

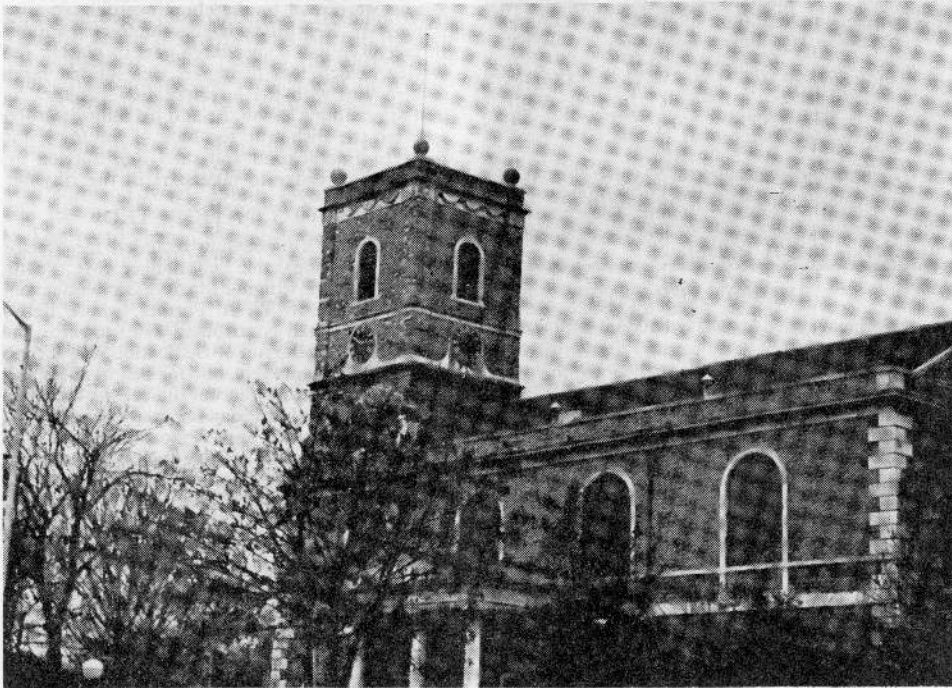
THE RINGING WORLD

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St. Mary, Lewisham, London, SE13

IN the period between AD 500 and AD 862, a certain Saxon (Leof-sunu meaning "Dear Son") came over our Kentish hills, saw what was then a fair and fertile valley watered by the River Ravensbourne, settled here, and called the place Leofshema, meaning the "Home of the Dear Son". With the passing of time the name has become Leofsuhaema, Lievesham, Lusam and, finally, LEWISHAM. From documentary evidence, it is almost certain that a church existed here in AD 964, possibly earlier. This church would have been very small and, as time went on, various additions were made. In 1471, a movement was made to build a bell tower and this was completed in 1512. It was built of rubble, flint and Kentish Ragstone, common building materials for the south-east. The four bells were hung in what is now the ringing chamber.

The "Lewisham Village" of 1770 consisted of a single street, over a mile long, the church being at the southern end. The population at this time was about 2,900 with 530 houses, wherein lived the city merchants. By 1773, the church had fallen into disrepair—cracks had appeared and there was continual dampness. So decayed was the fabric that it was decided to rebuild the church and incorporate it with the medieval tower. The building was completed in 1777 at a cost of about £3,886. The work included the raising of the tower by the addition of the present upper storey. The bells were hung in this storey and the ringing-chamber was raised to the original bell-chamber.

The exterior of the new church was very much as it appears today, except that there was a small apse at the east end instead of the present chancel (added in 1881). However, the interior was vastly different until modifications were made in 1881.

It is interesting to note that since 1854, no fewer than 24 parishes have been formed out of the ancient parish of St. Mary.

This year sees the bi-centenary of the new church and the casting of the 21 cwt. tenor of the ring of eight.

THE BELLS

The inventory of the church goods, made in 1552, mentions item "iiiiij (4) greate bells of brass sutyed in the steeple". With the rebuilding of the church, the number was increased to eight. Very little is known about the history of the bells, but they were rehung on ball bearings in 1950 by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank. The earliest peal is probably one rung in 1775 for the Bromley Youths. In 1784, the Society of Trinity Youths rang a peal of 10,080 Bob Major in six hours 33 minutes. This Society, which was active in the Lewisham-Greenwich-Deptford area disbanded around 1893 on the formation of the Lewisham District of the Kent County Association. Another notable peal rung was a "John" peal of Grandsire Triples in 1828. Practice night is Thursday from 8.00-9.30, and visitors are always welcome.—

IAN P. STEVENSON

DETAILS OF BELLS

TREBLE:	T. Mears of London. Feat 1819			
SECOND:	Lester and Pack of London. Feat 1766	Note	Wt.	Diam.
	Recast by John Taylor of Loughborough 1896.	E Flat	6-1-0	29½ in.
	Samuel Bickersteth M.A. Vicar. T. A. Warrington and George W. J. King (Churchwardens)	D	6-2-0	30 in.
THIRD:	T. Mears of London. Feat 1819			
FOURTH:	Cast by John Warner and Sons London 1859. Honourable Rev. H. Legge D.C.I. Vicar. Churchwardens S. Souther Charles Atkins. Recast 1896 by subscription collected by S. Shore.	C	7-1-0	33 in.
		B Flat	8-1-8	35 in.
FIFTH:	"Ye people all who hear me ring, Be faithful to your God and King." Pack and Chapman feat.	A Flat	9-1-0	38 in.
SIXTH:	Cast in 1743 Jno. Baker and Geo. Thornton Churchwardens, Paul Valentine and Jno. Evens Churchwardens. Pack and Chapman of London feat.	G	12-3-0	41 in.
SEVENTH:	"Gloria tibi domine, Qui natus est Virgine." Cast 1766 Lester and Pack. Recast in 1896 Taylor of Loughborough. Rev. Samuel Bickersteth M.A. Vicar Thomas H. Warrington and George W. King (Churchwardens)	F	14-1-0	45½ in.
TENOR:	This bell was paid for by voluntary subscription 1777 Paul Valentine and John Evans Churchwardens. Pack and Chapman of London feat	E Flat	21-1-14	50 in.

Total weight: 4 tons 5 cwt. 3 qr. 22 lb.