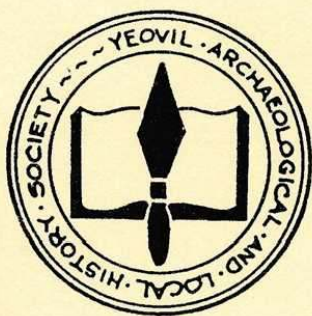


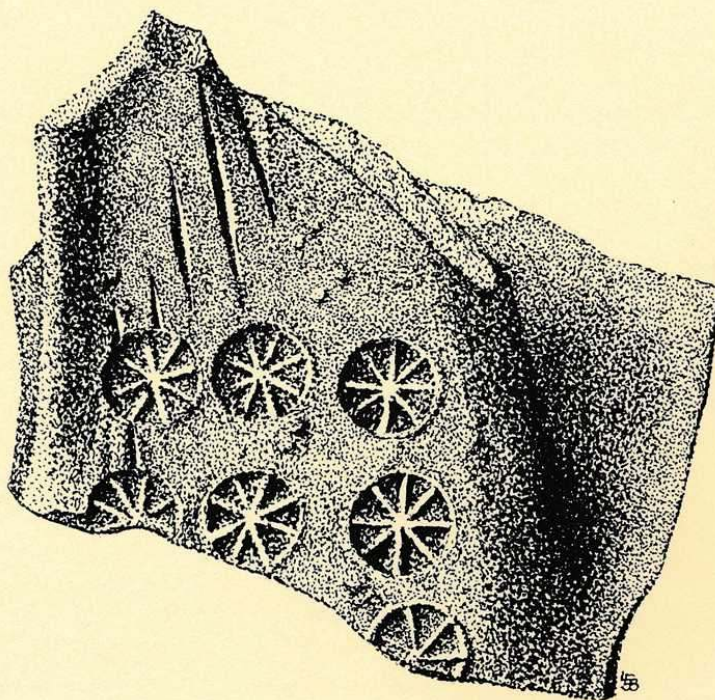
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PLATE 34 The Font at Puddletown, Dorset.

Photo. Brian Gittos

This font is carved with a diaper pattern of acanthus leaves bordered by entwined stems. There is a thin circumferential band near the top, which is overlain by the outermost curling buds of the topmost leaves. The R.C.H.M. (Dorset Vol. III, Part 2, p.225) dates it to the 12th century. Pevsner (Dorset p.350) describes it as 'a very fine Norman piece with an all-over palmette motif' and comments that it is 'tumbler shaped'. However, there is very little on which to date the font. The acanthus or palmette decoration is based on classical models, which relate to Corinthian capitals and whilst this motif is found on Romanesque decorative sculpture, it is also commonly employed in Anglo-Saxon manuscript painting of the 10th century. Even the buds overlapping the thin band are often found, where leaves overlap the framing lines of illuminated pages. Good parallels for the scheme as a whole are difficult to find but the closest, of which we are aware, is on another font, at Rendcomb in Gloucestershire ('Baptismal Fonts' by Tyrrell-Green, Fig. 49). The the bowl of that font



Plate 35(a) Detail of Puddletown Font



Plate 35(b) Detail of Puddletown Font

may be a copy of the Romanesque font in Hereford Cathedral, with 12 figures of the apostles standing in a series of round arched niches. However, the small pedestal is carved in a similar manner to the Puddletown example. The stems intertwine in the same way, although they are double stranded. The leaves have collared bands and are carved in a more precise manner. It may be that the two sections of the Rendcomb font are not contemporary. Until more research has been done it seems that the dating of the Puddletown font should remain open.

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