

Percy Manning Miscellaneous Papers

Documents relating to the Parish of Deddington 1583-1914

Bodleian Library, G.A. Oxon c.317 Volume 8 (of 26)

Deddington parish church bells

The rebuilding of the parish church of SS. Peter and Paul, following the collapse of the mediaeval tower and spire in March 1634, which had rendered the bells unserviceable, was delayed by the Civil War, and was not completed until around 1683. In the meantime, the bells were requisitioned by Charles I in 1643 to be melted down and made into artillery, against a promise that the bells would be restored in metal or money.

The Manning Collection includes photostat copies of records from the War Office Ordinance Office (Out Letters, W.O. 46, Vol. 6, ff. 107-8) procured by Percy Manning from the Public Record Office.

The first is a transcript of an order by Charles I dated 21 January 1642/43 requisitioning the bells, impliedly all five, with a promise to restore the same in metal or money:

Charles R:

Whereas Information is given us that by the fall of the Steeple at Dodington in this our County, the Bells are made unserviceable forutterly, till that shall be rebuilt and they new founded, And that the Mettal of them may be fitt for present ufe; for our own and the publick occafion, Wee hereby require you to send the same to our Magazine here in New Colledge, and some such Trusty person with them as may, as may [sic] see the just weight and nature of them taken by our Officer there, to the End Wee may restore the same in Materialls or moneys to the church when you shall have occasion to ufe the same, And to the End Wee may the better effect this, Wee hereby command the Comand:^s of our Trayne to remember us thereof; when it shall be oppertune and for full afsurance hereof to the whole parish, Wee are graciously pleased to confirme this by our Royale Signature, Oxford at ~~the~~ our Court Janry 21: in the 18:th year of our Reigne

To our Trusty and welbeloved subjects the parson Church Wardens Constables Officers and other the parishoners of Dodington -

A second order, which is not amongst the documents in the Manning Collection, was issued on 1 February 1642/43, acknowledging the delivery of two bells to the King's Magazine at New College, and requiring the delivery of two of the three remaining bells (the fifth apparently being serviceable). The promise of compensation was repeated.

A transcript of this order is set out in an article by the Deddington antiquarian, Charles Faulkner, entitled 'Historical notices relative to Deddington' in '*The Archæological Journal*', published by the Archæological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland in March 1849, and reproduced in the '*North Oxfordshire Monthly Times*' published on 4 September 1849 (page 6):

"ffebbruary the first, 1642.

"The Commissione^{rs} have this day received informac'on that two of the Bells are now brought in to the Officers of the Artillery from Deddington, which are directed speedily to be weighed and valued. And whereas there yet remained three Bells more, whereof one onely is hanged up fitt for use & the other are not. It is thought fitt that these two other Bells shal be sente in also for the King's service, & when they be brought they shall be weighed & valued also, and y^e sheriff of the County is desired to send these two other Bells speedily & the Parishione^{rs} shall have satisfaction from the King for these foure Bells, to be paid unto them either in Bills or money when their steeple shall be fitt to receave them.

"R. Heath. W. Walter. Geo: Strode. ffr: Tyller. Tho: Gardiner. Geo: Benyon."

<https://www.deddingtonhistory.uk/newspaperreferencestodeddingtoninpreviouscenturies/northoxfordshiremonthlytimes>

Although the rebuilding of the tower was not completed until around 1683, it was not until 1709 that the inhabitants of Deddington sought compensation from the Crown for the bells requisitioned by Charles I during the Civil War.

The Manning Collection contains a photostat transcript from the War Office of the Humble Petition by the inhabitants of Deddington to Queen Anne in 1709, which states that three bells had been delivered to the King's Magazine at New College, and requesting the promised compensation:

To the Queens most Excellent Majesty

The humble Peticon of the Inhabitants of Dadington in the County of Oxon -

Most humbly sheweth

That in the year 1636 there was standing in y.^e said Town of Dadington a very high & beautiful Tower in which were 5 Great Bells which not long after fell to y.^e Ground & in the fall the roof did break the same Bells and so made them unserviceable.

That about y.^e year 1642 y.^r Maj.^{ties} Roy.¹ Grandfather King Charles the Firft of ever blessed Memory having informacon thereof att his Court held then in y.^e City of Oxon, comanded y.^e said Bells to be sent into his Magazine in New Colledge in Oxon aforesaid to the end the mettall thereof might be imploy'd for present ufe both for his own & the publick occasion.

That y.^e said Inhabitants in all humble Duty & Loyaltie to their Sovereign's Comand did send in for his said Maj.^{ties} ufe Three of the said Bells, the just value thereof being taken came to 5000 weight of Metal.

That your Maj.^{ties} said Grandfather was graciously pleas'd under his Roy.¹ Signet to give Assureance unto y.^e said Inhabitants to restore y.^e same either in Metal or money when the said Inhabitants should have occasion to ufe the same.

That y.^e said Inhabitants have rebuilt y.^e said Tower and made it fitt to receive & hang Bells therein two Bells being already hung up & fframes finished for the other Three

That according to y.^e Direction & Roy.¹ Comand of y.^r Maj.^{ties} said Grand ffather, Wee the p^{re}sents Inhabitants of the said Town are encouraged to make our humble Address & Peticon unto y.^r Maj.^{ty} in behalf of the premifes, and humbly leave y.^e same to y.^r Majesty's Consideracon. And Wee as in all humble Duty bound shall ever pray for y.^r Maj.^{ties} long life & happy reign & shall alway's continue

Your Maj.^{ties} most Dutiful Loy.¹ & Obed.^t Subjects

The photostat transcripts include the below response by the War Office to the Duke of Marlborough (Queen's representative as Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire) dated 17 December 1709, claiming that no record of the Royal command could be found in the books of the War Office - despite a copy of the Royal command being on file as above:

17:th Decemb:^r 1709:

May it pleafe your Grace:

In obedience to your Graces Commands Wee have taken into consideration the inclosed petition of the Inhabitants of Dodington in the County of Oxon: touching Three unserv:^{ble} Bells of 5000 weight, of metal converted

by his late Matye King Charles the first, to the publick
service, and humbly report to your Grace that wee can
find no account of the same in the Bookes of the Office,
and considering this claim is made after so long a time,
Wee humbly conceive it will be of ill consequence it
shou'd meet with any encouragement because it would give
others handle, to bring in applications for severall
subsequent debts, contracted in the succeeding Reigns for
stores actually delivered into the Magazines amounting to
near £100000: for which Debentures are given out, and no
money ever yett provided for the same

All which is humbly submitted by

Your Graces &c.:

[Initials of four signatories]

Duke of Marlborough