

Although the church stands in a fairly isolated position in open countryside with only a handful of buildings nearby, it serves what was once a large and extensive parish. Claines parish once included the whole of Worcester north of The Tything and also the area to the north east known as Fernhill Heath. The ecclesiastical parishes of Worcester St.George, Worcester St.Mary, Barbourne and Rainbow Hill were formed from Claines. This explains the size of the church, which is a large building – further enlarged to the north in 1886-7 – with a Perpendicular west tower.

The tower is in three stages with an embattled parapet and pinnacles. Internally, it has a ground floor ringing room - with bellropes round the font – and ladder access to the clock room and bell chamber above. There are ten bells in the key of F# (757.5Hz).

## **Bell**

## **Inscription**

1. 243 / (*Bell and pomegranate border all round*)  
Waist: IN MEMORY OF / ELIZA MARIA THOMAS / WHO DIED APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup>.  
1939. / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY HER SON  
Opposite: (*Taylor's rectangular mark*) / 1940
2. 267 / (*Bell and pomegranate border all round*)  
Waist: IN MEMORY OF / ELIZA MARIA THOMAS / WHO DIED APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup>.  
1939. / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY HER SON  
Opposite: (*Taylor's rectangular mark*) / 1940
3. 218 / (*Floral border all round*)  
Waist: E.P.T. / A.D. 1927  
Opposite: (*Taylor's circular mark*)
4. 298 / (*Floral border all round*)  
Waist: E.P.T. / A.D. 1927  
Opposite: (*Taylor's circular mark*)
5. 150 / (*Floral border all round*)  
Waist: THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY / E.P. THOMAS / IN MEMORY OF HIS  
FATHER / A.D. 1927  
Opposite: (*Taylor's circular mark*)
6. 195 / FRANCIS : WYTHES (*coin*) WILLIAM : REYNOLDS (*coin*) H : N (*coin*)  
CHVRCH : WARDENS (*coin*) 1686 : / R : D : W : H (*border all round*)  
Waist: (*Taylor's circular mark*) / RECAST 1927.
7. RECAST BY JOHN WARNER & SONS 1886.
8. GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO 1622 (*ornament*)

**Bell****Inscription**

9. + IHESVS BE OVRE SPEDE 1623  
 10. + GOD BLESS OVRE NOBELL KING 1623 / (R. Oldfield's mark)

<b>Bell</b>	<b>Founder and date</b>	<b>Diameter</b>	<b>Nominal</b>	<b>Cwt.</b>	<b>Qrs.</b>	<b>Lbs.</b>
1.	John Taylor & Co, 1940	23 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	1911	3	2	3
2.	John Taylor & Co, 1940	24	1701	3	2	24
3.	John Taylor & Co, 1927	25 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	1516.5	3	3	6
4.	John Taylor & Co, 1927	25 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	1431	3	3	10
5.	John Taylor & Co, 1927	27 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	1276	4	1	10
6.	John Taylor & Co, 1927	29 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>16</sub>	1138	5	0	22
7.	John Warner & Sons, 1886	31 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	1012	5	0	25
8.	Richard Oldfield, 1622	34 <sup>7</sup> / <sub>8</sub>	955	7	1	10
9.	Richard Oldfield, 1623	38 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>	851	9	3	4
10.	Richard Oldfield, 1623	43	757.8	13	3	26

The inscription of the 1686 treble by William Huntbach is reproduced in facsimile on the new bell. The three largest bells are all inscribed in neat lettering, plain on the tenor and ornamental on bells 8 and 9. The lettering and marks on the Oldfield and Huntbach bells are illustrated in Walters' *Church Bells of Worcestershire* by photographs of plaster casts. The canons have been removed from all the old bells, which have also been quarter turned.

The bells hang in a two-tier cast iron frame (*Bellframes* type 8.3.D.a) with modern ringing fittings, supplied by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough in 1927 and modified and extended when the two extra bells were added in 1940. Bells 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8 are hung in lowside castings (type 8.3.A.h) in the upper tier, and bells 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10 remain in their original positions, occupying an H frame (type 8.3.C.e) sections below. The fittings include cast iron stocks, ball bearings, Hastings stays etc.

## History

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In 1552 there were four bells - "iiij bells in the tower with ij liche bells and iij saunce bells" at Claines. One of the mediaeval bells survived until 1886, though it is known to have been cracked as long ago as 1832 (see below). It was inscribed with an alphabet inscription in gothic lettering, with a cross and marks similar to those found on a group of bells around Worcester including the dated examples at Grimley (1482) and Worcester St.Michael (1480)

(Cross) A B C D E F G H I L M N O P Q R (cross) A B C D E F G H I K L I M  
N O P Q (*lion's head with lolling tongue - twice*)

This bell, approximately 31 inches in diameter, weighed around 5½ cwt. It is believed to have been cast at Worcester by a monastic founder in the late fifteenth century. H.B. Walters took details from a rubbing, now lost, made by H.T. Tilley in 1877.

A note in the parish register provides the information that "Ye great bell was cast at Claynes in ye Church House A.D. 1589, Nov. ye. 7". The identity of the founder is not known, and the few known bells of this period in the area - which might have provided a clue to who cast the Claines tenor in 1589 - are or were by unidentified founders.

In 1622-3, three of the bells were recast by a founder whose initials "R O" appear on a mark on the tenor. Two different styles of lettering are used, ornamental on the eighth (1622) and ninth (1623) and plain on the tenor. The founder was probably Richard Oldfield who is mentioned in the Ludlow accounts in 1624 and 1632. Other bells by him in the area include one at Lindridge (1626) and in Herefordshire and Shropshire. He seems to have been an itinerant. Before retuning in 1927 these three bells weighed 7-3-2, 10-2-5 and 14-2-21.

In 1686, a new treble was provided by William Huntbach of Worcester. It is clear from the parish records that this was an addition to the ring, and that the four old bells were rehung in 1686 with new fittings in a new frame. The frame seems to have been provided by a Mr. Saunders and the ironwork by Edward Lambe. Details in the records are as follows:

Meeting 19th August 1686

Att a parish meeting then held it did appeare to the Parishioners then present that the charges of a new Bell and frame with the new hanging of the other four the Carpenters worke and timber the Smiths worke together with the Churchwardens necessary expenses amounted to 65<sup>li</sup> - 17<sup>s</sup> - 11<sup>d</sup>.

This sum clearly included the normal church expenditure as well as the work on the bells, the cost of which seems to have been £46.8.8 plus sundry incidental expenses. The following details are included in the accounts for 1685-6:

1685-6	
Expense 3 days going to fetch materials for the Bells	£0.1.8.
The 14th Aprill for weighing the Bell and expence then	0.1.6.
Ye 22 <sup>nd</sup> for fetching a load of Timber from Ombersley to the Church	0.4.6.
Ye 27 expence when the workmen finished ye frame	0.0.8.
Ye 26 for Ringing the bells without clappers to days	0.2.0.
Disbursed to workmen concerning the Bells	
Paid to Mr. Humpach Bellfounder	£24.0.0.
To Mr. Saunders	13.0.6.
To Edward Lambe	8.2.0.
[and other expenditure	<u>1.6.2.]</u>
	46.08.08

A further note under 18 September 1688 mentions a payment of £7.11.3 to the churchwardens “to pay off Saunders & Huntbach Bells about the Bells”. When taken down for recasting in 1927, the Huntbach bell was found to weight 4-2-6 (nett).

The next significant reference to the bells is in 1832 when the parish obtained estimates from John Rudhall of Gloucester for recasting the cracked second bell. Rudhall also put in a price for recasting the five old bells into a new ring of six. The following details are recorded in his notebook:

27 August 1832

To Churchwardens of Claines, Worcestershire, to recast their 5 old Bells into a Peal of 6 abt. the wt. of the old for £80, or recast the 2d. Bell in 5 for 14d. a lb. new & allow 9½d. a lb. for the old

Nothing was done, however, and in 1877 the Rev. H.T. Tilley found the mediaeval bell “hopelessly cracked, with a piece broken out of the rim”. It was eventually recast by Warners when the church was restored in 1886-7.

However, the work on the bells at that time was evidently minimal, and when Taylors carried out an inspection in January 1927 they found the belfry in a poor state of repair, noting that the bells were probably last rung in 1884. They noted an old five-bell frame (*Bellframes* layout 5.12) with an anti-clockwise rope circle, and the inspection notes include the following comments:

Sir Aston Webb had made a report on the tower and is known personally to Mr. Thomas, who is defraying the cost of the bells. Bells 1. 1686 28” 1163hz, 2. Warner 1886 31¼” 1028hz, 3. 1622 34¾” 968.5hz, 4. 1623 38½” 882hz, 5. 43” old 756hz. Ringers on ground floor. ... Height of first floor 22ft. [*dimensions and details*] ... This floor looks nicely panelled from underneath. Ht of intermediate chamber 12ft to underside of bellchamber floor. On N wall are

3 corbels (stone), upper surface 1' 10" below the bellchamber floor & on these is placed a large timber fairly modern to support N side of framework. Bells rung last in 1884? ... The 2nd bell, recast by Warner, is not fitted with gudgeons & therefore cannot be rung, & never has been rung. Framework & fittings hopeless. 3rd and 4th with wedges instead of bolts, therefore very old ironwork. Tenor slightly skirted. Canons on all. Tenor only turned & is slightly worn again. ... Walls cut away for swing of bells & should be made good. Windows 6' 10" high. Chiming apparatus by Warner 1886, need not be refixed. Salley guides advisable.

So, at that point the five bells were still hung in the 1686 frame with very old fittings. Moreover, they were effectively a chime rather than a ring, having been sounded only by an Ellacombe chiming apparatus from about 1886 until 1927.

In 1927, the bells were thoroughly restored by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough. One of the old bells was recast and three new bells were added to make a ring of eight, the additional bells being donated by E.P. Thomas in memory of his father. The work was completed on 2 June 1927, the dedication took place on 26 June (reported briefly in the *Ringling World* p.421) and first full peal on the bells was rung on 28 August 1927. The work is commemorated on a brass plate on the south wall of the tower with the following inscription:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF / EMANUEL THOMAS,  
J.P. / WHO DIED APRIL 17TH 1915. / --- / THE FIVE BELLS IN THIS CHURCH /  
WERE REHUNG AND THREE NEW / BELLS GIVEN BY HIS SON, A.D. 1927.

Thirteen years later, just after the outbreak of World War II, two further bells were added to make a ring of ten. This necessitated the rearrangement of the top tier of the frame to accommodate the new bells. To do this, the second of the eight (i.e. 4th) was moved to the west and two new pits were created alongside for the new trebles. The positions of the bells in the lower tier were unaltered but bells 3 and 5 were re-roped with alterations to the wheels and pulleys.

The dedication took place on 23 June 1940, but owing to the wartime ban on ringing - imposed in June 1940 and lifted April 1943 - the bells were little used until some time later. The first peal on the augmented ring was achieved on 27 December 1943. The gift of extra bells is also recorded on a brass tablet on the south wall, inscribed:

TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF ELIZA MARIA  
THOMAS, / WHO DIED APRIL 8TH, 1939. / THE TWO TREBLE BELLS / WERE  
HUNG IN THE TOWER / BY HER SON, A.D. 1940.

In 1988 Taylors renewed the gudgeons on the tenor bell. A few years later the bells were refurbished by Arthur Fidler of Bow whose work involved rebushing the clappers, scraping and painting the bellframe and headstocks and overhauling the fittings.

There is a *clock* with skeleton dials on two sides of the tower dates from 1947. This was also presented by E.P. Thomas, as recorded on an engraved brass plate on the north pier of the tower arch which reads: "TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN LOVING MEMORY OF / FLORENCE ELIZABETH THOMAS / WHO DIED APRIL 12TH 1946 / THE CLOCK IN THIS TOWER / WAS GIVEN BY HER HUSBAND / ERNEST PERCY THOMAS / DECEMBER 1947". The clock is a Smith of Derby synchronous timepiece with motorised Westminster quarter & hour strike units. The skeleton dials are 4ft 6ins in diameter. Later Smith of Derby catalogues include a testimonial regarding the reliability of the Claines clock.

*Visited:* CJP and NCRC 20 April 1971;  
CJP 27 May 2005