

St. Sepulchre's, Holborn —success in sight

With the news that an order has been placed for the bell frame and that the building work including construction of two ring beams has been commissioned, the College Youths' restoration project has taken a resolute step forward.

The Society is now appealing to all members and friends to help raise the final £13,000 required to pay for the bell fittings.

The story so far

In 1977 Nigel Thomson and Andrew Wilby discussed the possibility of taking a look at St. Sepulchre's bells. For many years College Youths had met together in the vicinity of the church but none but a handful of the oldest members had set foot in the tower, the bells having been unring since the 1930s and little rung this century. Various tales were told of the problems: the tower was cracked; the pinnacles were loose; the frame was rotten; a war-time bomb in Snow Hill had weakened the tower. Nigel Thomson made contact with the church and received permission to inspect the bells. After inspection it was agreed that if the College Youths were prepared to clean out a century's worth of pigeon droppings a test could be carried out to assess the condition of the bells and tower.

Records

I write you with reference to Geoffrey Dodd's request on information on records. The following may be of some interest.

I have in my possession through my late father the following records all at 78rpm:

1. **HMV No. B9417.**
Side 1: Westminster Abbey; York Minster; Coventry Cathedral. (chime?)
Side 2: Bath Abbey; St. Mary's, Puddletown.
2. **HMV No. B2691.**
Both sides: York Minster.
3. **HMV No. C2098.**
Both sides: St. Margaret's, Westminster.
Side 1: Grandsire Caters.
Side 2: Stedman Caters.
4. **By Recosound, Leicester.**
Side 1: Leicester Cathedral, Stedman Cinques.
Side 2: On handbells conducted by the late Harold Poole, Cambridge Surprise Major.

I cannot vouch for the sound quality because of the now extinct speed (78). I hope this is of benefit to Mr. Dodd who may contact me if he wishes.

T. A. WOODING.

4 Westbury Lane,
Newport Pagnell, Bucks.
MK16 8JA

Alteration to practice night

I wish to advise that on and from 11th July 1984 practice night at St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney will be held on Wednesday evening from 7 to 9 p.m.

The Cathedral is locked at 7.30 p.m. each night, but it is possible for latecomers to use a buzzer which hangs out of the bottom spiral staircase window.

Would you please draw the above information to the attention of your readers who are always especially welcome at St. Mary's.

This is the first alteration to the practice night for nearly 50 years.

J. J. CUMMINS,
Tower Captain.

Sydney, Australia.

The bells ring again

So it was that in the summer of 1978 the bells were rung again under the supervision of Alan Frost and Brian Threlfall of the CC Towers and Belfries Committee. It must be said that the bells were extremely rough and the tower movement considerable enough to make ringing very difficult. It was concluded that whilst the tower itself was in satisfactory condition, the movement caused by the bells would in time cause damage. The old frame, wedged as it was very high in the tower, was the cause of the problem. It was therefore recommended that the bells should be rehung in a new frame built on a concrete ring beam some 20 feet lower down in the tower. It was agreed that the bells could be rung for short periods occasionally but that if ringing was to be re-established at St. Sepulchre's a major project had to be considered. Another reason for there being only very limited ringing at this time was the proximity of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Snow Hill Police Station, The Old Bailey and many other buildings that had been unused to bells for many years. There was no point in risking bad Public Relation with such influential neighbours immediately before launching a public appeal for funds!

Meanwhile Nigel Thomson and Andrew Wilby had been elected as representatives of the Ancient Society to the church authorities of whom Mr. Charles Brown, Churchwarden and Treasurer of the Parochial Church Council, was the contact. Indeed it was the enthusiasm of Charles for restoring these historic bells that gave the project its credibility in the first place. The Society at this time took the view that if it was to invest considerable resources of time and money in such a project then the result had to be compatible with the long term needs of the Society.

Augmentation

Most members attend the Tuesday practice to ring on twelve bells. The demand for ringing time at the five twelve bell towers at which the Society practices already puts strain on the goodwill of the incumbents who, in the city, live on the premises. The Society also lacks a tower in which peals can be attempted on a frequent basis and indeed it lacks a ring of twelve bells that can be described as easy to ring and this has an effect on the standard of ringing. The Society therefore offered to present two trebles to the church so that if the restoration was to produce a good going, readily available, sound-proofed ring of bells they would be twelve and therefore of maximum use.

Alternative schemes

Several different approaches to the restoration were examined. One solution to reduce weight in the tower was to restructure the ring with the existing ninth as tenor and use the tenor's metal to cast three trebles giving an 18cwt ring. Another thought was to have all the bells recast into a new 25cwt ring which would then fit on one level. It was however the definite view of the PCC that their historic bells, including the tenor which is the famous 'Execution Bell of Newgate Prison', should be preserved.

WHEN WILL YOU PAY ME?

say the Bells of Old Bailey



On November 12th 1980 the Parochial Church Council agreed that a public appeal should be made and the work put in hand subject to the funds being raised, the estimated cost then being £40,000.

Restoration committee formed

Another stroke of good fortune happened at this time. Andrew Pearmain, a member of the Society of long standing, who is also a professional musician holding appointments as organist at St. Mary-le-Bow and the Guards Chapel amongst others, was appointed Administrator at St. Sepulchre's and thus became the chairman of the Restoration Committee. Andrew Stubbs, College Youths' Treasurer, was elected to join Messrs. Thomson and Wilby as Society Representatives and it was by this team that the public appeal was officially launched in 1983 with the late Sir John Betjeman as Patron. At Easter that year members of the Society lowered the bells from the tower and delivered them to Whitechapel Bellfoundry for shot-blast cleaning and examination. It was reported after examination that all the Samuel Knight 1746 bells had minor cracks in the crown but that they could be treated and reused. However the old 4th had cracked seriously when having its crown staple removed and required recasting. At this stage the founders suggested that the old treble which is larger than the second should be tuned to be the second and the old second scrapped in the interests of improving the profile of the ring. This was rejected by the church in the interests of conserving as much of the old ring as possible.

The restoration scheme

The scheme then devised is for the twelve bells to be hung in a cast iron 'H' frame supported on two ring beams with the third and sixth on top. This should give considerable rigidity in a tower that is always likely to move slightly. The louvres in the clock chamber which is to become the bell chamber will be blocked completely. The old frame, made by

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ST. SEPULCHRE'S - continued

Robert Catlin in 1739 and incorporating timbers of the previous frame, in which - legend has it - the first ever peal was rung on January 7th, 1690, is to remain in situ. The floor beneath it is to be made sound proof and the central tenor pit will be fitted with an adjustable trap door. It is intended that with the door shut the bells will be barely audible outside and that with it open the sound level will not cause difficulties with the hospital and other neighbours.

Two floors will be installed between the bells and ringing room leaving a three foot chamber in which acoustic materials will be installed to ensure clear and balanced sound for the ringers. The ringing chamber itself has a false floor installed some five feet above old floor level at the end of the last century. For what reason this was done no-one knows, unless it was an expensive way of shortening the draught of rope which otherwise would have been long. This false floor is to be removed and the old wall panelling and decor restored. This was one of the few city belfries to escape the Great Fire of London in 1666.

The new bells will be cast to old profiles and tuned to match the existing bells. The Tenor Bell which weighed 31cwt exactly on arrival at the foundry will reduce to approximately 28cwt without its canons and after tuning, giving the City a light twelve - in City of London

Ladies highest for years

The Southern District of the Guild acted as host to the very well attended Ladies Guild Annual General Meeting.

The choice of Micheldever could not have been bettered as this proved to be a truly delightful village of thatched cottages, beautiful gardens and with a most unusual church and a pleasant ring of bells.

Ringing was enjoyed at Deane, Overton, Laverstoke, and Whitchurch. Barton Stacey was enjoyed once the upright iron ladder had been climbed, but this enjoyment was tempered with fears of the perilous descent to come!

Doris Colgate's "wonderful weather dance" had again been effective and the weather was perfect.

The Southern District Ladies had prepared a super tea in the church hall and all present did it full justice. All Districts of the Guild were represented and the attendance was the highest for some years. Members produced a lively business meeting and the President, Freda Cannon, entered her second year of office whilst the Secretary and Treasurer were re-elected. Subscriptions were raised but everyone accepted this cheerfully. It was decided to scrap the Committee meeting in November and instead encourage a Ladies Guild Quarter Peal Day on November 10th. Other business was quickly dispatched and members made their way to The Plough Inn at East Stratton where skittles and supper rounded off a memorable June day.

Jacqueline S. King.

Not a man in sight

The Central District of the Ladies Guild have been very busy lately. On Saturday June 30th we had a meeting at Barnes where we were met by the local band. We much enjoyed the newly rehung eight and despite only six members being present, due to tower outings and Flower Festivals at home towers, we were able to give assistance to the newly formed band there. We were very impressed by the new church which

terms anyway! The cost of the whole scheme has now risen to £62,000.

The public appeal

Money has come but slowly to the appeal fund. Members of the Society have distributed nearly 5000 appeal letters by hand and this has brought a steady flow of small contributions. Several significant contributions have been made including a grant from the Manifold Trust and 21cwt of bell metal in the shape of three redundant clock bells from the Directors of National Westminster Bank. In March this year it was announced that the City Parochial Churches Fund had agreed to pay the cost of the building work and ring beams amounting to £28,000. So as not to risk a further escalation of costs it has been considered desirable to commission the building work as soon as possible. Since the main frame girders are to be an integral part of the ring beams it is necessary to commission the frame construction as well. At its June meeting the Ancient Society voted the sum of £5,500 from its Bell Fund and General Fund to the project to enable the frame order to be placed. The cost of the two trebles is to be met, one by gift of the Past Masters and the other, as a family memorial by the Wright family. The cost of recasting the old fourth will be met by the Archers of Europe in memory of Sir Roger Ascham, tutor to Queen Elizabeth I and founding father of modern archery, who is buried in an unmarked grave within the church.

replaces the one that was burnt down about five years ago. The tea and meeting were held at the house of Theo Crowder's sister who made us most welcome. Unfortunately we were unable to ring at Mortlake in the evening as nobody was there to meet us.

Three days later eleven of us met up again at the Old Orchard, Harefield for an excellent dinner in most beautiful surroundings over looking the Colne Valley and Grand Union Canal. This was organised by Elsie Savory and Audrey Andrews. It was a real hen night with not a man in sight except to wait on us and we all enjoyed ourselves immensely.

T.C.

President keeps them in order

Despite the hot weather, some ringers still found the energy to ring when the KCACR Tonbridge District held its July Quarterly Meeting at Speldhurst. Five new members were elected at the business meeting and it was reported that the District Open Day had raised £168 for the Association's Bell Restoration Fund. For the evening ringing we were pleased to have our most notable District member, the newly elected President of the Central Council, come to keep us in order.

A.J.L.

In full daylight

Daventry Branch correspondent Fred Hutt is unlikely to report falling from his moped in bright sunlight himself, but we are pleased to hear that he is improving after a week in Banbury hospital to rectify a damaged bone in his foot. We anticipate it taking a pint or two for him to explain how it happened on the way home after ringing at Badby for 9.30 a.m. service, but it will have to wait as drugs are preventing Fred from drinking at present!

G.P.

* * *

Heard about the two vampires who wanted to get married? They loved in vein.

The remaining task

The task of raising the remaining £13,000 is a considerable one as most of the likely major sources have contributed already. The London members of the Society have and will continue to contribute to this restoration in cash and kind. The bells are to be hung by the members themselves. The Society recently elected its own Appeal Committee which comprises Messrs. Andrew Barnsdale (Chairman), Graham Firman, Philip Rogers, Mark Regan and the Representatives to St. Sepulchre's Messrs. Thomson, Stubbs and Wilby.

Many other ringers have let it be known that they would like to contribute. The Master, Mr. Graham Firman, has announced that Peal Day this year on September 29th is to be a "sponsored peal day" in aid of St. Sepulchre's. Some thirty members up and down the country have been invited to arrange peals in their areas and it is hoped that the participants will take the opportunity of helping the Society by attracting sponsorship from far and wide. It is not widely appreciated that the resident London membership of the Society is small - numbering only about 70. The project is therefore proportionately an enormous one for so small a group and so all help will be gratefully received.

Anyone who would care to contribute is now invited to do so by forwarding donations to:
The ASCY Bell Restoration Fund,
 c/o A. W. R. WILBY, Hon. Sec.,
 9 Nelsons Yard, TOWCESTER, Northants
 NN12 7DG, or direct to The Administrator,
 St. Sepulchre's Church, Holborn Viaduct,
 EC1A 2DQ.

Shortest on record

The Salisbury Branch held its summer quarterly meeting at Enford, a very much self supporting event, the Rev. Roger Keeley, Guild Master, taking the Service and a branch member, Ian Davidson, at the organ. Attendance was much below average (only 26) due no doubt to members being away on holiday.

The company stood in silence as a mark of respect to Ted Brine's wife (Chilmark) who passed away the previous week.

Appreciation was shown in the usual manner (applause) to the local ladies for a very delightful tea.

The Chairman thanked the Rev. Roger Keeley and Ian Davidson for their services, also the St. Thomas, Salisbury ladies for £20 for the L.E.B.R.F. raised at a Jumble Sale.

Congratulations were extended to Ted Read (St. Thomas) and Bill Trevitt (unattached) for 60 years of ringing; also to St. Thomas' ringers who came second for the Branch in the Guild Striking Contest.

The Chairman expressed good wishes to the new Guild President, Mrs. Godley of Yetminster, and welcomed Robin Winckworth from Surrey who had his picture in *The Salisbury Journal* recently as a regular visitor to Wiltshire.

A show of hands showed there was considerable interest in a Social evening in October.

John Kerr, Ringing master, stated that arrangements for the Branch outing to Bath were well in hand, and that the Monthly Practices were generally well attended.

The meeting closed at 6.02 p.m. Is it the shortest on record? 37 minutes. Ringing then continued at Enford until 8 p.m.

M.B.