

THE FONT AT THE CHURCH OF ST. CLEMENT, SANDWICH, AND THE HALLUM-BERNEY PROBLEM

J.B. ROSSETER

INTRODUCTION

This article is arranged in four sections as follows:

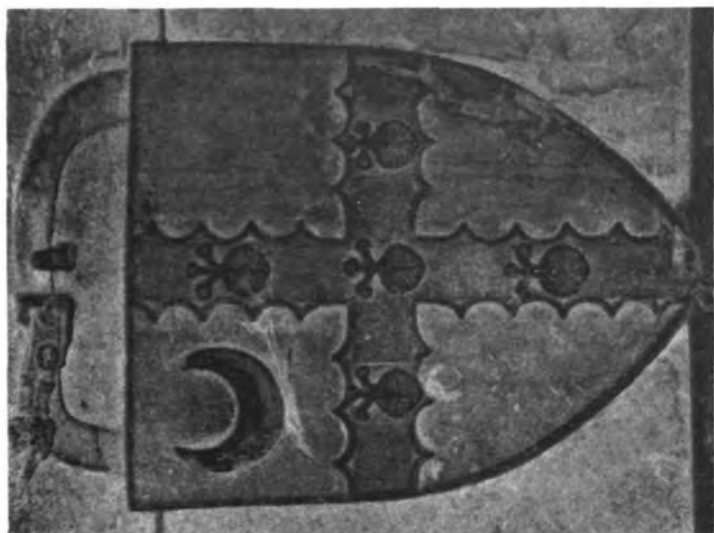
- (1) A description of the Sandwich font;
- (2) Descriptions of the stylistically similar fonts at Margate, Herne and Sittingbourne in an effort to arrive at a near date for the Sandwich font based on the architecture and ornament of the four compared;
- (3) Notes on Berney and Hallum, either of whom might own the Arms on the south face of the Sandwich font; and
- (4) A discussion of the possible origins of the Sandwich font in the light of evidence found in the three preceding sections.

THE FONT AT ST. CLEMENT'S, SANDWICH

The ornate Perpendicular font consists of an octagonal basin with pronounced mouldings at the top of the bowl and at the point where it curves away to the octagonal stem below. The whole stands on two broad steps. At the corners of the stem are two-tiered buttresses each carved with a lancet in the lower section. Between the buttresses are trefoiled niches having moulded bases on which formerly stood images. Beneath each niche, starting with the north side and moving clockwise are the following carvings:

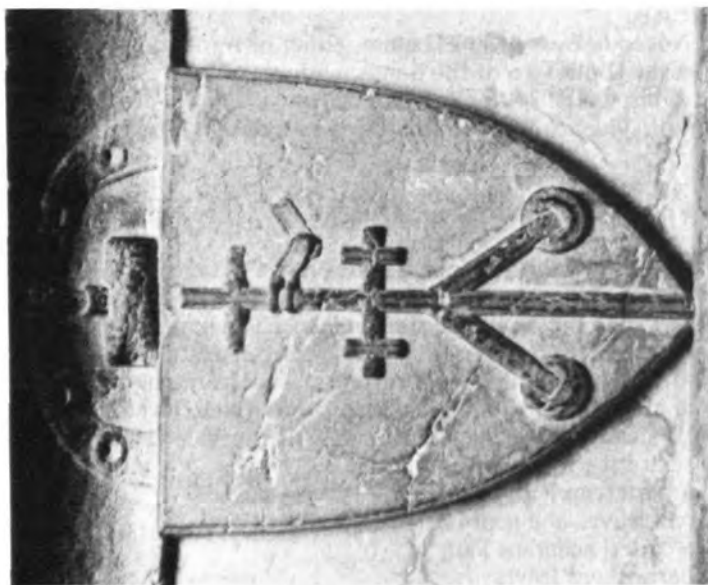
- (1) a buttercup leaf;
- (2) oak leaves and acorns;
- (3) a curled acanthus leaf;
- (4) berries and leaves;

PLATE II



St. Clement's, Sandwich: The Font, South Face: The Hallum/
Berney Arms.

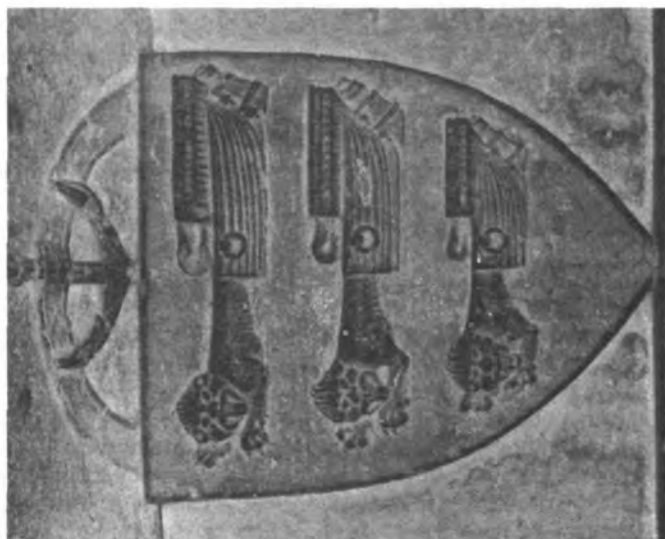
PLATE I



St. Clement's, Sandwich: The Font, North Face: The Merchant's
Mark.

THE FONT AT THE CHURCH OF ST. CLEMENT, SANDWICH

PLATE IV



St. Clement's, Sandwich: The Font, West Face: The Cinque Ports Arms.

PLATE III



St. Clement's, Sandwich: The Font, East Face: The Royal Arms.

- (5) a fleur-de-lys;
- (6) berries and leaves;
- (7) two tulips with stamens;
- (8) two pears and leaves.

The deep concave moulding above the stem, forming part of the basin, is delicately ornamented at each of the eight corners with a single oak leaf in low relief. Between these, starting from the north side, are eight ornaments, moving clockwise:

- (1) a bat's head with little hands;
- (2) oak leaves and acorns arranged round an acorn cup;
- (3) a grinning head with curled locks;
- (4) a wreath of small leaves;
- (5) a merman in a whelk shell;
- (6) a five-petalled rose;
- (7) an angel holding a shield of St. George;
- (8) a four-petalled formal flower.

Next above comes an emphatic projecting moulding, marking the transition to the vertical panel of the basin's sides which form a plain background for four shields at the cardinal points with four double roses between.

First the shields:

The north shield contains a merchant's mark strongly reminiscent of a wine mark, and indeed there is a wine tun above it.

The east shield displays the Royal Arms of England with New France in the first quarter. This means that the date of the font is later than 1405 (Henry IV *anno regni* 5) when the Royal Arms were altered. The shield strap is upheld on two ostrich feathers.

The south shield is blazoned with a cross engrailed carved with ermine with a crescent in the first quarter. Its ascription to either Hallum or Berney will be discussed more fully later. The shield strap resembling a knight's belt with ornate buckle and strap finial is upheld on a plain hook.

The west shield bears the Arms of Sandwich and the Cinque Ports. Its strap hangs from an anchor, the emblem of St. Clement.

The four great double roses on the font's alternate sides would appear to be identical, but not so. That on the north-east face is more delicately and crisply carved, having a centre of curled petals and well-defined stamens. The remaining three roses are not so carefully modelled and their centres are merely stippled buttons. We must note that these are ordinary double roses to be blazoned in one colour for they have sepals on the outside only. They are not Tudor roses which have sepals on the inner and outer rose.

Above the shields and roses comes a concave moulding containing sixteen decorations including those which support the shield straps.

THE FONT AT THE CHURCH OF ST. CLEMENT, SANDWICH

Starting over the north shield and moving clockwise:

- (1) a wine tun (strap holder);
- (2) a sad head;
- (3) some blackberries;
- (4) a delicate crown;
- (5) ostrich feathers (strap holder);
- (6) a crow or chough;
- (7) a quatrefoil;
- (8) a defaced veiled head;
- (9) a hook (strap holder);
- (10) a grinning head;
- (11) four acorns;
- (12) a lion's head;
- (13) an anchor (strap holder);
- (14) two monkeys;
- (15) a grinning head;
- (16) a devil's head.

Finally comes the topmost heavily projecting moulding at the edge of the font basin. The holes for the lid-lock are still visible. There are also eight holes infilled with lead. The whole font is of hard grey stone similar to that used at Herne and Sittingbourne, and in great contrast to the crumbling stone used for the font at Margate.

THE FONT AT ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST'S, MARGATE

The font at St. John's is very similar in shape to that at Sandwich but the stone of which the basin is made is much decayed and mouldering. The octagonal basin stands on an octagonal stem resting on two broad eight-sided steps.

At the corners of the stem are eight buttresses with between them eight trefoil-headed niches with half-octagon ledges for images as at Sandwich. Beneath each niche and between the buttresses is a square panel containing a formal five-lobed leaf resembling ivy, holly or oak. The underside of the basin is decorated with eight grotesque heads and eight formal leaves similar to those at the base of the stem. Above this decoration is an emphatically projecting moulding typical of the Perpendicular period.

Above this moulding we can now come to the basin itself. The sides facing the cardinal points contain large double roses with petals somewhat more convex than those at Sandwich, their large centres being made up of small balls. The carving is badly crumbled. The south-east and north-west panels contain the Royal Arms of England displaying New France (post 1405) and the north-east and south-west

panels have the Arms of the Cinque Ports, both as at Sandwich. All these coats are badly damaged. The side panels are finally surmounted by a very projecting moulding whose true profile is practically non-existent. It was once decorated with grotesque heads and leaves as below on the basin. The basin itself seems to be made of a sandy stone more crumbly than that of the upholding column.

This font's profile with its two emphatic projecting mouldings strikingly resembles that at Sandwich and is also very comparable with those at Herne and Sittingbourne. One feels that all four were probably designed by the same hand.

THE FONT AT ST. MARTIN'S, HERNE

The font at Herne has points of similarity with those at Sandwich, Margate and Sittingbourne. It is octagonal and has the same pronounced mouldings at the top and bottom of the basin. But it has panels of tracery on the much thicker stem and no buttresses or niches for saints.

It is easily dated by its important heraldry, having round the basin *eight shields of Arms set in squared quatrefoils*:

- N. A chevron bearing three leopards' heads for Laverick;
- NE Three pelicans for Pelham;
- E. Three birds' wings for Saxton;
- SE Three crescents in a border engrailed for Aldon;
- S. The Royal Arms with New France for Henry IV;
- SW The Instruments of Our Lord's Passion;
- W. The See of Canterbury with FitzAlan and Warenne for Archbishop Arundel, 1397-1414; see also Sittingbourne;
- NW Barry with three escutcheons for Halle.

Arundel was the contemporary, friend and patron of Robert Hallum, Archdeacon of Canterbury and later Bishop of Salisbury, whose Arms may or may not be those on the south face of the Sandwich font. He was Archdeacon from 1400-07 and Bishop from 1407-17.

Between the shields at the corners of the basin are small trefoiled panels, while the underside of the basin is decorated with square stylised flowers. The thick stem of the font has each side adorned with two little transomed Perpendicular blind windows, and each side of the base has a border of square quatrefoils.

The general similarity of the fonts at Sandwich, Margate, Herne and Sittingbourne, together with the Royal Arms, the Arms of

THE FONT AT THE CHURCH OF ST. CLEMENT, SANDWICH

Arundel and (possibly) those of Hallum, invite one to think of them as contemporary and to move toward an early dating for the Sandwich font in the time of Robert Hallum. However, we need to know more about both Hallum and Berney.

THE FONT AT ST. MICHAEL'S, SITTINGBOURNE

This font makes the fourth member of the group including Margate, Herne and Sandwich. Like them it is octagonal, it has a buttressed stem, projecting mouldings at the top and bottom of the basin, and decorations linking it with one or other of the group. Stylistically, the four are all of a piece and would appear to belong to the early years of the fifteenth century.

The sides of the Sittingbourne font are decorated as follows:

- N. On a shield the Instruments of Our Lord's Passion as at Herne;
- S. On a shield the Arms of Archbishop Arundel (1397-1414). These occur at Herne, too. At Sandwich their place is taken by the Arms of Archdeacon Hallum, his protégé (if they are not the Arms of Berney);
- E. A shield with a cross patonce;
- W. A plain shield;
- NE Four curled leaves springing from a central wreathed stem to form a square motif, cf. smaller motifs at Sandwich;
- SE A square device of oak leaves and acorns, cf. a similar smaller carving at Sandwich;
- NW A lipped large double rose of Lancaster. This also occurs at Sandwich and Margate;
- SW Four crisp buttercup leaves in a square motif as also on a smaller scale at Sandwich.

The stem of the Sittingbourne font is thick in proportion to its basin, and its panels are not niches but quite plain. Each buttress has a little lancet carved in its upper half. The stem is somewhat restored. The general quality of the carving on a hard grey stone is crisp as at Sandwich and Herne.

As we have shown earlier, the shield on the south face of the font at St. Clement, Sandwich, is blazoned with a cross engrailed carved with ermine and has a crescent in the first quarter. Since there is no colouring the Arms could be ascribed either to Berney or Hallum. We must concern ourselves therefore with some information first on the Berney family and then on Robert Hallum.

THE BERNEY FAMILY

The Berneys (pronounced Barney) are an old Norfolk family dating back to 1174 at Burham. They became influential Norwich merchants, some eventually moving to London where one became a sheriff.

Sir Robert de Berney was the son of John de Berney who was a well-known lawyer and Knight of the Shire in 1346, 1357 and 1368. Robert was a Knight Bachelor to John of Gaunt at Crécy and was granted after that battle a crest of five ostrich feathers alternately azure and gules, according to Mr John Berney, his descendant. He, too, was a Knight of the Shire in 1390, 1394, 1399 and 1402. He was also Sheriff of Norwich during the reign of Henry IV. He married Margaret, 'daughter of John Appleyard or as some say of Walter de Walcote and widow of Roger de Welisham', as it is stated in Volume VIII of Blomefield's *History of Norfolk*. She was heiress of the manor of Counton, near Cromer. Sir Robert died in 1415 and was succeeded by another John de Berney of Witchingham in 1417. He in turn was followed by another John in 1441.

The Berney Arms are given as 'per pale azure and gules a cross engrailed ermine over all'. The crest is a plume of ostrich feathers out of a ducal coronet and the family motto is, '*Nil timere neque timore*'. This is referred to by Mr John Berney and confirmed by Blomefield in Volume XI of his *History of Norfolk* as the old coat, and the new coat is 'quarterly azure and gules with a cross engrailed ermine over all'. The family has continued to serve Norfolk to the present day and has provided the county with a number of High Sheriffs.

Over forty notes on the family in Blomefield's *History of Norfolk* of eleven volumes, and a shorter reference in Walter Rye's *Norfolk Families* (Norwich 1913) failed to produce any reference to or connection with Sandwich. Nevertheless, the Lancastrian link through John of Gaunt and his kingly descendants is an interesting one when we consider the Royal Arms and feathers on the Sandwich font and the ornate belt from which the south shield is suspended.

There were obviously Berneys around at the same time as Robert Hallum but we have not been able to find any real link between either of them and Sandwich.

ROBERT HALLUM

1400-07: Archdeacon of Canterbury and patron of St. Clement, Sandwich;

1407-17: Bishop of Salisbury and diplomat.

THE FONT AT THE CHURCH OF ST. CLEMENT, SANDWICH

Robert Hallum, a native of Warrington, Lancashire, appears to have been born some time before 1370. Educated at Oxford, he became a Bachelor of Law in 1388 and a Doctor in 1403. He was Canon Lawyer to both Archbishops Courtenay and Arundel, and Principal Registrar to the former from 1389 to 1394. By 1399, the year of the deposition of King Richard II, he was Archbishop Arundel's Commissary General and Chancellor of the Court of Canterbury from 1400 to 1406.

On 7th April, 1400, he was appointed Archdeacon of Canterbury, which office he held until 1407, along with the Chancellorship of Oxford University from 1403 to 1406. He held prebends at Bangor, Chichester, Exeter, Salisbury and York together with livings at Halling (Kent), Newington (Oxfordshire), Biddenden (Kent), West Tarring (Sussex), Northfleet (Kent) and Winwick (Lancashire).

The archdeacons of Canterbury had held the patronage of St. Clement, Sandwich, at least since the time of Edward III, so now in the reign of Henry IV, Hallum along with all his other emoluments would have been patron of this important Cinque Port.

He became Bishop of Salisbury on 7th October, 1407, almost by accident. At this time there were conflicts over episcopal appointments between Henry IV of England and the two Popes, Innocent VII and Gregory XII. At one time Archbishop Arundel wanted Hallum as Bishop of London, but was opposed by the King who wanted his own candidate, Langley. In the end, Hallum was given the bishopric of Salisbury, both sides agreeing.

He was a lover of poetry and a good orator; but above all he combined a zeal for reform with a talent for diplomacy, which made him much in demand. In 1409, he spent seven months as a delegate to the Council of Pisa and in November 1414 we find him leading an English delegation to the Council of Constance until the day of his death at Gottlieben Castle in Constance on the 23rd August, 1417.

During this period abroad he was being considered at home as a candidate for the archbishopric of York, and in 1411 he would have been made a cardinal by Pope John XIII, but Henry IV would not allow him to leave England entirely and to take up residence in Rome.

He was buried at Constance beneath a truly magnificent brass which may still be seen in that cathedral. His career was closely linked to the lives of two great archbishops: Courtenay, who died in 1396, and one of whose executors he was, and Arundel who clearly valued his diplomacy and gave him what advancement he could.

Hallum's will was approved by Arundel's successor, Henry Chichele. He made bequests to the church of his native Warrington and to Daresbury in nearby Cheshire. There is no mention of the church

of Sandwich of which he was the patron or of the font there which perhaps bears his Arms: sable, a cross engrailed ermine with a crescent argent in the first quarter.

Unfortunately, the Arms on the font are not coloured, so they could be those of Robert Hallum or equally well of the Berney family. We cannot be sure of the armorial ascription which will be further discussed in the last section of this article.

THE ORIGINS OF THE FONT AT ST. CLEMENT'S SANDWICH

The splendid font at St. Clement's has not only excited admiration for its beauty but has also aroused a good deal of speculation as to its origins. Hypotheses have been put forward as if they were actualities. This is a pity, since attractive though they be, they prove nothing in the way of plain historical fact.

Even the font's situation in the church from time to time has altered. At present it stands to the north of the great Norman tower; but an early photograph shows it in the midst of St. Margaret's Chapel, while an eighteenth-century plan of the church shows it in what might be called a more normal position a little to the north of the west door of the nave.

Perpendicular in architectural style, it is tempting to think of it as having been made after 1457 when the nave was rebuilt after the French raid of Pierre de Brezé, and when it might have replaced an earlier font at that time destroyed. Certainly, its style would seem contemporary with that of the nave. This being so, our first possible hypothesis has taken shape, and we might conclude that the Royal Arms on the font's eastern face were those in use during the troubled reigns of Henry VI and Edward IV, when Warwick the Kingmaker, as Captain of Calais was wooing the support of the men of Sandwich.

We must, therefore, next consider the font's remaining three shields. That on the west face has the Arms of Sandwich displaying half the royal leopards and half the port's ships as supplied to the King. Since this coat was in use throughout the Middle Ages and still is, and though the Cinque Ports were in their hey-day during the Wars of the Roses, the Arms are not much help in dating the font.

The shield on the north face of the font displays instead of Arms a symbol which has been described as a merchant's mark. Carved in fine detail, it is akin, so Mr G.H. Fretten thinks, to a wine mark, and indeed there is a wine tun or barrel above the shield. Efforts so far in vain have been made to establish its exact provenance; but F.A. Girling in *English Merchant Marks*, pp. 100-101, suggests that, 'it

might be the mark of a member of the Berney family in view of the accompanying heraldry': a purely hypothetical statement which assumes that the Arms he refers to are indeed those of Berney. And this leads to the next point for our consideration.

The south face of the octagonal bowl bears a beautifully carved shield of Arms, uncoloured (as are the other three) and blazoned with a cross engrailed ermine with in the first quarter a crescent. Any ascription of this shield to Ellis, as first made by William Boys in his *History of Sandwich* (1792) and erroneously repeated by others, is clearly incorrect from a simple observation of the Ellis coat. Reference to Burke's *General Armoury* or to Papworth's *Ordinary of Arms* will soon provide us with a coat of Arms to match that mentioned above. The Arms of the Berney family vary slightly according to the different branches, but the best-known one shows: quarterly gules and azure, a cross engrailed ermine over all and a crescent in the first quarter.

This south shield on the font is suspended from a strap with an ornamental buckle very much like a knight's belt; and indeed, as we have seen, several of the Berney family were Knights of the Shire for Norfolk in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The name of Berney was known as early as 1174 and the latest member of the family, Mr John Berney, was due to be High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1778, the twelfth of his line to hold that office. He was, alas, unable to give any information about the Arms on the font at Sandwich. Nevertheless, the presence of the ornate belt supporting this shield is made the more interesting for his information about the family's service to the county.

Thus, our next feasible hypothesis emerges: that a member of the knightly family of Berney, possibly a merchant, may have given the font during the Wars of the Roses after the nave with its earlier font had been destroyed; and all this agrees very well with the architecture and the fact that the 'angel' roof of St. Clement's reflects an East Anglian origin. Hallum died in 1417; so the Arms on a font made after 1457 would undoubtedly be those of Berney.

One would like to leave the problem there as at least partially solved; but we must in fairness look at yet another hypothesis and start all over again! Consider once more the Royal Arms on the east face of the font and go back before the Wars of the Roses to the beginning of the Hundred Years' War. At that time the royal leopards of England were quartered with the Arms of France: azure semé of fleurs-de-lys. Naturally the French King objected to this and altered his arms to three fleurs-de-lys only. In 1405, our King Henry IV of Lancaster decided that he, too, would have only three lilies along with his three leopards, and this is the Royal Arms on the font.

It makes for the first time a factual statement that the font was made some time after 1405. But when?

If the Arms are those of Henry IV *post* 1405, then the great double roses on the font's alternate sides are Lancaster roses and the two feathers above the King's shield are those of the royal house. Again, if this is a Lancastrian font, yet another possibility emerges. Let us go to the Great Cloister of Canterbury Cathedral. Standing under the vault of bay 28 and looking up, we shall find a carved shield (29 on plan) exactly like the shield with the cross engrailed ermine and the crescent at Sandwich. But it is not as we might expect the shield of Berney for its ground is sable (black) and not gules (red) and azure (blue). It turns out to be the Arms of Robert Hallum, Archdeacon of Canterbury (1400–07) and Patron of St. Clement, Sandwich. He was the protégé of Archbishop Arundel, a Lancaster cousin to the King. He died, as we have seen, at Constance in 1417. Are we then to ascribe the font to a date between the heraldic change of 1405 and 1417 the year of Hallum's death? We have already had opportunity to study Hallum's meteoric diplomatic and ecclesiastical career and it is possible that, as our patron and as one closely connected with Arundel and the house of Lancaster, his Arms should appear on the font, but we have no real proof either for him or for Berney.

If we shift the emphasis to the shield with the merchant's mark on the north face of the font, another possibility arises. The merchant alone could have been the donor. The presence of the Royal Arms, the Arms of Sandwich and the Archdeacon's (or Berney) Arms would merely denote compliments paid to those concerned, particularly if the donor were a leading townsman or mayor.

To recapitulate, a visitor to the church knowing nothing of its history and making an assessment on style alone, could say that the font was fairly late Perpendicular, contemporary with the nave with which it stylistically agrees. If this were so, and the nave were rebuilt after the French raid of 1457 in what is an imitation of the East Anglian 'angel' roof, then the Arms on the south face of the font would incontrovertibly be those of Berney, for Hallum died in 1417. The Berneys, moreover, as we have seen, were a great Norfolk family. We must not forget the strong link between Sandwich and East Anglia. Brightlingsea is still a limb of Sandwich, and the Cinque Ports sent bailiffs to the Yarmouth Herring Fair. Less than a century after our period, Thomas Manwood, a draper, was trading with the prosperous clothing districts of Norfolk. Thence he brought home from Cley on the north coast his bride Catherine Gallaway. With such journeying in mind, it would be easy to contemplate a possible connection between our merchant and the Berneys.

Of course, if the rebuilding of the nave had occurred early in the

fifteenth century and the font had been made at the same time, or if the font alone had been made before the rebuilding consequent upon the raid of 1457, then the Arms on the south face could well be those of Archdeacon Robert Hallum, Patron of this church from 1400 to 1407 and Bishop of Salisbury until 1417, always bearing in mind that the Royal Arms with New France would make the date *post* 1405.

Two out of the four stylistically similar fonts we have studied bear the Arms of Archbishop Arundel, Hallum's contemporary, patron and friend. Arundel died in 1414, which helps us to date the four fonts to between 1405 and 1414 during the lifetime of Hallum. This would make our font earlier than the French raid and a survivor of that destruction. The argument outlined above in favour of Berney is still cogent, but against it we must place the stylistic evidence of the four fonts together with the relationship between Hallum, Arundel and King Henry IV.

Further factual evidence for either Berney or Hallum is not at this point available. The tantalizing uncertainty remains and the problem is still unsolved.

FURTHER NOTES AND SOURCES REFERRING TO HALLUM AND BERNEY

Hallum's episcopal seal bears in the upper part of the vesica the effigy of the Virgin and Child, and in the lower part two shields, one for the See and the other for his personal Arms. His Arms also appear on the Great Cloister vault at Canterbury Cathedral in bay 28, boss 29.

For reference to the early patronage of Sandwich held by the Archdeaconry of Canterbury, see Kilburn's *Survey of Kent* (1659) p. 237.

See also:

J.M. Horn, *The Register of Robert Hallum*, (Canterbury and York Society).

W.K.R. Bedford, *The Blazon of Episcopacy*, (1897).

J. Woodward, *Ecclesiastical Heraldry*, (1894).

J. le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae 1300–1541*.

Burke's *General Armoury*, (1961 edition).

A.W.B. Messenger, *The Heraldry of Canterbury Cathedral. The Great Cloister Vault*, Plate XLVIII 28/29 in the north-east corner of the cloister. (1947).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What can only be described as a preliminary and superficial exploration into the origins of the Sandwich font and of the Hallum-Berney problem would not even have been possible were it not for the assistance of the following to whom grateful thanks are due: The Rev. Canon D. Naumann, Rector and Rural Dean of Sandwich; Miss A.M. Oakley, Archivist of Canterbury Cathedral; Miss S.M. Eward, Librarian of Salisbury Cathedral; Mr K.H. Rogers, County Archivist of Wiltshire; Mr M. Holmes, The Victoria and Albert Museum; Miss I. Pollock, the Guildhall Library, London; Mr John Berney, Hockerling House, Dereham, Norfolk; Mr G.H. Fretten, formerly of Sandwich to whom I am indebted for much wise advice; and lastly, to my wife, daughter and son-in-law for encouragement and practical help.