

East Brent Parish History Group

Meeting 2nd October 2013

The Bells of St. Mary's

At St. Mary's, East Brent there is a ring of 6 bells hung in the uppermost part of the tower approx. level with the louvered openings.



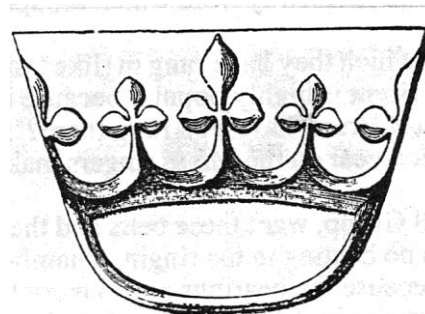
NO.	DIA.	FOUNDER	YEAR
Treble	2' 7 1/4"	Llewellyns & James, Bristol	1910
2nd	2' 10"	Llewellyns & James, Bristol	1910
3rd	3' 0 3/8"	Bristol Foundry	circa 1450
4th	3' 2"	William Chamberlain, London	circa 1440
5th	3' 6 3/4"	George Davis, Bridgewater	1799
Tenor	3' 11"	Llewellyns & James, Bristol	1877

Understandably, the 3rd & 4th bells are considered particularly interesting because of their age.

The 3rd bell (c. 1450) bears the Royal Crown which is associated with the Bristol Foundry and is inscribed:-

"STA ANNA ORA PRO NOBIS "

The lettering is in fine gothic style capitals and is particularly difficult to make out. It is unusual to find a bell dedicated to St Anne.



The 4th bell is considered more interesting being cast in about 1440 by a London Founder identified as William Chamberlain. The foundry marks include the coat of arms of the Fishmongers Guild of the City of London with a beautiful initialled cross followed by a further coat of arms as yet have remains unidentifiable. Bells by this founder are to be found all over the country almost always bearing the two shields and the cross beautifully executed together with inscriptions in fine gothic script. Inscription reads :-

"Nomen Magadalea Campana Geret Melodie"



Restoration Work

In 1995, the bells' installation was inspected by John Taylor, Bellfounders Ltd. of Loughborough to assess work needed for restoration and a report provided to Walter Champion in July 1995. The report states that :

The Bell Frame was installed in 1910 and of cast iron & steel construction. They pointed out that the frame allows bells to swing north/south which is the weakest way – not being east/west in line with the body of the Church. However, it was considered too expensive to change. The report gave credit to previous steeplekeepers as the bell frame had been kept reasonably well painted although the base steels were showing some signs of rusting.

The Bell Fittings comprise headstocks, gudgeons and bearings, clappers and crownstaples, pulleys, wheels, stays and sliders. And again the condition of the fittings reflected on the excellent steeplekeeping of past and present generations. However, after some 85 years of use the frictional parts were showing signs of wear.

Work Necessary

Some of the work advised was that Bellhangers would dismantle the ring of six bells lowering the bells onto timbers. Then remove the fittings from each bell, lowering the headstocks, gudgeon and bearing assemblies, clapper and crownstaple units, bell support bolts and the pulley units through the tower. They would place the stay and slider gear and the wheels safely beside the framework for re-fixing later.

Cut away existing gudgeons from the gudgeon boxes and re-cone the boxes to remove any chatter and fix new turned steel gudgeons. Fit to the gudgeons, heavy duty twin row self-aligning ball bearings fitted into totally enclosed housings with a lubricant reservoir and new bearing fixing bolts with locking washers. Strip the bell support bolts and place these through a Blacksmith's fire and re-anneal them and fit new insulation washers, locking washers etc. and clean up the bolt threads.

Re-Installation

Bellhangers returned with the refurbished fittings to the Church and hoisted them into the bell chamber. They assembled the fittings and re-fitted stay, slider, runner gear and wheels. They treated all cast-in iron crownstaple stubs with a rust inhibitor and altered the positions of the third, fifth and tenor garter holes as appropriate. Each bell was left in a ringing condition.

This is a short summary of the report concerning the bells and a full version can be supplied if required. If anyone has any further information on St. Mary's bells or indeed some photographs, these would be much appreciated. As always, documents and photographs can be copied and the originals returned.

Future Meetings

Some documents have come to light which will be reported on at the next meeting. Do you know of the Young Men's Club held up to the beginning of WW2. Come along and tell us what you know!

The next meetings will be on **Wednesday, 6th November** and then on **4th December 2013**. Thereafter on the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings take place at 7:00 pm in East Brent Village Hall. All are welcome, please do come along. There are many stories to be told.

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