

*All Saints, Hurworth.  
Old frame being dismantled and bells removed.  
(Photo courtesy North of England Newspapers).*

## Hurworth's bells ring again

The bells of All Saints, Hurworth on Tees are ready to ring again after a full restoration.

Although the restoration scheme was approved by the PCC in September 1995 it wasn't until September 1997 that work eventually started. Once the scaffolding went up, the louvres removed and a steel beam inserted it was all ready for Fred Pembleton and his gang.

Fred duly arrived before 9am on Saturday 3rd November 1996 and by just after lunch the bells had been removed for temporary storage in church. It gave the parishioners their first and perhaps only chance to see the bells – most comments referred to their size with the question: "How do you manage to ring them when they're that size?"

By the rusted state of the fittings on the Sanctus Bell we'd only just had them removed in time. This bell was found to be a listed bell – cast in 1682 by Samuel Smith of York. (Any relation to the brewers? After all bells and beer go together, don't they?) It bears the inscription 'Gloria In Excelsis Deo Rev. Leonard Waistell Rector 1682'. The bells were later transported to Loughborough for retuning before going onto Glapwell for alterations and a new frame.

During the time whilst the bells were away, essential work was undertaken in the belfry and ringing chamber. Over 60 bags of rubble, dirt and early sound insulation (ie sawdust) were removed from the belfry before anything else

## A hundred years of 'Victoria' at Chatham

*A 'find' by David Cawley*

Commenting in his Annual Report to the Kent County Association at Easter, 1898, the General Secretary, The Revd F. J. O. Helmore observed that the ring of ten at Maidstone had been satisfactorily rehung by Messrs John Warner & Co. "It were much to be wished," he added, "that the same could be said of the 'Victoria' peal at Chatham which that firm so largely advertises".

Last year I was purchasing ephemera about Kent churches whilst on holiday in that county; amongst the acquisitions was a pair of photographs from a magazine, pasted on to a sheet of paper across which was written "A ring of Eight Bells for St Mary's, Chatham." The top photograph (shown overleaf) is a most interesting one showing the newly-completed tower standing beside the previous church, built in 1788 with a chancel of 1884. A new nave and aisles were added to this chancel following the demolition of the eighteenth-century edifice, being consecrated in October 1903. Adjacent to the blocks are instructions to the recipient to borrow the blocks from the photographer, Mr Honey of High Street. Underneath is a suggested and potentially embarrassing caption 'Cast and made ready for hanging by Messrs Warner at their Whitechapel Foundry' (sic).

Whilst the circumstances and justification for Helmore's remark – he was no fan of Warner's,

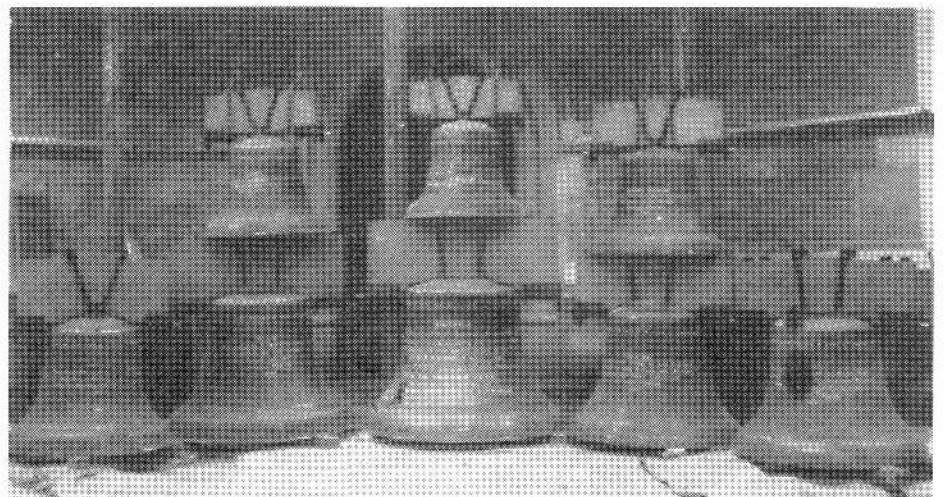
though a friend of their erstwhile foreman, Mr Goslin – are not known nor their outcome detailed, and the bells were in any case rehung with new fittings by Alfred Bowell of Ipswich only 30 years later, most will agree that Warner's turned out a fine ring of eight. They were dedicated just a hundred years ago on 2nd February, 1898.

For the last 20 years, St Mary's has gone through the vicissitudes of redundancy, threatened demolition and has eventually become the Medway Heritage Centre. As befits such a fine ring of bells, they play a significant part in its life, just as the grand tower which holds them was significant enough a feature in its securing the preservation of the whole church.

Before the church was given its tower, there were two bells in the pyramid topped structure seen in the photograph; the larger, 38" diameter, by Thomas Mears II 1812, was recast in slighter form as the treble of the new ring. The other, used as a clock bell is 28 1/2" diameter and inscribed

**william hatch made me  
RM CF CW (mark) 1651**

and was cast at the Ulcombe Foundry. On the demolition of the 1788 tower it was placed on display in St Mary's.



*The bells, St Mary, Chatham (Medway Heritage Centre).*

could be attempted. We were very much indebted to our Rector, Ray Graham, for his carpentry, electrical and felt laying skills in making the belfry ready for the new frame. Those who remember our ringing chamber will be pleased to know we have removed the beam and the old clock weights corner cupboards, thus creating more space.

The bells were returned in October 1997 looking very resplendent after their clean up and

with their new headstocks fitted and painted – and by the beginning of December Fred had given the go ahead for ringing however, not before a general clean up, repainting and carpet laying took place in the ringing chamber.

Since February 1996 we have been busily engaged in fund raising to meet the £31,000 cost of rehanging. We were given a good start by promises of grant from the D&N Association,

*(continued overleaf)*

**HURWORTH - continued**

The Yorkshire Association (Cleveland Branch) and the Barton Bell Trust. So far we have raised somewhere in the region of £15,000 with the PCC promising to fund the balance - however fund raising events will continue as the Millennium Bell Fund refused any help, despite their architect seeing no reason why we shouldn't have something.

A rededication service was held on Sunday 4th January at 10.30am when we hope ringing will commence at 9.30. Visiting ringers are most welcome, but we realise it might be inconvenient to leave your own towers unring on a Sunday. With this in mind we are planning an Open Ringing Day on Saturday 7th February where visiting ringers will be most welcome. Practices will recommence in the New Year -



*Hurworth ringers at rededication service.*



*Left, the Victoria tower and St Mary's Church, Chatham (see front page article). Church is 1788; chancel 1889; tower 1897. The 18th century church was rebuilt in 1903. Below, details of the bells.*

The Victoria Peal is as follows:

- On all: CAST BY JOHN WARNER & SONS LTD LONDON 1897
- Treble: RECAST 1812 / FOR CHATHAM PARISH / BY ORDER OF / ARCHBALD CHARLES WINEYER GIDEON DAVIS CHURCHWARDENS / RECAST 1897 (33 1/2" 7-0-10)
- Second: "JANE" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY CHARLES RICHARD BESSENT / IN MEMORY OF HIS MOTHER / JANE BESSENT / 1897 (32" 7-0-19)
- Third: "CHARLES BESSENT" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY CHARLES RICHARD BESSENT / IN MEMORY OF HIS FATHER / CHARLES BESSENT / 1897 (34 1/2" 7-3-25)
- Fourth: "CHAROLD" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY H. J. T. BROWNE / MAYOR OF CHATHAM IN MEMORY OF HIS DEAR WIFE / CAROLIE BROWNE AND HER SON HAROLD / 1897 (37" 10-1-6)
- Fifth: "MARY" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY MARY VINES / IN MEMORY OF HER FATHER AND MOTHER / CHARLES AND MARY WITHECOMB / OF THIS PARISH / 1897 (41" 12-2-24)
- Sixth: "CHARLES" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY ANN RANDALL / IN MEMORY OF HER FATHER AND MOTHER / CHARLES AND MARY WITHECOMB / OF THIS PARISH / 1897 (43" 14-3-24)
- Seventh: "NELLIE" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY ELIZABETH SARAH WITHECOMB / IN MEMORY OF HER SISTER / ELLEN (NELLIE) / OF THIS PARISH / 1897 (47" 18-3-27)
- Tenor: "VICTORIA" / THIS BELL WAS GIVEN BY CHARLES RICHARD BESSENT / (CHURCHWARDEN) AND ELIZABETH BESSENT HIS WIFE / TO COMMEMORATE THE SIXTY YEARS REIGN OF / QUEEN VICTORIA 1837-1897 / THE PEAL OF WHICH THIS BELL FORMS PART WAS / CALLED THE VICTORIA PEAL / BY SPECIAL PERMISSION OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA

J. TETLEY ROWE - RECTOR (dimensions 52" 25-0-21)

usual night i.e. Thursday 7.30-9pm, we look forward to welcoming all ringers but best to check with Brian Johnson (01325 720055) beforehand.

**ALL SAINTS, HURWORTH ON TEES**  
**IS HAVING AN OPEN DAY**  
**ON SATURDAY 7th FEBRUARY**  
**AND WELCOMES VISITING RINGERS**



*Hurworth bells awaiting hanging.*



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