



THE BELLS OF ST. MICHAEL'S, CHESTER.

BY THE REV. J. GODSON.

(Read 15th December, 1890.)

THE following is a copy of a statement made in one of the old books of churchwardens' accounts of St. Michael's parish, Chester, respecting the church bells of that parish:—

At a Parish Meeting duly warned, & held the 30th day of May, Anno Dom. 1726, in the Parish Church of St. Michael, in the City of Chester:

It is unanimously agreed & resolved by the inhabitants of the said Parish, that there shall be six new Tuneable bells hung in the steeple of the said Parish Church, instead of the three bells now hanging in the said Steeple. And the Churchwardens of the said Parish Church are hereby impowered & desired to procure & collect what money they can by voluntary contributions towards the charge of the said Bells, & the hanging of them in the said Steeple; & it is further ordered that the residue of the said charge shall be borne by the Inhabitants of the said Parish. And it is further ordered that the present Churchwardens with the assistance of John Williams, Esq., Thomas Jones, Esq., Alderman Hughes, Mr. Penkett, Mr. Godwin, Mr. Potter, Mr. Rose, & Mr. John

Dicas (a Solicitor), who are hereby desired & impowered to assist the said Churchwardens, are hereby impowered to make any contract or bargain relating to the casting, founding, & hanging the said new bells, or whatsoever else may relate to the same; & the said Inhabitants do hereby agree to ratify & confirm all such Bargains or Contracts, as witness our hands:

Then follow the names: Thomas Jones, John Williams, Roger Comberbach, William Hughes, Richard Penkett, Stephen Rose, William Goodwin, John Dica, Peter Potter, Joseph Dennet, and George Wilson.

The next entry relating to this matter, but bearing no date, though obviously belonging to the same year, 1726, is styled:

A particular account of the Contributions of Several Benefactors, towards the purchasing six new tuneable bells, to be hung in the said Steeple of the Parish Church of St. Michael, collected & received by Lawrence Gother, Alderman, & Wm. Hughes, Alderman, Churchwardens, pursuant to an order made at a Parish Meeting held the 30th May, 1726.

The first named benefactor is Sir Richard Grosvenor, who gave £20; then follow the names, written very clearly, of above seventy other persons; the total amount thus collected being £117. 9s. 8d. From this total a deduction of £1. 6s. 0d. is made, viz., £1. 1s. 0d., Alderman Saylor; and 5s., Mr. Thomas Taylor. Mr. Thomas Taylor, however, afterwards sent in his contribution, and so the amount £116. 8s. 8d. was obtained.

The next statement relates to the disbursements on account of the new bells, various items are given, and some of them are remarkable.

	£	s.	d.
Pay'd the carriage of the old Tantany Bell to		1	0
Salop - - - - -			
Pay'd the carriage of the old Tantany bell		1	0
Pay'd for the carriage of the new one		1	0

Pay'd Mr. Rudhall in cash 85 : 8 : 4 } - -	£	s.	d.
by the old bells 49 : 14 } - -	135	2	4
Given for to drink when the bells were weighed -		2	0
More for drink - - - - -		2	0
Expenses when Sir Rich. Grosvenor's subscrip- } tion money was pay'd - - - - - }		3	0
Given for a pint of wine to Mr. Ormes when he } pay'd his subscription - - - - - }		1	0
Pay'd the ringers on the Prince's birthday - -		1	0
The six new bells 30 ^{cwt.} . 2 ^{q.} . 7 ^{lb.} . 7 at 15 ^{pence} per lb.	-	213	18 9
The six new clappers - - - - -	-	3	6 0
		<hr/>	
		217	4 9
Due to Mr. Rudhall, to be paid the 9th of Nov., } 1727 - - - - - }		82	2 5

This sum (£82. 2s. 5d.) remaining was to be paid to Mr. Rudhall; we find, therefore, that he was the founder of the bells. His bell foundry was at Gloucester, but the wardens only paid the carriage of the bells from Shrewsbury, as appears from the statement of the auditor of the accounts. August 7th, 1727, a parish meeting was held, and an order made that an assessment of eighteenpence in the pound should be charged on all real estate in the parish, towards the repairs of the Church; and towards paying for the new bells and the hanging thereof, and other charges about the same.

And in the churchwardens' account for that year, 1727, this item occurs: Paid to Rudhall's order, £82. 2s. od. It would seem that this sum was advanced by the churchwardens; for though the founder's bill was paid the parish was not free from debt on account of the bells for three or four years afterwards.

In 1728, July 9th, a rate of ninepence in the pound, and in the same year (in October) another rate of one shilling in the pound were granted; and in 1729, two assessments, each a shilling rate, were made "towards the repairs of the church,

and *the new ring of bells*, and other charges about the same." But in 1730, May 19th, repairs of the church are mentioned with an etc., meaning a debt to the churchwardens, and in 1731 no intimation of such debt remains. So that in the course of four years the new bells of St. Michael's were ordered, cast, hung, and paid for; and long may they ring!

The inscriptions on the bells are as follows:—

- No. 1. FEAR GOD. HONOUR THE KING. 1726.
,, 2. PROSPERITY TO THIS PARISH. 1726.
,, 3. JNO. WILLIAMS AND THOS. JONES, ESQRS. 1726.
,, 4. LAW. GOTHER AND WILLIAM HUGHES, ALDERMEN AND
CHURCHWARDENS. 1726.
,, 5. LAW. GOTHER AND WILLIAM HUGHES, ALDERMEN AND
CHURCHWARDENS. 1726.
,, 6. SIR RICHARD GROSVENOR, BARONET. 1726.

