

**THE BELLS OF THE  
CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF  
S. PETER, EXON, PP. 1-39**

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**HENRY THOMAS ELLACOMBE**

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OF THE  
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OF  
S. PETER, EXON,

BY  
HENRY THOMAS ELLACOMBE, M.A., F.S.A.

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## PREFACE.

The following account of the Bells of the Cathedral was first printed in the Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society, but in scattered and irregular portions: they are now brought together in regular order, and in a form which will be more convenient for the general reader.

H. T. E.

13-60697

THE BELLS OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH  
OF S. PETER, EXON.

As a Ring of Ten the heaviest in Metal, and grandest in Tone in the whole World.

It may be gathered from the Fabric Rolls, examined by Dr. Oliver, from 1286 to 1439, which, by the kind permission of the Dean and Chapter I have also been allowed to see, that there were at that early period ten bells. Such an unusual number can only be accounted for by supposing that some of them were provided for certain services, and were hung within the choir or nave, as it appears by Rocca, in his *Treatise on Bells* (1612), and Carlo Borromeo, that seven was the number allowed to a Cathedral tower.<sup>1</sup>

These names appear on the Rolls:

1286 *Walter*, (for jobs, 2<sup>d</sup>) called from the donor, Bishop Walter Bronescombe.

*Bockerel*, hanging,— } in the North Tower, with two others.  
*Chauncel*, hanging,— }

*Germanyn*, (Qy.) from Ralph Germanyn, Precentor, 1308 to 1316. 2<sup>d</sup>.

1319 *Jesus*, 2<sup>d</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> ironwork. In St. John's, or South Tower.

1323 *St. Mary*, repairs, 11<sup>th</sup>. In St. Paul's, or North Tower.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Leofric, 1050, found seven bells in the Cathedral: he is recorded to have added six others and a dozen smaller ones, probably for chimes. In Dugdale's *Monasticon*, vol. ii., p. 527, Ed: 1817, this passage occurs in the Latin version of a Saxon M.S. in the Bodleian Library, auct. D. 2.16, fol. 1 a: "Erant autem antea nisi septem campanæ suspensæ, nunc sunt tredecim suspensæ, præter duodecim tintinnabula."

- 1351 *Peter*,<sup>1</sup> —6<sup>s</sup>. "The Base."<sup>2</sup> "De novo facta" in 1330.  
 1372 One of the bells was cast or recast.  
 1396 *Trinity*, repairs. —  
 \* 1396 *Grandison*, in the North Tower with three others, repairs, 12<sup>d</sup>.  
 1399 For repairing the four bells in the North Tower, 15<sup>d</sup>.  
 1415 *Bracton*, repairs, 14<sup>d</sup>.  
 1452-3, is a charge of xx<sup>d</sup>. "*in una bauderick pro maxima campana in campanile borcati.*"

Of the bells here enumerated, there are only two at present known by the same name: viz, *Grandison*, which is the Tenor of the ring of ten, and *Great Peter*; but *that Peter* must have been different from the present one, which was the gift of Bishop Courtenay in 1484.

There is a tradition at Llandaff, that our Peter bell was taken from that city in exchange for five bells brought from Exeter, in Bishop Courtenay's time; and certain it is, that the tower of Llandaff was built 1484, the date of the gift of this bell.<sup>3</sup>

There is another tradition that Cardinal Wolsey about 1513, when Lord High Chancellor, and possessed of the revenues of the Bishopric of Tournay, sent over from that place five large bells, and distributed them to divers Cathedrals; the smallest he gave to Sherborne, (that he gave one there is no doubt, as it was inscribed) and one to Exeter.<sup>4</sup> Be that as it may, it is perhaps hopeless now to find out the true history of the whole of the original bells of our Cathedral, nor how they were broken or destroyed.

However, I have been successful in finding the name of the founder of the bells set up in Bishop Quivil's time, and I believe he will turn out to be the earliest one of his craft known in the kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Probably so called from Bishop Peter Quivil.

<sup>2</sup> A term not known at present; it probably means the *biggest bell*.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Oliver (*History of Exeter*, p. 64) remarks, "that, although the date 1453 was twenty-five years before Courtenay was made Bishop, yet precisely in that year he was appointed Archdeacon of Exeter; and perhaps on that occasion may have offered such valuable presents."

<sup>4</sup> *Strype's Annals* and *Hutchins' Dorset*.



By the kindness of the principal officers in our Public Record Office in London, I am enabled to publish, for the first time, the name of Roger de Ropeforde (*Campanistarius*), of Paignton, whose son William, and grandson Robert, as next heir, carried on the business at the close of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, and were the parties employed by Bishop Quivil and the Chapter in 1284 to make the four bells in the North Tower, which we find recited in the Fabric Rolls just quoted. They were also engaged to repair the organs and the horologe.

In an Inspeximus Charter of Edward II (*Patent Roll*, Part i, m. 5.) is a recital of a deed of Bishop Quivil, dated ij Ides of July, 1284, by which he grants a tenement, with house and land at Paignton, to Roger de Ropeford, his son and heirs, for the annual payment of one penny at Easter, in consideration of which they are to make the bells for the Cathedral, and repair the organs and horologe, the Chapter, who were consenting parties, undertaking to provide all things necessary for the work to be done; also victuals and drink whenever they are so employed. From not having examined the original Record, both Dr. Oliver in his *Lives of the Bishops of Exeter* (p. 178), and Britton in his *History of the Cathedral* (p. 123), were misled by an erroneous entry in the published Calendar of the Patent Rolls, which gives the name of "Robert son of Walter" only, and that he was to toll the bells, whereas the Record is a confirmation to Robert, the grandson of Roger de Ropeford, of the same premises in Paignton, for the same services and payment by which they were first granted by the Bishop. (See the Record at the end.)

In the Fabric Roll 1285, is the entry of the following payments to them.

"Item in ferramento Campanæ que vocatur *clermatyn* ij<sup>s</sup>.

"Item in rotacione.....Campanarum xij<sup>s</sup>.

"Itm Rogero Campanistario et filio ejus ad pendendum duas Campanas scilicet *Cokerel* et *Chanterel* ij<sup>s</sup>.

"Fabro pro ferro et opere ad ferramenta earundam v<sup>s</sup>."

B<sup>1</sup>

How long they enjoyed this privilege does not appear, but from entries in the Fabric Rolls, 1372—3, in Bishop Brantingham's time, they were no longer employed by the Capitular Body, for other persons were engaged in casting two bells, the details of the cost are set forth in the following extract:

"Compotus Domini Willielmi Trendlebeare custodis operis beati Petri Exoniensis.

"Custus campane ad clokk. mcccclxxii.—mcccclxxiii.

"In stipendio Laurentii Drake xij<sup>s</sup>; Ricardi Slade x<sup>s</sup>; et Johannis Cobleigh x<sup>s</sup>; circa fusum cadum et formam campane, et Ricardi Hope ad ligandum prædictum vj<sup>d</sup>

"In cariagio bituminis et bitumine emto vj<sup>d</sup>

"In stipendio Johannis Brown, Roberti Facy, circa fornacem per iij dies iij<sup>s</sup> iiij<sup>d</sup>; et Ricardi Drebel per tres dies xiiij<sup>d</sup>

"In cc bordnayls xj<sup>s</sup>; et in xvi spykys ij<sup>s</sup>; in feno empto pro fornace iij<sup>d</sup>; in stipendio Ricardi Drebel plaustrantis prædictam fornacem ij<sup>s</sup> ij<sup>d</sup>; in una libra cere empta pro literis campane viij<sup>d</sup>; in xxiiij libris pinguedinis boum ij<sup>s</sup> vj<sup>d</sup>; in canabo et in filo canabo empto xix<sup>s</sup>; in ligacione cape campane cum ligno xiiij<sup>s</sup> ob; in stipendio Ricardi Drebel ad fodiendum puteum pro campana xx<sup>s</sup>; et in uno summo straminis empto vii<sup>d</sup>

"Summa xxv<sup>s</sup> v<sup>d</sup>

"Empcio metalli. In xxxv libris cupri emptis a Johanne Brasyer de Dertemouthe xxvi<sup>s</sup> xiiij<sup>d</sup> iv<sup>s</sup> præcium libre iij<sup>d</sup>; In vj<sup>s</sup> xvi libris stagni Willielmo Ryka de Ayschperton emptis v<sup>s</sup> ij<sup>s</sup> x<sup>s</sup> præcium libre ij<sup>s</sup>; in cariagio xij<sup>s</sup>; et in ij<sup>s</sup> xxxij libris metalli emptis in diversis locis lvij<sup>s</sup> ij<sup>d</sup>

"Summa xxxiiij<sup>s</sup> xiv<sup>s</sup> iv<sup>d</sup>

"In carbonetis emptis xv<sup>s</sup> iij<sup>d</sup>; in uno quarterio carbonetis lapidis empto iv<sup>s</sup>; in duobus summis focalis de Stokwode iij<sup>d</sup>; in expensis in purificatione metalli et fusione campane xiiij<sup>s</sup>; et in follibus conductis ad id complendam ij<sup>s</sup>

"Summa xxxiiij<sup>s</sup> vij<sup>d</sup>

"In solutione facta Thome Karoun alias Belhutero pro labore suo x<sup>s</sup> xix<sup>s</sup>

"In expensis suis versus Dertemouthe iij<sup>s</sup> et ex præcepto dominorum meorum xij<sup>s</sup>"

"In solucione facta Nicholao Bealde ad adjuvandum prædictum Thomam in opere prædicto per xix septimanas xij<sup>s</sup>"

"Summa xj℥ xv<sup>s</sup>"

"Custus alterius campane.

"In cariagio butuminis xxj<sup>s</sup>; in pinguedine boum xix<sup>s</sup> iij<sup>s</sup> vij<sup>s</sup>; in cera empta pro literis iij<sup>s</sup>; in uno homine conducto ad superintendendam formam campane per ij dies ix<sup>s</sup>; in pinguedine porcorum et schynzina vj<sup>s</sup>; in canabo et in filo canabi ij<sup>s</sup> ij<sup>s</sup>; in una plata empta iijj<sup>s</sup>; in ligacione cape cum ligno iijj<sup>s</sup>; et cum ferro de proprio vj<sup>s</sup>; et in quatuor summis focalis de Stokwode vj<sup>s</sup> ob; in uno summo straminis vj<sup>s</sup>; et in stipendio Ricardi Drebel locato ad fodiendum puteum pro campana per ij dies et dimidiam x<sup>s</sup>; et in una stapela pro campana viij<sup>s</sup>; et in solucione facta Thome Karoun alias Belhuteri iij<sup>s</sup> vi<sup>s</sup> vij<sup>s</sup>"

"Summa iij<sup>s</sup> iij<sup>s</sup> xj<sup>s</sup> ob.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Item, in solucione Gulielmo Crockarueville pro cruce campanilis et Johanni Snel cum toto apparatu ad exaltandam campanam integram xxx<sup>s</sup> x<sup>s</sup>; in emendacione unius clapere de Graunson iijj<sup>s</sup>"

\* \* \* \* \*

These may certainly be considered among the very earliest records relating to the casting of bells. Aware of their great interest when I first found them in the Fabric Rolls—which, by the courteous permission of the late Dean, I was allowed to examine—circumstances prevented my taking a copy at that time, and I depended upon getting the whole entry photographed; but as there was some difficulty about that, my friend, the late Mr. Barnes, kindly promised to make an exact copy and took charge of the Roll for that purpose; but other more serious matters engrossed his attention, and it was never done till Mr. Stewart Moore's attention was lately called to it.

We now come to September 29, 1339, the date of Bishop Grandisson's *Statutes* for the government of his Collegiate Establishment at Ottery St. Mary (No. 15), the number and position of the bells in