

### ST. STEPHEN'S, BRISTOL AN APPEAL—A CHALLENGE

Dear Sir,—There are surely few who have come to know Bristol, and the Church of St. Stephen in particular, who are not sorry to learn that the splendid tower was found to be in a dangerous state of decay. A prized building in the city's architectural heritage stands on an historic site where the River Frome once ran past the city walls. Today it is the City Parish Church, standing at the heart of the city centre.

The extent of the decay was so serious that it became necessary to rebuild completely the "crown" and the top stage or storey of the tower. The essential restoration work was to cost over £60,000, and if the bells of St. Stephen's were to continue to ring it was a requirement that the bells be lowered about 25 feet. This has meant rehanging the bells in a new frame at the level of the old ringing chamber and providing a new but somewhat smaller ringing chamber in the old clock room. Now there is a climb of 50 stairs instead of 84!

The appeal committee accepted strong representations on behalf of the ringers to take the opportunity to add two new trebles, augmenting the ring to 12, and to have the existing three trebles recast with retuning of others.

It was appreciated that this was outside what could be accepted as essential work and, in agreeing, the appeal committee expressed the hope that it could count upon the enthusiastic interest and generosity of bellringers. In consideration of such anticipated personal support one of the new bells would bear an inscription recording it to be a gift from bellringers.

The Antient Society of St. Stephen's Ringers, who annually subscribe substantially to the regular upkeep of the church fabric, have in addition raised an extra £12,000 for the tower appeal, and are to meet the cost of one of the new bells. The total cost of all the work relating to the bells, the provision of the new ringing chamber, etc., has reached £4,000. **The need for funds is urgent.** May I invite the most generous support of all your readers towards this appeal?

In order that all donations can be properly apportioned as being made towards the "Bells Appeal" I have been asked to receive these personally on behalf of the Appeal Committee and so provide a permanent record which will eventually be placed in the tower. To facilitate this, would those sending a donation please do so direct to me: **Albert M. Tyler, 43 Stanhope Road, Longwell Green, Bristol, BS15 6AJ.** It would greatly assist if each individual's full Christian and surname are given in block letters, and, similarly, where any group donation is made.

All ringers may be pleased to know that the essential work is so far advanced that a service of dedication is being arranged for Monday, May 17, at 5.45 p.m. As very limited ringing will be possible that evening an open invitation is extended to ringers on the occasion of the Bristol Ringing Festival on June 19, 1971.

**Please help us with your donation.**—  
Yours faithfully,

ALBERT M. TYLER,  
Longwell Green, Bristol.



St. Stephen's, Bristol.

For 500 years the tower of the Church of St. Stephen has stood as a prominent and beautiful landmark in the centre of Bristol. Erected about 1470 at the sole cost of John Shipward, twice mayor of the city, the tower is a magnificent example of the architecture of its time. Measuring approximately 18ft. by 20ft. at its base, the tower rises to a total height of 152ft. and is crowned with open-work arcaded battlements and pinnacles, where even the gargoyles are crowned with free-standing angle-shafts.

Until the advent of the multi-storey office block the tower dominated that area known as "The Centre." It has seen the change from the busy dockside of the age of sailing ships to the bustling traffic circus of modern commercial days. The tower itself has not remained untouched by the passing of time for in 1703 its crown was wrecked in a great storm. There was a further restoration in 1914, when the total cost was only £2,845!

There have been bells in the tower for at least 400 years. The Antient Society of St. Stephen's Ringers (founded 1620) is the oldest ringing society still in existence, although it is no longer dedicated to its original purpose. Their Ordinances of 1693 suggest that there were six bells at that time and in 1759 that number was increased to eight, cast by Abel Rudhall of Gloucester. In 1891 the bells were rehung and two trebles added by Llewellyn and James of Bristol, but unfortunately the whole operation had to be repeated by the same firm in 1906. There is to this day some doubt about the quality of the trebles in relation to the rest of the Rudhall ring.

The bells, however, have never ceased to be well used by Bristol ringers. The St.

Stephen's Guild was founded in 1892 and was very active during the first 40 years of this century. The Guild's peal book testifies to the standards achieved, which were encouraged by such able ringers as William A. Cave and Stephen H. Wood.

As with many towers, much had changed by the '50's. In 1951 the bells were re-clappered and hung on ball bearings by Mears and Stainbank, and since then, under the able guidance of Albert Tyler, innumerable ringers have been taught their first steps in ten-bell ringing and conducting. By the mid-60's over 100 individual firsts had been achieved in peals at the tower. When ringing ceased in 1969 about 290 peals had been rung on the bells.

On May 17 a new chapter begins in the long history of the tower. Twelve bells will ring out to the joy of St. Stephen's Guild, the Bristol ringers and all those who know the tower and owe it so much.

P. J. B.

### MARRIED IN BLANTYRE

On the last day of 1970 there took place the wedding of Mr. Jonathan Chamberlain, latterly of St. Michael's, St. Albans, and Miss Kay Moore, of St. Peter's, Little Aston, Staffs. Both work in Malawi at present and the ceremony was held in Blantyre, the largest town, at St. Paul's.

The Central African ringing circle have long expected this event, but to their U.K. friends it may be a surprise.

Luckily the mothers of both bride and bridegroom were able to be present. Ringing guests were pretty thin on the ground but several courses of Minor were managed on handbells at the reception.

The bride wore a full-length white dress of gros grain and lace and carried a bouquet of frangipane and roses, but, alas, the bridegroom did not wear the topper and tails expected of him.

