In the centre of the cross is a pair of concentric diamonds enclosing a quatrefoil. The outer diamond sends out a pair of shoots from its top corner which then become a pair of leaves framed by the 'cupped hands'. Apart from the rounded bottom corners, the spaces around the cross-arms are filled with a luxuriant tracery of leaf-shoots, but the work is incomplete at the top right. In this corner an incised line defines the curved upper arm of the cross and the leaf-shoots in the corner are virtually complete, but the space between was never carved. Ballybacon also has leaf ornament but here it is based on the hexafoil, with bezants filling the spaces between the petals. One side has two florets separated by a saltire and the others have single florets. It is actually a rectangle 56cm x 51cm and the basin is the same shape. At Naas is a five-support table font standing on a square base. The bowl has the same decoration on all four sides, a loose pattern of leaves incorporating fleur-de-lis. A similar form of ornament is used on the round bowl at Errigal Keerogue.

Kilcooly Abbey font is now built into the wall as a stoup so that one side is concealed. The three visible sides all have different decoration, two showing a link with the Ossory group. The first is covered with an 'arcade' of eight of the tall narrow grooves and three grooves share the right half of the next face with a strongly carved vertical cable set in a recess. The left half of the face has a central ring cut by a combination of a cross and a saltire and, from the outer ends of the diagonals, lines are taken to the points where the cross cuts the circumference of the ring. The design is accurately laid out and cleanly cut. The next side is similar but looks as though the success of cutting the previous ornament had gone to the head of the mason. The left half of the face is based on the same design but with many additional lines. The right half is based on a diamond drawn on the diagonal, with the inner corners joined and further lines added, so that the whole design disintegrates in confusion. Killucan is a much more refined and certainly later version of Kilcooly. The proportions are similar and three faces are divided in two. The undivided side is filled with a saltire of five parallel lines in very low relief. One side has two pairs of concentric rings, each pair filling one half and each containing a different leaf ornament. The third side has a beaded lattice in a beaded frame on the right, taking up slightly more than half the side. On the left is a fleur-de-lis with each terminal leaf a miniature fleur-de-lis in itself; where the main shoots leave the stem, a beaded loop frames the top leaf. The fourth side has a beaded saltire in each half. On the left the three upper spaces between the arms are filled with tight spirals and the bottom triangle is plain. On the right all the arms are surrounded by complex leaf patterns. The underside of the bowl is carved to form capitals for the four clustered columns which form the support. The final piece of decoration, emphasising the late date, is a row of seven leaf-bud motifs set along the bottom edge of each side of the bowl so that they partially disguise the manner in which the underside is carved.

At Coolbanagher is another Transitional font, its late date made clear by the form of the mitre worn by a bearded head on one of the eight sides, though much of the remaining

decoration suggests an earlier date. The bishop's face is flanked by two pairs of vertical twisted stems which terminate at the top in spatulate leaves, but the most intriguing feature is the way in which two loosely twisted cables emerge left and right from the bishop's mouth and go on to encircle the octagon at mid-height. Also unique is the way in which the cable is carved so that it is on top of the ornament on each of the eight sides. Opposite the bishop's head and at the other main points of the compass are angels carved in medium relief. Their hands are clasped at the waist, just above the line of the cable, and their wings are quite distinctive, five long feathers curved upwards on each side to frame the head and shoulders. Two of the four remaining sides are filled with different leaf-patterns (all with similar spatulate ends), one with grapes and one with a pelican. Beneath the bowl is a plain, roughly shaped, round extension which is set on top of a frustum of a cone, also without decoration. The slightly flaring square bowl at Galway, now on a later support, may be Transitional or may have had decoration added at a later date. Two sides are decorated with typical Romanesque florets but the others have armorial shields and Gothic arches.¹²⁰

The fonts of the remaining group are all variations on the theme of the capital. The simplest is at Ardee, with a square top which is progressively rounded down to fit the column on which it stands.¹²¹ Around the rim is a somewhat uneven cuff with beaded triangular motifs at the corners and undulating tendril along the sides. Beneath the cuff at each corner the progression from square section to round is disguised by sculpted motifs which are difficult to identify due to their being badly worn. A common feature to all four is a bottom section like the cuff of a gauntlet decorated with three bands of saw-tooth. Above the 'wrist' may be dragons' heads with gaping jaws. Kilkenny Cathedral, in addition to a font of the Ossory group in the nave, has a small example of the cushion-capital type in a side chapel. The demilunes on two faces are outlined with roll-mouldings which frame a complex leaf pattern and foliage also adorns the section between the demilunes and the roll-moulding extension at the bottom. The clustered-column shaft, while certainly medieval, is not the original support. The basin is square. At Inistiogue [74] is another cushion-capital font, made of a fine-grained limestone and of exquisite workmanship; it may well have been recut.¹²² On top of a square plinth is a thick cable-moulding encircling the socket for the cylindrical shaft which is in two pieces. The bowl has a shallow extension carved as a cable to match that on the base. Each face of the bowl is a demilune with a recessed panel framed by a continuous plain band which curves inward below each corner to make room for a small palm-leaf ornament, where on English fonts of this design it would be more normal to find a human mask. The stems of the palm-leaves run down the corner and divide like a canopy above the spreading leaf devices on the rounded chamfer. The four lunettes are filled with motifs based on two different combinations of ring and saltire, the pairs on opposing sides. The basin is square, as at Kilkenny. A very similar font in Dublin (St Audoen) has the lunettes outlined with beading and the motif on each side is an inverted

¹²⁰ H. K. J. Pike, pp. 30–1.

¹²¹ This was originally at Mansfield.

¹²² It was found at Kells and may have come from the Augustinian Priory. One side was recut in the nineteenth century, H. K. J. Pike, p. 13.

leaf-fan like the fingers on a hand. There are no cable-mouldings on the support. The basin is again square.

There are two other fonts based upon the cushion capital, clearly sharing a common pedigree, but quite different from those described so far. The short round shaft is integral with the bowl and tapers to the tall square base, but the main difference from other capital fonts lies in the shape of the bottom of each face. Instead of a continuous curve from corner to corner, here the rounded chamfering takes place much closer to the bottom of the bowl so that it is a cross between a scalloped bowl and a cushion capital. The lower edge of each face is shaped as three lobes bordered by a narrow band of ornament which continues along the top edge. At Fethard-on-Sea this consists of isosceles triangles, set alternately within a zig-zag line, all incised, while Carrick-on-Bannow [75] has a variety of different motifs in the band.¹²³ Like Inistiogue, the bands surround a recessed panel containing ornament in the same plane as the frame. Fethard has a device of great elegance on one side only, carefully designed to occupy the various areas within the frame. It consists basically of a modified fleur-de-lis, the five stems emerging from an oval disc below which the bottom ends of the stalks fill the central lobe. Above the oval disc the centre leaf juts up to meet the top band, flanked by a pair of daisies. The main stems each side are flat and beaded, curving up towards the corners and then reversing into the bottom corners where they turn up again and end in leaves. The outer pair of the five stems end in tight spirals. The ornaments on the side of the Carrick bowl are all different, various patterns of stranded or beaded stems creating symmetrical patterns. One side has the same design as the Fethard font but with looser spirals and with secondary leaf-shoots in the top corners. On this font the central lobe is smaller than those at the corners. Both have square basins.

Of a small number of individual fonts there are a few of sufficient character and quality to merit comment. Piltown has a scalloped bowl, unusual for its being octagonal with four long and four short sides. As the scallops are carved in a 45° slope to the roll-moulding at the bottom, this must have presented the mason with a considerable challenge in setting-out and in accuracy of cutting, one which he met with great success. Only the short sides carry ornament, a six-petal flower in a disc. The plain shaft is integral with the round base which is decorated with a pattern of three tiers of overlapping scales. Also octagonal are the bowl and basin at Dunshaughlin which has a shaft of the same shape and stands on a square base. Half the height of the bowl is vertical and the lower part slopes to the shaft. Five of the eight sides bear ornament, of which the shield may be a later addition. The other four are typically Romanesque and consist of a salient head *en face*, a lion *passant* with tail up, a bird between two quadrupeds standing on their hind legs and a quadruped *passant* with tail down.¹²⁴

Adare has a small chalice font reminiscent of the Gotland 'Paradise' group. The conical support is plain but the bowl is sculpted into prominent vertical ribs carved with cable and herringbone ornament, the concave spaces between being smooth. The decorated ribs are taller than the intervening spaces, giving a castellated effect at the rim. The

¹²³ Neither is in its original church. Fethard could have come from either one of two local abbeys and Carrick came from Bannow Bay.

¹²⁴ H. M. Roe, pp. 108–28, shows plain octagonal fonts at Athboy, Ballinlough Castle, Culmullen and Follistown, with others in fragments abandoned outside.

conical support is now placed on a hemisphere carved with a lattice of concave lozenges which may itself be an inverted bowl. Fermoy is probably too small to be a font and was perhaps made as a stoup. It has a crude round bowl on which are carved four heads in high relief. Two are crowned and one is female. There is no surviving support and the drain is offset so that it emerges beneath one of the heads.

The Franciscan Friary at Clonmel has a number of bowls in the courtyard, all quite badly weathered. Some have protruding lugs like mortars and may never have been used as fonts, but one round bowl still shows signs of rich decoration despite the severe weathering. It has four rams' heads in medium relief spaced evenly round the circumference, so that the top appears square; swags of leaves join each head to its neighbours on either side. At the bottom is a decorative moulding which may be either cable or plait. In the same courtyard is a square bowl with the corners chamfered to produce an irregular octagon, with worn heads at the top of the short sides. Another like this, but with inverted heads, stands outside the church at Freshford. Could it have been inverted in error before the basin was excavated? Even more plain are the few fonts which are square with no more articulation than narrow bevelling on all edges of the bowl; they are quite impossible to date with any certainty.¹²⁵

At Doneraile is a tall, square base with a later small bowl placed on the top. All four sides of the base are decorated. Beneath a broad band of foliage each corner is defined by an engaged colonnette with capital and base; ribs forming the tops of arches emerge from a point below the capitals which are set on the top corners. The arches are trilobed and carved along the top edge with foliage so must be thirteenth century, though the figures in the four arches are more archaic than their frame. East: a bishop blesses with his right hand and holds a crosier in his left. North: an old bearded man points with his right index finger to something held in his left hand. West: a wild man, naked above the waist, stands with both hands above his head, palms towards the viewer, fingers extended. South: a figure holds a sword aloft in the right hand and a shield bearing the cross of St George in the left.¹²⁶

Tub fonts are rare in Ireland but Wicklow has a round piece, with a 'D'-shaped top rim, set on a round plinth. On either side of the straight section of the top a semicircular loop hangs from the upper edge and appears to be supported on the tops of triangles below. The remainder of the surface is decorated with two tiers of triangles, points down. Kilshine seems very early, no more than a cylindrical basin hollowed out of a rough cylinder. An unusual feature is the way it has been slightly excavated at the base, with the bottom rim then partly cut away to leave three feet.¹²⁷

The small number of early medieval fonts in Ireland set against its rich treasury of other works of the period is hard to explain but must, to a degree, be linked to the small number of surviving Romanesque churches. Also worth remark is the fact that very few of the surviving fonts are plain, whereas in most parts of the British Isles the highly decorated examples are outnumbered by the completely plain and those with only limited formal ornament. Only the Ossory fonts are relatively unadorned but they are of

¹²⁵ Carrickfergus, Cloyne Cathedral, Inch and Lynn.

¹²⁶ H. K. J. Pike, pp. 11–12 says that the figures are a man *orans* on each side but this must be an error in her notes.

¹²⁷ H. M. Roe, pl. II and pp. 121–2.

a sophisticated design which probably saved them from destruction and disposal. It is almost as if the Church in Ireland had decided to preserve only the best and to rid itself of the rest.

