

THE ICKFORD COMMUNION-PLATE.

[BY THE REV. VERNON STALEY, RECTOR OF ICKFORD.]

The village of Ickford, in the county of Bucks, is famed as being the scene of the ministerial labours of Gilbert Sheldon, the donor of the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. In March, A.D. 1635, Sheldon became Warden of All Souls' College, Oxford: in the following year he was presented by King Charles I. to the benefice of Ickford, a village ten miles from Oxford. This benefice he held, not reckoning his ejection during the Commonwealth, until the closing months of 1660. In this year he was nominated by King Charles II. to the See of London: in 1663 Sheldon became Archbishop of Canterbury. He was consecrated Bishop of London on October 28, 1660, the festival of St. Simon and St. Jude. The next year Sheldon presented massive Communion-plate to his old parish of Ickford, which is now in the custody of the present Rector. A description of this plate is subjoined, with photographs.

The sacred vessels are of silver. The Cup is $9\frac{1}{8}$ inches in height, with a diameter of $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the lip: the depth of the bowl is $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches, inside measurement. Round the outside of the lip is engraved: "Ex dono Gilberti Episcopi Londini nup. Rectoris de Ickford in Com. Bucks." From the measurements given above, it will be seen that the Cup is of extraordinary size, and would hold a sufficient quantity of the Sacred Element to communicate over 100 persons. The date of the year-letter is 1661. In considering the unusual size of the Cup, it is to be remembered that the rubric directing "every parishioner to communicate at the least three times in the year," was at the time rigorously enforced. At the period of Sheldon's incumbency of Ickford, the number of adult parishioners was probably between 100 and 150: hence the large capacity of the Cup.

The Paten, used also as a cover to the Cup, rests on a circular foot: it measures $6\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter at the surface, and stands $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in height. Under the



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foot on the base is engraved—"Ickford Communion Plate."

The hall-marks upon both the Cup and the Paten are "R.F." (the maker's initials, with pellets above and below); leopard's head crowned; lion *passant*; and "D" in Old English type, on a shield, the year-letter of 1661.

The weight of the vessels is set down in the Ickford Register, under Oct. 20, A.D. 1730, thus—"Cup, 23 oz. 10 dwt. 12 grs. Cover, 9 oz. 3 grs."

The photograph is by Messrs. Taunt, of Oxford.

I have communicated with Mr. Krall (of Barkentin and Krall, Regent Street, W.), with a view to ascertaining the maker's name in full. On applying to the Assay Office, Goldsmiths' Hall, E.C., he received the following reply:—"I beg to say that, unfortunately, our Registers of Name-marks do not go back to 1660-1. I find, however, that there was a plain Tankard in the Dunn-Gardner collection 1655-6, with 'R. F.' between the pellets, but even then the name of the maker to whom it belonged is unknown: Yours, etc., H. W. ROBINSON, Deputy Warden."