

THE PROSPECTS OF WELSH CAMPANALOGY.

[Read at the Lampeter Meeting, August, 1878.]

It is thought that the following paper, now re-printed, by permission, from the volume of the *Archæologia Cambrensis* for 1878, may have some interest for Suffolk readers. I have accordingly appended a few notes, to connect the text in a small degree with the county, and I have added the inscriptions on the bells in the Deanery of Fordham, Suffolk.

J. J. R.

The history of our church bells is a branch of archæology apparently so unattractive that it is only within the last thirty years that any efforts have been made to copy and arrange the legends and ornaments which decorate the tuneful or tuneless tenants of our church towers and bell-cots. Before that time only the most meagre scraps about bells found their way into local histories, and the information recorded by such men as Blomefield was often as incorrect as it was scanty. Thirty years ago, when as a boy I began to collect the inscriptions from my own neighbourhood in Suffolk, hardly the name of a founder or the site of a foundry was known; and I believe that of the mass of fine initial crosses, foundry stamps, ornate capitals, and other embellishments which exist plentifully in every English county, not one had been engraved. Pass from 1848 to 1878, and we find whole counties investigated. Mr. Lukis led the van with Wiltshire, Mr. Tyssen followed with Sussex, then Cambridgeshire and Norfolk disclosed their treasures. Our patriarch, Mr. Ellacombe, Rector of Clyst St. George, surpassed us all with his fine quartos on

Devon and Somerset; and Mr. North has brought out a well-illustrated Leicestershire. This year has seen Cornwall added to the list of completed counties, while Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, and the East Riding of Yorkshire are well in hand, and there are no small accumulations of matter for Kent, Surrey, Suffolk, Dorset, and perhaps other counties.

I am not aware that anything has yet been attempted with regard to the bells of Wales, and though there are reasons why legends and decorations are not to be looked for in the same abundance within the Principality as in England, yet there can be little doubt that a diligent investigation would bring to light a substantial mass of important facts. There is apparently no reason why Welsh towers should not possess some amount of the bell literature of English towers. Those who would study the history of our bells must begin with the bells themselves, but they will not end there. Parish account-books, wills and inventories, bonds, the muniment chests of corporations, and many similar sources of information, will be found to contain items which prove at times the missing links in chains of evidence. Should any be disposed to take up the subject, he should be forewarned not to disregard the loneliest churches and the smallest bells. While sometimes noble peals of eight, ten, or even twelve bells record little or nothing of importance, a solitary tinkler in a bell-cot, or a cracked member of a village trio may bear on its shoulder magnificent lettering or important combinations of foundry-stamps.

As an instance I may mention that by far the finest lettering in the kingdom is only known to exist in two towers in small villages in Lincolnshire—Somersby, the birth-place of our poet-laureate, and South Somercotes. But what have we found? We have found the physiognomies* of some of our kings and queens,† impressions of medals,

* As at Ampton, Suffolk.

† As on a bell at South Lopham. Norfolk, cast by Thomas Gardiner, of Sudbury, in 1725.

both British and foreign,* invocations to saints, in which the mistakes in grammar and prosody are enough to draw down anything but a blessing, allusions to contemporary historical events, and mediæval† usages at death and burial. We find the hand of the builders of our cathedrals active in bell-making. We have seen the great Alan de Walsingham, Prior and Bishop-elect of Ely, setting the founder about his work; we have seen the items in the roll of his Sacrist, so as to perceive the difficulty of collecting copper and tin, and the ease of dispersing beer. We have found monks occasionally making bell-frames as well as bells, up to the time when Henry VIII. and Cromwell swallowed up indifferently the worthy and the worthless. Yet the evidence which assigns the vast majority of our bells to secular founders is not to be withstood. These secular founders we track out by their stamps, tracing them not only to their original foundries, but as they wandered from place to place; and in one instance‡ the bell-founder is shown to have been also a cannon-founder, the Sir William Armstrong of his day.

The work of the campanalogists, few as they are in number, is, then, by no means without its significance, and their collections will be valuable some day when the history of English metallurgy is written. But it is time to turn to the little that has been done to my knowledge in Wales, which little is, nevertheless, not devoid of encouragement. I will first mention the later bells, in order that none may be at the trouble of climbing the towers in which they hang.

Llangefni (Anglesey).—Bells by Blews, of Birmingham, 1868.

Llangyvelach (Glamorganshire).—Four by John Rudhall, Gloucester, 1805.

Llan-y-byther (Carmarthenshire).—One by one of the Rudhalls, in the last century. I could not get round this bell.

Llanrwst (Denbighshire).—One, Llanrwst bell, H. H.

* As at Risby.

† As in the will of John Baret, recited

in Tymms's *Wills and Inventories*.

‡ The Chirches of Bury St. Edmund's.

Rector, 1780; Priest's bell, Walker, Chester, 1822.

Gwydir (Carnarvonshire).—One, 1750.

Bettws-Garmon (Carnarvonshire).—One, 1842, with a head on each side in very high relief.

Cadoxton-juxta-Neath (Glamorganshire).—Three, by Thomas Bayley, of Bridgewater, 1770.

Cellan.—One small bell, without inscription, said by the Rector to be about 150 years old.

Lampeter.—One, removed from the old church. E. E. 1721. These are the initials of Evan Evans, bell founder, of Chepstow, who also cast the three at Caio in 1717.

I may here remark that, as a rule, the later bells in South Wales may be expected to come from Pyke or Bayley of Bridgewater, the Rudhalls of Gloucester (as at *Llanbadarn Fawr* in this county, where there is a peal of six by Abel Rudhall, dated 1749, *St. Peter's, Carmarthen*, 1722), or the Evanses of Chepstow. In North Wales they will come from Chester, or from foundries of which we know nothing as yet.

A little earlier we get the initials D. D., T. D., probably those of two brothers in partnership. These are on a bell at *Rhosilly*, Glamorganshire, dated 1722, and on the second bell at *Oystermouth* or *Mumbles* in the same county, dated 1714. I shall be glad to know something of the owners of these initials. The latter church contains two other bells, dated 1674, with some score of initials, probably those of parishioners who subscribed to the re-casting.

A few mediæval bells have been examined. Two in Glamorganshire apparently come from the same foundry—a small broken bell lying on the tower floor at *Rhosilly* in 1862, inscribed **Sancte Tellant ora pro nobis**, and a small unbroken bell at *Oxwich*, inscribed **Sancta Maria ora pro nobis**. I must plead my ignorance of Welsh hagiology, and shall be glad of further information about Tellantius, if that be his name. The stamps on these Glamorganshire bells are worth noting, as they are pretty sure to turn up again. The *Rhosilly* bell has three, a fleur-de-lys, a rhombus divided into sixteen similar rhombi, and

something like a stalk, with seven leaves. The *Oxwich* bell has only the last of these three.

At *Llanrhychwyn*, in Carnarvonshire, is a bell which bears a number of fleurs-de-lys and a crowned capital I, to which a small h appears to be prefixed. This crowned L may refer to Llewelyn the Great, who lived, I think, in this neighbourhood. These three bells appear to belong to the earlier part of the fourteenth century, if one may judge from the letters being stamped separately.

A further examination of the second bell at *St. Mary's, Conway*, will guide us to the period of a good many mediæval bells, which are almost always undated. It bears this legend :

+ Ave fidelis aia Werburga sanctissima

Felix in choro uirgynum.

Ora pro nobis [ad] Dominum

Johes Byrchynshaw Abbas Cestre.

The mention of Abbot Byrchynshaw is important to our purpose. He died in 1537, after forty-four years of office, and this fact will make the lettering and ornamentation of the bell useful in tracking out the history of others of a similar character. But if Abbot Byrchynshaw introduces such an exotic as the Saxon Saint Werburga into Carnarvonshire, we may expect to find invocations to Celtic worthies in all the counties of the Principality. The bell in the Town Hall at *Lantwit*, or *Llanilltyd Fawr*, in the county of Glamorgan, bears the name of a great local Saint, whose elegant cross yet stands in that little town, Saint Illtyd, Iltetus, or Iltutus, **Sancte Iltute ora pro nobis**. This worthy is said to have been ordained by Dubricius, Bishop of Llandaff, and to have led a saintly life, adorned with divers miracles, in South Wales. "Many scholars flowed to him," says Mr. Rees's translation of the life of St. Illtyd in the British Museum, "of which were these four,

namely, Samson, Paulinus, Gildas, and David; being learned they studied deeply, and many others like them." Well might a bell bear his name, for, like many of his kind, he had a miraculous bell of his own. He fled from Royal persecution, to the great sorrow of his people. While they were indulging in lamentations, "a certain person passed by who was a messenger of Gildas the historian, carrying a brazen bell, which was made by the said Gildas, to be brought to Saint David, a Bishop, as a present in memory of former acquaintance and friendship, and as he passed by the cave, which was near the public road, the bell sounded without being moved by any human being. And Illtyd hearing the sweet sound, came to the person who carried the bell, and proved the sweetness of its sound by moving it three times, and enquired of him where he was going, and from whom he carried the beautiful bell, which was more valuable than gold; Who, answering, said, 'I am going, and do carry this bell to Saint David, by the order of the celebrated Gildas.' Having mentioned this, he departed, and came to the valley of Menevia, and presented the Bishop with the gift. When given, he moved the bell, but from the motion given it returned no sound; and the Bishop being surprised at the wonderful circumstance, enquired of the messenger whether it had been moved and proved by any one on the way as he came. He being asked, mentioned what had happened, as above related, and the Bishop believing it to be truly told, said, 'I know that our master Illtyd wished to possess it on account of the sweetness of its sound, but he would not ask for it, having heard that it was sent to me as a gift from Gildas; but the Lord is not willing that I should have it; return, therefore, to the cave without delay, and give to Saint Illtyd the aforesaid article, which he wished to have.' The messenger then returned to Illtyd, and executed the Bishop's orders, and left there its solitary inhabitant, who received the frequent visits of angels."

There are many and many legends of Celtic bells, connected chiefly with those queer little articles made of two

sheets of copper, bent at the side, riveted, and dipped into molten metal, but this is the only one I know connected with a bell which is the work of a founder.

Two foreigners in South Wales must not be passed over. One of the bells from Santiago Cathedral now hangs in the turret of *Christ Church, Carmarthen*. It was brought to Swansea with its fellows, as I am informed, after the destruction of Santiago Cathedral by fire, of which terrible conflagration the circumstances live in the memory of many. It bears no date nor inscription, is roughly cast, and ornamented with a ball-flower or two, and some scroll-work in the form of a cross. In a musical sense it certainly seems a poor bell, but it has the appearance of considerable antiquity.

In the little bell-cot at *Nicholaston*, Glamorganshire, hangs a very beautiful bell with a Low-Dutch inscription:—**Ic ben ghegoten int iaer Ons Heeren mccccxviii.** On the barrel of the bell are two medallions; one bearing, as it seems, a crowned figure of the Virgin, with a crucifix in her right hand; the other, which is less distinct, a sitting figure with something at the end of a staff over the right shoulder. With this bell may be compared one in *Bromeswell Church*, Suffolk, inscribed **Ihesvs ben ic ghegoten van Cornelis Waghebens int iaer Ons Heeren mccccxxx.** This bell also bears medallions in the style of the Nicholaston bell, in number four, representing the archangel Michael, the flight into Egypt, and two other scenes, which we are not sure about. There is little doubt that these two bells are from the same foundry,* very likely at Louvain, where a bell at *St. Peter's College, Cambridge*, and the handbell of the corporation of *Rye*, were made soon afterwards.

A fitting conclusion for this paper will be found in the bells of the Cathedral Church of the Diocese in which we

* Or, perhaps, at Venlo, which retained its reputation for brass to the days of Jeremy Collier, and may retain it still. A bell at *Baschurch*, Salop, is inscribed
+ maria. int. iaer. ons. heren. m. cccc.

ende. xlviii. jan. ban. benloc. A bell at *Vowchurch*, Herefordshire, bears the same initial cross, and deserves examination.

are assembled, under the Presidency of its Bishop, joint historian of St. David's.

Our starting-point is the year 1199, when, after the death of the great builder, Bishop Peter de Leia, Giraldus Cambrensis was elected as his successor and proceeded to Rome to be consecrated by the Pope, thus endeavouring to avoid the recognition of the metropolitanical authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He found himself, as he says, opposed by a host of enemies, hired by the Archbishop. Some of their witnesses cut a very bad figure under cross-examination, and one Ivor, of Llandaff, *inter alia*, deposed that the Church had bad bells. "Proditor autem Landavensis Ivorus primus de non Menevensibus examinatus interrogatus de situ Menevensis Ecclesiæ, dixit, quod sita erat in colle quodam et procul a mari, et quod non habebat nisi unam turrim et campanas malas. Unde et hunc testem mendacem et subornatum fuisse quidem evidens erat." We may take this as satisfactory indirect proof that at this time the cathedral had reason to be proud of its bells, and that they probably hung in De Leia's central tower. But in 1220 the tower fell, and the bells must have run a great risk of fracture, though it is astonishing what they will survive in the way of falls. The calamity does not seem to have put bells into oblivion, for the octagonal tower on the north of Tower Gateway has much to suggest that it was intended for the survivors of, or successors to, the peal (if it may be so called) of which Giraldus writes. This tower is attributed to Bishop Martyn (1293-1328), but the addition to the central tower of a belfry stage by his successor, Bishop Gower, put the execution of this purpose aside. Now we hear of the bells again. Mr. Fenton says that they were "new cast in Gower's time, when the largest in taking down was said to have cracked the tower, and was lost at sea." These traditions are often hard to interpret. It would hardly be likely that Bishop Gower would have been at the trouble of hoisting a large bell into the new belfry and so soon hoisting it down again, and there are no accounts of any such crack as Fenton speaks of. However,

we may conclude that there was some re-casting, and the sea-carriage of the bells suggests Gloucester as the foundry, where *Johannes de Glocester* and *Sandre de Glocester* had been at work before this time.

It is stated, on Browne Willis's authority, that the number of the bells was seven. This is the number at Crowland, as stated by Ingulphus, and there is, I think, another contemporaneous instance; but, as time went on, nothing of the kind seems to have been reproduced. There is no trace of "the normal number of eight" in England, as far as we know, before the Reformation, or for some time after it. Five is the usual maximum, and that Bishop Gower's bells were five in number is hinted by the five pegs in the choir, to which the bell-ropes used to be fastened. The larger of the two bells which stand on the floor of the nave demands early attention, for it is cracked, and may at any time find its way to the foundry. It bears the inscription, SOLI DEO HONOR ET GLORIA, in capital letters, with an initial cross which seems to me to resemble that numbered 18 in Mr. Ellacombe's *Bells of Devon*, and 30 in his *Bells of Somerset*. This cross was in use by Roger Semson, bell-founder, of Ash Priors, Somerset, in 1548, and before his time by a founder whose initials were T. G. The style of lettering, however, on the St. David's bell seems to point to a still earlier date, which may coincide with the episcopate of Bishop Gower.

This peal of five remained at St. David's for some four centuries, and was for a long while in use. In the episcopate of Bishop Vaughan (1509-1523) the present upper storey of the tower was added, and then, I doubt not, the massive bell frame, with its five pits, was placed there. It is adapted for five very large bells; has a square opening in the middle, and a perpendicular capstan for drawing up the bells from below. The accounts of the Communarius contain items for bell-ropes and for horse hide for bawdricks, which are straps to help to fasten the tongue of a bell to the staple from which it hangs. The curfew was rung, as we find from the same accounts. In 1691 Precentor Ellis

reported that, as he took it, there were five bells. His reports are tinged with a Cambrian haze, and it is a comfort to find Treasurer Clavering confirming this statement thirty years later. "The biggest then remaining," says Mr. Fenton, "was twenty-two hundredweight." The four larger formed a complete peal, and one about four hundredweight tolled to prayers. This one seems to have been the treble to a peal of five. In 1748 the Chapter ordered them to be taken down, but only two were thus treated. These were directed to be sold in 1765, and about twenty years later a Mr. Richard Robert was appointed to be agent to sell and dispose of the bells, to get a new one cast, and to inspect into the repairs of the church. It is thus uncertain whether the order of 1765 was carried out, and all that I can now state with certainty is that St. David's contains three bells, one which is broken, in all probability of Bishop Gower's time, two cast by Savill of London, in 1777, of which one is the clock bell, a good one, and the other stands on the floor, encompassed with rubbish, so that I could not say whether it is whole or not.

J. J. RAVEN, D.D.

INSCRIPTIONS
ON
CHURCH BELLS IN THE COUNTY OF SUFFOLK.

DEANERY OF FORDHAM.

1. *Barton Mills*—3.

1. † Sancta. Barbara. ora. pro. nobis.
2. Johannes Draper me fecit. 1608.
3. † Sancte. Andria. apostoli. (sic) ora. pro. nobis.

The treble and tenor are each stamped thrice on the crown with the Bury shield. Between each word in the inscriptions is a stop, commonly used at that foundry.

2. *Brandon*—5. Tenor, 9 cwt.

1. These five bells were cast by William Dobson. 1815.
2. Prosperity to the town of Brandon. 1815.
3. Give no offence to the church. Wm. Dobson fecit. 1815.
4. William Dobson, Downham, Norfolk, Founder. 1815.
5. Rev^d. W^m. Parson, Rector : Tho^s. Willett and Rob^t. Smith, Churchwardens. 1815.

Since these inscriptions were collected a new treble has been cast from the old 2nd at Wangford.

3. *Cavenham*—3.

1. William Dobson, Founder, Downham, Norfolk. 1831.
- 2, 3. John Darbie made me. 1676.

4. *Elvedon*—1.

John Darbie made me. 1664.

5. *Eriswell*—3.

- 1, 2. Tho^s. Osborn, Founder. 1795. John Spark, Church Warden.
3. Tho. Gardiner made me. 1743.

The tenor formerly was the treble, and the present treble and 2nd were recast from the old 2nd and tenor.

6. *Exning*—5, and Clock-bell.

- 1, 2, 3, 4. John Draper made me. 1623.
5. C. and G. Mears, Founders, London. 1845.

William Fyson, }
John Dobede, } Church Wardens.

Clock-bell. T. Mears of London fecit.

W^m. Fyson, }
Tho^s. Bryant, } Church Wardens. 1831.

Late the gift of Francis Shepherd, Esq., 1723.

7. *Freckenham*—5.

1. William Dobson fecit, Downham, Norfolk. 1809.
- 2, 3. John Draper made me. 1623.
4. The Rev^d. H. Bates, Rector. W^m. Westrop and W^m. Mainprice, Churchwardens. 1809.
5. T. Osborn fecit. 1792.

8. *Herringswell*—3.

1. John Pond, C. W. 1741. Tho. Newman made me.
2. † *Hec fit S'coru' Camp'a Laude Bonoru'.*
3. † *Hac In Conclabe Gabriel Punc Pange Suabe.*

The 2nd and tenor bear thrice on the shoulder the ermine shield of the Brasyers of Norwich. This interesting little church was almost entirely destroyed by fire on Sunday, February 28th, 1869, and the bells were broken in their fall from the belfry. They have just been recast by Messrs. Taylor, of Loughborough.—*Jan.*, 1870.

9. *Icklingham All Saints*—3.

1. † *Virginis Egregie Vocor Campana Marie.*
2. † *Quzesumus Andrea famulorum Suscipe Vota.*
3. Johannes Draper me fecit. 1608.

The treble and 2nd bear thrice on the shoulder the sprigged Norwich shield.

10. *Icklingham St. James*—1.

No inscription. Cracked.

11. *Lakenheath*—5, and Clock-bell.

1. Thomas Mears, Founder, London. 1841.
2. †† *Sancta Materina ora pro Nobis.*
3. †† *Cristus Perpetue Dei Nobis Gaudia Vite.*
4. John Parsley, Vicar. Charles Newman made mee. 1697.
5. John Darbie made me. 1676. Thomas Denton, James Parlet, Churchwardens.

Clock-bell (now in the vestry) *ave maria Gratia.*

The 2nd and 3rd bear the royal arms between two crosses. On a tablet in the north wall of the tower is this inscription:—"This Fourth Bell was founded Jan., 1697. John Parsley, Vicar, gave 22s. Edm^d. Roper, Tho. Kitchener, Churchwardens. W. 1309 pounds."

12. *Mildenhall*—6, Tenor in F, diam. 42 in., weight 11 cwt. 1 qr. 18 lbs.

1. John Darbie made me. 1676. I. T., D. P., R. S., R. C., I. W.
- 2, 3. Thomas Newman cast me new
In 1732. Norwich.
4. **J. TAYLOR AND CO., LOUGHBOROUGH.**
C. F. YOUNGMAN. E. CHAPMAN. A. PEARSON.
1860.
5. † *In Multis Annis Resonet Campana Johannis.*
6. **JOHN TAYLOR AND CO., LOUGHBOROUGH.**
JAMES READ AND CHARLES OWERS, 1860.

The 5th bears the same marks as the Lakenheath 2nd and 3rd.

13. *Newmarket S. Mary*—5, and Clock-bell.

- 1, 4. John Draper made me. 1619.
- 2, 3. De Bvri Sante Edmonde, Stefanvs Tonni me fecit. W. L. 1580.
5. Tho. Gardiner and Tho. Newman fecit. 1719. W. Sandiver,
W Headley; C. W.
Clock-bell. John Thornton, Sudbury, fecit. 1718.

14. *Santon-Downham*—1.

Robard Gvrney made me, 1663.

15. *Tuddenham*—5.

1. R. G. 1672.
 2. R. G. 1666.
 3. Thomas Draper made me, 1591.
 4. † Sancta. Anna. ora. pro. Nobis.
 5. John Darbie made me. 1676. William Baker, C. W.
- The treble and 2nd are by Robard Gvrney. The fourth bears the Bury shield and stop, as at Barton Mills.

16. *Wangford*—2.

1. Robard Gvrney made me. 1668.
2. † † Sit Pomen Domini Benedictum.

The tenor bears between the two intitial crosses a shield with a bend between a cross and an annulet. (Fig. 18 in the *Church Bells of Sussex*, and 2 in the *Church Bells of Cambridgeshire*.) This bell has now disappeared. See Brandon.

17. *Worlington*—5.

1. Percbte dblce cano.
THE REV. JAMES GIBSON, RECTOR.
FREDERIC JOHN CLARK AND JAMES BOOBY,
CHURCHWARDENS, 1850.

On a scroll beneath.—

J. Taylor and Son, Founders, Loughboro'.

2. Robard Gvrney made me, 1665.
3. John Draper made me. 1635.
4. † Omnia : sonbs : labdet : DOMINUM.
THIS BELL WAS RECAST AND A TREBLE
ADDED BY SUBSCRIPTION, 1850.

On a scroll beneath :—

J. Taylor and Son, Loughboro'.

5. † IOHANNES GODYRGE DE IENNE ME
FECIT.