

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BELLS OF ST. JAMES' CHURCH, BADSEY

Although other bells in the locality were cast by the same firm, Badsey is their only complete peal of six bells, forming the back six of the present peal. The tower [?] shown below is a good example of this style, changed in 1706. Clark did the work.

It would be in early part of the fifteenth century, shortly after the tower was built, that Badsey Church was provided, in addition to the Sanctus bell almost certainly already existing, with bells. a peal of 6

Before being recast in 1706, five ringing bells were hung in the tower. The tenor, according to the Habingdon manuscripts (1660), had the inscription 'Det sonitum plenum Iesus et modulamen amsenum'. CAPITALS

Change ringing as we now know it, using rope and full wheel, did not itself develop until the seventeenth century, and it is most likely that the five bells were fitted with half or three-quarter wheels. References to 'medying of ye belle whele' and 'ij belle ropys' appearing in the Church Wardens' accounts for 1529-30, taken with an item in the 1532-33 accounts 'for a belle rope and ye sawnse belle corde', imply a thinner cord for the sanctus bell, which was probably rung using a simple lever action.

During the period prior to 1706, the bells, not unexpectedly, were constantly in need of attention. Repairs generally, many baldricks (leather straps holding the clapper to a ring at the crown of the bell) new clappers, ropes, recasting (mentioned in 1541 and 1623), are recorded. In the accounts for the period 1531-33, items

'for a claperijs'

'for ye iijde belle clapurxiijd'

'for ye clapur of ye foure bellexxiijd'

'for ye grete belle clapur ijs. iiiijd'

tend to confirm the existence of the ring of five bells by the early part of the sixteenth century.

With the advent of change ringing towards the end of the seventeenth century, and an established foundry nearby at Evesham, it was decided to recast the bells into a peal of six. Repairs, casting and rehangings were completed in 1706 by Clark and Bushell at a cost of £26 6s. 8d. By tradition, the casting operation was carried out on Merstow Green. Two years later, an entry in the accounts for 1708

'ffor Carrying ye Great Bell to Evesham and for fetching him home again 4s. Od.'

possibly to correct a defect, brought the total cost to £26 10s. 8d. Although other bells in the locality were cast by the same firm, Badsey is their only complete peal of six bells, forming the back six of the present peal. The tenor inscription, shown later, is a good specimen of a Chronogram. All the larger letters are Roman numerals, and, taken singly, add up to 1706. Translated, the inscription reads 'The Watchful care of Robert Hill, Vicar of this place, changed us into six. Wm. Clark did the work with his own skill'.

This was the peal of bells, in their timber frame, requiring the usual maintenance and repair from time to time to the fittings, to remain in the tower for almost the next two centuries. When proposals were under consideration for the general restoration and extension to the Church in 1884, John Taylor & Co. prepared a report on the state of the bells, fittings and frame. While the bells themselves were 'quite sound and of average tone and tune', only quarter turning being recommended, fittings were 'in a very rough state' and framework 'in a most dilapidated condition and quite unfit to carry the bells, and rocks about so much that it must be damaging the masonry'. Ringing was carried out from the ground floor, and the report shows that wooden guides for the bell ropes were fitted below the clock chamber floor. At this time, the estimate for the work of rehangng, new fittings, new iron salley guides and 'Strong English oak framework' came to £145 0s. 0d. with a further cost for repairs to belfry floors, stonework, beams to carry the bell frame, and 'cartage to and from Evesham Station'. It was decided to postpone this part of the restoration, although repairs to the tower roof were carried out.

Further repairs to the fittings were necessary, but it was not until 1896 that consideration was again given to rehangng the bells, and a revised specification and estimate was submitted by the Loughborough Foundry. A cast iron frame on steel girders was recommended, allowing room for eight bells. Removal of the bells to the Foundry for fitting to iron headstocks and where they could be tuned, new fittings, clappers, quarter turning, two additional treble bells would be completed at a cost of £279 5s. 0d. At this stage, the Revd. F E Robinson, Vicar of Drayton, Berkshire and Master of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Bell Ringers, advised that savings could be made by repairing the existing fittings and 'most of' the headstocks 'will do again', also that the canons should be retained. The order to carry out the work to this specification was accepted with reservations by the Foundry, costing, for the six bells and provision

for two more later, £163 15s. 0d. During the course of the work, it was found necessary to replace all the wheels and headstocks, gudgeons etc. bringing the cost to almost the original estimate. Work was completed by Christmas 1897 and rededication of the bells was performed by the Bishop of Coventry on Monday, January 24th 1898.

However, soon after the rehangings, on New Year's Day 1898, a band of ringers raised the bells and rang 720 changes of Bob Minor. One of the ringers was Revd. Robinson, who recorded that 'the clappers of the 3rd, 5th, and tenor went up the wrong side' and 'this defect should be rectified'. There followed correspondence between the Bell-hangers and the Vicar in which the cause of the false clapping was connected with the failure to remove the canons as originally recommended.

After settlement of the accounts for work in connection with the rehangings, a small balance of cash remained in hand, and, in December 1898, it was decided that this should be equally divided between a clock fund and a fund to provide two treble bells in the new frame. An order was given to Mears & Stainbank, the Whitechapel Foundry, in October 1902 and work completed in December of the same year, at a cost of £94 8s. 8d. This compares with the estimated cost of £75 0s. 0d. by the Loughborough Foundry had these bells been installed at the same time as the rehangings some five years earlier. The two new bells were placed in the tower as a memorial to the reign of Queen Victoria and dedicated, together with the new clock, by the Bishop of Worcester on 12th February 1903.

Almost fifty years later, the Loughborough Foundry was asked to comment on the cause of the difficulty in ringing the seventh bell. Their report, submitted in October 1949 covered all the bells, and it was decided to rehang completely, canons removed and fixing the bells to new cast iron headstocks with new fittings. For this the bells were to be taken to the foundry where they were also retuned. An appeal to cover the cost of this together with necessary repairs to the church fabric and an extension to the churchyard, was launched in 1950. This was successful with the proportion for rehangings the bells, approximately £60 each, individually sponsored. Five of the bells were restored as Memorials to

William Carmont Allsebrook, Vicar 1903-1945 (treble)

George Moisey, Clerk and Sexton (tenor)

George Mourelyan Sladden

Ellen Elizabeth Stewart

James and Sarah Mapstone

THE BELLS OF ST JAMES, BADSEY

DESCRIPTIONS

WEIGHT DIAMETER NOTE

The cost of the remaining three bells was borne by

The Mothers Union & Sanctuary Guild

The Men's Fellowship

Badsey, Aldington & Wickhamford British Legion

The restoration complete, rededication by Archdeacon Perowne of Norwich followed Evensong on Christmas Eve 1950.

A few years later shortage of accommodation in the Vestry, with the new organ requiring more space, necessitated a move for the choir. In the tower, the iron rope guides were removed, a new oak floor and balustrade constructed to form the present ringing chamber, and the space below made available for the choir.

AJB

1974

+ ROBERT PIGEON + THOMAS BYRD + THOMAS DUDLEY +
CHURCH + WARDENS + (antiquary) + (antiquary)

+ M B + F + (antiquary) + (antiquary) +

M V T A V I T : V I O L L A N S : I N : S E X : M O S : C V A A : R O B E R T I : M L L :

I O I : V I C : G V L : C L A A K : S P E C I T : A R T E : S Y A : A N S E B

THE BELLS OF ST JAMES, BADSEY

INSCRIPTIONS

WEIGHT DIAMETER NOTE

			WEIGHT	DIAMETER	NOTE
1	TREBLE	IHS GVL: HENR: PRICE, A.M., VIC. JUL: SLADDEN HENR: KEEN } ECCLESIAE CUSTODIBYS MCMII MEARS ET STAINBANK LONDINI FECERUNT	4-2-12	27½ INS	F
2		IHS A M D G VICTORIAE REGINAE DILECTISSIMAE REGNUM NOS CANIMUS MCMII MEARS ET STAINBANK LONDINI FECERUNT	5-0-20	28½ INS	E
3		IHS IHS	6-0-0	30 INS	D
4		IHS IHS	6-1-0	31½ INS	C
5		IHS IHS	7-3-0	34 INS	B Flat
6		+ ROB≡PIGEON + THO≡BYRD + THO≡DVDLEY + CHVRCH + WARDENS + (arabesques) + (arabesques)	10-0-0	35½ INS	A
7		+ M IHS B + F + (arabesques) IHS (arabesques) +	12-1-0	40½ INS	G
8		IHS MVTA VIT : VIGILANS : IN : SEX : NOS : CVRA : ROBERTI : HILL : Ibi : VIC : GVL : CLARK : EFFICIT : ARTE : SYA : AN ^o 1706	15-0-4	45 INS	F

With the advent of change ringing towards the end of the seventeenth century and an established foundry nearby at Evesham, it was decided to recast the bells into a peal of six. Repairs, casting and rehangings were completed in 1706 by Clark and Bushell at a cost of £26 6s. 8d. By tradition, the casting operation was carried out on Herston Green. Two years later, an entry in the accounts for 1708 'For Carrying ye Great Bell to Evesham and for fetching his horse again 4s. 0d.'