

Essay for the Friends No. 9

Ramblings of a Collector

A collector is someone with a passion, who has to possess the objects of his passion. My father was a collector before me, with his passion centring on antique pottery and furniture. Mine is for books, and being a ringer these have to be about bells and ringing, although local history runs a close second. It is my belief that books are there to be used, and my own collection is a working collection, although this has been overtaken, for bells and ringing at least, by having the facility of the Central Council Library available.

I started collecting bell books soon after I went up to university in London, and I see that I bought my first county book in 1962. Although I did not write down the price, I well remember that I paid the princely sum of £1 for a good copy of Owen's Church Bells of Huntingdonshire. At the time it was quite a lot of money for a student. Next book was a poorish copy of North's Church Bells of Bedfordshire, still a good buy at £1 10s. (£1.50), and so the books began to accumulate. Time spent looking around the bookshops in London, perhaps when I should have been studying, led me to Stanley Crowe's amazing bookshop. Housed in a damp basement, he had an outstanding stock, specialising in topography, and he produced the occasional book on bells for me. On the few occasions that I returned to London after finishing at King's College, I always made a point of visiting Stanley Crowe. Comparing the books I bought from him over a period of years, it was clear that Stanley Crowe had bought a collection of books on bells, but only sold the occasional one from the collection.

My gradual accumulation of books received a boost in 1976 when the late Pat Cannon offered me his collection of county books on bells, which I was delighted to buy. At the same time

I bought from him a long run of Bell News, all loose, which I had to have bound up. I didn't buy his Ringing Worlds, again all loose, which many years later wound up in Australia, and which I helped to complete by supplying photocopies of pages from which Pat had cut out details of his peals. I have since managed to add to my run of Bell News, although I still have a few years missing from the complete set.

With the books bought from Pat, which were complementary to the ones that I already had, I then had most of the county books on bells, my main area of research at the time. I was also trying to build up a set of Ringing Worlds, and gradually managed to build up a long run. Then I had the luck to buy, from Doris Fearn, George's widow, what had been George's set, and this made my own set almost complete, with just five years missing at the beginning, three of which I have since found. Each year I have my copies of the Ringing World bound up, to keep the set going.

Having looked for these early books over a period of many years, I have formed certain opinions - I am nothing if not opinionated! - and the following remarks reflect my views on some of the nineteenth century texts. Clearly all such books are bound to be rare merely because of the limited number printed and the losses over the years, so all my remarks on these books are relative. Lukis's book, *An Account of Church Bells*, published in 1857, was the first in the field, but is not that rare. It was usually bound in cloth, with a stamp of a bell on the front and the title of the book on the bell. This stamp (without the lettering) was used on the front of *Dunkin's Church Bells of Cornwall* (1878), although they were not printed by the same firm. Although rare, the best point of *Cornwall* is the stamp! Of other early pioneers, *Ellacombe's* books are not that rare and seem to crop up fairly regularly, except perhaps for *The Bells of the Cathedral Church of S. Peter, Exon.* (1874). Certainly

Church Bells of Devon appeared both as an article in the Transactions of the Exeter Diocesan Architectural Society (1867) and as a book in its own right (1872), the only difference being in pagination, and from this a larger number of copies would be expected. His books on the church bells of Somerset and Gloucestershire do not appear so often as the Church Bells of Devon. An inscription on my own copy of the Church Bells of Gloucestershire shows that in 1882 it was at the Redenhall Bell Foundry.

Books by Thomas North seem to occur fairly regularly except perhaps for Church Bells of Rutland (1878) and certainly Church Bells of Lincolnshire (1882). Whether only subscribers' copies were printed for the other books I do not know. My own copy of the Church Bells of Northamptonshire, bought from Stanley Crowe, is a subscriber's copy and contains an autograph letter from Thomas North to R. Reynolds Rowe, the subscriber, dated 10 January 1879. In it he says: 'I am glad that you are interested in my book: Ellacombe and other experts in such matters are very complimentary. I have a copy of Cornwall Bells & also the book on Cambridge ones by Dr. Raven: he is a good scholar. The Cornwall book is poorly got up.' Rutland certainly had a short print run, for a note in the front states that only 250 copies were printed, and for Lincolnshire only 210 copies were printed, 200 for subscribers and 10 for presentation. I find the stamped bindings, all very similar, quite pleasing. My own copy of Lincolnshire, a present from my wife before we were married, has been rebound but preserves the bookplate of Nathaniel Clayton, High Sheriff of Lincolnshire in 1881, fourth in the list of subscribers (after Queen Victoria, the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire and the bishop of Lincoln). Rutland sometimes turns up and the few times that Lincolnshire has appeared on the market makes me believe that the number stated to have been printed is correct.

However, I have doubts about the numbers printed of two books by Canon Raven. One of the earliest county books is the Church Bells of Cambridgeshire, the first edition of which was published in 1869. This has a nice blind-stamped binding, with a stamp of William Culverden's shield in the centre of the front and one of the arms of France and England quarterly on the back: this latter was associated with the beautiful IHU MERCI LADI HELP stamp, and was found by Raven on a bell at West Wickham. In the front it is stated that only one hundred copies were printed, but I have seen more copies than this would imply. As well as my own copy there are three others belonging to the Central Council Library, and over the years I have seen a number of others. The second edition was published in 1882, and while no doubt it was a much better contribution to comparative campanology, as a book it does not have such a nice feel to it. Printed for the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, it is likely that many more copies than the first edition were printed, although curiously it does not seem to occur as often. Raven's other book, Church Bells of Suffolk, was published in 1890, and the leaf opposite the title page states that the impression for sale was limited to 500 ordinary copies and 50 large paper copies. Most were in cloth (costing 20s.) with the Culverden stamp on the front - in black and not in gold - but a few copies were issued in half leather with marbled boards (costing 27s. 6d.). There seems to have been a problem in disposing of the book as it was advertised in Bell News until October 1901 and I have grave doubts about the total number printed, as the book seems to occur much too often for the total stated to be correct. I have the two versions in my own collection (but not a large paper copy), and there are four ordinary copies in the Central Council Library, and well as a large paper copy.

John L'Estrange's Church Bells of Norfolk was published by subscription in 1874, although a circular soliciting subscribers

was issued as early as 1864. No list of subscribers was published in the book, but it was probably well supported as it is not as scarce as some. With a blind-stamped cover typical of the period, the inside harks back to the previous century, with red lettering to the title page and nice engravings. Altogether an excellent book, both in content and presentation. The issue of the prospectus was probably stimulated by the publication in the same year of Tyssen's Church Bells of Sussex, the first county survey to be published. This was originally published in the Transactions of the Sussex Archaeological Society and then reprinted as a book. Again a nice blind-stamped binding, on the front is a stamp of a bell and wheel. This work, in either form, seems to turn up occasionally, but is clearly more desirable in book form. Most of the copies of this seem to have been given away by Tyssen, and so it may not have been published on the open market. My own copy was given to J.D.T. Niblett FSA in November 1865, and on another page there is a note 'Sept. 1884. Bought by W. George's Sons of Park St, Bristol at the sale of J.D. Niblett's library. 11/-'. It cost me much more than that! At the time that Tyssen wrote the book he was twenty years old, but had the advantage that his father, J.R. Daniel Tyssen, had collected bell inscriptions for many years, even employing persons to do this. Because of his youth, Tyssen lived long enough to produce a Jubilee article in 1914, printed in the Transactions for 1915. This was again produced in book form on its own, but with a reprint of the 1864 article added, and was issued in a plain maroon cloth. It is not too rare in either form - in my collection I have two copies of the book and one of the article in the Transactions, and there are two copies of the book in the Central Council Library.

Another name to be reckoned with is that of J.C.L. Stahlschmidt, whose pioneering documentary work, published in Surrey Bells and London Bell Founders (1884), established the framework for the early London founders. Published in stamped

green cloth, the details of the bells themselves are sketchy, but nonetheless it is an important work. He went on to complete North's work on bells in Hertfordshire (1886) and then his own work on Church Bells of Kent (1887). All were published in a similar green cloth, but with different blind stamping. I see that my copy of Kent was another that came from Stanley Crowe.

Two years after Kent was published, Charles Lynam's book on the Church Bells of Staffordshire came out. This is notable for several reasons, not always good! While it only gives the bare inscriptions on the bells, it makes up for this by giving many illustrations of lettering, that most valuable tool for comparative purposes. There are also a series of drawings of towers. It has one great drawback: it was not a stitched binding but the dreaded gutta percha, in effect an early type of paperback, the equivalent of the awful modern so-called 'perfect' binding. The net result is that every unrestored copy is in pieces, and it takes a good binder to restore a copy properly. I well remember buying a copy in Lichfield 30 years or more ago, and the staff having to check that every plate was there as it was completely loose in its case. I have had several copies over the years, but the one that I have kept is one that I bought from Pat Cannon, which he had had well restored.

Another book that is well worth having is Cock's Church Bells of Buckinghamshire (1897), which I rate very highly. This occurs occasionally, but because of the number of pages (760) can become loose in its case. It is well worth restoring properly, as the front cover is nicely stamped, with a rectangular stamp containing three bells in the centre. The front cover of Owen's Church Bells of Huntingdonshire (1899) has the same, or similar design, no doubt because Jarrolds published both of these books. Huntingdonshire was limited to a print run of 30 large paper copies and 200 ordinary copies, and seldom comes up. It is worth noticing that there are two variants of the cover, one

with the same bell stamp as Buckinghamshire, and another with a shield containing a bell. There does not seem to be any logic in which is used. Of the ordinary copies accessible to me, my own two copies have the shield, whereas the Library copy has the three-bell stamp. The Library has a large paper copy, which also has the three-bell stamp.

I was fortunate when I started collecting books on bells because there were still there to be found, if you went looking for them and were persistent. The situation is very different now, with few appearing on the market and those that do being highly priced. Clearly there is scope with later twentieth century books on bells, some of those from the first part of the century being ranked with the nineteenth century texts, and with keeping up with books as they are published.

I have not mentioned texts on change ringing itself. When I started building up my collection I was interested in the bells themselves - and still am. However, my developing interest in the history of change ringing caused me to start adding books on this to my shelves, and I have accumulated a number. Of course, with the Central Council Library at my disposal, any books I need are at hand. With an interest in books it has stimulated me to write on bibliographic matters in the Essays for the Friends, and draw together material from the Library, my own and other collections. These have, I hope, shown that there is scope within more modern texts for the collector at a more reasonable price than the early county books on bells.

To be Published by Subscription,

IN OCTAVO, PRICE 15s.

Notes on the Bells and Bell-founders

OF NORFOLK.

BY

JOHN. L'ESTRANGE.



WHILST everything of interest in our ancient Churches, from the floor to the roof, has been the subject of examination, the BELLS alone have been neglected. The present volume is undertaken to supply this omission. It purpōses to treat of the Bell-founders of the District, to note the Inscriptions and Devices upon the Bells, and to illustrate their History, from the Inventories of Edward VI., from old Parish Accounts, and other records.

Numerous Engravings of Gothic Letters, Founders' Stamps, and other devices, accurately copied from the Bells, will embellish the letter-press.

Subscribers' Names are received by the Publishers, MESSRS. CUNDALL AND MILLER, Rampant Horse Street, Norwich.

December, 1864.

(Over.)

Figure 1. The prospectus for L'Estrange's *Church Bells of Norfolk* (from C.C. Library).

THE
CHURCH BELLS OF SUSSEX,

WITH THE
INSCRIPTIONS OF ALL THE BELLS
IN THE COUNTY.

BY
AMHERST DANIEL-TYSSEN,
OF MERTON COLLEGE, OXFORD, ESQ.



REPRINTED FROM VOL. XVI. OF THE SUSSEX ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY'S COLLECTIONS.

Leves:
G. P. BACON, SUSSEX ADVERTISER OFFICE.
1864.

Figure 2. The first county book on church bells.

THE CHURCH BELLS

OF

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE :

THEIR INSCRIPTIONS, TRADITIONS, AND PECULIAR USES ;

WITH

CHAPTERS ON BELLS AND THE NORTHANTS
BELL FOUNDERS.

BY THOMAS NORTH, F.S.A.,

HONORARY MEMBER AND HONORARY SECRETARY OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE
ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LEICESTER: SAMUEL CLARKE.

1878.

Figure 3. A typical title page for one of North's books.

THE
CHURCH BELLS OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE;

A CHRONICLE OF
THE PRINCIPAL CAMPANOLOGICAL EVENTS

THAT HAVE OCCURRED WITHIN THE COUNTY.

TO WHICH IS APPENDED

A LIST OF THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE BELLS.

BY
J. J. RAVEN, B.D.,

OF EMMANUEL COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, HEAD MASTER OF YARMOUTH
GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

"Omnia solum laudet Dominum."

Inscription on the 3rd bell at Stetchworth.

"Nec manet in terra fossoris mersa latebris

Mens, sed fert domino vota precesque Deo."

Geo. Fabricius.

LOWESTOFT:
SAMUEL TYMMS, 80, HIGH STREET.

1869.

Figure 4. Title page of the first edition of *Church Bells of Cambridgeshire*, written before Raven obtained his D.D.

SURREY BELLS
AND
LONDON BELL-FOUNDERS.

*A CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF BELL INSCRIPTIONS.*

BY
J. C. L. STAHLSCHMIDT,
PAST MASTER OF THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF FOUNDERS,
MEMBER OF THE ROYAL ARCHÆOLOGICAL INSTITUTE, AND OF THE SURREY ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY.

LONDON:
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.
1884.

Figure 5. *Surrey Bells...*, a landmark in county books.

THE CHURCH BELLS
OF
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

*Their Inscriptions, Founders, Uses, and Traditions;
&c.*

BY

ALFRED HENEAGE COCKS, M.A.,

F.Z.S., F.R.G.S.,

(JOINT) HON. SEC. DUCKS ARCHITECTURAL AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY.



(At Wingrave.)

LONDON:
JARROLD & SONS, 10 & 11, WARWICK LANE, E.C.

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1897.

Figure 6. Setting a high standard: Cocks's *Buckinghamshire*.