

Bristol bells

It was most interesting to read Chris Pickford's article (a draft of which he kindly sent me beforehand) in *The Ringing World* pp. 239-41. I am grateful that he has pointed out my error in attributing to St. Nicholas church the first ring of 10; even on the evidence at present in Christ Church tower one can see that there have been 10 since 1789 and now we know that this number existed from 1727/8. My apologies.

As Mr. Pickford states, there was considerable rivalry between the neighbouring bellfounders; no doubt Rudhall would be disappointed that his original ring was considerably flattened when Christ Church bells were augmented. The recent acquisition of two bells from the former church of Northwick has seen to it that in the belfry are represented all the rivals - Abraham Rudhall (the back eight); William Bilbie (the trebles) and William Evans (the ex-Northwick service bell and hour bell both of 1713). To these must be added the independent and famous clock "jack" bells recast by Messrs Mears & Stainbank in 1912.

I was interested to note that the Whitechapel "peals book" mentions at St. Nicholas the recasting of the treble and *eighth*. This would accord with the record given by Ellacombe (C. B. Giles, 1881) and by the *Bristol Times & Mirror* of 1877 where the Mears bell is described as the "8th, 46½" diameter". As stated in my article of 19/26th December, p.1117, Ellacombe gives the first part only of the inscription. Both sources state that the "7 Mark, 14v" bell with no founder's name was the ninth. Taylor's report of 22nd February 1941 (when nine of the bells were still hanging) states that Mr. Fidler "tested each bell individually except the ninth, which crashed to the ground during the fire. . . ." In August 1957, Mr. Paul Taylor confirmed this, saying that "only a small fragment of the metal of this bell remains." Looking through a copy of their receipt notes of the bells the "7 Mark" bell is given as 4'0½", i.e. just an inch smaller than its 1764 predecessor. With the evidence of the Whitechapel "peals book", Ellacombe, and the antiquarian article in the newspaper, it seems that Taylors mistook the fallen bell for the ninth, no doubt in the general chaos in which they found the tower and the fact that all the bells which remained had lost their resonance to a greater or lesser degree. The bell by the unknown founder recast in 1856 was, according to the 19th century sources quoted 48½" diameter, very close to that received by Taylors in July 1959 and so it would appear on the evidence that of the old 10 it was the eighth which crashed and was stolen piecemeal and of the rest only the tenor retained any tonal quality. The difference in size between this bell and its predecessor is (as Mr. Pickford notes) quite striking; the ninth, however was an inch smaller and the eighth an inch larger than their respective predecessors; and the gap between the ninth and tenor greater than usual.

Coming now to St. Mary, Redcliffe: it is of interest to note that the trebles were invoiced out of Whitechapel to Mr. Alfred York of 19 Hillgrove Street, Bristol on 11th December 1872. Mr. York was subsequently a "star" in Llewellyns & James' testimonials, being their principal bellhanger at the time. The new bells cost £115.19s.5d., including clappers and carriage. I mention this in view of the fact that L & J had gone to Taylors six years earlier for the treble for St. James as Mr. Pickford states. One wonders just whether L & J were involved or Mr. York as a private individual. The parallel between the 1823 augmentation when Jasper Westcott was churchwarden invites this passing notice.

The development and decline of the later Bristol bellfoundries and in particular Messrs Llewellyns & James remains to be explored. An interesting list of this firm's principal works was produced in *The Ringing World* some years ago by Chris Dalton: this has altered probably very little, with the exception of the replacement of the 7th at Warmley (formerly St. George) Bristol with a recast Rudhall bell from St. George, Brandon Hill, Bristol. The article did not go into their early history or small works. We know from the foregoing St. James, Redcliffe information that they certainly had bells cast for them at Whitechapel or Loughborough and the extent of similar provisions has yet to be published. I recently saw a bell in St. Paul, Clifton, simply inscribed A.D. 1853 in heavy lettering typical of Jefferies & Price and of the Hale family, but with no name. At my own parish church is one bell 23½" diameter, weighing 2-1-17, inscribed

L. & J. BRISTOL: 1853

in this same heavy block lettering, but this time on the waist (a position they favoured). Was it cast by them, or for them; and if they cast it, were later Bristol bells cast by them for others (much in the same way as Robert Stainbank cast for Messrs Hale the front seven bells, now destroyed, at Clifton parish church in 1868)? And, at the other end of the span, I was interested when fitting a new rope to the bell at our other church of All Hallows, Easton, to read the vicar's name - and then to see in the familiar flowing capitals on the waist the simple words LLEWELLYNS & JAMES LTD - BRISTOL 1940. The bellcot was erected in the early autumn and the foundry destroyed in the November of that same year - a fearful picture in my possession shows St. Peter's church with roof gone and flames issuing from the louvres and an enormous fire to the east which I take to be the foundry. The bell in question, 20½" diameter must be their last casting and I wonder also if the 1853 bell is their earliest of their own?

DAVID L. CAWLEY (Revd.)

Bristol

Not "the thin end of the wedge"

As you can imagine I have followed the correspondence concerning "Bells on Sunday" with some interest. I believe that I have now answered all the letters that came personally to me. I am grateful to Mr. Dodds of Fordingbridge for his kind words of encouragement at a time when I had already barricaded my door lest I be strung up the nearest tower with the strongest rope. C. W. Woolley of Bushey was good enough to point out that programme schedules are not in the gift of the programme producer. At last I felt I had been let off the hook - a little. I was very glad to read in that same letter a careful analysis of the balance between speech and bells adopted by past producers. I would be most interested to know if those of your readers who listen to the programme would prefer more bells and less spoken detail or more introduction and less bells. I hope that together we might form an effective platform from which other programmes on bellringing might develop from time to time.

I can assure your readers that the change of transmission time is not "the thin end of the wedge" and as far as I am concerned the programme will not die the death of a thousand cuts. On the contrary, I want to explore ways of using the programme to its best advantage.

I would be very glad to receive suggestions of bells that people would want to hear. On occasion we might be able to commission a recording to be made. These recordings we

would broadcast with those that many of your readers already send to us. We are most grateful to those who take the time and trouble to record their bells. Without them the programme really would be greatly diminished. I have commissioned some recordings of bells to be made overseas and I hope that this will prove of interest in due course. In the meantime I assure you of my commitment to the programme and I look forward to producing it for many years to come.

STEPHEN OLIVER
Acting Chief Producer
Religious Broadcasting

Nothing improper in open debate

I read with interest the correspondence last week from Pat Halls and Stephanie Pattenden concerning the National 12-Bell Striking Competition. It seemed to me that Pat's letter was a cry for help rather than a master plan to undermine the Organising Committee's authority.

If the Derby ringers are to be caught up in a stricter application of the existing rules, could I suggest that they qualify as a "centre where 12-bell ringing is organised"? There does appear to be a distinction between organising and practising. I presume that Derby qualifies as a "centre" and 12-bell ringing is certainly organised, if not practised there. Alternatively, they could simply call themselves "Nottingham" or wherever they practise their 12-bell ringing. I cannot see their entry on this basis would be any less valid than bands which include ringers whose only attendance at the given 12-bell tower is the (shall we say monthly) practise arranged specifically or primarily for the benefit of the "Competition" band.

I quite understand the logistical problems created by the growing entry (perhaps regional beats is an answer?). Equally, I feel that it is the word "representative" which demands greater emphasis, if the rules are to be enforced more strictly, yet *fairly*.

Finally, I believe there is nothing improper in debating the National 12-Bell Competition in these columns. I certainly welcome the opportunity to contribute to a subject which holds much interest for a greater number of ringers than will ever compete, whatever the rules!

ROGER HEYWORTH

Ashted

Variation named

An extent of variation 92 Fd was rung at Church Gresley, Derbyshire on 10th March 1987 and named BLACKFORDBY DOUBLES.

N. ATKINSON

Burton-on-Trent

Handbells for Special Care Unit

The St. Mary's Women's Friendship Group of Ewell (ex-Young Wives) are holding a handbell concert in aid of the Special Care Baby Unit at Epsom District Hospital on 16th May 1987 at The Adrian Mann Theatre, N.E.S.C.O.T., Reigate Road, Ewell at 7.45 p.m.

The Warnham Handbell Consort are giving the concert and the Ewell St. Mary's Morris Men will also be there.

Tickets are £2.50 each and can be bought either from the box office (tel. 01 393 6660) after 12th April, or from Mrs. D. Pratt (tel. 01 393 9379) or Mrs. Carol Gosling (tel. Horley 783698) before that date.

Your support for this good cause would be much appreciated.