

THE BELLS OF SAINT SAVIOUR'S CHURCH, WESTGATE-ON-SEA, THANET, KENT

by The Rev David L Cawley, AKC, FSA Scot

IN HIS earliest collection of poems, 'Mount Zion,' published in 1932, the Poet-Laureate of today, Sir John Betjeman, lover of bells and Honorary Member of the Central Council, writes:

"Hark, I hear the bells of Westgate,
I will tell you what they sigh,
Where those minarets and steeples
Prick the open Thanet sky."
"Happy bells of eighteen-ninety,
Bursting from your freestone tower"

The minarets and steeples of Thanet are many and various; and from practically all of them a bell or bells sounded. Even in Westgate, a modern suburb: the two bells of Wellington House School, now demolished, one for calling to chapel (so good that it is still ringing at Beneden School) and a ting-tang; the high pitched tinkler of the red-brick Congregational Church; and not far away, the freestone tower of S Saviour's. But no bells "burst" from it, except one; and none did until one happy day in July 1975.

Until the eighteen-sixties there was little along the North Kent coast between the ports of Margate and Whitstable apart from the growing resort of Herne Bay, and the small villages of Reculver and Birchington. The railway built by the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company reached the western suburbs of Margate in 1863; ten years later "ribbon" development along the coastal road led to the building of S James' Church, Westgate-Garlinge in 1873. The lofty spire of this church, which is reputed to contain a six-bell frame (only one bell), is a familiar landmark to travellers to Thanet. The exclusive village (such it is still called, despite its extent) of Westgate-on-Sea soon followed, and a Mission Church was built. According to the appeal to build the present church, "Hundreds had to be turned away" from this small building. The appeal was for £10,000, and the designs showed a typical Victorian building of Ragstone, consisting of nave with aisles, large chancel, eastern vestries, and a lofty tower and spire at the north-west. As erected, the church is very slightly smaller; but the tower is detached, connected with the church by a north porch. The top stage and spire were never built, and it is finished with a pyramid cap. Notable possessions of the church include an Italian reredos of fine workmanship, in memory of the Revd A A Lyne, first Vicar, and a magnificent East window by Kempe, erected in 1887.

The first bell was one of 25" diameter, weight 3cwt 1qr 14lb, supplied by Messrs Gillett and Bland of Croydon. In 1913, as a memorial to the Revd T W Mylne, Mr Lyne's successor as Vicar, a new and larger bell was supplied by Messrs John Taylor & Co. This magnificent bell, 46" diameter, weight 17cwt 2qr 6lb, was hung for full-circle ringing in a composite wood and cast-iron frame. The bell seems to have been installed without thought for provision of further bells, being too large for a tenor in six, and inconveniently positioned.

In 1972, the Reverend Stanley M Evans, then Chairman of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers, was Instituted as Vicar. No stranger to bell restoration, having restored and augmented the derelict five in his previous parish, Bredgar, Fr Evans was able to see that in a comprehensive programme of improvement and restoration at S Saviour's, bells were included. Some years previously, the need for bell furniture had been recognised when an electronic set of "bells" was installed, operated from a keyboard by the organ console, and consisting of metal bars

within the console which can be heard either solely at the keyboard or broadcast from the tower.

The story of the bells of the redundant Holy Cross Church, West Gate, Canterbury, was fully told in the 'RW' of July 1972. The bells were in store at the Whitechapel Foundry, and, after an extension of the Faculty to the Kent County Association to "hold them in trust" there until a home could be found, a remarkable donation (which came in an anonymous envelope which Fr Evans thought was a Funeral Notice) gave a clear sign that the bells from West Gate, Canterbury should go to Westgate, Thanet. On 5 December 1973, Mr Alan Berry, General Secretary of the KCA and Diocesan Adviser on Bells, was able to recommend that the bells go to S Saviour's.

Months of fund-raising and work followed, not only for the installation of the bells, but also for provision of a sound-proofing ceiling, electricity to the tower, repair of the stonework and transport. A great deal of the work of installing the new bells was undertaken at nominal charge, by an Association member, Stuart Taylor (and his wife), and they also removed the old one. At Whitechapel, the five bells from Canterbury were tuned, turned, and refitted (including canon-retaining headstocks on the four larger); from the metal of the bell of 1913 a new treble was cast, and the bells were supplied with a massive Iroko wood eight-bell frame. Timber frames have been used in many Kentish towers owing to their proximity to the sea. The total bill, including ancillary works, was £4,100, of which about £100 is still to be raised. Fr Evans will gladly receive donations at the Vicarage, Thanet Road, Westgate-on-Sea.

The bells were dedicated on 19 July 1975, by the Venerable Bernard Pawley, Archdeacon of Canterbury. Other robed clergy included the Revds S M Evans (Vicar), D L Cawley (formerly Diocesan Adviser on bells), and H M Albin (Vicar of S Dunstan-with-Holy Cross, Canterbury). The service consisted of Evensong. The Lessons were read by Messrs A P S Berry and E A Barnett (President of the Central Council). The Choir was augmented by local musicians and by the boys of the Choir of Sprowston Parish Church, Norfolk, and who were spending a week based on Westgate, singing in local churches. After the second lesson, the clergy and church officials, preceded by the choir, went to the tower, the Archdeacon and clergy ascending in copes! Mr W A Hughes of the Whitechapel Foundry handed a rope to the churchwardens, who in turn passed it to the Archdeacon, inviting him to dedicate the bells. Following the dedication the ropes were handed to the vicar, and prayers were led by the other clergy. The bells were then rung up in peal by a band intimately connected with them or with each other: Messrs W H Dobbie (who taught the vicar to ring); J Stockbridge (who took part in the last ringing at Holy Cross 50 years before); B J Luck (Chairman, KCA); A P S Berry (Gen Sec, KCA); and the Revds D L Cawley (former Diocesan Bell Adviser, who directed the removal from Holy Cross) and S M Evans (Vicar of Westgate) who called the opening touch (three leads of Bob Minor). The procession returned during the singing of the Easter hymn from which the inscription on the treble is taken. The Archdeacon preached and the augmented choir (who had never rehearsed together before) rendered the Hallelujah chorus in fine style. After the blessing, an invited band conducted by the President of the Central Council rang a touch of Kent.

A splendid repast was laid on in the Church School following the service, and general ringing

followed. The bells were rung for service the next morning, at which Fr Cawley preached, and on Wednesday 23 July, the 91st anniversary of the Church's consecration, the ringers of All Saint's, Birchington (who in a sponsored walk raised over £70 for the bells), rang at the vicar's invitation the first Quarter Peal on the bells in their new home, being 1,260 Grandsire Doubles: Betty Russell 1; Peter Russell 2; Matthew Hubbard 3; Ian Whorlow 4; David Russell 5; Michael Little 6. Let us hope that for the centenary in 1984 (of all dates!) we may hear Grandsire Triples—the space is there, so is the challenge.

Here are details of the bells:

- Treble:** (named "Our Saviour," 26 $\frac{1}{2}$ " , note F, 4cwt 0qr 9lb);
(Inscription ring): ALLELUIA TO THE SAVIOUR/WHO HAS GAINED THE VICTORY;
(Waist): I WAS CAST FROM/THE 1913 MEMORIAL BELL./IN MEMORY OF/T. W. MYLNE VICAR 1900/13./TO TREBLE THE PEAL OF FIVE FROM/HOLY CROSS, WEST GATE, CANTERBURY/ TRANSFERRED HERE EASTER 1975./;
(Other side): STANLEY MUNRO EVANS. VICAR/
J. J. S. BURY
R. J. MILLARD CHURCHWARDENS
19(W)75/WHITECHAPEL
- Second:** ("John" E-flat, 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ " , 4-3-1): JOHN FISHER CH WARDEN J739
- Third:** ("Mary" D-flat, 29" , 4-2-6): IOSEPH HATCH MADE ME 1608 R F
- Fourth:** ("Josephn," C, 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ " , 5-1-27): IOSEPH HATCH MADE ME 1615 I H R C
- Fifth:** ("Stephen") + STEPHANVS : NORTONE : DE : KENT : ME : FECIT (B-flat, 35 $\frac{1}{4}$ " , 8-2-11)
- Tenor:** ("Peter," A-flat, 38 $\frac{1}{4}$ " , 9-3-16): IOSEPH HATCH MADE ME 1608 R D

The treble by the Whitechapel Foundry 1975, the second from Thomas Lester at the same foundry 1739, second, third and tenor by Joseph Hatch of Ulcombe, near Maidstone, fifth by Stephen Norton of Maidstone and London, c1360-80, the cross, lettering and three-dot stops are very delicately worked and surmounted by a crown.

If Sir John had been in Westgate 43 years after he wrote his poem, he would have seen the new treble arrive at the time of the words "Lift up your Hearts" in the Eucharist: it should have been wheeled in at the offertory, but the truck was held up. But what better inspiration for all of us as a new ring is born? LAUS DEO: some prophecies indeed come true. DLC

Please see photo on back cover

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GOOD TURNOUT

The Western Division annual striking contest was held at W. Tarring on Saturday, July 10.

We were blessed with glorious weather, and a good turnout of 10 "method teams" and six "call change" teams. The judge was Peter Hurcombe, assisted by Justin Nelson (Hurstpierpoint) and the service was conducted by Rev. John Kimberly (curate).

Tea was taken by 70 plus after which the results were announced.

Method section.—1, W. Tarring A (14 faults); 2, Thakeham (30); 3, W. Tarring B (43); 4, Hoene (50); 5, Pagham A (53); 6, Chichester A (56); 7, Chichester B (74); 8, Westbourne A (82); 9, Arundel (99); 10, Washington, did not finish.

Call-change.—1, Bosham (20 faults); 2, Westbourne B (40); 3, Walberton (51); 4, Midhurst (66); 5, Pagham B (79); 6, Pagham C (86).

D.U.S.C.R.

SUMMER TOUR

After a two years break, the Durham University Society returned to the Lake District. On June 11, our first stop was Barnard Castle, followed by Sedbergh where we joined the practice of the local band composed of boys from Sedbergh School.

We spent the night at Kendal Youth Hostel and next morning rang at Kendal (10) and later at the Priory Church at Cartmel. On Sunday we rang for morning service on the pleasant eight at Hawkshead. Some then went fell-walking above Coniston while others walked via the Tarns and managed to "grab" the three at Grasmere ringing for evensong.

Monday was hectic for in the morning we visited Ambleside (eight), Brathay (six) and Langdale (six), and after lunch had a hair-raising journey over the Wrynose and Hardknott passes with spectacular views. After St. Bees (eight), the bells of Cleator Moor were put to good use before moving to Longthwaite Y.H. in picturesque Borrowdale.

At Keswick we had good ringing, followed by the fine bells of Cockermouth and later a quick ring at Bridekirk, and then a longish journey to Carlisle.

Most of Tuesday was free as we were unable to ring at either of the towers in Carlisle. Our last tower was Brampton (six), where we rang a quarter peal to celebrate Linda Bailey's 21st birthday. It was her first quarter and she rang very well.

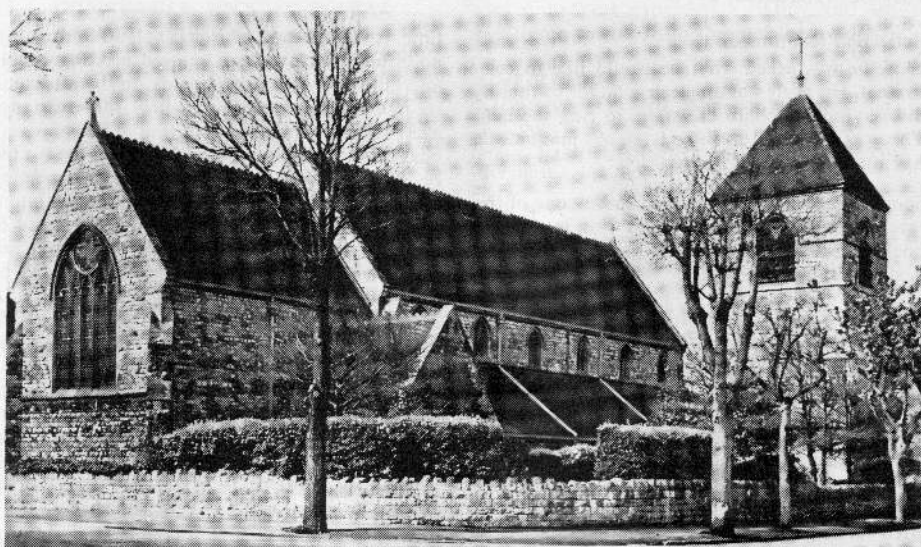
We returned somewhat exhausted to Durham via Hadrian's Wall and Hexham.

Altogether a most successful and enjoyable week and our thanks to "Janet" for all the organisation.

N. G.

Brampton, Cumbria.—June 16. 1260 Pl. Bob Minor: Linda M. Bailey (first quarter) 1, Catherine Ogden 2, J. P. Ladd 3, Caroline R. Cox 4, N. F. C. Gale 5, G. A. Jones (cond.) 6. 21st birthday compliment to Linda Bailey.

From Dunedin, N.Z.: "I hope that the heat-wave in Britain is not affecting your health. We could do with some of your heat-wave here, as during the last month Dunedin has experienced three snow-falls (usually Dunedin is snow-free)."



ST. SAVIOUR'S CHURCH, WESTGATE-ON-SEA
(See story on page 652)



Flashback to 1972: the tenor bell prepares to leave Holy Cross, Canterbury. (L to r): Messrs B J Luck (then District Chairman); Derek Carr (now Ringing Master, Canterbury Cathedral); Derek Dancey; David Cawley (now Rev, then Diocesan Adviser on Bells).



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Published by The Ringing World for the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers and printed by Seven Corners Press Ltd., Guildford. Registered at The Post Office for transmission as a newspaper