

The Church Bells of Berkshire.

PART VII.

By FREDERICK SHARPE.

109.

INKPEN.

St. Michael.

Ring of Three Bells; tenor 35 inches diameter, in A.

<i>Bell.</i>	<i>Inscription.</i>	<i>Weight.</i> <i>Cwts. Qrs. lbs.</i>		
Treble.	NICOLAS † MAY † WILLIAM † MAWKES † C † W 1659 [<i>Bell.</i>] W [<i>Bell.</i>] P [<i>Three Bells.</i>]	5	0	0#
Second.	GOD BE OVR GVD IW 1590	6	0	0#
Tenor.	† HENRY HAYES † IOHN FROOM † CHVRCH WARDENS † THO DICKER [<i>Bell.</i>] FOVNDER J734	7	2	0#

Around the treble above its inscription band is an ornamental vine border. This bell was cast by William Purdue, of Salisbury, or Bristol,¹ and has the typical high crown favoured by the Purdues.²

The second, a very square-shouldered bell, is by that noted founder, John Wallis, of Salisbury.³

The tenor is the work of the Reading clockmaker, Thomas Dicker: and a scale drawing of its inscription is given in Fig. 90.

The writer has not seen these bells, and the foregoing details have been compiled from notes in the Turner MS.,⁴ and from rubbings taken in 1940 by a parishioner, who was persuaded by Mr. Underhill to climb up the bell rope to the belfry: there being now no permanent means of access to the bells. In the Turner MS. a figure of a bell is shown between the words DICKER and FOVNDER, but, as this did not appear in the rubbing, taken in 1940, it has been omitted from Fig. 90. Turner notes that the treble, and tenor, are maiden castings. The tenor is now⁵ the only example of Dicker's casting in the county.

Incised in the shoulder of the tenor headstock is the date 1724 proving that the former tenor had been fixed to it. The bell fittings are noted in the Turner MS as being of the traditional XVIIIth century type, and the bells hang in an oak frame. The

¹ See Walters' *Church Bells of Wiltshire*, 291.

² See *Berks. Arch. Journ.*, XLIII (1939), 106, and Plate XVII. B.

³ See under the heading Coombe.

⁴ Society of Antiquaries Library.

⁵ See under the heading Basildon.

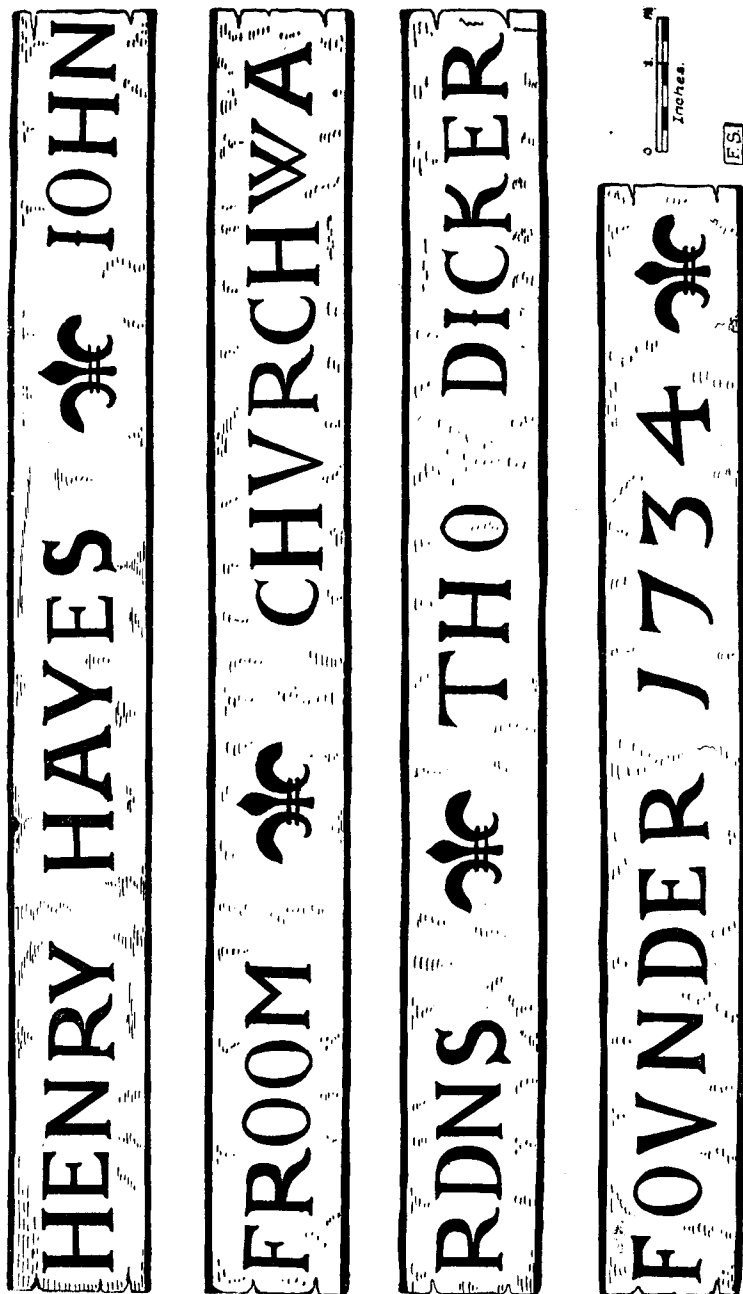


FIG. 90. Inscription on Tenor Bell at Inkpen, cast by Thomas Dicker, of Reading. See page 57.

tower also is of oak, resting on four huge oak pillars at the west end of the nave.

The Commissioners' Inventories made on 4th August 1552 state :—*Inckpene three lytell belles hanging in the steple by estyma-tyon XXX^c weight the corse bell¹ and a sakaring bell.²*

Visited :

T.A.T., 20th June 1877.

110.

KENNINGTON.

St. Swithin.

The Church was erected in 1828, and equiped with a single bell, hung for chiming, in an open western turret. According to statements by the vicar and churchwardens the tone of this bell was so poor that they recently sold it and purchased a new one. There is no record either to whom the old bell was sold, or from whom the new one was bought ; but the founder is *thought* to have been Warner, of London.

Visited :—

A. R. Pink, 16th January 1941.

111.

KINGSTON BAGPUIZE.

St. John-the-Baptist.

A chime of two small bells ; tenor 20 inches diameter.

These bells hang in a closed turret very difficult of access. They were examined in 1926 by Mr. L. H. Chambers, who states that the treble is twelve inches in diameter and bears no inscription, and that the tenor is inscribed :—

I RUDHALL GLOCESTER FECT. 1799.

The Commissioners' Inventories for 1552 state :—*Kingston Bagpuyse, thre belles in the belfrey A sance bell A leche bell.¹*

112.

KINGSTON LISLE.

St. John the Baptist.

Chime of Two Bells ; tenor 16½ inches diameter, in F sharp.

The bells are not tuned diatonically : the treble, 15 inches in diameter, sounds the strike-note A natural. The approximate weights of the two bells are $\frac{3}{4}$ cwt, and 1 cwt respectively.

¹ The "corpse" or "lych" bell, rung in front of a funeral procession.

² The sacring bell usually hung inside the church, sometimes on the rood screen, and was rung during mass at the Elevation of The Host.

An illustration of the treble is given in Fig. 91. It is a maiden bell, bearing no inscription or marks, and having a long waist and wide spreading sound-bow. It has a high crown, from which rise canons measuring $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and an argent of 5 inches. On the evidence of shape and mouldings the bell may be dated approximately mid-fourteenth century. Although *complete* evidence is lacking it is possible that it may have been cast by the Monastic Method of Bellfounding,¹ employing the use of a full sized wax model in forming the moulds.

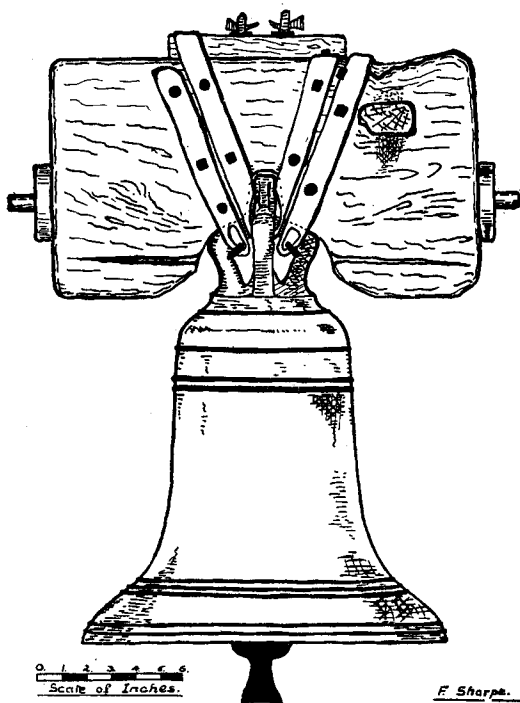


FIG. 91. Fourteenth century bell at Kingston Lisle, with original headstock and ironwork.

The fittings of the treble also are interesting. The medieval-pattern elm headstock, shown in Plate XVIII, and Fig. 91, is fitted with gudgeons of the drive-in type each secured solely by means of an iron stockhoop.² A wooden lever is morticed into the headstock and the bell secured by means of wrought iron straps

¹ Described by the author in an illustrated lecture delivered to the Society at Reading University 14th February 1942.

² See under the heading Compton Beauchamp.

passing through the canons and nailed to the headstock.¹ The argnet is held in position by means of XVIIth century-type slotted pins and keys. On the north side of the bellframe the gudgeon pivots in an *iron* bearing; on the south side a much more primitive device suffices, a *simple slot in the oak bellframe*. The clapper is of the XVIIIth century type and fitted with busk boards.²

The tenor is inscribed:—MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON, 1883. It is fitted with an elm headstock, iron lever, hoop gudgeons, and brass bearings, which are the work of Mr. Frederick White, of Appleton. Nothing is known of the predecessor of this bell.

The bells hang in a closed western turret very difficult of approach. Ladders were procured giving access to the western-most roof-principle of the nave which forms the foundation of the eastern side of the turret. From the roof-principle entrance to the turret, about five feet above, was effected through a small trap-door, with no possibility of a ladder being introduced between the top of the roof-principle and the floor of the turret.

Visited:

F.M.U., F.S., 22nd March 1941.

113.

KINTBURY.

St. Mary.

Ring of Six Bells; tenor 43 inches diameter, in F, and a Sanctus Bell.

Bell.	Inscription.	Weight.		
		Cwts.	Qrs.	lbs.
Treble.	J702 ROB/COR JOHN BLANDY ESQR: GAUE YS: BELL	5	1	0#
Second.	[Cross Fig. 38] ANNO DOMINI 1630	6	0	0#
Third.	GORGE ELLY JOHN CLARKE C [Fig. 16.] W / I Æ E H [Shield Fig. 17.] K 1669	7	0	0#
Fourth.	[Cross Fig. 43.] OUR FACHAR WISS ARC IN BEWER / WK	8	0	0#
Fifth.	ANNO DOMINI 1629 IG RW [Fig. 38.]	10	0	0#
Tenor.	[Fig. 38] COME WHEN I CALL TO SERVE GOD ALL 1629	13	1	0#
Sanctus.	J759	1	2	0#

¹ Compare Boxford, and South Hinksey.

² Illustrated Fig. 76. *Berks. Arch. Journ.* XLV (1941), 27.

The treble has large ornamental initial capitals to the last six words of its inscription, while over the small size letters in the words "JOHN" "BLANDY" and "GAVE" are bands of ornament.¹ It was cast at the Aldbourne foundry in 1702.

The third is by Henry Knight II, of Reading, whose ancestor, William Knight II, cast the fourth *circa* 1576. The latter however is not a *clean* casting, and has badly formed lettering of the same type as that on the second at Letcombe Bassett, a scale drawing of which will be found in Fig. 92.

The second, fifth, and tenor are by the same founder as the fourth-to-seventh bells at Buckland and others at Lambourn. This was probably Nathaniel Bolter.² The initials I.G. on the fifth are puzzling as the churchwardens for 1629 were Bartholomew Godfre, and Richard Watts. The sanctus was probably cast at the Aldbourne foundry. Illustrations of the second, and tenor, will be found on Plates XVII. B and XIX. B. These bells were probably cast in the parish by an itinerant founder, and therefore the present tenor could not be the bell referred to in the accompanying legend.

The oak frame and most of the bell fittings are the work of Mr. F. White, of Appleton, but new self-aligning ball bearings were fitted by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank in 1937 when the gear was generally overhauled by them. All the bells have been quarter-turned; and the third has a false clapper-staple. On the second the letters NN are conjoined, and on the third the founder has omitted one letter in the first word. The letter C on the fourth is inverted.

The Commissioners' Inventories dated 4th August, 1552, state : *Kyntbury iij belles in the steple and a saunce bell . . . a sakaring belle.*

There is a legend concerning the tenor bell of which there are many versions. One of these by T. Major was published by Mrs. Bowen in her "Short History of Kintbury" (1932). Another was recorded in 1880 by Mr. W. H. Hallam, of Swindon, who was "told the story by a Lockinge man of over 70 years of age." Other versions have supplied a few minor details of the occurrence.

It appears that the "Great Bell"³ had been sent away to be recast,⁴ and was being brought back to the church by water, when, by some accident, it fell into the River Kennet.⁵ Many attempts were made to extract the bell

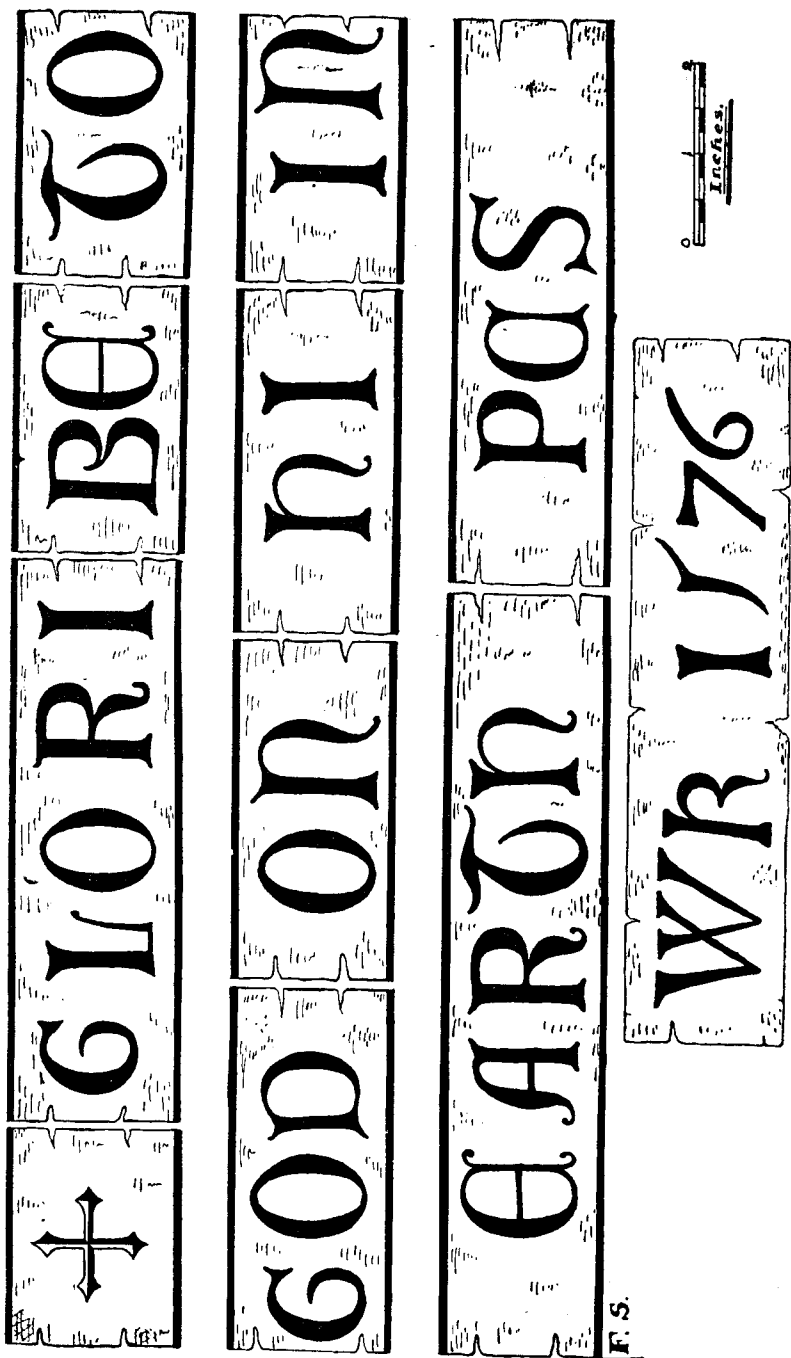
¹ Illustrated Tilley and Walters *Church Bells of Warwickshire*, Plate XXVI, Fig. 1.

² The recasting of the bells is not mentioned in the churchwarden's accounts, which, during this period, give simply total receipts, total payments, and balance.

³ Until the XVIIIth century the tenor bell of a ring was invariably styled the "Great Bell," no matter what its size. Similarly the treble was the "fore" bell.

⁴ In Mrs. Bowen's recorded version the bell was bewitched into the River Kennet.

⁵ Similar stories are common in other parts; see Morris *Legends o' the bells*.



from the water but all failed, and the great bell only sank deeper and deeper into the mud of the river bed.

At last, in desperation, the parishioners decided to ask the advice of a notorious wizard who lived in the neighbourhood.

"To this excellent idea each and all were agreed
And two old cronies were chosen with speed
Of talkative reputation,
To visit this man and to start the next day
Attired in their best; with a donkey and chay
As the village deputation."

The wizard was duly consulted and he advised that all attempts to haul the bell out of the river would fail unless complete silence were maintained.

"With such other rules as I shall now tell
"Before you again possess your Great Bell.
"Thus if 'tis your wish to have him¹ again
"You must hook on his head a bright new chain
"And to this chain, placed all in a row,
"Fasten twelve Heifers, white as pure snow;
"Each one must be led with a bridle on head
"By a maiden in white, with a sash of blood red,
"And each one with a whip of silken thong
"To drive the heifers quite silently on
"The time to commence must be at midnight
"When the moon and stars shine silvery white
"But no one must speak,
"Not a word, nor sneeze, nor even a groan
"But all to be silent as if carved in stone
"Or the charm will break
"Then all your anxiety, trouble and cost
"For the bell you seek will for ever be lost."

The parishioners with some difficulty procured a team of twelve white heifers, and these were yoked to the grappling chains secured to the "bright new chain" fastened through the argent of the bell. Then at midnight in strict silence the white heifers driven by the twelve maidens slowly moved forward and at length the great bell began to be hauled up the river bank. This sight was too much for one of the spectators² who cried out:

"Here again comes Kintbury Great Bell
"In spite of all the devils in Hell!"

Immediately the chain snapped and the bell rolled back into the River Kennet. All subsequent attempts to extract it failed and the bell is reputed to be still buried in the mud of the river bed in a spot called "Bell Hole,"³ and, it is said that when the village bells are in full peal, he is still heard to join as a Bourdon Bell.

Visited:

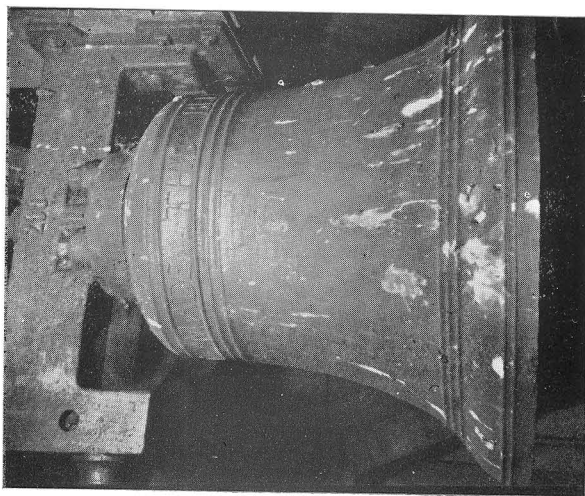
E.J.M.S., F.S., 3rd June 1939.

¹ This would agree with the medieval practice of calling bells above the normal size for tenors in the masculine gender, *i.e.* Great Tom, Great Peter, etc., while the other bells were feminine.

² In the record published by Mrs. Bowen, the village witch, a female sweep by trade, is credited with breaking the silence.

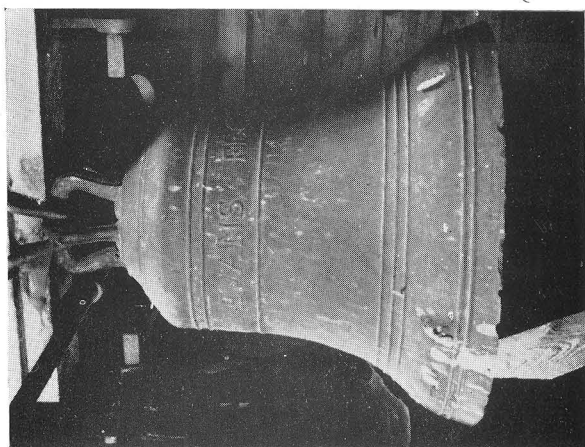
³ In the foregoing account all the quotations are taken from the verses by T. Major, published *in extenso* by Mrs. Bowen in her book entitled "A Short History of Kintbury," Newbury. Blacket Turner & Co., Ltd., 1932.

PLATE XVIII.



A.

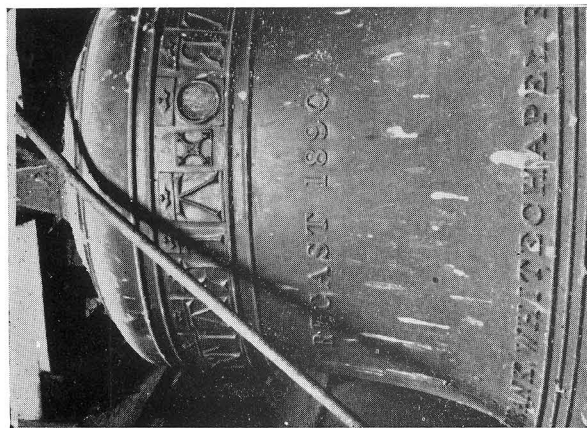
The Treble Bell at Stanford Dingley, cast by Henry Knight I of Reading, in 1609. Recently the canons have been removed from this bell which is now hung to a modern cast iron headstock.



B.

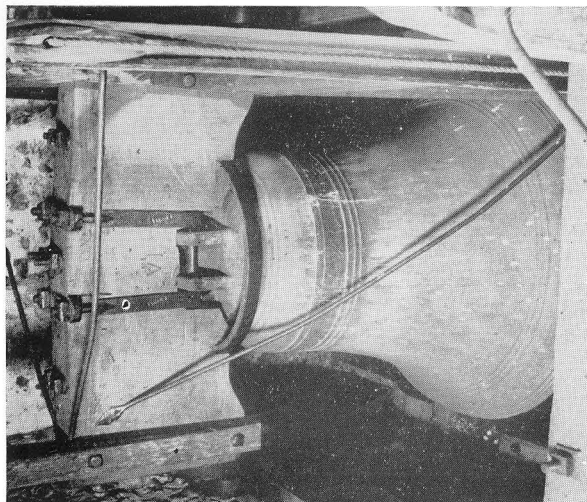
The Clock Bell at Padworth, cast by William Evans, of Chepstow in 1763. The only product of this foundry in the county.

PLATE XIX.



A.

The Fourth Bell of the ring of six at Padworth recast by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank in 1890. The lettering and stamps on the former bell have been admirably reproduced in its successor. The ornamental letters seen in the upper inscription band are those used by the Appowells of Buckingham: *circa* 1560.



B.

The present "Kintbury Great Bell," cast by Nathaniel Bolter, or the Purdues in 1629.

114. KNOWL HILL.

St. Peter.

A Chime of Two Bells ; treble $21\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, and tenor 25 inches diameter ; cast at the Whitechapel foundry.

Each bell bears the inscription :—

THOMAS MEARS FOUNDER LONDON 1840.

In 1925 the tenor had no clapper, and was only used as a clock bell.

Visited :

L. H. Chambers, May, 1925.

115. LAMBOURN.

St. Michael.

Ring of Eight Bells ; tenor 51 inches diameter, in E flat.

<i>Bell.</i>	<i>Inscription.</i>	<i>Weight.</i>		
		<i>Cwts.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>lbs.</i>
Treble.	JAMES WELLS ALDBOURN WILTS FECIT	6	0	0#
Second.	HENRY BAGLEY MADE MEE IT IS TRW IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD J742 ::::/::::::::::	6	2	0#
Third.	AN ♦ NO ♦ DO ♦ MI ♦ NI ♦ 1639 IW	7	3	0#
Fourth.	✠ ANNO DOMINI 1637	9	1	0#
Fifth.	RECAST BY JOHN WARNER & SONS LTD. LONDON 1892. / THOMAS SPICER & JASON WITHERS CH WARDENS JAMES WELLS ALDBOURN WILTS FECIT 1804	11	0	0#
Sixth.	ANNO DOM (<i>Other defaced letters.</i>)	12	2	0#
Seventh.	✠ ANNO DOMINI 1637	16	0	0#
Tenor.	✠ COME ♦ WHEN ♦ I ♦ CAL ♦ TOSERVE ♦ G O D A L L 1 6 3 7	23	0	0#

The treble and former fifth were cast at the Aldbourne foundry by James Wells, whose independent bell founding career extended from 1800 to 1826. The inscription on the treble occurs just above the sound bow, but the bell lacks the characteristic moulding wires below the shoulder usually favoured by the Aldbourne founders.

The second is one of the last products of the Witney (Oxon) foundry,¹ and the third and sixth are by John Wiseman of Montacute, Somerset, whose bells are not otherwise found in the county.

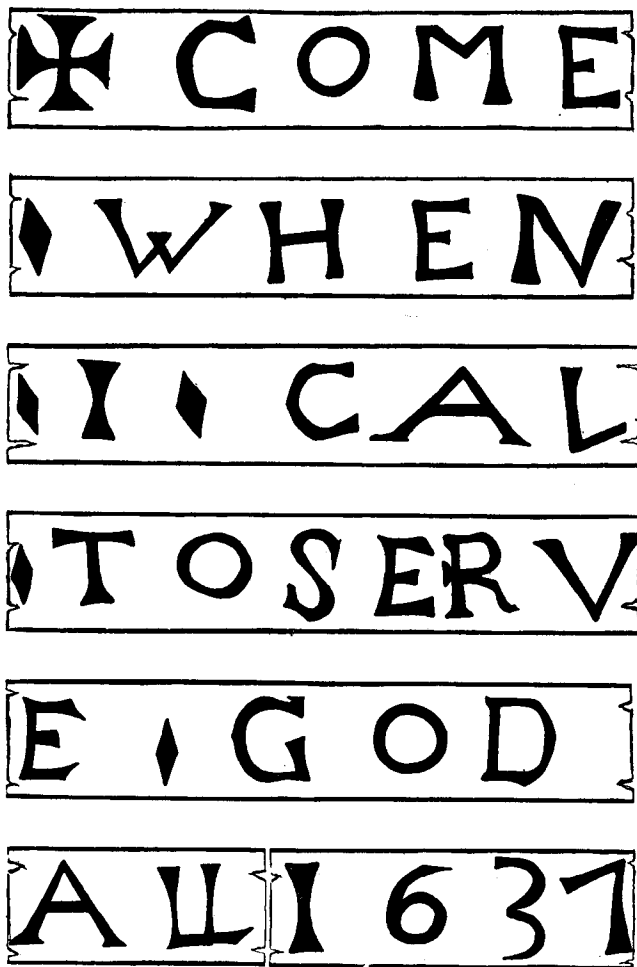


FIG. 93. Inscription on the Tenor Bell at Lambourn, cast by Nathaniel Bolter, or one of the Purdues. The bell was probably founded by the clay model process, with stuck in parchment or sheet-metal type letters, all of which are different. The letters are drawn one quarter full-size.

¹ See footnote to Catmore.

The fourth, seventh, and tenor form part of the unidentified Bolter-Purdue group, of which we have already had examples at Buckland, and Kintbury. Perhaps one day someone may have the good fortune to have access to some churchwardens' accounts in which these founders are mentioned but at the moment they lack identification. The tenor is a very fine-toned maiden bell: a drawing of its inscription will be found in Fig. 93.

The fifth was recast in 1892 by Messrs. Warner, who also removed the canons from the other bells and rehung the entire ring with new fittings in a new cast iron frame.

The second, third, fourth, and seventh have been considerably sharpened by some rather amateurish workman.

The Commissioners' Inventories for 1552 state:—*iiij belles, one lytle belle called a Sanctus bell.*; and an inventory of Church Goods made in 1636 states:—*Five great bells, one little bell.* The bells were probably augmented to six in 1639 when the present third and sixth were cast by John Wiseman. That he should have done this work only two years after the present fourth, seventh, and tenor were cast points to Bolter as being the most likely founder of the latter, as he was an itinerant. There must have been at least eight bells in the ring by 1742.

The following extracts from the Churchwardens' accounts are given by John Footman, M.A., in his book "The History of Lambourn Church."

1630. Paid for makinge the Ringers drinke upon the Fifth of November. ijs. vjd.

1655. Item, Roger Pusey, for his owne worke and materials towards mending and making the bell-wheels. 5s. 6d.

Item. pd. to Mr. Waldron for 2 bell stocks. 5s.

Mr. Footman states:—"In this account we find mention of the huge timber props and supports which had at some time been inserted to relieve the tower walls of the weight of the bells, and which were only removed in 1892 when a thorough restoration of the walls rendered this unnecessary.

1694. Given to ye Ringers for ringing Queen Elizabeth's Coronation Day 5s. (This day, Nov. 17 was commonly observed about this time as a kind of Protestant Festival, second only to the 5th November. A similar entry is found for many years after the Restoration.)

1691. Gave to ye Ringers when Limerick was taken. 5s.

1722. On Sunday October 14. Agreed that for the future the Ringers be paid for Ringing in Money by the Church Wardens.

1742. The second bell was cast by Henry Bagley at a cost of £8 11s. 8d.

Rev'd. Robert Milman, vicar, 1851. "No one cared more for manly sports than he did, but he was deeply convinced of the abuses of the turf, and having racing stables in the parish, he knew only too well to what evils it led. On one occasion soon after he

had come to the parish, when he had refused permission for the church bells to be rung in honour of the victory of a Lambourn horse, the ringers obtained access to the tower, and locking themselves in, rang a peal. Mr. Milman could not restrain his indignation ; he summoned the ringers before the Magistrates, and on the following Sunday preached so vehemently upon the abuse of the turf that no one ventured to trifle with him again."

Visited :

M.L.S., F.S., 16th March 1940.

116.

UPPER LAMBOURN.

St. Luke.

One bell, weighing approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. hung for chiming, under a porch over the western gable of the nave. The bell appears to bear no inscription.

Visited :

R.G., F.S., 4th August, 1941.

(To be continued.)