

HILLINGDON

Built on the crown of Hillingdon Hill is the church with embattled west tower which replaces the mediaeval tower. The present tower is built of stone and flint, brick faced inside and the middle is rubble. The names of Ino Attlee and Ino Robince are inscribed on the outside stonework, Churchwardens in 1629 when the tower was built. The cupola consists of six massive oak uprights which were causing the tower roof (supporting them) to sag. In 1982 RSJs were installed to support the roof and cupola; when ringing the ten bells recommenced it was discovered that the RSJs, roof and cupola were sitting on virtually nothing!

Access to the ringing room is by way of a wooden spiral staircase in the south-west corner of the tower, followed by a straight section towards the south-east corner, through a trap-door. This straight section of stairs, constructed of oak in the 17th Century, is described as having “moulded pilaster balusters, square newel with shaped terminals and moulded rail”. Only two people at a time are allowed to use this ancient staircase. Opposite the staircase, mounted on the north wall of the first floor of the tower is a tablet where the old ringing room used to be (above the porch before 1911). The tablet records a list of ringers who took part in three peals of Grandsire Triples rung in 1733 and the band who rang in the peal of Oxford Tripple Bob Major, 5120 changes in three hours twenty-six minutes, four years later. The ringers who took part were: Richard Ashley, James Munday, William Smith, John Christmas, Will Mitchell, Richard Inett, Matthew Ashley, Robert Brown, John West, Richard Ferris, and Richard Cox.

There may have been three or four bells at the time of King Edward VI, and five bells in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. There was a petition in the Court of Requests in 1559 against Lawrence Wright bellfounder of London, concerning a badly-cast tenor. There were six bells by 1700. Two bells were added in 1731 at the cost of £500 shared between two parishioners William Harrington, yeoman, and Richard Ashley, baker. The bells were recast by Pack & Chapman of London in 1776.

The Mears family of Whitechapel recast various bells during the 18th and 19th centuries until the ring was recast and augmented to ten, tuned on the Simpson five-tone principle, by Gillett & Johnston in 1911 with new fittings and frame. Mr. John Stilwell, Vicar's Warden, whose family came to the parish in the late 18th century, defrayed the cost of the entire work. His daughter, Lady Juliet Craig, together with her husband, undertook the cost of work done in 1964. In thankful memory of the life and work of Sir Gilfrid and Lady Juliet Craig, the bells were quarter turned and rehung on ball bearings in 1969 by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry through the kindness of Mrs. Barbara McLellan, Lady Craig's daughter. They were rededicated on Sunday March 30th, 1969 by The Venerable J Eastaugh, M.A., Archdeacon of Middlesex.

Many peals rung are commemorated by peal boards and every known peal rung in the tower is documented and displayed in the ringing room.

Miss C A Pratt became St. John's first lady ordinary ringing member of the Middlesex County Association in 1912. The present St. John's Guild came into being at the end

of the First World War during which time the bells were rung by ladies whilst the male members of the band were engaged in serving with H M Forces.

After the Second World War the tradition of the Hillingdon Joint Meeting commenced, involving members of the Middlesex, the London County Associations, the Oxford Diocesan Guild and the Ladies' Guild, in the spirit of ringing, fun and comradeship and culminating in a competition when selected members (agile) representing their organisation, took part in the indoor 'Cricket Match'.

Source: The Revd Frank Cecil Tyler, AKC., *Hillingdon Parish Church* (n.d.), pp 3 and 5; Ronald K Russ; Stephen S Russ; J A Trollope, manuscript: *History of London Ringers and Ringing*; *Ringling World* April 6, 1945 p 141 and double issue December 1969 & January 2, 1970 p 1002; Association records.

Details of previous ring:-

	Weight	Diameter	Note	Inscription
Treble	5-1-10	28¾ ins	E	G MEARS & CO. FOUNDERS, LONDON. 1864

2 nd	6-0-0	29¾ ins	D sharp	JOHN WEST & JOHN HANNINGTON CHURCH WARDENS 1779 PACK & CHAPMAN OF LONDON FECERUNT
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3 rd	7-2-0	32 ins	C sharp	Inscribed as the 2 nd , after FECERUNT :
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4 th	8-2-0	34 ins	B	T. MEARS OF LONDON 1828
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incised on waist THE VERY REVD. R. HODGSON VICAR

Beware the inscription of the following two churchwardens needs retyping – computer went berserk

RATCLIFF) Ch. WARDENS
T. SEAWARD)

5 th	10-0-0	38¾ ins	A	MESSRS ALLEN & SHACKLE CHURCH WARDENS. W. & T. MEARS OF LONDON FECIT 1788
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6 th	12-0-0	39½	G sharp	Inscribed as the 5 th , but CH. WARDENS instead
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7 th	15-0-0	42 ins	F sharp	Inscribed as the 5 th , but after MEARS, add : LATE LESTER PACK & CHAPMAN
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Tenor	21-0-0	49¾ ins	E	Inscribed as the 7 th
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The old treble of 28½ ins diameter was inscribed

GLORIA DEO IN EXCELSIS R PHELPS FECIT 1732