

Our own Geoff Marchant, over the course of several months, wrote some of the history of the church bell in the monthly magazine. The articles are collected together here.



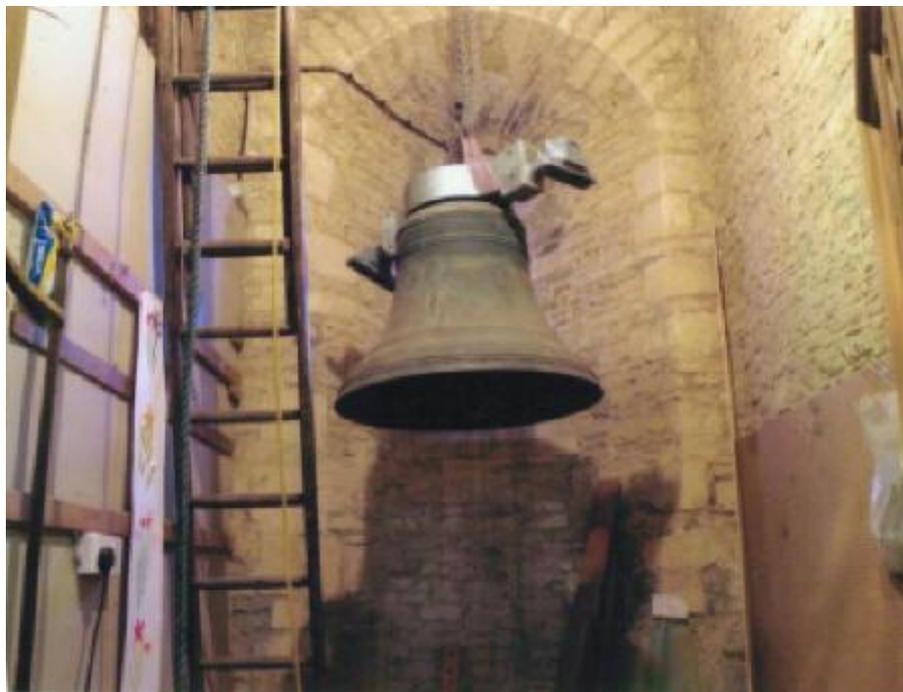
Return of the bell to Kenn, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009, showing new canon-retaining headstock in galvanised steel (cf description of old headstock on p23 here). Also note new self-aligning ball-bearings housings.

1<sup>st</sup> ringing of newly rehung bell 10.40am on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009 - the first time in living memory that the bell (5½cwt recorded at foundry, Whitechapel) was rung full circle. Bell photos courtesy of John Ball.



Hoisting the bell back up the tower





Old and New (before "flight" lengthened) clappers. (Note discrepancy in new "flight" length!)

## NOTES ON KENN BELL & ASSOCIATED HISTORICAL DETAILS

***For 2011 Update see page 26***

In March 1996 Moor News contained an article on the bells of All Saint's Church, Kingston Seymour, written by Bob Ford. So that Kenn should not be "left out in the cold", I decided I would try to put on paper as much as I could find out about the single bell in St John's, Kenn and include associated items of historical interest.

Some details of both the present and former bells at Kenn are given in the "Church Brief History" pamphlet written by local Archivist David Chambers (R.I.P. 1990) - the casting date and founder of the original bell is not known but it was recast in 1775 by William Bilbie of Chew Stoke and, he believes, then weighed 8cwt, 1 quarter 17lbs (426.8kg). The church accounts of that time have a receipt for £8 8s 0d in William Bilbie's own hand. Forty years later Bilbie's bell was again recast, this time by William Jefferies of the Bristol Foundry, for the sum of £16 2s 5d. (My son Andrew

and I have recently studied the churchwardens' accounts and seen these entries for ourselves. We very much felt we were walking in the steps of David Chambers who must have painstakingly searched the ancient script for interesting historical information - we found most of it difficult to read and made a note to take a magnifying glass next time we go to the Somerset Records Office where they are kept! However, we came away with many notes and I will try to report some of the relevant entries in a later article).

Compared with most of All Saint's bells, Kenn's present bell is therefore only a youngster, but as it has hung in the tower now for over 180 years, and as some bells in use today date back to the 1600s and beyond, it would be interesting to know why Bilbie's bell at Kenn only lasted 40 years. Perhaps an overzealous ringer managed to crack it, or perhaps William was not initially such an expert in the art of casting as were his forbears. In any case, it must have been one of the very first bells cast by William.

A recent book "Bilbie and the Chew Valley Clockmakers" by James Moore, Ernest Hucker and current Banwell bellringer Roy Rice gives a very full account of the Bilbies, their foundry, bells and clocks, but omits the Kenn bell. However, it does show that Edward was casting in Chew Stoke from 1698 to 1723 (including 1 for Kingston, 1714, in his total of 65 known bells); Thomas took over from 1725 to 1768 and included bells for Tickenham, Wrington, and Wick St Lawrence in his total of 353, Abraham followed from 1768 to 1773 and produced 6 for Portishead in 1772, his total being only 35, and then his younger brother William took over in 1775 and, with our Kenn bell of that year included, produced a total of 79 bells. In the same year, 1775, William also cast 1 for S Brewham, 4 for Uphill, 1 for Wedmore and 1 for Weston in Gordano, so it would be interesting to know whether these lasted longer than Kenn's bell – hopefully they did.

I thought I had made a discovery when I noted a single bell of 1750 in Thomas's list. This was attributed to Kenn too, but Kenn in Devon, not Somerset, and St John's records bore no mention of any bell for that year, so presumably Devon was correct.

These early founders were not too modest either - at Nempnett Thomas boasts on the old 3rd bell:

*I hame well cast, wich that yov see, twase Thomas Bilbie cast me 1728", and further away at Mark "Come here Brother founders & here you may see, what sort of a workman young Bilbie may bee; Hele challenge all England for casting a bell, who will the workman can be but done well: Thomas Bilbie cast mee 1727".*

A wealth of history and competition unfolds in these inscriptions and though somewhat curt by comparison, Kenn's present *William Jefferies Bristol 1815* gives the essential information for generations to come. This inscription can be deciphered easily on the bell itself but it is also available from **Church Bells of Somerset by Rev H T Ellacombe**, in the Reference sections of both Bristol and Weston libraries. Ellacombe did his visits and research in the early 1870s - we know this because for nearby Christon he has appended *Visited Nov 18th 1870* to the details of the then one bell there (*Anno Domini 1683, 33 inches diameter*" ie at the bell mouth). Unfortunately he doesn't give us a diameter for Kenn's bell but he does add "in a turret". Now this leads to two alternative conjectures - either Ellacombe decided to call the pyramidal topped tower (or whatever preceded it) a "turret", or he plainly got

it wrong and really meant to append this note to some other single bell church! Just from its size there is little possibility that Kenn's bell could have been in a turret on the church roof, and why indeed should it have been when David Chambers tells us that the tower is probably the oldest part of the church? This is one mystery to which we may never know the answer – has anyone any details or photos of the church before the present pyramid cap was put onto the tower?

Since my original article was written, we have established 3 details:

Mary Holmes, our organist, kindly sat at the organ console one Sunday and worked out that the note of the present bell is part way between B and C above middle C. This was then transposed into Hertz (i.e. cycles per second) using data from various sources.

A measurement of the bell mouth gave  $30\frac{3}{4}$  inches - this was converted to 0.78105 metres.

Using the above information and an equation published in "The Ringing World" of February 19th 1982, the approximate bell weight was calculated as 292kg ie. 644lb., or 5cwt 3 quarters 0lbs, so this is a bit heavier than I suggested in the "Celebration 2000" article in February's Kenn News - probably due to the weight of Tortoiseshell butterflies which hibernate inside it! (This last comment, while made flippantly, has some truth about it - butterflies do cling onto the inside of bells despite the cold and the condensation on the surface of the bronze casting throughout the Winter months, and despite the loud noise and high vibrations when the bells are rung. Some people are making a study of this phenomenon and have asked that ringers look into their bells at intervals, and that details of how many, and of what species, be sent to them in succeeding years so that the rate of butterfly depopulation can be estimated! Unfortunately, my last inspection at Kenn showed numerous bits and pieces of Lesser Tortoiseshell wings on the floor beneath the bell, but no live specimens in, or out of, the bell! Perhaps we also have a breed of voracious spiders....? Now a question for you - can anyone tell me when binoculars were invented? (1853 – Ed) Why do I need to know this? Well, if Ellacombe recorded that a bell was "in a turret" (on the church roof?) in, say, 1870, could he have read the inscription on the bell from ground level using a pair of binoculars? Just a thought!

It can be noted that the bell weight of  $5\frac{3}{4}$  cwt which I suggested in the last article (above, here) was a reasonable estimate, is much less than that which the late David Chambers, in his brief history of Kenn Church, attributed to the previous bell cast by William Bilbie of Chew Stoke (and which was supposed to be of similar weight to the bell previous to that, by terms of the 1775 re-casting agreement - see details later). It would appear that David probably made an incorrect supposition since his weight of 8cwt 1qr 17lbs is an exact transposition of the bellfounder's total bill of £8 8s into a weight, by the stated charge for re-casting the bell, ie £1 per cwt. No doubt the bellfounder's total bill, though, would have included not only the re-casting but other tasks such as fettling off any excess metal in the casting mould, tuning the bell, and perhaps even visits to and from Chew Stoke, and then re-fitting the new bell in the (new?) bell frame. The Churchwardens' accounts for the year 1775 contain the following interesting details in very ornamental script:

*October the 3rd This Day is Agreed on between the parishioners of Kenn & Wm Bilbie of ChewStoke Bellfounder, for New Casting the Bell, to be the Same Weight as Near as Can be Made, if any Addidom to the Bell be Wanting for to pay One Shilling a Pound Weight, if any Deficiency for him to allow the Same in Perportion, and for the Casting to Pay Him One Pound P Hundred Weight(signed) William Bilbie*

*John Gosling, Churchwarden*

*Geo. Witherall, Overfeer*

*Wm Manning*

*Wm Wilkins*

And then, after the bell had been supplied, the mason had done his work in the tower, and the carpenter and blacksmith (all local men?) had prepared the tower and bellframe, bell wheel and iron fittings including made-to-measure bolts, nuts, washers, braces for the wheel, bearing cups and caps, gudgeons (the pivots on which the whole bell rotates) and gudgeon straps shrunk onto the wooden headstock to hold the gudgeons tight even in hot summers when the wood dries out and shrinks, came the final reckoning:

*Disburfments of John Gosling CW p of Kenn from the visitation Aug 4th 1775 as follows:*

	£	s	d
<i>Pd the bellfounders bill</i>	8	8	0
<i>Pd the carpenters bill</i>	4	4	0
<i>Pd the Blacksmiths bill</i>	1	-	8
<i>Pd for 3 loads of Gravil &amp; one days work for a man</i>	0	2	8
<i>Pd the mafon one Days work</i>	0	1	6
<i>Total Disburfted</i>	24	10	3¼
<i>Recd. By Rate</i>	26	10	4
<i>Balance due to the parish</i>	2	-	¾

Note that from the size of the carpenter's bill (which is half that of the bellfounder's) it is my guess that a new bell-frame was provided - and this may be the same one as is still in the tower now! Also note that my calculation of the "Total Disburfted" ( ie Total only Disbursed), is £13 16s 10d - so "where has all the money gone"?????

In last month's article (above, here) we read of the Churchwarden's accounts of 1775 agreeing between Parishioners and Bellfounder William Bilbie of Chew Stoke on "this day", October 3rd for "New Casting, the Bell". We also saw the "Disbursements of John Gosling, CW p of Kenn from the visitation Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 1775. There is some contradiction here between dates as the outgoing money for a job done can hardly

pre-date the agreement to have it done! (unless Bilbie was before his time in demanding "payment up front"! ) Should the agreement have been 1774? Did John Gosling have a lot on his mind in 1775 when the work was actually being done and perhaps didn't write up either year's accounts until it was all finished, and then unwittingly put in 1775 for both? We can only surmise. Perhaps the "disbursements" listing was actually back-dated to meet the requirements of an Archdeacon's visitation which could possibly have occurred on that date as he says "from the visitation". (A query for our clergy - were there Archdeacon's visitations in that era, or who else of importance might have visited?) Was there a Squire, or major landowner, or other civil or church dignitary who might have had a need to know of the state of Kenn Church funds?

Incidentally, John Gosling's description of himself as CW p of Kenn was most certainly Churchwarden parish of Kenn, as many 'CW' names appear in the inscriptions of other parishes' bells, together with the priest's name, or that of 'Clerk' (ie Clerk in Holy Orders = a priest), and possibly a donor's name as well. (It would appear that Kenn did not afford such an elaborate description on the 1775 bell, nor even later at the 1815 recasting). Much historical detail can be found from these inscriptions and at present a new book on the bells of Somerset is being assembled by a former General Secretary of the Diocesan Bell-ringers' Association.<sup>1</sup>

The "3 loads of Gravel" referred to in the disbursements at Kenn may have been for infilling the tower walls either as dry gravel, or mixed with lime mortar, or whatever bonding agent was used at that time, although I have come across no evidence to support this in Kenn tower - perhaps someone with ancient building knowledge can offer advice here. (Has anyone got a helpful contact?) Of course the gravel may have been used simply to harden up the pathways so that trundling the old one out and the new one in was made that much easier.

Now as I stated last month, there is yet another mystery in that my copy of the disbursements came to £13 16s 10d and we are left wondering why the "total disburffted" included a further £10 13s 5¼! Part of this may have been to cover carriers' bills, or even a faculty fee, if such required in 1775 (any comment John?!) However, seeing as the bulk of the work was done in the heat of the foundry and the forge, and perhaps also in a hot summer, no doubt a few jars of cider and ale were also consumed... and had to be paid for! (was the 'Rose and Crown', 'Drum and Monkey', or other forbear around in those days, I wonder - if so it was quite handy for the work actually done in the church). Further thoughts on this matter are given in another financial account of Aug 4<sup>th</sup> 1775 which I will reproduce in the next article.

Meanwhile, the one deep mystery is why the 1775 recast had to be done, as a reasonably thorough search of the records in the preceding years gave no clue at all. Then only 40 years later it had to be recast again, and there is a similar complete dearth of information as to why. Last, but not least, why did the 1775 bell for Kenn not appear in the Bilbie foundry listing for that year (or any other!) As we will see later, there is much "nitty gritty" detail in Churchwarden's accounts, but so many mysteries remain unanswered due to a complete silence on the very points we raised.

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<sup>1</sup> Author George Massey did before its completion. At September 2011 its publication is still awaited. GRM.

If anyone can provide any thoughts, or craft details, on any of the questions raised, I would certainly like to hear, and I'm sure our "Kenn Views" editor would be only too pleased to print them.

Last time I wrote on this subject we noted that there seemed to be a mis-match of £10 13s 5¼d in the actual stated costs of re-casting and re-hanging the church bell in 1775 and the Churchwarden's claim for the total disbursed. While I cannot hope to solve this conundrum (at least without a further visit, or two, to re-read these ancient accounts at the Somerset Records Office in Taunton), there is a peculiarity in the fact that my notes made on the occasion of our visit in 1997 show yet another financial account by the Churchwarden, John Gosling, again dated Aug 4th 1775, and placed just in front of the agreement with William Bilbie to have the bell recast. This juxta-positioning, and continual use of the same date, does seem to suggest that there was a lot going on (and out!) at that time and John Gosling, despite his neat and detailed entries, was finding it a hard job to get every item covered, and in the right place, at the right time.

In passing, and considering the country nature of education, of the parish and the general level let alone accountancy in those times, he must have been a very educated man to be able to present accounts in the admirable way he did. I wonder how many in the village then could even read and write, let alone challenge the church accounts, or even understand them?

	£	s	d
<i>Pd. John Coles Bill about the Church</i>	4	18	9
<i>Pd William Burridge for Halling Materials to the Church</i>	2	9	9
<i>Pd. for 25 Gallons of Cyder at Sixpence p. Gallon</i>		12	6
<i>Pd. for Half a Thousand of Tile</i>		8	0
<i>Pd. The Carpenter One Days Work</i>		1	6
<i>Pd. for Gravil and Halling into the Church Yard</i>		2	0
<i>Pd. for Bread and Wine for the Sacrament at WhittSuntide</i>		1	6½
<i>Disbursed</i>		4	8½
<i>Due to the Parish at Easter</i>		5	10¼
<i>Due to me from the Parish</i>	8	8	10¼

Now it may not be easy to go back to adding up pounds, shillings, and pence after all the time we have had new money, but try as I may, I cannot make sense of this account. (If anyone can prove me a duffer, please, please do so!) The items all seem to be outgoings, and yet the total "due to me from the Parish" is obviously not the

"grand total". I wonder whether they are all items of outgoings jotted down from time to time throughout the year, including Easter and Whitsuntide, and this is a copy of that list entered into the book on the day he eventually got down to doing the books. This could have been instigated by the fact that he had to write up the agreement with the bellfounder and get him to sign this important book.

Also, perhaps what I interpreted as "Due to the Parish at Easter" should be "Due to the PRIEST at Easter" (as we had parish givings at Easter to the vicar when I was a lad, and the Tax Man fortunately had no part of it as it was the Easter collection donated to the vicar). If this was so, then John Gosling was lucky as he got significantly more for his trouble (£8 8s 10¼d as against £0 5s 10¼d to the Priest – and why does that farthing keep creeping in?! It is also interesting to note that, if we exclude John's own bill, that the total of all these items comes (I think!) to £9 14s 7¼d, which goes a long way to towards the "missing" £10 13s 5¼d in the account of the same date which followed the agreement with the bellfounder. My own guess is that the agreement was "slotted in" to a space which John had left for the accounts and perhaps if we had more time to study the figures in the original book we would come to a sensible balance (any retired accountant out there who would like to have a go?!)

Obviously in the year 1775 there was a lot going on at Kenn church apart from recasting the bell. John Coles was presumably a builder and he was using the extra gravil he and 'the carpenter' may have put on a new roof with approx. 500 tiles, though both the carpenter's one day's work and (by the way!) bread and wine for the communion, were very minor items by comparison with the other charges. Also the bellfounder presumably had to wait another 7 months for his money...

As soon as I had written the previous contribution in this series, I had a thought which could turn the content of my last paragraph completely "upside down" - what if the half thousand tiles mentioned in John Gosling's accounts were not roof tiles but floor tiles? This would give a better explanation of why so much "gravil" was required, as possibly this and / or sand, would be used to bed them down). Now here's a nice little project for some of our ex 'Sunday Club' members in the summer holidays - count up the floor tiles in the chancel and see if there are about 500. Then deduce also the number of roof tiles from the number along the chancel roof multiplied by the number up one side of the roof Multiply this by 2 (for the two slopes of the roof, and see what that comes to...any volunteers?

If the tiles supplied were roof tiles, they could have come up channel from the Bridgwater and Comwich area (our old home district, so this would give extra personal interest). If they were the floor tiles though, they are possibly patterned as in so many other churches, but at present they are under carpet and I haven't investigated. Under the altar the tiles are different colours and very small, forming a tessellation almost like a Roman mosaic floor. I have no idea where these would have been produced; does anyone out there know or have any ideas? (Bristol? London?? the pottery areas???)

Following on from the recasting of the bell in 1775, the next entry of interest in the accounts seems to be the following, again in very ornate script (and spelling and capitals as reproduced here:

*Receivd March 23rd 1776 of Mr John Goslin the Sum Of Eight Pounds Eight Shillings for new casting of the Bell & I Promise to Keep the Said Bell Sound until Michaelmas Next & if the Said Bell shall come by any*

*accident I Promise in the Time mentioned to new Cast the Bell at Five Shillings in the Hundred for Waste : by Fair Ringing William Bilbie Bellfounder ChewStoke*

*Witnefs WmManing*

*Geo Witherall*

Hence my comment at the end of last month's article that the bellfounder had to wait some months for his payment!

This receipt raises four points:

It specifically states that the sum of £8/8s was for "new casting the bell" and doesn't mention any additional work, so perhaps David Chamber's interpretation was in fact correct and Bilbie's bell (and the previous one) did in fact weigh over 8cwt. If so, it was considerably heavier than the one cast by William Jefferies which now hangs in Kenn tower, and certainly would have been too big for "a turret".

The "guarantee" is only for six months, which doesn't seem to reflect great faith in his product! On second thoughts though, if it was used regularly and hadn't cracked within six months there was a high likelihood that it would be OK for many years.

The "by Fair Ringing" comment – inserted almost as an afterthought – may hint as to why the bell needed recasting in the first place. Perhaps William Bilbie considered that the previous bell hadn't been well treated (and perhaps he knew the perpetrator was still likely to ring the new bell). On the other hand the old bell may have been in pieces for many years and that is why we can't find any reference in the records to a ringing tragedy! With this in mind, we believe the new bell then went on OK for another 40 years, but again perhaps it was soon broken (either outside of the six month period, or by the opposite of "fair ringing" and had to wait until 1815 to be recast again. I do think though that an early breakage of any type would have justified some comment in the records.

I am not exactly sure what the "Five Shillings in the Hundred for Waste" means. It could be a reduced charge, which the bellfounder would make to recast the bell from the hundredweights of "waste" ie broken bell metal, collected up from Kenn Tower. If so then it is a quarter of the original cost – not a free replacement!

Anyway, there was no reported comeback on this guarantee so we must assume that the bell lasted at least 6 months satisfactorily (or that my comment in point 3 above was nearer the mark!)

The final item of about this time is a simple entry:

*1776 Pd for Mending the Belfry Window and a new Lattice for ye same 5/3d*

(In passing, I wonder what the "lattice" was made of - wooden strips? I doubt if wire netting was available in 1776....does anyone know? - but roosting birds were problems even then, presumably.

The next item regarding the bell itself comes in 1815, but in my next article I will recount some of the more general items which we culled from the Churchwarden's Records from 1682 onward.

As I promised last month, (above, here) our delve into the Kenn Churchwarden's Records book this time takes a more general look at the items listed. However, because of the fact that we had gone to the Somerset Records Office at Taunton mainly to find out details of the bell, there were a large number of points noted which had a partial reference to that subject, but those I have held over for a later article.

The first point to note is that in very faded writing on the fragile cover of the book we see

*"Novber th*

*17*

*1682"*

and also joined written capitals "AM", the second leg of the A being also the first leg of the M. (Our Andrew assured me he hadn't "doodled" on the pages, but someone with the same initials did, and probably over 300 years ago! It was with great care and a certain sense of reverence that we handled these documents and felt a particular awe and honour to be allowed to do so after so many years).

Also on the cover was

"m - I and " FYN NARKAP PAPIER GEMAAKTDOR

MR JAN DANIELS OP DE VELUWE"

This may be the type of paper and (Dutch?) maker of the Records book - if anyone has any explanations or suggestions, please let us know. Then we have

*Amos J. Hawkings*

*May th 8th 1682*

*James Barber*

*Seen & Allowed by us*

*William Lawrence (?)*

*Ed Georges*

*John Proovfs*

The latter item presumably acknowledges that the accounts have been "seen & allowed" by all the signatures, or perhaps that the 3 persons on the left had been approved for Church office by the two signatures on the right, for in 1687 we have three new names appended:

*"1687 John Smyth*

*John Pigott*

*Richard Morgan"*

Does anyone recognise any family names in any of the above? - bearing in mind that "f" (as in "Proofs") could be a first "s" and the writing is not easily deciphered anyway. Did the Smyth and Pigott have later Smith-Pigott associations, I wonder?

*"1687 Pd for beare at several times when the Lish (Parish?) meet to make the vale (rate?) & other bisnes 5/-*

(Was this "rate" the levy on the rest of the parish to keep the poor in a time when no state benefit existed, or could it have been a levy for the upkeep of the church?)

*"For making the vale (rate?) and singing (signing) 2/6d<sup>2</sup>*

*"Paid for the order to carry away Sainuel Walber apprenetes"*

*"For two warrants for S W & his apprenetes"*

The latter two entries (for which I have no notes of the costs) I thought at the time were presumably the events leading up to the Kenn Hangings as the result of wheat rick burnings, but then I found out I was a mere 142 years too early! So what, I wonder, had Samuel Walber and his apprenetes(?) been up to?

In an account written by "M. Wake Vicar" in 1731 is this item:

*"For John Wall for trouble with Hannah Moore by Justices 15/-"*

(What had Hannah been up to in Kenn? - I assumed this was the Hannah Moore from Wrington, or am I again out in my dates?)

*"1743 For a coffin for Phillips Child 4/-*

*For wool 1/- (for lining the coffin, I wonder?)*

*For bread & cheese & Syder 4/- (for those doing the next item?)*

*For digging the grave & ringing 2/- (sorry, this one bell reference had*

to be included here to end this poignant episode)

*"Sept. 5th 1751 Pd for a new church Brifh 1/6d (assumed to be a brush)*

*"8th Apr 1755 Mrs Nash (distrib. to poor) £1-2-6d (see also later item in 1760 below)*

On 23rd June 1760 there is another payment, of 11/3d, noted by the name of Mrs Ann Nash and on many other occasions too, such as

*A rate made this 4th Day of Jan. 1763 Impremis.....Mrs Ann Nash 7/6d,*

and on

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<sup>2</sup> NB - money entries below have been condensed to £/s/d (as here 2/6d) from the longer notation used in the original record

*16th Oct. 1766 £3, and on 16th Dec 1766 £2/5s.*

If these were payments to Mrs Nash for arranging the meetings and collecting the rate, they would seem very high and I wonder if the sums mentioned are in fact the totals collected and handed by a Mrs Ann Nash to the parish poor, or delivered to herself if she had perhaps lost her husband early in life and had a large family to bring up all on her own? (We obviously homed in on this name as it is so similar to Ray's<sup>3</sup> surname that we wondered if it was a far off ancestor?)

Then in October 1766 our John Gosling "Overseer" first appears when he signs the Rate lists (and Edmund Wilkins' very shaky signature up to April of that same year disappears...) On Sept 17th 1772, John first takes up his post of Churchwarden. "*We do appoint John Gosling Churchwarden of the parish of Kenn for the year Enfuing*" and it is a pretty sound assumption that it is his very good writing of accounts from 1773 onwards.

However, a few years before this, in 1769, there is a peculiar reference to "Kenn Chapel". Why the church should suddenly be referred to as a chapel, and its warden as a "chapel warden" after so many years is indeed strange, unless a new vicar or some other newcomer to the parish had decided it sounded better for a small church, or had there been some official "down-grading"? I cannot really think the item refers to the actual chapel near Stonehouse Farm, especially as that probably wasn't even built by 1769! Anyway, we have the entry:

*1769 Kenn Chapel. The vicar, Chapelwarden and others the principal inhabitants of the parish of Kenn to erect a new gallery in the said chapel (The expenses of building there of being delivered in at Six Guineas or thereabouts). And it was also agreed that a sixpenny rate (amounting to six pounds twelve shillings & seven pence) be granted to the Chapel Warden for the purposes aforesaid."*

(Were there really 265 people who considered themselves "principal inhabitants" of Kenn, or did the rate apply per pound to the rateable value of a much lower number of persons' estates? Only the latter would explain how a sixpenny rate could achieve a total sum which ended with "seven pence"!

Then, in 1770, the church (note reversion to "church" now) was in need again of general maintenance for we note

*"1770 Pd. In Coles Bill for whitewashing ye church & mending ye (sides?) of ye tower & porch 14/-*

*Pd him another bill for sealing ye gallery 12/11d*

And so we came up to the 1775 recasting of the bell, and as our time was running short we only managed to note down a few items after that date, two of which fall into our 'general' category. The first of these is even greater maintenance of the church.

*"1783 Aug 30th Deals & Halling £1/4/4½*

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<sup>3</sup> Ray Naish of Stonehouse Farm, Kenn and later of Cloverlea , Kenn 1926 -

*Sep 10th ¼ Thou 6d sprigs 8d*

*Oct 9 3 dozen of Flat pins 4/3d*

*Oct 22nd Pd Carpenters Bill £1:0:1d*

*Elm & Oak board & Oak*

*Quarter 60 foot at 2d p foot 10 10/-*

*Oak to put under the seats 4/-*

*Nov 20<sup>th</sup> for repairing the Church tile & mortar 5/3d*

*for 22 Mats for the Firms in the Church 13/6d*

I wonder if this was the first time the church had had "firms" ("forms", or pews) - previous seating (as can still be seen at Iken church, south-east of Snape in Suffolk) if any at all, was just a few bare pews around the outer walls. (Park at Snape Maltings for a pleasant walk across the Marshes, on a path boarded for part of its way, to see this ancient and interesting church, or be lazy and drive round! Like Kenn, it is well worth the visit).

The reference to 250 of what looks like 6d sprigs, for a total cost of 8d seems indeed peculiar, especially as I suspect the (extra?) 3 dozen flat pins were also sprigs and cost much more.

Finally, until another visit to Taunton, we have:

*"1789 for putting up the Vane & the Smyths work 3/6d"*

As has happened before in writing this series, I had just handed the last article concerning Kenn's William Bilbie bell to Sheila for inclusion in the July Kenn News, when an interesting snippet of information turned up. This time it was the lead item in the ringers' weekly paper, "The Ringing World", and was interestingly headed "Born to Raise the Sons of Erth". It told how this pun on a phrase from Charles Wesley's carols "Hark! The Herald Angels sing" had been dreamt up by Sir John Smith in 1983 as an inscription for a new bell for the Cornish village of St Erth, near Hayle, bringing their ring up to 4 bells. However, it proved even more apt in 1999 when two more bells were added in time for a Christmas dedication. What has all this got to do with Kenn? you may well ask, - well nothing except that in 1783 St Erth had three new bells cast by the same William Bilbie of Chew Stoke, so I read on with interest. The old bells were taken down and "sent by sea to the foundry"!! Wm. Bilbie received £45 1s 1d for casting the 3 new bells which were rehung by a Mr Richards for £10. Captain Cundy was paid for transporting the old bells to Bristol and bringing the new ones back, and "carryage of the Bell Wheelles Stocks & Ca (etc?) from Hayle was 1/6d. Bells 1 & 3 were still in use in 1878 (i.e. 105 years later) but No. 2 had been recast in 1820, ie only 37 years after its casting, which is very similar to the 40 year life of his Kenn bell. In fact, though, Erth's No. 1 bell wasn't recast until 1982 and No.3 until 1901 so these lasted for 199 and 118 years respectively. Three bells of Kenn's size would have cost £25/4s, so as the bill was over £25 more only 8 years later, it is surprising to see that the St Erth weights were, say, approximately 4, 5½,

and 8cwt, another pointer that perhaps our bell weighed considerably less than 8cwt (I wonder what the inflation rate was between 1775 and 1783!)

Now returning to our Kenn Churchwardens records, we have a few early bell and associated references, some of which add other items of interest:

*1700/01 Payd for a bell roop (rope) 2/2<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>d*

(Nowadays these are over £70 for even the shortest one ! !)

*1707 Payd for mending ye bell 1/6d*

*1709 Pd for making ye grave & ringing 2/-*

(ringing the funeral bell, presumably)

*1709 Pd for a new bellRope 2/-*

(These bell ropes don't seem to last very long and this one is a bit cheaper than the last one!)

*1714 for mending the Rowler (roller) of the bell 6d*

*1720 Pd for a bell rope 4/-*

(Just over 10 years this time, and double the cost)

*1721 ...& 1 day Puling down ye porch & about mending of ye bell 6/-*

(The regularity with which this item of "mending of ye bell" comes up does make me wonder, perhaps somewhat uncharitably, whether this was a good little income for the repairer, for, hidden up the tower as it is, who else would be likely to be going up there to check on what had been done? On the other hand, if it was being treated badly, perhaps all the repairs were really necessary).

*1722 Pd to John Taylor for a Stile & Back Rails for the Churchyard*

*& Puting of it up & Mending of the While (wheel) of the Bell 12/-*

*Pd for nails for the stile & ye Bell 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d*

*1724 Pd for ringing bell & digging grave 3/-*

And now on the back of the 1709 page:

*1727 Pd for a new bell wheel £1/2s*

*1727 Pd for Join (? John or Joinery?) to haing the bell in 2/6d*

*1727 Spent when the bell was haigned (hanged) 6d*

(You can hear him saying, "There you are, I told you last time I mended the wheel it wouldn't last much longer" and perhaps also "if you'd had a new one then, you wouldn't have had all the other damage to put right now!", and of course we needed a drink to see us through")

The work on the bell in 1727 could only have been of very limited advantage though, for under the authoritative title of "*M. Wake Vicar*" we have "*An account of what was laid out in the year of Your Lord 1731 as follows...*" (a peculiar one that; why "Your Lord" and not "our Lord" I wonder?)

*For hanging the bell £1*

*For new Gudgeons & brasses & Iron 13/1½d*

(the gudgeons & brasses for the bearings on which the bell pivots)

Then again:

*1743 For mending the bell wheel 5/-*

*1753 June 15<sup>th</sup> For ringing ye bell & digging ye grave 3/-*

*1757 June 12 Paid John Young a (and?) Bill Eicngar & nails to ye church articles*

(? not understood - any suggestions?)

*1757 Paid John Dean for repairing the belcage & ye pulpit 1/6d*

*Paid John Dean for timber for belcage & pulpit 1/-*

*Paid John Dean for nails for belcage & pulpit 6d*

(All this work on the bellcage and bell tends to suggest that the fittings were in a continually bad state, so perhaps they all failed nearer 1775 and the bell was smashed or cracked as a result!)

*1766 Pd for a Bellrope & mending the bell 7/6d*

*For mending ye glafs of ye Belfry window 6d*

(we haven't any there nowadays - just wire guards - but at least it does show that Ellacombe's reference to the bell being "in a turret" in the 1870s is surely wrong - Kenn had a "belfry" (in the tower) in 1766!)

So we come to the 1775 recasting and rehangings, but some repair work was still required even after that, and the amazing point is that all these minor jobs were dutifully entered in the Churchwarden's records eg:

*1787 Pd for a New bell rope 2/-*

*1807 Feb 6Pd for a new Stay for the bell 1/-*

(The stay is the wooden beam bolted to the headstock, on which the bell is hung, and is there to rest the bell upside down when it is being rung through full circle. To break it means that the bell was either being rung very clumsily, or perhaps by a learner who wasn't amply supervised. Again, was this the problem and the reason for all the repair work needed!? Anyway, was this the problem and the reason for all the repair work needed!? Anyway, full circle ringing, which brings out the full tone of the bell, was in action here in 1807, but nowadays has not been possible for safety reasons for many decades, so it is definitely overdue for another rehang (see page 26)).

Well, that brings us up to just 8 years before the second documented "newcasting" of our bell and as I now write, nearly 185 years after that event, I am very mindful (and I hope you are too, now) of the great part both these bells have played in the history of the village. This year we have (or will have by the time this appears) used our William Jefferies bell of 1815 to celebrate two other historic events - the "Ringing In" of the year 2000, and the 100th birthday of the Queen Mother, and at the end of this year we can also celebrate the end of the 20th century and the real start of the next millennium. So next time I will reproduce the much less elaborately documented details given of the 1815 recasting, a few notes on the Bristol Foundry where it was produced, and events it was used for on up to 1855.

As I hinted in last month's article, (above, here) the recasting of Kenn's William Bilbie bell in 1815 only brought forth a three line entry in the Churchwarden's Record Book, compared with the detailed bills, guarantee, and founder's statement and signature in 1755. According to the Bilbie history written by James Moore, Roy Rice and Ernest Hucker, the Bilbie foundry had virtually gone out of existence by this time, and even if some of the Kenn parishioners had still been in favour of going back to this rural location rather than to the Bristol founder, the tales of delay, broken promises, and liquor effected 'mis-doings' of the two remaining sons Thomas Webb Bilbie & James Fear Bilbie, must by now have got to Yatton and on to Kenn via the "jungle telegraph" and so the parish now turned to the Bristol foundry for its new bell.

I was lucky a few years ago to become acquainted with a lady (now deceased) in Cilybebyll, near Pontardawe in the Swansea valley, whose husband had been rector of Corston, near Bath, for many years. As she was trying to get fundraising going in order to get the three ancient bells in her home village rehung, we not only got into correspondence but later on also visited her. On one of these visits she produced from her late husband's copious collection of books a copy of the Transcripts of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeology Society of 1918, and furthermore allowed me to borrow it! I made numerous notes on the subject of the Bristol Foundry, researched and written by H.B.Walters. Some years later another bell researcher, the late Frederick Sharpe of Launton, Oxfordshire, evidently revised, some of that work in "Church Bells of Herefordshire" 1975 and, together with Mary Bliss of Winstone, Glos, was doing a new investigation of the bells in the diocese of Gloucester when he died in February 1976. Mary brought the work to its successful conclusion and in 1986 "Church Bells of Gloucestershire" was published, and I was given a copy as a present. I found it also contains details of the Bristol Medieval Foundry based on the very same transcripts, and on the authors' own revisions. (In the past we have had the pleasure of meeting and ringing with both Fred and Mary).

Evidently, records show that in 1236 Johannes Bellytere was a bellfounder in Bristol, followed by Walter le Belyetare (1296), another Johannes Belyettare (1300 - 1325), and John le Bellezettere in 1308. One of only a very few bells from that early time existed at Butcombe (where we used to ring) at the time H.B.Walters wrote his

account but, in total disregard for its antiquary value, it was broken up and melted down when the new ring of six bells was installed there in 1914. It was considered to have been by Johannes who died in 1325. No information then exists of founders names until 1436 William Glasier "belmaker in le market", followed funnily enough by John Gosselin (c.f. our John Gosling of 1755), and in 1453 by John Foundoure in Redeclyf St" Due to the rivers Avon and Severn, many bells from these early Bristol foundries are to be found in South and West Wales, as well as on this side of the channel. I have noted from the transcript, that from 1450 to 1550 there was a large number of bells cast in Bristol, " 160 in Glos, Somerset, Devon & Wilts + a few in Cornwall, Hereford & s. Wales" Yatton had a bell in 1145 by Hew, bellman, Redecleve, and in 1468 it had a "small bell" recast (no founder's name), and again in 1482 Yatton's little bell was rehung and a toll of vjd (six pence?) was paid at Redclyff Hyll.

Yet again, in 1502 - 3, Yatton's second bell was recast by the Bristol Foundry, in 1529 - 31 Yatton had JW cast a bell, and in 1532 - 35 Yatton made payment to Thos. Jeferes ("Th. Belleter de Borstellio" ie Bristol?, as per details for a bell at St. Michael's Bath). Now this is interesting as our Kenn bell was recast by "William Jefferies Bristol - 1815 nearly 300 years later. This name appears as the cast-in inscription on the bell but does not occur in the Churchwarden's Record, where it simply says:

*Oct 25 1815 for newcasing (sic) the bell £16/2/5d.*

together with

*Do Robert Gastons Bill 10/-*

*Do George Hurl, Bill 13/6d*

(presumably these were carpenter and haulier, or perhaps two different hauliers - it would be interesting to know if it came by horse and cart all the way or by river to Clevedon and Kenn Pier!) However, one wonders if our William Jefferies was a descendant of this Thomas Jeferes of 1535 and whether foundrywork was thus "in his blood" from those earlier days. Certainly the name crops up in the earlier years when a Thomas Jefferies (or Gefferies) was Sheriff of Bristol in 1525 (could this have been the same Thomas?)

Between 1508 and 1546 Thomas produced about 40 bells, the old 2nd of the 3 at Butcombe being one of his (or, according to another listing, perhaps by an unknown "RT" perhaps one of his workers or partners?) - again this bell was nonsensically destroyed in 1914). Another of Thomas's was Wrington's small sanctus bell. Henry, his son, took over in 1560 on the death of his father, but also up to 1553 the name of John White of St Philips, Bristol, appears on transactions. There then seems to have been a gap of 70 years and it is thought that perhaps the foundry may then have been re-opened and worked by Richard Purdue and his descendants until about 1692, since the Sanctus bell in Quatt, Shropshire, was then produced and had the inscription "JOHN PACKER IN BRISTOL FECIT" cast on it. Another bell by Packer in Reynoldston, Pembrokeshire is dated 1705, but here the Bristol foundry trail ends for over 100 years. (The Purdues were a particularly famous family of founders throughout the West Country, having had bases at various times at Closworth, Taunton, Glastonbury, Salisbury and Bristol, as well as casting "on the spot" at some locations.

Another important family of bellfounders was the Rudhall family of Gloucester and as "their fame spread the length and breadth of Great Britain and across the seas to Ireland, Jamaica and America"\* this may well explain why, in part of their operating years from 1684 to 1835, there is no further mention of a Bristol foundry. (\**Church Bells of Glos. M. Bliss & F. Sharpe*).

From about 1815 - 1850, though, a Bristol foundry seems to have been run first by Jefferies and then jointly by Westcott, Jefferies & Price, in the Redcliffe area and this was presumably "our" William Jefferies in partnership, having cast relatively few bells of his own (though I would proffer the opinion that his bell for Kenn was a fine example). William also cast a single bell for Llanwen, Cardiganshire, in 1829 and, with Price, another for Cricklade, Wilts. in 1832. "*Church Bells of Glos.*" also records that the ring of 8 at St. Matthew, Kingsdown, Bristol (cast 1835/6) is by W. Jefferies alone and we had the pleasure of ringing these for a wedding a few years ago when invited to do so as many of the Bristol ringers were on holiday on that particular Saturday. Also, in the 60s, I helped a struggling band on their practice nights there but never then realised who had cast them (and let's face it, it would probably not have meant much to me at that time if I had known!)

In 1875 the noted firm of Llewellyns & James "of considerable and extended reputation" took over and was still going strong at the time Walters wrote his report in 1918. Having just seen a photograph of an "RT" inscription, the unknown founder of 1480 – 1510, I notice it is in small letters with a double headed r, could this possibly have been a Thomas Jefferies senior, the "r" having a curly tail and the letters reversed in position about a central cross, ie. r+t could have possibly been t+j: yet again we shall probably never know. Suffice it to say, there are reported to be 26 bells from the Bristol foundry surviving in Gloucestershire, **and we have another here in Kenn**. Do value your heritage.

And as I have gone on plenty long enough for this time I will leave the remainder to next month

Last month (above, here) I quickly traced the known history of the Bristol foundry where Kenn's present church bell was cast on 25th October 1815, i.e. 185 years ago. The last founders were Llewellyns & James, who were still casting bells in 1918 when H.B. Walters wrote his transactions for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeology Society. Coincidentally, in October 1996 a well-known Bristol ringer, Dick Bowden had a letter published in "The Ringing World" which, while we are on the subject, could be of interest to our older readers as they may remember the parts of Bristol mentioned, and also shown in the two photos which accompanied the letter. As the photos do not reproduce well, I will only give the text of Dick's letter here but I will put a copy of the whole article on the church notice board so that the photos can be seen. Dick says:

*Ringling visitors to Bristol occasionally ask me where the bell foundry of Messrs. Llewellyns & James was situated. Until recently one could only point vaguely to the eastern end of the grassed-over bombed area adjacent to Bristol Bridge, now known as Castle Park, where the only two pre-war buildings still standing are the preserved ruins of the churches of St. Mary-le-Port and St. Peter. It is difficult to realise that prior to 1940 this pleasant open recreation site with its trees and flower beds was a thriving densely packed commercial*

area with over two hundred buildings (mostly shops) lining the narrow streets. After careful research, a comprehensive map of Castle Park has been produced by Mr Maurice Bye of Westbury-on-Trym in which he shows all the lost streets and the outline of every building with the name of the firm occupying it at the time of the severe bombing in November 1940 which reduced most of the area to rubble. Mr Bye's map shows the location of Llewellyns & James premises as 150 feet (47.75 metres) at their nearest point from the east end of St. Peter's Church. L & J were at that time trading as brass founders. All trace of the foundry has long since vanished but fortunately the sounds of some of its bells can still be heard on Castle Park - not least the magnificent 29 cwt Tenor at St Thomas, Bristol which was recast by Llewellyns & James in 1894.

RICHARD J. BOWDEN. Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol.

ps. I am adding a few further items of information which were not to hand when I penned the above letter: Llewellyns & James' orders for casting church bells seemed to tail off in the 1920s and for a while it was generally accepted that the treble for Maperton, Somerset dated 1930 was their last casting. However two later castings have been discovered locally viz.- a single bell at St. Oswald's, Bedminster Down, 26in dia. dated 1933 and another at All Hallows, Easton, 20 in. diameter dated 1930. After searching through the Reece Winstone photographic records in the series "Bristol as it was" I have found two interesting prints - both taken from the same spot in Little Peter Street. The first one dated 1938 shows part of the west elevation of the L & J foundry building and part of the name board with the letters "LLEW" and "Brassfounders" clearly visible. The second is dated 1963 and surprisingly shows that this west elevation survived the war, albeit reduced in height by one storey and re-windowed. It was apparently used as a property store until it was demolished together with two adjacent pubs in 1969. RJB.

So, with many thanks to RJB for his research, that brings the Bristol foundry history to its end (or perhaps more accurately, foundries history, as they may well not have been the same site), the demolition, funnily enough, taking place in 1969 - the same year as Eleanor and I married and came to live in Yatton.

Now back to our William Jefferies bell, what it has been used for, and contemporary items of interest. In the records we noted the following:

*1815 July 15 form of prayer & thanksgiving to Almighty God for the Glorious Victory obtained over the French on Sunday the 18th day of June at Waterloo 2/6d.*

*Aug 11 pd for a letter directed to the officiating minister for the relief of the widows who lost their Husbands in the Battle of Waterloo 1/6d*

*Jan 5 1816 paid for a proclamation respecting the War against France 2/6d*

*Feb 19 1816 Mr. Tilys Bill for the Bell 1/5d*

(It is not stated whether this was for repairs, or for ringing it in association with the war).

*May 16 1818 Paid Samuel Warn for toling the bell for the Princes Charlotte and our Queen*

(the "Q" written in the old format like a "2")

*1838 for ringing the bell for the King 6/-*

(why 1838, when in 1837 William IV died and was succeeded by Victoria?? – could anyone add their historical knowledge, or research, to explain these events?)

*Oct 26 1851 for pieces of rope for splicing bell rope 1/-*

(I wonder if this was from Bryants of Bristol if they existed in 1851 – they were still in Colston Street when we came in 1969).

*Oct 26 1851 for splicing bell rope 1/- (done by a mariner, I wonder?)*

*Mar 2<sup>nd</sup> 1855 Wm Laking for putting a stay to the bell 2/6d*

That was the end of our search on this first occasion, but one day when time allows I hope to delve further into the records, and especially into the later years. Next month I will end these articles with a few details of the size of our Kenn bell and its fittings and frame, and also its present uses, and my hopes for its future.

This month, just in case you think a "small bell" really is small and takes up little room up in our tower, I have taken some basic statistics which, while it is out of sight, may well surprise you. However, may I just comment that in this county of heavy bells, Kenn's (estimated) 5¾cwt bell really is only a small one. (Congresbury's heaviest weighs 34cwt and Wells cathedral's heaviest is slightly over 56¼cwt, which means that even the lightest of their other bells (respectively seven and nine) is probably bigger than that at Kenn). As you can see, and especially as it is an old installation, I make no apologies for using good old British units of hundredweights and inches – it certainly makes a change from the European system at my place of work!

Our bell was apparently rehung on a new headstock in 1912, (and possibly in a new frame as well, Ray thinks), but the only evidence we have is that carved into the wooden headstock, "W.KING 1912". The bell swings East - West and the frame in which it swings is 79 inches long by 42½ inches wide. The tower internal dimensions at the bell level are 79 inches East/West and 82¾ inches North/South. The frame really only consists of two massive wood beams 9 inches deep by 5 inches wide on which the bell pivots are mounted. These top beams, while appearing quite solidly attached to cross beams which are built into the North and South walls, flex up and down alarmingly when the bell is rung only halfway up!

The bottom structure to take the thrust of the bell, were it ever again to be set upside down as was originally intended, and carried out as we have seen in the records, is now very weak and appears to be merely attached to the floor boards at the west ends. The bottom beams are loose in the walls and will shift to and fro about half an inch if given a good push with the foot!

I have some photographs of some of these structures and will try to remember, when this article is printed, to put them on show in the church.

The bell mouth measures  $30\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter, and internally at the soundbow (the thicker section just above the bell mouth) it is  $22\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter.

The wooden headstock is  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep by  $4\frac{3}{4}$  inches wide and the bell, which still has its canons (the cast-in loops on its crown and which look something like a crown) is hung from this by iron or steel plates with nuts on the top threaded ends.

There are mating cross pieces of iron or steel on the top of the headstock and under the loops of the bell's canons to clamp it to the headstock. (In even earlier times, as I have seen on really ancient installations which had not been modified, there were no nuts and threads but just very rusty wedges in very corroded slots in the iron straps – just imagine a few hundredweight of bell metal being quickly turned full circle on that – run for your life!!)

The clapper<sup>4</sup> is wrought iron "flight", "ball" and "shaft", the top of the latter being secured in a long and narrow wooden "box", which is intentionally split longitudinally into two halves. This "box" is more correctly a wooden bar of two pieces each  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches long by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide, clamped together to give a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inch square section. This clamped section has the pivot hole drilled through it, as it is from this bit of wood that the whole clapper swings on the "crown staple". This crown staple is a U shaped circular bar of iron which was positioned into the inside of the top (or crown) of the bell when the bell itself was cast, hence it was "cast-in", ie the molten bell metal was allowed to cool and solidify around it. The bell metal is an alloy of copper and tin, roughly in the proportions 70:30. The clapper "box" is clamped over this crown staple and the pivot hole is just large enough to allow the clapper to swing freely. Nowadays a clapper and its pivot bearing are much more highly engineered.<sup>5</sup> The box looks reasonably new and when I took over maintenance of the bell I was perturbed to find that the most important of the 5 clamping bolts ie the one above the pivot, which could stop the whole clapper from flying out, was missing – and there was no sign of it on the floor – I wonder how long it had been rung in the that state?! Andrew and I replaced the missing one August 25<sup>th</sup> 1997.

The clapper 'ball' is very squat, more like a rugby ball section, or flying saucer shape! (A flying saucer first seen in Kenn in 1815 then, but I don't think it made headlines in the local press!) It is  $14\frac{1}{2}$  inches in  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, but it is only 3 inches deep, thus giving the 'squat' section. The tapered flight below the ball is eight sided and is  $2\frac{1}{8}$  inches diameter at its minimum section adjacent to the ball, and  $2\frac{3}{4}$  inches diameter at its maximum (lowest) section, with a length of  $2\frac{7}{8}$  inches.

The wooden wheel rim diameter is  $67\frac{1}{2}$  inches with a sole diameter (on which the rope sits) of  $64\frac{1}{2}$  inches, so you can tell it is quite a size.

As I have said previously, in view of the state of the frame in which the bell hangs, it is not considered safe at the moment to ring the bell full circle and set it upside down as should be possible. I feel it would be an appropriate start to the new millennium if we could soon get it safely rehung in a modern frame and have the old cast-in crown staple drilled out and replaced with an independent stirrup. This would take away the

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<sup>4</sup> See page 3

<sup>5</sup> See page 3

possibility of our bell becoming cracked due to corrosion stresses, as could so easily happen, especially in this 'near to the sea' position. It is not a case of "well it hasn't happened in 185 years, so why should it happen now?" - it is more a case of we have been extremely lucky it hasn't happened yet! (Last year our architect required rust removal and painting of the straps on which the bell hangs but completely missed this hidden, but much more potentially disastrous situation).<sup>6</sup>

Our wardens are in the process of getting a quotation for the re-pointing of the walls on the first floor of the tower since the old plaster between the internal stones is crumbling badly. Obviously the sooner this work is done the less mess will be experienced both upstairs and down and deterioration will be halted. The top floor, ie. the bell chamber itself and the short spire above it, are in a somewhat better state and will probably have to wait until it is seen whether a new bell frame is a near future possibility.

Now what is our bell used for nowadays? Well, the most important use is that for which it has always been used, that is to announce the approach of the start of a service and to bid all to "come", "come", "come".... Just think, it has been doing this for over 185 years in some form or other! Whenever I ring it, I try to keep to a pattern of two sessions of half circle and this brings out the full tones. I say "tones" advisedly because a bell does not just sound one note but many different notes (in true harmony if the bell is well tuned), and these emanate from different parts of its anatomy. I always remember the first time I rang Kenn bell up to this pitch and I was especially pleased when Avril remarked how much better it sounded than the previous "ping, ping"!

For a Holy Communion service you may have noticed that this is then followed by groups of three chimes leading up to a short break before the clock strikes on a much slower beat. (Funny that the clock only strikes before a service - and only then if the priest doesn't beat me to it and start service early!!) For any other service the "5 minute bell" is a continuously regular chime.

on good authority, as I write this at the end of September, that Yatton are now going to follow suit)<sup>7</sup>. We have used the bell also for special occasions - to ring-in the year 2000 when 26 people turned up to add their chime, on the Queen Mother's 100th birthday when 25 turned up, and John Griffin rang it on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1999 for a wedding - I wonder when that was last so done at Kenn? (We are not the only church to use a single bell for a wedding; our family were. on the way to Inveraray a You may also have noticed that in the Communion services we have re-instated the "elevation of the host" or "sacring" bell ie three chimes when both the bread and the wine are individually blessed. The theory behind this is that those who cannot get to church (especially when ill) can still know when the most important part of the service has arrived and can join in by private prayer. This function is not a legal requirement of the Church of England, whereas the sounding of a pre-service bell is, but several people have said how much they like this additional signal (and I have it few years ago and we stopped off at Luss on the banks of Loch Lomond. Suddenly

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<sup>6</sup> In the November 2003 article I said that I might try getting a grant based on our bell being of "historical interest". I approached the Diocesan Advisory Board soon afterwards to see if we could get the bell 'listed'. The person concerned in giving advice on bells then died, and in October 2011 we still haven't got anywhere, although the new advisor has been contacted, we are assured. Consequently no grant was possible and the full cost of the work (£7105) on the bell and bell frame was met from the Jack Hanson bequest to the 'Friends of St John's'.

<sup>7</sup> They didn't, though!

the church bell started to ring on that beautiful Saturday afternoon, to be immediately followed by the bride and groom coming out with beaming smiles into the sunshine and to a bagpipe accompaniment as well. Now.....I'll ring the bell next time if John can manage the bagpipes! Many of you may not have known that not only did John Cruse ring himself in at Shalford with 10 good strikes on the 4th of the 8 bells there, but he willingly agreed to ring himself out from Kenn with an equal number of chimes prior to his last service here – how many actually saw and heard that, I wonder? (10 strokes = 10 years intended incumbency, so an old rumour has it!)

On Remembrance Sunday we now put a leather muffle on one side of the bell clapper so that there is a joyful open stroke followed by a muffled "echo"- as in the half-muffled" ringing performed at many other churches on this occasion, and for funerals and Good Friday.

I am hoping that our next bell event will be the solemn muffled ringing out of the 20<sup>th</sup> century approaching midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup> this year and the joyful start of the 21<sup>st</sup> after midnight, but for this I need a volunteer, or volunteers, to come along to the church at about 11.40pm and be able to stay until about 12.10am. This is because I will have to go up into the bell chamber and therefore, for safety's sake, someone must be present just in case I fall off the ladder! Please let me know as soon as possible if you could be that volunteer<sup>8</sup>. Again, children and all are invited to do their bit on January 1<sup>st</sup> at 12 noon. This will be the last of these particular specials, so do come along and bring friends and relatives, if you would like to have a go.

And so, like the final instruction from the conductor at the end of a session of change ringing, I have to say "That's All; STAND". Many thanks for listening to our bell and reading these notes and, by the way, we would love to have more replies or suggestions to the questions asked along the way!

## **Kenn Bell History Update, June 2011.**

Sunday 12th June, 2011, and at long last the bell can be rung right up to the balance point without the clapper producing a terrible jangle onto the bell! It has taken over 2 years to get the Whitechapel Bellfoundry to sort this out. At the 'Friends of Kenn Church' AGM on Thurs. 19th May it had been reported that we were still waiting for Whitechapel to give us a date when they could re-forged the new clapper (which they had provided for the bell at the re-hang in April 2009, having forgotten to take the 'old boxed' clapper with the bell to the foundry in February when snow produced a travel problem!) A day or so after this AGM the foundry claimed they had been waiting for us to send the clapper back – despite them having told us earlier not to do so! When it had then been sent and re-forged, it didn't come back by courier on the promised Friday but, after another phone call, it arrived early next day, Sat. 11th June and was re-installed by John Ball and Stuart Welch. When rung for service next day the jangle had gone, thanks to a

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<sup>8</sup> Again, "they didn't, though", so GRM did it all on his own, with mobile phone at the ready in case of an emergency!

heavier clapper flight ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch added). Of course we shall never know whether the old (original) boxed clapper gave a true ring on the bell as there is no one living who can remember the bell rung right up full circle, but it would have been nice to have that one, with a new steel shank replacing the wooden box, as originally intended.

The re-hanging of the bell has kept the large oak top beams of the original bell-frame, but with a new lower frame of steel girders well grouted into the tower walls. This solution was that provided by Whitechapel and that and their good reputation were the main reasons the job was entrusted to them. The crown staple has been drilled out, thus taking away the fear of the bell cracking due to stresses induced by it rusting. A modern free-standing clapper assembly has been installed.

Going back a few years, Geoff Marchant, who rings the bell for most services, had hoped to get the rusting crown staple removed and the bell rehung for the Millennium in 2001 but with money being raised for, and work proceeding on, the Church New Room, the bell had to wait another 8 years. Matthew Higby (Chilcompton), Taylors (Loughborough), and Whitechapel were approached for advice and estimates. Matthew wanted to produce a wholly new frame and gave options for automatic chiming of the bell, or full ringing. Taylors seemed to think the existing frame was satisfactory having said they had witnessed the bell rung well up – when we knew full well it hadn't been! Whitechapel seemed to give the best options. A lot of investigation, drawing, planning and costing went into the provision of new trapdoors to get the bell down and back up the tower, the existing one being large enough for us to get through, but not the bell. The architect of the time insisted on a landing with removable ladder below and fixed handrail and stair above. At the time of this update, only a new floor has been provided with again a 'man only' size trapdoor, and the old ladder is still in use to get to it! The trap door at present has no hinges so has to be hauled into position each time.<sup>9</sup> The ceiling is of re-cycled oak and looks fine. (Installed by local carpenter John Hayden from wood obtained from Wells Reclamation by John Ball.)

Friends of Kenn Church Committee meeting minutes for 22nd May 2008 state: Bell tower – At the Yatton Moor Parochial Church Council meeting on 3rd April 2008 – It was proposed by Julia Bush (Kenn Churchwarden) and seconded by Ryan Densham that the PCC authorise St. John's Kenn to spend £7,778 + VAT on the work outlined in the Whitechapel Bell Foundry's Quotation, plus a £1000 contingency, and secondly in anticipation of "The Friends of St. John's" releasing funds, approval to apply for a Faculty for the work on the St. John's bell tower and bell to be carried out. The motion was passed without dissent." This was followed by the statement – "The Friends of Kenn Church agreed unanimously that the legacy from Jack Hanson should be released for this purpose," NB - There is now a plaque in the church by the tower door which records this and another legacy. It should also be noted that Julia Bush had said she could do little on the technical side for the bell re-hang, but she would do the Faculty Application! - and she did a marvellous and successful job!

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<sup>9</sup> Hinged August 2011

Friends of Kenn Church Committee meeting minutes for April 23rd 2009 state: "Bell Tower -That very day, Whitechapel Bell Foundry had completed the work on re-hanging the bell. They have requested that three weeks should elapse for the concrete to cure before the bell is used and John Ball has received instructions on tightening of various bolts in due course. Contingency Work – John Ball has chased Norman Harris (Builder, Kingston Seymour) so that reinstatement work of the tower can now be undertaken. A vote of thanks to John Ball for his work in expediting, preparing and general overseeing of the task was unanimously agreed."

MOOR NEWS March 2009 showed pictures of the bell on the tower floor and after being loaded into the Foundry truck, together with a write-up.

Further articles appeared in 'Kenn News and Views' in Feb., April and Nov. 2008, and Jan., Feb.& Mar.2009, May and Nov. 2010, and May 2011. Some of these are available online at [www.kennvillage.co.uk](http://www.kennvillage.co.uk)

One item worthy of notice is that Kenn Bell was the subject of some discussion on a ringing website in the early 2000s, and an expert on bell history decided it was probably of too early a date (1815) to really have been cast by William Jefferies, who was then only 'a beginner'. Its good form and lettering suggested to him that it was probably a Rudhall bell from the Gloucester foundry which had been made under contract for Jefferies. Whitechapel did point out that it was hung 90 degrees rotation from the normal position, as are quarter turned bells, but ours had never been quarter turned. Mysteries abound, but one thing is now sure, our Jefferies/Rudhall 1815 bell, stated by Whitechapel to be 5½ cwt., should with care now ring for another 200 years or so. We look forward to celebrating its duocentenary in 2015.

NB: On Sunday June 19th I was able to hear the bell from outside the tower while my wife Eleanor rang it full circle. The jangle has not completely gone but is much less and I would not want any more weight added to the clapper flight as the bell is now much louder inside and outside the church and does sound to be "hammered". Too hard a strike by the clapper could also crack the bell, the very problem we set out to eliminate! It would seem that in exchanging a wooden-top clapper for a modern all metal one, the CG and dynamics have been altered so that the sound now is not so mellow as before – a great pity but one for which I cannot see a solution. Steel bells have pads to lift the clapper back off of the bell sound-bow to stop clapper vibration but I have never seen these on traditional bells.

Geoff Marchant, Yatton, June 2011

Note: We had asked Whitechapel to provide extra "bat-friendly" wood preservative as used on the new wooden beams by them, so that we could treat the old top beams as well - this was not done and nothing has been done in this respect as at September 2011. Neither was any repointing of the tower done in the most

sensible time for that work to be done ie when the bell was out of the tower. At September 2011 nothing in this respect has been done either.

From “Kenn News and Views” Issue 274 June 2011:

*Our bell was rung on the 29<sup>th</sup> April in celebration of the Wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton.*

And Finally on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2011 the bell was chimed for Harvest Festival Family Service for a short while by the four year-old Fenwick triplets. John Ball took a couple of photos of them doing it from the floor all together, on the rope end, but they individually stood on a table to chime the bell by holding the ‘sally’, with Geoff’s help and care!

Appendix 1 -  
Replies and Queries to the Kenn Historical Notes  
Unusual Tales  
Quotations and Snippets  
Photos July 1989

## REPLIES AND QUERIES TO THE KENN HISTORICAL NOTES

1. Ray Naish has pointed out that the tiles in the Nave were taken up about 18 years ago because they had all become saturated with a white lime film, so we couldn't count them now to see if they were possibly the tiles referred to in the churchwardens' accounts of 1775. Also, he suggests that the 'graviil' and sand mentioned at that time was used for bedding-in these tiles. The Nave aisle-way is now concrete and covered by carpet.
2. Ray also pointed out the second tombstone inside the church porch as he thought it bore the name of one of the names I mentioned on the first page of the Churchwardens' accounts. It is worth noting that the first tombstone inside the porch is obviously a very ancient one as most of its inscription is entirely worn away. The second one, though, is reasonably easy to decipher and bears the following names:

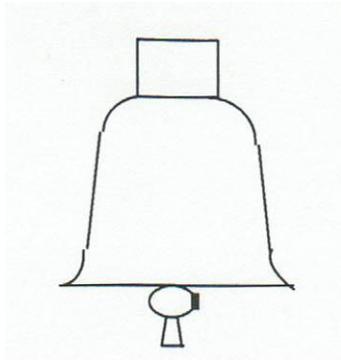
*Hannah, wife of William Wilkins departed this life 1749,  
Edmund, son of Edmund and Anne his wife, died 22nd Nov. 1750 Age 9 months,  
Edmund (i.e. the father of the above) son of William and Hannah died Jan. 19th.  
1767, age 41.*

Interestingly, William himself does not appear to be mentioned here so presumably he had a separate tombstone (and was buried in a separate grave?) Of course the fact that his wife's tombstone is now in the church porch does not necessarily mean there are any burials beneath it. It could well have been brought in from a part of the churchyard and used to pave the porch.

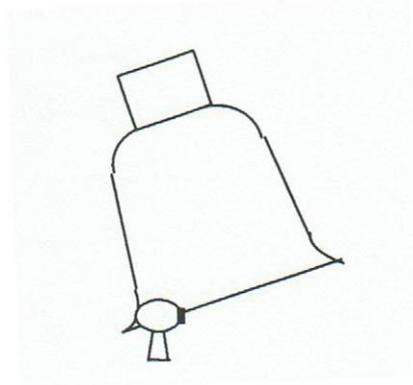
William Wilkins was one of the signatures on the October 3rd., 1775 agreement between William Bilbie of ChewStoke, Bellfounder, and the parishioners of Kenn for the old bell to be recast. Well spotted Ray!

The queries I have received were:

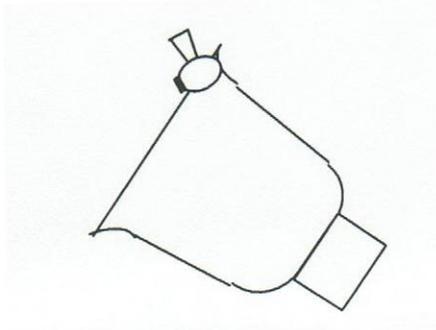
1. From Julian Gale as to whether I had any further notes from the records as he was researching family history - unfortunately until another visit to the Somerset Records office is possible it's a case of 'WYSIWIG' - What You've Seen Is What I Got!
2. Ray, and possibly others, was interested and a little confused, as to why on Remembrance Sunday the bell was **ringing** muffled on one stroke and open on the alternate stroke, and yet during the service at the blessing of the bread and wine it **chimed** all three strokes open. To add to the confusion he then heard me say after the service that I had just been upstairs to take the muffle off! No, it wasn't anything to do with the fact that Michael Callow chimed it during the service and managed to get a different tone out of it than I did before the service, it is simply to do with the words I have made bold above, i.e. the difference between ringing (when the bell swings high) and chiming (when the bell only moves through a very small arc of a circle). Also, we only chime it during the service to (hopefully) ensure we get the correct number of strokes (3). I have added a few diagrams on the next page to try to explain what happens - remember, there is only a muffle pad on one side of the clapper ball:



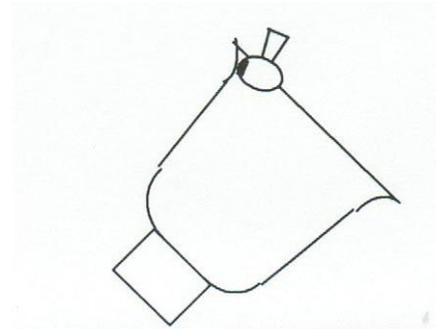
**1** - Bell at rest before we pull on the rope. Rope is on Left Hand Side of bell. Muffle pad tied onto Right Hand Side of Clapper Ball.



**2** - Bell swing-chimed through very small arc of circle. Bell hits one side only of Clapper Ball, ie the unmuffled or "open" side, every time it sounds. Therefore no muffled stroke.



**3** - Bell swinging much higher through greater arc of circle. Clapper thrown to far side of bell (swings same direction as bell and catches it up). Clapper strikes "open" on this stroke.



**4** - On the return swing the clapper catches up the bell with the clapper's muffled side, so the bell rings muffled.

Consequently, on swinging the bell up through, say, more than an eighth of a circle, it will sound alternately "open" (un-muffled) and then muffled.

When swing chiming through a very small arc of a circle it will strike "open" (un-muffled) every time it sounds.

The promised ringing out of the old year/century/millennium, and the ringing in of the new, did not draw any offer of help and so consequently, although it did go ahead, the "old" was tolled out without going upstairs to put the muffle on, (I couldn't say I was eager to go up there on such a foul night!). The "new" was joyously rung in - not that anyone has even mentioned that they heard, - one person has even admitted that they were fast asleep so didn't expect to hear it!!

The "Ring-on" session on New Year's Day attracted young and old - and very young!! All were given a hand to make their mark of the date, and one of the seven who attended used to ring this bell for service eight or nine years ago, so needed no physical help at all.

Jan 2001

## Unusual Tales

Having read some of Cliff's "Tales of the Unexpected" in previous issues of Kenn News and Views, I made a mental note to recount the following true(?) story which appeared in our weekly bellringing paper, "The Ringing World" last October following a rather facetious correspondence as to whether there were bells in Heaven. I will repeat it word for word as I am sure, for ringers and non-ringers alike, it will give that 'tingle down the spine'...

"Recent correspondence regarding "Bells in Heaven" prompts me to write of an experience which my father and grandfather had during the First World War:

An uncle of mine had joined the army, under age, and was serving as a stretcher-bearer in France. He was injured, although not by enemy action, and was sent home to England where his condition worsened. So much so, that my father and his father made their way to the hospital in London to bring him home, as he was not expected to live. Whilst on the way they both heard the sound of church bells ringing, at a time when church bells were not being rung and there was not even a church in the vicinity. When they arrived at the hospital they found that my uncle, who was my father's brother, had died at the precise time that the church bells were heard.

My father, a clergyman and model steam locomotive builder, was a very down to earth man who did not fantasise or imagine things - nor I believe was his father, a builder by trade. I leave readers to make up their own mind as to the significance of this story.

Michael D. Marshall  
Blandford, Dorset."

...and I sincerely hope they had not been drinking, either, if they were travelling up from Dorset to London and back, even in those days!!

Another snippet I saw recently was a letter concerning the bells of Lancaster and Berwick Town Hall (yes, there are secular rings) and it caught my eye because of a similarity with an account of Kenn's bell which I quoted last year. Chris Pickford of Sevenoaks Kent referred to a diary of George Thurnhill of Huntingdon July 1760, who noted "The town of Berwick is a pretty large town... The Town Hall is a good building and has a beautiful Turret which we took for the steeple of the Church, And here the Bells are hung as the Church has no Steeple."

Now this brings us full circle to our first reference for Kenn in Ellacombe's "Church Bells of Somerset" where he said the bell was hung in a turret" - obviously (as with so many other words) the meaning of 'turret' has changed over the centuries and was in the late 1700s synonymous with our modern meaning of 'tower", so there is no mystery here after all!

A couple of other points picked up from the same source:

Glasbury on Wye - 6 bells were cast by Jefferies and Price of Bristol in 1838 when the church was rebuilt. (The same Mr. Jefferies who recast the Kenn bell in 1815.)

And another reference to Glasbury by Chris Pickford - "...most Rudhall rings of the 18th & early 19th centuries being tonally pretty poor" "When the Bristol bellfounders (Jefferies and Price) were contacted, Rudhall had already ceased business a few years earlier."

And another reference to the same place by Margaret Gill, of Glasbury, regarding historical payments for their bells ...and to Mr North for carriage of the new bells as per bill" - I am sure I've come across this name before but no carrier's name was mentioned for Kenn.

This page will contain some of the quotations which I have collected along life's way. I have enjoyed and treasured them, I hope you do too.

Starting with a 'bell' one, this comes from a report of the Funeral of bell-founder Paul Lea Taylor, 16th. Oct., 1981. Canon R.A.Jones (former Rector of All Saint's, Loughborough said "In making a bell he had made an instrument which spoke not only to Christians but to the whole of society, to remind men of God and that his nature is one of beauty, joy and harmony."

Brian Dunning in "Land of Swans and Smugglers", Country Life, Jan. 30th, 1975 re Abbotsbury Church: "What matters is that it is God's House and the chief house of the village - a public yet private place, the keeper for generations of the griefs and gratitudes of a complete community."...and how true that is of any church! That is why it hurts the few caring people left so much when their church is closed, emptied of all its possessions, and used for some mundane secular purpose.

'The hum and murmur of the multitudinous insects sounded like the music of innumerable bells" - Kilvert's Diary, 8th. Aug, 1875.

And from the same source, but dated 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1876, and describing some magnificent oak trees in Moccas Park, near Monnington on Wye, with one suspected of being 2000 years old and measuring roughly 10 ½ feet in diameter:

"I fear those grey old men of Moccas, those grey, gnarled, low-browed, knock-kneed, bowed, bent, huge, strange, long-armed, deformed, hunchbacked misshapen oak men that stand waiting and watching century after century biding God's time with both feet in the grave and yet tiring down and seeing out generation after generation, with such tales to tell, as when they whisper them to each other in the midsummer nights, make the silver birches weep and the poplars and aspens shiver and the long ears of the hares and rabbits stand on end. No human hand set those oaks. They are 'the trees which the Lord hath planted'. They look as if they had been at the beginning and making of the world, and they will probably see its end."

"A statistician is a man who uses statistics as a drunk man uses a lamppost - mainly for support and **not** illumination." Anon.

'An ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory." Anon.

"The Ringing World" Nov. 6th, 1981 "We are a mixed community like bits of architecture - bits of church architecture. Some are "detached towers" and never seem to reach the main building; others are flying buttresses - they touch where they can; yet others are buttresses because they give solid support from the outside; but many, many more, thank God, are the pillars who prop the Church up from inside."

York Diocesan Leaflet (via the R.W. Nov 13th, 1981: "So What's Your Trouble?"

Our forefathers did without sugar until the 13th century, without coal fires until the 14th, without buttered bread until the 16th, without coffee, tea and soap until the 17th, without gas, matches and electricity until the 19th, and without cars and canned or frozen food until the 20th. Now, what was it you were complaining about?

Thou that has given so much to me, Give one more thing, a grateful heart. Not thankful when it pleaseth me, As if they blessings had spare days; But such a heart whose pulse may be thy praise.

George Herbert 1593-1633

## Kenn Church Bell

Back in December 2000 my article in "News & Views" had two sentences, thus:

I feel it would be an appropriate start to the new millennium if we could soon get it (the bell) safely rehung in a modern frame and have the old cast-in crown staple (on which the clapper swings) drilled out and replaced with an independent stirrup. This would take away the possibility of our bell becoming cracked due to corrosion stresses, as could so easily happen, especially in this 'near to the sea' position'.

Well thankfully the bell hasn't cracked yet, and with the new church room so much needed and to the fore as far as fund-raising was concerned I had decided I must bide my time with further mention of work required on the bell and its frame. However fate (or the bell!) decided to take its own turn and not wait for any for us. John Griffin mentioned on more than one occasion, that when the bell was being rung he had heard a strange knocking sound while stood outside the tower. Consequently he, John Ball and I ascended to the bell chamber and on swinging the bell heard this knocking all too clearly and did a thorough investigation. We found that after 185 years the elm headstock, on which the bell is hung, had started to break up in an area local to the pivots, and as it swung so the pivot would "clunk" from side to side. Tragedy! Could we do anything ourselves to rectify the problem? - even making a completely new timber head-stock was considered. However, with today's church authorities requiring faculty application for all such work, together with stringent Health and Safety requirements and the lack of any strong beams beneath the bell on which it could be sat while the work was in progress, we had to admit eventually that a professional rehanging was probably by far the best option. That will cost, but will also take away the fear of a crack developing. So in the meantime the bell is being used with even greater care than usual and if you have thought it isn't sounding out as much, that is why. We have obtained a bell-hanger's estimate and are now in the process of trying to decide whether we can retain the old floors (which have no large trapdoors for the bell to come down through - and also have joists in the way to complicate matters) or to build new ones. All this at the time when the church least needs more expense. We are seeking all ways of keeping the cost of the job down, but grant aid for a single bell is virtually non-existent unless it is of special historic interest - see more below! The bell-hanger has tried (and is still trying!) to convince us that if we bought a separate ring of 5 small bells for which he just happens to have 4 going spare, the job would only cost a few thousand extra and we could get grant aid to cover the difference! Well we have little chance of getting enough people to ring them and room in the ringing chamber, even without the present paraphernalia, is minimal, so unless 5 or more readers wish not only to donate a sizeable sum to buy a bell in memory of a loved one, but also to learn to ring it for services thereafter, we have no intention of pursuing that course! - but please shout quickly if you want us to reconsider!

Before I could do anything to find out whether our bell would be considered to be of special historic interest, our son Andrew (who was in at the beginning of all this by coming to the Somerset Records Office with me and helping glean information for the earlier articles) posted an enquiry on the bell historians web site asking whether there were many bells by William Jefferies still in existence. In a rush of e-mails various historians give dates, lists and opinions and from all this it would appear that Kenn's bell of 1815 was the very earliest known. Others being Fishponds, Bristol (now gone) and Redlynch, Somerset, both 1832, but with most of William's bells

dating from 1832 when he cast the call bell for Tyntesfield House which “certainly looks like an early effort”. So one opinion offered was that the earlier bells were cast **for** William Jefferies of Bristol and not **by** him, and possibly by the noted John Rudhall of Gloucester. Apparently the clue to this is that the date is inscribed J8J5 with “J”s rather than “1”s, so whether John used this “quirk” to distinguish all his castings I do not know. Whether or not it is one of his, we obviously do have a rather special bell even if only for the mystery and conjecture it is now causing! So I may even now see if there is a possibility of a grant based on historical interest.

GM 20/11/2003

In the 20/11/2003 article I said I might try getting a grant based on our bell being of ‘historical interest’. I approached the Diocesan Advisory Board soon afterwards to see if we could get the bell “listed”. The person concerned in giving advice on bells then died, and in October 2011 we still haven’t got anywhere, although the new advisor has been contacted, we are assured. Consequently, no grant was possible and the full cost of the work (£7,105) on the bell and bell frame was met from the Jack Hanson bequest to the “Friends of St John’s”.

GM 20/10/2011



Note braced wooden Wheel, Rope down through Frame Pulley on Right Hand Side, Slider in slot below bell, and Main Frame Beams.



Looking up under bell, Note Clapper stem, 'ball' and flight. Slider on L.H.Side. Also Walt. Neath in background and Spire above bell.



View from end of Bell Pit, Note Bell hung from Headstock by iron plates, Through Canons (Cast-in Loops), Wooden Headstock, Bearing retaining Plate visible on Left Hand Side



View looking up into Spire.