

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
Cambridge Antiquarian Society,

OCTOBER 1916—MAY 1917

WITH

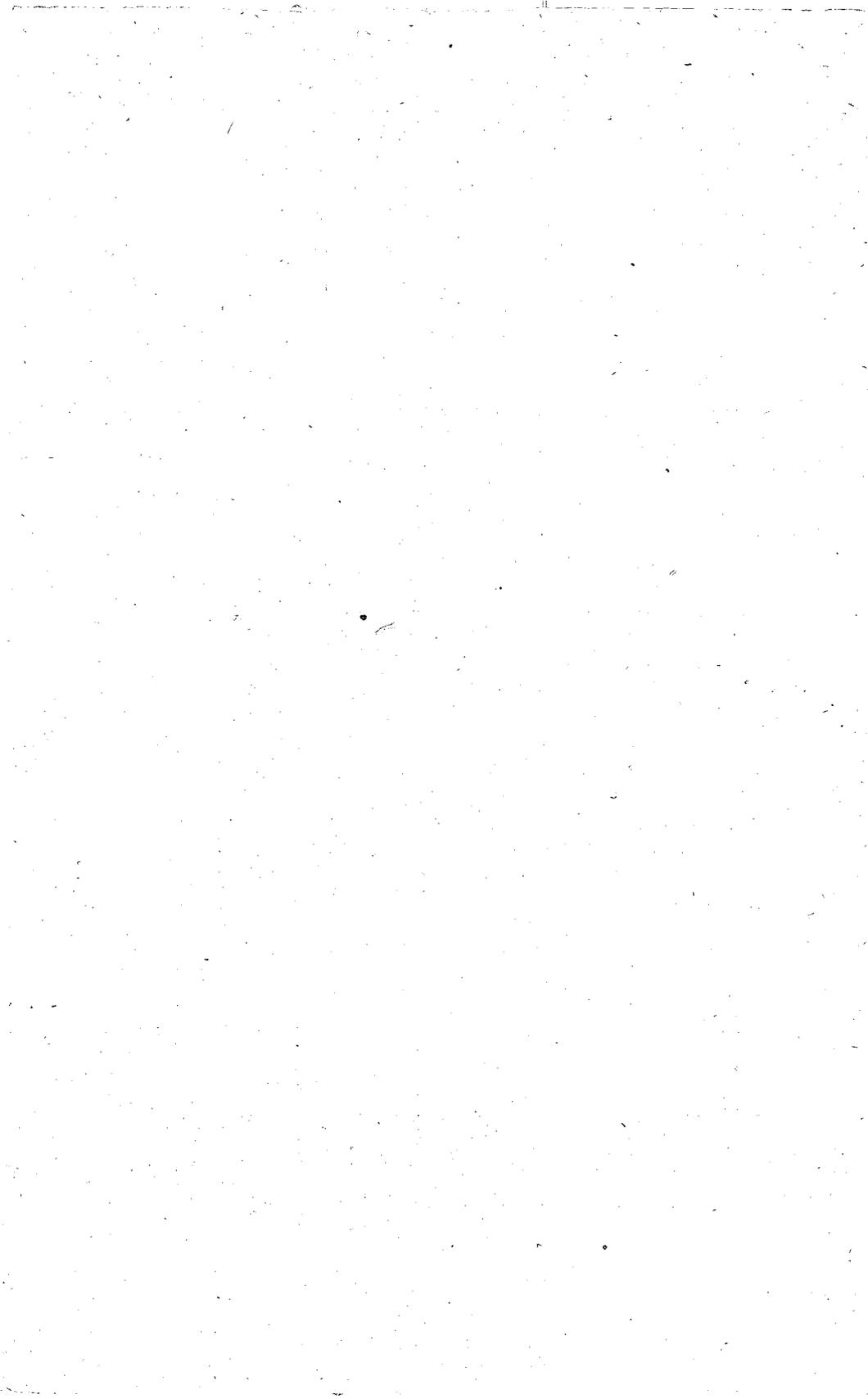
Communications
MADE TO THE SOCIETY
MICHAELMAS TERM, 1916, AND
LENT AND EASTER TERMS, 1917.

No. LXIX.
BEING THE TWENTY-FIRST VOLUME.
(FIFTEENTH VOLUME OF THE NEW SERIES.)

Cambridge:
DEIGHTON, BELL & CO., LTD.; BOWES & BOWES.
LONDON: G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.
1919

Price Ten Shillings net.

CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY
PROCEEDINGS AND COMMUNICATIONS



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VOL. XXI.



NEW SERIES.

VOL. XV.

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ANCIENT CHURCH BELLS IN CAMBRIDGE.

By the Rev. A. H. F. BOUGHEY, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College.

(Read at the Meeting on May 14, 1917.)

There were Church bells in Cambridge many centuries before any that we possess now. The Observances¹ in use at the Augustinian Priory, founded in Cambridge in 1092 by Hugh Picot, and removed to Barnwell by Pain Peverell in 1112, required the Sacrist or Sub-sacrist sometimes "signa pulsare,"—which shows that there were large bells: also "nolam pulsare" to wake the brethren in the dormitory for late and early prayers, and "cymbalum semel percutere" as a signal for them to wash their hands and go to the refectory for breakfast after leaving the Church;—and these terms *nola* and *cymbalum* show that there were smaller bells besides the *signa*.

In 1273 we read that the University used the bell of St Benet's Church to "convene clerk̄s to extraordinary lectures." This unhappily led to a quarrel between the Chancellor of the University and Alan the Rector of St Benet's: the Bishop of Ely (Hugh de Balsham, Founder of Peterhouse) was called in to arbitrate, and seems to have done so to the satisfaction of all parties, including the parish clerk, who got a remuneration for ringing the bell "in a civil and honest manner."

Before 1457 we find the University using "magna campana in Ecclesia S. Marie": and that practice has gone on ever since.

In passing, let me refer to the well-known chimes of St Mary's, solely for the purpose of quoting—at a time when England and Australia have been so closely and specially brought together—one beautiful stanza of the gifted Australian poet, Adam Lindsay Gordon, which combines characteristics of the old country and the new. As most people know, the chimes were

¹ Edited by the late Registry, Mr J. W. Clark.

1st

In Oltis Annis Refonet Dampna Iohannis R

3^d

STVE X M ST RTI A GERI SI X P I E R S I

4th

Per Atria Cantabo Laudes Tuas Domine Iaudibus Celebrabo Nomen Tuum Sanctum

5th

Oreutate Sacra Biat Ber Campana Brata



Inscriptions on the Walls of Kings College, taken before the Sale in 1756

put up in Great St Mary's in 1793: in the latter half of the nineteenth century they were copied (slightly altered and thereby spoilt) at the Royal Exchange in London: later they were copied (correctly, on four fine heavy bells), at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster: since then they have spread to every English-speaking country,—even to the Antipodes. Here is Gordon's verse:

“Hark! the bells on distant cattle
 Waft across the range,
 Through the golden-tufted wattle,
 Music low and strange;
 Like the marriage peal of fairies
 Comes the tinkling sound,
 Or like chimes of sweet St Mary's
 On far English ground.”

No one who has heard our chimes, can doubt to what that refers.

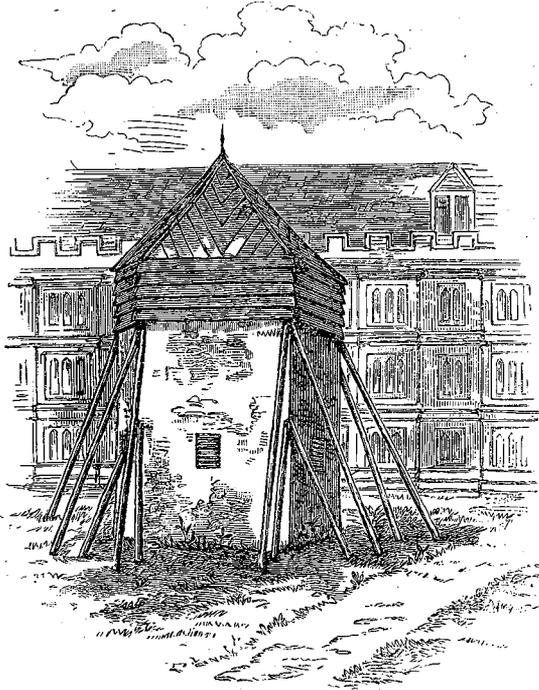
To speak of particular old bells in Cambridge, which either exist still or of which records remain. Let me take first the latter,—bells which we possess no more. Bowtell, in his valuable MSS., gives the inscriptions on the eight bells of Great St Mary's which were in the tower before they were taken down in 1722 to be replaced by the present ring. Only one was dated, 1595: but of the others, two at least seem to have been much older than the tower itself. For one, besides the inscription “O mater Dei, memento mei,” bore a shield on which the arms of France were (if correctly described) *semée of fleurs de lys*; and therefore the bell ought to be earlier than the reign of Henry V. Another was inscribed, “Johannes Yorke me fecit in honorem beate Marie.” John of Yorke flourished in the latter half of the fourteenth century. Mr North “considers that he may have learnt his art from Richard Tunnoc, bailiff of the city in 1320-1, and representative of York in Parliament in 1327,” who died 1330.

There was in Cambridge, until 1755¹, what Mr Walters² justly terms “a magnificent ring of 5 heavy bells.” They belonged to King's College; and were “long considered the

¹ When they were sold to Lester, of the Whitechapel Foundry, for £533. 10s. 3d.

² *Church Bells of England*, p. 356.

largest in England." The weight of the tenor is given as 46 cwt. 2 qrs. 7 lb.—more than $2\frac{1}{4}$ tons. I need say very little about these bells, because their history, gathered from documents at King's, is so fully and carefully given in a paper of this Society¹ contributed in March 1879 by Mr J. W. Clark. One tradition said that the bells were presented to Henry VI by



Old Clochard at King's College

(From "The Bells of Cambridgeshire," by J. J. Raven, D.D.
C. A. S. 8vo Pub. XVIII.)

Pope Calixtus III; another, that they were brought from France by Henry V after the battle of Agincourt. Mr Clark shows (chiefly from a declaration, dated 2 May 1465, of the first Provost of King's, William Millington), that both traditions are wrong. It seems certain that the bells were, from their beginning, of English make, and were a gift to the College from the

¹ C. A. S. Communications, Vol. iv. p. 223.

Royal Founder. They were never properly hung; they rested in a wooden clochard, which was intended to be temporary, but was not replaced,—though there exists in the British Museum a design for a handsome tower, unfortunately never erected. The temporary building was neglected (like the bells), and became ruinous;—so ruinous that we find this sad entry in *Cooper's Annals*, taken from the Cole MSS.—“In Dec. 1728, Henry West bell ringer of King's College was crushed to death by one of the five great bells of that College.” The clochard was pulled down in 1739. The bells were removed to the Ante-chapel. Three of them were cracked; and complaint was made that they “did harm, by standing there, in sinking the floor.” The Bishop of Lincoln, Visitor of the College, in 1746 consented to their being sold, on the ground of “their uselessness, and [the] advantage of applying the produce to the College Stock”: and sold they were a few years later. It is a sordid and not very creditable story.

Four of the bells had inscriptions (see Plate III, reduced from Mr Clark's paper: the inscriptions were copied from a drawing in the Muniment Room of King's College); from which we see at once that the treble and tenor (the smallest and largest bells) were made at the foundry of John Danyell, a well-known “bel-yeter” in London between about 1450 and 1470. This fact has not always been recognised. The initials I. D. on the treble were taken by Blomefield, the antiquary, to stand “for John Dogget, who was Provost here in 1500, when it was new run'd.” He is certainly wrong. Mr Clark has discovered (from the accounts) that it was the *second* bell, and *not* the *first*, which was recast in 1500. But apart from that, the arms, crosses and stamps on the two bells prove that they were made not later than 1470; and Dogget was Provost only from 1499 to 1501. Mr Clark is, however, I regret to say, not much more fortunate in his own conjectures. “It is possible,” he writes, “that the letters may be J. O., which occur also on the treble bell at St Botolph's Church, Cambridge, and are probably those of the founder who cast it; but what his name was we are unable now to discover. If we could satisfy ourselves that the letter was H and not D, we should have the initials of John Harrison who

cast one of the bells in 1482-3." Now the letter is not in the least likely to have been H. Nor is it at all likely to have been O,—any more than the initial referred to at St Botolph's, which is *decidedly* a D. There can be no reasonable doubt (1) that the initials I. D. are those of John Danyell, and that he made the treble bell himself; and (2) that the tenor was made either by Danyell or by Henry Jordan,—for these two founders used generally the same stamps—royal arms, crosses, &c.,—and apparently worked simultaneously in the same foundry, perhaps as partners.

The second bell suffered many vicissitudes. It was recast in 1478 by "Thomas harrys de London Belfounder," and again by Thomas Chyrche of Bury St Edmunds in 1500; and possibly it was the bell (not further specified) recast in 1482 by "Johannes Harrison Belfounder," of whom we know nothing more.

The royal heads on the third bell are too small in the drawing to enable us to identify them for certain. They look somewhat like the heads of Edward III and Queen Philippa, which were used as stops by several bell-founders. Walters¹ notes a group of bells, cast at Worcester about 1480 by an unknown founder, bearing the heads of Henry VI and Queen Margaret. Remembering that Henry VI was the Founder of King's College, we should *like* to think that the *king's* head at least is Henry's; and the absence of a beard (if the drawing is correct) so far favours this idea; but the queen's head is a difficulty.

The ancient bells still remaining in Cambridge are—one at St Edward's and four at St Botolph's. For we must not include under the title "ancient" sixteenth century bells, interesting as some of them are,—as, for instance, the 4th bell at St Edward's, bearing the date 1576 and (in Latin) the name of the maker, Stephen Tonni of Bury St Edmunds; or the foreign bell at Peterhouse, made at Louvain and dated 1548.

The 5th bell at St Edward's bears the inscription "Sancta Anna Ora Pro Nobis," and three times repeated a curious shield. This shield has, in chief a crown and on either side of it two arrows crossed in saltire and two balls between the arrows; in the centre, two keys crossed in saltire and surmounted by a bell

¹ p. 299.

of ancient shape with five canons (i.e. bell-canons); beside the keys, the initials H. S. in black letter; and in base a cannon (i.e. a gun) with a cannon-ball coming out of its mouth. The same shield occurs on many other bells, and is the mark of a foundry at Bury St Edmunds in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

There remains only one more subject for our consideration, but to my mind it is the most important of all,—the bells of St Botolph's Church. What makes them so interesting to anyone who cares for Church bells is that they are a complete and untouched medieval ring of four bells. They are not dated; but they were made about 1460, and they are to-day exactly as they left the foundry, except for slight incrustations due to time and weather. Such pre-Reformation rings *untouched*,—i.e. with no bell recast or meddled with—are not common even with three bells, and are very rare on higher numbers. With the help of a friend who is learned in bell-lore (Mr Pearson, Vicar of Henley in Suffolk), I have examined the records of nearly all the English counties whose bells have been tabulated and published; and we have found only three towers¹, besides St Botolph's, which contain rings of four pre-Reformation bells, all made by the same founder at the same time and remaining unaltered. And there is *one* Church—St Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield,—which has a ring of *five* bells fulfilling the same conditions.

The bells of St Botolph's are contemporary with the lost bells of King's College, and came from the same foundry, John Danyell's. This is clear from the inscriptions. All four have the same lettering, small and capital Black-letters. All four have a floriated stop, which was Danyell's; and all except the treble have Danyell's shield with the arms of France modern and England. The treble and second have one of Danyell's crosses; and the treble has his initials J. D. This is specially to be noted, because Dr Raven² wrote in 1881: "The treble bears initials, probably those of the founder, which Blomefield considers to be J. D.; but Mr Lukis writes them T. O. To me they seemed to be J. O."—A few days ago three of us—the

¹ Fawsley, Northants; Thurlbeer, Somerset; Torbryan, Devon.

² Camb. Antiq. Soc. Publications, no. xviii. p. 24.

Rector of St Botolph's, a friend of his, and myself—carefully examined, with a strong light, the chief points of interest in these bells; and I took some rubbings. We were all satisfied, without any doubt, that the initials are J. D. The reasonable (and to my mind certain) inference is that the founder of all four bells was Danyell himself; and their date cannot be far from 1460.

It may be noted in passing that one of the other untouched rings of four which I have mentioned—viz. Fawsley—came from Danyell's foundry: as did a charming ring of *three* at Bartlow in this county.

My last remarks have to do with the Saints commemorated on St Botolph's bells. Here are the inscriptions:

- Treble: Sancte Apoline Ora Pro Nobis. J. D.
 2nd Sancte Andrea Ora Pro Nobis.
 3rd Sancta Margareta Ora Pro Nobis.
 4th Nomen Magdalene Campana Gerit Melodie.

The difficulty here is the "Sancte Apoline." No Saint named "Apolinus" is known or heard of anywhere. Raven¹ asserts confidently that the Saint invoked is the lady Apollonia, who suffered martyrdom in the Decian persecution, and was prayed to by sufferers from toothache: and he refers to Thomas Becon, who wrote in the Tudor period, and who certainly calls her in English "Apolline." But there are two objections to this identification. (1) The name on the bell is *masculine*; the letter at the end of "Sancte" and of "Apoline" is certainly E. (2) The name on the bell is *Latin*. Now a writer or speaker in *English* would naturally use the colloquial English form; but if he went back to *Latin*, he would equally naturally use the Latin form. Becon, for instance, in the passage where he writes "Apolline," writes also "Agasse": but it is hardly conceivable that anyone writing in Latin would not go back to the Latin form "Agatha." English folk talked of "St Audrey": but in Latin we should be surprised to find anything except "Etheldreda." They talked of "St Austin"; but in bell-inscriptions, where it is very frequent, it is *always* "Augustinus" and requires

¹ p. 126.

four syllables to scan—e.g. the treble of the Bartlow three has the extremely common pentameter,

“Wox Augustini Sonet In Aure Dei.”

I have many qualms therefore—in spite of Dr Raven’s great learning and authority—about his interpretation of the name.

Mr Walters¹ adopts Dr Raven’s view (that Apollonia is meant) without remark. But he appears not to be happy about it: for later on², when he is quoting the inscription on the 5th bell at St Benet’s (dated 1610),—

“Non nomen fero ficti sed nomen Benedicti”

(“I bear not the name of an imaginary saint, but the name of Benedict”)—he adds:—“The first half of the line looks suspiciously like a ‘purple patch.’ Or can it be a hit at the imaginary St Apoline to whom a bell in the neighbouring tower of St Botolph’s is dedicated?”

To these two ingenious theories I am going to venture to add a third. Can the person meant be St Apolinaris? He has the advantage of being *real* (not imaginary), of being *masculine*, of being *well known* (at any rate in Italy,—witness the two splendid Churches dedicated to him in Ravenna and Classe), and of having a good *Latin* name. If this conjecture is right—and I offer it with a good deal of diffidence—either the bell-founder, or the person who gave the order for the bell, set up or wrote the name in an abbreviated form.

Now abbreviations are quite common in old writing and old bell-inscriptions; and the commonest of all abbreviations is a vowel with R. In Church documents we constantly find “p’ish” for “parish,” “p’son” for “parson,” and so on. Here are a few instances of such abbreviations from the Latin will of a London citizen and bell-founder, who died in 1440:—p[ar]entum, num[er]ata, Rog[er]o, p[ar]dono, t[er]mi[ni], st[er]ling, int[er], s[er]ju[ie]nti, fu[er]it, ux[or]i, &c. On an old black-letter bell at Stixwold in Lincolnshire the name of the Saint, “Katerina,” appears as “Katina,” with no mark of abbreviation. If we may venture to suppose that “ar” has been omitted, in our St Botolph’s bell, we get “Apolinare” at once,—“non nomen

¹ p. 271.

² p. 332.

ficti," but a real historical Saint. At any rate I hope that members of the Society who are learned in medieval Saints and medieval Latin will give their views on this point.

There are other interesting old bells quite close to Cambridge, as for instance the tenor at Coton, with the verse

"Virgo coronata duc nos ad regna beata";

it comes from the Bury St Edmunds foundry; and the treble at Madingley with its ingeniously forced rhyme,

"Dicor ego Thomas: laus est Xri sonus o mas,"

—which someone has translated,

"My name is Thomas, and I can
Sound forth the praise of Christ, o man."

But this is travelling beyond the scope of the title of this paper.

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