



Isleworth celebrates 600 years



All Saints, Isleworth.

The precise date of the building of the tower of Isleworth parish church (All Saints) is not known, other than that it was in the 14th century. The first records, however, are of work done to it in 1398 and for this reason its 600th anniversary is being celebrated this year, with various events.

The first one has already taken place: on Wednesday 10 June there was a peal of 5600 changes of Stedman Caters (published on p.674), composed by Paul Mounsey, and conducted by Chris Rogers, who was one of the many ringers taught to handle a bell here. Suffice it to say that our ringable, yet critical, vicar – the Revd John Morgan – remarked “What a superb peal”.

The next event is a ringers’ service, tea and short meeting on 11 July, starting at 3pm. (see notice in this week’s issue). Isleworth’s talented choir master, Mr. Alan Gibbs, has composed some special music for the special service, entitled *Isleworth Bells*. Alan’s preamble to the music reads:

“...based on the permutations of Grandsire Triples in All Saints’ key of E flat. As well as bells, you may fancy you hear choir, organ, birds – even a church cat engaged in its unholly pursuit of the birds. Samuel Howard’s

hymn tune *Isleworth* (*Eye-sul-worth*) is quoted: it was published only two years before eight of the present bells were cast in 1767. There are also snatches of a *nunc dimittis* by the church’s blind organist, Richard Limpus (father of the founder of our Royal College of Organists) and the old Hundredth (which Gustav Holst arranged and conducted at the 1921 Whitsun Festival). But the final cadence belongs appropriately to the 14th century”

Although this meeting is arranged by the London County Association, it is hoped that many ringers from other associations will attend, particularly those from the Middlesex County Association, which played a major part in the augmentation to ten bells in 1931.

A further event will be on Sunday 23 October, when serious tower and handbell competitions will be held, as well as a fun and joyful afternoon. For this there will be classes for method and call change ringing on tower bells, and tune and method ringing on handbells. Please come and join us in our celebrations!

HAROLD ROGERS

(A brief history of the tower at Isleworth will appear in a future issue)

St John the Baptist, Wittersham, Kent

On 12-13th February, work was carried out at St John the Baptist, Wittersham to augment our current six bells to eight.

From at least the beginning of the 17th century, Wittersham has had a least five bells hanging in its church tower. Three of the bells, still in regular use – two, three, four, (now four, five, six) have the date 1609 cast into them and the tenor dates from 1623. The fifth (now seven) originates from about this period but was re-cast in 1951 after having cracked. In about 1940, the bells were renovated and augmented to six by the addition of a new treble.

By the end of the 1960’s, the condition of the old wooden frame had deteriorated to a point where replacement was considered the best option. It was recognised at this time that the ring of bells could be enhanced by further augmentation to a full octave – eight bells. Funds were apparently unavailable to see the whole project to fruition. The contract went to Taylor’s of Loughborough in 1967 who re-tuned all the existing bells so as to form the back six of a ring of eight and re-hung them in a modern steel eight bell frame complete with all replacement fittings.

The reason why our tower wanted to augment to eight bells was because we are an active band with a good number of members from the younger section of our community. Our current six bells owe their richness of tone to the fact that they are fairly heavy. Two additional lighter bells have enhanced the

opportunities for our younger members of the band and permit them to enjoy greater participation and involvement. The band is an important local activity for the youngsters of the area who are looking forward to ringing in the new Millennium on 1st January 2000.

The full octave has meant improved music from our bells. It is a generally held view amongst ringers that eight is musically the optimum number for a ring of church bells – basically because of hearing the full octave.

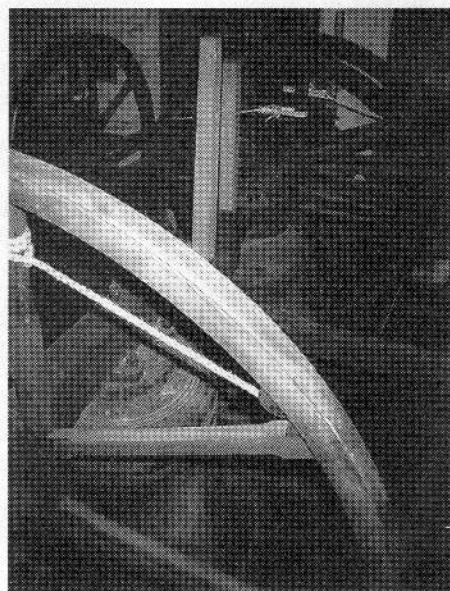
The second was the treble of the ring of three bells cast especially for the church of All Saints, Hawkhurst, in 1861. All Saints church became redundant during 1996/7 and it is due to the efforts of the Redundant Churches Uses Committee of the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Finance that the bell had been made available to our project. The new treble was cast especially for the ring by John Taylor Bellfounders of Loughborough on 30th October, 1997.

Generous funds were received from the Sir James Coyer-Fergussons Charitable Trust, The Kent County Association of Change Ringers, the Bell Restoration Fund, plus local fundraising, local ringers and churchgoers. The whole project has been 50% Grant Funded by The Millennium Commission.

The first ring on the eight bells was prior to our Dedication service on 1st March. A quarter peal of Plain Bob Triples was rung by a full



A MILLENNIUM PROJECT
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The bells in the tower at Wittersham.

Wittersham band, both past and present. The quarter peal was very well struck and the band felt proud to ring the bells out on such a joyous occasion. During the service, the bells were
(continued overleaf)

From the archives...*(compiled by David J. Herschell)**The Bell News and Ringers' Record**Saturday, 9th July, 1898***New ten at Stockton**

The week's leading article, which took up over two pages of the week's issue, described the events surrounding the arrival of additional bells for St Thomas à Becket, Stockton on Tees, County Durham. Under the heading 'Stockton's Jubilee Bells - Celebration of the Arrival,' the article stated: 'At noon on Monday, 20th June, the four new bells which are to increase the ring in the parish church, Stockton, to ten, as a permanent memorial of the 60 years' reign of Queen Victoria, arrived in the town, and, surmounted with flags, were taken on three trolleys to the church. They were the source of much interest, and were followed by large crowds of people. The present peal consists of a light ring of six, made up in 1714 by the addition of four larger bells to the two bells cast in 1696. They are, for the principal church of a large town, inadequate both in number and weight of metal, and compare unfavourably in this respect with rings to be found in many smaller towns. In April of last year Mr G. J. Clarkson, who is one of the most enthusiastic of the parish church ringers, being the founder of the Stockton Society, and the first secretary of the Durham and Newcastle Diocesan Association, brought forward a scheme for the addition of four larger bells to make up a ring of ten, with a tenor of 30cwt, at a total cost of £722, £113 of which was for fittings and £200 for alterations and extension of the bellframe. To assist in promoting it he very generously offered to pay the cost of the 7th bell, upon the condition that the 8th was subscribed by the church officials. This the

latter more than did, the ringers surrendering their usual salary for one year, amounting to £18, towards the £78 15s [£78.75] required. ... The founders are Messrs. Llewellins and James of Bristol, who have followed the exact shape of the old bells, templates of which were most carefully taken!

After describing a commemorative dinner in great detail, the article concluded by stating: 'Flags were flown, and the bells of the parish church were rung in commemoration of the reception of the new bells, a 720 of Durham Surprise being rang [sic] as an appropriate welcome to the bells, which make the first peal of ten in the county of Durham.'

'The peal will be the only one of ten bells between York and Ripon to the south, and Newcastle to the north, and if the requisite alterations are made in the striking arrangements of the clock, a splendid edition of the Westminster chimes can be obtained....'

Invitation from Bishop

Under the title of 'A Unique Gathering,' it was reported that 'on Tuesday, 28th June, the Lord Bishop of Exeter and Mrs Bickersteth entertained at the palace some of the bell-ringers of the diocese. Invitations had been sent to the head ringer in each parish. About 450 accepted, and assembled in the palace gardens at 12.30p.m. At 1.00p.m. dinner was served in a marquee erected in the grounds, at which the Bishop presided. He was supported by the Bishop of Crediton, the Archdeacons of Exeter, Totnes, and Barnstaple, Canon Edmonds, the rural deans of the diocese, the Mayor and Sheriff of Exeter, and the President of the Devonshire Guild.

'The Bishop, after asking his assembled guests to drink "The Health of Her Majesty the Queen," on this the anniversary of her Coronation-day, addressed a few words of welcome to them. He said that when he first

came into the diocese there were two things which particularly struck him: one was the 14th century screens which beautified so many of the churches; the other was the sweet-toned bells which rang out their welcome to him in a large majority of the parishes, and he was glad of this opportunity of thanking the ringers for the kindly greeting which they had so often given him on visiting their parishes.'

In thanking the Bishop and Mrs Bickersteth for their kind hospitality, the President of the Devonshire Guild (Rev Maitland Kelly) 'pointed out that the gathering was quite unique, he had never heard or read of 450 ringers being gathered together in one place before, either in this diocese or any other, and he would assure his lordship that though they fully appreciated his kindness in inviting them there that day, and treating them as he had done with such generous hospitality, there was something which they appreciated still more, and that was his recognition of them as a body of Church-workers.'

Round assessment

A new assessment system has been proposed for ringers. This will involve the compilation of a report taking account of the views of fellow ringers, Association and CC officers, clergy, church members, the congregation, near by residents, taxi drivers, family, employers and friends.

This reporting is more extensive in its data collection than 360% reporting and is balanced and rounded. It is, therefore, to be known as spherical reporting.

A.J.B.

WITERSHAM - continued

rung for two minutes whilst members of the congregation listened to the new ring of eight.

The bells were available for ringing after the service, and was of a very high standard. The service was very well attended by all people and especially that of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers.

The first quarter peal of major was rung on the bells on 29th May. This was Yorkshire S

Major and included all members of the Ashford District of the Kent County Association of Change Ringers.

The first peal was rung on the bells on 25th May by all members of the Isle of Oxney Guild of Change Ringers. This was very well struck and was a great achievement by all.

I wish to thank all those who were involved with this project.

(Peal details on p.674) KAREN A. MASH

St John the Baptist, Wittersham, Kent**Details of the bells**

Bell	Inscription	Founder	Date	Weight
Treble	G. MEARS & CO. FOUNDERS LONDON 1861 IN USUM ECCLES OMNI SANCT. HAWKHURST	John Taylor, Loughborough	1997	5-0-26
2	[SHOULDER BAND OF VINES] TAYLORS, LOUGHBOROUGH 1997	George Mears, London	1861	5-2-12
3	Shoulder MEARS & STAINBANK 1937	John Taylor, Loughborough	1997	5-0-26
	Waist IN JOYOUS SOUND - KENNETH MAXIMILLIAN WILKINSON COMMANDER R.N. 9 NOV 1936 AGED 43	Mears & Stainbank, London	1937	6-1-5
4	JOSEPHUS CARTER ME FECIT 1609	Joseph Carter II, London	1609	7-1-19
5	JOSEPHUS CARTER ME FECIT 1609	Joseph Carter II, London	1609	9-1-2
6	THOMAS ODIARNE JEREMY ODIARNE ISAAKE ODIARNE GAVE THIS BELL	Joseph Carter II, London	1609	11-1-27
7	Shoulder THOMAS MEARS & SON, LONDON, FECIT 1808	Gillett & Johnston, Croydon	1951	13-2-6
Tenor	JOHN WILNAR MADE ME. LB: G.F. C.W.	John Wilner, Borden	1629	16-2-8

The peal is tuned to the key of E.



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