

BELLS OF ALL SAINTS, BIRCHINGTON

There are eight bells in the tower.

No: 1 "Cast by Mears & Stainbank 1901"	Approx. weight 4 cwt.
No: 2 "Cast by Mears & Stainbank 1901"	Approx. weight 4 cwt.
No: 3 "Warner made me 1887"	Approx. weight 4 ½ cwt.
No; 4 "Sam Knight me Fecit 1728"	Approx. weight 4 ½ cwt.
No: 5 "William Anderson SK me Fecit 1728"	Approx. weight 5 ¼ cwt.
No: 6 "William Jepp CW SK me Fecit 1728"	Approx. weight 5 ½ cwt.
No: 7 "Joseph Hatch made me 1633"	Approx. weight 7 cwt.
No: 8 "Samuel Knight made me 1730" (Tenor)	Approx. weight 9 cwt.

The bells were all recast in 1956.

There are many references to bells and bell ringing in the Churchwardens' Books. The earliest is 1532, when there was a large and a small bell. Soon after, a third one was added. In 1662 the number was increased to five, while the sixth bell was added to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee of 1887. In 1902 the octave was completed by Mr CE Matthews, Churchwarden, who gave two treble bells in memory of his wife.

The early records show, among other items, the buying of bell ropes, clappers and leather baldrics, from which the clappers hung.

The oldest bell in the present peal was made in 1633 and is now No: 7. John Hatch, his maker, was a famous Kentish bell founder. The agreement for the casting of this bell is still held in the church archives.

As now, the bells were rung to call people to church and on special occasions to mark historical events and deaths. They marked the landing and departure of Royalty from Quex and from Margate. They were rung for the births of royal children, for victories in battle and celebrations of local and national importance. In pre-Reformation times they were rung in times of storms, as it was believed that the bells had the power to disperse the tempests, so we find records of payments made for ringing "at ye tempes". In the time of James 1, it is recorded that the bells rang out on November 5th for a number of years, to celebrate the failure of the Gunpowder Plot.

