

## CITY, BOW

If you take the first letter of the biblical text of each of the present bells' inscriptions, they will be found to reveal the name of D. Whittington, one of the famous connections with these bells.

This church houses the great bell of Bow of the nursery rhyme, 'Oranges and Lemons'. Anyone who is born within the sound of Bow Bells can claim to be a true Cockney.

Originally called St. Mary New Church, by Norman times it was called Sancta Maria de Arcubus, Arcubus means the arches or bow arches.

It is thought that a bell was cast in 1334 to ring the City Curfew. John Downe, or Donne, mercier of Hosier Lane who died 1472 left a sum of money in his Will for a bell also to be rung at 5.45 a.m. This practice continued until 1874.

William Copland, a tailor and churchwarden, gave a tenor in 1515 and the first time it was used was to be tolled for his death. All the bells and the tower were destroyed in the Great Fire of London. Dame Dyonis Williamson, of Hales Hall, Norfolk, gave £2,000 towards the rebuilding of the church and its bells. Eight heavy bells were installed in 1677 cast by Christopher Hodson and augmented to ten by Lester and Pack in 1762. In 1881 Mears and Stainbank cast two new trebles. In 1933 the bells were recast by Gillett & Johnston. The gift of Mr. H Gordon Selfridge, the tenor weighed just over 54 cwt. The total weight of the bells was 10 tons 9cwt 0qrs 10lbs., dedicated by His Grace, The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury on Friday July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1933. The British Broadcasting Corporation used the sound of the bells as a time signal during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War.

All the bells were destroyed by enemy action in a fierce air raid on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1941. As much metal as possible was salvaged. The tower was found to be unsafe and had to be partly rebuilt so the Dedication Service did not take place until 1961 by the Bishop of London in the presence of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh.

The present ringing room is panelled waist high and about 25 ft in height, with grey carpeted floor. As the historical peal boards were lost through bomb damage much research was undertaken to reconstruct the peal tablets now on the walls.

Names inscribed on previous bells:-

1738 Rector Samuel Lisle, D D. Churchwardens - Robert Green, Wm Cannell, Thos Paris, Ino Waldron, Ino Rainford,

1762 Rt. Revd. Dr. Thos Newton. Churchwardens - Wm Gibson and Jas Pierrepont of Bow. Churchwardens of St. Pancras - Thos and Jno Stevenson. Samuel Blackwell, Esq. Gave £50. Arms of Blackwell - Argent, a greyhound sable: on a chief inserted, sable, three bezants.

1819. The old 8<sup>th</sup> incised on the waist in addition to inscription:- THESE CHAIN TIES OF CAST IRON WERE APPLIED FOR THE SECURITY OF THIS TOWER SEPT. 1819. GEORGE GWILT ARCHT.

1881. Rector Marshall H Vine, M A. Churchwardens Messrs. James Hughes, William Tegg, C H Bowden, F T Tyars, Jonathan Crocker.

1933. Rev. S Gordon Ponsonby, M.A, V.D., Rector

Castings:-

1762

Old 5<sup>th</sup> bell had three coins each of 1ins diameter

Old 7<sup>th</sup> bell had two coins each of 1¾ins and two coins of 1½ins

Old 8<sup>th</sup> bell had two coins of Charles II, one of 1¾ins and two coins of 1¼ins

Old 9<sup>th</sup> bell had three coins 1½ins and two coins of 2ins diameter

Old tenor bell had six coins 1½ins and two coins 1¼ins diameter

1933

Immediately before the casting of the tenor, representatives of the assembled company each threw a coin into the molten metal at the Gillett & Johnston foundry

1956

August dignitaries were present when the tenor was recast at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry on Friday July 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956:- the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Sir Cuthbert Ackroyd, the Master of the Worshipful Company of Founders, Mr. H C Bradbrook, the Master of the Worshipful Company of Turners, Mr. Claude Munday, the Rector of Bow, The Revd. Hugh Evans Hopkins, his churchwardens and vestry clerk and the Master of the Ancient Society of College Youths and Squadron Leader John S Mason. Mr. A A Hughes of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry carried on the long standing custom by inviting the Lord Mayor and the Masters of the two City companies to cast a coin into the furnace.

Peals.

The first peal on the eight bells was rung in 1731. The ten bells were heard for the first time on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1762 the birthday of the reigning monarch, King George III. Many peals have been rung here from that date. The first peal on the ten bells was of 5363 changes of Grandsire Caters rung by the College Youths on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1765 in three hours fifty-one minutes with three men needed for the tenor and two on the ninth, called by William Underwood from the treble. The Cumberlands rang the first peal of Stedman Caters on the bells in 1808. The Ancient Society of College Youths rang a peal for a special reason on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1875: the bells were muffled in memory of the late John Mayhew, for many years a ringer here.

The Middlesex County Association rang an historic peal on Saturday December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1925 of Cambridge Surprise Maximus, 7392 changes in five hours thirty-eight minutes by:- William J Nudds, Albert W Coles, Charles T Coles, John H Cheesman, George R Pye, William H Hewett, Herbert E Audsley, James E Davis, Thos Groombridge, Senr., Harold W Clark, Reuben Sanders and William Pye Master of the Association who composed and conducted the peal, the longest peal in the method rung to that date.

Source: Andrea Jamieson and Tim Amor, *St Mary le Bow: a short guide* 1988, p 1; City of London Corporation *City of London churches* (n.d.), p 22; Gillett & Johnston *Bow bells* 1933, pp 3 and 8; Whitechapel Bell Foundry records; J R Jerram, manuscript in the care of The Revd. D L Cawley; J A Trollope and W G W, *Ringing world* December 29, 1961 pp 871-2; W T Cook, *Ringing world* November 3, 1967,

p 791; Fred Ellis, *Ringling world* September 18, 1992, p 908; *Church bells* January 16, 1875, p 79; *Ringling world* August 3, 1956, p 489; Association records.