

A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
**THE BELLS**  
OF ALL SAINTS' CHURCH



Since around the year 1360 the tower of All Saints' has contained at least one bell; for calling the people to church, ringing the hours and curfew.

## **The Five Bells**

For 220 years All Saints' Church's peal consisted of five bells:

- The 'Ancient Bell', a tenor, which is believed to have been cast in the mid-1360s. It is listed in the Church Building Council's *Schedule of Bells for Preservation* in Coventry Diocese and, until 4 January 2015, it was the oldest bell still ringing in a peal within the Coventry Guild.
- Two bells cast in 1703
- Two bells cast in 1793

The last two bells were cast shortly after the current church was built, but the first three would have hung in the ancient mediaeval church, which stood on the same site; the 'Ancient Bell' was probably cast in a pit in the church grounds, because transportation of a 7cwt bell would have been fraught with difficulties in the 14th Century.



*The ancient church, demolished 1789*



*The Hon Mary Leigh*

We don't know for sure who paid for the first three bells, although the 3rd Bell has "Mr Winter, Warden", inscribed on it, which probably refers to Thomas Winter, who's memorial is on the south wall of the Upper Room and who would have been aged about 39 when the bell was cast. He and his wife, Ann, lived at Wootton Grange to the north of the village of Leek Wootton.

We know that The Hon Mary Leigh, who donated the bells in 1793 was the older sister of Lord Leigh, who had died in 1786 and left the Stoneleigh estate to her for the length of her life. She was a great benefactor of the Church, contributing to the building of the new Church in 1790.

## **Restoration, 1921**

In 1921 Beatrice Mary Leigh had the bells restored in memory of her husband, Major The Hon Rupert Leigh of the 4th Dragoon Guards (formerly 15th Hussars), who had died in 1919, aged 63. He was the younger brother of Lord Leigh.

The work was carried out by John Taylor & Co of Loughborough, a firm which can trace its history back to Johannes de Stafford who cast the 'Ancient Bell' in the 14th Century. In 1921 the bells were 'de-crowned' (the original cast crown was removed so that the bells could be bolted onto modern headstocks).

In 1926, when consulted about insurance of the bells, Taylors stated, "In our opinion this bell should not be rung, and should be very carefully preserved in the Church. There are only a few specimens of this founder's work in existence today." In 1966 a letter to Taylors refers to the 1921 restoration when the bells were, "...de-crowned and bolted up to wooden headstocks". It also describes the arrangement, "...the ring is anti-clockwise" and the condition, "The

wheels are somewhat warped and loose ... worn pulleys, does not allow the ropes to run true..."

In 1966 some remedial work was undertaken to repair the wheels and bearings and, perhaps, to replace the wooden headstocks with steel ones.



*A headstock*



*A crown*

# The Bells Through History

## The 'Ancient Bell' (circa 1360)

The Clock Bell | 788lb (357.43kg) | 35.5" (89cm)

Founder: Johannes de Stafford of Leicester

✠ IHS : NAZARINUS : REX : IUDEORUM

*(JESUS OF NAZARETH KING OF THE JEWS)*

## The 1360s

On the throne: King Edward III (1327-1377)

The Hundred Years War was in its third decade.

The Order of the Garter was 12 years old (established 1348).

The Black Death arrived in Britain in 1348-50, killing 30-40% of the general populace, but there was a recurrence, known as The Pestilence of the Children (because they did not have the same immunity as adults), which hit Warwickshire badly in 1361-2.

In 1365 Vienna University was founded (Oxford was already 270 and Cambridge about 160 years old).



*Fashions of the 14th Century*

Geoffrey Chaucer was in his early 20s - he fought in the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) and was captured in 1360 at the Battle of Rheims, married around 1366, but didn't start work on the Canterbury Tales until the 1380s.





# The Fourth & Fifth Bells (1703)

The Fourth | Strike Note: C# | Weight : 435lb (197kg) | Dia. : 28" (71.1cm)  
Founder: Abraham Rudhall I of Gloucester

PROSPERITY TO ALL OVR BENEFACTCORS AR  
Mr : WINTER : CHURCH W<sup>r</sup>

The Fifth | Strike Note: B | Weight : 567lb (257kg) | Dia. : 30.75" (78.1cm)  
Founder: Abraham Rudhall I of Gloucester

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN & CHURCH

## 1703

On the throne: Queen Anne (1702-1714)  
Anne became Queen on 8 March 1702 after the death of William III, who had reigned alone since the death of his wife, Anne's sister, Mary in 1694.

Anne was immediately popular, after her Dutch brother-in-law, and in her first speech distanced herself from him, "As I know my heart to be entirely English, I can very sincerely assure you there is not anything you can expect or desire from me which I shall not be ready to do for the happiness and prosperity of England." Her popularity may explain

the choice of inscription on the Fifth bell.

Founder of Methodism, John Wesley, was born and the famous diarist, Samuel Pepys died in 1703.

The Great Storm of 1703 hit Southern England and thousands were killed; the Royal Navy lost 13 ships and around 1,500 seamen. The first Eddystone Lighthouse was also destroyed, together with its designer Henry Winstanley.

On 30 November, Isaac Newton was elected President of the Royal Society in London, a position he held until his death in 1727.



*Fashions of the early 1700s*



# The Second & Third Bells (1793)

The Second | Strike Note: E | Weight: 420lb (190.5kg) | Dia.: 26.13" (66.3cm)  
Founder: John Briant of Hertford

THE GIFT OF THE HON<sup>BLE</sup> MARY LEIGH. J BRIANT HARTFORD FECIT 1793

The Third | Strike Note: D | Weight: 430lb (195kg) | Dia.: 27.63" (70.2cm)  
Founder: John Briant of Hertford

THE GIFT OF THE HON<sup>BLE</sup> MARY LEIGH. J BRIANT HARTFORD FECIT 1793

*FECIT* means 'he made (it)', i.e. ... J Briant Hartford he made it ...

## 1793

On the throne: King George III (1760-1820)  
Prime Minister:

William Pitt the Younger (TORY)

Horatio Nelson, 1st Viscount Nelson, met Emma, Lady Hamilton in Naples.

'Westminster Quarters' was written for the bells of a new clock at the Church of St Mary the Great, Cambridge by Professor Joseph Jowett.

Thomas Minton established his ceramics manufactory, Thomas Minton and Sons, in Stoke-upon-Trent, Staffordshire.

The Plymouth Gin Distillery began production.



'Frailties of Fashion'  
(Published 1793)  
by Isaac Cruikshank

# The Tenor Bell (1723, recast 1923)

Tenor | Strike Note: A | Weight: 827lb (395.5kg) | Dia.: 34.88" (88.6cm)

Founder: John Taylor & Co, Loughborough

*Ex-St Mary the Great, Cambridge, this bell had been acquired for use at Woolpit, Suffolk, but was subsequently re-sold to Leek Wootton in 2014.*

MESSEIURS EDWARDS PHIPPS ... WARDENS R : PHELPS FECIT 1723

RECAST 1923

REV. C L HUBERT, VICAR

DR. H B RODERICK

MR. W KILSBY



CHURCHWARDENS



**1723**

On the throne: King George I (1714-1727)

Prime Minister: Robert Walpole <sup>(WHIG)</sup>

Work begins on the palatial west wing of Stoneleigh Abbey, home of Edward Leigh, 3rd Baron Leigh.

Sir Joshua Reynolds was born and Sir Christopher Wren died in 1723.



**1923**

On the throne: King George V (1910-1936) (*right*)

Prime Minister: Bonar Law <sup>(CON)</sup>,

then Stanley Baldwin <sup>(CON)</sup>



The marriage of HRH Prince Albert, Duke of York and Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (*left*), the future King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and parents of Queen Elizabeth II, took place at Westminster Abbey.



The Empire Stadium, Wembley, was opened to the public for the first time and hosted the FA Cup Final between Bolton Wanderers and West Ham United football clubs.





# The Treble (2014)

Treble | Strike Note: F# | Weight: 388lb (176kg) | Diameter: 24.5" (62.2cm)  
Founder: John Taylor & Co, Loughborough

2014  
TO THE GLORY OF GOD  
HONOURING ALL WHO  
PERISHED  
IN WORLD WAR I  
\* \* \*  
LEST WE FORGET



Photograph taken on 8 October 2014  
© Press Association

## 2014

On the throne: Queen Elizabeth II (1952-)  
Prime Minister: David Cameron (CON)

In February Sochi, Russia hosted the Winter Olympics, in July Glasgow hosted the Commonwealth Games and in September the first Invictus Games, for injured servicemen and women, were held in London.

Britain commemorated the centenary of the start of World War I on 4 August; All Saints' Church, Leek Wootton held a service of commemoration on 3 August and the nation was captivated by the installation of 888,246 ceramic poppies at The

Tower of London, entitled *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*.



On 18 September Scotland went to the polls in the Scottish Independence Referendum, which resulted in Scotland remaining in the Union.

**The Treble was cast at Taylors of Loughborough on 8 October, blessed by The Reverend Jim Perryman and witnessed by a group of bell ringers and local residents.**

On 9 April 2015, Prime Minister David Cameron visited Taylors' foundry during the 2015 General Election Campaign. All Saints' bells were in the Tuning Room at the time and he chimed the new Treble.



*Tower Captain, Mark Sayers and Mary Barrass of Taylors of Loughborough 'feed' the newly poured bell*

## The Bell Ringers

We know very little of the bell ringers over the years. In recent living memory we know of Will Golby, George Legge and John Hobbins. In 1973 his obituary in the parish magazine read, "...for nearly 70 years Will Golby served this Church as bell-ringer and in the choir. For many years Captain of the Tower". He died aged 83.

## The 2014 Bell Restoration Appeal

In June 2014, 93 years after the last major restoration, the *2014 Bell Restoration Appeal* was launched, because the bells were in need of a major MOT to ensure the ringing of the bells for another century. Its aim was to raise between £40,000 and £50,000.

The Appeal received an excellent response, with donations from parishioners and residents, local community groups, businesses and interest groups. There were also fundraising events held throughout the community, including two music concerts staged in the church and an Open Gardens / Scarecrow competition, sales of artwork and cards.



The old peal of five bells rang for the last time on Sunday, 4 January 2015 and on 10 January work began to remove them from the tower, with the assistance of a mini crane inside the church, lifting the bells over the balcony to the floor.

At Taylors the original five bells were restored, added to with a second-hand tenor and newly cast treble bell and retuned as a peal of six bells and clock bell.

They were returned to the church in June 2015, where the retired 'Ancient Bell' now exclusively chimes the hours, the clock hammer causing less damage than ringing with a clapper. A small eighth bell, the new Sanctus Bell (cast by John Warner & Sons Ltd in 1911), was previously the Garden Bell at nearby Stone Edge.

The peal is now a ring of six, still arranged anti-clockwise and ready to ring for another century.

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Priest-in-Charge : The Reverend Jim Perryman  
Churchwardens : Jonathan Cox | Nigel Stallard  
Tower Captain : Mark Sayers

Bell Ringers : Maureen Biggerstaff | Ruth Eyles | Elaine Harvey | Paul Haynes  
Geoff Holiday | Avril Sayers | Jill Wassell | Rod Wassell

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