



Letters to the Editor should be sent to him at The Ringing World Limited, Eagleside House, 7-9 Chantry Street, Andover, Hampshire SP10 1DE, or e-mailed to [letters@ringingworld.co.uk](mailto:letters@ringingworld.co.uk). The sender's full name, address and telephone number (daytime and evening) should be supplied, but if these details are not to be published this should be clearly stated at the head of the letter. Where a letter to the Editor is not for publication, kindly put 'Not for Publication' at the head of the letter. It is not usually possible to acknowledge receipt of letters privately. We reserve the right to edit letters and do not guarantee to print the whole of any letter received. Publication of a letter does not imply agreement with its contents by the Editor and/or Directors of The Ringing World Ltd. The Ringing World Ltd shall not be liable for accuracy of information or opinions expressed in published letters or for any loss or damage suffered as a result of their contents.

### **Whitechapel Bell Foundry and St. Magnus the Martyr**

Sir, – I read with interest the *RW* front page article of 4th August about the launch of an appeal to install a new ring of twelve bells at St. Magnus-the-Martyr, Lower Thames Street, in the City of London. However, I must set the record straight with regard to the history of our involvement with St. Magnus in respect of its previous ring of ten. In particular, I must take issue with the statement that "post war priorities and lack of money allowed the bells to languish at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, and they were eventually scrapped in 1976 to defray storage charges", which could easily be open to mis-interpretation.

At the outset of the Second World War a number of rings of bells were dismantled for safety with the intention of rehangng them when the war was over. Of the rings that Whitechapel removed, all were reinstated shortly after the war – with the exception of the bells from St Magnus. Negotiations for rehangng those bells commenced in or about 1949. However, correspondence on our file indicates that the church authorities at St. Magnus were unwilling to commit substantial sums to undertake this work.

The bells were very heavily corroded and although one or two were believed to be cracked the matter of the soundness of the bells could not be established without cleaning. At the expense of Mears & Stainbank, and with the approval of the church, the bells were removed from our premises for cleaning inside and out by sand blast process after which it was clear that four of them were cracked. Negotiations continued into the early 1950s with a number of detailed proposals being submitted by this company who, to assist the church with its financial difficulties, offered a 5-year interest-free loan.

Letters continued to flow from Whitechapel to St. Magnus during the 1950s and most of the 1960s although most of these were ignored. During these years much rebuilding work was undertaken at Whitechapel and due to shortage of space it was necessary to move the bells not only within our own premises, but also to place them in temporary storage in lockable railway arches at Bethnal Green. All of these movements were advised to the church, and all transport costs and associated insurance cover was at the expense of Mears & Stainbank.

As time moved forward, we increased the pressure upon the Parish to come to a decision as to the future of the bells. In this regard we offered a number of alternative and less costly schemes, to assist in finding donors and/or sponsors to help with the financing, to actively seek a buyer for the bells, and again to offer an interest-free loan to finance whichever scheme they preferred. All of these offers were ignored.

In 1971, we pointed out to the Parish that at no time had we charged for storage nor had we charged for any of the several insurance policies that we had had to take out to cover the bells but gave notice that, with effect from 1972, we would pass on the cost of these insurances but would continue to make no charge for storage. Requests for payment were ignored for a year or two until a cheque for £100 was received "towards the cost of insurance". No further payments were received.

As you rightly state, it was in 1976 that the church instructed us to buy the bells as scrap metal and this we did once we had established that it was with Diocesan permission. Their instruction made no reference to our outstanding account which went back for nearly 4 years, and we therefore deducted the outstanding insurance costs from the sum of money that was paid for the bells.

I can confirm that at no time did we make any charge for storage, for cleaning the bells by sand blast process or indeed for any other of the services that we undertook other than for the basic insurance premiums from the period 1972 until 1976. The information contained in this letter has been obtained from our own file which covers the whole of this period.

ALAN HUGHES  
Managing Director  
Whitechapel Bell Foundry Limited

### **Church Scrapped the Bells**

Sir, – I'd like to emphasise that the decision to scrap the old bells at St. Magnus was made by the church in order to augment its own funds rather than pay off the minimal debt to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry (which was less than 10% of the scrapping value). The files show that the Foundry acted most helpfully during those difficult years when the church showed no interest in its bells and at no time pressed for them to be scrapped.

Things have changed at St. Magnus and the church is grateful for the recent help of both foundries and other bellhangers; we look forward to working closely with one of them in the future.

DICKON LOVE  
Trustee Secretary,  
St. Magnus the Martyr Bell Fund

### **Betjeman Centenary**

Sir, – Thank you for the amusing and informative article by Paul Vaughan about John Betjeman that appeared just before the centenary of his birth. I hope that the well-chosen quotations from his poetry will encourage those who do not know it to read more for themselves. The letter to Penelope Betjeman from her Vicar, ending her appointment as organist, is written in terms that clergy might sometimes want to write, but which they would hardly dare to use nowadays!

Paul Vaughan mentioned that Betjeman had at one time attempted to learn to ring. Wilf Moreton wrote in *The Ringing World* of 26th April 1991 that it was Sam Jones, who was Secretary of the Oxford University Society in 1928 and who in his later years was Rector of Thrupton and Allensmore in Herefordshire, who tried to teach him.

May I offer one correction? Penelope Betjeman lived for a time in a remote cottage near Hay on Wye, not Ross on Wye as stated. I was once told that she used to ride her horse into Hay, and tether it to a No Parking sign whilst she did her shopping!  
Rev. BARNEY BELL  
Clungunford, Craven Arms, Shrops.

### **Betjeman at Oxford**

Sir, – It seems an appropriate moment to write to you about Sir John Betjeman.

As a boy in Hereford, where my father was a Canon at the Cathedral, we knew the Revd. S. W. E. Jones who was one of the Minor Canons, and as he was on his own at Christmas, he would be invited to come round on Christmas Day. We knew him quite well, and he was known as 'Jumbo'. Now it turned out that he had done some ringing, and when at Oxford was Master of the Oxford University Society.

One day he told us that he had started to teach Betjeman to handle a bell in the Summer, but that in the Autumn he had not come back for the next lesson as arranged. 'Jumbo' had just read the autobiography of Betjeman, and at last realised why! It transpired that Betjeman had left Oxford and so could not go on with his lessons in handling a bell. The mystery of why the man had not kept his appointment was solved after 40 years or so!

MICHAEL P. MORETON  
Croydon, Surrey

### **South African Born Peal Ringers**

Sir, – Further to Steve Barton's letter regarding this article, I would like to add my name to the list of SA born peal ringers. Although I have not yet rung a peal in South Africa, I was born in Sandton near Johannesburg in 1986. My parents were both ringers at St. George's, Parktown and I was in the belfry at a very early age!

We moved to England in 1987 and I learnt to ring at the age of 11. I rang my first peal in October 2001 at the age of 15, for the Coventry Guild. Since then I have run 2 other peals for the Coventry Guild and, most recently my first peal for the Sheffield Universities Guild.

I have just started an exchange year at the Georgia Institute of Technology and joined the band at St. Luke's, Atlanta so I am hoping it will not be too long before I get to ring in a North American peal. In the longer term I would love to return to my country of birth and join the list of South African born peal ringers who have rung a peal in South Africa!

KATY IDLE  
Atlanta, Georgia

### **Define a Quarter Peal**

Sir, – At the Central Council meeting at Leicester in May, I raised the subject of the definition and official recognition of a quarter peal. As reported in the minutes of the meeting, there was a certain amount of support and a certain amount of opposition for a change in the current situation.

At present, apart from the welcome reporting of quarter peals in *The Ringing World*, there is no official recognition of the fact that a quarter peal exists. I find it invidious that a band ringing 32 changes of a new surprise major method in a peal of spliced, have the right to name it, but a band ringing 1280 or more changes of a new surprise major method in a quarter peal, do not. I believe this situation should be corrected and to do so, a quarter peal needs to be defined. I cannot see that is a great problem.

I would like to know if other ringers have similar opinions. If you do have opinions on the