

## BELL-FOUNDRIES IN THE COUNTY OF BUCKINGHAM.

This short notice may interest some of your readers of the present day, although upon a subject which, thirty years ago, one would have been classed very low in the social scale for handling; but, thanks to the untiring exertions of that veteran and learned campanist, the Rev. H. T. Ellacombe, and others, our church bells have again been brought into repute, the ropes rescued from the unruly grasp of the young and thoughtless, and the sanctity of our towers once more recognized.

The unseemly behaviour in the belfry of the last few generations of ringers was but a natural consequence upon the short-sighted and Puritanical policy of bygone churchwardens, who, instead of repairing in a churchmanlike manner windows and other parts not always impervious to the inclemency of the weather, partitioned off the tower and aisles, and, in many of our parish churches, even the chancel too, as parts unfit for holy uses.

The most important bell-foundry in this country was at Drayton-Parslow. The Rev. J. J. Raven, in his "Church Bells of Cambridgeshire" (Lowestoft, 1869), p. 52, mentions the existence of Richard Chandler's foundry at Drayton-Parslow, in the seventeenth century. Through the kindness of the Rev. Benjamin Spurrell, who most courteously allowed me access to the parish registers, I have been enabled to prove, beyond a doubt, that such a foundry did exist. There are several entries of the more interesting events in the lives of the Chandler family—their birth, marriage, and death—extending over the greater part of the seventeenth, and part of the eighteenth centuries, to wit: "Henry, son of Richard Chandler, *bell-founder*, and Mary, his wife, baptised April ye 28, 1702."

I cannot say when this foundry was first established, but probably not till about the middle of the seventeenth century. There were two, perhaps three, generations of Chandlers founders at Drayton.

"RICHARD CHANDLER,  
1638,"

is the inscription on the tenor at Cheddington. It has a fine tone, and measures 41 inches across the lip.

“CHANDLER MADE ME, 1652,”

is the testimony of bells 1, 2, and 4, at Aston Abbots.

“ANTHONY CHANDLER, PRAISE THE LORD,  
1679.”

(The tenor at Marsworth.)

“GEORGE CHANDLER MADE ME, 1682.”

(The 4th at Marsworth). “Ditto” the 3rd in 1702.

The last of them, Richard, did a very extensive business, not only in our own, but in neighbouring and even more distant counties. The treble at Dunton is one of his latest productions.

“R. C. MADE ME, 1720.”

He was an excellent workman moreover. (It is locally reported that he would execute all orders himself, leaving nothing to his men.) Hear the testimony of the Rev. J. H. Sperling, a no mean authority. In particularizing the tenor at Melbourne, Cambs., he writes (“Raven’s Church Bells of Cambs.”): “This is one of the grandest-sounding bells for its weight (18 cwt. ; note F; lip 47 in. diam.) I ever heard. It bears the inscription—

“RICHARD CHANDLER MADE ME, 1688.”

Edward Hall (probably a son-in-law, for Richard Chandler married twice, and left a large family) succeeded Richard Chandler. Hall cast the third at Aston Abbots, in 1739, and fifth in the same tower the following year; one or two at Stewkley, etc.; but the improving state of the high-roads and communications with the metropolis, Oxford, Gloucester, and other large towns, where other bell-foundries existed, was fatal to our craftsman; for Hall’s business—already past its zenith when he took to it—gradually succumbed. He appears to have found a difficulty in getting a suitable maintenance out of his craft, and to have annexed a general blacksmith’s shop to his business. But even this did not thrive, for on “9 February, 1755 (was buried), Edward Hall, *poor bell-founder.*” So runs the parish register.

The site of this foundry is the garden and paddock

in the rear of the "Three Horse-shoes" inn, built about twenty years ago by the present proprietor. One John Baldwin, a bedridden village worthy, tells me that he in early life succeeded one William Hall, probably a grandson of Edward Hall above, in the village smithy business, which at that time was, and still is, carried on on the site of the old bell-foundry. Baldwin bears testimony, moreover, to having found, whilst digging clay, etc., in the paddock and garden, sundry bits of bell-metal (not preserved); also to having taken over with the business sundry metal castings, also small metal and other moulds (not preserved), and a quantity of sand, all which William Hall said his grandfather used in the bell-foundry business.

The bells cast at this foundry are plain in appearance, the lettering Roman capitals. Neither Edward Hall nor Richard Chandler used any special trade mark, but one or two of their predecessors would occasionally impress the accompanying figures 1, 2, 3 or 4.

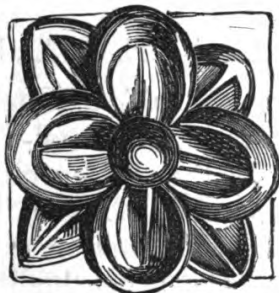


Fig. 1.

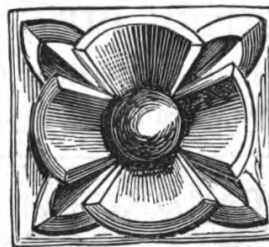


Fig. 2.

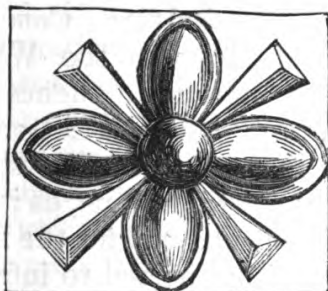


Fig. 3.

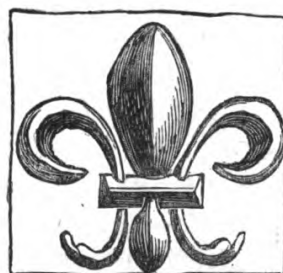


Fig. 4.

as at Cheddington and Aston Abbots, or attempt to ornament the lettering, as on the Marsworth treble. The second at Hardwick,

**"ANTHONY CHANDLER MADE ME,  
1675,"**

bears the impress of both the face and reverse side of a crown piece of Charles II. struck in 1673.

Lipscombe says that George Chandler cast, in 1687, the big bell at Wing. This is one of the heaviest bells in the county, weighing about *twenty-six cwt.*, as estimated by Messrs. Taylor, of Loughborough, who recast the fifth in 1842, not 33 cwt., as per Browne Willis, MS. copied by Lipscombe, and also in the "Records," 1850. The tenor bell has since been recast by Warners, of London.

Another foundry was at Buckingham. The Rev. W. C. Lukis has found Bartholomew and Robert Atton, bell-founders at Buckingham, from 1590 to 1624 ("Lukis on Church Bells," Parkers, 1857, errata at end of vol.) The tenor at Oving, a very fine-toned bell, weight 14 cwt., bears the inscription, "R.A., 1617," and was probably the work of the latter. The third at Passenham, Northants, runs :—

**"BARTHOLOMEW-ATTON-MADE-ME. B.A., 1624."**

This bell also bears a stamp, fig. 5 (*vide* "Notes and Queries," Jan. 20, and Feb. 3, 1872). A. Daniel-Tyssen,



Fig. 5.

Esq., in his "Church Bells of Sussex" (Lewes, 1864), tells us that this, or a sister stamp, was "originally used by a Norwich founder, but that, in 1588, it disappears from the Eastern Counties, finds its way to the Whitechapel foundry, thence to Reading." That Attons of Buckingham used this stamp need not surprise us, as it was not at all unusual for the founders of that period to infringe upon one another's trademarks. This same stamp also

occurs upon the tenor at Drayton Parslow, cast in 1591, and inscribed "BARTHOLOMEWE." This Drayton bell is closely akin to the second at Pitchcott,

## "SEINT LVKE APOSTEL, 1591."

But that these last two are Atton's productions is merely my own conjecture. The tenor at Hardwick inscribed "ROBART NEWCOME MADE ME, 1590," has similar lettering and stamps. Mr. Lukis tells us this man was a founder at Leicester, 1598 to 1612. He may have been a foreman at the Buckingham foundry, prior to starting on his own account at Leicester. The Drayton tenor, 2nd at Pitchcott, and Hardwick tenor, each carry also an elegant initial cross. So few churchwarden's accounts, or other parish records likely to throw light upon the subject, have survived the wanton destruction of the Cromwellian period, and negligence of succeeding generations, that it is impossible to fix, for a certainty, the founder of every individual old bell in our towers.

Another name has come under my observation. I allude to Seymour, of Aylesbury, who is an ironmonger, and cannot be designated a bell-founder proper, but who, in the year 1850, having an order to recast the Sanctus bell at Hardwicke, put his own name and place of business, "S. SEYMOUR, AYLESBURY," upon the new instrument, which is a most miserable apology for the old one, which was inscribed "CHANDLER MADE ME."

I have no reason for concluding that there were no other foundries in our county. Should any reader know of others I shall consider it a great favour to be informed of their existence and locality.

I cannot permit the insertion of even this short notice without expressing my utter unworthiness to take up a subject so ably introduced to your notice, and dwelt upon in an earlier number of the "RECORDS," by the Rev. J. Batty, and at the same time thanking those eminent campanists who have, from time to time, so kindly furnished me with information upon this subject.

THOS. ARCHER TURNER.

ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,  
*St. Mark's Day, 1872.*