

Repton's Merry Bells.

Contributed by F. C. HIPKINS, M.A.

“Barrow's big boulders, Repton's merry bells,
Foremark's cracked pancheons, and Newton's egg shells.”



THUS does a local poet compare Repton bells with those of neighbouring parishes. It is not intended to defend the comparison, for as Dogberry says, “Comparisons are odorous”! but to write an account of the bells, derived from all sources, ancient and modern.

Llewellynn Jewitt, in Vol. XIII. of the *Reliquary*, describing the bells of Repton, writes, “at the church in the time of Edward VI. there were iij great bells & ij small.” Unfortunately “the Churchwardens' and Constables' accounts of the Parish of Repton” only extend from the year 1582 to 1635. I have copied out some of the references to our bells entered in them, which will, I hope, be interesting to my readers.

Extracts from “the Churchwardens' and Constables' accounts of the Parish of Repton.”

A.D. 1583.	The levy for the bell	vj ^{li} ix ^s o
	It' spent at takying downe the bell	xvj ^d
	It' payd to the Bellfounder	xxxiiij ^s iij ^d
	It' bestowed on the s'vants at casting of ye bell...		xvj ^d
	It' expensys at drawing up the bell	vij ^d
	It' to the ryngers the xvii th day of november	xij ^d
A.D. 1584.	Recevyd of the levy for the bell	vj ^{li} x ^s vij ^d
	It' of Bretby towards the bell	vj ^s viij ^d
	It' spent at takying downe ye bell	vij ^d
	It' bestowed on the bell founder	ij ^d
	It Payd to Bellfounder for weyght,) <i>z.</i> . iij score & ij pounds)	iiij ^{li} xi ^s viij ^d

A.D. 1585.	It' for a bell rope for the great bell	ij ^s
	It' to John Pratt for makinge iiij newe bellropes	v ^s
	It' the day before Saynt Hew's day for } mendyng the bels, & for nayles }	viiij ^d
A.D. 1586.	It' of our ladie's even, given to the ringers } for the preservation of our Queene }	xij ^d
	<i>Our ladie's even</i> , eve of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (March 25th). <i>Preservation of our Queene</i> Elizabeth from the Babington Conspiracy.	
A.D. 1587.	It' given unto the ringers uppon coronation daye	iiij ^d
A.D. 1589.	It' for a bell rope	ij ^s viij ^d
A.D. 1590.	It' payde to francis Eaton for mendyng } the irons aboutt the bells }	ij ^s iiij ^d
A.D. 1592.	It' payde to Ralphe Weanwryghte } for trussyng the bells agyne }	iiij ^s
	the Coronacyon daye	
A.D. 1600.	It' spent in takinge downe ye beell	xij ^d
	It' payd to John Welsh for takinge hitt donne ...	vj ^d
	It' spent in lodinge hitt	iiij ^d
	It' spent in charges going with the beell } to Nottingham, being tow days and one } night	vjs viij ^d
	It' payd to ye bellfounder for castinge the bell ...	iiij ^{li} xvij ^s
	It' spent with him	ij ^d
	It' payd for yookeinge ye Beell and for greysse...	ij ^s viij ^d
	It' spent uppon them that holpe with the beell ...	x ^d
A.D. 1603.	It' given to the ringers uppon New yeares daye morninge	vj ^d
	It' given to ye ringers upon St. James daye (July 25th)	xij ^d
	It' given to ye ringers the v daye of August ...	xij ^d
A.D. 1605.	It' payd at hanginge up ye greatte bell	vj ^d
	It' bestowed of ye Ringers at ye first Ringinge } of ye bells }	vij ^d
	It' payd for greese for ye bells	viiij ^d
A.D. 1607.	It' given to ye Ringers uppon Christmas daye morninge	iiij ^d
A.D. 1614.	It' tow bellclappers	
A.D. 1615.	The names of them that gave money to bye the newe beell. 80. (Repton, 62. Milton, 18.)	
	Sum gathered	xij ^{li} viij ^s viij ^d
A.D. 1623.	First payde for castinge the bell	v ^{li}
	It' given to the Ringers at the time of Prince Charles his comminge forth of spaine. (Oct. 1623).	xij ^d

Extract from the diary of Mr. George Gilbert.

"A.D. 1772, Oct. 7th. The third bell was cracked, upon ringing at Mr. John Thorpe's wedding. The bell, upon being taken down, weighed 7 cwt. 2 qr. 18 lb., clapper, 24 lb. It was sold at 10d. per lb., £35 18s. Re-hung the third bell, Nov. 21st, 1774. Weight 8 cwt. 3 qr. 24 lb., at 13d. per lb., £54 7s. 8d., clapper, 1 qr. 22 lb., at 22d., £1 2s. 10d. £55. 9s. 6½d."

This is all the information I can gather about "Repton's merry bells" from ancient sources.

For some time our ring of six bells has only been "*chimed*," as, owing to the state of the beams which supported them, it was considered dangerous to "*ring*" them.

During the month of January, 1896, Messrs. John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough, descendants of a long line of bell-founders, lowered the bells down, and conveyed them to Loughborough, where they were thoroughly cleansed and examined. Four of them were sound, but two, the 5th and 6th, were found to be cracked, the 6th (the Tenor bell) worse than the 5th. The crack started in both bells from the "crown staple," from which the "clapper" hangs; it (the staple) is made of iron and cast into the crown of the bell. This has been the cause of many cracked bells. The two metals, bell-metal and iron, not yielding equally, one has to give way, and this is generally the bell metal. The "Canons," as the projecting pieces of metal forming the handle, and cast with the bell, are called, and by which they are fastened to the "headstocks," or axle tree, were found to be much worn with age. All the "Canons" have been removed, holes have been drilled through the crown, the staples removed, and new ones have been made which pass through the centre hole, and upwards through a square hole in the headstocks, made of iron, to replace the old wooden ones. New bell-frames of iron, made in the shape of the letter **H**, fixed into oak beams above and below, support the bells, which are now raised about three feet above the bell chamber floor, and thus they can be examined more easily.

During the restoration of the Church in 1886, the opening of the west arch necessitated the removal of the ringers' chamber floor, which had been made, at some period or other, between the ground floor and the groined roof, so the ringers had to mount above the groined ceiling when they had to ring or chime the bells. There, owing to want of distance between them and the bells, the labour and inconvenience of ringing was doubled, the want of sufficient leverage was much felt: now the ringers stand on the ground floor, and with new ropes and new "sally-guides" their labour is lessened, and the ringing improved.

When the bells were brought back from Loughboro' I made careful "rubblings" of the inscriptions, legends, bell-marks, &c., before they were raised and fixed in the belfry. The information thus obtained, together with that in Vol. XIII. of the *Reliquary*, has enabled me to publish the following details about the bells.

The "rubblings" and "squeezes" for the article in the *Reliquary* were obtained by W. M. Conway (now Sir Martin Conway) when he was at Repton School.

The 1st (treble) Bell.

On the haunch, between three lines, one above, two below,

FRANCIS THACKER OF
LINCOLNS INN ESQ^R 1721.

a border: fleurs-de-lis (fig. 7): Bell-mark of Abraham Rudhall, a famous bell-founder of Gloucester (fig. 7): border (fig 7).

A catalogue of Rings of Bells cast by A. R. and others, from 1684—1830, is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford: this bell is mentioned as the gift of Francis Thacker.

At the east end of the north aisle there is a mural monument to his memory.

The 2nd Bell.

On the crown a border of fleurs-de-lis (fig 9). Round the haunch,

D sweetly **t**oling **m**en **d**o **c**all **t**o **t**aste **o**n
meatl' **t**hat **f**eed **t**he **s**oule

between two lines above and below, then below the same border (fig. 9) inverted.

1622 Godfrey Chacker Jane Chacker

This bell is referred to in the Churchwardens' accounts under dates 1615 and 1623.

The 3rd Bell.

Round the haunch, between two lines,

THO^S GILBERT & IOHN TETLEY
CHVRCHWARDENS 1774
PACK & CHAPMAN OF LONDON
FECIT

Below, a border, semicircles intertwined.

This is the bell referred to in the extract quoted above from George Gilbert's diary.

The 4th Bell.

Round the haunch, between six lines (3 above and 3 below),

✠ **M**elodie **N**omen **G**enet **M**agdelene

a shield: three bells (two and one), with a crown between them (fig. 1), (Bell mark of Richard Brasyer, a celebrated Norwich Bell founder, who died in 1513) a lion's head on a square (fig. 2): a crown on a square (fig. 3): and a cross (fig. 5).

The 5th Bell.

Round the haunch, between two lines, one above, one below,

✠ **G**lor **d**ūi **i**hū **e**pī **v**ox **r**exultationis

same marks (except the crown) as No. 4 Bell: a king's head crowned (fig. 4): and a cross (fig. 6). Below this, round the haunch, a beautiful border composed of a bunch of grapes and a vine leaf (fig. 8), alternately arranged.

REPTON BELL MARKS AND ORNAMENTS.

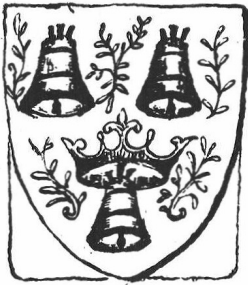


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

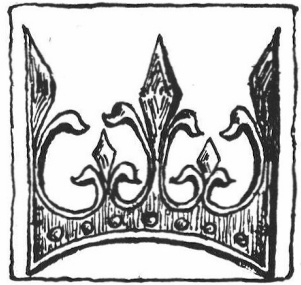


Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.

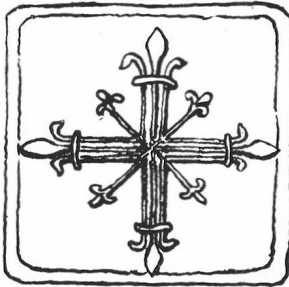


Fig. 5.

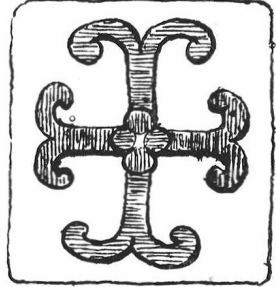


Fig. 6.

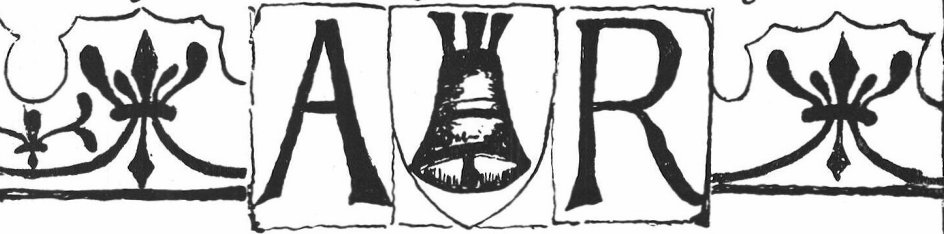


Fig. 7.

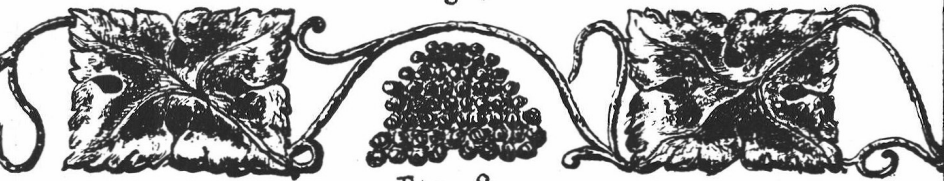


Fig. 8.



Fig. 9.

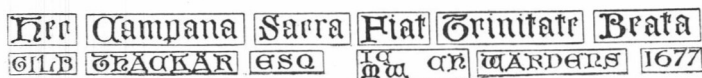
Below, the Bell mark of John Taylor & Co. within a double circle, a triangle interlaced with a trefoil, and a bell in the centre. Above the circle the sacred emblem of S. John Baptist, the lamb, cross, and flag. The name of the firm within the circle.

Underneath the Bell mark,

RECAST 1896.

The 6th Bell (the tenor Bell).

Round the haunch, between four lines, two above, and two below,



(no bell marks).

Below, a border like that on the 5th Bell.

RECAST 1896.

G. WOODYATT, VICAR.

J. ASTLE,
T. E. AUDEN, } CHURCHWARDENS.

Bell mark of J. Taylor & Co. on the opposite side.

(Owing to the difference of the type of the inscription, and names, it is supposed that this bell was recast in 1677, so it may have been one of the "three great bells" in Edward VI.'s time.)

The following particulars of the bells have been supplied by Messrs. John Taylor & Co.

No.		Diameter. ft. in.	Height. ft. in.	Note.	Weight. cwt. qr. lbs.
No. I.		2 9½	2 3	C#	7 3 19
„ II.		2 10¾	2 4½	B	7 2 27
„ III.		3 0½	2 4½	A	8 1 18
„ IV.		3 2	2 6½	G#	9 2 21
„ V.		3 6	2 10	F#	12 2 26
„ VI.		3 11	3 1	E	17 3 0
Total					3 tons 4 cwt. 0 qrs. 27 lbs.

Key-note E major.

To complete the octave, two more bells are required, D# and E, then indeed Repton will have a "ring" second to none.