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Holy Trinity, Dartford. Kent 1080 - 1980

Dartford lies in the most north-westerly corner of Kent, on the border of the G.I.C. and Kent, and the town is on the old London-to-Dover Watling Street Road. The old stage-coaches to the coast used to stop overnight at the Bull and Victoria Hotel, which still stands today. Dartford has grown from a small hamlet into a large industrial centre which includes a large chemical works, paper mills and engineering establishments.

The Parish Church of Holy Trinity celebrates its 900th birthday this year, for there has been a church in Dartford since Saxon times. The tower is the earliest part of the existing building and was erected (c. 1080) by Gundulf, Norman Bishop of Rochester, builder of the White Tower, Tower of London, and of the north tower, Rochester Cathedral. The church was contained in the Domesday Survey under the heading *Terra Regis*.

In 1235 an unusual wedding took place in the church, for Princess Isabella, daughter of King John and sister of Henry III, was married by proxy to a holy Roman emperor. The Leper Hospital, which stood on West Hill before 1330, was probably founded by the Church.

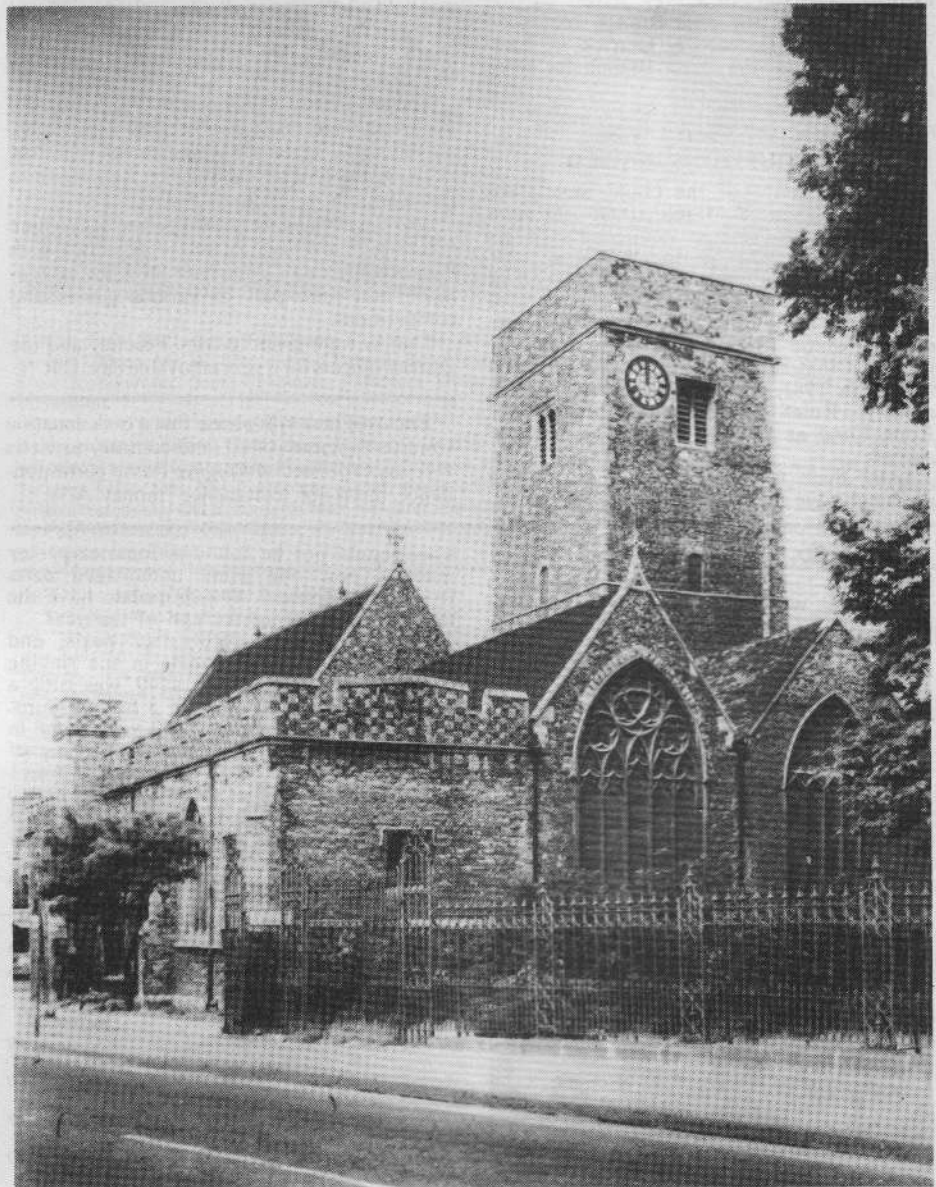
The nave is built in the Decorated style about 1325. The Naves arcades, each of three bays, are of Kentish ragstone and have octagonal columns with moulded capitals. The Portland stone font was replaced, for a time, in the church and was used as a garden decoration. The pulpit is Jacobean (early 17th century) with a modern pedestal, and is similar to that in Sutton-at-Hone, some three miles south. Behind the pulpit are marks on the chancel arch pier, with the dates "1866" and "1968" indicating the depth to which the church was flooded in those years (1 ft. 3 in. (approx.) in 1866 and 2 ft. 6 in. (approx.) in 1968). As a result of the 1968 flood, Victorian tiling on the nave floor was replaced in 1971 by flagstones.

THREE-MANUAL INSTRUMENT

The organ, a three-manual instrument, by Harrison and Harrison of Durham, was built in 1911 and incorporates parts of an earlier instrument. It has been described as the finest, for its size, in this part of Kent and was recently restored, due to damage by the 1968 flooding. A previous organ stood in the Lady Chapel, the first one recorded being erected in 1793.

A Chapel was built in the early 13th century and named after St. Thomas-à-Becket. On the west wall hangs a royal coat-of-arms of 1751 (George II) and is probably one of the largest in a parish church, being 13 ft. 4 ins. x 10 ft. 9 ins.

The chancel is thought to be built in the 13th century and the roof is considered to be early 14th century. The coloured paneling over the sanctuary was erected in 1922 and under the north arch stands an ornate early 17th century tomb to a local paper-maker, Sir John Spilman and his (first) wife Elizabeth.



[Photo: Dartford Photographic Society.]

The Lady Chapel was also probably erected in the early 13th century and rebuilt in its present form about 1450. A few years after the rebuilding (c. 1470) a large painting of St. George and the Dragon was completed possibly by Italian artists and later covered with plaster, but during alterations it was uncovered and restored with oils.

About 1470 an additional stage was added to the tower, for the housing of the bells, making the tower 90ft. high. Thos. Revet, in 1474, gave "to the newe bellys to be bought to the use of the chirche of Dartford xxvis. viiid." The Rev. John Hornley, M.A., Vicar, and first President of Magdalen College, Oxford, left 10 marks in 1477 to the fabric of the bell tower. At this time there appear to have been four bells, plus one "Dollyng bell".

During the Civil War there were six bells, and in the churchwarden's accounts are

several records of peals rung. Thus in 1645 the ringers were paid 5s. when William Waller defeated Sir Ralph Hopton at Winchester, and the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot (1605) was also commemorated by an annual peal. In 1660, on the Restoration of the Monarchy, an address was presented to King Charles II on Dartford Heath and "paid the ringers when the King past though the town £1 10s.". Subsequently peals were rung annually on May 29 (Restoration Day). The Duke of Marlborough's victories were celebrated, as was Trafalgar in 1805, and visits by royalty have been occasions for peals down to present times.

On 13th January, 1696-7, "paid Mr. Whiteman (Philip Wightman of London) Bellfounder, for coming downe to Dartford by order of Vestry to view the bells in order for their casting, £1 . 2 . 0d." The

(Continued overleaf)

THE HIGHEST HONOUR

At its recent meeting the general committee of the Bath and Wells D.A. elected three elder statesmen of the Association as honorary life members. Honorary life membership is the highest honour the Association can grant, and is reserved "for outstanding services to the Association and to the Art of Ringing".

The three are: Mr. H. V. (Brigham) Young of Wiveliscombe, a very popular 'young' man who joined the Association in 1916. Mr. George Hartland, of Curry Rivel, ringing master of the Crewkerne Branch for many years, and Mr. Leonard F. Derrick, of Nailsea, an officer of the Chew Branch for more than 40 years.

East Grinstead and District Guild SUBSCRIPTIONS RAISED

The 53rd AGM of the Guild took place at Edenbridge on 8 March, when afternoon ringing preceded the service conducted by the President. During the business there were several important issues in front of members to be discussed, one of the most important being subscriptions. After remaining static for six years, the treasurer proposed that subscriptions should be raised to 60p in 1981, and this was passed unanimously. Rules for the registration of the Rope Fund as a charity were debated and agreed.

Later there was a resumption of ringing at Edenbridge and at Chiddingstone. A. K.

DARTFORD, KENT—continued

bells were re-cast and two were added in 1702 (total weight 88½ cwt.) at a cost of over £500. The fourth bell was re-cast in 1773 by Pack and Chapman, and the treble in 1882 by Mears and Stainbank. In 1917 all the bells were re-cast by Mears and Stainbank at the expense of Mr. A. J. Penney, J.P., who, as Alderman Penney, became Charter Mayor of Dartford, 1933. The tenor weighs 18½ cwt. (the whole eight total 76 cwt.) and the key is E flat. Bells were formerly made in Bullace Lane, near the church.

In 1976 the bells were rehung on ball-bearings by the local ringers and were rehung in pairs over a series of weekends.

Disaster struck in 1978 when a gudgeon broke on the tenor whilst it was being rung. The wheel was smashed and, when a spare



Back row (l. to r.): John Burton (captain), Andrew Waldron, Paul Wagstaff. Middle: John Bennett, Rev. John Clausen (Stone), Shirley Fronton, Frank E. Walker, Marian Wainsbury. Front: Simon Davies, Alex Britton. Absent—Lesley Croucher, Roy Edwards.

Suffolk Guild

DISTRICT COMPETITION

The North-West District annual striking competition was held at Lakenheath on 8th March when there was a good entry of 12 teams: Barrow, Gt. Barton, Brandon, Euston, Exning, Horringer, Ixworth, Lakenheath, Stowmarket, Walsham-le-Willows, West Stow and Whepstead. The test piece was either call-changes or Plain Bob.

A service conducted by the Rev. P. Strickland was held after the competition and was followed by tea in the village hall provided by the Lakenheath ringers under their captain, Mrs. E. Peachey.

The judges (Roger Peters and Trevor Hughes) from the North-East district gave the results, adjudging Lakenheath the winners and Mr. Henry Ivings (donor of the shield) presented it to that team.

A social evening was held afterwards at which 100 ringers and friends were entertained with handbells by teams from West Stow and Lakenheath and took part in various games and competitions.

Thanks were given to Mrs. Peachey and the District officers for a very enjoyable day. C.R.N.

Enclosed herewith please find a cash donation towards expenses, of £2 (and contrary to views recently expressed in *Ringling World* correspondence, this is not "conscience" money! A.W.)

wheel could not be found, a local carpenter made a new one using undamaged parts from the old wheel. It is hoped to have the tenor rehung before the end of the year.

There are many records of peals, and some are detailed on panels in the ringing chamber. On 30 October, 1749, was rung a peal of Grandsire Triples in 3 hrs. 16 mins. This was repeated exactly 200 years later in 2 hrs. 52 mins. In 1895 peals were rung of Kent T.B. Major (5088 changes, 3 hrs. 1 min.), Stedman Triples (5040, 2hrs. 55 mins.) and Double Norwich C.B. Major (5088, 3 hrs. 5 mins.). Peals were also rung to celebrate the granting of the Borough Charter (1933), King George V's Silver Jubilee (1935) Victory in Europe (1945). Many associations have visited and rung in this ancient tower beside the historic Dover Road, and no doubt many others will do so in the years to come. G. H. P., J. M. B.

Treble	29"	5-1-6	E flat	Recast 1917
Mears & Stainbank		Founder	London	1882
2nd	30½"	6-0-5	D	Recast 1917
		PW J702		
3rd	32½"	6-1-17	C	Recast 1917
		PW J702		
4th	35½"	8-0-25	B flat	Recast 1917
Pack & Chapman of London,			Fecit	1773
William Pope Churchwarden				
5th	37"	8-2-10	A flat	Recast 1917
		PW J702		
6th	39"	9-2-16	C	Recast 1917
		PW J702		
7th	43"	13-1-25	F	Recast 1917
		PW J702		
		Leonard Savill	Vicar	
		Alfred John Penney	Churchwardens	
		Henry Robert Dines		
Tenor	48"	18-2-11	E flat	
		Made by Philip Wightman	London	J702
		Charles Manning, Thomas Walston	Churchwardens	
		Mears & Stainbank - remade - us - in - the - year - 1917 - as - the - gift - of - Alfred - John - Penney - Churchwarden - in - Loving - Memory - of - Parent - Alfred - Thomas - Mary - Penney. (Stainbank on headstock)		

It was decided to name all the bells for the 900th birthday celebrations, and these are: Treble, Penney; 2, Tyler; 3, Hope; 4, Grace; 5, Benediction; 6, Faithful; 7, Griff; Tenor, Gundulf. J. M. B.

Salisbury D.G.

ALL THE MONEY RAISED

The North Dorset Branch held their AGM at Mere on 8th March when, in the absence of the Rev. F. W. Pugh, the meeting was chaired by Mrs. M. M. Godley.

The committee was re-elected with the exception of Miss M. Duke, who resigned as one of the two Masters and Joe Herbert (Sherborne) was elected in her place. Miss Duke was thanked for her work for the Branch.

Six members were elected and Ben Ridout (Okeford Fitzpaine) and Fred Priddle (Stourton Caundle) were nominated for Hon. Life Members of the Guild.

Mr. Spencer (Iwerne Minster) reported that all the money had been raised for the rehanging of the bells. The meeting agreed to pay for a commemorative peal board.

Blandford tower is undergoing further repairs and ringing has been suspended.

The new ring of eight being hung at Brownsea Island will be dedicated at Whitsun.

The meeting preferred the AGM to be held in March instead of December. Ringing which took place at Bourton, Longbridge Deverill, Maiden Bradley, Silton and Stourton, was enjoyed and it is hoped to have similar arrangements at the June meeting at Trent. A.L.W.

THE CHIEF OF SINNERS

Written by John Bunyan in 1666 after six years of imprisonment

But, I say, my neighbours were amazed at this my great conversion, from prodigious profaneness, to something like a moral life: and, truly, so they well might; for this my conversion was as great, as for Tom of Bedlam to become a sober man. Now, therefore, they began to praise, to commend, and to speak well of me, both to my face, and behind my back. Now, I was, as they said, become godly; now, I was become a right honest man. But, oh! when I understood that these were their words and opinions of me, it pleased me mighty well. For though, as yet, I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly. I was proud of my godliness, and, indeed, I did all I did, either to be seen of, or to be well spoken of, by man. And thus I continued for about a twelvemonth or more.

Now, you must know, that before this I had taken much delight in ringing, but my conscience beginning to be tender, I thought such practice was but vain, and therefore forced myself to leave it, yet my mind hankered: wherefore I should go to the steeple house, and look on it, though I durst not ring. But I thought this did not become religion neither, yet I forced myself, and would look on still; but quickly after, I began to think, How, if one of the bells should fall? Then I chose to stand under a main beam, that lay overthwart the steeple, from side to side, thinking there I might stand sure, but then I should think again, should the bell fall with a swing, it might first hit the wall, and then rebounding upon me, might kill me for all this beam. This made me stand in the steeple door; and now, thought I, I am safe enough; for, if a bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding.

So, after this, I would yet go to see them ring, but would not go farther than the steeple door; but then it came into my head, How, if the steeple itself should fall? And this thought, it may fall for aught I know, when I stood and looked on, did continually so shake my mind, that I durst not stand at the steeple door any longer, but was forced to flee, for fear the steeple should fall upon my head.