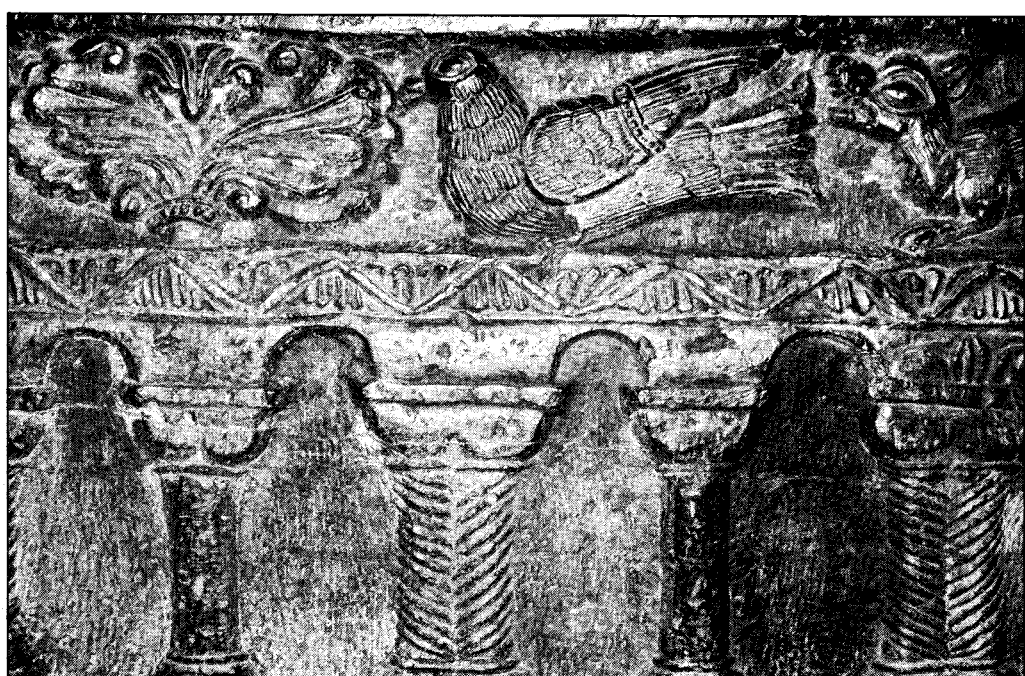




4
The Gate of Paradise is shown as a Romanesque palace barred by the Angel with his sword. But the Angel teaches Adam to dig and Eve to spin flax.



5
Here is the flat Earth on it pillars again. Fierce dogs chasing the doves represent the wicked persecuting the faithful in a fallen World.

Now look at the top. All round the perfect circle is the Vine and the branches bearing fruit. It symbolises the eternal life in Christ into which we are born by Baptism. At opposite corners the other great Sacrament by which our union with Christ is maintained and enriched is shown by the doves drinking from the vessel under the Cross. Cloven fire at another corner is for the gift of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. So it is when people are being Christened here that the Font really comes alive.

The original lining probably went for bullets when Waller's troops were concentrated here in

March 1644. Was it then that someone just began to break it up? What lucky chance or intervention saved it from the fate of a second Tournai font at Ipswich a part of which was found mutilated when the Town Ditch was being filled in? It is now in the Museum there. The limestone base of ours may be original; many of the others are all marble. A completely new base and columns for St. Mary Bourne were made in Tournai in 1935 from the marble which is still quarried there.

In the 1880's our Font was moved from under the centre arch of the c1230 Arcade which cannot have been its original place.

The mediaeval font bowl at the other end of the aisle came from our little ruined Church at Westbury (2m). Another was taken from the yard of the Court House to Buriton House in 1922. Similar in shape but slightly smaller, "The Old Font" is thought by some to have been the original Saxon font here; if so, it might have been used in our St. Mary in the Fields (near South Farm) which was "quite down" by 1703.

Above the 14th cent. window by the Pulpit notice the carved heads on either side; the faces are full of character and must surely represent a real man and woman who once worshipped here.



"Our Father. Bless all Christened in this font. May they be faithful in their witness to Thy Son and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more; and grant to the faithful departed refreshment, light and peace. Amen."



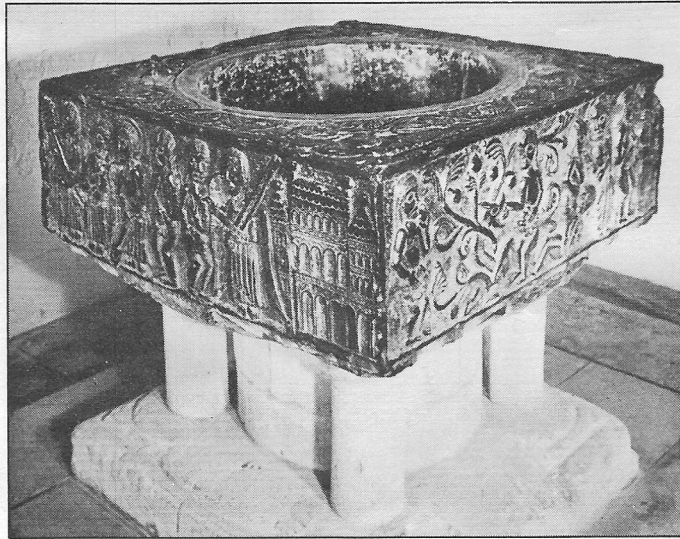
7 East Meon Vicarage, Petersfield, Hampshire. 8
The Vicar thanks Denis Frone ARPS for photos 1 & 4 and S.R. Smith for 2,5,7 & 8.
He would be grateful for photographs and information about the Tournai Fonts on the Continent.

c/2 20p

All Saints, East Meon

The Tournai Font

The famous sculptors of Tournai in Flanders made this Font from a single block of their local Marble (re-crystallized limestone). About 1150 it was brought here 500 miles down the Scheldt, across the North Sea and English Channel up the Itchen, and then laboriously overland the last miles.



Probably this was the magnificent gift of Bishop Henry of Blois (William the conqueror's grandson). A great patron of artists and craftsmen; brought up in the cultured court of his mother Countess Adela; "most earnest in the beautifying of churches"; a great administrator; he was austere in his personal life. He gave many rich works of art to his Cathedral at Winchester where there is another fine Tournai font.

The Charité St Christophe, the Tournai guild which traded in Winchester would have been responsible for bringing the four Hampshire examples here.

There are other Tournai Fonts at Lincoln Minster, St. Peter's, Ipswich, and Thornton Curtis, Humberside. In Belgium and Northern France with two more in Germany there are nearly fifty, some now in Museums as at Brussels. Some, like our own and Winchester's, are more finely carved and tell a story. At Dendermonde (Termonde), in the Church of Our Lady, St. Peter is seen at the Last Supper with our Lord and the other Apostles; warming his hands at the fire when he betrayed Him; and with his keys at the Gate of Paradise (the latter as depicted at East Meon). Most, as at Southampton and St. Mary Bourne, feature larger symbolic designs.

Ours is of the usual size and shape (though that at Wolvertem is round). The sides are about 100 cm by 47 cm; the bowl is 67 cm diameter and 37-40 cm deep. Babies were usually dipped into the water in the early days. An iron bracket shows where the Cover was padlocked to prevent the baptismal water being stolen for wrong uses when, with holy oil and salt in it, it was kept through the year from Easter. Now we bless fresh water each time.

See how minutely and cleverly the details, clothing, hair, a distaff, the tip of a wooden spade, feathers, an adder's skin, etc. are carved in the smooth black stone. At the same time these "primitive" sculptures deliberately forego a pictorialism already in vogue to convey a sense of spirit, power and purpose. Take time to study them. If they are in shadow, use a mirror or white paper to reflect light from the window. Do not touch the Font, please; in time this irreplaceable, unique work of art could be worn away. We want it to be still in use and still admired here in another thousand years' time! There is a replica of it in the Victoria and Albert Museum. The theme of the series of pictures here is Creation, the Fall, and Re-creation.



2

Begin here with the flat Earth on its pillars and arches (upheld by God) and on it, full of life, composite creatures, fish, reptile, bird and animal, all in one. They represent all the many forms of life.



3

Now God the Father creates man. (2) He creates woman while Adam sleeps. (3) The Old Serpent offers Eve the forbidden fruit from the tree. (4) Adam eats it.