

All bellringing is an art form, from little bells to the largest and Doubles to 22-In-Oh, and while I think of it, the ten bells of the Nancy Hanks Center (*yes it is spelt correctly*), Washington D.C. sound just like as if they were ringing from a Church tower!

An old Yorkshire saying - "*Tha's nowt so queer as folk*", and that of a (non-ringing) Devonian who once said - "*that bellringing attracts the lunatic fringe*" are probably both true of the antagonists (and possibly of protagonists) of the ringing of small bells.

As for the attitudes of some members of The Bath & Wells DA, (No! not of Church Bellringers) - seems to us mere *less than* mortals, are just being small-minded or just plain daft - for surely the revenues to their Association from the peal fees at 'Nether' Marston are quite impressive by all accounts - and in any case ALL true, conventionally-rung peals on bronze bells by rope and wheel are part of our cultural history and should be recorded for posterity as such.

During our little chat we agreed that if conventional peal-ringing on *little* bells was to be subject of a special class then *big* bells should also be similarly treated. We agreed that to postulate such a position is indeed 'just plain daft' and not really worthy of further discussion (although the Adonis of the heavy-bell brigade may not agree - as we understand that he has now pealed bells over 2 tons to some 200 peals! We regard that as an exceptional performance - indeed it calls for '*rupturous*' plaudits. Perhaps he too will concur that there is much merit in ringing small bells in the future.)

As an aside, like my country cousin at Nether Marston, my adoptive parents have just installed a small ring in the garden and is shortly to augment them to an octave. I know that they would not have done this if the project was not meritorious - although it would have restricted my hunting-ground somewhat - but that aspect is academic as I roam freely in *another place*, listening happily to all the bells ringing, both great and small, just like us!

CANDY COLES-PRICE  
Mindinho-le-Tower, Nether Anglia

## St Pauls Church, London, Ontario

Since I wrote my article on St Pauls London, Ontario some further facts have come to light.

The C & G Mears 6 were not hung dead in 1901 but replaced by a Gillett & Johnston chime of 10 bells, consisting of an octave with an extra treble and flat second. The tenor weighed 20-2-0 and was 49 1/2" diameter. The ring was in the key of E flat.

The 1935 chime of 11, also by Gillett & Johnston consists, again of an octave, with an extra treble, a flat 2nd and a flat 4th. The tenor weights in at 23-0-0, is 49" in diameter and they are in the key of E.

Thanks to Alan Buswell for the extra information from the Gillett and Johnston Archive.

GEORGE A. DAWSON  
Loughborough

## WHITES OF APPLETON CHURCH BELLHANGERS

APPLETON  
ABINGDON  
OXON  
OX13 5JJ



Telephone  
Oxford (01865)  
862549  
Fax Oxford  
(01865) 864969

Established in 1824

## Beatie baiting

John Jelley's letter printed on May 9th reminded me of the peal which severely damaged Colin Walkers hands. It was Cambridge Royal rung in the rather fast time of 3 hours and 22 minutes on November 14th, 1953, Peter Staniforth conducting from the second.

The band was:  
John E. Cook Treble, Peter J. Staniforth 2, Harry Poyner 3, Earnest Morris 4, Redvers F. Elkington 5, Bryan F. Sims 6, Terence A. Thornber 7, S. Anthony Jesson 8, John B. Bennett 9, Colin P. Walker Tenor.

I should explain that in those days Ernest Morris lived in "The Vergers Lodge", a sort of annexe to St Margarets vicarage, approached by an archway in the boundary wall of the churchyard. We youngsters used to leave our bikes inside the enclosed yard behind Ernest's house, not always to the liking of Mrs Morris. Her name was Beatrice and she inspired fear and respect, being a large woman with a stentorian voice. The only exception was Colin Walker who would purposely bait her with statements and comments which left her lost for words. I have it on good authority that after the Cambridge Royal, Colin, on collecting his bike said, "Beatie, I have just come for my tea" what Beatrice said I do not know.

Oddly enough St Margarets vicarage supposedly had its own ghost. I recall Ernest Morris telling me he had actually seen it when on fire watching during the war. I wonder - Ernest wasn't the type who habitually exaggerated circumstances, so perhaps there was some truth in his experience. Whatever, the vicarage and vergers lodge have long since been demolished, and no doubt the ghost has been exorcized by the appalling sound of passing traffic on St Margarets Way.

J. B. BENNETT  
Pem-y-bontfawr

## Good Friday ringing

Recently I read that in a Gloucestershire church on Good Friday this year the three hours' service finished with the tolling of a bell 33 times, followed by a quarter peal, half-muffled.

As long ago as 1899 Percy Dearmer wrote in the first edition of The Parson's Handbook "All the church bells should be silent during the last three days of Holy Week after the Maundy Mass. Therefore we have no precedent for the objectionable and morbid practice of tolling a bell on Good Friday."

Probably not all churches silence the bells completely during those days, but it would be interesting to know how widespread the custom is nowadays of tolling a bell at 3 o'clock on Good Friday.

BRIAN TAYLOR  
Guildford

## Blindly obvious

I was very interested to read of the planned new tower at Basildon. There was no mention of any temperature control or blinds. As Tower Captain of a tower with large glass windows on three sides I am well aware of the problems caused by strong sunlight and in the new Basildon tower these problems will be much worse. Without air-conditioning the ringers will be boiled alive and without blinds or curtains they will be dazzled by the sun. I would strongly recommend that both be included at this stage of the project as to include them later will be much more difficult and expensive.

LAWRENCE DAVIES  
Wimbledon

## Bristol queries answered

Your issue of 13th June contains a particularly interesting letter from Alan Freke about St Peter's together with a photograph and a request for information from "any of the generation of pre-war Bristol ringers". I do not belong to that generation nor to Bristol any more; but having been for ten years Bristol's DAC Adviser on Bells, I have a file on St Peter's.

Likewise your correspondent Mr Bryant in the same issue (p.604) requests information on St Nicholas, Bristol. Turning to that church first, I would refer Mr Bryant to my articles "The City of the Heavy Fours" and in particular to St Nicholas, the first of the three, (RW 1986, p.1116) and to the subsequent article by Chris Pickford, FSA, on "Bristol Bells - The Higher Numbers" which dealt with the relative history of the twelves and tens of the City in a manner which enhanced and complemented my own. Suffice it to say that St Nicholas' ring of ten bells was rehung in a new frame in 1898 when the three smaller were recast. The tenor was not weighed at the time nor apparently in later years; it was 58 1/2" diameter in C-sharp; a modern Taylor bell of approximately the same size and note is Truro Cathedral tenor (33-3-10): the same size but very slightly heavier are Westbury, Wilts (35-0-14) and Beverley St Mary (34-3-12). The Church was not "destroyed" as Mr Bryant says; the upper church lost all its fittings and roof, the tower and spire were gutted although the bells stayed in situ and the lower church remained intact. In February 1941 Taylors tested the bells as they hung in the frame retaining only their metal fittings. The wooden headstock of the ninth had given and that bell crashed to the ground. It was broken in pieces and stolen; 4, 5, 6 and 8 were cracked and the others impaired to a greater or lesser degree. In 1957 Taylors estimated for "the scheme you wish to pursue - viz., to reinstate four bells, the two smallest and the largest of which will be used for the quarter chimes and hour strike with another bell to strike the curfew. It would be very appropriate if the large hour bell were to be tuned to the same note and weight as the bell is now, viz., note C-sharp, 30-cwt approx. . ."

The bells supplied were to be notes C-sharp (hour, no. 10) the Curfew Bell note G (equivalent to a flat 6th) the 2nd Quarter (note G-sharp equivalent to the sixth) and the 1st Quarter (note C-sharp, equivalent in note to the third). In 1994 I began discussing with the authorities the possibility, however remote, of reinstating the ringing peal. One problem was that the Curfew bell was a semitone sharp of its desired position, no. 7 of the ring and would have to be rehung outside it and a proper no. 7 provided; further, the two smaller bells were very much on a chiming scale, and whilst the larger, 1" smaller than optimum could take its place in a ringing peal, the smallest bell was 2 1/2" too small and 2-cwt deficient in weight (it actually hangs not in the third pit, but on the old treble stock and in the treble pit.) Providence removed me to Leicester before we could proceed further! The bells hang in the magnificent cast-iron Taylor frame of 1898, the three smaller on the stocks of the former treble, 5th and 6th and the tenor on a new stock all set in the 1898 bearings. There are no other fittings than clock hammers. The bells are now:

- 1 "St Stephen" (1st qr) 28 1/2" C# 4-0-17
- 2 "All Saints" (2nd qr) 36 1/2" G# 8-3-26
- 3 "St Nicholas" (Curfew) 39" G 11-0-21
- 4 "St Leonard" (Hour bell) 55" C# 29-3-22

St Peter's was also reduced to a shell during the blitz and its bells, which were a complete Rudhall eight of 1729, fared badly. Six of them

came down with much of the wooden frame in the blitz, and Taylors were contracted to remove the remaining two and the metal of the fallen bells at the same time as the removal of St Nicholas from their frame. St Nicholas' remained in the church; St Peter's went to the foundry, who in 1963 purchased their metal (total weight 73-cwt 1-qtr 17-lbs) from the Diocesan Board of Finance, who had taken over the ruins of the church which they then conveyed to the Corporation whose successors in title still manage this very attractive ruin.

The tower itself was equipped in 1963 with a good first floor of concrete – even with a 4' 6" square hatch in the centre. The three arches upon which the tower stands were also massively strengthened. Alan Freke's photograph, according to my sketches is the view, looking west, of the ringing room (where the newel stair at the left hand side terminates). Gone now are all the timbers, chimestand and peal boards; the present ringing chamber if it can be called such (having no bells) no longer partakes of the nature of a dungeon but is a well lit and roomy apartment. There is no ceiling, but one can see where the clock room was – the window in the north wall at dial level was blocked to receive it. The dial and the clock mechanism (which fell) survived the blitz although damaged. Above this are two massive RSJ's well below the level of the new louvred windows; in fact the whole place looks as if it is asking for a ring of bells.

St Peter's was not only the oldest church in Bristol, but had the oldest bell, its Sanctus. This survived the blitz and was sent to Canada. Any claimants?

Taylors reported in January 1935 "The installation as a whole is apparently well cared for ... but the working parts of the bell fittings are becoming the worse for wear." The tenor was particularly bad and they estimated for rehanging it for £49, together with a service overhaul of the other seven; or £104 if the whole eight were rehanged with new gudgeons and bearings and the frame strengthened. The work was apparently carried out locally, presumably by Llewellyns & James Ltd, whose considerable foundry and engineering works was practically next door. Although they had practically given up bell work (they cast one small bell in 1940 after a lapse of seven years) they would have been well able to attend to the bells from the engineering point of view.

There are references to St Peter's in the RW series "Reminiscences of an Old Bristol Ringer" published in 1975, and a specific article by the late Sidney G. Riches, written in 1988. He recalled the "Square spacious ringing chamber and a good circle of ropes; the bells were in fairly good order with a tenor of about 18 cwt which sounded well outside. (Inside) when the bells were rung, the sound was heavily distorted by the reverberation against the metal chute". The latter was the exhaust from the heating system.

I was fortunate to find in the Bristol Record Office a copy of the St Peter's Guild of Ringers Rules, a couple of photographs of the ringers which included Mr and Mrs A. V. Bennett, Mrs H. Bennett, Frederick Porch (Tower Keeper) and possibly Isaac Long. There was also (P/St PE/Soc/1) a Minute Book recording the activities of the Society from 1935 to 1939 – the band in 1935 was completely new though by no means all inexperienced, and it is sad that the war put an end to the society, St Peter's and its bells for good.

I referred earlier to my articles on the "City of The Heavy Fours". St Nicholas remains the same; at the Cathedral, the three smallest of the four ancient bells in the central tower were

rehung 'dead' for clock chimes and service tolling by The Whitechapel Foundry in 1993. The following year three of the four bells at the now redundant St Paul, Portland Square, were taken out. The smallest went to Wagga Wagga, NSW., the next to Buckland Dinham, both as part of ringing peals. The third, complete with fittings was transferred as a service bell to St Agnes Church. John Rudhall's tenor remains (as a potential hour bell if ever the clock is repaired) in the otherwise vacant ten-bell frame.

DAVID L. CAWLEY

*We thank Andrew M. Bull from Dursley, who also supplied a reference to Mr Cawley's article – Ed.*



*St Nicholas' curfew bell.*

### St Nicholas Bristol Bridge

With reference to David Bryant's letter on page 604 he is incorrect when he states that the peal of ten (tenor 35cwt) at St Nicholas was destroyed by fire during the war. They were in fact damaged by the heat of the fire during the first blitz on Bristol in November 1940 and in consequence lost practically all of their tonal quality – but only the 8th fell out of the frame and was broken. The remaining nine bells were taken down in 1941 and placed on the floor at the base of the tower where they could easily have become prey to any scrap metal merchant with criminal tendencies. According to my father they were visible throughout the 1950's although they were wrapped in barbed wire and could only be viewed through the bars of the locked wrought iron gates to the tower arch.

Eventually they were taken away by Taylors and the metal from them was used to cast the four new bells in 1960 which are hung in the existing 10 bell cast-iron 'H' frame. There are two bells on which the quarters are struck and these weigh 4-1-17 and 8-3-26 respectively. The hour bell weighs 29-3-22 and the curfew bell which weighs 11-0-21 automatically strikes for 7½ minutes each night immediately after the clock has finished striking nine.

These bells are listed in the current edition of Dove as a ringable four but this is a somewhat moot point as although they are hung in headstocks with gudgeons and bearings they have no clappers, wheels, stays, sliders or pulleys and in their present state therefore can only really be classed as clock bells. The enclosed photograph shows the curfew bell.

NICHOLAS W. BOWDEN

### St Peter's Bristol

Alan Freke's old photograph on page 603 showing part of the tower interior of St Peter's is most interesting. I would suggest that it was probably taken prior to 1883 as in that year there was a general refurbishment of the tower and the 8 bells (Rudhall 1729, tenor 20cwt) were rehanged by Alfred York. Shortly afterwards a peal of Grandsire Triples was rung on them with Alf York on the 7th and this was claimed as the first peal on the bells for 35 years.

We know from recorded conversations with pre-war ringers such as Sid Riches, Albert Tyler and Leslie Pearce that peals at St Peter's were rare but the bells were rung regularly in the 1930's and the Bristol City Branch of the G & B occasionally held business meetings in the church rooms which were just up the road in Castle Green opposite Llewellyns and James foundry. A photograph of the St Peter's ringers taken one Monday practice night in 1938 shows a band consisting of five men and six women. The general consensus of opinion was that the bells went well and sounded quite good outside the tower – but due to a galvanised fume duct from the church heating system which passed through the ringing room the sound produced inside the tower was somewhat distorted.

The disastrous end came on 29th November 1940 when a heavy air-raid put paid not only to the bells of St Peter's but also the nearby peal of eight at St Mary-le-Port and the ten at St Nicholas. St Peter's was the first church to be hit and set ablaze by incendiary bombs and six of the ring plus the Sanctus bell fell to the ground. The other two bells remained in the tower in a somewhat precarious situation in the remains of the frame until they were taken down by Taylors in 1941. All the salvaged bell metal was held in store for some years and finally sold for scrap in 1970. The preserved ruins of St Peter's and St Mary-le-Port are now the focal points of the Castle Park recreational area.

R. J. BOWDEN

### The Army Guild of Bellringers AGM

The AGM took place at Isham on Saturday, 17th May. At the meeting the officers were re-elected and the decision made to keep the subscription at £3.00 for 97-98.

After much discussion, the meeting voted to keep meetings on the third Saturday for another year. London (by public transport) was selected for 20th September and Hertfordshire for 17th May, 1998.

Recruiting new members was slow and there was a great need for more ladies to join the Guild.

Before the meeting, ringing took place at Burton Latimer (a joint services venture as the Guild was joined by members of the RAF and RN Guilds at the end of the session), Barton Seagrave and Isham.

After an excellent lunch at Pytchley, ringing took place at Orlingbury and Pytchley.

Former and serving personnel (including FANY, MOD and HG) together with their partners would be welcome at all the Guild's meetings.

Details of membership may be obtained from the secretary: Mrs C. Baron 79, Pinner Park Avenue, Harrow, Middx HA2 6JY (0181 428 1332).

The Guild would like to thank all incumbents for permission to ring at their churches and for the warm welcome received from them and the ringers who met us.