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The Weekly Journal for Church Bell Ringers

Hadlow—No more rude comments

The church of St. Mary at Hadlow in Kent dates back to Saxon times and indeed in spite of much alteration to the body of the church most of the fabric of the tower is original.

The timbers in the spire are old and evidence suggests that there was at least one bell in the tower in the eleventh or twelfth century. However there is a dearth of documentation about the church and the only thing of which we can be certain is that five bells were cast by James Bartlet in 1695. A sixth bell, the present third, is dated 1696 so you can take your pick of what might have happened. Did Hadlow like the five bells and quickly order a treble? Was the original treble so awful that the founder was told to produce something better? Or did he just cast them around the turn of the year and the treble was the last one to be cast and by then it was January?

Judging by the cut outs in the wall of the tower and in the old beams the Bartlet six were hung higher in the tower. They must have been in a different frame from the one which has just been removed: certainly the heads of a previous frame have been used to secure the corner uprights of the spire timbers into the corner of the wall. It looks as if this was probably done when the eight-bell frame was installed and it was necessary to shorten these corner uprights to allow the bells room to swing.

In 1775 Pack and Chapman added two trebles to make a ring of eight and they were hung in a new frame. They did not make a very good job of matching the two new bells to the old for they were very flat, especially the second. It has taken over two hundred years to put that part right! Apart from peals, there appears to be no record of the bells from this time until 1905 when Mears and Stainbank rehung all of the bells for a cost of £130.

In 1975 the bells were inspected and two reports recommended that they should be rehung in a new frame. The local ringers all agreed that this would be a very good idea but the PCC could not be persuaded. However, after a mere eighteen years of badgering it was at last decided that a proper job should be done and in 1993 the decision was taken to place an order with Whitechapel to rehang in a new frame and recast the trebles.

The only problem was that the roof also needed major repairs. After long discussion it was decided to launch an appeal for both roof and bells. The parish already had a considerable sum set aside for this work and the appeal was launched with a target of at least £70,000. A gift day in May produced the amazing sum of £40,000 promised over the next four years and was a signal that the project was set fair to succeed. Inevitably the rest of the money would be far more difficult to find but we have managed to get near to the target and are reasonably hopeful of getting there during 1994. Part of the roof has been done and work on the bells is now completed.



The tenor on its way down.

The New Year Bank Holiday was the day set aside for taking out the bells and the Kent Association's heavy gang and tackle duly obliged! A lot of interest was generated among the parishioners and Kodak and their ilk must have done very well on that day. A member of the congregation and one of the ringers drove the bells up to the foundry. With that task completed the frame had to be dismantled before the builders could come in and strengthen the tower. With the frame out of the way it was only too apparent why we needed three concrete elbow stitches in each corner. The movement of the frame and the supporting beams had produced ominous looking cracks in the tower. However the structural engineer, James Malcolm, was not put off when he saw them

and merely confirmed his original recommendation. The builders came in to do their part of the project and the inside of the tower very quickly came to resemble a stone quarry with everything coated with a thick layer of mortar dust. Meanwhile, back at the Foundry it was discovered that the three was cracked. Although it had not affected the sound of the bell it was decided that it ought to be welded and another member of the congregation generously offered to take the bell from Whitechapel to Soundweld and take it back again when the welding was finished. By the middle of February Whitechapel were ready to start putting in the new frame. Four of the foundation beams had to be concreted into the tower before the building work could be finished so Trevor Bailey came down for one day to supervise this and then disappeared for a fortnight. He returned the day after the builders finished and at that stage there was no floor either beneath the bell or to the silence chamber. The local ringers had agreed to construct these so it meant two hectic weekends while the bells were going in if the rehang was going to be finished on time. Fortunately we had enough floor down by the time it was necessary to be drilling holes for the ropes and the job was completed in time for the bells to welcome Easter Day. And what of the result! The back six do not really sound different from before. As James Bartlet's last complete six which still exists they are listed bells. That they were not going to be tuned did not worry the locals; they knew they were pretty well in tune and sounded good. With the trebles recast, the sound is a great improvement and one (i.e. a fool) is fooled into thinking that the old ones have been tuned! No longer will reports of outings be able to refer rudely to Hadlow bells. We now have an excellent ring of eight bells. And since they have now been weighed properly the Tenor is a quarter to three quarters of a hundredweight lighter depending on whether you took the Tenor

(Continued overleaf)



On their way to Whitechapel.

HADLOW—continued.

to be 13 or 13½. The note of the Tenor is approximately G. However those familiar with the tower will be confused when they come to try them out as the whole rope circle has moved halfway round the tower! The tenor rope falls roughly where the fourth used to and the treble where the five was.



The tenor with its old headstock Chris Munday. The less flattering photograph is of Nick Munday.

We still had three weeks left to get the ringing chamber looking respectable before the Bishop of Tonbridge came to rededicate the bells. A target which was just achieved with the stair carpet going in the day before. And now, not only have the two offending trebles gone but also the unpopular scour-coloured paint on the panelling of the ringing chamber!

The second was dedicated to the memory of Ken Garner formerly Principal of Hadlow College and a chorister at St. Mary's, who died about a month before the bells were taken out.

Details of the bells:

Treble	4-3-4
PACK & CHAPMAN OF LONDON FECIT 1775	
(Around the crown)	
GERALD LANE	VICAR
JOHN MACNAMARA	} CHURCHWARDENS
RAY NORBURY	
Recast Whitechapel 1994	
2nd	5-0-0
PACK & CHAPMAN OF LONDON FECIT 1775	
(Around the crown)	
IN MEMORIAM	
KENNETH ERNEST GARNER	
Recast Whitechapel 1994	
3rd	5-0-15
†AMES BARTLET ME FEC†T 1696	
(Around the crown)	
4th	5-2-25
†AMES BARTLET ME FEC†T 1695	
(Around the crown)	
5th	6-2-10
Inscription as on the fourth	
6th	7-1-9
Inscription as on the fourth	
7th	9-1-25
Inscription as on the fourth	
Tenor	12-3-0
HENRY BARTON EDMOND NORMAN	
CH-WARDENS	
ANDREW REANY VICAR 1695	
(Around the crown)	
†AMES BARTLET ME FEC†T	
(Immediately below)	

Inscription on the treble has the D of London back to front.

Each of the James Bartlet bells bears the familiar foundry mark with the three bells. The current version of this mark appears on the two recast trebles where the date of the recasting is recorded.

PETER ROMNEY

The 1994 Tewkesbury Shield

The 22nd Tewkesbury Shield Competition was held on 7th May and attracted eight teams. The set piece, a plain course of Lincolnshire Royal, was judged by Peter Border, Roger Baldwin and John Mayne. These are the same judges as in the very first competition back in 1973.



Back after 21 years. The judges: John Mayne, Peter Border and Roger Baldwin.

"Ruthy's cafe" was open all afternoon, serving tea, sandwiches and cakes, and raised around £60.00 for the Tewkesbury Abbey Appeal.

The guest speaker at the adjudication, David Thorne, explained that he had met A.J.B. for the first time earlier in the day, and found him to be almost normal! He also paid tribute to the organisers of the competition in a speech which was much enjoyed by all.



RWED and A.J.B. meet at Bushley - a day to remember for at least one of them.

Re the query of A.J.B. (RW 13/5/94). The ancient parish of Bolton-le-Moors has possessed a church dedicated to St. Peter since 1170, the modern church of 1871 has 13 bells.

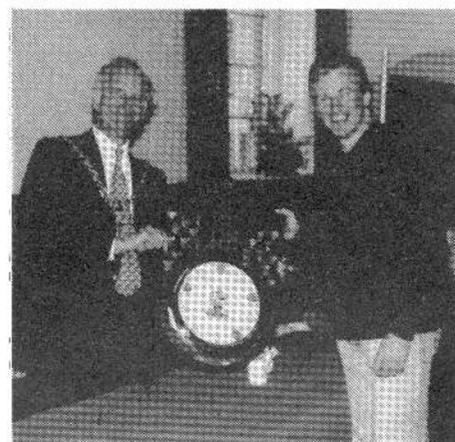
The other St. Peter at Bolton is at Halliwell some 1½ miles out of the town and was built in 1840. It sometimes has the title St. Peter Smithills which is a district in the Halliwell area. Halliwell may be a distortion of Holy-Well as there is a well in the area. Before 1840 the people of the district were served by a small chapel at Smithills Hall which is still used.

J. THORNLEY.



Retiring Contest Secretary, Richard Hart (right) with David Bagley.

The chief judge, Peter Border, described Lincolnshire Royal as being like "mistakes joined together by plain hunting". John Mayne made some comments on the standard and speed of the ringing, and Roger Baldwin then gave out the marks. Hugh Evans of the competition committee, thanked the retiring secretary, Richard Hart, who has been organising the competition for twelve years and is handing over his task to David Bagley.



Geoff Harris receives the shield from the Mayor of Tewkesbury.

The results were as follows:

Team	Place	Faults	Drawn
Gloucester + Bristol	1	52	8
Lichfield	2=	58	4
Oxford	2=	58	7
Leicester	4	68	6
Bath + Wells	5	76	3
University of London	6	78	2
Coventry	7	80	1
Worcester + Districts	8	122	5

D.P.B.

* * *

For old times' sake I'm prepared to answer A.J.B.'s first question on page 498 (two St. Peters in Bolton). Very simply, for the same reason that Milton Keynes has two all Saints (Loughton and Milton Keynes); two St. Marys (Bletchley and Shenley); they have been overtaken by the mushroom disease emanating from ambitious neighbours.

Dove 1st edition lists Halliwell, Lancs, with 16½ cwt tenor; 4th and 6th put it in Lancs and Gtr. Man. respectively and advise the reader to "see Bolton". Seeing Bolton, one finds that the tenor had dropped to 14-3-12 by the 6th edition.

VALERIE WILLARD.