



THE CHINESE BELL AT GOSFORTH.

TO FACE P. 99.

ART. VII.—*Bells at Gosforth, Irton, and Waberthwaite.*

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I.—GOSFORTH.

THE inventory of church goods, taken in 1552, shows indirectly that Gosforth had at that date “ii prch belles.” The churchwardens’ accounts show that these were lost in 1834.

“1834, Oct 4, By Expenses attending the taking down of old Bells and erecting the New ones, 5s. 7d.

1835, Feb. 4. By Mr. Wilmot’s Bill for New Bells, £9 5s. 4d.”

These new bells, which still hang in the restored church, are perfectly plain, and measure across the mouth 16in. and 19in. respectively.

The only other entry which refers to bells is:—

“1737. Mr. Denton fee and bell chain and the writter 2d, 13s.”

Jefferson, writing in 1842, says of Gosforth Church:—
“The western end is surmounted by a turret (carrying two modern bells), which formed part of the old building, and bears the date 1654. . . . The bell turret stood formerly at the east end of the nave, and was at that time (1789) removed to its present position.” A photograph taken during the rebuilding in 1896 shows that Jefferson was correct. The steeply-pitched gable of 1654, with part of the turret, can be plainly seen embedded in the higher gable of 1789. A sketch taken in 1830 shows a west turret of three arches, the top one being very small.

In the churchwardens' account book is the following entry:—

“ We the undersigned Churchwardens of the parish of Gosforth, have accepted in behalf of the said parish a Bell presented by Lady Senhouse of Seascale which had been taken in a Fortress in China by the late Sir Humphrey le Fleming Senhouse.

Signed by us in the Vestry Room this 24th day of April, 1884.

Churchwardens	{	Wm. Robinson
		Andrew Herbert
		John Walker
		William Leech.”

Sir Humphrey le Fleming Senhouse, K.C.H., C.B., was senior naval officer in command of Her Majesty's squadron in the Chinese war of 1841, and captured the Bogue Forts at the mouth of the Canton River. In the fort called Anunghoy, on the right bank going up stream, the bell was taken; and, after Sir Humphrey's lamented death, was brought home by Captain Pitman in H.M.S. “ Druid,” and presented by Lady Senhouse to the church.

The bell was found to be too large for the lower arches, so the turret was partly taken down and rebuilt with buttresses on each side. The expense was borne by the Senhouse family. The dated stone was carefully preserved and replaced by the rector, the late Rev. Francis Ford Pinder.

Like all Chinese bells, it had no clapper; so a massive one was inserted by the village smith, and the bell hung. It rang—once only—according to tradition, and is certainly badly cracked now, which is not surprising considering the size of the clapper. In 1896 it was carefully taken down, and is now safe on a window ledge inside the church. The date stone is built into the vestry gable.

The bell, which is apparently of cast iron, is highly ornamented, somewhat thin, and rather globular in shape, measuring 21in. in diameter at the mouth and 25in. in height. The six canons, which have been eight, are formed by the four legs and two heads of a horrible

monster. Two more legs have been broken away to insert the clapper. Nearly half of the ornament consists of a mass of scroll work, from which can be disentangled a delightful dragon, all horns, scales, and claws, apparently in the clouds of heaven, and very angry with a benevolently gazing fish, which seems, as it splashes in the water below, to wonder what all the noise is about. The dragon's body ends in clouds, as there is no room for any more of it; but the tail reissues at the top opposite corner of the picture, to conveniently fill up a gap. Above the fish is an ornamental arch, which is the usual way of representing building in Chinese drawings. There are three inscriptions; the longest, of 19 characters, is surrounded with fantastic scroll-work; the other two, of four characters each, have a framework of water-lilies of considerable artistic merit. The curved lip of the bell is profusely decorated with a floral pattern.

The two smaller groups of characters are a pair, and form an example of a Chinese "antithesis," a favourite kind of inscription. Through the kindness of Mr. J. H. Lowry, a translation has been obtained from the well-known Chinese scholar, Dr. Henry. The first eight letters are:—

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. FENG =Wind | 5. KUO =Country |
| 2. TIAO =Tone | 6. PIAO=Outside |
| 3. LIANG=Both | 7. MIN =People |
| 5. SHUN =Favourable | 8. AN =Peace. |

which may be freely translated as a kind of motto wishing good luck:—

“ The breezes and the tone (of the bell)
Are both in accord
In the land to its borders,
The people dwell in peace.”

The longer inscription, which is placed between the two shorter ones, gives the date of the hanging of the

bell. The letters are in five perpendicular rows, and must be read from above downwards, beginning on the right hand of the reader. They are :—

9. } S H I H =Time.
 10. }
 11. { T A O } Name of an Emperor's reign.
 12. { K U A N G }
 13. S H I H =Ten.
 14. C H I U =Nine.
 15. N I E N =Year.
 16. S S Ū } These are two characters which indicate a year of
 17. H A I } the sexagenary cycle.
 18. S U I =Year.
 19. C H U N G =The second of two.
 20. C H C I U =Autumn.
 21. C H I =Lucky.
 22. T I H =Day.
 23. C H I H =Establish, set in place.
 24. L I =Erect.
 25. W A N =Ten thousand } The literati and gentry are so
 26. W Ê N =Pencil strokes } indicated.
 27. L U =Furnace.
 28. T S A O =Make.

which may be translated thus :—

“Date.

In the nineteenth year of the reign of Tao-Kuang, in the ssühai cycle year (*i.e.*, about 1839), in the second month of autumn (*i.e.*, the eighth Chinese month, about September), on a lucky day, this bell was put in place and erected. By the (subscriptions of) the learned and gentry it was made in a furnace.”

Dr. Henry remarks:—“9 and 10 are one character, another way of writing SHIH, time, here meaning ‘date;’ SUI and NIEN both mean ‘year,’ but SUI is used when the cycle characters are employed.”

Though not very old apparently, the fact that this is probably the only bell of the kind that ever hung in a church in England will make it of interest to the Society.

A letter to the late Mr. Wallace, of Distington,

enquiring about another Chinese bell in his museum, elicited the following reply:—"The iron Chinese bell, which I have, came into my possession in 1867. It was brought home by Captain Pitman, and was captured by Sir H. Senhouse in H.M.S. "Blenheim" during one of the squabbles we have so frequently had with the Chinese. It was presented, along with many other things, to the Whitehaven Mechanics' Institution by Captain and Mrs. Pitman and Miss Senhouse in 1865, and they kindly transferred them to me. The bell is cast-iron, 28in. in diameter at the rim and 33in. in height to the top of the git, through which the metal has been poured in, and which has not been removed. One side is in a great measure covered with irregular lines and arabesques in low relief, and the other with groups of characters and an upright ornament filled with larger characters. It was taken at the capture of the Bogue Forts in 1841, and was the bell of Admiral Quang's ship."

The two bells have, therefore, a common origin. I have been unable to trace the ultimate destination of the second.

The death bell is rung at Gosforth.

II.—IRTON.

Irton Church had in 1552 "ii prch belles." There are now eight, which were presented by Sir Thomas Brocklebank, Bart., in 1887. Prior to 1887 there were two, one of which being cracked was broken up; but the larger bell was fortunately saved, and is now hanging in the clock tower at Irton Hall.

It weighs 4cwts. 3qrs. 5lbs., measures 2ft. 3in. across the mouth, and hangs from a central loop and six canons. Round the upper part runs an ornamental band of grapes and vine leaves in relief, and above that is an inscription (also in relief), in Roman capitals, which reads:—

IMPOSTOR :: FVGATVS :: ANO : GEORGII ::
REGIS :: SECO : ANNO : DOM :: 1715.

The inscription is all in one line, which does not reach round the bell. The hiatus is filled with a strip of the same ornamental band as above.

The Highlanders surrendered at Preston on November 14th, 1715, and on the same day at Sheriffmuir the troops under the Earl of Mar were driven back. The Pretender himself did not land in Scotland until December 22nd, and embarked for France on February 4th, 1716. Still there can be no doubt that the bell commemorates the defeat which ruined his cause. Chancellor Ferguson says in his *History of Cumberland*:—"In 1715, the Jacobite rising found no supporters in Cumberland."

George Irton, Esq., was "Lord of Irton" in 1715; and Sir William Pennington, of Muncaster, first baronet, was patron of the living. It is probable that one of the two was, at any rate, the prime mover in the erection of the bell. The term "Lord of Irton" is still commonly used by the people of the district, the last of the Irton family being always referred to as "the old lord."

A bell in Cumberland, cast in 1715, would probably come from a York foundry, and be the work of either Samuel Smith or Edward Sellar. The modern bells at Irton are from the foundry of Warner & Sons, London.

		in.		cwt.	qr.	lb.
Treble	...	29½	...	6	1	5
2	...	30½	...	6	2	25
3	...	32	...	7	0	1
4	...	34	...	7	1	23
5	...	36	...	8	0	25
6	...	38	...	10	1	1
7	...	41	...	12	0	6
Tenor	...	46	...	16	1	25
				74	1	27

(The note of the tenor is E natural.)

The inscriptions are:—

- Treble. Suscito voce pios. Tu Jesu dirige mentes.
2. Nomen sanctum Jesu serva nos mortis ab esu.

3. Sit nomen Domini benedictum. Laudate illum cymbalis sonoris.
 4. Morabor in domo domini in longitudinem dierum.
 5. Sancta Trinitas unus Deus miserere nobis.
 6. Omnia fiant ad gloriam Dei.
 7. Vivos voco. Mortuos plango. Fulgura frango.
- Tenor. In honorem Dei et in piam memoriam Ann Brocklebank.

III.—WABERTHWAITE.

Waberthwaite Church is said to be dedicated to St. John the Baptist. The "ii prch belles" of 1552 still hang in the turret, which was rebuilt in 1796. The south bell, which is the tenor, measures across the mouth 17½ in., and hangs by a central loop and six canons. Round the shoulder is an inscription of 20 letters—Lombardic capitals.

2̄ 2̄ I A C O B' D N S T O S W A L K E R

The stock of letter-moulds seems to have been incomplete and the workman careless, for the letters T and U are upside down, the letter S reversed, and one S is on its side, and the same character does duty for N, U, or even W. At the end of the inscription is a lozenge stop; over the T in S T S, the N in D N S, and the O in T O S, is in each case a lozenge; and after I A C O B a lozenge set obliquely a little above the letter line—all being marks of abbreviation.

Taking the U to stand for W, as on the old town clock bell at Carlisle (1421), on which "UESTMORLAND" is inscribed, we get the whole extended sentence:—

SANCTUS JACOBUS. DOMINUS THOMAS WALKER.
i.e., St. James. Thomas Walker, B.A.

There is nothing unusual in a bell bearing the name of a saint to whom the church was not dedicated. Thomas Walker, B.A., was probably rector of Waberthwaite at the time, and possibly the donor of the bell or bells. A William Walker was rector of Waberthwaite in 1535.

The north bell (the treble) has a diameter of 16in., and hangs from a central loop and six canons. It is of the same shape and to all appearance from the same foundry as the south bell. Round the shoulder is an inscription of 17 letters—Lombardic capitals:—

HENRICUS ♦ 2 REX ♦ 2 SEXTUS \ REX ♦

After HENRICUS is a lozenge stop, which is repeated after REX; after SEXTUS a triangular stop. Again the letter U is upside down, the letter S reversed, and the same character does duty for N and U.

The lettering, with the exception of the letter U, and perhaps also of R, exactly resembles that on the Distinguon treble, which again is very similar to “the tenor bell formerly at Loweswater, which last is considered, from its lack of space stop or mark of any kind, to be an early fourteenth century bell. The letter S is reversed in both instances. The late Mr. Stahlschmidt thought that the stop-marks at Distinguon, which differ from those at Waberthwaite, indicate later work than Loweswater,” being by a successor of the founder of the Loweswater tenor.*

The letters on the south bell at Eskdale are also very similar.

It may be that the name of the King simply indicates that the bells were hung during his reign; but they furnish at least the approximate date (1422-1471), and seem to show that Lombardic lettering in bell inscriptions lingered on in Cumberland somewhat later than in the southern counties. They also afford additional proof that bells in Cumberland churches were not confiscated by Edward VI.'s Commissioners. It is, however, quite as probable that they are connected with the well-known tradition of the “Luck of Muncaster.” Henry VI., when

* *Transactions*, vol. xiv., p. 324.

a fugitive either after the battle of Towton in 1461 or the battle of Hexham in 1464, is said to have been sheltered at Muncaster by Sir John Pennington, and to have given to his host a curious glass vessel. 1461 is on the royal portrait at Muncaster.

In the reign of Henry VI., the church at Muncaster belonged to the Priory of Conishead; and the presentation to the rectory of Waberthwaite to Roger Kirkby of Kirkby, who died, according to West's pedigree, in 1613. Since 1608, both presentations have been in the hands of the Penningtons, and were held up to 1844 by the same incumbent, who held service at Waberthwaite "of a suitable length" to allow him to cross the Esk by stepping-stones "free of tide" to do duty at Muncaster. The Kirkbys were staunch Royalists in the reign of Charles I. There is no proof that the Penningtons had anything to do with the bells; but they are of the right date, and hang within half-a-mile of Muncaster Castle, so that, even if Thomas Walker was the donor, he may well have had the royal visit in his mind.

NOTE.—This paper was written several years ago. I have to acknowledge much prompt and generous help from the late Rev. H. Whitehead.

ADDITIONAL NOTE.—Sept. 1901. A deed dated 1392, quoted to me by the Rev. J. Wilson, shews STS IACOB to be the name of the patron Saint. It is a grant from Thomas de Berdesey to Sir Richard de Kyrkeby, Knight, of the Manor of Wayburthwait and the advowson of the Church of *St. James* of Wayburthwait, with the reversion of the lands which Isabella, relict of James de Wayburthwait holds in dower. Witnesses—Sir John Hudleston, Knight, William de Hudleston, Richard de Hudleston, and others. The county histories all seem to have confounded the dedication of Waberthwaite with that of the adjacent church of Corney.
