

OUR BELLS .

They are the survivors of a Ring of Three recorded in an inventory of 1553 when the Commissioners spelt the name RYDDEMORE.

At one time they were a peal but now they can be chimed only. They were re-hung in October 1869 by Mr Wm. Aggett of Chagford and again after an inspection in 1962.

TREBLE BELL. The late Rev. H. T. E. Ellacombe of Clyst St George who made a special study of the bells of the Diocese recorded that our Treble Bell is one of the oldest in the Diocese. It has no name of the founder or of a Warden of the time, only the founder's mark I.T. His name is not known but he was working in Exeter around 1440.

The bell has inscribed in 'Black Letter' which is notoriously hard to read

'Voce Mea Viva Depello Cuncta Novica'
trans. 'With my living voice I drive away all things that may do hurt.'

It is 29½" in diam.

SECOND BELL.

This was recast by MEARS of London in 1869. It is 30½" in diam.

It was previously recast by a local founder Mordecai Cockey of Totnes.

The old inscription used to read :

'Nicholas Hooppell Ch Warden -
Mordecai Cockey cast me in Totnes 1692'

Nicholas Hooppell probably lived in Cottage Farm which is now Cross Manor.

TENOR BELL.

It is the largest bell 32½" in diam.

It was recast by AMBROSE GOODING of Plymouth in 1740.

The inscription reads:

'JAMES GILBERT WARDN A GOODING 1740.'
James Gilbert occupied one of the Tenements at Marwell and is listed in the Survey of 1754.

Gooding's bells had a faulty design in the crown staple and the clapper tended to fall out. There are few of his bells left in Devon. The crown staple in our bell has been strengthened, no doubt because of the technical knowledge of Hingston Randolph at the time of the re-hanging in 1869. So we have one of the few remaining Gooding bells in Devon.

Authority: Rev. H. T. Ellacombe.
Prebendary John Scott of Bampton.

ALL HALLOWS : RINGMORE : THE BELLS

These are the survivors of a Ring of Three recorded in an inventory of 1553 when the Commissioners spelt the name RYDDEMORE. At one time they were a peal but now they can be chimed only. They were rehung in October 1869 by Mr. Wm. Aggett of Chagford and again after an inspection in 1962.

TREBLE BELL : It is claimed by H.T.Ellacombe that our Treble Bell is one of the oldest in the Diocese. It has no name of the founder only the founder's mark : I.T. His name is not known but he was working in Exeter around 1442. The bell has an inscription : **VOCE MEA VIVA DEPELLO CUNCTA NOVICA (WITH MY LIVING VOICE I DRIVE ALL THINGS THAT MAY DO HURT).** It is 29 inches plus at its greatest diameter.

SECOND BELL : This was recast by **MEARS** of London in 1869. It was previously recast by **MORDECAI COCKEY** of Totnes. The old inscription used to read : **NICHOLAS HOOPPELL, CH. WARDEN - MORDECAI COCKEY CAST ME IN TOTNES 1692** Nicholas Hooppell probably lived in Cottage Farm which is now Cross Manor. It is nearly 32 inches in diameter.

TENOR BELL : This is the largest bell nearly 33 inches in diameter. It was recast by **AMBROSE GOODING (PLYMOUTH)** in 1740. The Inscription reads : **JAMES GILBERT WARDN.....A GOODING 1740** James Gilbert occupied one of the tenements at Marwell and is Listed in the Survey of 1754. Gooding's bells had a faulty design in the crown staple and the clapper tended to fall out ! There are few of his bells left in Devon. The crown staple in our bell has been strengthened because of the technical knowledge of the Rev. Hingeston-Randolph , vicar at the time of the rehanging in 1869 : Thus we have one of the few remaining Gooding bells in Devon.

The Vicarage
Bampton
Tiverton
Devon EX16 9NG

September 20th 1988

Dear Colonel Grimshaw,

First may I say how much I enjoyed meeting you, and how much we both enjoyed our visit to Ringmore and Middle Manor.

I enclose a report on the condition of Ringmore bells, and a sheet containing some historical notes on them. I'm much intrigued by the Robert Stainbank mark, of which I have a very good plaster-cast now, and if I find out anything interesting about it I'll let you know.

I think the best person to do the work which is needed on your bells would be Arthur Fidler of Rame Barton, Rame, Torpoint, PL10 1LG. He used to work for Taylors' and may even have done the Ringmore job in 1962; certainly he will know just how the clappers should work. He should be asked to estimate for the whole work including cleaning and painting the steelwork, but of course that's not skilled work and if you could raise a working-party to do it voluntarily it would save the PCC a lot of money.


Alternatively, you could get an estimate from Taylors' themselves, at The Bell Foundry, Loughborough, Leics., or from the Whitechapel Foundry, 34 Whitechapel Road, London E1.

I think the PCC should be urged to get on with this work as soon as it can: the rusting of the bell-bolts is putting three historic bells in some serious danger, and in any event it will not be long before the steel girders become actually dangerous if the corrosion is not halted.

If there is anything I can do to help in the future, please get in touch. When you have got some estimates, you might want to seek for grant help, and I might be able to help you with some addresses.

If the bells have to be removed from the tower (which they probably won't) you would have to get a Faculty, but otherwise I think an Archdeacon's Certificate should do.

Yours most sincerely,


John Scott.

Ringmore Church Bells: Some Historical Notes

Before the great surge of enthusiasm for bellringing in the 17th century, most churches had rings of three or four. At Ringmore the ring of three which is recorded in the Inventory of Church Goods of 1553 remained, though two of the bells have been recast, one of them twice.

The Treble, 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter, was cast by the Exeter foundry in the middle of the 15th century. It bears the mark of a founder whose initials were i.t. or l.t., flanking a bell and surrounded by a rope circle. There is an initial cross, followed by the inscription:

Voce mea viva depello cuncta nociva
[with my lively voice I drive away all hurtful things]

Until the last century there was a belief that ringing church bells would avert thunderstorms, floods and epidemics, and this motto was a popular one on bells cast by the Exeter founders.

This bell has had the "cannons" [the loops on the head from which it was originally hung] removed, but is otherwise in its original state, and sounds the note C sharp. It is one of about 140 pre-Reformation bells from the Exeter foundry in the county of Devon; there are others in Somerset, Cornwall and Dorset and a few elsewhere including Guernsey.

The Second was recast in 1692 by Mordecai Cockey of Totnes, and was (according to H.T. Ellacombe) inscribed:

NICHOLAS HOOPPELL CH: WARDEN MORDECAI COCKEY CAST ME IN TOTNES 1692

The story goes that the clapper of this bell fell out when the bells were to be rung for a wedding in the last century, and the blacksmith was recruited to go into the belfry and hit it with a sledge-hammer, which not surprisingly broke it. It was in pieces in 1865 when Ellacombe saw it, but was recast at Whitechapel in 1869. The inscription on the new bell is:

Defunctos ploro - plebem voco - festa decoro
[I mourn the dead, I call the people, I honour the festivals]

The lettering is a 19th-century version of gothic "black-letter". There is a cross and a foundry-mark preceding the inscription, and the foundry-mark is interesting because it has the initials R.S., for Robert Stainbank. He was taken into partnership by George Mears of Whitechapel in 1865, and from then on until after World War II the firm was known as Mears & Stainbank, but Robert Stainbank's name seldom appears on their bells by itself, and I have never seen this very handsome mark or even seen it illustrated.

The Tenor, 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter in A sharp, was recast in 1740 by Ambrose Gooding of Plymouth. It is decorated with various little embellishments -- a dove, a crown, a head (possibly of George I) and an acanthus-leaf. The inscription is:

JAMES GILBERT + WARDN + (leaf) A + (bell) + GOODING + (2 leaves) 1740
+ (dove) (crown) (head)

The omission of the "E" in Warden is Gooding's mistake.

Both the 2nd and Tenor have their cannons, but have been drilled for a centre bolt and two bell-bolts.

The three bells are not tuned to a modern diatonic scale, but the modern scale was not invented when Ringmore's original three bells were cast, and no doubt the two bells which were recast were recast to the same notes as they had before.

John G.M. Scott
20th September 1988

Diameter
30 $\frac{1}{4}$
Note B



Ringmore Church Bells

The ring of three was first inspected by me in 1962, when the 2nd and Tenor were hung in a mediaeval or early 17th-century type frame and the Treble in a lash-up arrangement above them in the base of the spire. Subsequent to my visit the bells were rehung "dead" for chiming by Taylors' of Loughborough.

The Tower is transeptal, over the S porch, and the only example of such a tower from pre-Reformation times in South Devon, as far as I know. It is of local limestone, with a short parapet spire, and seems to be in good condition. However, a good deal of weather seems to blow in through the louvred windows in the belfry. Access is by a vertical wooden ladder.

The Bellframe consists simply of three steel girders, 5" x 6", with their ends built into the E and W walls of the tower, with angle-section steel sections bolted across their ends near each wall. The bells are hung from timber deadstocks which are secured to the girders by steel angle-brackets.

The steelwork has all suffered from the weather and proximity to the sea, which always increases corrosion in steel. The ends of the girders, where they meet the walls, are laminating and the expansion is splitting the stonework round them, while the rest of the steel is showing blistering of the paint as rust pockets form underneath it.

The Gear consists of bell-bolts securing the bells to the deadstocks, centre-bolts securing the chiming-clappers, and chiming-clappers of the "trigger-action" type, with ropes and pulleys to a panel in the tower's first floor. The design of the clappers was intended to prevent the heads of the clappers from being held in contact with the bells, as this can cause bells to crack.

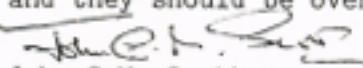
The bell-bolts, and probably the centre-bolts too, are rusting severely, and although there is probably ample reserve strength in them they are now expanding so that they fit very tightly in their holes and could at any time split the heads of the bells. The clappers and fittings are rusty but serviceable; the clappers of the Treble and Tenor have lost their "trigger-action" property and the heads of the clappers can be held against the bells. This is probably caused by wear. The chiming panel downstairs has ratchet adjusters for the ropes, but these have all siezed up solid, and one of them has had its square sheared off in an attempt to move it. The ropes can be adjusted in the ordinary way, but less easily.

The Bells, historical details of which I enclose separately, are in good order, and need no attention. The Treble has had its cannons removed, but the other two have their cannons intact.

Recommendations. The urgent need is to prevent rust from doing any more damage. The steelwork of the frame should be cleaned off and painted with rust-preventing paint as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

The bell-bolts should be drawn, and replaced with new ones, either hot-dip galvanized or for preference (though much more costly) stainless steel.

The clappers and their fittings will have to be removed for this to be done, and they should be overhauled at the same time.


John G.M. Scott
September 20th 1988

1. John
2. George.

ch! Amended by telephone.

Report on the Tower & Bells of Holy Trinity, Ringmore

Date of Inspection, 5 July 1995

The Tower now houses, in the second stage, a heating apparatus mounted against the N wall with a louvred opening into the nave. This has necessitated the removal of the chiming-rope frame which formerly stood on this wall. The flue from the heater has been taken up through the belfry and out through the doorway to the tower roof.

One of the holdfasts at the top of the ladder is rusting badly and should be replaced: it would be highly dangerous were the ladder to come off the wall when someone was on it, and a second pair of holdfasts would be a wise precaution.

The Bellframe is rusting again, and needs to have the loose rust removed before it is repainted.

The Gear is in quite good order; some of the bell-bolts have been replaced in stainless steel, and some others are rusting.

The Bells are in good order.

Recommendations.

1. There seems to be no great difficulty in resiting the chiming-ropes. The clappers are mounted on independent crown-staples which can be loosened and swivelled to a new angle to suit a different run for the ropes, and the frame for the top pulleys can be re-mounted in a different position. The best place for the chiming frame is probably across the W window of the ringing-room, and it can be mounted on two pieces of timber fixed across the opening. There is some worm in the wooden parts of the frame, and it should be treated before it gets weakened.

The pulley-frame should be overhauled, cleaned, repainted and the pulleys greased, and mounted directly above the frame, with holes drilled in the floor for the ropes, at the same height as at present. [If there are joists in the way of the ropes, the pulley-frame and chiming frame should be adjusted one way or the other to avoid drilling through them.] I advise that the old angle-brackets be left in situ and new ones made up and hot-dip galvanized before being cemented into the W wall. The crown-staples of the bells should then be loosened, the ropes fitted, and the clappers adjusted to swing exactly in line with their pulleys before the nuts are retightened.

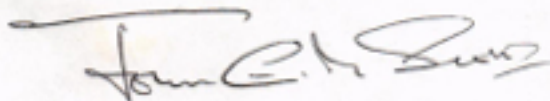
I understand that this work is regarded as being implicit in the Faculty for installing the heating system, and no further permission will be needed.

2. The bellframe should be cleaned and painted. I would recommend an undercoat of "Galvafruid" as the best way of inhibiting rust.

3. The bell fastenings should be checked over, and any suspect nuts replaced in stainless steel; the rest should be painted in the same way as the frame.

4. The doorway to the tower roof needs to be fitted with doors which fit round the flue-pipe and exclude birds and as much weather as possible. The sound openings in the belfry should have any missing louvres replaced and should be fitted with "Weldmesh" bird-guards; these could be of a size big enough to allow the bats to pass through but exclude jackdaws and pigeons -- say 2".

5. The rusty holdfast at the top of the belfry ladder should be replaced, and a second pair of holdfasts fitted about 6 feet below, as a safety precaution.



John G.M. Scott.

The Vicarage
Bampton
Tiverton
EX16 9NG

March 24th 1987

Dear Col. Grimshaw,

Ringmore Church Bells

It's a long time since I saw Ringmore bells -- before they were rehung by Taylors', in fact -- and my records of them were not as complete as I'd like, but I can answer most of your questions, I think.

2

They are the survivors of a ring of three which is recorded in the Inventory of 1553, when the Coemissioners mis-spelt the place "Ryddemore". Of the three two have been recast, one of them twice, and one still survives.

When I saw them they were in a very unsafe condition; the lower part of the frame, containing the two larger bells, was probably 16th-century in part; the Treble was hung above the other two in a ramshackle affair, one part of which was formerly the main hatch-beam of a small ship, with the Lloyds' number carved on it; I jotted down the number, but lost the piece of paper: conditions in the tower were so cramped and unstable that I had some excuse, but it would have been nice to know which wreck the timber came from.

The Treble, the smallest bell, is the mediæval one. It was cast by one of the Exeter bellfounders, and bears the mark with his initials I.T.; so far his name is still not known, but he was working in the middle of the 15th century, say about 1440. The bell is 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter, and the inscription is in "black-letter, which is notoriously hard to read. It is preceded by a cross, and runs, more or less as you quote from Hingeston-Randolph,

+ Voce mea viva depello cuncta nociva (I.T. Mark)

This does translate as Hingeston-Randolph has it. It was one of a number of "stock" inscriptions which the Exeter founders used, each word being on a large pattern, so that they didn't have to put the letters on the bell one by one from an alphabetical set. Occasionally a word may be applied upside down, but I didn't note this on yours.

The Second, which is 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ " diameter, was recast in 1869 by Mears of London, and I didn't note its inscription. It was formerly recast by a local founder, Mordecai Cockey of Totnes, and the inscription was recorded by H.T. Ellacombe as:

NICHOLAS HOOPPELL CH: WARDEN MORDECAI COCKEY CAST ME IN TOTNES 1692

The Tenor, the largest of the three, is 32 $\frac{3}{4}$ " diameter, was recast by Ambrose Gooding of Plymouth. I recorded the inscription as follows:

JAMES GILBERT WARD^N A (bell) GOODING 1740

Gooding used a number of little decorations, including one like a cock-dial, and one which was a profile bust of George I. The "pair of dividers" is, I think, the "A" of his initial, with the cross-bar angled down as it often was at this period. Ambrose Gooding didn't leave many bells, and he tended to use a type of crown-staple (the iron loop from which the clapper was hung) which caused many of his bells to split in the head, so that surviving bells by him are few -- all the more reason to be glad that Ringmore has one, and that its crown-staple has been drilled out so that it's less at risk.

It's good to have some background information about James Gilbert; it all helps to fall out the story, doesn't it? It you have any wardens' accounts for the period, you might be able to find out where he lived from the Church Rate assessment lists.

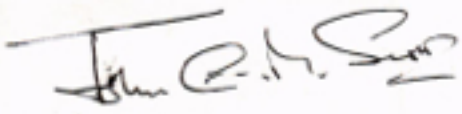
Just what William Aggett did I'm not sure; he tended to claim credit for rather more than he did. It would have been some time after 1869; Aggett was working round the turn of the century, and there are still some people who remember him with his billycock hat. When I saw the bells in 1962, most of the gear was much older than Aggett's time, and in very poor condition, the ironwork on the Treble being particularly bad.

When the plan for rehanging them was put forward, a specification was obtained from Taylors', which the architect apparently passed to a local builder and told him to estimate for. I was sent the estimate, which showed that the builder had only the haziest idea of what was involved and almost no idea of how to carry it out -- he would have got himself into a most almighty tangle if he'd tried to do it. It also provided for no access to the bells, which would have been hung about 30 feet above the ground floor with no floor and a ladder up the wall which would have been some feet away from the bells, so that even replacing a rope would have been most hazardous; I don't know what the final result was, but I hope it's better than that!

I'd like to see the bells again one day, and have plans for a visit to Thurlestone before long, so I may well ring you up in the hope of meeting you in the tower and looking at the bells together. If that comes off, I might be able to tell you more about the bells in the light of what I've learnt in the last 25 years.

Till then, I hope that this will be interesting and useful.

Yours most sincerely,



(Rev. Prebendary) John Scott

Tom Kimball
Bell Foundry
A. Hunt - Copies of marks
Robert Stainbank.
Coat Arms. - Timber Resistant

0398-31385

The Vicarage
Bampton
Tiverton EX15 9NG

2306

November 2nd 1988

Dear Col. Grimshaw,

I'm very sorry to have omitted the details of the 2nd in my report on the bells. The diameter of this bell is 30 1/2", and the note is B. It was a purely accidental lapse.

I have made enquiries of a great many of my fellow-bell-enthusiasts, and nobody so far has reported seeing the R.S. mark; nor does the Whitechapel Foundry have any record of it, which is strange because their records are normally very full. Although Robert Stainbank did little, if any, bellfounding himself, it does seem very odd that a mark which must have involved a great deal of trouble in the design, which is handsome and quite elaborate, the making of the pattern and the making of the stamp itself, should have been used apparently only once for a bell for a parish which however delightful is undeniably obscure. I've taken some pictures of the cast which I may send to "The Ringing World" with a little piece to see if anybody else has any information about it.

My kind regards to your wife.

Yours most sincerely,

John Scott

Letter of Sep 20. 1988. + report on bells to A. Bennett. for copying. 7/2/92.

George

Bells

(the copy) Many thanks. Very interesting. I return it in case you need it for someone else.

Obviously we must get an estimate (? divided between skilled & non-skilled work) but I have a stripping "flail" wheel, which fits my Black & Decker, and several lengths of cable (plus goggles) so we could have a "working-party", as suggested.

I see Mr. Scott refers to the "alternative" firms but then says "some estimates" - I presume that, in the good old Service manner, two (or 3) estimates are required before asking for help.

I suggest, to save time, you discuss with Rector and tell him I agree to getting estimate(s) - without any 'prejudice' to having the work done - but in view of the dangerous situation which might be created if we delay, we must go ahead.

Req. 8/10/88.