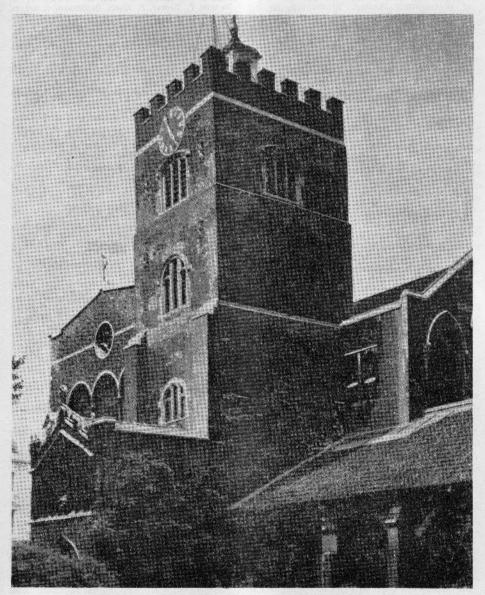
# THE RINGING WORLD

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THE PRIORY OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW THE GREAT, **SMITHFIELD** 

# OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH BELL RINGERS

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THIS YEAR OF 1973 is the 850th anniversary of the founding of "The Priory of St. Bartholomew the Great", Smithfield, London, and therefore an appropriate time for a short history to appear in The Ringing World. The Priory was founded in 1123 by Rahere, a courtier of King Henry I. It Rahere, a courtier of King Henry I. It was built as an Augustinian Priory and remained so until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539. After a period of use as a parish church, Queen Mary gave it to the Dominican Friars, who on her death in 1558 went quietly away, leaving the old Priory to become once more a parish church. The original building was constructed in the Norman style and when finally ted in the Norman style and when finally completed was about 350 ft. long. In addicompleted was about 350 ft. long. In addition to the church it had all the normal monastic appendages. The present church consists of the original choir plus the crossing and one bay of the old nave, a fine lady chapel, circa 1335, which is situated behind the high altar and one side of a chairty. Undergoth the Lady Chappel is a cloister. Underneath the Lady Chapel is a fine crypt, used at some time as a charnel

St. Bartholomew's Hospital was also founded by Rahere, but due to continued ill feeling between the two foundations they soon parted company. However, they still continued to wrangle and records show that early in the 13th century the Hospital agitated to have more bells. The Bishop decided that they should not have more than two, that these should not be large and that the Hospital was not to have a belfry in the accustomed manner. Further, that on Easter Eve they were not to ring their bells before those at the Priory were rung. Needless to say, at present relations between the two foundations are of the friendliest. The Hospital Church of St. Bartholomew the Less has a tower containing three bells, two of which date from 1485; these are now chimed for Sunday and other services.

Rahere also obtained from King Henry the right to hold a fair in the vicinity of the Priory on St. Bartholomew's Day: this was an important source of income for the church. This fair was held annually from 1133 and in monastic times was the great proposal market for the wealler, and gloth annual market for the woollen and cloth trades of the country. Indeed, traders came from the Continent to sell their wares. At the Dissolution of the Priory, Henry VIII gave the rights of the fair to Lord Rich, and Bart's Fair continued until 1854 when, after a long decline, it died a natural death.

(Continued overleaf)

#### ST. BARTHOLOMEW-continued

#### OTHER FAMOUS FIGURES

Besides Rahere many other famous figures of history have had associations with St. Bartholomew's. Wat Tyler was smote down by Walbrook before the great door of the church. Was he finished off in the church hospital? - contemporary records are divided. William Wallace, the Scottish patdivided. William Wallace, the Scottish patriot, was hanged, drawn and quartered outside the west front during the height of Bart's Fair and Milton took refuge in the precincts of the close during the early days of the Restoration. Hogarth, the great painter, was born, baptised and lived in the parish. John Wesley preached many times here and conducted weddings during the period he was an unbeneficed and unlicensed period he was an unbeneficed and unlicensed clergyman, whilst Benjamin Franklin, the American statesman, worked as a journey-man printer in the Lady Chapel during the time of its secular use. Not to be forgotten is that large army of people who, in de-fence of their beliefs, perished by burning at the stake during the reigns of the Tudors. The stake was just outside the west entrance and it is reputed that Queen Mary used to watch proceedings from a room over the entrance gate.

The present tower was built in 1628 and consists of four floors. From the outside one sees a red brick tower with no interest-ing architectural features. However, from the inside it can be observed that the tower is built on the old Norman arches and that this Norman work continues up on three sides of the tower as far as the ceiling of the first floor, which is the ringing chamber. Above this is the clock room, containing a clock which was most likely installed when the tower was built, and the bell chamber is immediately above. A full list of the names of those who subscribed to the building of this tower is still in existence and is kept with the parish records.

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Editor: C. W. DENYER,

The Ringing World Committee: W. G. Wilson (chairman), 42 Willow Grove, Ruislip Manor, Middlesex; R. S. Anderson, D. A. Bayles, R. F. B. Speed and Mrs. P. J. Staniforth.

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### BOOK OF THE FOUNDATION

The first mention of bells at St. Bartholomew's is in the "Book of the Foundation", which records the story of Rahere's conver-sion and the building of the Priory; it also gives a wonderful picture of life in the 12th century. This book, which is written in Latin, is now in the Cottonian Collection at the British Museum. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries the Priory possessed two of the Monasteries the Priory possessed two rings of bells; the heavier, a ring of six with a tenor of a reputed weight of 36 cwt., was sold to St. Sepulchre's. Unfortunately they were run out during the Great Fire of London. These bells are mentioned by Stow in his survey of London, written in 1598. The lighter ring, the present bells, are a complete ring of five mediæval bells all cast by the same founder. They bells, all cast by the same founder. They bear the mark of Thomas Bullisdon, who flourished in 1506 to 1510, and it is believed that they were cast as parish bells at the instance of Prior Bolton, the penultimate holder of the office, who was connected with the building of the Henry VII Chapel at Westminster Abbey. Downman, in his privately printed book of 1898, tabulates over 20 Bullisdon bells which were then in use in various parishes of England.

Individual descriptions of the bells are: 1.—Sancte Bartholemeo Ora Pro Nobis. Height 18½". Dia. 22". Estimated weight 2 cwt. -sancte Bartholemeo Ora Pro Nobis. Height 18½". Dia. 22". Estimated weight 2 cwt. -Sancta Katerina Ora Pro Nobis. Height 20". Dia. 24". Est. weight 2 cwt. 3 qr. -Sancta Anna Ora Pro Nobis. Height 21½". Dia. 26½". Est. weight 3 cwt. 2 qr. -Sancte Johannes Baptiste Ora Pro Nobis. Height 23". Dia. 29". Est. weight 4 cwt.

Sancte Petre Ora Pro Nobis. Heig Dia. 31". Est. weight 5 cwt. 2 qr Height 25".

Each bell bears after the word Nobis a shield with the trade mark of the founder, a bell dependent from a transverse beam or stock with the letter Tt in the field. Except for the dedication of the treble bell, to the patron saint of the Priory, it can only be pure conjecture why the remaining bells were given their dedications. Records show that there were chapels to both St. Anne and St. Katherine and an image to St. Peter in the old Priory but nothing to connect with St. John the Baptist. The bells are hung anti-clockwise in the original wooden frame of 1628.

Since 1510 these sweet-toned bells have been rung for services and to commemorate the great events of history as they hap-pened, and many of these are recorded in the parish registers, together with the fees paid to the ringers. One curious custom the annual commemoration birthday of Queen Elizabeth I, which continued until 1708, and for this the ringers were paid 2s. 6d. to be shared five ways. These bells were rung to welcome the same monarch on her visits to the City of Lon-don and have also been rung to honour and welcome the present Elizabeth II on her visits.

Until 1814 the Priory possessed an old sanctus bell, which was melted down in that year to provide metal for a larger bell, weighing 3 cwt. 2 qr. 22 lb., to be used as a clock bell, and this bell is still in use. Unfortunately there is no record at the church or at the foundry of the inscription on this old bell. As far as is known there on this old bell. As far as is known there have been only two peals rung on the bells in their 460 years of use—the first rung by the Middlesex C.A. in 1923 to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Foundation, and in 1956 by the Kent C.A. for the patronal festival. Unfortunately, due to the nearness of the hospital buildings to the tower, the possibility of further peals is remote; how-(Continued at foot of next column) SUFFOLK GUILD DINNER

THOSE ATTENDING

Seated at the top table were Mr. J. W. Blythe (president) and Mrs. Blythe, the Bishop of Edmundsbury, Mr. J. Freeman (president, C.C.), Mr. H. E. Egglestone (ringing master) and Mrs. Mr. H. E. Egglestone (ringing master) and Mrs. Egglestone, Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Symonds, Canon and Mrs. Muxlow, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Pipe, Rev. L. R. Pizzey (hon. secretary), Mr. and Mrs. E. Ambrose, Rev. and Mrs. G. Tarris, Mr. A. S. Hudson and Mr. C. W. Denyer (R.W.).

Others present included Misses Edwards, R. Frith, S. Potter, M. Carson, M. Brown, D. Edwards, M. Newby, D. Stillwell, M. Freeman, O. Bunn, P. Cutting, S. Geater, A. Richmond, F. Franks, S. Ling, S. M. Pipe, R. Bedford, A. E. Lester, J. Wightman.

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ever, quarter peals are frequently rung for services.

William Laughton and his Rambling Ringers rang at Bart's in 1734, and an extract from his diary reads:

We rang upon those little bells, Four different peals to divert ourselves, Grandsire, Old Doubles, Simonds and New, And Faith we struck 'em good and true.

These methods are still being rung at Bart's and visitors are welcome to our Thursday practices (commence 6.30 p.m.) to join us and try their hand. Sunday ringing is at 5.50 p.m., when visitors are even more welcome. It is regretted that due to the proximity of the tower to the neurological wards of the hospital ringing is kept to a minimum, and consequently permission to ring at Bart's is never given to touring parties or organised outings. R. L. B.