

The best peal in England ... The last word in every respect

by David Cawley – part II



St Dunstan-in-the-East, 2011 (Photo: J Pladdys)

In his first instalment back in February, David Cawley explored the early history of bells at Dunstan-in-the-East in the City of London, and set the scene for the story of the legendary post-war replacement ring – which was destined to enjoy only a short life in the tower before plans to re-build the rest of the church were abandoned. Here David recounts the story from the destruction of the Blitz – “The Second Great Fire” – to the installation of the new 21cwt Taylor peal – which so few ringers had the privilege to enjoy – and explains what subsequently became of those acclaimed bells.

The second Great Fire

Two years later the church was gutted through in a massive air raid. The arcades within and the east wall had to be demolished. The tower was likewise gutted and the stonework of the arches of the spire impaired. The bells had been on wooden headstocks which burned away; four of the bells broke in pieces during their fall. Of the other four, part of the crown of the treble was broken out; the third and fifth were cracked. Amazingly, the tenor came all the way down to the ground and was found to be sound. Equally remarkable was the survival of the classical vaulting beneath the ringers’ floor, despite several tons of bells, or bits of them, landing on it. “*Even the Thames failed us that night,*” wrote Revd Arthur West, “*the tide being out – mud being of no use in fighting the flames.*” Fortunately the north-east porch was undamaged and the Vestry, north of the tower offered accommodation for smaller services which commenced within days. “*For a year we managed in this accommodation with*

larger services – Empire Day, Harvest Festival and so forth – we held in the ruined nave. Then for a year we enjoyed the hospitality of St Margaret Pattens.” During this time, the bells, or their remains, were recovered and a vault in one of the aisles was opened to receive them. Even then some 15 cwt of metal was later found to have disappeared. A temporary brick chapel, reminiscent perhaps of the “tabernacles” of post-1666, was built to embrace the site of the first bay of the nave and aisles, approached through the base of the tower and connected also to the vestry room. In September 1944, Mr Albert Hughes visited the church to discuss with Mr West the eventual restoration of the bells. Unfortunately, his letter does not survive, but a later Rector’s summary does: “*8.9.44 (Bells) Mears & Stainbank. Original weight of bells was 96½cwt. Suggests 84cwt for new bells, and hang on a lower level.*” This suggests that he was thinking of a ring something like the back eight of the present ten at St Clement Danes. Mr Hughes generously lent a small bell, reputedly 16th-century which was hung in the former ringing room and used for services; it remained there till 1970, and is now preserved in the crypt at All Hallows by the Tower. Meanwhile, Alex Scott and Vernon Helbing, of Sir Herbert Baker’s architectural practice at Church House Westminster, were preparing visionary – and rather grandiose plans for the next edition of St Dunstan’s. It is sufficient to say here that these plans were eventually rejected by the Bishop of London’s Commission on the war-damaged churches, and a further set, showing a “chamber music” type church with all necessary meeting rooms and

appurtenances, fared likewise. Mr West and his Church Wardens were resolutely opposed to the wish of the Diocese to build a Christian Institute on the site of St Dunstan-in-the-East. The Institute plan (which sounds somewhat vague) was shifted to Christ Church, Newgate Street, where it never materialized. In fact, the two churches had one thing in common, magnificent towers; and both have fared in much the same way, excepting one – Christ Church had no ring of bells. The Bishop’s Commission was committed to the preservation of both towers, whatever else might happen. In his Rector’s report for 1945, Mr West outlined his plans and also stated that “*At a meeting of the Parochial Church Council ... It has been decided to secure priority for the refounding and rehanging of our eight bells by Messrs. Mears & Stainbank.*”

The scaffolding went up around the tower and spire in the spring of 1948 and was destined to stay there for five years. Nothing would be simple at St Dunstan’s then or subsequently. The bows, or arches supporting the spire were found to be in relatively good condition, as was the spire itself; but the jointing, and the stonework of the parapet and pinnacles, had been badly affected by the heat of the fire. The War Damage Commission agreed to pay the entire cost of the work to the tower and spire, to include demolition to parapet level and rebuilding, all internal floors and fixtures, a new bell frame; and under part II of the War Damage Act, *a new ring of bells, complete with fittings and installing them.* The whole of the interior of the ruined church became a builders’ site as one by one the stones of the spire and its supporting bows were lowered, followed by the pinnacles and



The tenor being exhumed (from the collection of David Cawley)



A very rare view (N) of the church seen from Great Tower Street c1900 (from the JP collection)

parapet. At this point work ground to a halt. Everyone had forgotten about the metal ties probably inserted in 1817; on opening up the walls of the parapet they and the stonework surrounding them were found, like cast-iron staples in the head of old bells, to be in a parlous condition due to rust and consequent expansion. It could not be classed as War Damage; “*The Diocesan Reorganization Committee said that they had no money (which is always true)*”, wrote the Rector, “*and it looked very much like the parish’s responsibility to find a large sum ... and to find it at once; which, from our point of view, was absurd ... the stones looked impassively on; and nothing happened.*” In the end it was the Diocese which came to the rescue.

Enter the bell founders

At the same time, T. H. Taffender set to talking to the Rector about the bells. He had been present when they had been buried and noted that the tenor sounded undamaged. He hoped that it might serve as the tenor of the new ring. He also mentioned the work which Taylors had carried out satisfactorily in 1933. Further, that firm, for whose work he had a personal preference, had recently installed a massive two-ton 18-bell chime down the road at All Hallows, a pretty substantial contract. As a result, J. P. Fidler of John Taylor & Co. attended on 14th July 1948. It was a desolate scene he described: “*Met by Taffender. The tower is completely burned out, the only floor that is left is the arched stone vaulting. The frame is one of Mears’ light structures, the timber sills burned away, of the four RSJs supporting it that on the west side is missing, the other three are buckled. The frame itself is all distorted and most of the frame castings just held together by their securing bolts, but for these a number of the castings would have fallen ... I would say that the bells were set*

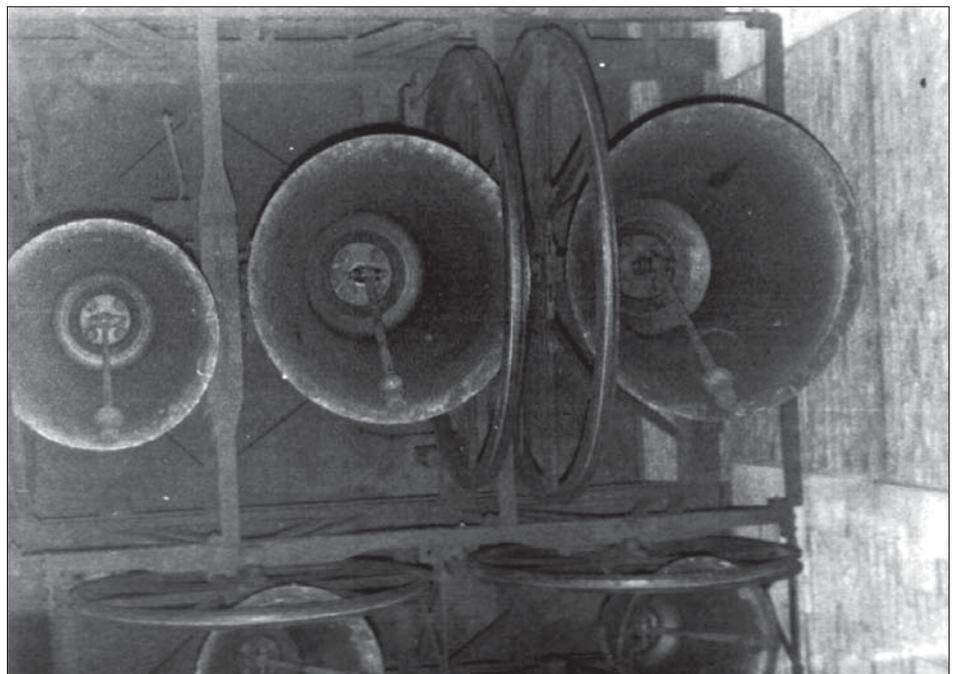
too high in the tower, it would be a good plan if they could be set at the level of the old clock floor (appx 16ft) but it is doubtful whether there is room for them on one level.” Going to the former ringing room he observed that Potts had installed a new clock there showing the time on the existing dials; he also remarked that Mears had lent a small bell; and that “*the large circular hatch has a temporary covering of boards and asbestos sheeting – Taffender put his foot through the latter.*” No injuries having been suffered, they met the Rector where “*Taffender said it was one of the finest tenors for its weight and ... would like it retained – I told him that even if it was not cracked its tone would be impaired through having been through the heat of the fire, further more it would be risky to use it, the chances were that it was now very brittle and might break up when rung.*” Finally J.P.F. “*mentioned that if possible it would be better to hang the bells lower in the tower. I made mention of the advisability of recasting the bells into a lighter ring, but both Taffender and the Rector did not like this idea.*” In their consequent formal report, Taylors underlined all this, not least the bringing down of the bells 16 feet in the tower. They calculated that the old bells weighed 86cwt in total and “*had thought it might be advisable to reduce the weight of the bells and to install a peal somewhat lighter in weight than formerly ... This however is a question which your Architects will no doubt pronounce upon.*” The cost of a recast ring to a similar weight to the old, fittings and frame was estimated at £1,700 installed.

A month later, Albert Hughes was at the tower; his advice was substantially the same: hang the bells lower in the tower; “*And my advice would be to put in a ring with a little less total weight. This would enable us to hang them to better advantage in distribution of weight, and I would suggest a Tenor of 18cwt. in the Key of E, with a total weight of*

71 to 72cwt. They would form a very musical ring and be in very good proportion to the Tower.” The cost was estimated at £1,268; but since the WDC was paying, price was not the over-riding factor. Some years later, such a ring was hung at St Andrew, Holborn, and very musical it is.

It was not until 1950 that the architects were to give further attention to the matter of the bells. In November Taylors quoted at the architect’s request £1,660 for a 22cwt ring of eight with all new fittings and framework. “*Referring to the last paragraph in your letter,*” they added, “*our proposal as to re-siting the bellframe lower down the tower will have no effect on the cost of carrying out the work as far as we are concerned*”. The following February, Mears & Stainbank quoted £1,039 for the 18cwt ring similarly hung. Not unnaturally, the architect, Vernon Helbing, favoured this scheme and their quotation and on March 23rd, he strongly urged this to the PCC. The Parish Registrar, on the Council’s behalf, now wrote to Taylors asking if they would favour a lighter ring (a strange question since they had suggested this in 1948). Their reply was to put the onus on the architect, but they felt that 86cwt would be in order at a lower level. On receipt of this the Rector quoted this opinion and asked the architect’s verdict; the reply was “*that the problem was tied up with many things which require to be co-ordinated.*” A note from the Rector to the architect, dated 13th April suggests a moment of exasperation, “*GO AHEAD WITH TAYLORS AND DON’T LET WEIGHT OF BELLS DELAY.*”

On reflection, it seems that the most important matter was relegated to the sidelines in the “month of madness” which was April, 1951. Ron Dove earlier mentions “*a complete lack of forethought*”. This is not correct, although it is “the accepted wisdom”. What is fact is that people were not listening to one another; or at least they were hearing only



Looking down on the new (1951) bells ‘up’ – clockwise from bottom right: 1, 2, 4, 7 and 8

what they wanted to hear, whilst attempting to shift responsibility to others. Academically it is interesting to know whether what Mears had quoted for, and which Taylors had independently suggested themselves, a lighter ring at a lower level, would have cured the tower “rock”. How much was down to the weight of the bells? How much to the height at which they were hung? And how much to the poor layout of the 1904 frame? The questions are academic in more ways than one, but they are inter-related and those who asked the first two had different agendas. It is interesting too to see how some of those City of London towers behave, even where heavy ring of bells were replaced by lighter ones hung lower down.

At the beginning of May, Helbing took the fateful decision “to lower the bell frame a little and re-found bells at 80cwt. Not possible to implement Taylor’s full suggestions, but what little re-arrangement can be done should help to reduce leverage and strain.”

In fact, the frame is some 3 or 4 feet lower than its predecessor, and better supported on a massive foundation of rolled steel joists which still span the empty bell chamber in both directions (indeed they are quite capable of carrying a bell frame and bells). The frame was unorthodox in layout as was the roping, mainly to reduce thrust on the tower. The treble, second, fifth and sixth swung north / south; the two trebles instead of swinging ‘mouth-to-mouth’ were each roped at the south end of their respective pits. The seventh hung in the centre, in the position usually occupied by the tenor in a modern frame, and the tenor hung beside it, along the north wall. These two bells were roped “unopposed”, the tenor being drawn to its correct position in the clock room. The frame was heavily cross-braced in every pit for extra rigidity.

Back at St Dunstan’s, the surviving bells and the remains of the others were exhumed from the burial vault by Dove Bros., who were engaged on rebuilding the spire. The bells were cast in the summer of 1951: the treble, third, fifth and tenor bore facsimile reproductions of the wording of their predecessors, with the borders handsomely re-arranged. The other four have their old inscriptions repeated in Taylors’ lettering and ornament. On the 2nd the name of T: Lester became T. Lister, and its date 1740 rather than 1746; and the 6th was 1715 instead of 1750. (These errors came from an old list – prepared by Mr Dix – supplied by the Rector). The front seven also have on their waists RECAST / 19 (T) 51, while the tenor had:

SPIRITUS SANCTUS A PATRE ET FILIO
SUAVITER SONANS AD SALUTEM
REFOUNDED 1951 BY TAYLOR,
LOUGHBORO.
ARTHUR G. B. WEST – RECTOR
F. CLYDE JEAVONS
CHURCHWARDENS
E. CLEVELAND STEVENS

There was probably little difference between the old tenor and the new one as the old ring was in D (Old Concert Pitch) and the new one in E-flat (International Pitch), the

diameters and weights of the new bells being: *Treble* 29", 5-2-8; *Second* 30", 5-3-1; *Third* 31½", 6-2-11; *Fourth* 34", 7-2-17; *Fifth* 37", 9-2-7; *Sixth* 39", 11-0-13; *Seventh* 43", 14-1-17; *Tenor* 48½", 21-0-14. The total weight, 81cwt 3-qr 4-lb, was a tad over the four tons specified by Mr Helbing and some 4cwts lighter than the supposed weight of the original ring. They were hung in the as yet incomplete tower early in 1952, but no ringing was permitted whilst the work was in progress. In the interim, after his long incumbency, the Revd Arthur West had died: he too never heard his bells.

The tower restored – then silence

A restored and handsome lobby and vestibule complements the restored vaulted ceiling of the ground floor. The central hatch has received a four-foot diameter ornamental surround, which was screwed on after the bells and frame had been hoisted. Those screws, noted on the installing bellhanger’s instructions, were subsequently forgotten about, as we shall see. A fine lantern type chandelier has been installed, giving a most impressive appearance. New doors are fixed throughout the staircase turret in the south-east corner. On the first floor was, once again, the ringing chamber, tall at 22 feet (a feature of many London ringing rooms), its stonework nicely restored: the two lofty 3-light gothic windows in the south and west walls have been reglazed in diamond panes and the recesses below fitted with polished benches. The staircase creates quite a ‘cant’ in that corner, so that when one entered, the second rope was directly in front and the third to the left; opposite, the tenor rope was in the centre of the north wall, behind which was a doorway on to the former vestry roof. The rope circle was not perfect due to the special arrangements above; in particular, 1-2-3 were rather far apart. The three largest bells were originally equipped with boxes to stand on, perhaps for effect as much as anything. The clock chamber above is itself quite tall, the still remaining Potts clock installed after the bombing having been overhauled and sited here in 1953, the date on the restored clock dials. A further ascent of the spiral stair brought one to the bells themselves. The lofty bell chamber has been completely restored, new stone tracery and louvres put in, and the bell frame foundation was (and is) set in a massive concrete ring-beam. The four great bell chamber windows are bricked up to half their height, several feet above the lips of the bells when they were “up”. The remaining area is still considerable. Above the windows a further ring-beam is extended on the south side to form a gallery with safety wall, where it is possible to look down, at one time upon eight upturned bells. Still higher a thick concrete roof reinforces the tower where once the metal ties rusted quietly away in the parapet; a short iron ladder leads through to the roof, where one can gaze in wonder at the massive “bows” of the crown spire, which look so delicate from the ground. A plaque records the completion of the work to the tower and spire, May 28th, 1953, the day Everest was conquered and in time for Her

Majesty’s Coronation the following week. St Dunstan’s bells were to play no part in either celebration, the architect having decreed that they “*must not be rung for a twelvemonth yet*” to allow the spire to settle. At some point thereafter, the bells were “tried out” but mystery surrounds even this event; the only one who told me personally that he was there was the late Ernie Rowe, bellhanger at Whitechapel. He stated that all the bells were rung, and that the tower movement was noticeable. The architect sent someone from the office, but no-one from Taylors seems to have been asked to be present.

At the end of 1956, a new Rector, The Revd Richard Tatlock, was appointed in what seems like a last-ditch effort to find a role for St Dunstan’s. One of the first things he did was to get in touch with Helbing, the architect, having written up a valuable summary of events 1944 – 1956. He asked bluntly for a statement regarding the ringing of the bells. Helbing replied “*Risk will be taken if the bells are rung before the tower is buttressed with a nave, etc. With the absence of stress details we are not competent to accept responsibility.*” The Rector replied that he had been told all the bells had been rung. He now asked, “*How many bells may be rung, and how, and for how long. Surely stress details were worked out earlier?*” Helbing’s, senior partner, Alex Scott now took over; and as it was all tied in with rebuilding the church there was falling-out, big time. After Rector Tatlock left, a pastoral scheme was made uniting the benefices and their parishes, providing that All Hallows by the Tower should be the Parish Church and that appropriate arrangements should be made for St Dunstan-in-the-East “*the repair of the tower to be completed by buttressing.*” Two years later, when the late Ranald Clouston was approached for advice, he turned to A. A. Hughes, who stated “*It used to wobble rather badly before being gutted by fire and I think it is probably unsafe to ring the bells with the church as it is now.*” In the early 60s, members of the ULSCR would go and “turn the bells over” singly under the watchful eye of Mr Charles Tisshaw, Verger of All Hallows, when he went to St Dunstan’s in the spring to “advance the clock”. My friend the late Nick Davies, an LDS graduate, told me of these adventures which seemed to have ceased by the time I went up to London University in October 1965.

The bells ring out

John Pladdys, one of my longest-standing and valued friends, has written on Dickon Love’s website (<http://london.lovesguide.com/dunstan-in-the-east.htm>) of his memories of St Dunstan-in-the-East, and I have no intention of reiterating them. Many of them are my memories too, and John has well summarised the ones which relate to the development of a relationship with All Hallows and the eventual gaining of permission to ring all eight bells by members of the ULSCR. What it (eventually) boiled down too was this: if I was to play the chime at All Hallows for services, I would also be regarded as steeplekeeper of the Parish and consequently of St Dunstan’s. I could arrange for single bells be “turned over” as necessary.

Their marvellous sound – and it was, as Richard Offen says in his contribution to Dickon’s site, “spine-tinglingly good” – increasingly whetted the appetite for the real thing. When it did happen, I remember a mixture of pride, happiness and disbelief. Suddenly, it was all so easy. St Dunstan’s had been conquered, the bells sounded every bit as good as they had promised to be – and the spire hadn’t fallen down! It’s a pity Richard’s contribution is spoiled by over-exaggeration: he writes of “the unsupported tower swaying and kicking quite alarmingly”, which just simply wasn’t so. The movement at tower parapet level was measured by Ranald Clouston in February 1967, and noted in writing as *3/32" maximum in Triples with the 7th at the front*. Likewise he noted some N/S rock, but *much less*. Such amounts of movement will begin to affect the ‘go’ of the bells. Nor was the tower as unsupported as is made out. Slight buttresses, really the remains of the west responds of nave arcades, and the west walls of the aisles lend additional support. The missing item is the flat nave roof, which rose only to about a third of the way up. I did arrange for a report by Brian Threlfall, of the CCCBR Towers & Bells Committee. Naturally, he reported to the parish, but I’ve never seen the report to this day. I gather it was not unfavourable to the ringers’ dream, with certain caveats and a longer-term proviso for eastern buttressing. I think the bells needed careful handling, as much for the rather long draught as for the tower movement, to which one became used.

The end of the road

But how I wish now that I had handled things differently. I can deal with accusations that such ringing as I arranged was “solely to suit myself”, as one ringer was pleased to write. Hey, I’m not that sort of guy; and anyway if I could have pleased myself, the bells would have been open to all, and as often as possible. But I did take too much on myself. One senior member of the ASCY, hearing of our exploits, told me “to get my *nawse* out of that tower in Fish Street Hill.” I said of course I would; after all, as I told him some time later, St Magnus is in the said hill, not St Dunstan’s. Phil Corby did give us great support, and it is the recording of his attempt for a quarter of Cambridge (frustrated by a broken rope) that is on Dickon’s site. As John says, it doesn’t do the bells much justice, but it was the best we could manage and it does give you some idea. The Cumberlands were tied up with their project to rescue and hang in Spitalfields the equally grand Gillett eight from Clapham Park. We had fallen foul (on account of the late “Mrs Spriggs”) of the London County – of which T. H. Taffender, so long associated with St Dunstan’s, had been Master; they seemed not to be interested. C. Montagu Meyer, Taff’s successor-but-one, did show personal interest in St Dunstan’s and did ring there with us on the new bells. On one occasion, after a quarter at Waterloo, I enlisted his help in getting the clappers down to the clock room for attention. The tenor clapper was a large item which Monty decided to carry down alone. After a few steps he put the



The church during the rebuilding of the spire in 1951 (from the collection of David Cawley)

clapper down – but it didn’t stop moving, the flight pivoting on the spiral stair column. “It’s chasin’ me, the bugger’s chasin’ me” echoed down as a more than usually dishevelled Monty exploded into the clock chamber. But he was a good help, and, as the “Crypt” has lately shown, was dedicated to the LCA. I think the link with Taff which St Dunstan-in-the-East represented should have been exploited. We were going to need support.

I think I am right in saying that ever since 1961, the St Dunstan’s site was a pain the neck to All Hallows; the union of benefices was however a valuable source of income and influence. The St Dunstan’s element on the PCC became non-existent, and the “St Dunstan’s Churchwardens” were increasingly hard-nosed businessmen on their way up to becoming Churchwardens of All Hallows. The Vicar at the time was Canon Colin Cuttell, a priest of vast experience who, I think, treated me and “my bells” with a wry smile. He was the sort of man at ease in City boardrooms and Civic functions, and with a way of communicating the faith in such unpromising surroundings that I was to envy in similar circumstances thirty years later. He also had an unpredictable temper as we found out one afternoon when ringing at St Dunstan’s. The bells were *very* loud outside – and the next door Tower Hill telephone exchange made representations. He descended on the one and only occasion I saw him in the tower, beckoned me over, smiled sweetly and thundered STOP! We were not even allowed to ring the bells down, and I had to come back later to do it. He was a good friend, but no ally – in fact quite the reverse. On June 18th, 1969, I received from the “St Dunstan’s Churchwarden” a letter telling me of the proposal to develop the St Dunstan’s vestry site and incorporate the lower floors of the tower, “and, *regrettably, that will involve the disposal of the bells*”. He enclosed a copy of

the minutes of the first meeting of the St Dunstan-in-the-East Project, which had been held the previous April 6th, and of which I had known nothing. The plan claimed to be to provide on the site of the old vestry room a meeting room, with a two storey flat above it and “*for the greatest use of a married incumbent [of All Hallows] ... living quarters in the bell-ringing room which had sufficient height to take two storeys. This adaptation would prevent future bell-ringing and a prior decision would be needed as to (a) the removal and disposal of the bells or (b) their retention with little hope of being rung again. There could be sentimental objections from some quarters to the disappearance of the bells, although they had no historical value and could be used elsewhere.*” The Churchwarden, Mr J. C. S. Parsons, favoured alternative (a) and “*the other warden would be consulted*”. I was asked to get in touch with “*a firm who might submit an offer*”, whilst the architect was in touch with the original founders. I was also invited to the buffet luncheon to launch the St Dunstan’s appeal: I was actually asked to chime All Hallows bells as guests arrived – I declined. The luncheon and Trustees’ meeting was a morning-dress affair, and I realised that I was utterly out of my depth.

I did invite the Whitechapel Foundry to inspect and report. At their suggestion, no offer was made for the purchase of the bells, or even to store them – the latter because of rebuilding the back foundry. Instead they produced a specification for lowering and cleaning the bells, overhauling the fittings, and producing a new frame foundation, so that the ring might be sold complete: the firm at the time rebuilding London Bridge in the Arizona desert had written enquiring about the availability of “old English bells” with especial reference to St Dunstan-in-the-East. The developers, McCulloch Properties, were

friends of Canon Cuttell who duly forwarded Whitechapel's figures: a new ring of eight of the same calibre with frame and fittings complete would cost £6,770; the cost of removing St Dunstan's bells, overhauling and a new bell frame foundation and shipping F.O.B. London £1,320. Then Taylors made an outright offer for the purchase of the whole installation, £2,544 including the cost of removal. When the developers decided against purchase, as they were in no position to build a tower, Taylor's offer was accepted by the committee, whose main interest was in finance. To this day, there has never been a married priest at All Hallows, and only Canon Cuttell ever used the Vicarage flat as a weekday pied-a-terre – to-day it is leased as a centre for complementary medicine and holistic treatment. Above the ringing room, the tower is much as it was, minus its bells.

Arrangements were made with John Taylor & Co to commence removal of the bells on Friday 27th November, 1970; I learned of this by a letter from Paul Taylor himself, on the evening of the previous Tuesday, and by the time I had got in touch with Tom White, Editor of *The Ringing World*, that week's edition had already gone to press. There were no such things as e-mails then; there were indeed telephones, but the lack of interest I had noticed was no encouragement; and, quite frankly, I was scared. Even now, 40 years almost to the day since the bells were removed, this has not made easy writing. On Thursday, 26th November, the UL practice at St Olave, Hart Street was shortened, and complete with ropes (those at St Dunstan's had shown an increasing propensity for breaking), we adjourned to our neighbour and rang the bells for the last time.

The final scenes in this sorry tale are still painful. I mentioned earlier that the bell-hole was surrounded by a circular border, screwed on, 4 feet in diameter. There was no way a circular bell half an inch larger would go through, and those screws had been forgotten about. "You may have to grind off the lip" say the written instructions to the bellhanger. When the bells were loaded up, a truck, which should never have been in Idol Lane, collided with Taylor's vehicle, knocking the fifth off. The headstock broke in two and the bell cracked from top to bottom. Then it was decided to break the tenor up in the tower: Ranald Clouston and I stood outside. "Let us go," he said, "I never want to hear a sound like that again". The damaged bell was subsequently recast a semitone sharper, the treble replaced likewise by another, and a further treble added to make a chime of eight, tenor 14-1-7 in F; these were sent to Stirling Wineries, Calistoga, California. Bells 1, 3, 5, 8 (the smallest being a new bell, the 3rd the former 2nd; the fifth being the old 4th, and the tenor the old St Dunstan's 7th) are hung for electrical slow swinging in a formed concrete arched belfry. The other four (including the ex-St Dunstan's 3rd and 6th) are hung dead in two other similar belfries. The 1951 treble languished on the floor at Loughborough till 1976, when it too was broken up. "I must say, I am very thankful that the disposal of these bells has been

arranged without us being brought into it", wrote Douglas Hughes from Whitechapel.

This was a very, very special ring of bells. There is no doubt that, as in other City belfries, the quality of the bells was enhanced by the mixture of Portland stone and London stock brick of which the towers are constructed. There are indeed elsewhere other fine Taylor rings with 4'0½" E-flat tenors – take the back eight at Solihull, or the Town Church in Guernsey for two. But the best comparison is local – the eight at St James, Clerkenwell (by Gillett & Johnston) and the Mark I eight at St Lawrence, Jewry (by Mears & Stainbank), both magnificent examples of the bellfounder's craft. There are times when comparison is almost invidious.

For myself, I shall always get a lump in my throat as I pass down Lower Thames Street and see that peerless spire rising serene over its modern competitors; as I read that street sign – City of London. St Dunstan's Hill EC3; as the decades roll away, and in my mind I hear again their wonderful sound.

Acknowledgments

A number of people, perhaps unaware of the earlier article, have asked me to "write up" the story. It has not been easy, and I thank them for their encouragement. To John Pladdys I owe a particular debt of gratitude for his support: it's possible that had the two of us both been in London in 1970, things *might* have turned out differently. A number of friends no longer with us are mentioned in the text and remembered with respect. I acknowledge the help given, and patience shown, by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, and by John Taylor & Co., whose Loughborough foundry produced these marvellous bells. Dickon Love, Church Warden and Tower Master of neighbouring St Magnus has done the Exercise a great service with *Lovesguide*, and has given particular help with the preparation of the illustrations to this article. He is now occupied with the provision of a new ring of ten at the other St Dunstan's – in-the-West – for details of which, and how to support this exciting project, see <http://dunstanbells.com/>

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Llantwit Major wedding

A happy event took place on Saturday, 8th October at St Illtud's Church, Llantwit Major, with the wedding of Dave Bounds and Beverly Noon.

Beverly was given away by her son Gareth, and Dave's best man was fellow ringer and Tower Captain, Peter Mayle. Maid of Honour was Dave's daughter Ffion.

Dave has been a ringer at St Illtud's since 1966, and is currently the Master of the Llandaff and Monmouth Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers.

As most of the local band had been kindly invited to the wedding by Dave and Beverly, the nearby ringers from Holy Cross Church, Cowbridge stepped in to ring on the day.

The following peals and quarter peals were rung in October to celebrate the happy event:

3rd, quarter peal at Llanedeyrn, Cardiff, 1400 Doubles (17m/v) (p.1097)

4th, quarter peal at Llantwit Major, 1260 Doubles (7m/v) (p.1097)

8th, peal at St John's, Cardiff, 5050 Spliced Caters (2m) – *see p.1267*

8th quarter peal (handbells):

Llandaff, Cardiff. (34 Triscombe Drive) 9 Oct, 1344 Ealing S Major: Helen Phillips 1-2, David F Moore 3-4, Robert E Hardy 5-6, Philip D Hopkins (C) 7-8. With best wishes to Tom & Alison Mayes on the birth of their son Samuel, and wedding congratulations to Association Master Dave Bounds and Beverly Noon.

GUY INGRAM

St Illtud's band press officer



Left to right: Ffion Bounds (David's daughter), Peter Mayle, David Bounds, Beverly Bounds (formerly Noon) and Beverly's son Gareth Noon. Ffion is also an accomplished ringer and an essential member of the St, Illtud band

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