

St. Michael's Church, Alnwick

The Bells

There are three bells in the tower; all had been ancient, but the largest, called the "Big Bell," was melted down and re-cast in 1764.

The other two have ancient inscriptions. From careful examination of the bells themselves, and the cast and rubbings of the letters, the reading of these inscriptions can now be given with accuracy.

The larger of the two, which is 2 feet 3 inches in diameter at the mouth and 2 feet high, has an inscription in Lombardic letters which vary on height from half-an-inch to one-inch and a half, one part of the inscription being on the haunch of the bell and extending about two thirds of the circuit, the other part being on the waist and filling the entire circumference. Hence it may be inferred that the lower line begins the inscription which is concluded on the upper line. It is as follows :

ADVITORIO†POPVLO†DEI
MI†CHAELE†ARCHANGELE†VENI†IN†

"Michael the Archangel. Come to the help of the people of God."

WM STODDART M:A CURATE JNO. DAND & JAS. GLADSTONES CH:WARDENS (rose)
LESTER & PACK OF LONDON FECIT (under the bell) 1764

The Archangel invoked is, of course, the guardian saint of Alnwick to whom the church was dedicated.

This probably is the oldest bell and has been attributed to the thirteenth century as archaeologists tell us that before that period in such inscriptions only the name of the saint was mentioned.

The other bell is 2 feet in diameter at the mouth and 1 foot 10 inches high, the letters are similar to those on St. Michel's bell, but better formed, more ornate and larger, being 1 inch and three-quarters high. The inscription is in two lines, one around the haunch and the other around the rim of the mouth. It runs thus :

AVE†MARIA†GRACIA†PLENA†
ORATE†PRO†AIA†DE†JOHANNE†VALKA?

The final letter after the A is completely obliterated, so it is impossible to say in whose memory this bell was given *, but excepting the surname the whole is intelligible and may be rendered:

"Hail Mary full of Grace! Pray ye for the soul of John Valka--"

It is difficult to assign a precise date to this bell but archaeologists are of the opinion that it is not earlier than the middle of the fourteenth not later than the fifteenth century.

Robert Rattray Mangin
Vicar of Alnwick 1906-1944
Archdeacon of Lindisfarne 1924-1944

* --- for the soul of Sir John Delaval

As in old writings the family of *Des Vaux* are always styled *De Vallibus*, it therefore appears not improbable that *De la val*, which is evidently the singular form of the same word, might be rendered above. *Wm Davison*