CITY, SMITHFIELD

The eleven bells may have been cast at the request of Prior William Bolton, the last but one of the Augustinian Priors: historian Stow states six of the bells were sold to the parish of St. Sepulchre at the time of the Reformation leaving the parish church with the remaining five ancient Bullisdon bells cast in about 1510 at his Aldgate foundry.

The present red brick tower, built in 1628 on the old Norman arches, is topped by a wooden turret and golden vane to the height of 138 ft. The 1814 clock is beneath the battlemented section.

The bells were rung on each birthday of Queen Elizabeth I and this custom continued up until 1708, a hundred years after her death.

William Laughton and his Rambling Ringers rang here in 1734 and an extract from his diary reads:- We rang upon those little bells
                        Four different peals to divert ourselves,
                        Grandsire, Old Doubles, Simonds and New,
                        And Faith we struck 'em good and true.

The first known peal was rung on Wednesday March 21st, 1923 and commemorated the 800th anniversary of the dedication of the Church. The peal consisted of 5040 changes of Grandsire Doubles in two hours thirty-three minutes by members of the Middlesex County Association:- Charles T Coles - conductor, William H Hewett, Frank I Hairs, Chas W R Grimwood and Reuben Sanders.

The five bells were lowered for safety and stored in the west porch during 1941 at the request of Prebendary Wellard.

Not only are the bells rung anti-clockwise, the numbers on the face of the clock in the ringing chamber are also anti-clockwise.

Source: Whitechapel Bell Foundry records; Charles W Pearce, *Old London City churches, their organs, organists and musical associations* (n.d.), p 17; ' Pitkin "Pride of Britain" Books; 1974, *The City of London churches* p 8; T Winyard (Sidesman) *The Priory Church of St. Bartholomew the Great* reprinted 1985, pp 9-10, and his article in the *Ringing World* November 19, 1976 p 978; W E C, *Ringing world* May 26, 1972 pp 414 and 431; R L B., October 26, 1973 pp 853-4; Association records