

## The Outing

(Any resemblance to real towers is purely coincidental!)

*Here's ther first tower, and here we all are,  
At least four ringers in every car.  
We've all brought our Doves and the map of the  
route,  
And the brollies and wellies are all in the boot*

*What have we here? - A nice little eight,  
Simon's rung here and he says that they're  
great,  
Though the draught's rather long and they  
haven't got guides  
And the ringing room's "cosy" - better stick to  
the sides.*

*Well, it's all very fine for the local to say  
"Just leave the bells up - we need 'em today"  
But the back four came down in two pulls when  
in rounds,  
And I wouldn't endorse the sort of odd sounds.*

*Which came from that tower when Grandsire  
we tried,  
Perhaps little Carol should not ring inside  
When the box is as wobbly as that one we  
found -  
We all like to keep our feet on the ground*

*Oh well, on we go, the next one's not far,  
We'll drive down this road and then see where  
we are  
You can't miss the tower, according to John,  
We'll be there before you can say "Treble's  
gone"*

*You can tell John from me he's a fraud and a  
fake,  
He had no idea how long it would take  
Now everyone's hot and everyone's cross,  
If he went into a ditch it'd not be a loss*

*We've found it at last, it's as tall as a tree,  
When we get to the top we'll be able to see  
The coast of Australia, if height's any guide -  
It's redundant, and smells like its pigeons have  
died*

*Yes, one of 'em's dead, I can tell you for sure,  
I just trod on the brute - it's there on the floor,  
Now my foot's going to pong of dead pigeon all  
day  
- And I think that someone's just broken a stay*

*Well, let's have a quick burst of rounds on the  
seven,  
We've got to be at the next by eleven  
I hope it will prove a bit easier to find,  
But Jim says there's a pub near, so no-one will  
mind*

*Just this one then lunch, I'm as dry as a bone,  
For a change they sound pleasant, they've got a  
nice tone,  
Though we could do without organ practice as  
well  
'Cause striking's a problem when you can't hear  
your bell*

*So let's try this pub just over the road -  
The bitter is "off"? Well, then, that be blowed,  
Tom wants Real Ale and Lyn fancies cider  
- Don't know how she'll ring with scrumpy  
inside her*

*A miracle's happened - it's quarter past two  
And we're all at the tower and forming a queue  
But where is the bod we're supposed to have  
met?  
It's started to rain and we're all getting wet*

## The City of the heavy fours

by *The Reverend David L. Cawley, AKC, FSA*

The parish of St. Paul was carved out of the old parish of St. James, Bristol and is the focal point of a rectangle of what were once houses and are now magnificently restored, but alas as offices. Plans for a church on the site were first incorporated into the square's design in 1789; work commenced on it to the designs of a stonemason, Daniel Hague, in 1792<sup>1</sup> and it was opened in 1794<sup>2</sup> when still incomplete. An elegant framed portrait of the late "worthy Diocesan", Dr. Christopher Wilson, Bishop 1783-92 hangs in the vestry recording his gift of a "superb communion service" to the church he never lived to see. On another wall is an unusual gilt-painted and minute table of Fees which naturally includes the tolling of bells for funerals. Have "the small bell" and it could be done for 1s.6d.; but the "Tenor Bell" (any significance in the initial capitals?) cost 5s.0d. The tower, popularly supposed to have been modelled on that of the (then) Royal Exchange in London is of four stages and within the parapet rises a diminished cuboid stage; within the parapet of that another smaller cuboid; and within the parapet of that a pinnacle. It is in fact a spire and internally it is conical: writers have never been able to take it seriously (even today "far more scholarly results" are demanded). It is said to have been built on the whim of the rector, Dr. Small; but Bristolians and those who have come to love Bristol and who may never have heard of Daniel Hague or Dr. Small have a great affection for "the wedding cake": for those who do want to be serious, the tower itself is a massive and strong edifice of excellent proportions. The Georgian Gothick church lost its

galleries and received an excellent new chancel in 1894. The parish was severely damaged in the last war. The eventual reconstruction of Portland Square as a commercial settlement coupled with the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of the area, have combined with the forces of ecclesiastical politics to end the parochial status of St. Paul's church. Now closed except for occasional services, it gives its name perhaps unjustifiably to an area which has had more than a fair share of notoriety in the last decade.

For the church as planned in the first instance, two bells were cast by John Rudhall of Gloucester. Their precise relationship is difficult to determine and it is more than likely that there is no one alive who has heard them: derelict for many years, these two have sat on top of the bell frame for the last sixty years. It is claimed that the larger was the intended treble of ten, but it is more likely that they were supplied from stock as a ting-tang and a service bell. In 1795, the tower being finished it was already "preparing for a ring of ten bells"; floors were put in including a lofty ringing room; in the bell chamber an excellent oak frame for the ten bells was built. The sixth and tenor were ordered and duly hung, but the writer has no reliable evidence as to what stopped the vestry from going ahead with the completion of the ring. The larger of the two 1792 bells was also hung for ringing in the treble pit, the smaller being hung "dead", hence Mr. John Llewellyn's remarks that they were "The treble, sixth and tenor of a ring of ten . . . in addition to the sanctum bell" (*sic*).<sup>3</sup> The three ringing bells were equipped with transitional type 18th

(Continued opposite)

*We were all a bit miffed at the chap with the  
key,  
He didn't get here until twenty to three  
A horde of damp ringers stampedes up the  
tower  
To ring rapid rounds for the last half-an-hour*

*The things that we do just to go for a ring!  
The cars are all steamed up, we can't see a  
thing,  
The map is all soggy, the route can't be seen,  
Though we're told that the next tower is "just by  
the green"*

*This "green" 's more a bog, if the truth should  
be told,  
There's mud in our shoes and we're wet and  
we're cold  
The ladder's defeated poor Jan, I'm afraid -  
She's wearing a skirt - she's inclined to be staid*

*Ropes shrink when it's wet - this is more than a  
shower -  
But they must have a band of dwarfs in this  
tower  
There's a limit to how many knots you can use,  
Phil rang on his knees - Carol took off her  
shoes*

*Only one more, thank goodness, the day's been  
too much,  
I don't think anyone could manage a touch  
The quickest of grabs, and then to the pub  
To talk of the day with a pint and some grub*

*But of course, being ringers, we'll do it again,  
We'll search for strange towers in fog and in  
rain,  
- And of course you feel different over a beer  
When planning The Outing you'll go on next  
year*

C.K.

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**ARTHUR FIDLER**

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**Don't bother to tell Sid, he's  
probably got his already!**

century bell gear; the two smaller ringing headstocks and the "sanctum" deadstock still lie about the bellchamber floor and the tenor's in the ringing room.

No further effort was made to augment the bells, which remained substantially as Rudhall had left them until 1926. Late in August of that year the Bristol bellfounders Messrs Llewellyns and James commenced the work of rehanging the bells in all new fittings; their estimate for doing so was £135. The following month the work to the two larger was complete and they further estimated for repairing the frame with proper angle-brackets of massive design and with the insertion of 28 forged tie-rods: this work was carried out for the princely sum of £38.10s.0d. At this time it seems to have become apparent that the four bells together would never sound satisfactory and it was estimated that instead of hanging the 1792 bells, to recast the two into one (the fifth of ten) would cost only £30 extra inclusive of hanging. Although the two smaller had been dismantled and the smaller had the canons removed and was partly drilled ready for new ringing fittings, work was at once suspended whilst the deliberations proceeded: with the new bell, of course, it was at once realised that there would be numbers 1, 2 and 6 of a heavy six; or 3, 4 and 8 of a large ring of eight; or even 5, 6 and 10 of an average ten. At the end of November, Llewellyns & James submitted estimates on these lines - also admitting that they had their sums wrong and that they had overlooked the necessity of tuning the smaller 1795 bell which was rather flat of the G-sharp it was intended to sound. They also added the cost of fixing the necessary rope guides and "sally guides" (the latter being unnecessary if a light floor was inserted). Mention was made of the need for coat hooks, boxes for the larger bells, electric light and a quote given for a chiming apparatus (4 guineas a bell). They were emphatic in stating that the new bells would be "moulded . . . to the best and most modern designs and tuned diatonically and harmonically on the principles initiated by the late Canon Simpson in our powerful tuning machines."

The church architect, Sir George Oatley, must at this time have been having second thoughts: either because the rector was so enthusiastic, or through fears for the tower's safety, but more probably because Llewellyns & James had made both omissions and errors. On 31st December, the Whitechapel Foundry of Messrs Mears and Stainbank (careful to emphasize their connections with Rudhall: "after continuing the Foundry for five years in Gloucester, we transferred everything here") concluded that the smallest bell was too small, the next (which could not be properly tested) too flat, the smaller 1795 bell in need of tuning and the tenor "of very fine tone". They were prepared to re-use the fittings supplied to the two latter by Llewellyns and James a few months earlier, but observed that the bracing of the bell frame in pits 7, 8 and 9 would require stilling. Routine notes were made about the clock weights and hammer and also bringing back the tenor for harmonic tuning. They guaranteed the whole peal to be in perfect tune and cited Wrington as an example of their "splicing" work: "with the exception of Wells, which is a much heavier peal, Wrington has the reputation of being the finest peal of ten in the country".

A month before this, a letter was received from Loughborough, not only profuse in its detailing of important works from York Minster to Shanghai ("to show how our bells are appreciated not only in this country but all over the world, and it is particularly gratifying to know that our bells are so appreciated in a

country like the United States") but also advising that, in accordance with the architects' request, Mr. John Oldham of Taylors would be "arriving Bristol by train due 11.48 a. m." and would be at the church at mid-day. They asked for "access to all floors on arrival as his time in Bristol will be rather limited". Their remarks on the bells were, perhaps, predictable: the smallest is altogether too small", and the next two "not only unsuitable in pitch by reason of the falseness of their harmonics"; even the tenor (quoted as 24 cwt.) "is too thin and light . . . a really full toned bell of this note and weight should be 29-cwts. diameter 4'7" ". Unfortunately the framework ("apparently in fair condition") allowed only of a bell of 53" diameter. Taylors advised complete refitting, recasting the defective three smaller bells and rehanging in the existing frame (warning also that "the tenor will always sound extremely 'panny' . . . and this would be most undesirable".) They also quoted for recasting all the bells with a tenor in D "forming a peal which would be all of one family".

Sir George Oatley had meanwhile been up the tower to examine the work done by Llewellyns and James, had found it satisfactory and the tower quite fit for a ring of bells. He advised against competition (as they were now able to tune bells harmonically); but a month later was writing, "There is certainly no occasion to pay that extra for (Taylor's) name and reputation". He did not mention Llewellyns & James and found himself impressed with the Mears report and estimate to which he added, "It is interesting to note that they . . . have incorporated into their business the firm which carried out the original bells" and advised acceptance of their tender. In January 1927, Gillett & Johnston wrote asking if they could be allowed to inspect, report and tender for the work enclosing copious literature, but no reply survives, nor was any



St. Paul's, Portland Square, Bristol (4, 26 cwt.)

as the "6th" and provide iron headstocks on the eight new bells, the Bristol founders keeping in this case to elm, as in the case of the two already rehung.

Founder	Total weight of ten	Ring of ten	Ring of eight*	Ring of six*
John Taylor & Co	116 cwt.	£1172	£1019	£843
Llewellyns & James	105 cwt.	£1034	£ 862	£672
Mears & Stainbank	111 cwt.	£1029	£ 885	£706

\* In both cases omitting smaller bells.

order placed. The only other work done in the tower was the fixing of a new clock with an enormous hammer 20 years later. The two larger bells hang with their 1926 Llewellyns & James fittings in the Rudhall frame strengthened by the Bristol bellfounders. The two smaller stand on top of the frame, the small one partially drilled and the larger untouched.

Despite the long draught, it is quite possible to ring the two bells which hang and to reflect on what might have been: a glorious Taylor ten, a majestic Mears ring. What of Llewellyns & James? They did cast bells here and there after the mid-20's, though the writer knows of nothing more considerable in quantity than a swinging chime of three for Shirehamepton in 1929 (the middle bell now at Lockleaze). Could it be that St. Paul's was a last-ditch effort to get back into the market with what would have effectively been their only ring of 10 in their own city of Bristol?

A summary of the quotes given 60 years ago should be qualified by the fact that the figures given by John Taylor & Co. reflect the costs of recasting three of the bells, whereas Llewellyns & James and Mears & Stainbank would recast only two; the latter would tune the tenor as well

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, PORTLAND SQUARE		
Treble	24½" F-sharp (unhung)	3-0-0
	JOHN RUDHALL FEC. 1792	
Second	28½" D (unhung)	4-2-0
	I. RUDHALL FEC. 1792	
Third	39" flat of G-sharp (rehung 1926)	9-2-0
	THE REV. I. A. SMALL, D. D. RECTOR, OF THIS PARISH, 1795	
Tenor	53½" C-sharp (rehung 1926)	26-0-0
	THE REV. I. A. SMALL, D. D. RECTOR OF THIS PARISH 1795	
	IN RUDHALL GLOUCESTER FEC. 1792	

Footnotes

1. Bristol, Studio Vista Series 1970. T. H. Burrough.
2. Records of the Diocese of Bristol, Ed. I. Kirby 1970
3. Bells and Bellfounding, by X-Y-Z (1879). Details of founders remarks and particulars of the bells from Personal MSS and from Bristol County Records Office (Diocesan Archives) P/St.P/ChW/13(d)