

CALEDONIAN CAMPANALOGY,¹

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In Scotland the accessibility of small ecclesiastical bells of a high antiquity, existing in museums and private collections, has led to many and full dissertations on them, while larger specimens in towers, dating from the middle ages, have almost escaped notice, and the history of the foundries seems absolutely untouched.

There can be no doubt, however, that research in this branch of archæology will meet with as ample a reward as has fallen to our lot who have laboured in bringing to light the Church bells of the seventeen completed counties of England.

Though change-ringing has rarely been practiced north of the Tweed, and rings of bells are few in number, yet many a solitary tinkler which gives forth its weekly summons to worship may be found to chronicle on its weather-beaten surface something of wider import than its individual history. It is with a view to stimulate interest in this matter that these fragments are put together.

Fergus, the brazier of Boston in Lincolnshire, certainly has a Caledonian sound in his name. He is recorded in the continuations to Ingulphus's Crowland Chronicle, of whatever value they may be. It is related that the old bells of that abbey were melted in the fire of 1091, and that about 27 years afterwards this Fergus gave "duo skilletas" to serve after a humble fashion in their stead. The bell-founders of the middle ages are constantly designated as braziers and potters, their business lying more usually in

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casting domestic utensils than in their more sonorous handiwork.

Mr. Lukis,¹ records two bells at Lochmaben, in the county of Dumfries. One is inscribed :

✠ Ave Maria. Johannes Adam me fecit.

The other, possibly older, bears no inscription.

A more detailed observation of this bell of John Adam's may give the clue, possibly, to the history of a considerable group of bells. The lettering, especially the capitals, and all stops and other marks, together with the initial cross, should be squeezed and cast in plaster-of-paris; or at the least good rubbings should be taken. Then as other mediævals fall under notice some evidence of their origin will show itself, and perhaps in some list of burgesses or of guild-brethren it may be found where John Adam exercised his calling.

A Berwickshire church, unfortunately not named, has a bell bearing a legend set backwards, and to all appearance in two varieties of type. My late venerable friend, the Rev. H. T. Ellacombe, sent it to me for solution. I can make out *sanct tommas campana . .*. If some Berwickshire antiquary would find the church and send me a rubbing I might be able to complete the inscription. Everything here ought carefully to be compared with Lochmaben, and with the silver plate inscribed

johannes alexandri me fieri fecit,

which is attached to the lower edge of the Guthrie bell, and relates not to the original rude iron hand-bell but to the ornamentation with which it was enriched in after-ages. These three inscriptions may be referred to the later years of the fourteenth century, or to the earlier of the fifteenth.

The Cathedral of S. Magnus, Orkney, supplies us with evidence that bell-founding was carried out in Edinburgh Castle in the year 1528, by Robert Borthwick, of whom we desire to know more. There are four bells in the Cathedral, of which the smallest is 1 ft. 8 in. diameter, and without inscription. Two hundred years ago it was called the "Skellat bell," a designation which recalls Fergus to our mind. But the other three, though apparently not quite

¹ *Church Bells*, p. 134.

in tune, were intended for a sequence descending to a rather sharp G, and the treble is inscribed :

“maid be maister robert maxvel, bishop of orknay, y^e secund zier of his consecration y^e zeir of gode I^m V^c XXVIII. zeris, y^e XV. zier of Kyng James y^e V. be robert borthvyk ; maid al thre in y^e castel of Edynburgh.” The last eleven words are omitted from the second bell, and on the largest the words are somewhat modernised at its recasting in Amsterdam by Cladius Fremy in 1682. All bear the arms of the Bishop, and medallions with the sworded figure of S. Magnus. There is a full account of these bells in Mr. Lukis’s book. The importance of lettering, &c., here is very great, as more of Borthwick’s bells may be expected to turn up. Medallions such as are found here, are very Continental in their character, as we shall learn from our next example, the tongueless *Katerina* bell in Glasgow Cathedral.

This belongs to a small group in Great Britain cast in Mechlin, which, so far as our present knowledge extends, amounts to three or at the most four. One of them, at Bromeswell, in the county of Suffolk, beautifully ornamented, fell to my lot in working up that country, and through the kindness of Canon van Caster, of Mechlin Cathedral, I obtained a detailed account of the founder’s family, Waghevens as the name appears at Bromeswell, or Vohaghevens, as at Glasgow. The Bromeswell bell by Cornelis Waghevens, is dated 1530, and bears medallions of the Annunciation, the Flight into Egypt, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Victory of the Archangel Michael over the Dragon. The Glasgow bell is the latest known to have come from the hand of Jacop Vohaghevens. It bears a figure of S. Catherine and the arms of Mechlin, and is inscribed—“Katherine ben ic, ghegoten van Jacop Vohaghevens int iaer ons Heeren 1554” (Katherine am I, cast by Jacop Vohaghevens in the year of our Lord, 1554). From its tonguelessness it seems always to have fulfilled its present purpose as a clock-bell. The extravagant praise which Mr. Haweis bestows on Belgian work, past and present, leads me to say that in tone the Bromeswell bell is very common-place. The weight of the Glasgow bell, to judge by its diameter, is about 5 cwt.

Foundry work appears to have been sent out of the country during the latter part of the sixteenth century. The great bell of Glasgow Cathedral records its fabrication in Holland in 1583, by the gift of Marcus Knox, a merchant in Glasgow. It was recast by Thomas Mears, of the Whitechapel Foundry, in 1790.

Two bells disappeared from Holyrood Abbey in 1547, in the general wrecking which followed on the grim struggle at Pinkie Cleugh. The Diary of William Patten, Londoner, thus records the matter' :—"There stood south-westard, about a quarter of a mile from our camp, a monastery they call Holy Rood Abbey. Sir Walter Bonham and Edward Chamberlain got license to suppress it. Whereupon these Commissioners making their first visitation there, found the monks all gone : but the church and much part of the house well covered with lead. Soon after, they plucked off the lead ; and had down the bells, which were but two : and, according to the statute (i.e., *the English Act of Parliament for the suppression of the Monasteries*), did somewhat hereby disgrace the house. As touching the monks ; because they were gone, they put them to their pensions at large." These bells, I fear, are beyond tracing.

At Cramond we have more Low-country work, the bell being inscribed :—

"Michael Bvrgerhvys me fecit 1619. Soli Deo Gloria."

This is a beautiful little specimen, weighing about $2\frac{1}{2}$ cwt., cast clean and close, rather long-waisted. The acoustic properties are remarkable, the note being F, the barrel-note A, and the flat crown under the cannon A in alt. This bell was taken from the parish in the Parliamentary War, but restored by General Monk. Two East Anglian bells, at Thwaite St. Mary's, Norfolk, at Mettingham, Suffolk, have a border somewhat similar to this.

The hanging of the bell at Arbroath is recorded in a quaint epitaph to the Town Treasurer in the Kirkyard.

"Here lyes Alexand . Peter . present Town Treasurer of
Arbroath, who died — day, January . 1630
Such a Treasurer was not since, nor yet before,
For common works, calsais, brigs, and schoir—
Of all others he did excel
He devised our skoel, and he hung our bell."

¹ Arber's English Reprints III., 138.

Where there is other bronze casting there is usually bell-founding. It may therefore be noted that in 1642 James Monteith cast at Edinburgh a bronze gun, which was found at Bhurtpore by the British in 1828, and now lies in the Museum of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Lettering here again will be important.

The history of the carillons at Glasgow, Stirling and elsewhere would be worth following up. We find chime-barrels in England more than four centuries back. Most of these little bells at Glasgow bear the date 1735.

To prevent disappointment, it is as well to mention that the eight at Berwick-on-Tweed, and the six at Dunkeld Cathedral, come from the Whitechapel foundry, the latter dating only from 1814.¹

¹Any communication made to Dr. Raven on the subject of ancient bells will receive a ready answer and be much valued.