There are five baptismal fonts in existence made of black basalt by the famous pottery firm, Josiah Wedgwood. Only two of these still remain in churches; at Cardington, Bedfordshire, and a few miles away at Essendon, Hertfordshire.

The other three fonts are located in the Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight, Merseyside, the Wedgwood Museum at Barlaston, Staffordshire, and the Buten Museum of Wedgwood at Merion, Pennsylvania, USA.

In 1765 Samuel Whitbread, the brewer and friend of Wedgwood, moved to Bedwell Park in the parish of Essendon, Hertfordshire. The Cardington font was donated by Whitbread’s daughter Harriot. In 1777 the parish church underwent a complete rebuilding. On completion in 1778 Mary Whitbread, half-sister of Harriot, presented a Wedgwood font to the church. This font nearly left Essendon c.1880 when the present building was being constructed and Richard Green, who had lived at the Mill, Essendon, emigrated to Australia. Anxious to have a tangible reminder of his native village in England he wrote to the vicar requesting the Wedgwood font for his church there. The font had been discarded in the belfry since c.1850. Fortunately for Essendon, however, no one was willing to pay the freight charges. When the font is in use, a small silver gilt bowl would be placed on a pedestal inside. On the bottom of the bowl the inscription reads:

*‘Mary Whitbread, born at Bedwell Park, gave the font and this vase to the Church of Essendon in the County of Hertfordshire. MDCCLXXVIII’*