

**Information from Chris Pickford's survey of Worcestershire bells and clocks –
*preliminary draft only (this version 22 May 2020)***

WORCESTER

St.Andrew (*former church*), Deansway

The tower and its tall and elegant spire are all that remain of this church. Rising to a total height of 245ft, St.Andrew's steeple more than rivals the Cathedral tower (203ft). The remarkable height and acute angle of the spire gave rise to its local nickname of "the glover's needle" as a reference to the glovemaking trade once associated with the City and, indeed, with this particular parish. The church was demolished in 1949. It had been a relatively modest building in comparison with its grand steeple. Although of pre-Conquest origin the parish was always small and the living was poor. From the C17 onwards the area became industrialised, densely populated and consequently quite impoverished.

The tower and spire stand in what is now a public garden, open on three sides and closed only on the west. The west face has a large five-light window with trefoil-headed lights. The tower dates from the C15 and it was originally embraced by the north and south aisles of the church. The slender spire is octagonal, ribbed and has two tiers of lights and a Corinthian capital at the top instead of an ordinary finial. On the ground nearby is the original top section of spire, again with a Corinthian capital.

Although a great ornament to the city, the spire must have always been a great burden on the parish, especially when major repairs were required. In 1663, for instance, the Dean and Chapter helped out by making an extraordinary payment of £5 "Paid by Chapter order to the parish of St Andrews towards the steeple". Further work on the spire was needed in 1700-1 and again in 1715-6 but worse was to come. On 5 June 1733 the mediaeval spire was badly damaged by lightning. Applying for a faculty to take down the remains in 1735 the parishioners stated that it was "now in danger of falling". There were no funds to repair it and money was also needed for repairs to the ruinous north aisle. On 11 September a faculty was granted to take down the spire and cover over the tower until money can be raised for rebuilding the spire. A brief was issued to raise money in 1741-2.

It was eventually rebuilt in its present form 1751 by Nathaniel Wilkinson (d.1764), a Worcester master mason well known as a 'spire mender'. It is regarded as the most notable of the spires he erected, the others being at Ross on Wye, Ledbury (1732), Mitcheldean (c.1733), Monmouth and Slimbridge (1735). The new spire was by no means immune from storm damage and further repairs were needed in 1780 and 1799.

In 1809-1812 the tower was wholly recased in limestone - the original red sandstone remaining underneath - according to designs prepared by William Eaton, architect. The work was carried out under contract by William and Joseph Stephens, builders and stone masons of Worcester, and was superintended by John Collingwood, architect, of the Tything, Worcester. Further repairs to the spire were carried out in 1870 and in 1946-7 around the time of the demolition of the church.

Access to the tower is by spiral stair in the south west angle. The lowest stage of the tower has a fine lierne vault with 32 carved bosses and a central bell hole. Above is the former ringing chamber. The bellframe is on the next floor, level with the main louvred openings of the belfry.

The present bell

The tower still contains one large bell, as follows:

Bell

Inscription

1. (Cross) ANDREE SANCTI CAMPANAM QUIPPE BEATAM FECIT IN HONOREM WYLLEI DIGNUM SIBI FLOREM

<i>Bell</i>	<i>Founder and date</i>	<i>Diameter</i>	<i>Mouldings</i>	<i>Note</i>	<i>Weight</i>
1.	Unknown, early C16th	49"	4:4-4:3:4	E _b	20 cwt

The inscription is in badly formed or 'worn' gothic lettering. The lettering and marks have not been positively identified as representing the work of any known founder. Without reliable comparisons and firm evidence it is simply not possible to identify a place of casting or named maker for this bell and even the suggested dating is nothing more than guesswork.

H.B. Walters thought the lettering "of a mixed character" and "evidently of comparatively late date", hence his suggestion of a C16 date - perhaps supported by near contemporary evidence (*see* below). He attributed the bell to "an unknown founder" but also expressed the view that it was "certainly cast at Gloucester". On the basis of supposed similarities with the lettering on the Sanctus bell from Gloucester St.Nicholas (now at the Cathedral), Walters conjectured that both bells might have been cast by Richard Atkyns around 1530. In their Gloucestershire book, however, Mary Bliss & Fred Sharpe suggested that the two bells might be by different founders. They thought it possible that the Gloucester bell might be by William Henshawe (fl.1503-1520). They had only seen Walters' drawing of the Worcester lettering and therefore made no comment on the possible founder of the St.Andrew's bell.

None of this is really convincing. Indeed, it illustrates a major defect in past attempts to attribute bells to individual makers on the basis of approximate date, supposed place of casting and recorded names of bellfounders - of the supposed place and approximate date, that is - known from unrelated (i.e. non transactional) documents. A great deal of what is thought to be "known" about medieval bellfounders would not withstand too much close scrutiny.

The St.Andrew's bell is rather corroded but nevertheless a fine looking one of fair tone. It has been slightly skirted at the lip. The canons remain although one of the single canons is missing. The bell has been eighth turned. As long ago as 1891 the bell was only being 'clocked' and not swung.

For many years the bell - although still fixed to its old headstock - was supported on wooden blocks and unable to be sounded. That is how it was in 1969. In March-April 2002 the bell was rehung by Arthur Berry at the cost of Worcester City Council in order to restore the clock chime and to enable the bell to be sounded - according to historic custom - for meetings of the Council. The old headstock was reused with new supporting ironwork. A computer-controlled hour striking system with and solenoid hammer were fitted by Joyce of Whitchurch.

The bell has a massive oak headstock with the remains of ringing fittings, i.e. strap gudgeons, stock hoops and plain brass bearings. The wheel and stay had been removed long before 1969 but witness marks in the form of holes through the stock etc remain to indicate where they were once affixed. In the side of the pit are the remains of an old latchet slider block. There are others in pits 3 and 4 of the frame but pit 2 has the remains of a traditional slider system. By 1989 the clapper had gone - and only the rusted stubs of the crown staple remained.

The bell still hangs in what was originally the tenor pit of a massive oak bellframe with pits for five bells. The tenor pit (59" wide) is on the east side of the tower oriented north-south, with four parallel east-west pits to the west (i.e. *Bellframes* layout 5.3). The widths of the other pits (from south to north 43", 47", 50" and 54") indicate that the rope-circle of the old ring of five must have been anti-clockwise.

The frame is clearly all of one build and it is known to have been installed in 1609 (*see* below). The trusses all have sills, king posts, end posts, scissor-bracing and long frame heads (*Bellframes* type 5.Y). The tops of the diagonal scissor braces are secured to the posts only (and not to the heads). The braces are offset and they are pegged with 1½" pegs in the middle where they cross. The ends of the sills are halved over bearers with half lapped dovetail joints. The king posts are all shaped, i.e. thicker at the top, and have mortises indicating that all five bells once had hammers for the clock or chimes. The pit-ends along the west side of the four parallel pits all have scissor-bracing between the posts. The frame heads or the pits are halved over the head across the pit ends, the latter being set into the top of the end posts. The whole frame seems to be little altered, although it pits 2, 3 and 4 new timbers have been inserted in the heads around the bearing blocks whose sockets remain.

The former Sanctus bell

There used to be a Sanctus bell here too. It was being kept in the cellars at a house on the north side of the Cathedral Close in 1967 but I have been unable to discover what happened to it after the building ceased to be used as the Rectory for All Saints in the later 1960s. It may have been subsequently transferred to a new church at Ronkswood (since demolished).

Bell

Inscription

S. COME AWAY MAKE NO DELAY T (*bell*) R 1771

<i>Bell</i>	<i>Founder and date</i>	<i>Diameter</i>	<i>Mouldings</i>	<i>Hz</i>	<i>Note</i>	<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Lbs.</i>
1.	Thomas Rudhall, 1771	13				0	1	14*

In 1967 it was fitted with an oak headstock with drive-in gudgeons, stock hoops, iron chiming lever and clapper. The simple iron frame in which it was once hung was also in stored in the same cellar. Saunders indicates that in 1891 the “ting-tang” was hung in the north end of the tenor pit and its rope went down into the church through the vaulting.

The former clock

A church inventory of 1590 noted in P.G. Feek’s paper on the “Church Clocks of Worcestershire” (1952) refers to the “sixe bells with a Clocke, Chymes and the whole furniture thereunto belonging”. Extracts from the accounts (from 1587) provided by Canon Buchanan-Dunlop mention the clock and chimes in 1592 and the chimes in 1595. In 1609 - alongside major work on the bells and frame (see below) - the old clock and chimes were replaced by new ones made by one “James”, as recorded:

1609	It'm payed to James for makings the Clock & Chymes	vij ^{li} .
	It'm payed to ffillpotts for mendinge the Clock howse and helping upp with the Trebble	iiij ^s .
1610	Payd to James for taking of the Irons belonging to or Chimes & for setting of them in order	v ^s .
	Pd James for wages to mend or Chimes & his labor	iiij ^s .
	Payd to James for on quarters wages due at Kandelmas for keping Clock & Chimes in order	j ^s . viij ^d .

The bellframe, as noted above, provides evidence that at some time all five bells were fitted with hammers for the clock or chimes. The later accounts include some further payments relating to their upkeep:

1619	Pd James Richards for keepinge the Clooke in rep'ration	2s. 0d.
	Paide for a payce roop for the Clocke	4s. 6d.
	To James Richards in parte payment towards the chimes	10s. 2d.
	Pd for a new poyce for the chimes	2s. 0d.
	Pd to William Uggons for finishinge the chimes	£2 0s. 4d.
1621	Pd Goodman Tandie for a gable ropp to hange the poyse for the Chimes	8s. 8d.
1622	It for making the great bell Clapp[er] new and the Chymes dore key	vij ^s . vj ^d .
1623	Pd Henry Gosling for mending three Chime hambers	j ^s .
	Pd Thomas Barton of wich for mending the Clock and Chimes and new wyers and all Iorne worke belonging to them for his labor	xxvj ^s . vjd.

In 1623 the churchwardens entered into agreement with Barton of Droitwich. This agreement stipulates that Thomas Barton shall "repayre, maynteyne & kepe the Clocke & Chymes nowe standing in the steeple of the parishe Church of St Andrew" for the next seven years, and the churchwardens agree to pay him an annual sum of 4 shillings.

In 1889 H.B. Walters noted that there was “an interesting old clock in the tower”. It seems to have been still in use in 1891 when William Saunders visited as he noted that it struck the “hour on big bell”. Writing in about 1950, Canon Buchanan-Dunlop observed:

It seems almost certain that St. Andrew's continued to have a clock until recent years. It had no outside dial latterly, and probably never did have one, but simply struck the hours and quarters upon the bells. ... Until 1940 the frame and mechanism of the clock stood in the belfry, and the late Col. Albert Webb told me that it was in working order. Unfortunately I never took very much note of it, but, as I remember, it consisted of a large wooden frame with attachments. When Mr. Feek and I tried to see it after the war, we were told that it had gone. It was probably stolen for firewood by local vandals, from whom nothing in St. Andrew's Church was safe."

Recent inspections have confirmed that there are no remains of the clock in the tower now.

History

In 1552 there were three bells here - “in the steple iij bells” - with a separate “saunce bell”. The remaining bell was evidently one of these, and in his *Worcestershire Relics* (1877) John Noake quotes an interesting document (p.136) - presumably from the Corporation archives - about the St.Andrew's “great bell”:

Examination of witnesses as to Saynt Andrew's bell. The 28th daye of Aprill in the sixt yere of the rayne of King Edward ye Sixt by the grace of God, &c., Edmund Tedyngton, of the age of 80 yeres or thereabout, being sworne and examined before John Wallesgrove and John Rowland, bailiffs of Worcester, and in the face of all the wholl Counsell at a common Counsell holden the daye and yere above seyde, sayth that he knew one Mr. Wheley who made the shorte ... and battlement of St. Andrew's steple and bought the greate belle there of his costes and charges and did hang him upp in the steeple and gave the same bell to the parish for that intent to be knolled and ronge at all times when need should require as the Counsell's bell for the calling together of the Counsell of this cytie withoute denyall or contradiction of anie man, and so used as the Counsell's bell in Wheley's time hitherto and he never knew to the contrarie but the bell was given for that intente as the Counsell bell, and this he hath justified on his oathe.

This was reprinted *verbatim* by Walters, who added his own commentary on the evidence offered by it. He noted that the Latin inscription on the bell translates as “Wylley made the bell, blessed in honour of St.Andrew, a worthy honour for himself”. He also acknowledged that this might refer to a mid-C15 Rector - John Wylley or Willey, Rector of St.Andrew's 1436-1451 - but thought that the evidence pointed to the bell being a later gift by another of the same name. He concluded:

Edward Teddington, being 80 years old in 1553, was born in 1473, after the time of John Wylley the Rector; it is therefore pretty certain that Mr. Wheley was a different person and gave the bell in the early part of the sixteenth century (see above)

That may be so, but there must also be the possibility that Mr. Wheley was an old man when Teddington knew him and that the gift had been made some considerable time earlier. None of this is certain, but the examination should not be taken as clear evidence that the bell dates from the early C16 as Walters infers.

Clearly, as the document does show, the corporation had long-standing responsibilities for the upkeep of the bell. There are other examples of this, notably at St.Nicholas, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, where the City authorities continue to bear a portion of the cost of repairs not only to the town bell but also to the steeple itself. Noake and Walters (mainly) cite various extracts from the corporation and church accounts relating to the use and upkeep of the bells. These include:

1553	The Corporation paid 'for the amending of Saynte Androes bell his clapper'	xx ^d .
1589	There was 'laide out on the singinge men of the Colledge for hearing the tune of the belles'	6d.

	In the same year the churchwardens 'desire to be allowed of divers summes by them laid out in costes and charges expended at the Councill in the M(ar)ches in ye parishes cause, concerninge the castinge of their fowerth bell, altogether	18s. 8d.
1590	An inventory gives 'sixe bells with a clock.'	
1595	Regulations for the ringing of the bells in 1595 are referred to	
1625	Paid by Mr. Maiors appointment for ringinge when there was speeche betwixt our King Charles and the French ladye	2s. 6d.

So, between 1552 and 1590 the number of bells in the tower had been increased from three to six (perhaps including the Sanctus bell at the later date) with a tenor weighing a ton. Also, the accounts indicate that the fourth bell was recast in 1589, the Cathedral 'singinge men' being paid to adjudicate as to whether or not the bell was of good tone and in tune with the rest.

The churchwardens' accounts indicate that major work was carried out on the bells in 1609. This included the erection of the present bellframe, the recasting of at least one of the bells (the treble), and the new clock and chimes already mentioned (above). The Churchwardens levied a 'lowen' - probably a rate or 'lewn' rather than a loan - towards "the Frame for the Belles the Clock and Chymes". This raised £23 12s. 2d. Of the detailed payments quoted by Feek the only one relating to the bells was for "helping upp with the Trebble" but there may be further details in the original volume if it still survives.

In 1612 one of the bells was reported as broken and the Churchwardens were summoned before the Consistory Court for their neglect. This must have been the second bell of what was by then a ring of five, as when the bells were sold in 1870 John Taylor & Co of Loughborough, who bought the metal, noted the date 1612 on that bell.

There is little information on the bells between the early years of the C17th and 1870 when the four smallest bells of the five were sold to John Taylor & Co of Loughborough for scrap. Of these, surprisingly little is known, although Taylors' records tell us the nett weights and give the date of one of the bells (the second):

<i>Bell</i>	<i>Founder and date</i>	<i>Diameter</i>	<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>Lbs.</i>
1.	Unknown, possibly 1609	c.36	7	1	17
2.	Unknown, 1612	c.38	8	2	19
3.	Unknown	c.42	11	3	5
4.	Unknown, possibly 1589	c.45	14	3	17

The foundry records include copy letters in response to an enquiry from the Rector and a copy receipt for the purchase of the bells:

To the Revd. Edward H. Harrison (Rector of St.Andrews), Coll: Green, Worcester
 October 12th 1869
 Would give £3.10s. per Cwt for the old bells delivered here. New bells present price
 £6.10s per cwt

To the Revd. Edward H. Harrison, Coll: Green, Worcester
 March 4th 1870
 St. Andrews Church Bells. We really cannot give more than £3 10s. per cwt delivered here. We will undertake the taking down & carriage here for £5.

June 8th 1870. Sent receipt of old bells to the Rev^d. Edwd. H. Harrison at Beechingstoke Rectory, Devizes.

St. Andrew's Church, Worcester

1st Bell	7-1-17
2	8-2-19
3	11-3-5
4	<u>14-3-17</u>

42-3-2

1-4 Deduct iron staples 8lb per bell

42-1-26 Nett Bell metal

The removal of the bells was reported in *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 14 May 1870:
Removal of St. Andrew's bells.

A meeting of parishioners was held in St. Andrew's vestry on Thursday the 10th February last, for the purpose of considering the desirability of disposing of the four smaller bells of the church, and it was decided to sell them and apply the proceeds to the restoration fund. The bells have for years only been rung on Christmas and New Year's Eve, on account of their imperfect condition. The bishop gave his sanction for the disposal of the four bells, and they have recently been purchased by Mr Taylor, of Loughborough, and were removed from the church tower last week. The call-bell and the tenor bell are retained.

When Walters visited in 1889 he noted "There are pits for five bells; the other four were sold, and the headstocks are still lying about in the belfry. There is also an interesting old clock in the tower, the spire of which was built in 1751". By 1989 one elm stock (probably from the treble) still remained and Christopher Dalton thought it much newer than the existing stock on the great bell.

In the gardens below the tower there is a bell-shaped plaque of bellmetal, inscribed:

These gardens were opened / in 1953 to commemorate / the Coronation of Elizabeth II. / In 2001 the City Council, with assistance from the Duckworth / Worcestershire Trust installed the / Quayhead fountain and re-designed / the riverside end of the gardens. / To celebrate the Golden Jubilee of / Queen Elizabeth II on the third of June 2002, / the City Council re-hung the remaining tenor / bell in St. Andrew's tower to allow the chiming / of the hours and to once again summon Council. / "As often as they shall here the grate bell of the / Parishes of Saint Andrews to be knolled by many and / dyvers tymes and after that Banged out for the same / the City Councillors are to attend at the Guildhall."

Further work

- Can Wylley be identified now (in particular, when did Wylley the steeple builder and bell donor die?)
- Check the original Corporation and parish records to check and amplify the extracts given above
- Check again the records relating to the re-casing of the tower and spire 1809-1815 (857.06 BA 4426/3)
- Revisit to reconsider frame, obtain nominal and check inscription etc
- Find out present whereabouts of the old sanctus (it was in the cellar of All Saints Rectory in the Cathedral Close in the 1960s and perhaps at the Old Palace in the 1980s)

Visited: H.B. Walters, 1889; William Saunders, 22 July 1891; CJP 29 January 1969; Christopher Dalton and Dr. John Eisel, 16 November 1989; Mark Regan 20 May 2020