

IMPERIAL COLLEGE

The tower was built to mark Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887. The bells were a personal gift to the Prince of Wales (Edward VII), President of the Imperial Institute, from Mrs. Elizabeth Millar of Melbourne, Australia, who requested the bells be known as the 'Alexandra Peal' and they be rung on certain royal occasions - request adhered to.

The bells were rung for the first time at 1.00 p.m. on May 10th, 1893 at the conclusion of the opening ceremony. The Queen turned a gold key to complete an electric circuit which sent a signal to the bell chamber for the ringers to commence.

The ringing chamber is reached by a climb of 273 steps and the bells are hung over 200 ft above ground level. The balcony is just above the bells. There have been performances of Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture which have included the bells in the finale, with the orchestra assembled around the balcony.

The first peal was rung on August 9th, 1902 by the Ancient Society of College Youths of 5079 changes of Stedman Caters. One of the many other peals was rung by the Society of Royal Cumberland Youths, on St. George's Day Wednesday April 23rd, 1924, a peal of 5007 changes of Stedman Caters in three hours forty-four minutes by members of this Society who represented their own County Associations:-

John D Matthews - Sussex C A
George Williams - Winchester D G
John S Goldsmith - Surrey C A
William H Fussell - Oxford D G
John H Cheesman - Kent C A
William Miller - Essex C A
Albert E Sharman - Bedfordshire Association
Frank Smith - Middlesex C A
Walter Ayre - Hertford C A
John W Cornford - London C A

The peal was composed by John Carter of Birmingham and conducted by John D Matthews. This peal was rung to celebrate the official opening of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley by His Majesty King George V and was organised by special permission of the First Commissioner of His Majesty's works.

Source *Ringing world* May 2 1924 p 275; *Ringing world* May 7 1993 pp 437-8.