

**CHURCH PLATE IN THE ARCHDEACONRY  
OF WORCESTER BEING AN INVENTORY  
AND NOTICE OF THE SACRED VESSELS IN  
USE IN THE DIFFERENT CHURCHES, WITH  
AN EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION**

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Church plate in the archdeaconry of Worcester Being an Inventory and Notice Of The Sacred Vessels in Use in the Different Churches, With an Explanatory Introduction by William Lea

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**WILLIAM LEA**

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# CHURCH PLATE

IN THE

ARCHDEACONRY OF WORCESTER,

BEING AN

*Inventory and Notice of the Sacred Vessels*

*IN USE IN THE DIFFERENT CHURCHES,*

WITH AN

**EXPLANATORY INTRODUCTION.**

BY

WILLIAM LEA, M.A., ARCHDEACON OF WORCESTER.

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WORCESTER: DEIGHTON AND CO., HIGH STREET.

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1884.

137: 2.7.

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND HENRY  
LORD BISHOP OF WORCESTER,  
BY WHOSE MUNIFICENT ASSISTANCE  
SO MANY CHURCHES HAVE BEEN BUILT AND RESTORED,  
AND BY WHOSE KINDNESS  
THE AUTHOR WAS APPOINTED TO THE OFFICE  
WHICH HE HAS THE HONOR TO HOLD,  
THIS NOTICE OF THE SACRED VESSELS IN THE CHURCHES  
OF THE ARCHDEACONRY OF WORCESTER  
IS RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED.

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# Church Plate

IN THE

## Archdeaconry of Worcester.

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### INTRODUCTION.

BEFORE commencing an account of the Church plate in the Archdeaconry of Worcester, I may be allowed to mention the incident by which my attention was first directed to the subject. In the summer of 1881, soon after my appointment to the office which I have the honour to hold, I paid a visit to a distant Deanery. Among other parishes then visited was a Church lying in a deep, secluded valley, and entirely surrounded by woods, it was the most perfect ideal of rural retirement I had then, or have since, seen. I found the Rector, a gentleman of the old school, waiting for me at the entrance of the porch. behind him were the two Churchwardens, behind them the parish clerk. The Rector received me with the greatest courtesy, and took me into the Church and pointed out the Church plate, laid out on the Communion table ready for my inspection. From this incident I took the hint, which I have ever since carried out, of inspecting the Communion plate in the different Churches which I have visited. At first I only noted down such plate as was interesting from its antiquity or peculiarity, and specially the early Elizabethan Cup and cover for Paten, which is so commonly found in old Churches in the rural parts of the Archdeaconry, but finding, at later visits in other parts, that in some instances these old Cups had recently disappeared, and had been replaced by modern plated ware, it occurred to me that something might be done to prevent further spoliation, by making and

publishing a Terrier or Inventory of the Church Plate of the Archdeaconry, and as a first step to this, in my notice of visits, I made a request to the churchwardens that they would have all the Communion plate belonging to the parish ready for my inspection in the Church.

Later on, I saw the desirableness of extending this Inventory to other objects; and in consequence I have requested churchwardens of every parish to make an inventory of all the properties, registers, ornaments, and possessions of their Church, and to place it in the parish chest, in order that the articles contained in it may be verified when they are handed over to their successors. I have also requested that a copy of it may be deposited in the Archdeacon's Registry at Worcester.

In order to make the subject and the notices which are given of the plate of the different parishes more clear, it will be desirable to offer a few introductory remarks on the history of the different articles of Communion plate which are now existing in our Churches.

In the reign of Henry VIII. the plate belonging to the Monasteries and the Cathedrals was seized and appropriated by the Crown, but the plate in Parish Churches, in the great majority of cases, was not then interfered with; but towards the end of the reign of Edward VI. the order was issued "that all monuments of superstition should be destroyed." Vessels used at the Mass were specially mentioned, and directions were given that any chalices so used were to be melted down and made into "decent Communion Cups." In this respect our Reformers seem to have acted with less wisdom than when they revised the Service Books of the Church. They might have remembered a Scriptural instance which bears on the point, and have imitated the example of the leaders of God's people of old, the holy vessels from the Temple at Jerusalem were taken away to Babylon, and there defiled by profane hands and uses, yet they were not on this account cast aside, but purified and restored to their original place when the people returned from their captivity. Instead of this the old Communion vessels were directed to be destroyed, and so completely was this direction carried out in the last year of Edward VI., and in the early years of the reign of Elizabeth, that not more than six or eight pre-Reformation vessels are known to remain, and possibly some of these may not be of English manufacture. The best known examples in this neighbourhood are the Chalice and Paten of the Church at Leominster, which is supposed to be of 15th century work, though from the absence of the English H.M. it may

be of foreign manufacture. Mr. Lambert, of Coventry Street, by whose kindness the Leominster Cup has been recently restored, and who is considered the best authority of the day on old Church plate, is of opinion that it is of German manufacture, and not earlier than the middle of the 16th century. He tells me that the earliest Cup of English manufacture of which he has any knowledge was sold by him to a former Vicar of Leamington. It is of the date of Henry VIII., and originally belonged to the English Chapel at Calais, and came into his possession when the late Emperor of the French presented a new set of Communion plate to the congregation.

When Mary came to the Throne, in 1553, the order was given for Chalice to be restored, and probably any Communion Cups which had been made at the close of her brother's reign were, in their turn, done away with, for not more than five or six of the date of Edward VI. are now known to exist. At the Accession of Elizabeth stringent orders were again given for the restoration of Communion Cups, and, in obedience to these, the then existing Chalices and other vessels which had been used in the service of the Mass were broken up and made into the new Cups. Bishops, at their Visitations, used to enquire if this had been done, not that all the old plate was accounted for in this way, for in the churchwardens' accounts of the day there are frequent notices of the plate having been stolen by thieves, or in some places sold with the consent of the parishioners to alter and repair the Churches, or even for the purchase of stone for mending the roads. In more recent times, I am sorry to say, there are instances of the old plate of the Church being sold, and plated ware purchased in its stead. I wish to record my protest against this. I think that whatever is used in the celebration of our highest service should, at any rate, be real of its kind. The old Councils order vessels of gold, or at least of silver; our own Reformers almost repeat their words. If we cannot have gold, let us have silver; if we cannot have silver, let us put up for a time with pewter, which was not uncommon at the time of the Reformation, rather than something which makes a pretence of being better than it is. At the same time I am aware that it is not always a question of sparing expense, for I know Churches in which money has been lavished with an open hand on ornament and decoration, where the vessels for Holy Communion are at present of plated ware.

But before entering on a detailed description let me mention