

THE CHURCH BELLS OF MONMOUTHSHIRE.

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VIII.

THE CHEPSTOW FOUNDRY.

THE craft of bell-founding appears to have been carried on at Chepstow in the Elizabethan period, if not earlier, and it is quite possible that some of the unassigned bells in the county, such as those of R.P. and G.P. (1598) may have their origin here. The foundry is, however, first mentioned in the will of Richard Cleyton (1630) husband of Margaret Cleyton, whose tomb, dated 1605, is in the chancel of Chepstow Church. He leaves money "*to build a school-house at the end of the bell-house in Chepstow.*" [This was in Welsh Street, and the school-house later became an inn, "The Three Cranes," and was in 1936 the residence of a doctor.] In 1670 it belonged to Charles and George Green, who conveyed it to John and Margaret Evans in that year. In 1674 it passed to Thomas and Joan Turbett, and their daughter, Joan Turbett, sold it to *Evan Evans and Lydia his wife* for £25 7s. Od., on July 5th, 1710. It remained in the Evans family until June 17th, 1772, when Mrs. Elizabeth Rudhall, widow, devisee of the will of Elizabeth Evans of Chepstow, only daughter and heir-at-law of her father, *William Evans* of Chepstow; gentleman,¹ conveyed the property to Thomas Davies. In 1785 it passed to William Williams, and in 1809 was conveyed by him and his wife to Richard Williams in trust for Lewis Williams, who in 1820 mortgaged it for £2,000. In 1878 it was the property of Edward Pendril King. It continued to be called "*the bell-house*" until 1905, when it is referred to merely as "property in Welsh Street," and is identified by a plan.² The workshop or foundry appears to have extended into the Castle Vale, at the back of Welsh Street.

¹ He had evidently retired from active work before his death in 1770. His last traceable bell is dated 1767.

² Information kindly supplied by the Itton Estate solicitors, Messrs. Rider, Heaton Meredith and Mills, in 1926. The property is referred to by them as "*Boscobel House.*"

Evan Evans I, who is said to have learned his trade as an apprentice to Abraham Rudhall I¹ of Gloucester (see article in *Western Mail*, June 30th, 1936) thus started his work at Chepstow (about 1686) in an existing, but probably derelict, bell-house, which was to be the scene of many a casting for nearly a century. He probably rented it at first, for, as seen above, it did not become his by purchase until 1710.

His earliest bell so far discovered is at *Ystradowen*, Glam., 1686, for the tenor at *Llanblethian* in the same county, dated 1685 (the year of its bequest to that church by the will of Sir Leoline Jenkins of Cowbridge) cannot have been cast before 1695, for it bears as stops the impressions of obverse and reverse of a crown-piece of William III, whereas until the death of Mary in 1694, the heads of both monarchs appear side by side on their coinage. His earliest in this county is *Llansoy No. 2*, 1688 (Fig. 31):

As will be seen in the list appended, Evan Evans was soon sending out from Chepstow a steady stream of bells, mainly of course to his own county and Glamorgan, but also to Gloucestershire and across the Bristol Channel to Somerset and Devon, in spite of the competition of the Rudhalls in those counties. He also penetrated to Carmarthen and Cardigan, but so far I have not met any of his work in Pembrokeshire. In 1726 and 1729 bells were supplied as far north as Cartmel in Lancashire, but by this time he had been succeeded by his sons, Evan and William. His founding was not always done at Chepstow in the earlier years of the business, for the ring of six at *Llantrisant*, Glam., made by him in 1718, was cast at the church itself. In 1894 when repairs were being done to the tower, excavations at its base revealed the remains of a temporary bell-foundry, with parts of the copes and cores of bells, as well as fragments of bell metal from the founding. A large portion of the core of one bell is still preserved in the tower, and this was found on measurement to coincide with the dimensions of one of the ring.² During the same year and the next, six bells were cast for *Peterston-super-Ely*, and several at *St. Nicholas* (of which Nos. 4 and 5 remain) as well as a bell for *Merthyr Dyfan*, all within a few miles of *Llantrisant*, and it is quite possible that these also may have been cast in the neighbourhood. In 1722-4 the foundry seems to have been entirely occupied

¹ Rudhall's earliest bell is, however, 1684, and Evan Evans' first bell 1686.

² *Arch. Camb.*, 1894, pp. 323-4, where the ring is erroneously attributed to Rudhall.

in Devon (*Berrynarbour*, 1-6, 1722; *Kentisbury*, 1-4; and *Poltimore*, 1-6, 1723; and *King's Nympton*, 1-5; *Morchard Bishop*, 5; *Stoke Canon*, 4; and *Templeton*, 2, 1724) and these may be also examples of "itineration." Later on, the work seems to have been carried out exclusively at Chepstow.

His bells are all well cast and tuneful; they usually bear a simple English inscription, but occasionally he strikes a patriotic note as at *Llanfihangel Crucorney*, 1700—"GOD BLES KING WILIAM"¹ (Fig. 23) and at *St. Maughan's*, 1714—"GOD PRESERVE QUEEN ANNE."

All his inscriptions are in Roman capitals of several types, and he sometimes uses as stops impressions of coins. Thus at *Llanblethian* (Glam.) on the tenor are obverse and reverse of a William III crown, and obverse of a Charles II half-crown, whilst on the firebell there (1702) are the obverse and reverse of a Queen Anne shilling. He often employs a kind of "cabled" stop or engrailing between words as at *Cwmyoy* No. 5 (1700) (Fig. 14) whilst at *Porthkerry*, Glam. (1695) he uses pairs of x's and at *St. Maughan's* (1714) he uses the same in threes (Fig. 47). On a few of his earlier bells, as at *Llansoy* No. 2 (1688) occur single cross-hatched bars, varied by the same triply linked (Fig. 31).

In 1710, the year of his purchase of the foundry site, he was joined by his sons, *Evan* and *William*, whose names appear on the bells at *Llanwern* in that year (William on Nos. 2 and 3 and Evan on 4 and 5) though William's name does not occur again until 1718, and the Evan here may be the elder or younger. William seems, however, to have shown a special interest in towers and bells from his early youth, for we read in Archdeacon Coxe's *Tour in Monmouthshire*, 1802, that "The original tower (of Chepstow Church) which stood at the eastern extremity of the church (i.e. the central tower of the Norman church) fell down about ninety years ago; according to the account of the old clerk, *one Evans, a bell founder*, who died in 1770, aged 80, ascended to the top a few days before its fall." [1904 edn., p. 290.] The tower fell in 1701, and thus William Evans was only eleven years old when he performed this hazardous climb; it is interesting to note that he was to place in the new tower, erected in 1705-6, a ring of six bells in 1735, augmented to eight by him in 1749.

Both names, Evan and William, occur from 1718, though the *Evan* may have been father or son, for Evan I lived till 1724, his will being

¹ This may have been due to the Rector—see under *Llanfihangel*.

proved December 17th in that year. The Evan who continues to be joined with William until 1727 is no doubt Evan II.

Evan I had six children by his wife Lydia, namely *Evan* described as *maltster*¹ at his death in 1730; *William* the founder; *Sarah* m. Rev. Thomas Walters,² rector of Itton; *Elizabeth* d. 1709; *Joseph* d. 1715; and *Faith*, the wife of John Tudor of Cowbridge, d. 1718.

In his will Evan I leaves a guinea apiece to the three children of his daughter Sarah Walters, and leaves the whole of his landed estate to his "loving wife Lydia, during her naturall life," and "*the work house and orchard which is now in my possession and was called Turbetts unto my son William Evans and his heires for ever; . . . unto my two sons Evan Evans and William Evans all my working tools to be equally divided between them.*"³ At first sight it seems strange that Evan did not succeed to the property or part of it, but he was otherwise provided for. His grandmother, Elizabeth Evans, had married for her second husband George Cross of Chepstow, *maltster*,⁴ and Evan II had evidently joined the malting business of his step-grandfather. He survived his father six years only, and in the letters of administration to his widow, Elizabeth, in 1730 he is described as "maultster." Lydia, the wife of Evan Evans I, by her will dated August 12th, 1734, and proved June 20th, 1739, left to her grandson, Evan Evans,⁵ her mansion house called "The Squirrel" in Welsh Street, "which I purchased of Thomas Rouse, Esq.;" to Elizabeth, eldest daughter of her son William Evans, a messuage in Caldicot; and mentions also her daughter Sarah, her eldest sister Elizabeth, and her grandchildren William and Elizabeth Walters, as well as her son-in-law, Thomas Walters, clk.⁶

The partnership between Evan II and William lasted till 1727, their last bell being that now at All Saints, Llandaff North, formerly the ting-tang at the cathedral, bearing the inscription INTER OMNES PAX EE ⚡ WE ⚡ 1727. Their workmanship maintained the reputation

¹ He had ceased to be interested in the foundry after 1727. Probably both of the partners had other activities, for William is himself styled "mercier" in 1731. (Chepstow Parish Registers, January 18th.)

² *Thos. Walters, cler.*, signs the letters of administration of Elizabeth Evans in 1730 as a witness. Her marriage took place at Mathern, May 29th, 1717.

³ *Llandaff Registry*, 2-155.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3-50. See pedigree in Bradney, *Hist. of Monmouthshire* IV, i, 16.

⁵ Son of Evan Evans II, bap. 1720.

⁶ *Llandaff Registry* XII, 1734-40; *Talycoed MSS.* V, 48.

of their father and they supplied several important rings of which the eight still at Cowbridge, Glam, 1722 (retuned, sandblasted, and rehung in steel frames by Messrs. Taylor of Loughborough in 1935) is perhaps their greatest achievement. Their inscriptions, as seen above, are sometimes in Latin, and usually accurately spelt.

From 1727 William works alone and his reputation must have extended rapidly, for in 1729 he was chosen to recast five bells at Exeter Cathedral, including the celebrated tenor "Grandison," weighing nearly $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons. This he carried out successfully at a total cost of £391 14s. 0d., the items being as follows:—

For recasting ye 3 crack'd bells of St. Peters, Exon, viz ye 5th 8th and tenour, and likewise ye 3rd and 4th tho' sound, this being necessary to make a complete musical peal of ten thus

<i>For recasting 15,100 pd. of metal at £1. 18s. per Hund.</i>	211. 8. 0
<i>Taking ye bells down and hanging yem up again</i>	70. 0. 0
<i>The allowance of 5 pd per hundred for waste . . . at 1s 2d per pd.</i>	44. 0. 0
<i>Six hundred pd. encrease of gross wt at 1s 2d</i>	39. 4. 0
<i>To ye Foundery</i>	20. 0. 0
<i>To ye Stocks</i>	5. 0. 0
<i>To ye workmen</i>	2. 2. 0

£391. 14. 0¹

The tenor, "Grandison," named after a former Bishop of Exeter, was the most notable bell in the West Country. As recast by Evans it remained until 1902, when it was recast by Messrs. Taylor of Loughborough, to a weight of more than $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons, forming now the tenor of the heaviest ringing peal in the world. The whole ring was referred to by Canon Ellacombe of Exeter (c. 1880) as "a noble ring surpassed by none in the kingdom," and though his opinion may have been biassed by his enthusiasm it is nevertheless a high tribute from such an authority to the sound workmanship of our founder.

William Evans was responsible also for a good many rings of eight, as well as many of five and six bells, a large proportion of which remain

¹ *Exeter Cathedral Records* quoted in a *Western Mail* article by Rev. Gordon Hamlin in 1936.

in use and still giving good service after two centuries ; thus at Chepstow is a ring of eight, six of 1735 with two added in 1749. Many other single bells as well as sets of two, three, and four will also be found in the appended list. It is from his hands also that the Cartmel (Lancashire) bells of 1726 and 1729 proceeded.

Most of his bells are rather plain and devoid of ornament, bearing the names of churchwardens, etc., only, apart from an occasional "PEACE TO THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD," or "PROSPERITY TO ALL MY BENEFACTORS," or as at *Llanwern* on his earliest bell "PROSPERITY TO ALL THOSE THAT LOVES GOOD BELLS." Very occasionally, as at *Risca* (1734) and *Penallt* No. 4 (1751) he uses a graceful scroll ornament (Fig. 43).

His only lapse into the bad taste very prevalent among his contemporaries in the craft is a mild example—at *Backwell, Som.* (No. 5) 1758, where he ridicules his rivals, the Bilbies of Chewstoke, whose unsuccessful work he had remedied, thus :—

BILBY & BOOSH MAY COME & SEE
WHAT EVANS & NOTT HAVE DONE BY ME.¹

Like his father, William's work is to be found at *Cartmel* (1729) and also at *Satterthwaite* (1737) Lancs., whilst at *Tresco*, Scilly Islands, is also a bell by him of date 1740. The last traceable bell from the foundry is at *Bathampton, Som.*, 1767, though he lived for three years after this date.

He seems to have taken considerable interest in local affairs, signing the registers as Churchwarden in 1731 and 1732, as his father had done in 1717. He married Elizabeth, daughter of John Gosling, "master of ye Chepstow Boat," who died in 1726² and had issue two daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah ; the latter of whom married George Kemeys of "Panteague," Gent., and died January 10th, 1759, aged 25, whilst the former died unmarried a few months after her father.

William Evans died June 9th, 1770, in his eightieth year, and was buried in the family vault in Chepstow churchyard on June 14th.

¹ *Bush* and *Nott* were the respective bell-hangers.

² *Registers of Chepstow Parish Church* (W. H. James), p. 20.

The tomb bears inscriptions to the following :—

William Evans "Belfounder" d. 9 Jun 1770 in his 80th year
Elizabeth his wife d. 7 Jan 1760
Sarah his daughter, wife of Geo. Kemeys of Panteayne, d.
 19 Jan 1759 aged 25
Elizabeth his daughter d. 18 Nov. 1770 aged 39
Jacob Rudhall, Esq.,¹ late of the Monmouthshire Militia d. 12 Nov.
 1795 aged 51.

The Rudhall and Evans families had thus become connected by marriage. In the pedigree of the Evans family given by Bradney in his *History of Monmouthshire* IV, i, 16, no connection is however shown, nor does it appear in the Rudhall pedigree given by Ellacombe, *Gloucester*, p. 199.

As we have already seen, Elizabeth, daughter and heiress to William Evans, died five months after her father and by her will appointed as her executrix, Elizabeth Rudhall of Bristol, widow. Probate was granted in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury² the same year.

She leaves to relatives sums varying from 500£ to 1000£, including her "relation," Mrs. Stephens of Gloucester, her "kinsman," Mr. Sayce of London, and her servant, Ann Watkins, with residue to Elizabeth Rudhall of Bristol, who was, no doubt, a relative of the Gloucester founders, so that in all probability the foundry tools, stamps, and lettering dies passed to the Gloucester firm, to be absorbed by Mears and Stainbank of London in 1829, and transferred to Whitechapel about ten years later. Thus ended a foundry, which, though perhaps of no great size, had been able to compete with the best products of the English foundries for nearly a century, and to make a notable contribution to campanology in the West of England and a great part of Wales. It will be noticed that comparatively few of their bells have needed recasting—a proof of sound workmanship and good material.

Appended is a list of as many of the bells of this foundry as have been traced by the writer in the course of more than thirty years devotion to the subject. It is too much to hope that the list is

¹ *Records of the Royal Mon. Militia* by Captain Noel, 1886, p. 31: "Among the captains . . . Jacob Rudhall." The name does not occur in the Rudhall pedigree by Ellacombe, *Gloucestershire*, p. 199.

² P.C.C., Jenner, 431: *Talycoed MSS.*, X, 71.

complete, as many of the Welsh counties are still not fully explored. In the case of Somerset, Gloucester, and Devonshire the lists are taken from Ellacombe, as there is no more recent survey of these counties, and thus some of the bells marked as still existing may have been recast since the lists were made. The same applies in a less degree to some of the other counties.¹

Evans Evans I (1686-1724).

[Those in brackets since recast. T = ting-tang.]

1686	Pendoylan, Glam.	[2]	1710	Tidenham, Glouc.	6
	Ystradowen, Glam.	1	1711	Lisvane, Glam.	2, 3
1688	Kemeys Inferior, Mon.	1 ?		Henllys, Mon.	2
	Llangevieu, Mon.	1	1713	Braunton, Devon	[1, 4, 6]
	Llansoy, Mon.	2		Northwick, Glouc.	1, 2
1690	Llancarvan, Glam.	4 ?		St. Mellon's, Mon.	[3-6]
	Badminton, Glouc.	3		Tintern, St. Mary, Mon.	1
1695	Llanblethian, Glam.	6 ²	1714	Llanfihangel-y-Llewern, Mon.	2
	Porthkerry, Glam.	1, 3		St. Maughan's, Mon.	1
1696	Wollaston, Glouc.	1	1715	Llanelli, Brec.	2, 3
1697	Cwmyoy, Mon.	4		Llansawel, Carm.	1
1698	Kilgorrwg, Mon.	1	1716	Capel y Ffin, Brec.	1 ?
1699	Caldicot, Mon.	[6]		Llansoy, Mon.	1
	Portskewett, Mon.	1		Monmouth School, Mon.	1
1700	Gwenddwr, Brec.	1, 2		Newchurch West, Mon.	1
	Cwmyoy, Mon.	1, 5	1717	Conwil Caio, Carm.	1-3
	Llanfihangel Crucorney, Mon.	1, T		Peterston-super-Ely, Glam.	1-6 ?
	Roggiett, Mon.	1		St. Nicholas, Glam.	4, 5
1701	Pendoylan, Glam.	[1]	1718	Llantrisant, ³ Glam.	1-6
	Dingestow, Mon.	3		Merthyr Dyfan, Glam.	3
	Overmonnow, Monmouth, Mon.	1	1719	Llanfihangel Cwmdru, Brec.	1-6
				Llangattock, Brec.	2-4, 6, 7
1702	Llanblethian, Glam.	T		Laleston, Glam.	1
	Itton, Mon.	1	1720	Llanerchaeron, Card.	1
1703	Pendoylan, Glam.	[4]		Swansea, St. Mary, Glam.	[3-7]
1705	Pendoylan, Glam.	[3]	1721	Llangorse, Brec.	1-5 [6]
	Llandegveth, Mon.	1		Lampeter, Card.	1
1707	St. Athan's, Glam.	2		Llangyndeyrne, Carm.	1
	St. Fagan's, Glam.	1	1722	Bristol, St. Mark, Glouc.	1-6
	Llangattock-v-Avel, Mon.	[2], 3-6		Berrynarbour, Devon	1-6
	Redwick, Mon.	1	1723	Kentisbury, Devon	1-4
1708	Crickhowell, Brec.	1		Poltimore, Devon	1-6
	Partrishow, Brec.	2	1724	King's Nympton, Devon	1-5
	Rudry, Glam.	2		Morcharth Bishop, Devon	5
1709	Rumney, Mon.	5		Stoke Canon, Devon	4
1710	Brynna, Glam.	1		Templeton, Devon	2
	Llanddewi Rhydderch, Mon.	1			
	Llanwern, Mon.	1, 4, 5			

¹ The author would be glad to learn of any additions or corrections to the following lists.

² It bears date 1685, but two obverses of Wm. III crown, first struck in 1695.

³ These were cast on the spot ; see *Arch. Camb.*, 1894, p. 323.

Evans and William Evans (1718-1727).

1718	Chulmleigh, Devon ..	1-6	1723	Mitcheltroy, Mon. ..	3
	E. Buckland, Devon ..	1-4		St. Decuman's, Som. ..	3
1720	Beaford, Devon ..	3	1725	Llancillo, Heref. ..	2
	Chaldon, Devon ..	3	1726	Cartmel, Lancs. ..	1
	Chawleigh, Devon ..	2-6		Coity, Glam. ..	1-6
	Mariansleigh, Devon ..	2, 5		Llanblethian, Glam. ..	4
1721	Bronllys, Brec. ..	1-4		Llandogo, Mon. ..	1
	Cruwys Morchard, Devon..	2-6		Peterston Wentlloog, Mon. [3-5] 6, [7] 8	
1722	Cowbridge, Glam. ..	1-8		Wilcricck, Mon. ..	1
	Cwmyoy, Mon. ..	3, 6	1727	Llandaff, All Saints, Glam.	1

William Evans only (1710-1767).

1710	Llanwern, Mon. ..	2, 3	1739	Penyclawdd, Mon. ..	1
1723	St. Decuman's, Som. ..	1		Broomfield, Som. ..	5
1725	Walterstone, Heref. ..	1	1740	Hay, Brec. ..	1
	Roath, St. Margaret, Glam.	1		Tresco (Scilly Is.) Corn. ..	1
1727	Llanllwni, Carm. ..	1		Westleigh, Devon ..	[1]
	Thelbridge, Devon ..	1-4		Goodrich, Heref. ..	1
1728	Roseash, Devon ..	1-4		Whitney, Heref. ..	1-3, 5
1729	Exeter, Devon ..	1 [5] 8 [10]	1741	Brushford, Som. ..	1-5
	Cartmel, Lancs. ..	2	1742	Morchard Bishop, Devon ..	2
1731	Littleham, Devon ..	3		Morebath, Devon ..	2-6
	Washford Pyne, Devon ..	3		Cromhall, Glouc. ..	2
	Rumney, Mon. ..	3		Redland, Glouc. ..	1
1732	Goldcliff, Mon. ..	1		Withycombe, Som. ..	4
	Olveston, Glouc. ..	2-5	1743	Morchard Bishop, Devon ..	4
1733	Olveston, Glouc. ..	1		Silverton, Devon ..	1-5
	Aylburton, Glouc. ..	1	1744	Letton, Heref. ..	2
	Charles, Devon ..	1-5		Bedwas, Mon. ..	3-5
	Countisbury, Devon ..	3		Penhow, Mon. ..	1-5
	Newton, St. Cyres, Devon..	1-5	1745	St. Margaret's, Heref. ..	1
	Shirwell, Devon ..	1-6		Machynlleth, Mont. ..	1-3
1733	Lisvane, Glam. ..	1	1746	Llanbedr Ystradyw, Brec. ..	1
1734	Filton, Glouc. ..	1-5		Llanblethian, Glam. ..	5
	Penterry, Mon. ..	1		St. Mary Hill, Glam. ..	1-4
	Risca, Mon. ..	1		Hewelsfield, Glouc. ..	4
1735	Chepstow, Mon. ..	3-8	1747	St. Andrews, Glam. ..	1-5
1736	Llanbedr Ystradyw, Brec. ..	4	1748	Sandford, Devon ..	1-5
	Tiverton, St. Peter, Devon	8		Bristol, St. Mary Port, Glouc.	3-8
	Compton Greenfield, Glouc.	1	1749	Chepstow, Mon. ..	1, 2
	Clifford, Heref. ..	4-8		Portbury, Som. ..	4, 5
1737	Tiverton, St. Peter, Devon	1-5	1750	Bristol, St. Mary Port, Glouc.	1, 2
	Woodbury, Devon ..	1	1751	Llanbedw Ystradyw, Brec. ..	2
	Cheriton, Glam. ..	1	1751	Lledrod, Card. ..	1
	Pennard, Glam. ..	1, 2		St. Arvan's, Mon. ..	1
	Satterthwaite, Lancs. ..	1	1752	Littleland, Glouc. ..	1-6
1738	Llanfihangel Ystrad, Card.	1		Mynyddislwyn, Mon. ..	2
	Llangadock, Carm. ..	[2, 3] 4		Redwick, Mon. ..	5
	Foy, Heref. ..	1-5		St. Pierre, Mon. ..	1
1739	Devynock, Brec. ..	6	1753	High Bickington, Devon ..	2-6
	Llywel, Brec. ..	1		Swymbridge, Devon ..	2, 6
	Chittlehampton, Devon ..	3-8		Tavistock, Devon ..	1, 3, 5, 6
1739	Morchard Bishop, Devon ..	3	1754	Chawleigh, Devon ..	1
	Bristol, St. Augustine, Glouc.	2		Witheridge, Devon ..	1-4, 6
	Bristol, St. Michael, Glouc.	1-6		Eglwysilan, Glam. ..	1-3