

EKJ

*An early pewter coffin-chalice and paten found
in Westminster Abbey*

By the Rev. H. F. WESTLAKE, F.S.A.

IN a paper read before the St. Paul's Ecclesiological Society as far back as 12th November 1885, the late Sir William Hope laid down the main principles to be adopted in determining the dates of early chalices and patens of English manufacture. So far as I am aware nothing that has been written since has served to modify these principles in any marked degree. He classified the pre-Reformation chalices in eight sections. Between the first four and the last four of these there was a marked distinction, due to the spread in the fourteenth century of the custom of laying down the chalice on the paten to drain after the ablutions. The effect of this custom was the abandonment of the round-footed chalice, which would be unstable in such a position, and the making of chalices with hexagonal bases. For as practical a reason the hemispherical design of the bowl of the chalice was abandoned in favour of a conical shape which would drain the more easily in such a position.

The chalice under review belongs to the earlier or round-based group, and it will be convenient, therefore, to note the four subdivisions into which this group may be separated:—

Type A. c. 1200–c. 1250.

Broad and shallow bowl. Stem, knot, and foot plain and circular.

Type B. c. 1250–c. 1275.

Broad and shallow bowl. Stem and knot wrought separately from bowl and foot, one or other (or both) polygonal, foot plain and circular.

Type C. c. 1275–c. 1300.

Broad and shallow bowl. Stem and knot as in *B*; circular foot, but the spread worked into decorated lobes.

Type D. c. 1300–c. 1350.

Bowl deeper and more conical. Otherwise as in *C*.

One further distinction remains to be drawn. The earliest chalices are found to have a quasi-lip, but this seems to have been soon abandoned. Its occurrence, therefore, in a particular chalice may be of as much, or perhaps more, importance than other characteristics which divide the sections. Of the earliest section but three examples were known to survive in 1885. Two of these are at Chichester and Lincoln respectively, and the third, which

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ESTLAMP, F.S.A.

The Ecclesiological Society as late Sir William Hope laid emphasis in determining the dates of English manufacture. So far as written since has served to a great degree. He classified the sections. Between the first and second was a marked distinction, a century of the custom of the chalice to drain after the ablutions. The abandonment of the round-based chalice in such a position, and the use of circular bases. For as practical a design the bowl of the chalice was made to drain the

of the earlier or round-based chalice, therefore, to note the four sections may be separated:

1. Stem, knot, and foot plain and

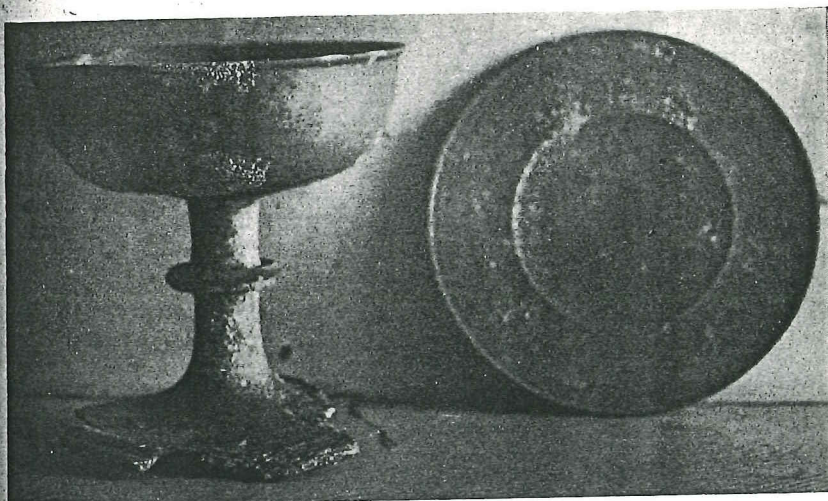
2. Stem and knot wrought in metal, one or other (or both) circular.

3. Stem and knot as in *B*; circular bowl into decorated lobes.

4. Otherwise as in *C*.
To be drawn. The earliest example, but this seems to have been the first, in a particular chalice of more importance than others. Of the earliest section to survive in 1885. Two of these survive, and the third, which

until recent years was in use at Berwick St. James, Wilts., is now at the British Museum. I shall claim that this example from the Abbey provides a fourth. As will be seen from the illustration, it has this quasi-lip as well as the other characteristics of Type *A*. What, perhaps, the picture does not completely show is that the base is circular.

The chalice and paten were found in a stone coffin accidentally disclosed in 1913 near the Vere monument in the east aisle of the north transept. The coffin had evidently suffered one removal at



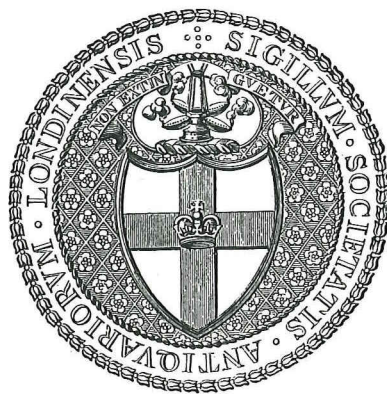
Pewter coffin-chalice and paten from Westminster Abbey.

least from its unknown original place of deposit. The lid with a cross may still be seen close to where it was found. The chalice and paten were replaced with the bones of the occupant of the coffin, which is now sealed by the pavement of the aisle. It is not possible now to determine to whom the coffin belonged, but if the chalice may be allowed to date it as belonging to the first half of the thirteenth century, it may well be that the bones are those of Abbot Richard de Berkyng, who died in 1246 and was first interred in the old Lady Chapel. Like Katherine de Valois, he must have been removed when the chapel was demolished, but no trustworthy record remains to show where. The arguments for this identification depend mainly on the elimination of other possibilities and need not here be detailed. To Mr. Thomas Wright, Clerk of the Works, belongs the credit of photographing the chalice and paten before their replacement, and thus preserving a record of some importance which would otherwise have been lost.

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