

# SOMERSET PISCINAS

BY EVELYN CLARK, F.S.A.

## PART (1)

### INTRODUCTION

Among the many features of interest and beauty in medieval churches, piscinas are some of those which have largely been left unnoticed. There is little literature on the subject, and only scant, if any, reference in most studies of Gothic architecture to their types and ornaments. Thus the field is but insufficiently explored, although none the less worthy of attention, not only on account of the exquisite detail of much of the workmanship, but also for its links with the ritual and dogma of the early phases and development of the Christian church.

Cautley (1937, 1938 and 1954) in the Appendix to his great work on Suffolk churches, mentions those most worthy of note, but the descriptions are scanty compared with the interest of the subject or the detailed accounts of the fabric and its special points of note in the main text. Bond (1916) devotes a chapter to piscinas in his study of chancel furniture, and they naturally find a place in Parker's (1905) Concise Glossary of Architecture, but there exists no standard work on the subject, either in general or in regard to a particular locality. Somerset is rich in examples of most types of piscinas, but no comparative survey has so far been undertaken, although Doctor J. C. Eeles, described some of those in the western and other areas of the county.

Piscinas must not be confused with stoups. Of somewhat similar design, their functions are entirely different as are their positions in, or outside, a church. A stoup is a stone receptacle usually without a drain, for the holding of the holy water with which the worshipper crossed himself on entering the sacred building, usually placed in the porch beside the S. or N. doors, or on the wall inside or out an entrance ; occasionally, as at Muchelney, also outside the porch. It bears no relation to the altar. Stoups may be elaborate in design, placed upon an engaged or detached shaft; sometimes consisting of a basin ornamented or plain. As at Staple Fitzpaine, in the N. wall, the remains of a cusped stoup indicates the position of a former doorway for which a window is now substituted.

It will be of interest briefly to trace the derivation of the word "piscina," and the sources of the rite with which it is associated. The piscina originally denoted the basin or pool used in Roman houses for ablutions; later, in the Christian era, for the baptizing of converts to that faith, the word meaning a fishpond, the fish being one of the symbols of our Lord, each letter of the word 'ichtheus,' i.e. in Greek 'a fish,' being an initial letter of the Name of the Godhead. It is surprising, therefore, that piscinas were never decorated with fish, 'canting,' being so much in favour in medieval work. Thus the piscina has a special significance in regard to the Eucharist itself, with which it was peculiarly associated in medieval churches.

The piscina is the drain by which the water, used in the various ablutions performed in connection with the ritual of the Mass, for the washing of the priest's hands and of the Sacred Vessels, was emptied through the wall into consecrated ground. In medieval literature it is alternatively referred to as *piscina*, *lavacrum* and *sacrarium*. In the contracts for the building of the churches of Catterick and Fotheringay it is respectively mentioned as *lavatory* and *lavatoris* (Salzman 1952).

Piscinas vary greatly from one period to another in their type and construction. The earliest known reference to a drain in a church (suggesting that it functioned for various usages) is that of Bede (672 or 673-735) who, when the bones of King Oswald were washed before burial, observes that "they poured the water in which they had washed the bones in a corner of the sacristy," a procedure indicating that the bones were regarded as a sacred relic. Such drain-like receptacles were not unusual in later medieval times, for in the 13th century a pronouncement directed that a hole in the floor should function in the absence of a piscina. This may explain the fact, mentioned by Bond (*ibid*), that no piscinas earlier than the 12th century are known in this country.

A piscina is invariably connected with an altar. It may be placed:—

- (a) in the S. or E. walls of the chancel, near the altar or associated with the sedilia attached to the S. wall, for the use of the celebrant and his attendants, the deacon or subdeacon, during certain parts of the Mass (Parker *ibid*).
- (b) in a chancel chapel.



- (c) in a chapel in the N. or S. aisles.
- (d) in the base of a hagioscope or squint.
- (e) in the wall above the rood (showing that a chapel had once existed in the loft).

The use of water for ceremonial purposes at the altar varied in different periods. In very early times the piscina consisted merely of a sink in the sacristy into which a basin was emptied, the ablutions for which such a drain was needed being only those in which the water was poured over the hands of the celebrant before Mass, and the chalice rinsed at the altar with wine or wine and water. After Mass it might again be rinsed with water at the drain. This appears to have been the simplest of the ritual ablutions.

Durandus later mentions five ablutions as performed :—

- (1) At a Pontifical Mass.
- (2) At the robing of the Bishop.
- (3) After reading the Offertory.
- (4) After the censuring.
- (5) After discarding the vestments.

Bond (*ibid*) refers to a recess found in some churches, in which a basin was kept when not in use, as at Haydon, Essex, and St. Alban, Kemerton, Gloucestershire. As early as the 4th century, to the present day, a basin and towel are given to a subdeacon at his ordination as symbols of his office. A support upon which to hang a towel remains in some churches.

In 845-847 Pope Leo IV directed that a receptacle should be placed near the altar for the disposal of the ritual water. Such ablutions were performed with varying degrees of ritual, which need not be detailed here.

Between 1050 and 1100, the Berangarian Controversy (q.v.) regarding the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and that of the Real Presence in the Eucharist gradually tended to increase the care and solemnity with which the Sacrament was administered, in its handling, and the rites previous to its performance. In 1080, however, after protracted dispute, Berangarius made a final retraction of his heterodoxy. In 1216 the Lateran Council defined once more the dogma of Transubstantiation and in 1264 was instituted the Feast of Corpus Christi. These edicts affected the development

of the piscina as a feature peculiarly relevant to church ritual. Thus, in the 13th century, two drains for the following ablutions were, for a time, obligatory :—

- (1) At the altar during Mass, the washing of the priest's hands with wine and the rinsing of the chalice.
- (2) The washing of the priest's hands with water on leaving the altar.
- (3) The cleansing of the chalice and paten, also at a piscina. Thus more than one drain and/or bowl appeared essential for these purposes and are significant of the period.

Early in the 15th century, however, a single piscina was re-introduced. A reversion to Low Mass and the simplifying of the ritual of High Mass, made separate bowls for the washing of the priest's hands and the vessels no longer essential. One piscina served a dual purpose and the priest drank the rinsings.

It is probable that the ritual varied somewhat in different localities. At Rothwell, Northants, three drains occur ; at Castle Ashby, Northants, above two trefoiled basins a third appears in a credence or shelf, for holding the vessels brought from the altar. A credence is found in the recess of many piscinas. In some, however, spaces on either side or at the back were reserved for a similar purpose, and, although very rarely, a table or sideboard was provided, as at St. Cross, Winchester. Bond (*ibid*) deals fully with the derivation of the word 'credence' and the functions of that special feature of church furniture.

The styles and features of piscinas are so numerous and diversified that no more can be attempted here than to indicate their most salient characteristics. Among other types are :—

- (a) A single or double bowl, round or square, within a wide chamfered or rounded niche decorated with contemporary ornament. The features often fail to be diagnostic and dating is difficult. A credence, or spaces for cruets, at back or side.
- (b) A shallow bowl in the sill of a window.
- (c) Pillar piscinas, as at Bodmin, Cornwall, on a detached or engaged shaft.
- (d) Angle piscina, a niche divided in two sections by a detached shaft, the bowl set at an angle.



Parker (1905) affirms that no piscina of earlier date than the 12th century is known to exist in England. Bond (*ibid*) suggests that the scarcity of Norman piscinas can be explained by the assumption that they were destroyed during later periods of church rebuilding. It is possible, however, that other causes may be assigned to their absence. We have already referred to the hole mentioned by the Venerable Bede. This may have been a more usual method of disposal of the sacramental elements. Another reason may also be given in this connection. At Asthol Leigh, Oxfordshire, a medieval stone altar has a stone piscina attached to one of its supports as a part of the complex. This example is perfectly preserved and is unique. Stone mensas alone are more frequently found to-day. It is possible that such a type of medieval altar and piscina constituted the original design, varied occasionally by a mere hole in the floor, the disappearance and destruction of the former being attributable in later times to iconoclasm. It is, of course, obvious that other types existed alongside of altar-cum-piscina, but it is possible that the latter may have been the primary design. The idea, at least, merits consideration. That early piscinas in any form were not invariably present is explained by the fact that, in Norman times, the doctrine of Transubstantiation and the related reverence for the altar and its furniture received less consideration.

Norman piscinas are rare in Somerset. At Blagdon, the round-headed arch is modern, but the niche contains a medieval trefoiled bowl with drain, under the projection of which are four archaic figures, possibly typifying the Evangelists, about 1 ft. in height, below a round-headed arch and separated each from the other by a cushion-headed pillar with roughly-fashioned base. The heads and features of the figures are primitive; the bodies merely consist of uncarved pieces of stone. The whole of the ancient complex is carved from a single block. Bond (*ibid*) describes it as Norman, but the opinion of the British Museum authorities is that it is of Saxon workmanship. The piscina at Thurlbere may also belong to the Norman period, but has been much restored.

When studying piscinas it is surprising to discover how varied are the types of bowl, canopy, niche and ornament. It cannot be affirmed with certainty that the examples are more elaborate in one part of England than another. On the other hand, it may well be that certain craftsmen, perhaps members of a particular guild

of carvers, tended to create finer workmanship than elsewhere. Somerset is rich in variety of designs, and the differences between one example and another impress the student the further afield he goes. Nearly all examples display some peculiar or distinctive feature, whether of structure or decoration. Their diversity of detail, when the main features are, of necessity, usually present in all, is remarkable. Many, by their mouldings, leave no doubt as to the period to which they belong. The plainer examples may be merely of chamfered stone; others richly decorated with appropriate carvings of the period; delicately moulded bowls, finials and crockets, of original and unusual design. The bowl, shallow or deep, may project beyond the wall below, perhaps resting on a carved support or moulded pillar. The hood or canopy above may be recessed in several orders, as at Compton Dundon. Splendid examples of the Early English period are to be found, among others at Cheddar, Shepton Mallet and Stoke-sub-Hamdon, each having two bowls, supported on pillars perfectly preserved, with fine mouldings of the period. There are two ruined double piscinas of the same period at Glastonbury Abbey, in the chapel of St. Thomas of Canterbury and in another of unknown dedication, in the N. transept. Both niches are exceptionally high and the bowls nearly  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ft. in diameter. At Curry Rivel is a piscina of Transitional Early English to Decorated, some 4 ft. above the floor, with two pillars supporting round-headed capitals beside the niche and the fine cusped canopy with roll moulding. The whole is surmounted by a carved finial. The bowl is cinque-foiled, ornamented below with Early English dog-tooth. At Wells Cathedral, I had hoped to find an Early English piscina, but none is earlier than the 15th century, with the exception of one example. In Bishop Bubwith's Chantry of 1424, the piscina on the wall by the entrance rests on a pillar, the drain, partly broken away, having three holes. A somewhat similar example is in Bishop Sugar's Chantry, the octagonal intact bowl on a pillar, having eight small drain holes. At the E. end of the choir aisle, the piscina in the Chapel of St. John the Baptist has an ogee arch.

Two other features of special interest must also be noted in connection with the cathedral. Bond, in his *The Chancel of English Churches* (1916) refers to a "floor piscina" in the N.W. tower chapel, now the choir vestry of the cathedral. It consists of a



round hole 4" in diameter at the base, and  $6\frac{1}{2}$ " above, the rim flush with the stone in which it is sunk, not at floor level as Bond assumes, but  $17\frac{1}{2}$ ' above the original floor, situated S. of the position in which an altar may once have stood. The piscina has no basin, but is merely a hole large enough to receive the rinsing of the chalice.

On first examination of this feature, I assumed that it was sited in a stone bench. Further inspection, however, shows that the hole is in a block of stone 2' 4" to the S. from the base of a pillar, the hole itself being  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " from the N. edge of the stone, the end of which, being visible, shows that it did not, at least at that point, extend further. The floor of the chapel is covered with modern boarding, with no further evidence of stone work. A space in the E. wall, however, beyond the piscina, suggests that an altar may originally have stood there.

We know that the stone (first assumed to be a bench) in which the piscina is placed is  $17\frac{1}{2}$ ' above the original floor level. The floor is now boarded over for 8' 3" to a platform N. of the piscina stone, as well as over the rest of the building. We cannot determine if a bench of the same height as the block originally continued round the wall of the chapel, beyond the assumed altar, as no sign of one is visible to-day, the space being blocked by a modern cupboard.

Having no diagnostic features by which its date may be determined, we may assume that the piscina was placed in position when the lower portion of the N.W. tower was built, i.e. in 1324.

Another object of much interest, in the Treasury of the Cathedral, is the pillared bowl on the left of the entrance, which Bond (*ibid*) describes as a piscina, but which, on examination, is proved conclusively to have been designed for another purpose. It is a five-sided stone bowl, 2' by 1' 3" in diameter, resting on a short stone pillar placed on a stone bench below, the whole attached to the wall. Within the bowl is a drain, guarded by a carved hound holding a bone, thus exemplifying the prevalent humour of the medieval craftsmen.

The chamber was originally built as a Treasury, and has never served in another capacity. For several reasons, the piscina-like structure could not have been used for the purpose hitherto assigned to it :

- (a) Since it is on the west wide of the building, it could not have served as a piscina for an altar.

- (b) The size and shallowness of the large bowl precludes such a function.
- (c) Mass would not have been celebrated in a building such as a Treasury.

Two reasons may be considered in regard to its presence in this building. It is probable that the custodian or guardian needed, from time to time, to wash his hands before re-entering the Cathedral proper. The bowl, with the drain, might well have been intended as a lavebo or wash basin, and used solely for that purpose. The Treasury also would naturally be the chamber or store-room in which were kept the Eucharistic vessels for the celebration of the Mass. From time to time these vessels would need to be washed, which might explain the presence of the bowl with its drain beside the door.

An example of a very simple bowl, without canopy or ornament, is at Greinton. In the window sill of the S. wall of the chancel, near the altar, the piscina, probably of earlier date than the wall itself, has one of its fluted divisions projecting below an overhang of the side of the window. The bowl is perfectly preserved.

Among the most decorative examples that I have so far seen in Somerset is that at Street. The canopy, of the 14th century, has three finials, the tops restored, the shafts below showing the typical decoration of the period. The two outer shafts end at the base in a crude face between arms raised as if to support the pillars above. The bowl is extremely shallow and very wide, and projects beyond the wall. It is ornamented with the ball-flower ornament, and the whole design is unusually pleasing. The piscina at Butleigh in the S. wall of the chancel near the altar, has a square surround, and a projecting bowl resting upon a pedestal, the lower apex of the bowl ending in a carved boss.

In some churches, the piscinas have wholly disappeared. This is the case in Over and Nether Stowey, but good examples are to be found at Cannington and Bridgwater. In the former, the 15th century piscina has a four sided bowl, three sides of which project beyond the wall below. The niche enclosing the whole has a rounded back, in the centre of which is a small moulded credence, the niche again enclosed by a moulded surround. The piscina is placed in the wall on the S. side of the altar, approximately  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ft.



above floor level. In a side chapel in the S. aisle of the same church close to the present altar, is a niche containing an octagonal bowl, below an ogee arch.

At Bridgwater, the chief piscina, as usual S. of the altar, is in a niche surmounted by a trefoiled arch, and has a shelf at the back and sides of the bowl, in which the drain is placed. The diversity of position and adjacent features, to the piscina is a study of great interest. At Frome, as also at Boxgrove Priory in Sussex, a piscina is sited high up in the respond of the S. side of the chancel arch, showing that an altar once stood on the platform of the rood loft.

Another unusual form of piscina at Meare, near Glastonbury, is an example of the 14th century, where an ogee arch is angled to the N.W., the bowl to the W., allowing room for the placing of the cruets. The niche itself is flush with the wall, facing N.

At St. Mary's Taunton, the usual position of sedilia and piscina is reversed, the former being beside the altar, the latter to the west, the whole complex of the 15th century. The piscina has a credence the bowl being covered or destroyed. A fine ogee arch is set in a moulded frame, below which is a second ogee arch with cinquefoiled divisions.

At Compton Dundon, the piscina forms part of a complex together with three sedilia, the whole of the 14th century ; a projecting bowl with fluted interior, and a credence above, are both below an ogee arch with a cusped hood.

At Charlton Mackrell a hagioscope, enabling the priest at a side altar to view the High Altar during the celebration of Mass, has a beautifully carved piscina inserted in the floor of the squint. Its siting is less unusual than is generally realized. Parker (*ibid*) illustrates a somewhat similar design under a 14th century canopy at Enford, Wiltshire, the piscina almost flush with the edge of the squint. Another example is at Clapton-in-Gordano. Other features showing diversity of position may often be observed.

An interesting example from a church of another county is at Old Frensham, in Hampshire, where a single-bowl piscina of the 14th century is placed, contrary to usual practice, to the west of a small aumbry in the S. wall of the church ; that is to say the aumbry and not the piscina is level with the High Altar. At Bentley, in the same county, the piscina has a rounded arch, carved with Norman

chevron, the bowl and setting being of modern restoration. This piscina is flanked by sedilia open at the back, so that the priests at the altar in the S. chapel could, through the opening, obtain a view of the chancel and the High Altar. In the vestry, in the N. aisle, paralld to the chancel, is a 14th century piscina. It is evident that, although now built up, the present dividing wall was originally absent, so that, similarly to the S., the N. chapel, now a vestry, also obtained an uninterrupted view of the High Altar. This is an interesting example of the placing of three altars with their respective piscinas, in a straight line with each other. Such comparisons are of great interest, but space does not allow us to deal more fully with them.

Piscinas will be described in greater detail as we proceed. The foregoing remarks may serve as an introduction to this interesting study. Every county in England possesses examples varying in the degree of excellence of their mouldings and design, in some cases unique. Local specimens should be noted, as such observations are of great value and their recording is long overdue.

Lastly as to dating. This, even approximately, is often difficult to determine. Restored piscinas are usually easy to assess in that the modern work is, at least to an experienced eye, different in finish from that of the earlier periods. But some medieval piscinas possess few or no features sufficiently diagnostic to date them. They may be earlier or later than the present fabric. Care must be exercised and all relative features taken into consideration when trying to determine to what period in Norman or Gothic architecture they belong.

The arrangement of piscinas in this paper is planned according to the alphabetical list of churches in the Diocesan Directory of 1956. After much consideration this appeared the easiest method of reference. In the present section, the piscinas begin at Allerton or Chapel Allerton and continue to Worle, Weston-super-Mare, i.e. those of the Axbridge Deanery including the Axbridge, Burnham and Locking districts. The dedication is also given. Where the piscina is missing, as in a few instances, its absence is noted. It is hoped that this plan may be found helpful for the guidance of archaeologists in the hitherto neglected study of the piscinas of Somerset.

In conclusion I would like to record my warm thanks to Mr. C. Sansome, F.S.A. (Scot.), and Mr. Derek Blackwell for his co-operation in the photographing and preparation of some examples mentioned in the text.



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## SOMERSET PISCINAS

## ARCHDEACONRY OF WELLS

**1. Axbridge Deanery : 1. Axbridge District.****Allerton or Chapel Allerton.** Dedication unknown.

Much restored piscina in S. wall of chancel. Modern shallow projecting bowl with drain in recess with rounded back below 3 cusped arch. c. 13th-14th c.

**Axbridge.** St. John the Baptist.

Piscina in S. wall of chancel by sedilia. Bowl with fluted divisions and drain, below tall cusped arch with chamfered sides, approx.  $4\frac{1}{2}'$  in height and  $1'$  from floor level. Space for cruets on either side and at back and front of bowl. Base of niche and bowl may be later than canopy. c. 15th c.

**Cheddar.** St. Andrew.

1. Fine 13th c. double-bowled E.E. piscina in chancel. Canopy with roll moulding ending in moulded shoulder arch. Wide credence behind bowls, the diameter of which is  $7\frac{1}{2}$ ". Width of niche 1', width of shelf  $6\frac{1}{2}$ ".

2. In S. aisle E.E. double-bowled piscina, with bowls projecting from wall except for shallow fluted depression behind, in which is carved a leaf, and circular except where flattened against back of niche which they almost touch. The western bowl front to back measures  $6\frac{1}{2}$ ", the eastern 5". Both bowls decorated below with foliage of the period. Drains cemented up. An aumbry near piscina in E. wall. 13th c.

**Compton Bishop, Axbridge.** St. Andrew.

Fine double E.E. piscina niche in S. wall of chancel, in niche with 2 engaged and one detached shaft with bell capitals supporting a cusped and double-moulded arch. Between this and a higher arch is a tympanum containing a small aumbry. Plain shallow bowls with drains set approx. 2" from edge of recess, and  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ' above floor level. Space for cruets. 13th c.

**Draycott, Cheddar.** St. Peter. Modern, no piscina.

**Henton, Wells.** Christ Church. Modern, no piscina.

**Loxton, Axbridge.** St. Andrew. **With Christon.** Blessed Virgin Mary.

In N. aisle chancel chapel two piscinas, a wall dividing the chapel from chancel. (a) In small niche in angle of E. wall, fluted shallow bowl with drain, on bracket at angle between E. and S. walls. (b) To W., in extension of S. wall, second single-bowled fluted piscina under cusped and moulded arch, with bowl at edge of niche.  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ' above floor level. Single drain. Space at side for cruets. 14th c. (?)

**Christon.** Modern, no piscina.

**Priddy, Wells.** St. Lawrence.

In sill of window in S. wall of chancel, 14th c. piscina. Plain circular deep bowl with drain, approx.  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " from edge of sill, and 6' above floor level, E. side of window being wider than W.: the window is slightly splayed and suggests a low-side window.



**Rodney Stoke, Cheddar.** St. Leonard.

In S. wall of chancel fine piscina in niche, approx. 1'10" in width and 1'4" in depth, height 3'2", with chamfered hood arch. Fluted bowl 1'10" in diameter with drain. 14th c.

**Theale, Wedmore.** Christ Church. Modern, no piscina.**Wedmore.** St. Mary.

1. In S. wall of chancel piscina in chamfered stone niche with moulded and cusped canopy. Bowl with drain, credence at back of niche slightly to W. side. 14th-15th c.

2. In N. chancel chapel, 3 sided projecting bowl with 4 drain-holes under carved Tudor rose, below cusped and chamfered recess with arch above. Credence behind shelf. 14th c.

3. Incorporated into wall of 14th c. window in S. chapel, piscina with rounded stone hood, slightly splayed to S.W., below which is a fluted bowl with drain set back from front of recess. Base of E. side of window rests upon the hood, showing that the piscina must originally have been part of the window complex. Bond (*ibid*).

4. In E. wall of S. chapel projecting bowl; two-holed drain with broken ornament, space behind for cruets. Tall cusped and moulded arch above recess. 14th c.

**Westbury, Wells.** St. Lawrence.

1. In S. wall of chancel 14th c. piscina with octagonal projecting bowl with drain, below cusped arch. Space at back for cruets.

2. In S. wall of S. aisle projecting bowl with deep fluted basin. Tall recess with cusped arch. No space for cruets except in front of bowl. 14 c.

**Wookey, Wells.** St. Matthew.

1. In chancel by altar shallow hexagonal bowl with drain, and flat stone front, slightly projecting beyond niche which is built into a pillar, under plain cusped upper projecting arch. Original credence replaced by modern shelf, perhaps with original slots for bolts. 14th c.

2. In hagnioscope in N. wall remains of shallow projecting bowl with front cut away ; no drain, but fragments of decorated boss. 14th c. (?)

3. In S. wall ruined remnants of bowl, cut away in front. Moulded arch above and fragments of cusping. 14th c.

4. In S. chancel chapel medieval piscina recess with modern circular surround and a (perhaps) original semi-circular chamfer which continues to base of niche. No bowl or drain, but credence at back. Date difficult to determine, perhaps 14th c., much restored.

### **1. Axbridge Deanery : 2. Burnham District.**

**Badgworth, Axbridge.** St. Congar. **With Biddisham.** St. John the Baptist.

1. In S. wall of chancel restored 14th c. piscina below pointed arch ending in a moulded and carved finial. Modern fluted bowl with drain. Places all round for cruets. Lovely design.

2. In hagnioscope of N. chancel chapel, piscina with bowl and drain projecting beyond squint at lower level than the E. opening, which is raised a foot or two above. Space for cruets. 14th c.

### **Biddisham.**

Small piscina Trans. E.E. to Decorated, under window ledge in S. wall of chancel. Arch 2 cusped with chamfered front and sides. Shallow and fluted bowl, with boss to drain, filling nearly the whole of the recess. Very simple. About 2' above floor level.

**Berrow, Burnham-on-Sea.** Blessed Virgin Mary.

Attached to S. wall of chancel small shallow piscina with single shallow bowl and drain at back. Below bowl, carved wreath-like surround of foliage, the whole resting on a moulded and pointed shelf, the bowl set in the circle of foliage like a cup within a saucer. Beautiful design. 13th c.

**Blackford, Wedmore.** Holy Trinity. Modern, no piscina.

**Bleadon, Weston-super-Mare.** SS. Peter and Paul.

Slightly pointed, recessed and cusped arch with narrow raised stone-facing at back. 5 sided bowl with flat back and evidently



modern. The chief interest of this complex is that it is placed in the N. wall of the chancel, a rare example. The bowl is supported on chamfered base on the floor of the niche, approx. 4' above floor level. It is possible that the piscina is not in its original position. 14th c. (?)

**Breane, Burnham-on-Sea.** St. Bridget.

In S. wall of chancel bracket piscina, cusped ; bowl with drain in wall at back, towards which slope the 3 fluted divisions. Approx. 1½' above floor level. 14th c.

**Brent Knoll, Highbridge.** St. Michael.

In niche set back from wall and ending in an ogee arch, cusped and moulded piscina in wall of S. aisle chapel (now vestry). Credence and also space for cruets beside bowl, which is shallow with 4 flutings and drain. 14th c.

**Burnham.** St. Andrew.

1. In S. wall of chancel, plain chamfered surround to recess with splayed opening. Shallow fluted piscina with blocked drain. Restored, date uncertain.

2. Piscina in S. aisle chapel, semi-circular cusped arch with moulded sides. Not Norman, perhaps 15th c. Restored.

**East Brent, Highbridge.** Blessed Virgin Mary.

1. In S. wall of chancel large rectangular niche, 3 arched, of red sandstone with two engaged and two detached shafts. On E. side fluted and shallow bowl with drain. To W. spaces for cruets, there being no second piscina. It is possible that there was originally a second in this position. To the west two carved sedilia unrelated to piscina. 13th c.

2. In N. aisle chapel niche with curved top ; bowl filled up. Difficult to date, perhaps 13th-14th c.

**Highbridge.** St. John the Evangelist. Modern, no piscina.

**Lympham, Weston-super-Kare.** St. Christopher.

Restored 15th c. piscina in E. wall of N. aisle chapel. Cusped and pointed arch ; drain filled up but foliated base. Three-sided bowl with chamfered overhang. 14th c. (?)

**Mark, Highbridge.** Holy Cross.

1. Close to E. wall in wall of S. chancel, recess approx. 3' in height with pointed arch and modern central boss. Shallow bowl with drain, three sides projecting, and chamfered front. 14th-15th c.

2. In N. chancel chapel niche with moulded, cusped and slightly pointed arch, approx. 2½' in height. Narrow credence; deep bowl with squared sides, the front presumably cut away. Carved flower above drain. 15th c.

**Weare, Axbridge.** St. Gregory.

1. In S. wall of chancel, niche in rough stone-work with round top and chamfered sides. Bowl without drain. Perhaps 14th c.

2. Piscina below and to E. side of window in S. aisle of chancel, with cusped arch set in rough stone-work. Shallow bowl with fluted drain, set back in wall. 14th c.

**1. Axbridge Deanery : 3. Locking District.****Banwell and Sandford.** St. Andrew.

In S. wall of chancel painted, canopied and chamfered niche with carved floral frieze and gilded credence, both restored. Round shallow bowl below without drain. Date of church 1380.

**Sandford.** Modern, no piscina.

**Blagdon, Bristol.** St. Andrew. **With Charterhouse-on-Mendip.** St. Hugh.

Piscina of outstanding interest. In S. wall of chancel round-headed modern niche, above medieval trefoiled bowl with drain, under projection of which are 4 archaic figures perhaps typifying the Evangelists or Fathers of the Church, each 1' approx. in height below a roundheaded arch and separated by cushion-headed pillars with roughly-fashioned bases. Regarded by British Museum as Saxon, by Bond (*ibid*) as Norman.

**Charterhouse-on-Mendip.** Modern, no piscina.

**Churchill, Bristol.** St. John the Baptist. **With Langford.** Blessed Virgin Mary.



1. In S. wall of chancel lovely piscina in E. splay of window. Projecting shallow stone bowl cinque foiled, with drain in centre, attached to wall by slightly pointed projection. Single pointed moulded arch above a second chamfered one below. Place behind for cruets. Late 13th or early 14th c.

2. Below window in S. nave aisle piscina with shallow foliated bowl and round drain. Part of front of bowl has been broken away. Very small spaces for cruets on either side and at back, between which flutings of bowl extend. Probably 14th c.

**Langford.** Modern, no piscina.

**Congresbury, Bristol.** St. Andrew.

1. In S. wall of chancel lovely late 13th c. piscina with drain on W. side of fluted bowl extending nearly from edge to edge of recess, which is divided by detached E.E. shaft supporting elaborately moulded arches with fine bosses in centre and on either side. Narrow credence at back extending across recess. Also space for cruets to E. Outer mouldings on either side of niche carried to base without shafts. Approx. 3' above floor level. Fine workmanship and rich effect. 13th c.

2. Below sloping window ledge approx. 3' above floor level in S. wall of S. aisle chapel, recess with moulded hood, and bowl with 3 flutings set slightly to right of recess, the middle division to S.W. approx. 2" from front. Drain filled up. Space for cruets at either side and in front. 14th c.

**Hutton, Weston-super-Mare.** Blessed Virgin Mary. Modern, no piscina.

**Kewstoke, Weston-super-Mare.** St. Paul.

In S. wall of chancel attached to base of low-side window, between it and E. wall, plain chamfered niche slightly splayed to W. No bowl or drain. 15th c.

**Locking, Weston-super-Mare.** St. Augustine. Rebuilt, no piscina.

**Puxton, Bristol.** St. Saviour. Congresbury **With Hewish St. Anne** and

**Wick St. Lawrence.** Chapelry of St. Lawrence.

Complete restoration. Piscina recess in S. wall of chancel which may be 15th c. Drain filled up, and two cusps to arch is all that remains of original work.

**Hewish St. Anne.** Modern, no piscina.

**Wick St. Lawrence.** Modern, no piscina.

**Shipham, Winscombe.** St. Leonard. **with Rowbarrow.** St. Michael and All Angels. Modern, no piscina.

**Rowberrow.**

Attached to S. wall of chancel piscina, and 2 sedilia with chamfered sides and cusped arches. Piscina with deep drains below cusped arch, the whole complex almost entirely restored.

**Uphill, Weston-super-Mare.** St. Nicholas. No piscina.

**Weston-super-Mare.** All churches modern except St. John the Baptist which has been rebuilt and piscina destroyed.

**Winscombe.** St. James **with Sandford.** All Saints.

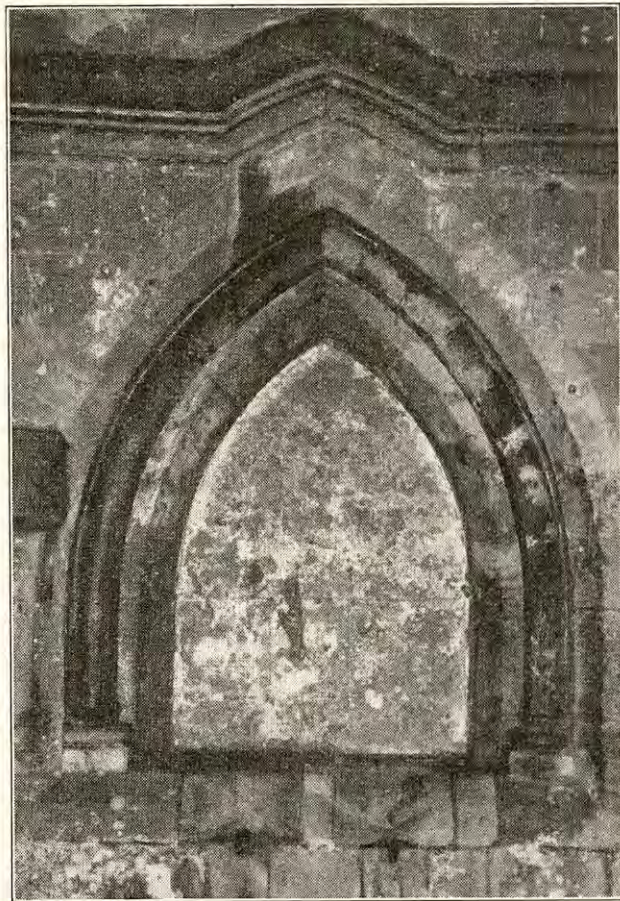
On S. wall of chancel plain 14th c. piscina with moulded and pointed arch above bowl which is placed at edge of recess and then cut away. Drain with worn moulded ornament and two open holes, the others filled up. Place for cruets on either side.

**Sandford.** Modern, no piscina.

**Worle, Weston-super-Mare.** St. Martin.

In S. wall of nave near chancel arch, restored hood and shelf in 14th century piscina niche with bowl, but no drain. Probably removed from original position.



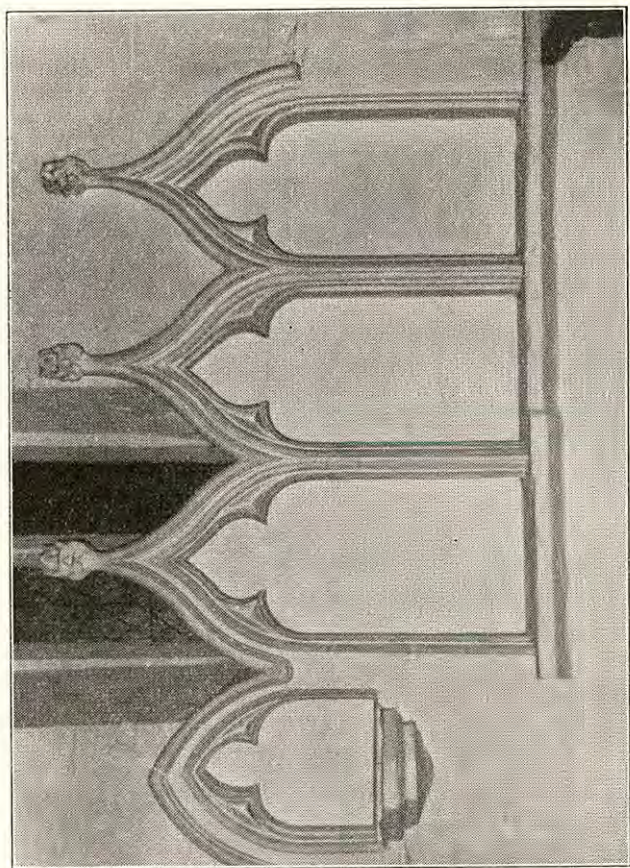


Chapel of St. Thomas, Glastonbury Abbey.



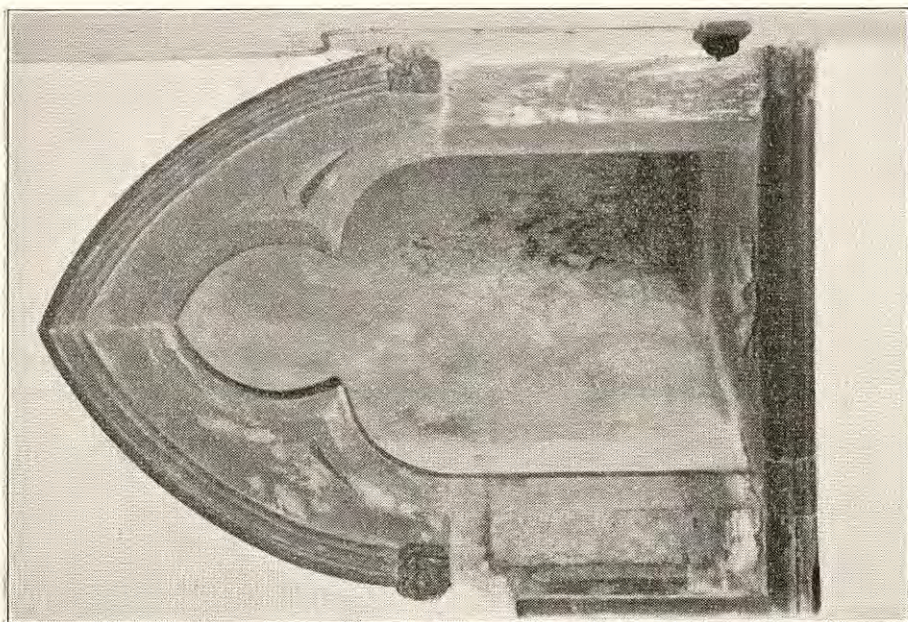
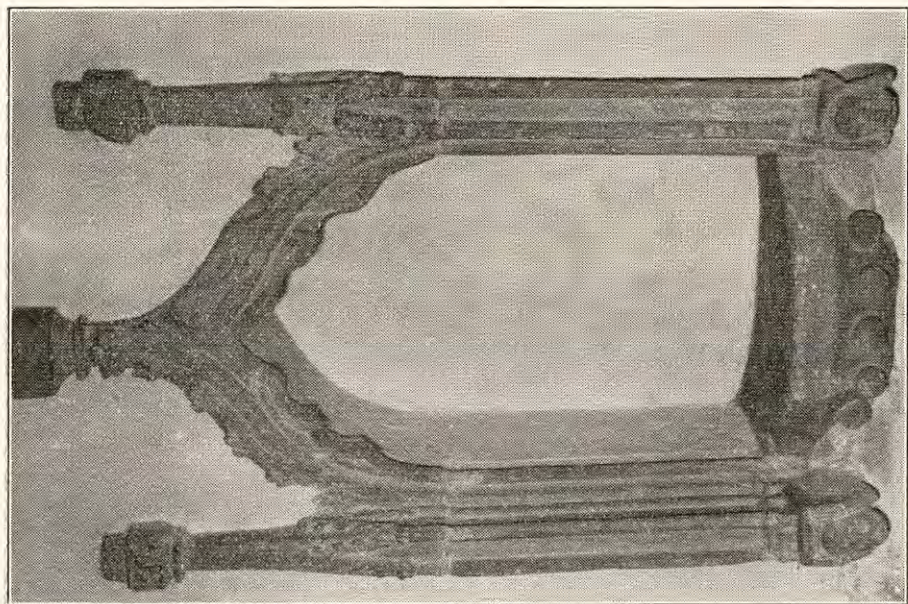
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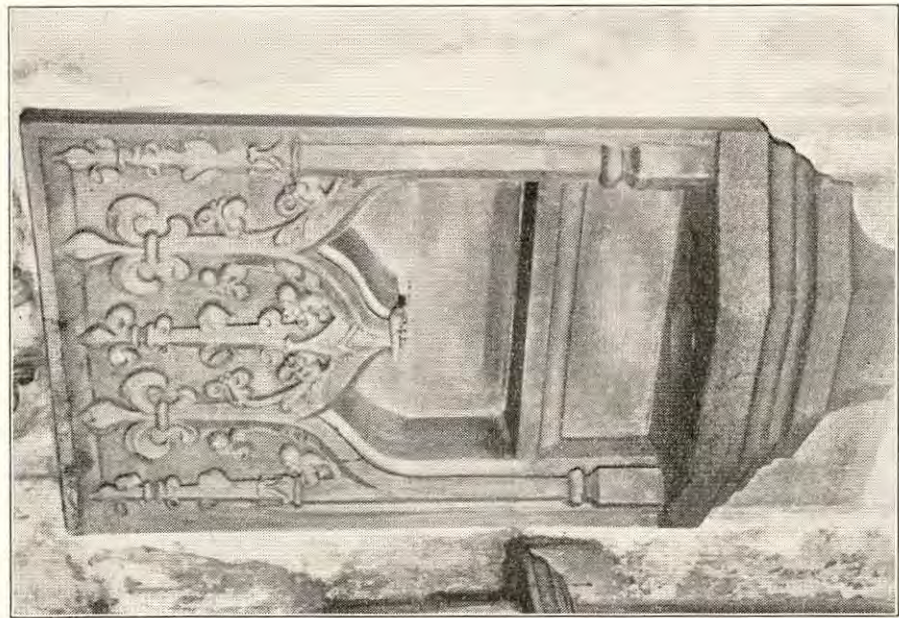


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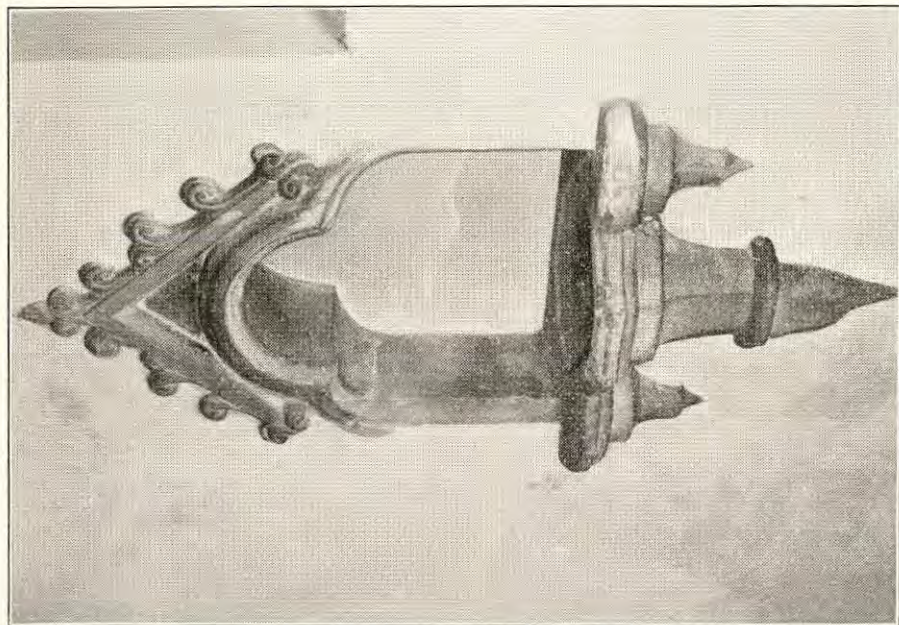








St. Mary's, Oxford



St. Benjamin's, Glastonbury