

THE BELLS OF MIDDLESEX

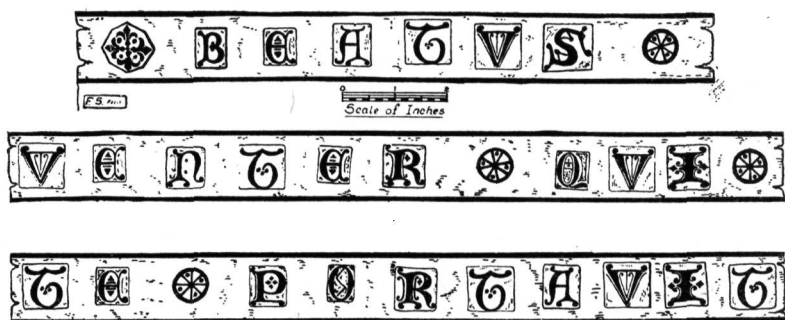
By F. W. M. DRAPER

IV.—St. Paul's, Finchley

THE church of St. Paul in Long Lane, Finchley, a modern building, possesses an ancient bell, which came from Hatford in Berkshire and was cast in London about 1380.

This bell is described in *The Church Bells of Berkshire* (*Berkshire Archæological Journal*, Vol. 45, Part 2, 1941, pp. 73–75) by Frederick Sharpe, author of *The Church Bells of Radnorshire* and *The Church Bells of Oxfordshire*.

When the new church at Hatford was built in 1873, two ancient bells were removed from the turret of the old church. One of these eventually came to Finchley, where it still hangs



[Drawing by Frederick Sharpe]

from its original Berkshire elm headstock, and was visited there by Mr. Sharpe and Mr. F. M. Underhill, editor of the *Berkshire Archæological Journal*, on 17th May, 1941, just after the church had been damaged by enemy action.

The diameter of the bell is $22\frac{1}{4}$ inches, height from lip to crown $20\frac{1}{4}$ inches, canons 4 inches, and argent $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Its strike-note is G natural. It is inscribed *Beatus venter qui te portavit*, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee," the inscription being preceded by an Initial Cross and the words separated by a Word Stop used by John Langhorne of London. The inscription is not known to occur elsewhere.

John Langhorne, brazier, whose business career extended from 1379 to 1406, appears to have been the first owner of the second and more important London bell-foundry (see Deedes

and Walters, *Church Bells of Essex*, 21-24). He apparently died in 1406, his will being dated in January of that year (Sharpe's *Calendar of London Wills*, ii, 363). The Hatford (or Finchley) bell was probably cast at the beginning of his career.



Permission to publish the above account and the scale drawing is kindly given by the author, Mr. Sharpe, and by the editor of the *Berkshire Archæological Journal*.

V.—Kingsbury

THE bell-chamber in Kingsbury old church is described as "inaccessible" in the Middlesex volume of the Historical Monuments Commission. In 1950 Mr. Rodney Meadows and Mr. E. Southgate and other members of the Kingsbury guild of ringers made rubbings of the bells, which were found very difficult of access.

The inscriptions on the three bells are as follows:

PETRVS + DE + WESTON + ME + FACIT

ANNO DOMINI 1604  GOD 

SAVE  KYNGE  JAMES

F&H+I&B

MADE ○ BY ○ SM ○ NEWTON ○ 1708.

OLEVER ○ IACKSON ○ CHVRCHWARDEN ○

[Drawing by Mrs. H. E. Chiosso from rubbing by Rodney Meadows and E. Southgate]

Tenor. Simeon Potter, who wrote the history of the church in 1928, transcribed "Petrus de Weston" as "Petrus de Westmo," i.e. of Westminster. The rubbing, however, shows that the old reading was correct. We first hear of Petrus de Weston in 1328. He died between August and October, 1347. The lettering of his bell at Marlston, Berks, is identical with that at Kingsbury.

2. The following information was kindly supplied by Mr. Sharpe. The "ring and cross" shield was formerly used by Richard Hille, of the smaller London foundry *circa* 1423-1440. Hille usually moulded in wax, whereas later founders generally used loam. It is impossible to ascertain from the rubbing whether (*a*) the inscription was formed in wax and built up on a model of the bell from which the two moulds—core and cope—took their shape; or (*b*) the inscription was impressed into the cope, or outer mould, by means of moulding stamps. If method (*a*) was adopted, the founder, whoever he was, must in some way have gained possession of Richard Hille's plant in the early years of the 17th century; if (*b*), the founder must have used a portion of a medieval bell, on which Hille's cross and ring shield appeared, to make impressions of it in the cope. A founder with the initials I.B. owned the Gloucester foundry 1580-1608, but was probably not the maker of this bell. It may be correct to say with Trollope that I.B. stood for James Butler, but the juxtaposition of the two sets of initials F.H. and I.B. points strongly to a pair of churchwardens.

3. Samuel Newton was Master of the Founders' Company in 1710/11. His foundry was in the parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate. Stahlschmidt (*Church Bells of Kent*) says that its site was marked by a court called Founders' Court on the south side of Fore Street. This court is shown on a plan made for the Rev. W. Denton's *Record of Cripplegate Without* (1883) from a MS. map of the 17th century in the Guildhall Library. It was nearly opposite the end of Milton Street, the former Grub Street. The words of the inscription on the bell are separated by impressions of coins of Queen Anne.

VI.—All Hallows, Staining

IN the fourth London volume, dealing with *The City*, published by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, mention is made of the Flemish bell from All Hallows Staining now

standing in the vestibule of Grocers' Hall. It is said to bear the rhyming inscription: "Martine es minen name mun gbelunt sy gode bequame ghemaect int jaer m.cccc.lxviii." This legend is not translated, nor could it be, for, even for those without expert knowledge of medieval Flemish, it is obvious that, though the *bel* of *gbelunt* bears a specious resemblance to

* martine * es * minen * name *

miin * ghelut * sy * gode * bequame *

ghemaect * int * iaer * m * cccc * lvi * *

[Drawing by Mrs. H. E. Chiosso from rubbing by Amherst Tyssen]

"bell," there can have been no word of such a shape, while *mun* does not exist and stands for *miin*, modern *mijn*. A visit to Grocers' Hall showed that *gbelunt* was a mal-transcription of *ghelut*. This word, pronounced with a strong initial guttural, corresponds to German *Geläut* or *Geläute*, "a pealing of bells." The second element is cognate with the adjective "loud." The inscription then reads:

Martine es minen namē
 miin ghelut sy gode bequame
 ghemaect int jaer m.cccc.lxviii.

and means: "Martin is my name. May my peal be pleasing to God! Made in 1468."

No information is available about the other bells and their origin. The church escaped the Great Fire, but fell down in 1671 and was rebuilt. In 1870 the body was pulled down and the site sold by the patrons, the Grocers' Company, to the Clothworkers, with certain restrictions, including the stipulation that the tower should be preserved. The tower escaped the blitz and has been skilfully embodied in the temporary church

now serving the united parishes of All Hallows and St. Olave, Hart Street.

The following early extracts from the churchwardens' accounts referring to the bells of All Hallows are taken from the *Annals of the Parishes of St. Olave, Hart Street, and All Hallows, Staining*, by the Rev. Alfred Povah (1894).

- | | | | |
|-------|--|---------|---------------|
| 1492. | Itm pd for a lyne to the Sanctus bell | | jd. |
| 1509. | Itm paid for small bells for the sacrement vppon corp.s | | |
| | xti day | | xvj <i>d.</i> |
| 1509. | Ress.d for ye ryngyne of oure bells at ye yremongers masse | | xi <i>d.</i> |

In the reign of Edward VI the churches were officially despoiled, just as the property of the monasteries had been appropriated under Henry VIII. The roll of the Edwardian inventory dealing with All Hallows is in the Public Record Office (E 117/4/18). The entry referring to the bells runs: "Item a Clock iiij belles and A saunce bell." It may be that they escaped looting. The following quotation from Povah's *Annals* does not necessarily prove that they were surviving in Queen Mary's time.

- | | | | |
|-------|---|---------|--------|
| 1556. | Itm the IXth day of Octob.r for ye knyll of ye great bell for | | |
| | Jemes grenken and for pelle[s] | | viis. |
| | Itm ye XV day of jennywar beryd Thomas Crokar in ye | | |
| | cherch for pytt, & knyll & pelles | | xiiis. |

But, on her accession, Queen Elizabeth presented a set of silken bell-ropes to the church, which may indicate survival. There were certainly bells to ring, whether old or new.

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|-------|---|---------|-------------|
| 1587. | Pd to the Ringers for Joye the traytors were taken [Bab- | | |
| | ington] | | 6 <i>d.</i> |
| | Pd to the ringers when the Queene of Scotts was proclaymed | | |
| | traytor | | 8 <i>d.</i> |
| | Pd to ye ringers the 9 of February for Joye of ye execution | | |
| | of ye Queene of Scotts | | 1 <i>s.</i> |

When it came to the point of obtaining information about the retention of the bell by the Grocers' Company, the Clerk sent at once the required facts.

The acquisition of a facsimile of the inscription proved unexpectedly easy, for it was remembered that our archives at Bishopsgate Institute contain a rubbing made in 1919 by our former member, the late Amherst Tyssen, D.C.L. The drawing of this rubbing was made by Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Chiosso.