

ASSOCIATION RESCUES CANTERBURY RING

HOLY CROSS BELLS WILL RING AGAIN . . .

. . . but not at Holy Cross. Since 1681 the flint and ragstone church with a tiny parish has fought it out with St. Peter's for remaining a parish church. Until 1924 they both soldiered on. From 1928 to 1942 St. Peter's stood derelict, but in 1942 the Church of St. George, with its five bells, was destroyed, and in 1959 St. Peter's again became the centre of nearly all Canterbury's parochial life. In 1941 Holy Cross with St. Peter's had been amalgamated with St. Dunstan's, and gradually the latter church took over much of the parochial work. Lack of full-time clergy and financial considerations prompted the idea of giving Holy Cross to the University—which started life in 1965. But it was far too distant to serve this purpose, and in 1968 worship ceased. In December, 1971, the building was declared redundant and, although it will remain standing, its future is not yet certain.

The church, which stood originally over the ancient West Gate, was rebuilt alongside the gate when the latter (and much of the city wall) was reconstructed by Archbishop Sudbury (c. 1380). The amount of money expended on these operations was one of the grievances which hastened the Peasants' Revolt (1381) in which Archbishop Sudbury was beheaded by the mob. But the church must have been finished by that time, for there was a bell of this period in the tower until May of this year, which bore the name of the Kentish founder, Stephen Norton, who is buried at All Saints', Maidstone. Other bells of his exist at Snaive in Romney Marsh, Chiselborough (Somerset), and there is one which has many characteristics of his work in the former ring of Worcester Cathedral, now in the Cloisters. The bells, presumably a ring of three, were augmented to four in 1608 by the Kentish founder, Joseph Hatch, who also recast the tenor. In 1615 the second of this ring was recast and given very ornate canons with the likenesses of faces moulded on them. A treble was added by Samuel Knight of Holborn, "to make ye ring better." This cost £21, and the hanging of it £5 7s. 0½d., including refreshments. Unfortunately it had to be recast in 1739—this time by Thomas Lester, of Whitechapel. A new frame was built at this time, and the date 1802 on the second headstock seems to indicate that the bells were rehung then.

DANGEROUS

By 1870 the old tower, which carried a small tiled timber structure on its roof, had become dangerous, and it was reconstructed in 1871, much old material being re-used. It now has a tiled pyramid roof, carrying a weathervane designed in the likeness of a gate; the traditional title of the church is Holy Cross, Westgate. Strange to say, the old bell-frame, fittings and the bells themselves were taken down and re-erected exactly as they were before, with an anti-clockwise rope circle; and by 1922 the veteran ring of five was rung down for the last time. For many years they were chimed, but in 1967 unwelcome visitors (pigeons) moved in; and when the accumulation became dangerous (and made the church smell badly) nearly half a ton of guano was removed, and the pigeons were wired out.

With the declaration of redundancy, under the terms of the Pastoral Measure, a waiting period of a year is usually decreed before any contents can be dispersed and the church converted or demolished. In the case of Holy Cross this was not required, as the church had been given over to its last use simply because it was otherwise redundant. In 1970 the writer examined and reported on the bells, recommending that they be removed voluntarily from the tower, and placed in trust with the K.C.A.C.R. On the formal declaration being made in December, the Archdeacon of Canterbury (a vice-president of the association, now Provost-designate of Portsmouth, where he will be a great asset to the ringers) promised every assistance to the association if they would undertake the work. The Diocesan Advisory Committee agreed enthusiastically, and the newly-created Redundant Churches (Uses) Committee assisted in every way, including making application for a faculty to remove the bells, to store them until they could be rehung as a ringing peal in another tower, the association to be responsible for the removal of the bells and all the costs. The faculty was granted, and removal of the bells began in May with the expulsion of what must surely be a record number of worm-eaten cupboards, weevil-ridden boxes, chests and trunks, and, rather pathetically, an enormous accumulation of gift boxes for the restoration of the church. A large number of pigeons in various stages of dissolution were also thrown out. The belfry itself looked like some ghost ship, with vast cobwebs stretching from wheel to wheel and stay to stay, all well covered with fine white dust, the whole installation looking very other-worldly. Once the bells were down to the ground an additional problem was to get them past the mediæval font, with its soaring late-Perpendicular cover, which had to be removed. Our old friend Mr. Harry Parkes, of Whitechapel, who was in Canterbury on that day, was able to get the two largest bells between tower arch and font in his usual inimitable fashion. After a fortnight's delay, waiting for free transport, the bells departed for the Whitechapel Foundry, which had kindly lent the association the tackle free of charge, where they will be stored pending a decision as to their new home.

HISTORIC RING

Where they will ring depends on the association and the diocese (which they will not leave); it is already established that this historic ring will remain as a unit, and approaches will come officially from the diocese and association rather than from individual parishes to them. What has been established is that the association was able to rescue this long-derelict ring, and is now actively engaged in finding it a new home. Meanwhile it is also engaged in a policy for acquisition of single or odd redundant bells for storage, either for use elsewhere intact or by recasting—full consideration being given to age and antiquity as all the bells in the dioceses of Canterbury and Rochester are protected by a schedule of Bells for Preservation where this is warranted. The general secretary will ap-

preciate information as to impending declarations of redundancy—and also any suggestions from other areas that have tried this sort of work. What is significant is that the association and the diocese have been able to work hand in hand with the scheme so far, and the Church is served and God glorified thereby.

THE WORKERS

Alan Berry (Gen. Sec., K.C.A.C.R.), Derek Carr, David Cawley, Andrew Sawyer and Jim Stockbridge, who learned to ring on these bells nearly 60 years ago. Free tackle from the Whitechapel Foundry; free loading by courtesy of Caffyn's, of Canterbury (through Mr. Derek Chatfield); free transport by Messrs. Nichols. Thanks to all of them for helping us to cut our costs and to do the job. Thanks also to Mr. Harry Everett and the Rev. David Naumann, of Diocesan House, for their encouragement and assistance, and especially to the Ven. Michael Nott, Archdeacon of Canterbury, who came right up to the top to see the work he had helped bring about in progress.

THE BELLS

Treble (28½", 4-3-4 in E): JOHN FISHER CH WARDEN J739
 Second (29", 5-0-10 in D): iofeph hatch made me 1608 / RF
 Third (31½", 5-2-17 in C sharp): iofeph hatch made me 1615 / IH RC
 Fourth (35½", 8-2-24 in B): +STEPHANVS : NORTONE : DE : KENT : ME : FECIT (each letter, stop and cross, crowned)
 Tenor (38½", 10-3-1 in A) IOSEPH HATCH MADE ME (medallion) 1608 / RD

DAVID CAWLEY.

The invitation to the Central Council to visit Oxford in 1973 was issued by Mr. Philip Walker on behalf of the Oxford Society as well as the Oxford Diocesan Guild, the two bodies being jointly responsible for the organisation.

Durham and Newcastle Association

LADY DOCTOR INSTALLED

"When I took up ringing a few years ago and read in *The Ringing World* about the 'Exercise' I was puzzled and could not understand why ringing was not referred to as a sport or hobby. But I soon realised 'Exercise' was the correct term when I found I was receiving both physical and mental exercise, and I suppose I shall find another meaning of exercise now that I have taken on this job." So said Dr. Eva Robson when she was elected chairman of the Southern District at the annual meeting at Hurworth on June 24.

Most of the ringers at Hurworth are ladies, and this was well appreciated at tea time by the visitors who had ample opportunity to assist the battle of the bulge by enjoying home-made goodies.

At the business meeting there was a lively discussion on instruction policy. Some favoured special methods at meetings, others supported special practices, and yet others suggested attending practice nights at struggling towers to give assistance. The outcome was that some definite decisions were made, and will be carried out, *Deo volente*.

A proposal that in future the annual meeting of the Southern District be the last meeting in the calendar was carried.

The following officers were elected: Dr. E. Robson (chairman), Mr. T. Cooke (ringing master), Mr. F. Hodgson (secretary). This is believed to be the first time a lady in the Durham and Newcastle Association has held the office of chairman.

A collection for the Bell Restoration Fund realised £1.80.