

WILLEM WITLOCKX BELL MAKER (1669-1733)

Jan Witlok's January 2015 Witlox Newsletter includes family details and a photograph of a bronze bell cast by master bell maker Willem Witlockx of Antwerp, Belgium. Willam is recorded as casting bells in the early 1700's. In the same town was the older bell master Melchior DeHaze and it is assumed Willem learned some of his skill from the older master. He perfected bronze bell casting to a high degree and became a skilled bell turner using his other skill as an ivory turner. Willem was criticized for his gaudy self portraits that he cast into his larger bells but his status was confirmed in 1723 when he was appointed director of the Royal Cannon Foundry at Mechelen.

His work lives on to the present day and some of his bells were featured in a recent Christies Auction. Others did not survive as long. His Holy Blood bell at Bruges was destroyed in 1741 when the bell tower was hit by lightning and burned. The south tower at the Royal Convent at Mafra in Portugal has a set of clarion bells cast in 1730 by Willm Witockx. Each tower has 50 bells, 49 of which form part of the clarion. The bells weigh from 15 kg to 14,688 kg

Willem had set the standard for quality in the 1730's and in future years the goal was to try to cast bells that exceeded his standard. It is recorded he was a wealthy man at his death in 1733.

