

# The Ringing World

June 12, 1987

The weekly journal for church bell ringers

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## An exciting ring of five

*It all began with a quinquennial inspection of the bells of All Saints, Footscray, Kent by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. The file showed that extensive work had been done in the past, turning the bells and fitting new headstocks but had stopped short of recasting due, no doubt, to what then seemed prohibitive cost. This latest report again suggested recasting as the only way to improve the tone of the bells, generally agreed to be very poor and in the (approximate) key of E flat.*

All Saints Church, Footscray, Kent, is a lovely little church situated in a country lane on the edge of Footscray Meadows. It dates back to before the 14th century and there was a church on the site before that. It is finished with flint on the outside, with a wooden tower and a cockerel weather vane on the spire that nods to and fro as we ring. It has been likened (by the captain of St. Alfege, Greenwich) to a garden shed on top of a church with five flower pots.



Peter Romney working on new treble.



Is there anyone up there? David Joyce bending over backwards to help.

### Shock waves!

We requested an estimate which duly arrived and was presented to the PCC accompanied by gasps of horror and exclamations of "Why didn't they have it done 20 years ago when it would have only cost about £500!" After the shock waves had passed we began to think that when in another 20 years, another PCC was faced with another estimate for the same work, at ten times today's price, the comments would be the same. So the die was cast.

The fourth bell was dated 1862, the third and fifth (tenor) both 1863. These three having been cast by J. Warner & Sons. In 1889 the ring was augmented to five by the addition of two trebles cast by Gillett & Co. We believe that this is the second lightest ringable ring of five in the country. To add to the excitement they are rung from the middle of the centre aisle. Two on one side and three on the other - "their life in your hands" at every service!

Richard Offen and Peter Romney from the Kent County Association Bell Restoration subcommittee came to inspect the bells in September 1985 and agreed with the foundry's findings. They offered us a substantial grant and their labour and expertise free. An offer which we were only too glad to accept. At this point our band consisted of four adults and four juniors; all keen but inexperienced in these matters.

### Began in earnest

Fund raising began in earnest in April 1986. We had enormous support, both from parishioners and friends of the church and friends in other local towers. All of whom must be heartily sick of sponsoring our walking, bicycling, supermarket dash etc. and many of whom ran events and donated the proceeds to the bell fund.

By January 1987 the PCC agreed that we had raised enough to go ahead; that they would pay any shortfall and would be repaid from the bell fund as soon as possible along with other loans gratefully accepted from members of our church.

The last quarter peal was rung on January 4th 1987 by P. Macey, Anne Martin (C), G. Long, Veronica Grover and Margaret Macey; the last peal having already been rung on December 28th 1986 by Allison Boyes, Susan Fisher, A. J. Britton, Anne Martin and Antony Baker (C). One last wedding on 9th January and then on Saturday 10th we were ready to start.

Richard Offen had instructed us to take everything apart. This didn't sound too difficult. How



Tenor being tuned at Whitechapel.

wrong can you be! Our faithful band turned out in freezing weather, along with Philippa Rooke from Chelsfield: a staunch supporter/worker and much appreciated. We were in the belfry all day, apart from the odd cuppa, till about 7 p.m. It was bitterly cold and snowing by the evening, however, we kept our spirits up. Any weird noises emanating from the tower were only us singing. Many of the nuts and bolts had been painted on, so we had to cut through them with a hacksaw. The clapper bolts did defeat us and were left on.

The following week brought deep snow. In theory the bells were to be lowered on 17th January, so we needed to keep working to that end. On 14th January Margaret, Roger and I waded through snow drifts to reach the church in order to take up the floor of the sound chamber. The all was prepared. Roger did get covered in snow when I inadvertently put the belfry hatch in place with him under it; well, I didn't know it was covered in snow. Abominable what!

When 17th January arrived the "Canterbury Crew" were snowed up, so the work was postponed until 24th January.

### Absolutely gripping

We arrived at the church on the 24th at 8 a.m. and were amazed at the apparent ease with which everything was achieved. By 11 a.m. our five bells were outside the west door awaiting transport to the foundry. Mr. Brian Saunders, a local builder had kindly volunteered for this work and off he went into the snowbound yonder! The rest of us had a cuppa, swept up, gathered our overworked cameras and home we went.

On 5th February eight of us, including our Rector, Canon Tyers, went to watch the bells recast. Alan Hughes gave us a blow by blow account and it was absolutely gripping. Again, multiple camera activity! On 14th February we were back at the Foundry. We had booked a trip round in the distant past and by pure luck it was when our bells were being tuned. More camera activity.

(Continued on p. 538)

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FOOTSCRAY - continued from front cover

## Bells back

The bells were returned to All Saints on Saturday 7th March. Again work commenced at 8 a.m. with the "Canterbury Crew" already well into the preliminary work when the bells arrived. Once again, it was pretty cold but not snowing. There was a great deal to do in one day. The bells were all up in the belfry by lunch-time, having been blessed by the Rector when they arrived. Then the wheels had to be reassembled, sliders and runner boards fitted, stays bolted on, new floor mounted pulleys fitted and bosses moved so that the ropes fell more conveniently, especially the fourth whose ringer almost had to straddle a pew. The belfry itself is only about 9 feet square. There is no room to work as the bells fill the available space. The work went on and on. The sandwiches were all eaten and the younger members were all dispatched for supplies and biscuits, the urn was doing overtime! By 8 p.m. the end was not in sight so Margaret and I went off to the chip shop for sausages and chips all round. This revived the workers for their final onslaught and at



Some of "the workers".

about 10.30 p.m. we were ready for the big moment.

Now we just had to test them but we were very restrained and only did a few rounds. They sounded wonderful, although the handling was not as before. By the time we had cleared up and got home it was 11.20 p.m.

The "Canterbury Crew" consisted of Richard Offen, Brian Butcher, Tom Brett, Alan Andrews, Peter Romney and David Joyce. We are all most grateful to them for giving up their Saturdays and for the hours of hard work done on our behalf. I must also say that they probably have the most photographed legs in the county and do a good line in contortion.

## Final adjustments

The Rededication Service was fixed for 11th April. We had a tied-bell practice beforehand and the fourth was very hard to set; the ropes needed adjusting too. Up to the belfry we went once more: Margaret and me, Derek plus tools, to improve the situation. A bit off the runner boards made all the difference. With the clappers still tied they were still a bit tricky but better than before.

The bells were rededicated by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Rochester. The church was almost full and it was tricky to see so many friends, both from our own church and from surrounding ones. The Lewisham District Quarterly Meeting had been adapted to take in this service, so many ringers who had laboured long to teach us more, were there. The Mayor of Bexley was there with her escort, some of the "Canterbury Crew" and their families and Mr. and Mrs. Alan Hughes. Our own ringers, of course, turned out in force. We were somewhat apprehensive, as part of the service included us ringing rounds (easy) and then stopping, preferably together (not so easy). The fittings needed further adjustment and the bells were still not easy to handle, however, all was well with only a minor hiccup.

After the service there was tea in the hall and Richard Offen on behalf of the Kent County Association presented a cheque for £1,500 to Canon G. Tyers. This was a very generous and much appreciated grant towards the cost of recasting. Then it was off to the church for more ringing.

From the hall, where I was helping to clear the tea, a strange assortment of sounds reached me. Grand sire Doubles, barely started and instantly in trouble. Could that be Bob Doubles with all those chords? Rounds? Well, almost. Suffice it to say that the bells are light and the handling, well, different, but the tone is worth every single penny.

## The bells

Bell	Diameter	Note	Weight	Weight of old bell
Treble	1'7"	B	£ 1-2-11	£ 1-1-20
2nd	1'8"	A	1-3-2	1-2-13
3rd	1'9"	G sharp	2-0-6	1-3-4
4th	1'11"	F sharp	2-2-3	2-1-4
Tenor	2'1"	E	3-1-27	3-0-6

## Inscriptions

Treble A.M.D.G. ET IN PI MEM; ELYNDON OB; 1880  
 2nd DED; 1889 C.B.-R.  
 3rd DONATED BY GLADYS ROSE IN MEMORY OF HER BELOVED HUSBAND HARRY BORN 26.3.1900 DIED 8.4.1978  
 4th (No Inscription given)  
 Tenor PRAISE THE LORD  
 RECAST FROM ORIGINAL METAL BY DONATIONS FROM THE PARISH AND FRIENDS

All Bells rear:

RECAST

1987

WHITECHAPEL

(and the Foundry crest)

Visitors welcome at practice on

Wednesday evenings, 7.30-9 p.m.

Sunday service ringing at 9.40 a.m.

Evening service ringing by arrangement.

The present ringers of All Saints are Rosalind Farmer, Margaret Macey, Roger Cass, Vanessa Watts, Derek Grainge, Peter Macey, David Macey, Nigel Grover, Laurence Grover, Kath Barnes, Veronica Grover (captain).

We are not an experienced band although thanks to neighbouring towers in our District, we are a lot better than this time last year. Especial thanks to Anne Martin and Philippa Rooke from Chelsfield and Tony Baker and Allison Boyes from Greenwich, who have encouraged us constantly and bullied us mercilessly, to try, try and try again! We moan like —, but are very grateful. Many thanks too, to Patrick Braund and the band at St. John's, Sidcup for welcoming us to their practice whilst our bells were away.

In closing this epistle. All Saints has no official peal or quarter peal records but written on the wall of the sound chamber in pencil, is the following:

May 1910

A muffled peal was rung to the memory of His Late Majesty Edward VII by: Edward Samuel Lyle (Captain), Joseph Browning, James Browning, Richard Smale, Charles Downton.

A muffled peal was rung to the memory of the lads of the village on Armistice Day 1922 at the investing of their memorial by: E. S. Lyle, (?) Downton, R. Smale, (?) Bennet, (?) Jeffery.

On November 25th, 1922. A peal was rung to commemorate the marriage in Bombay, India of Miss Sophia Pullman, daughter of J. B. Pullman by: E. S. Lyle, H. Downton, J. Browning, C(?) Downton and R. Smale.

In 1923 to commemorate the marriage of His Royal Highness the Duke of York, a peal rung by: Edward Samuel Lyle, Harold William Downton, Richard Smale, James Browning, William Browning.

Does anyone remember any of these events or anything about the ringers? There is no mention of the methods rung or of the number of changes, as it seems possible that they did not mean the same as we do by the word peal. We would be very pleased to hear from anyone with such information.

VERONICA GROVER.

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