

the right is lifting the end of the Cross with a rope; the sharp-featured man, bending down, has his hand on our Lord's shoulder; while the third man's face, behind the centurion, is hard and brutish. The whole picture is distinguished by its fine colouring and drawing, and faithfully follows the Van Dyck at Antwerp.

J. E. JAGGER.

Mr. Frederic Shields, Morayfield, Merton, the distinguished painter of the Chapel of the Ascension, Marble Arch, says that 'certain portions of this Picture bear unmistakable marks of Van Dyck's hand.'

SOME NOTES ON THE CHURCH BELLS OF WIMBLEDON AND MERTON

WAS a county, Surrey is not rich in its possession of ancient Church bells. Its neighbours, Kent and Sussex, are far wealthier in the number of those recorded which date from mediæval times. This being so, it is somewhat remarkable that the belfries of Wimbledon and Merton should contain two of the old bells, out of a total of twenty-two for the county recorded by Stahlschmidt as still existing.*

My attention was first called to the subject in 1896, when the Rev. Edward A. Downman, author of 'Ancient Church Bells in England,' 1898,—to whose book I am indebted for some of the following notes—asked me to visit Wimbledon belfry, for the purpose of examining an old bell there. This visit I made in January, 1897. Again, in November, 1907, I visited the belfry, and this time I

* Stahlschmidt: Surrey Bells and London Bellfounders (London, 1884).

took the opportunity of inspecting all the bells.

Of the six bells, which compose the peal, there is little to be said of Nos. 1, 2 and 3, except that they are quite modern.

No. 4 is dated 157—, the last figure of the date, for some reason, being absent. The inscription in capitals is:

PRAYSE YE THE LORDE AN 157—

The cutting appears to have been entrusted to some careless or ignorant workman, who made two mistakes—the inversion of the S in prayse and of the N in AN.

The founder was Robert Mot, of White-chapel.

No. 5 is the oldest and most interesting in the belfry, and, as is the case with nearly all English mediæval bells, is undated. It bears the following inscription in old English characters:

Sancte Bartholomee



followed by a symbol of which this is a reduced reproduction. The character is thus spoken of by Stahlschmidt:

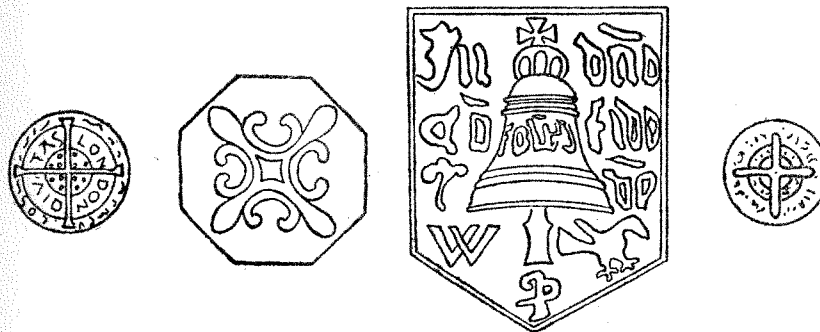
'[The Wimbledon bell] bears also a shield, with a very curious letter or rebus upon it . . . of which I profess myself utterly incapable to make out the meaning.'

Again, in his 'Church Bells of Kent,' 1887, in speaking of a bell at Graveney,

bearing a similar character, he says:

'I thought when I first saw the rubbing that part of the inscription must have been filed or chiselled off, but I have ascertained by personal inspection that this is not the case. I shall be glad if anyone can rede me the riddle.'

The founder's shield is most interesting. Canon J. J. Raven, in his 'Church Bells of Cambridgeshire' and 'Church Bells of Suffolk,' devotes a good deal of space to its consideration.



His train of reasoning is very fascinating, and though it falls short of absolute proof, he makes out a very strong case for the theory that it is the shield of William Culverden, citizen and brazier of London, who died in 1523, having worked at bell-founding for about ten years previously to that date. The bird represents a culver (a dove or pigeon), and the dē (den) above completes the name.

This would fix the date of the founding of the bell at between 1513 and 1523.

Although Culverden's bells are not numerous, his work is spread fairly widely throughout England, as bells bearing his mark are found at Chobham, Surrey; in Kent, Middlesex, Essex, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire, Suffolk, Staffordshire, Dorsetshire and Northumberland.

No. 6 bears the date 1715, and the prosaic inscription

RICHARD PHELPS MADE ME 1715.

In the Merton Belfry there are five bells only three of which claim our special attention.

The oldest is that which bears the Latin inscription, in black-letter characters,

Sancta Margareta Ora Pro Nobis,

together with two stops and a shield, representing the Royal Arms uncrowned. This shield was probably used by John Danyell, of London, who worked about the middle of the 15th century.

Work bearing his shield is even more widely distributed than is that of the Wimbledon founder, Bells from Danyell's foundry exist in Suffolk, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Rutlandshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Durham, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, Somersetshire, Devonshire, Cornwall, Sussex, Kent, Essex

and Hertfordshire, making, with Surrey, twenty of the English counties.

The other two bells do not compare in interest with this, though one dates from 1621, and is inscribed:

BRYAN ELDREDGE MADE MEE 1621.

The third is more modern, being only about a century old. The inscription is:

THOMAS MEARS OF LONDON FECIT 1803.

From another aspect, however, this attracts our attention, for it was cast during the time when Nelson was living in Merton.

There are two other bells in the belfry which have been added within the last few years. This was sufficient reason for our neglecting them, though a second might be added, viz., that they were 'up,' and bell-ringers, if they would not admit the first reason, will readily grant the second as an excuse for not taking rubbings.

It will be noticed that while the Churches of Wimbledon and Merton both have St. Mary as patron saint, the names on the bells do not agree. This was quite an ordinary feature in the naming of bells. It is, of course, possible that other bells once existed bearing an inscription to St. Mary; but, on the other hand, it is quite as likely that there never were any dedicated to St. Mary, as even when several

old bells exist in one belfry, the saint's name of the Church very probably will not figure on any of them.

Some early bells (like many modern) bear for their inscription the founder's name, either in English (A. B. made me) or more often in Latin (A. B. me fecit) and the inscriptions found upon mediæval bells are very varied, many of them being not a little curious. A good proportion have prayers inscribed on them. Many of these prayers are addressed to saints, and finish with the formula, *ora pro nobis*, sometimes abbreviated into *o. p. n.* The old bell at Wimbledon would belong to this class, though we are at present baffled as regards the meaning of the sign above referred to.

Some few inscriptions illustrate the mediæval belief that a bell kept the belfry from being struck by lightning.

Such are:

Vincencius Reboat At Cuncta Noxia Tollat
Voce mea vobis depello cuncta nociva
Tempora Fulgura Dum Pulso Sescio Maria
A Tempestate Protegas Nos Petre Beate

In popular belief, until a few years ago, witches, elves, giants and fairies all disliked bells.

Grimm, in his 'Teutonic Mythology,' says:

'Again the witches' dislike of bells is heathenish: the elves have it, and the giants Pious prayer and ringing of bells put their plans out;

they call the bells "yelping dogs." In a Swedish folktale, an old heathen crone, on hearing the sound of the Christian bell from Tegneby, exclaims in contempt: ". . . . the Christian Church has got a tinkler." As yet there is no thought of witchery. But it is told of Swedish witches, too, that they scrape the bells loose up in the belfry: in their airy flight when they come to a steeple, they set the kidnapped children down on the church roof, who are then mere jackdaws to look at: in the meantime they scrape the bell loose, and lug it away, and afterwards let the metal drop through the clouds, crying: "never let my soul draw near to God, any more than this metal will be a bell again!"

Keightley, in his 'Fairy Mythology,' records instances of the fairies and trolls objecting to the sound of church bells. Thus:

'The people of Ebeltoft were once sadly plagued by them [the trolls], as they plundered their pantries in a most unconscionable manner; so they consulted a very wise and pious man, and his advice was, that they should hang a bell in the steeple of the church. They did so, and they were soon eased of the Trolls. Again, "There is a high hill," says Kalen, "near Botna, in Sweden, in which formerly dwelt a troll. When they got up bells in Botna Church, and he heard the ringing of them, he is related to have said:

Pleasant it were in Botnahill to dwell,

Were it not for the sound of that plaguey bell."

And, further, speaking of the Korrigan:

'The sight of a soutane, or the sound of a bell, puts them to flight; but the object of greatest abhorrence to them is the Holy Virgin.'

These tales explain to us the difficulty experienced in our own village of East Bergholt, Suffolk, where it is related that the people who were engaged in building the church, could not succeed in raising the tower for the bells. Every night the part they had raised during the preceding day was thrown down by the devil, and with such persistency did he show his dislike, that the people at last gave up the task in despair, and anyone now passing may see the bells in the churchyard, suspended under a roof away from the church, only a few feet from the ground!

P. J. HEATHER.

OLD FOLKS' MEMORIES OF WIMBLEDON*

THERE is no happier way of spending an afternoon than in chatting with those whose memories stretch back into the Wimbledon of 60 or 70 years ago. It is all so clear to them still, and they love to talk of the good old times when Wimbledon was a village, and life went on more quietly, perhaps more contentedly, than it does now. The atmosphere of the old time still lingers round them, and as one talks with them, one lives in the good old days again.

The familiar phrase, used by every old resident, 'I am going to the village,' told me that it must have been a village in the not

* No attempt has been made to supplement or modify, from other sources of information, the impression of the old inhabitants, whose recollections furnish the matter of this article. Their value lies in the fact that they are personal reminiscences. To the earlier generation of the present residents many of the vanished features were once familiar. Most of the recollections refer to the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria.