

**Corrections and Update at January 2020 to “The Bridgwater Bell Foundries (1739 to 1833)”
dated November 2019, by Geoffrey R. Marchant.**

I have now studied the listings of Bridgwater cast bells in the books by George W. Massey (The Church Bells of Somerset, 2011) and Christopher Dalton (The Bells and Belfries of Dorset, 2005) and have found that our numbers vary significantly. The main reason for my much lower numbers seems to be that both GWM and CD have found details of intermediate scrappings and re-castings between the original dates of casting and the dates of both Ellacombe's listings and those in the National Bell Register (NBR). Where these extra details have come from I have no idea as I would have thought that would need access to the founders' records or churchwardens' accounts for every location. Both authors have listed bells I did not find, whether in Somerset or South Wales.

So on page 1 where I stated that a total of 160 bells from the Bridgwater bell foundries still exist, of which 103 are in Somerset or Bath and Wells Diocese, GWM has 123 existing in Somerset alone, and CD has 117 in Somerset, but 194 total existing in all counties. CD also has a total of 307 for all the bells cast in Bridgwater whereas I had estimated 253 on page 3 of my document. However, even if we use CD's total of 307 bells cast over the period of 92 years as for my calculation on page 1 of my document, we get 3.94 mean per year, which is still much less than my figures for the Chepstow and Gloucester foundries based on existing bells. So my conclusion about the size of the Bridgwater foundry and its output being much less than the others is still correct - and that will remain correct when the extra Bayley bell previously missed by all of us, but described below, is added into the total.

On page 15 of my original document I said I thought that the Bayley bell from Charlynch (treble of old four in 1875, and later second of old five) had been used in the casting of two new trebles to augment the ring of six at Woolavington into a ring of eight. I have now been told that it was the old Llewelin and James tenor from Charlynch that was so used (together with the Charlynch treble of five, for both West Monkton and Woolavington augmentations) and that the 1743 Bayley second bell of the five went to Staple Fitzpaine to make that ring of five up to a six. The latter is confirmed by the NBR entry for Staple Fitzpaine. Interestingly the Charlynch third, quite an ancient bell with Latin inscription, went to Reykjavic to be used there, while the pre-1600 Bristol foundry fourth of the five went to Penselwood as tenor of the six there. Ellacombe gave the Latin inscription on the second of the four at that time, i.e. the bell which went to Reykjavic, as what looks like “CHRISTE PIE FLOS MARIE” (could that be 'Holy Christ Flower of Mary' – part Google translation, partly my guess!) and was 31 inch diameter. *[In passing, I well remember ringing on these Charlynch bells several times in the 1950's and 60's, (first visit 3.9.54), with stiff heavy ropes and enormous diameter sallies (probably also Bridgwater made), as a lad of 14 to 16 years I could not get my fingers fully around rope plus sally and so struggled to ring the second (I suspect, or third) when up, let alone trying to raise in peal! Ron Short or Fred Sweet, my excellent tutors, would have oiled the bell bearings before we started to ring but they still had to leave me behind, set the other four bells and give a helping hand to get mine fully up! Charlynch bells were removed 1982.]*

AN ADDITIONAL THOMAS BAYLEY BELL.

When I sent out my Bridgwater Bell Foundries document in October 2019 it was a lucky decision of mine to send a copy to our Old Morganians' local Bridgwater historians Chris Sidaway and author Roger Evans. Roger came back to me to say I had missed out one Thomas Bayley bell which he knew of in New Jersey, USA! He gave me online sites for news and pictures of this bell and said it was referred to as the 'Bridgeton Little Liberty Bell'. He mentioned he also had a copy somewhere

of a booklet written by Bill Chestnut of Bridgeton, New Jersey about 20 years ago weaving a story for children around this bell and its travels. I was lucky to get an e-mail address for Bill from the lady responsible for organising the 325th founding celebrations in 2019 whose e-mail address was given online. Having explained my interest to Bill, he very kindly sent me a copy of his booklet and told me that in 1998 he had visited Bridgwater, Somerset and the Blake Museum there and found out that indeed Thomas Bayley did have a foundry there in the 1700's. Previously it had been thought that the "Bridgewater" cast on their bell referred to Bridgewater, Massachusetts, and in fact the information on a plaque outside the present Court House in Bridgeton, and on a card in the wood and glass case the bell was now displayed in, claimed incorrectly that it came from Massachusetts! The bell had first been installed in the belfry of an earlier Court House there in 1763 to be used, as in England a town crier would use his handbell, to draw people together to hear special announcements. Thirteen years or so later it was dubbed "The Little Liberty Bell". (Lester and Pack of the Whitechapel Foundry, London, had provided a larger bell for Philadelphia in 1752 which, like our Big Ben at Westminster, had arrived before its tower was built and so had been temporarily erected in a ground-level frame and cracked by bad usage. The Philadelphia bell was then twice recast by local men John Pass and John Stow and was used in 1776 to announce the vote for independence but again became cracked in the 19th century.) The Bridgeton bell was later used as the town's fire station bell and eventually at two schools before being made redundant by electric bell systems. It was then put in the present County Court House and used in local celebrations and even taken to Philadelphia on one occasion in 1926 for a Liberty anniversary there. In 2019 it formed part of a procession around Bridgeton for their 325th founding celebrations. The online photos (reproduced here on pages 3 & 4) clearly show the 'THOs BAYLEY BRIDGEWATER 1763' inscription. When I was still awaiting measurements of its height and diameter I did some very rough scaling and I estimated its height to crown to be 12 to 14 inches and mouth diameter to be 14 to 16 inches*. (This would make it only slightly larger than the old school bell I referred to on page 3 of my document and perhaps somewhere near the size of the Bridgwater Gaol clock bell now at Bridgwater Blake Museum and by John Kingston 1823 ref. GWM. The great mystery about this Bridgeton bell (which other bell researchers have also missed from their lists**) is how did Bayley in Bridgwater, Somerset first get the order and then how did he deliver it – personally? - to Bridgeton? It appears to have had a wheel but no stay and therefore only to have been swing chimed, but the 'frame' it is now in appears to be simply two trestles sat on the cage bottom and not connected in any way. The well-patched headstock has gudgeons but at least one of these in one photo appears to tilt up at about ten degrees or so and therefore the bell can presumably only be sounded nowadays by pulling the clapper to the bell soundbow. Whether the original frame (which Bill Chestnut conjectures could have been made by local carpenters) was gradually cut away until this was all that was left is unknown, but the press photo showing the first part of the Thos. Bayley inscription certainly seems to have more framework than that shown in the "glass case" photo.

As far as the original order for a bell is concerned we can only assume that someone who knew of Bayley's Bridgwater, Somerset, foundry emigrated to, or visited, that area of New Jersey at just the right moment, or perhaps it was obtained secondhand somehow. As to its journey, we can assume coastal shipping from Bridgwater to Bristol, Liverpool, or some other large UK port, then by big ship to New York or Philadelphia, and then coastal shipping, land travel, or a mixture of the two to Bridgeton. I commented on page 3 of my document about the Bilbie bell in Fife, Scotland but the travels of this Bayley bell certainly surpass that!

* Further update 20.01.2020: I am very much indebted to historian Jim Bergmann in Bridgeton who has measured up this bell and gives its diameter as 15½ inches and height 11 inches and has taken more detailed pictures of the bearing assembly, see page 5 below. I compare this bell with others on page 4 below.

** Bell historian Chris Pickford has pointed out to me though that this Bridgeton bell is included in George Dawson's list of 'English bells in America' online.



Above: Online Photo of the Bridgeton Little Liberty Bell clearly showing the start of the Inscription.

Below: Bill Chestnut's photo of the other side of the bell & frame clearly showing '(Bridg)ewater 1763'.



Below: Online photo of the bell in its present day display case with Bob Crowe, in whose care the bell was for the 325th foundings celebrations, 2019.



I sent Jim's pictures to Chris Pickford and Chris commented that he had noted initials I.P. on the bell- frame but I had great difficulty seeing those, and in Bill Chestnut's booklet he had stated that carpenters David Sheppard and Samuel Fithian headed the frame construction team – however he says that was part of his 'historical fiction'. What other single bell I wonder has had a story book written specifically about it?

I did some comparisons of the Bridgeton bell with the three old Bridgwater Gaol Clock bells which are now on show at the Blake Museum. We are indebted to Mike Searle there for measuring up those bells and giving me those details as well as their dates and weights:-

Small bell	diameter 13inches	height 13 5/8 inches	None, AR?	No date	weight 45 lbs
Medium bell	diameter 19½ inches	height 15 inches	Founder AR	Date 1706	weight 117 lbs
Large bell	diameter 22inches	height 21 1/8 inches	J.Kingston	Date 1823	weight 215 lbs.

Unfortunately we have few other small bell details to compare with, especially of that era, except the 1770 Bayley clock bell at Oare (ref. Page 18 of my original document, this is confirmed as clock bell by both GWM's and CD's books).which is quoted as 19 inches diameter in GWM's book, but its height not recorded, and its weight estimated as 1½ cwt; i.e. both diameter and weight considerably bigger than the Bridgeton bell. From much later small bell diameters in the NBR it looked as though the Bridgeton bell might weigh somewhere between 84 lbs (0cwt.3qtr.0lb) and 105 lbs (0.3.21) – the latter figure being the quoted weight of the M & S 1957 smallest bell at East Huntspill, Somerset, which is shown as 15 ½ inches diameter. However, I note that the school bell of 1698 referred to on page 3 of my original document had height 11½ inches but diameter only 12 7/8 inches and weighed 49 lbs (0.1.21) with clapper. Factoring that weight by diameter and height ratios gives a much less estimate of 56 lbs for the Bridgeton bell. So I have to state a revised range of 56 lbs (0.2.0) and 105 lbs (0.3.21) for the Bridgeton bell, but if I had to give my best guess I would say somewhere around 66 lbs (0.2.10). We will never know for sure unless the bell is ever dismantled from its headstock and weighed!

Two more photos of the Bridgeton bell in its present display case. These photos are courtesy of Jim Bergmann. The first shows the “BRIDGEWATER” spelling; the second is an end view showing the peculiar three-hole plain bearing fitting with no brass cup and no top restraint at all.



A copy of Bill Chestnut's booklet and a small replica of the bell has been found in the Bridgwater Museum.
THOMAS BAYLEY – First Casting.

On page 1 of my original document I quoted the start of Bayley's bell casting as being in 1739 as is shown on the online founders.net and on page 4 I said I had found no Bayley's bell dated before

1743. In Christopher Dalton's book, however, he shows the first Bayley bell to have been at Dawlish, Devon cast in 1742 to be the third of the ring of five bells there.

THE KINGSTONS.

On pages 5 & 8 of my document I have shown an entry for T.I.Kingston which is what appeared in Ellacombe's Somerset Bells for the two bells at (Chapel) Allerton. I note that GWM says these two bells are by Edwin Kingston which would make sense for the date of 1832. The Bell founders Database omits a T.I.Kingston, and the NBR seems to omit Chapel Allerton altogether. GWM has done much research on the Kingston family (q.v.) and shows the lineage as Isaac casting bells 1801 to 1808, then his son John 1808 to 1829, and lastly John's eldest son Edwin in 1831/2. So unless there was a younger son of John with initials T.I. who helped Edwin and put his name on these two bells this will remain another mystery. (GWM may well have investigated and found that the Ellacombe entry was incorrect.) NB. The finish date given in the NBR for John cannot be correct at 1833 since GWM shows he died in 1831.) GWM's information also answers my query on the set up between Davis, Kingston and Pyke in that he believes that following Thomas Bayley's death the business was acquired by Thomas Pyke, who in 1782 employed George Davis to manage the bell business and he was followed by the Kingstons, though T.P. was still around.

What does seem another mystery is that GWM shows that in some parishes, such as Enmore and Nether Stowey, some of Bayley's and Bayley & Street's bells were very short lived. He has entries which show that at Enmore the 5 of old 5 lasted only 12 years from its casting in 1739 and then 46 years when recast by B & S; the 3 of that 5 scrapped after only 7 years; the 4 of the 5 lasted 75 years; and at Nether Stowey the 3 & 6 of B & S's ring of 6 were both recast by Thomas Bayley after only 20 years. At Sampford Brett GWM shows a Bayley & Street treble to the ring of 5 was cast in 1754 and recast by Thomas himself only six years later! Whether this was all to achieve better tuned rings or whether mis-use as H.B.Walters on page 357 of his book "Church Bells of England" suggests happened at other churches ("Bells however are easily cracked, and ringers are careless") we cannot tell. In other places Bayley's bells were considered of very good quality casting, but the above information, where-ever GWM achieved it, could possibly suggest a few early problems. (All others of his bells though seem to have lasted over 100 years, and some much longer and even to the present day.) It is interesting to note that the 1739 Enmore tenor bell is shown by GWM as being the first bell we know that he cast and installed. Perhaps that explains why the Durlough bell I referred to on page 4 of my earlier document was obtained from Wroth at Wellington (see below) in the same year as Bayley was only just getting going on casting bells in 1739.

THOMAS II WROTH.

On page 21 of my Bridgwater Bell Foundries document I mentioned Thomas II Wroth, bell founder at Wellington, Somerset. and I have now noted that both GWM and CD in their respective books (see p.1 here) have drawn attention to Thomas Bailey being the nephew of Wroth. I then had thoughts as to whether Bayley could have learnt about casting bells from Wroth, and perhaps worked with him for a while. To this end, I thought that if Bayley had used any of Wroth's inscriptions that would show a linkage. However, when I went through Wroth's inscriptions shown in Ellacombe's Church Bells of Somerset, I found that Wroth had been far less wordy than Bayley. Most of Wroth's simply gave Vicar and churchwarden's names, sometimes but not always his own name or initials as founder, but little else except the year. On a few occasions, as on Crowcombe tenor, Thomas I Wroth had added "God Bless the Church", and on the 7th at Curry Rivel Thomas II Wroth had used "God Save the Church", or as on the 4th of 8 at Drayton "Good Will Towards Men". On the 4th at West Bagborough he even went as far as "God Save the Church and Bless the Queen" but none of these seemed to have been used by Bayley. However there was a surprise when I got to

the Wellington entry – here on the tenor in 1748 was “Nos Resonare Iubent Pietas Mors Atque Voluptas”, but no 'TW' which did occur on the 2nd and 5th bells of the same date, which made me reasonably sure it must be Wroth's bell! This inscription was so similar to the one Bayley used at Wiveliscombe in 1751 (see pp 19 & 20 of my original document) that on just this one occasion there does seem to be some tie-up – and Wroth's usage occurred 3 years before Bayley's first use of it! However that link seems to be so tenuous that it surely cannot prove more than they perhaps talked to each other, or even that the vicars of the two parishes might have requested similar inscriptions. I searched for this inscription, or anything similar, in Chapters XIV & XV of Walters' Church Bells of England which covered Mediaeval and Post Reformation bell inscriptions, but nothing like it was mentioned, so I think it must have been used by local request. From looking at inscriptions it was a minor deviation to note bell poetry in J.J. Raven's book “Bells of England” and I only mention it here as on page 312 he includes a poem by a Rev W.L. Nichols which refers to the Quantocks and the bells of Holford ringing out their “carols – one, two, three” and “the mellow chimes of Dodington”. (Eventually he mentions Bitton too.) In Ellacombe's Bells of Somerset” he shows 4 bells at Dodington 'all recast by Warner and Sons 1870' but doesn't say where the bells were originally cast – but GWM lists bells 1 & 3 of the former 4 there as being by Bayley, Street and Co. both 1754; and indeed 3 ancient bells at Holford where no bells cast at Bridgwater ever seem to have been installed. (None at Bitton, Glos. Either!)

SUGGESTED BELL FOUNDRY SITE AT EASTOVER.

On page 5 of my original document I said that a Mr E. Owens had suggested that the Bell Foundry site had been at the east end of Eastover on the site of the Bridgwater Motor Co. (See also 'BF?' on map on page 6 at that location.) Since I wrote that, a friend has visited the Westonzoyland Pumping Station and Museum and sent me a picture of their descriptive plaque on a Culverwell engine made c1870 in Bridgwater and installed in Holt's Brewery at Burnham on Sea where it worked until 1958. After restoration it now runs at the Westonzoyland Museum. The plaque records that Culverwell & Co's “Bridgwater Foundry” was on the very site Mr. Owens said he had understood was that of the Bell Foundry. It could be that he confused the two foundries, or it could also be that the steam engine parts foundry succeeded an earlier bell foundry there. The former would probably seem to be the most likely case, though, in light of the other claims for the Bell Foundry site.

FOOTNOTE:

I suggested on page 1 here that GWM must have consulted Parish Registers to get such information on all these bells. Having now read through more of his book I note that that is just what he did do! It is a fantastic work of many, many years dedication to the cause and an extremely good record for posterity. It also covers the Bridgwater Bell Founders in great detail.

ADDITIONAL BOOKS CONSULTED.

“The Church Bells of Somerset” by G.W.Massey, Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, 2011.

“The Bells and Belfries of Dorset” by Christopher Dalton, Upper Court Press 2005.

“The Bells of England” by J.J.Raven D.D., F.S.A., second edition, Methuen & Co. London 1907.

“The Church Bells of England” by H.B. Walters M.A., F.S.A., Henry Froude Oxford University Press 1912.

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