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The Dowdeswell christening bowl

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NOTES

THE DOWDESWELL CHRISTENING BOWL

EDWARD ROGERS, the last male representative of the Rogers of Dowdeswell, who died in 1810, bequeathed to the parish church a silver 'monteith' punch-bowl to be used as a christening bowl. It bears the inscription:— 'This Monteith the ancient christening bowl of the Rogers of the Upper House was left by Edward Rogers, Esq. for a christening bowl to the Parish Church of Dowdeswell He died 25 August. This was given in November 1810'.

The bowl was described by Dr A. C. Fryer in *Transactions*, 1927, xlix, 128, and is illustrated.

The silver bowl would be given as a substitute for some common bowl which, according to a not infrequent practice in the 18th and 19th centuries, was placed in the font to save the trouble of filling it every time there was a baptism.

The bowl continued to be so used until the late Bishop Ellicott (1863-1905), on some occasion when he came to Dowdeswell, told the Rev. William Coxwell-Rogers, rector from 1854-94, that the practice must cease and the font be used. At a later date, when money was wanted to repair the church, the then rector sold it to a member of the Coxwell-Rogers family (the representative and heirs of the donor)—it is said for £20. The purchaser bequeathed it to the wife of Colonel E. E. Beale-Browne, of Withington Court, who till recently was in possession of it.

The bowl is described (p. 69) in *Church Plate of Gloucestershire*, published by the Society in 1906, when it was among the Dowdeswell church plate.

When Dr Fryer was preparing his concluding paper (*Trans. B.G.A.S.*, 1927, xlix) on Gloucestershire fonts he sent a proof of his description of the bowl, including

the words 'is preserved by Colonel E. E. Beale-Browne at the Court, Withington', to Colonel Beale-Browne, who replied that all was quite in order.

In the illustrated guide to the Church Congress at Cheltenham, 1928, attention was called in the 'Notes on the Church Plate Collection', by the Rev. J. T. Evans (p. 90), to the disappearance of the bowl from the church. This aroused interest, and the Council of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society has been considering the matter and making enquiries. The Executive Committee of the Society of Antiquaries has also had its attention called to the loss of the bowl, and has promised its assistance.

In reply to an enquiry, the Diocesan Registrar reports that he can find no record of a faculty for the sale of the bowl. The present rector of Dowdeswell states that he has never seen the bowl, and that there is no record in the vestry books as to the sale. Colonel Beale-Browne was also approached directly and after giving the information set out in the fourth paragraph above he stated:—

'When church repairs were required the Rector (since dead) sold it to one of the (Coxwell-Rogers) family, and on the death of the purchaser it was left to my wife, but I do not care for keeping church property, so sold it but do not know who bought it or where it went'.

On being asked again whether he would say when and where the bowl was sold, he replied:—

'I informed you in my former letter that the Dowdeswell christening bowl had been sold, and the money received from it expended on church expenses, therefore the parish has nothing more to do with it. I am unable to give you any information as to its whereabouts'.

The above is all that it has been possible to discover and this statement is printed in the hope that some definite information may be forthcoming.