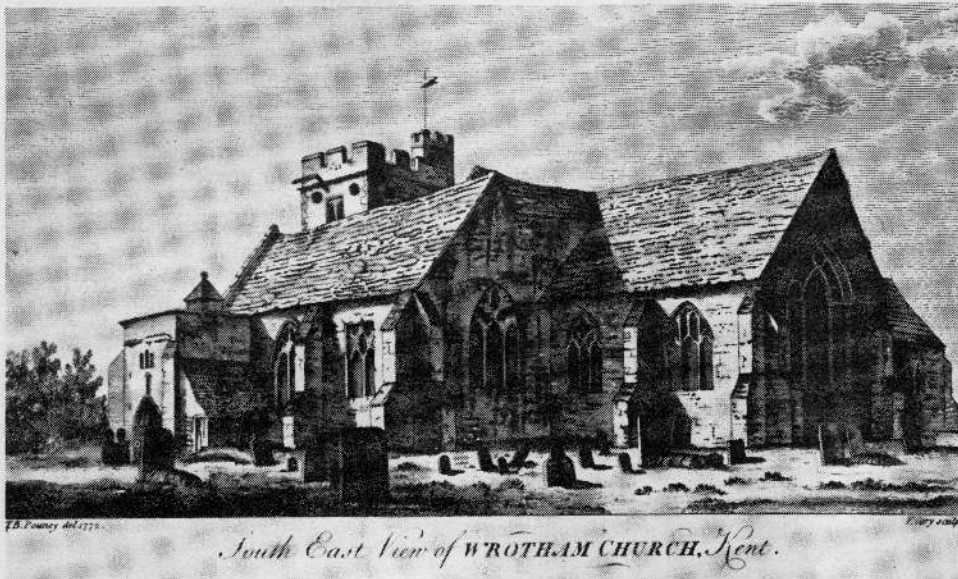


THE RINGING WORLD

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THE CENTRAL COUNCIL
OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS



South East View of WROTHAM CHURCH, Kent.

Wrotham Church

T. B. Pouncy 1772

S GEORGE, WROTHAM, KENT

The Church of S George, Wrotham, dates from the 13th century although this is the second building on the site, the earlier one dating from 964. The 15th century tower is of fine proportions and is all the more impressive since from its position close to the road it rises directly and seems to dominate the whole village.

The ring of eight bells is reputed to be one of the finest in Kent, but its early history is not clear. Certainly one of the oldest references is that in the will of Mr Richard Melchebourne (Vicar of Wrotham 1397-98) who bequeathed on his death in 1404 a sum of four marks towards the purchase of bells. This coupled with the fact that Archbishop Arundel greatly encouraged the use of church bells suggests that some addition was made to the Wrotham ring in the early part of the 15th century.

At a vestry meeting in 1754 it was decided that "the six bells should be forthwith taken down, and carried to some Foundry or other proper place, and there melted, run, or cast, into a complete peal of eight with such addition of new metal as shall be required?" A panel on the wall of the ringing chamber records the names of 42

benefactors who, between them, subscribed some 67 guineas to complete the work.

The bells were all re-cast, tuned on the five tone Simpson principle, rehung in a new steel and iron frame and supplied with new fittings throughout, by Gillett and Johnston in 1911. The bells in their re-newed condition were first used to celebrate the coronation of HM King George V on 22 June 1911.

The tower also houses a clock made in the early part of the 17th century and is probably one of the oldest church clocks in the country. It is still in excellent mechanical order. It has a carillon capable of playing hymn tunes after striking the hour. The original work was put in hand in October, 1762, when John Chalkden agreed "... to put the said Church clock and chimes in good sufficient and workmanlike repair and to set the chimes to the eight Bells to play three different tunes as shall be appointed by the said inhabitants . . .". The "said inhabitants" had a highly individual opinion on what was appropriate since one of the tunes was entitled 'The Captain with his whiskers took a sly glance at me'. Some years ago the original tunes were substituted by some of more religious character.

The details of the bells and the inscriptions appearing on them are:

Treble: 4-3-9, Tunes in E
Although I am both light and small
I will be heard above you all

2nd: 4-2-26
At proper times our voices we will raise
In sounding to our benefactors praise

3rd: 5-1-6
Peace and good neighbourhood

4th: 7-0-6
Our voices shall with joyful sound
Make hills and valleys echo round

5th: 8-2-5
Ye ringers all that prize your health and happiness
Be sober, merry, wise and you'll the same possess

6th: 9-3-12
To honour both of God and King
Our voices shall in consort sing

7th: 12-3-12
In wedlock bands all ye who join with hands your
hearts unite
So shall our tuneful tongues combine to laud the
nuptial rite

Tenor: 20-0-10
The Revd. Dr. John Potter, Rector
Richard Fulljames and Wm. Welch Churchwardens
1754

In the autumn of 1976 the bells were overhauled at a cost of £1,600, again by Gillett and Johnston, the work on this occasion being principally concerned with the mounting of the bells and their bearings. Donations towards these costs would be gratefully received and should be sent to: L B Bryan, "Draycott," S Mary's Road, Wrotham, Kent, who would also be pleased to receive requests from other bands of ringers wishing to make use of the Wrotham bells.