

St Mary's Bells



Written by Mr C H Bray, 1955

When I first climbed the belfry as a young man, there were three wheels, indicating that there were once three bells, or that it was originally intended to have that number, as was the case with the other two churches in the village (*Earls & Dauntsey*).

From an inventory of the church goods made in the reign of Edward VI (1553) (W.A.M. X11), we know that there were only two bells at that time. It is the third, or heaviest, bell that is missing. This is a piece of information which is essential to leave on record for future reference, as the two bells now hang in the second and third bell cages, whereas, when I first saw them, they were in the first and second.

The wheel of the first cage was taken away when the change was made some time in the 1920's. No doubt the change was made in order to carry the ropes away from the centre of the vestry, where they used to hang, and so allow more room for the officiating minister.

Anyone visiting the belfry today would naturally conclude on seeing the empty first cage that its bell had been taken away; the fact is, the third bell has been missing for centuries, or maybe the original intention of having three bells was never carried out.

The timber of the bell frames appears to be in good condition, although it has been there for 500 years. There is nothing like good, solid, English oak for standing up to the wear and tear of centuries.

The second bell is pre-Reformation - there are only 29 bells in the county as old, and there were three in the Winterbournes.

1854 W.A.M. Vol 2, The Rev W C Lukes, shows:

*Winterbourne Cherborough, 2 (vide supra)

1 Treble "Love the Lord" I.W. 1602

2 Mediaeval Bell

I.W. doubtless stands for J Wallis of Salisbury, the earliest founder in Wilts then known.

*An alternative name for Winterbourne Gunner

Jan Oliver
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