

“founders settled at Chester, both long before and after Edward the Sixth’s reign; Mr. Seth Rosomgreve, who was himself one of that craft, may have melted his weighty acquisition on the spot. One Simon Montford was a Chester founder at the date of the dissolution of the monasteries, as were others of his family before and since that date.”* I am not able to confirm or disprove these statements, but in the absence of any authority for them, I am a little sceptical as to their accuracy. I have never met with any “bellfounders” at Chester, although several “founders,” or “brassfounders” occur in the eighteenth century.

I find in *Harl. MSS.*, 2177, in a series of abstracts of the old churchwardens’ accounts of Trinity Parish in Chester, now lost, that in the year 1600 a new bell was cast by “Robert Orrell, bellfounder,” but it is not stated where he lived. The name is a well-known Lancashire one.

We now come to the Lancashire bell foundry at WIGAN. The business appears to have been in the hands of a family named SCOTT, which was one of old standing in the town, and to whom there are many references in the parish registers, &c. The will of JOHN SCOTT, of Wigan, brazier, dated 26th December, 1646, was proved at Chester on the 25th January, 1647-8.† The will itself is not of much interest, but in the schedule of debts owing to him there are the following entries, which shew that he was a bell-founder.

* It is also noted that in 1558 the churchwardens of Childwall, in Lancashire, sold one of their church bells to “John Plymmer, of Chester.”

† In it he mentions his wife Ellen, his daughters Mary and Alice, his granddaughter Elizabeth Scott, daughter of Richard Scott, his son Rauffe Scott, who had then a wife and two children, and his grandson John Scott, son of the said Rauffe.

Item, owing to me by Mr. Edmund Molyneux and Christopher Robie late churchwardens att Holland ^{iiij}^{li} which is yett in arrear and unpaid to me of the some of ^{xxij}^{li} for a Bell, of which ^{iiij}^{li} I have received in wheate 6^s so remaineth. ^{iiij}^{li} ^{xiiij}^s

Item, oweing to me and William Gardner brazier by William Laithwaite and Thomas Marshden panmakers for a small hundredweight of plate at ^{vij}^d pound ^{iiij}^{li} ^v^s

In the inventory of his effects, which is a long one, there are many items of "brasse" such as "item, in old pot brasse 3^{ccc} and ^{xxiiij}^{li} [324lbs.] "at sixe score to the hundred and at 5^d the pound " ^{viiij}^{li}."

Item, in bell brasse one C and a halfe and 8^{li} weight at 6^d the pound... .. ^{iiij}^{li}

Item, in old lead ^{xx}^s

Item, in new brasse pots 3^{ccc} and a halfe and 5^{li} [355lbs.] weight at 6^d ob. the pound ^{xij}^{li} ^x^s ^{vj}^d

Item, more new pot brasse 23^{li} weight ^{xij}^s

Item, in liverpoole 2 dozen of old pot brasse ^x^s

The earliest bell of which I have at present any record, as being cast at Wigan, was probably cast by this John Scott in the year 1647. This is a bell now in Trinity Church, Warrington, which formerly hung in the old Market Hall or Court House at Warrington, and which was taken down a few years since and removed to the church. It bears the following inscription and initials in small capitals.*

EX DONO JOHANNIS BOOTH
COLONELLI ET RECTORIS
EMPORII DE WARRINGTON
ANNO DOMINI

W.
I. S.

1647

C.S. J.B. G.J.

* *Warrington Church Notes*, by W. Beamont, p. 152. But in *Walks about Warrington towards the beginning of the present century*, the same author gives this inscription somewhat differently, as "Donum Johannis Booth Colonelli et Rectoris hujus Emporii de Warrington, 1647," that is, "the gift of Colonel John Booth, governor of this market town of Warrington."

The above mark stands for John Scott, Wigan.

On the 27th November, 1649, there is an entry in the Liverpool Corporation Records that there was "some conference with the bell-founder of "Wigan about the casting of 2 bells."*

Again, in 1657, the Wilmslow churchwardens' accounts contain the following entries † :—

Item, spent when wee did meete concerning the sendinge of the bells unto Wiggan to be caste, of ourselves and those w ^{ch} came from Wiggan concerning the same	o	2	o
Spent when the Bells were brought from Wigan...	o	3	o
Item, paid unto the bell founder with that which hee had rec ^d before, the summe of	18 ^{li}	o	o

This bell still exists in the tower of Wilmslow Church and bears the initials



One of the bells still remaining in the tower of Taxal Church, co. Chester, has this lettering and date I.^{W.S.} 1656, showing that it, like the Wilmslow bell just mentioned, had been cast at Wigan by John Scott. ‡

Some years ago I met with a bell in one of the Welsh churches in the Vale of Clwyd, which showed by the initials and date that it too had been cast at Wigan, but unfortunately I have mislaid the note I made about it.

Mr. GEOFFREY SCOTT appears to have succeeded Mr. John Scott as a bell-founder at Wigan, but I have not been able to ascertain the exact relationship between them. He was casting bells in 1657, as shewn by the following entries from the church-

* *Liverpool Municipal Records*, vol. i. p. 212.

† *East Cheshire*, vol. i. p. 112.

‡ *East Cheshire*, vol. ii. p. 541.

wardens' accounts of the parish of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester.*

1657.

Payd for carrying of the broken bell mettles to WIGAN, staying there till the bells were new cast and bringing them to the church againe ...	3	0	0
Spent when we went to Wigan to see the bells cast being foure dayes out horses and men ...	1	0	0
Payd to GEFREY SCOTT the bell-founder for casting of foure bells, with their brasses ...	25	0	0
Spent in drinke amongst his workemen & given them in Barrages	0	15	8
Spent on the Belfounder & his soñe in Chester they being here six dayes to see the bells hanged & to chipp them to make them tunable ...	0	9	4

1658.

Imprimis, Spent when we agreed with the Bell-founder for casting of the great bell	0	2	0
Payd to the bell founder for casting of the great bell, he being at all charges of taking it downe out of the Steeple, carrying of it to Wiggan & back againe to hange it vp & fitting the Irons and head Stock to it	12	0	0
Spent on the Belfounder & seuerall of the Gentm: of the parrish when they were about the consultation of the tunableness of the Bells & in drinke to the Ringers	0	3	4

In the Wigan churchwardens' accounts for 1662 there is an entry of a payment of £5 9s. 6d. to "Jephraie Scott for casting the bell steppes and "overweight."†

He made his will in 1665, as "Jefferey Scott of "Wigan Bell Founder," and it was proved at Chester on the 27th June in that year. He desired to be buried at Wigan Church amongst his ancestors. He mentions his house in the Mill gate, and refers to Alice his wife and William his son, his son

* Copied from the original accounts, kindly lent to me by the Rev. H. Grantham, Rector of St. Mary's.

† *History of the Church and Manor of Wigan*, by the Rev. G. T. O. Bridgeman (Chet. Soc. N.S., vol. xvii. p. 552).

Roger, and his younger children Charles Scott, Margery Scott, and Mary Scott. "Such goods as shall be fit for my son William's trade" were not to be valued in his inventory. These included "the work house ballis dudle and work loomes." In the inventory of his goods, debts, &c., the following items have a special interest, shewing that he did a good business in bell casting.

Item, in clay moulds	... ..	1 ^{li}
Item, owing by the churchwardens of Bevington [? Rivington] for bells casting...	... ..	11 15 0
Item, owing by the churchwardens of Great Neston .. ..	... ..	21 7 0
Item, owing by the churchwardens of Trafford ...		3 5 0
Item, owing by the churchwardens of fearfeild [Fairfield] .. ..	... ..	2 19 0
Item, owing by the churchwardens of Hefeild [Heyfield] .. ..	... ..	2 10 0
Item, owing by the churchwardens of Salford ...		2 10 0

WILLIAM SCOTT appears to have succeeded his father as a bell-founder, and the following entries occur in the Wigan churchwardens' accounts in the year 1677.*

Paid unto William Scott for kestring [casting] the first bell	li s d	10 10 0
Pd unto William Scott for overweight of the newe bell being six score and nineteen pounds at 1s y ^e pound .. ..	... ..	6 19 0
Pd William Scott for kestring the bell steps and overweight .. ..	... ..	4 2 0
Itm, spent at the agreement for kestring of the newe bell .. ..	... ..	0 2 6
Itm, spent of the workmen at y ^e kestring of y ^e bell ... ..	... ..	0 3 6
Itm, spent of ye weighing of y ^e newe bell ...	... ..	0 2 6

In 1682 more of the Wilmslow bells required re-casting, and once more they have the work done at Wigan.†

* See *The History of Wigan Church*, Chetham Society, N.S., vol. xvii. p. 553.

† *East Cheshire*, vol. i. p. 117.

Spent when we agreed with Mr. Scott about the bells	o	8	6
Paid for carriage of the Bells and spenses [expenses] at Wiggan	3	8	4
Paid to the Bellfounder for casting the bells and spent the same time	38	o	o

In 1684 the Prestbury churchwardens had one of their bells cast at Wigan, and the following entries occur in the accounts of the churchwardens.*

When Mr. Scott the Bellfounder came to Prestburie, when we agreed with him for the casting of the 4 th Bell	oo	o4	o6
Paid for carrying the s ^d bell to Wiggan and recarrying to Prestburie	oo	15	oo
Pd Mr. Scott the Bellfounder for casting the Bell afores ^d and for one hundred and twelve pound of mettle	18	oo	oo

Mr. William Scott was still carrying on his business at Wigan in 1692, when these entries occur relating to a bell at Denton, near Manchester.†

1692. [Pd] William Scott for the new Bell being 226 lb, the old 223 lb at 6 ^d a pound for casting and 12 ^d a pound for new ...	o5	14	o6
ffor carriage of y ^e Bell to and from Manchester	oo	o1	oo
ffor expenses in wayinge [weighing] y ^e Bell old and new	oo	o1	oo
ffor spent at hanging y ^e Bell by order of y ^e Chappell Warden	oo	o1	oo

In 1694 the Wigan churchwardens' accounts shew that the fourth bell was taken down and recast by Mr. William Scott, who was paid £20 for casting it, and £11 7s. for additional metal, amounting to eleven score and seven pounds.‡

The will of William Scott, of Wigan Wood-

* *East Cheshire*, vol. ii. pp. 227-8.

† Booker's *History of Denton Chapel* (Chet. Soc.), p. 116.

‡ *History of Wigan Church*, p. 587.

houses, brazier, was made 9th June, 1702-3, and proved at Chester on the 11th May, 1703.* He mentions his wife Ann Scott, but does not appear to have had any children, and no other persons of the name of Scott are mentioned. It is probable that with him the trade of bell founding, which had been so long in the family of Scott, came to an end. The last bell, probably cast by him, of which I have any note was the great bell at Chapel-en-le-Frith, in Derbyshire, which was re-cast at Wigan on the 6th August, 1701.†

It is probable that the trade of bell casting was continued at Wigan by other hands, for in 1717 a new bell, ordered by the churchwardens of that town, was cast by RALPH ASHTON, bell-founder there, at a cost of £49 7s. 6d. including the cost of the new metal, which exceeded the weight of the old metal to which it was added.‡

A few years later, when a new set of five bells was ordered for the parish church of Wallasey, in Cheshire, the sum of £60 11s. 7d. was "pade to "the bell founder LUKE ASHTON of Wigan." These five bells remained in the tower of that church until the disastrous fire of 1857, when they fell to the ground, and were much damaged and broken. The inscriptions which they bore were as follows§:—

- 1st bell. Luke Ashton in Wigan made us all 1723.
- 2nd bell. Gloria Deo in Excelsis. 1723. Wiggan.
- 3rd bell. John Robinson, Joshua Young Churchwardens
1723. Wiggan.

* I have also full abstracts of the wills of James Scott, of Wigan, Alderman, 1696, and Geoffrey Scott, of Wigan, pewterer, 1699, the latter of whom was the son of the former.

† *The Reliquary*, vol. vi. (1865-6), p. 67.

‡ *History of Wigan Church*, p. 618.

§ Kindly sent, with other information about the Wallasey bells, by Mr. W. C. A. Pritt, of Wallasey. The account of these bells by Mr. Pritt was printed, subsequent to the reading of this paper, in the *Cheshire Sheaf* for April, 1891.

4th bell. Let us sound to the honour of Christ and to the glory of All Saints.

6th bell. I to the Church the living call and to the grave do summons all. Memento Mori 1723
Mr. Thomas Arson.

These bells were also ornamented with a crowned "G. R." on the waist, a band of oak leaves round the top, and another of roses round the rim.

Mr. Luke Ashton was probably the last of the Wigan bell-founders, for in 1732 the bells of Wigan Church were sent to Gloucester to be recast by Mr. Abraham Rudhall of that place, which would hardly have been the case had there been any good foundry in that town. I have in vain searched for any wills of this Ashton family.

I would only add that for quite a hundred years or more, during the whole of the 17th century, the town of Wigan appears to have been the home of a large number of persons who carried on the trade of braziers, pewterers, &c. This is shewn by the lists of wills, now preserved at Chester, where their names occur. The families of Forth or Ford,* Marsden, Orrell, Banks, Baldwin, Boyes, Cooper, Markland, and Harvey† may be mentioned, and it is noteworthy that in 1669 Edward Markland, of Wigan, describes himself as "founder," but he was probably a "brass-founder," and not a "bell-founder."‡

* Thus, in the year 1617, in the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of St. Mary-on-the-Hill, Chester, there is the following entry:—

Pd to Robert Fourde of Wigine for castinge of towe brasses for the greate Bell wayeinge seventeene pound at vjd a pounce, and iij li and a halfe of there owne brasses at xijd a pound, the whole some is xiijs

† I have full abstracts of the following Wigan wills in addition to those of the Scott family already noted, John Harvey, of Wigan, brazier, 1614 (a very long will); Edward Markland, of Wigan, founder, 1669; William Fairbrother, of Wigan, founder, 1726; and Robert Orrell, of Wigan, brazier, 1734.

‡ I recently examined the will of "William Terrey, of Chester, founder," proved at Chester in 1728, and found from internal evidence that he was a "brassfounder."