

The Ringing World

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Harrold – a dream come true

On Sunday, 25th June, 1989, the new 3rd bell and restored six bells of St. Peter's Church, Harrold, Beds, were dedicated and blessed during the Communion Service. The bells were rung after the service for the first time in almost three years – a most joyous occasion for all ringers involved in the massive fund-raising efforts and the actual restoration.

A crack was found around the top of the 3rd (a Hugh Watts bell cast in 1603) during the summer of 1986 (see R.W., 15th August 1986, p. 711). Experts agreed that the crack went almost half the complete girth of the bell and suggested it should be recast and not welded. It was obvious too that all the other bells would benefit from re-hanging on ball-bearings, clappers needed rebushing, the wheels and pulleys needed attention and the frame badly needed cleaning and painting.

A day to remember at Headcorn

Saturday, 29th July, dawned bright and sunny as we've come to expect this summer, but this day was special – our cracked tenor bell was to begin her journey to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

At 8 a.m. the trio of Kent volunteer experts arrived: Peter Romney, Frank Lewis and Brian Butcher. At the same time Enid, Doris and I were preparing to set up our regular bookstall which has raised so much of the money to pay for the re-cast. If we did well this morning we would have reached £1,000 this summer season.

By 11 a.m. the bell was being lowered through the clock-room. Assistance in guiding her came from Ron Millidine and David Manger, while Alan Howe (one of our servers) was on the receiving end below. Blick Waring (churchwarden) removed the baize doors to allow the bell to be taken out of the west door.

11.45 saw Tim Day (local farmer and chorister) drive his tractor and fork-lift up the church path. The bell was loaded on a pallet and amid well-wishers and amateur photographers and with three men on the front of the tractor to balance the bell's 19+ cwt, the bell was carried to the road.

One slight hitch – the waiting lorry was waiting no longer! Driver James Wilton had answered his fireman's bleeper call. Luckily for us they had a full crew without him and he was soon back and the bell safely loaded.

The bellringers are most grateful to all the helpers – and also to all our customers and donors of stock. We took £65 that morning (almost a record) and so reached £1,007 this year.

Thankyou everyone, and well done!

The happy shopkeeper,
JEAN VIDLER

After receiving estimates it was decided the work would be split into three phases:

Phase 1 would be to recast and rehang the 3rd bell and to rehang the treble and 4th bell – as both were found to have loose gudgeons! This would go ahead in spite of the fact the P.C.C. would not be able to support us financially, as they were fully committed to major restoration to the tower and pinnacles. (It was likely ringing would have had to stop for a while in any case due to the state of the pinnacles.)

Phase 2 would be to rehang the 2nd, 5th and tenor bells and refurbish the wheels, sand-blast and repaint the frame.

Phase 3 would be to re-bush the clappers and replace the pulleys.

Phases 2 and 3 would take place as and when funds were available. The cost of the work was reduced because all the work in the tower was to be undertaken by Barry Thompson and the local ringers, with the voluntary help of Rodney Walker (of Taylors) and Pat Albion (Beds Association Technical Advisor).

Various fund-raising events were organised during 1987 – a sponsored peal at Sharnbrook on New Year's Day, a handbell concert by St. Lawrence, Chobham, Handbell Ringers in March, raffles at District quarterly meetings, sale of cakes and cups of tea at District meetings, and a sponsored beard shave. Donations were received from villagers, ringers and

friends, and the Parish Council. A substantial grant was received from the Bedfordshire Association of Church Bell Ringers, Bedford District Bell Restoration Fund.

The old 3rd bell and headstock – together with the treble and 4th headstocks – were taken down on 9th July 1987 and taken to John Taylor's at Loughborough. The new bell was cast on 13th August with an additional inscription commemorating a well-known local ringer whose family still live in the village:

CUM CUM AND PRAYE 1603 (facsimile)
HARRY GAYTON
1883-1972
RINGER FOR OVER
60 YEARS
Taylor Loughborough
Recast 1987

Some ringers were able to travel to Loughborough to watch the recasting, while others went in October to see the bell being tuncd.

The new bell and refitted headstocks arrived home on 5th December, but were kept in the ringing room as it had been decided to go ahead with Phase 2 – following a generous and unexpected donation from the P.C.C.

In March 1988 the remaining bells were lifted onto beams, the headstocks taken to the foundry, and the wheels taken down to be refurbished and treated. The restoration of the pinnacles and repairs to cracks in the tower held up any more activity in the tower but fund-raising went on.

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Tim Day drives off watched by Alan Howe.

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