

Information from Chris Pickford's survey of Worcestershire bells and clocks – draft only (this version 26 April 2014)

BROUGHTON HACKETT

St.Leonard

This is a humble little church, the oldest part being the C14th nave with a west window in the Decorated style. The walls are of lias stone. The building underwent a modest restoration and partial rebuilding under A.E. Perkins of Worcester in 1843. It is, nevertheless, recognisably the same building as that shown in the watercolour of c.1815 by Thomas Rickards.

The belfry is in the form of a turret over the west end of the church, supported internally on two long beams spanning the width of the nave between the north and south walls. Outside it is weatherboarded, with a pyramid rood, vane and weathercock. Inside the cladding, the structure is of some age and has timber uprights linked by horizontal members and diagonal bracing.

There is no fixed access to the turret but a hatchway in the ceiling at the south west corner of the church gives access to the roofspace from where a short wooden ladder leads to the bell chamber.

The turret contains two ancient bells - less than a semitone apart in note - as follows:

Bell

Inscription

1. + AVE : MARIJA : GRACIA
2. + I H E S U S : N A Z A R E T H S : R E X : I V D E O R V M

Bell	Founder and date	Diameter	Mouldings	Hz	Note	Cwt.	Qrs.	Lbs.
1.	Warwick founder, c.1350	20 ⁷ / ₈	3:2-2:3:2	1561.5	G-7	2	1	0*
2.	Warwick founder, c.1350	23 ⁷ / ₈	3:2-2:3:2	1503	F#+26	2	3	0*

These bells are beautiful castings, neatly inscribed in Gothic capitals and with clean mouldings and nicely-formed canons. The pairs of mouldings above and below the inscription and at the lip are flat in section, indicating an early date. They are both of the same date and from the same foundry. They may be compared with two bells at Beaudesert (Warwickshire) with identical lettering and another at Whitchurch (also Warwickshire) which is similar, but probably later. They seem to date from the mid-C14th, and on the basis of their geographical distribution Warwick has been suggested as a possible place of casting.

There is no bellframe as such, and the bells merely hang between four parallel east-west beams - two for each bell either side of a central beam supporting a post under the apex of the turret. These beams all rest on the square of timbers at the base of the roof. The smaller bell hangs on the north side, the larger to the south. The bells were quarter turned and rehung with new fittings by Whites of Appleton in 1972, including Iroko stocks, plate gudgeons, ball bearings, clappers suspended from independent crown staples and iron chiming levers. The bells were photographed and recorded in the Appleton workshops by Fred Sharpe. The work was undertaken at a cost of £155.

There were two bells here – evidently the same ones – in 1552. The Edwardian Inventory lists “In the steple ij bells a sacring bell a liche bell.

Before they were rehung in 1972-3 the bells were hung with old-fashioned fittings. The smaller bell was hung for deadrope ringing with an oak stock, drive-in-gudgeons, stock hoops, plain bearings, and full wheel. The bell was secured to its stock with nailed straps. The larger bell was hung for ringing with similar fittings except that it was fitted with an iron latchet stay and slider. The fittings were of C17th or C18th date.

Visited: CJP and Paul Cattermole, 26 February 1969; Fred Sharpe (at Appleton) 14 December 1972 and 17 April 1973; CJP and Eric Carter, 26 April 2014; Thanks to Marion Capell (2014) and to Bill Jones (Peopleton) who kindly provided a suitable ladder

Source notes

Broughton Hackett: Account of church and parish in John Noake, *The Rambler in Worcestershire* (1854) (pink cover) p.197 etc – The church is simply a small oblong building, with wooden bell-cot. It has recently been renovated – apparently almost rebuilt as well as repewed

Broughton Hackett: Application for reseating and repairs, with partial rebuilding, 1843 – rejected. A.E. Perkins, of Worcester (Architect). No plans in the archive. Further reference in minutes Vol.11 p.224 (LPL - ICBS file 3177, details from website only)

Broughton Hackett: Conveyance of addition to churchyard, 2 March 1892; Consecration of addition to churchyard, 12 May 1892 (Worcester Diocesan records – Registrar's index)

Broughton Hackett: Extracts from Dr. Peter Prattinton's notes (with contemporary illustration of the church by Thomas Rickards) in *Transactions of the Worcestershire Archaeological Society* Vol.IX (New Series) (1932) p.106 – visited 19 August 1812. No mention of bells or belfry in the notes published here [but Walters p.57 says Prattinton gives the inscriptions]. Rickards illustration shows square weatherboarded turret with pyramid spire

Broughton Hackett: Notes on bells (in F.A.White's workshop, 17 April 1973). Smaller bell + AVE : MARIA : GRACIA (20⁷/₈" diameter, 19¹/₄" L/C and c.5³/₄" canons); Larger + IHESVS : NAZARENVS : REX : IVDEORVM (20⁷/₈" diameter, 19¹/₄" L/C, 5⁵/₈" canons) (Sharpe collection at Pitt Rivers – Worcs); Pictures of the two mediaeval bells in White's workshop, 14 Dec.1972 (2 photographs), and one of F.A. White fitting plate gudgeon to wooden headstock of one of the bells (Sharpe collection at Pitt Rivers – Worcs photos)

Broughton Hackett: Whites of Appleton job book 1956-1974 - Two C14 bells rehung for swing chiming with Iroko stocks, plate gudgeons, chiming levers, independent staples etc. Quarter turned. Canons intact. Completed 13 December 1972 at a cost of £155. 1. 20⁷/₈"", 2. 23⁷/₈"

CJP - April 2014



