



Official Journal of the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

St. Michael & All Angels, Maidstone, Kent

During the second half of the last century, the county town of Maidstone expanded rapidly. Originally the Tonbridge Road area lay within the parish of St. Peter's (the oldest church in Maidstone). St. Michael's (architect, Sir Arthur Blomfield) was built of Kent Ragstone in 1875/76—cost, £9,449 16s. 1d.—in a dominant position adjoining the Tonbridge Road, and was consecrated on 25th October, 1876. It has subsequently become the leading Anglo-Catholic Church in the area, with a tradition of liturgical ceremonial, and good music.

In the tower an 8-bell frame was installed by John Warner & Sons: the seventh was cast in 1876 by them, and 2-6 in 1878. The proposed treble and tenor were never cast, resulting in the middle six notes of an octave:—

Weight	Note	Weight	Note
Treble 4-3-12	F	4	6-0-2 B
2	5-0-4 E flat	5	6-2-4 B flat
3	5-2-8 D flat	Tenor 7-1-26	A flat

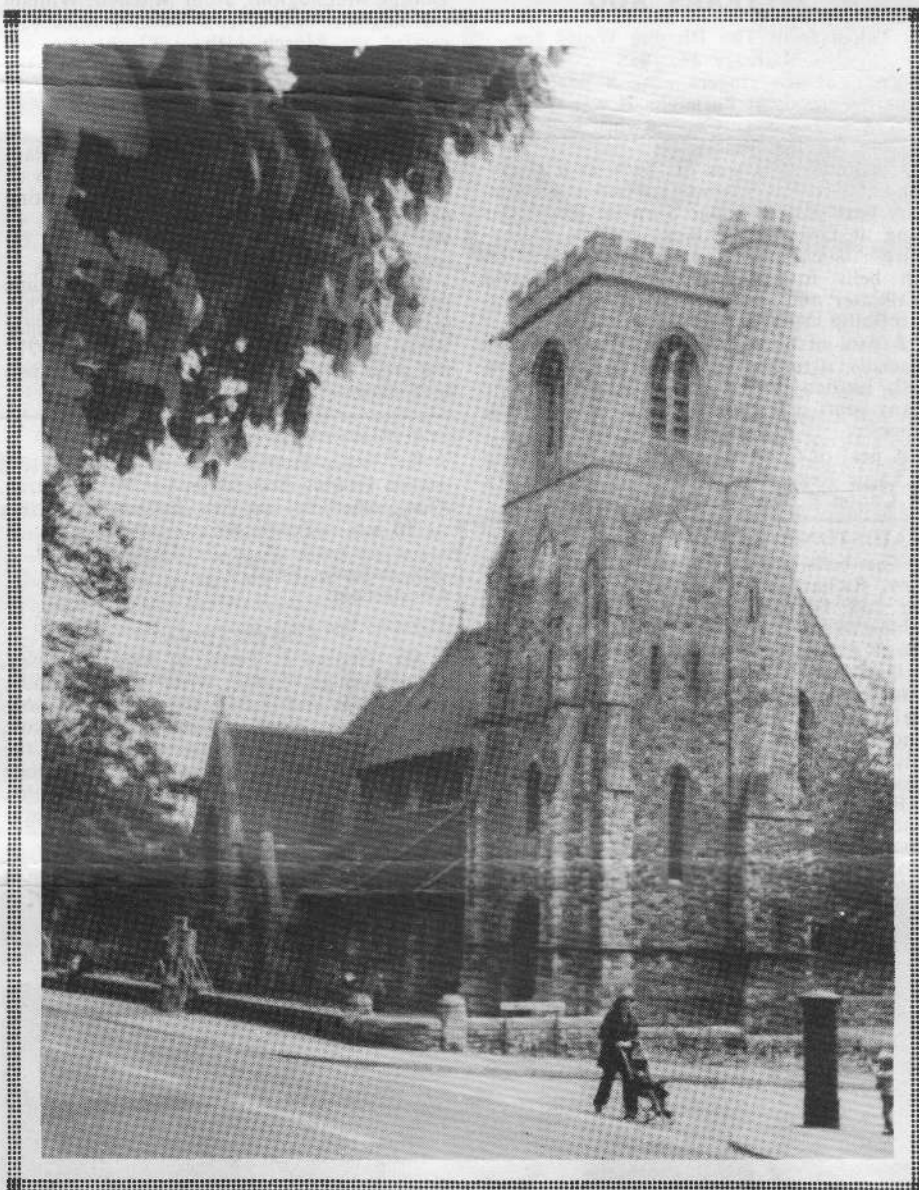
Clock by T. Cooke & Sons, York, dated 1877

Although sporadic attempts were made to train a local band, proficient ringers were inevitably attracted to All Saints' (10 bells). After World War II the bells were rarely rung, until in 1956 Percy Town organised regular practices. Martin Howe was recruited and under his guidance a local band was taught and flourished. A ringing society of pupils at the Grammar Schools was formed, and by the late 1960s and early 1970s a high standard was achieved. Simon Wigg, Peter Muchlinski and others became prominent ringers. More recently, other ringers have replaced the losses, and youngsters in the parish are showing a keen interest.

MORE DIFFICULT

However, the six bells were becoming progressively more difficult, although only light. The Bell Restoration Fund was launched, and in 1974 we fortunately acquired a Gillett & Johnston bell from the redundant St. Paul's, Penge. This has become the new tenor, following advice that the tower structure might suffer if eight bells, as intended by Warner's (tenor 9 cwt.), were installed.

By 1979 our Restoration Fund was showing a healthy balance after a Kent C.A. grant, several Premium Bond wins and numerous coffee mornings, etc., organised by our Appeal Secretary. The sale of a parish property enabled the PCC to lend the balance needed to recast the old six bells into 1-7 of a light octave, with the Penge bell as tenor.



A final peal was rung on 11th August, 1979, by a Sunday service band. In September, Kent C.A. members removed the Warner bells and Messrs. Whitbread & Co. kindly arranged transport (with the Penge bell) to Whitechapel Bell Foundry.

The vicar, tower captain and several members of the Church were delighted to see the recasting, and to be shown around the foundry by Mr. William Hughes. The origi-

nal oak frame was tie-bolted by Stuart Taylor in October, and on 10th December, 1979, Alan Hughes brought the eight bells, which were rehung by K.C.A.C.R. members on 5th January, 1980.

Treble 2-1-12	C	5	3-1-4	F	
2	2-1-20	B	6	3-3-8	E
3	2-2-16	A	7	5-0-4	D
4	2-2-26	G	Tenor 6-1-24	C	

Bells 1-7 by Whitechapel, 1979. Tenor by Gillett & Johnston, 1933.

(Continued overleaf)

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1980

ON CHRISTMAS MORNING

On Christmas morning, the Warnham (Sussex) Handbell Consort took part in the "New Morning" programme, broadcast on Radio 4 and presented by Christopher Slade.

The seven-minute 'appearance' by the Consort began with an interview of John Vinall, the team's conductor, who explained some of the intricacies of handbell ringing. "Dance of the Fawn" was then played, a tune which had been specially composed for the Consort by John Vinall.

Following this, George Francis, the team's leader and founder-member, answered questions about the bells and demonstrated the smallest and largest bell in the team's set of 105.

The Warnham Consort concluded their programme with a performance of The First Nowell, and We wish you a Merry Christmas.
B. M. W.

25 YEARS AGO**Taken from The Ringing World for January 28, 1955**

Young Essex ringers rang a peal in 21 Minor methods at Purlleigh. It was the 60th peal for Peter J. Came, who had been ringing for five years.

Christmas 1954 was the 50th, as a ringer, for Leonard Fidler, tower captain at Hitchin.

A peal of Cambridge Surprise Royal was rung at Grantham, Lincs., for the Derbyshire Association. It was the first peal on ten bells for Michael Orme and David Walklate, and the first of Surprise Royal for Philip Mehew.

A peal of Stedman Triples 'in hand' was specially arranged and rung to mark the 90th birthday of John O. Lancashire, for many years a leading ringer at St. Martin's, Leicester.
February 4, 1955

A peal of Cambridge Surprise Major rung at Lyme Regis marked the 50th anniversary of Canon C. Carew Cox's first peal.

MAIDSTONE, KENT—continued

The bells are to be re-dedicated by Rt. Rev. Richard Third, Bishop of Maidstone, on 2nd February. They will thus be in action at the beginning of 1980, to celebrate the K.C.A.C.R. Centenary Year.

Our thanks to all concerned: to Father Paul Gibbons and the PCC, the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, and the Kent C.A.; to Richard and Dawn Offen, Mike and Pauline Barber, without whose drive the project would never have been completed.

Ringings: Sunday, 10.15 (9.30, 1st in month) and 6 p.m. Wednesday, 7.30 p.m.

A peal at Kintbury, Berkshire, was claimed as the first peal on the bells since they were originally hung in the 17th century.

Three new Surprise methods were rung by the St. Martin's Guild for the Diocese of Birmingham: Witton Surprise Major at Birmingham Cathedral, Yardley Surprise Major at Yardley, and Icknield at the Cathedral. They were all conducted by Peter Border. As a conductor his total of 44 peals in 1954 was exceeded only by Harold Poole.

40 YEARS AGO**January 26, 1940**

Challis F. Winney, one of the outstanding figures in the Exercise, died at the age of 81. Mr. Winney was a truly great ringer and conductor on handbells, and his skill and enthusiasm led to a memorable performance—the ringing of Holt's Original on handbells non-conducted for the first time. George McLaughlin, John Mitchell, William Birmingham and Challis Winney were successful on March 11th, 1887, at the old headquarters of the College Youths, the Goose and Gridiron, in St. Paul's Churchyard.

February 2, 1940

Congratulations were extended to William Hewlett, father of the Dorchester Branch of the Salisbury Diocesan Guild, on completing 64 years as a ringer at Puddletown and 45 years as captain of the band, and also on serving for 40 years as parish clerk.

Did Great Peter of Exeter originally come from Talley Abbey, Carmarthenshire? That was a question posed by Edward J. Thomas. When the Abbey was dismantled in 1772 the great bell, weighing 72 cwt., was shipped to Exeter.

LONG LENGTH

Sir,—An attempt will be made to ring 10,560 Double Bob Major at Christ Church, Dore, Sheffield, on 9th February, starting at 10 a.m.—Yours, etc.,

L. GOODALL.

105 Ashgate Road,
Chesterfield.

UNFORTUNATE

Mr. George E. Feirn, of Kirton-Lindsey, Gainsborough, Lincs., writes: "On January 12, Frances and myself were going on holiday to our elder daughter in Bangkok, Thailand. Within minutes of boarding the plane at Heathrow, Frances fell and broke her hip. She was taken to Ashford Hospital, Middlesex, where they performed an opera-



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tion. Within a few days she was transferred to Scunthorpe Hospital where she is improving and will be discharged in a few days."

Obituary**J. A. CARMEN**

A former member of the Gloucester and Bristol D.A., Jack Carmen died on 5th November. He was a regular Sunday service ringer at SS. Philip and Jacob, Bristol, from the end of the war to 1953, and during that time he acquired a reputation for reliability and good striking. We have no record of his peals, and as far as we know the last one he rang was Kent T.B. Maximus (Granta Variation) at St. Mary Redcliffe in 1949.

R. J. B.



Delivering the old bells to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, London.



Casting the new bells.