



Bellfounders' Gift Page



Restoration of the Abbey

Thursday 19th October was a notable day in the life of Westminster Abbey. On that day a Service of Thanksgiving was held to celebrate the completion of the most extensive programme of restoration of the Abbey since the time of Sir Christopher Wren. The restoration has taken 22 years and has cost £25million. All the exterior stonework has been inspected and cleaned and any parts showing signs of decay have been replaced. The ornate Henry VII Chapel, from which the scaffolding has only recently been dismantled, looks especially splendid with gleaming white stonework inside and out and with weather-worn mediaeval sculpture replaced. A magnificent new stained glass window has also been installed in the Chapel.

The Service of Thanksgiving was attended by Her Majesty the Queen and by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh in his capacity as President of the Westminster Abbey Trust which has been responsible for raising funds for the restoration.

The Abbey ringers played a full part in the proceedings and the instructions were precise. "Before the Service ring up to 2.48pm; stop while the choir sings the Te Deum; recommence at 2.56 and stop when the signal is received that the Queen has arrived, expected to be at 2.59. After the Service ring for 25 minutes."

Three courses of Stedman Caters, a bob course of Grandsire Caters, a course of Cambridge Royal and some more Stedman nicely filled up the time slots, plus rather a lot of rounds while we awaited the stop signal – most unusually, the Royal Party was a few minutes late arriving.

Further ringing was required that evening. The Dean and Chapter had asked that to mark this very special occasion a peal should be rung. As this was a notable Abbey occasion it was considered appropriate that a member of the Abbey's staff, Emma St. John-Smith, should join nine members of the Abbey Company of Ringers for the peal attempt. Furthermore, the Abbey service sheet was unequivocal in its statement that "a peal of 5055 Stedman Caters... will be rung on the Abbey bells this evening beginning at 6.15pm".

The peal band met the Abbey's expectations and the peal was successful – in three hours and seventeen minutes. Welcome refreshment was provided in The Jerusalem Chamber and was much appreciated. Thus concluded a splendid and memorable occasion at Westminster Abbey.

First peal congratulations

Noel Tuit, Gareth F. S. Bennett, Diane M. Hart, David Hart, Ian Orchard, Mick Priestley and to Michele Ellender who completed her "first as conductor" peal.

* * *

The Bob Minor was going well when suddenly someone forgot to lead after making seconds to the treble. The Tower Captain shouted "Lead again" and all was well. "We've come a long way," said the Captain. "If I'd shouted 'Lead again' six months ago, everyone would have led. Now only the culprit did!"

(from Lincoln DG Central Branch Newsletter)

100th anniversary at St. Giles

Attempts for peals of Grandsire Triples in North Staffordshire have had an unfortunate tendency to failure this year – perhaps something to do with the unaccustomed temperatures! Two cases in point were attempts to ring Holt's ten-part for the 100th anniversary of the first peal at St. Giles, Newcastle-under-Lyme.

The first attempt, on Saturday 29 July – the exact anniversary – broke down early in the second half, after we had negotiated the first Holt's bob single perfectly. As all the band were available a second attempt was hastily arranged for the following day. We rang the full length, but due to an unnoticed shift in the last part, the peal didn't come round cleanly. Needless to say, we were just a little annoyed, having rung 4½ hours in tropical temperatures for nothing. It was especially unfortunate for Steve Wilcox, whose first peal this would have been.

On the next convenient date, 28 October, conditions were much more comfortable, and the peal was successfully rung without major incident. Steve Wilcox and Ralph Mitchell of the original band were not available, and their places were taken by Stefan Zientek and Howard Malkin.

K. BROWN.

Wormshill bells dedicated

On Sunday, 8th October, the Rt. Rev. Dr. David Say, K.C.V.O., a former Bishop of Rochester, dedicated the newly augmented ring of six at St Giles, Wormshill at the Parish Harvest Festival. Prior to the service, six members of the Kent County Association rang a quarter peal of Plain Bob Minor. This was the second quarter peal on the ring of six, although the old four bells (1, 2, 3 and 6) had been quartered once in 1990 and the remaining bells (4, 5) were quartered several times when they hung as bells 1 and 2 of the ring of three at West Bretton, Yorkshire. The project to install the bells was managed by Michael Nightingale of Cromarty and took 51 years to achieve.

The dedication took place at the end of the service when the Bishop moved to the ground floor ringing room, blessed and sprinkled it with holy water (brought from Cromarty, Scotland). Once the ring was dedicated, the Bishop named each bell, one at a time ... Mary, Magdalen, Gregory, Mirren, Regulus, Giles. After the pronouncement of its name, the bell was made to ring for one whole pull, although when his turn came, the County Chairman had a little difficulty in standing his bell (as Mrs. Nightingale put it afterwards: "I didn't think that Gregory was ever going to stop!"). The bells were then rung together in rounds as the congregation looked on. The ringers were:

Helen Gigney 1, Dickon Love 2, Tom Barlow 3, Jackie Barlow 4, Peter Romney 5, Brian Butcher 6.

Following the service, a magnificent harvest supper was provided that must have been one of the best country spreads to be seen. In the afternoon, two of the ringers went back to the church, and joined by four others, they attempted a peal which unfortunately was lost. The remaining ringers went on to the Swale District's other recently restored ring of bells at the neighbouring village of Bicknor.

Following the article on p. 901, there was some debate as to the founder of the West Bretton bells. I will agree with the experts who claim the bells are by Samuel Smith II – it would appear that we were given false information by the Wakefield Diocese! I have also checked the inscriptions on the bells, and find that we were also misinformed about these. Therefore, to put the record straight, the inscriptions on the front three bells (formerly from the church of St Gregory the Great in Canterbury) are as follows:

1. [Mears & Stainbank Foundry Mark only]

2. [Mears & Stainbank Foundry Mark only]

3. THESE THREE BELLS

WHICH WERE CAST BY C. & C. MEARS IN 1851

WERE RECAST BY MEARS & STAINBANK IN 1963

[Foundry Mark]

D. R. LOVE

Wormshill, Kent. 8 Oct, 1260 PB Minor: Helen M Gigney 1, Dickon R Love 2, Thomas M Barlow 3, W Emma S Cundiff 4, Peter M Romney 5, Brian G Butcher (C) 6. Prior to the Wormshill Harvest Festival and the Dedication and Naming of the Bells.

Superlative marks 50 years

A peal was rung at St. Michael with St. Paul, Bath on 21st October as a compliment to Bath Abbey Tower Master Eric Naylor on the 50th anniversary of his first peal.

Eric first handled a bell in 1943 and, come the end of the war, quickly rang his first peal. It was conducted by his brother George and the band also included his brother and sister-in-law.

Eric suggested that we should ring Grandsire Triples as for his first peal on 20th October 1945 at St. Margaret, Rainham, Kent but he was persuaded to learn half lead bobs in Superlative instead! Our congratulations to him.

MIKE STUBBS.



"I do wish Bill wouldn't come straight to practice from the pig farm".

– from Lincoln DG Central Branch Newsletter.

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