

The Church Bells of Berkshire.

PART X.

By FREDERICK SHARPE.

165.

READING.

St. Lawrence.

Ring of Twelve Bells; tenor 5I½ inches diameter, in D;
and a Sanctus Bell.

Bell.	Inscription.	Weight ¹		
		Cwts.	Qrs.	lbs.
Treble.	GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO. / M. & S. LONDON. 1929. (M)	4	3	1
Second.	LAUS DEO. / M. & S. LONDON. 1929. (M)	5	0	15
Third.	RICHARD COBB ✕ CH ✕ WARDEN ✕ R ✕ C J748 ✕ ✕ ✕ / RECAST BY MEARS & STAINBANK. 1929. (M)	5	3	12
Fourth.	BY ADDING TWO OUR NOTES WELL RAISE & SOUND ^E _Y GOOD SUBSCRIBERS PRAISE. J748.	5	0	7
Fifth.	[Three scrolls.] ROBERT ∴ CATLIN J748 FECIT ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴	5	2	3
Sixth.	PROSPERITY TO ALL OUR BENEFACTORS R ✕ C J748 [Twelve scrolls.]	5	3	17
Seventh.	IMPRIMIS VENERARE DEUM MANDATA GB SERVA • QUCERES NON ALIOS UNICUS IPSE DEUS ✕ R ✕ C J748 ✕	6	3	4
Eighth.	J. TAYLOR & CO. BELLFOUNDERS LOUGH- BOROUGH. 1882. / + CETERIS RENOVATIS / EGO CVM SONORIBVS MEIS SEPTIMA ² ET MAXIMA ³ / DE NOVO FVNDATA FVI / A.D. MDCCCLXXXI ⁴ / PROCVRANTE EX HVIVS / ECCLESIAE ET SA ERDOTIBVS / CAROLO KERRY.	9	2	3
Ninth.	J. TAYLOR & CO. FOUNDERS LOUGH- BOROUGH 1882. / + GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO. / CHRISTMAS A.D. 1881. / REV. J. M. GVILDING, VICAR. / CHAS. KERRY, CURATE. EDWD. WELLS, M.D. AND GEORGE LYDDON, C.W.	11	1	20

¹ Note the unusual scale of weights for these bells.

² A reference to the present ninth of the ring of twelve, which prior to 1929 was the seventh of the ring of ten.

³ The tenor.

⁴ The restoration work was begun in 1881 and completed the following year.

<i>Bell.</i>	<i>Inscription.</i>	<i>Weight.</i>		
		<i>Cwts.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>lbs.</i>
Tenth.	RECAST 1803. MR. JOHN KIRK MR. JOHN HARRIS CHURCH WARDENS ::::: THOMAS MEARS OF LONDON FECIT.	10	2	26
Eleventh.	RICHARD WESTBROOK & IACOB WALTER CHURCH WARDENS. THOS. MEARS OF LONDON FECIT 1793.	14	2	17
Tenor.	JOHN TAYLOR & CO. BELLFOUNDERS LOUGHBOROUGH LEICESTERSHIRE 1882.	23	0	20
Sanctus.	MEARS & STAINBANK. LONDON. / 1929.	1	2	0

These bells, which comprise the only ring of twelve in Berkshire, hang in a cast-iron side-pattern frame mounted on a double set of rolled-steel joists. The bells are fitted with cast iron head-stocks having fixed steel gudgeons, self-aligning ball bearings, and traditional-type wheels and other gear.

The treble, second, third, and sanctus were cast by Messrs. Mears and Stainbank in 1929; the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh by Robert Catlin, of London, 1748; the eighth, ninth, and tenor by Messrs. John Taylor and Co. 1882; and the tenth and eleventh by Thomas Mears, in 1803 and 1793, respectively. The six oldest have had their canons removed; the remainder were cast without canons. Every bell has been slightly flattened in the tuning machine.

Few bells have such an interesting history¹ as these, for through the last five centuries no expense has been spared either to keep them in ringing order, or to make alterations to the ring in accordance with the fashion of the time.

The first known record of the bells is in the churchwardens' account roll of 1433 where they are described as the "*little*," "*middle*," and "*great*" bells. By this it would appear that the tower then housed a ring of three, for even if *little* referred to the saunce or sanctus bell the term *middle* bell implies that there was one in the ring lighter, and one heavier than it. (There was a saunce bell in medieval times which weighed 1½ cwt. before it was recast in 1547, and for which a new rope was provided in 1501, and again in 1544.)

¹ In the compilation of this account of the bells of St. Lawrence's Church, Reading, information has been derived from the following sources: 1. The Churchwardens' accounts; 2. Kerry, *A History of the Municipal Church of St. Lawrence, Reading*, 1883; 3. Cocks, *The Church Bells of Buckinghamshire*, 1897; 4. Lukis, *An Account of Church Bells*, 1857; 5. Peal Tablets; and 6. The foundry records of Messrs. Mears & Stainbank, of London, and Messrs. John Taylor & Co., of Loughborough. Many thanks are due to the two bellfounding firms, and to Messrs. R. T. Hibbert and E. G. Foster for much valuable help in the belfry.

Some work was done to the belfry in 1458, when probably another bell was added, and from evidence subsequently given here we learn that the tenor of these was a fairly large bell, weighing about 21 cwt. There was certainly a ring of four in 1493, when Henry Kelsall made provision in his will for the installation of a new tenor to augment the bells to a ring of five.

"Item. I will and charge that a Tenour bell to be made according to the iiij bellis that now hange in the stepyll of Saynte Lawrence Church of Reding aforeseide to the some of—¹ The scripture² to be made aboute the same bell—Henry. The Bell of Ihu."³

The bell was not erected before 1498–9, when we find a record of his⁴ consecration.

Itm. payed for the halowyng of the grete bell namyd Harry. vjs. viijd.

And ovir that Sir Willm Symys, Richard Clech, And maiftreff Smyth being godfaders And godmoder at the confecracyon of the same bell and beryng al op cofts to the ffuffrygan.

In pre-Reformation days it appears that, before a bell was raised to its final place in the belfry, it was set apart for its future use by a solemn ceremonial, and by the recitation of an office which has been variously called the *Blessing*, the *Consecration*, and the *Baptism* of the bell. Mr. North has given an interesting account of this⁵ and I cannot do better than quote his words.

"The use of this Office, if not coeval with the introduction of the Church bell is certainly of great antiquity. This we gather from the fact that Charlemagne issued, in the year 789, an express order against the baptism of bells. The *De Benedictione Signi vel Campanae* of the Roman Pontifical follows the ceremonies enjoined in the more ancient Offices. The bell having been first washed by the Bishop with water into which salt had been cast, was anointed by him with holy oil and chrism. he saying :

' Sancti + ficetur, et conse + cretur Domine Signum istud ; in nomine Pa + tris et Fi + lii, et Spiritus + Sancti in honorem Sancti N. Pax tibi.'

After which the inside of the bell was censed. This Office, which had many characteristics of Holy Baptism, was made even more conspicuously similar by the introduction of other—apparently unauthorised—ceremonies, so that, at least in the eyes of the vulgar, it assumed a too close and irreverent resemblance to that Holy Sacrament. These additions were the giving of a name—not the simple dedication of the bell in honour of a certain saint—and the use of sponsors. These customs prevailed in France, and also in England, where the chief duty of the sponsors appears to have been to pay the costs attending the consecration."

¹ There is a blank space in the will here.

² The inscription.

³ Kelsall was the founder of the "Jesus Mass," in this Church.

⁴ Exceptionally heavy bells are masculine, *c.f.* Great Peter, of York; Great Tom, of Oxford; Great Paul, and Big Ben, of London. All other bells should be referred to in the feminine gender. At the commencement of this series, however, the Editor expressed a wish that the neuter gender should be used.

⁵ North, *The Church Bells of Bedfordshire*, 5.

Such was the nature of the Consecration of the great bell, Harry, in 1499.

Both Kerry and Cocks, suggest that William Hasywood, of Reading, cast Harry. There is, however, no supporting evidence of this; and the author is of the opinion that the bell may have been cast at any one of the three following foundries: (1) The Wokingham foundry, then carried on by the successor¹ of John Michell; (2) The branch of the Wokingham foundry, transferred to Reading and then owned by William Hasywood, or (3) the foundry in Reading owned by the Knight family. The transaction being provided for by Kelsall in his will does not appear in the church accounts, but in the year that "Harry" was baptised there occurs the following entry:

It. payed to John Knyght for makynge of a bawdrick *vjd.*

We have no record of John Knight as an actual bellfounder, but members of a Reading family of this name were subsequently very famous in the art. In 1519, William Knight² was appointed one of the churchwardens.

The sanctus bell, or saunce, was recast by John Saunders of Reading in 1547, the transaction being recorded in the Churchwardens' accounts as follows:

Itm. Paid to Sawnders for Caftyng of the litell bell which wayed before it was cast *j c a qar. att ijd. a li xxiijs. iiijd. & for xiiij li of newe metall att vd. a li vs. xd. which cumyth to xxixs. ijd.*

This means that the bell, weighing 140 lbs., was recast at the rate of 2d. per lb., plus an additional 14 lbs. of metal at 5d. per lb. The saunce hung in a cote, or penthouse of its own; probably over the gable above the chancel arch. We read in a subsequent account:

Item mending ye Penthowse of ye little Bell wth boorde and nailds *viijd.*

Some of the bells, including "Harry" appear to have been sold in the beginning of Edward VI's reign, and afterwards redeemed by the parishioners.

Anno 1550. Paid & allowed to the churchemen³ for the redemyng of bells by them sold *xls.*

Among the "*Detts owyng*" in 1554 is recorded:

Item uppon Robt Tylbye & Willm Lypsescombe⁴ for redemyng of the greate bell by them sold as apperith uppon their accompts *xxxiijs. iiijd.*

"Harry," or "Kelsall" as he became known, survived until 1567, when he was recast for the first time by William Knight II. The whole town and neighbourhood contributed towards the good work. The records of this, and subsequent recastings are taken from the churchwardens' accounts of St. Lawrence.

¹ This fact was not known to either Kerry or Cocks.

² William Knight I was a bell founder. See under the heading Lockinge.

³ Churchwardens.

⁴ These persons were the churchwardens in 1550.

The gathering of this parrysh of Saynct Larrance. For the new casting of kelsall, ye Great Bell: 1567

All the gatheringe (amounted to) 12.5.9.

The Charges of the fame bell

In p ^r mis to willm knight for casting the fame bell	vijli. vjs. viijd.
Itm for drincke for the that tooke paines to take up & downe the fame bell	xxd.
For makinge the obligacyon wherein the bell-fownder ftoode bound to ye pifh	viijd.
For mendinge the fame bell wheele & nayles for the fame	iijs. jd.
for a rope for the fame bell at ijd. ob the pownde for mending the Clapper & c.	vs. iiijd.
for new makinge ye fame clap gret.	vjs. ijd.
for makinge ye bawdrick to ye fame	xxiijs.
To martyn woodnett for takinge downe the fame bell & hanginge it up	ijs. iiijd.
for xliij foote of boorde for ye fowth wyndow in the fteple where the bell was taken out & in, and one hondreth & a halfe of nayles	xxxjs. viijd.
for mendinge the bawdricke	ijs. vjd.
for mendinge the flocke &c.	xvjd.
	ijs.

Sum of the expences of the Bell

So resteth to the Church

xjli. vijs. vd.
xvijs. iiijd.

In 1574 the third bell of the ring of five was recast. The job appears to have been done twice as mention is made of the *first bell casting*, with the record of the second transaction following. *First bell casting* should not be confused with *casting the treble bell*, which was carried out in 1575. After recasting the third weighed 14 cwt. 22 lbs. plus 19 lbs., i.e. 14 cwt. 1 qr. 13 lbs. Again the wording of the account requires explanation; the cost of casting the bell, plus cost of additional metal at the rate of 5s. 8d. per cwt.,¹ amounted to £4 10s. 0d.; not, as might be supposed, 14 cwt. 1 qr. 13 lbs. at 5s. 8d. per cwt.

1574.

Itm to the bellfounder for the first bell casting	xlvs. viijd.
Itm more to him for xxxvj pound of his stuffe	xvijs.
Item to the Bellfounders man for bringing the bell to the church	iiijd.
Item to Ventner for a daies worke for having up of ye bell	viijd.
Item geven in earnest upon the casting of ye third bell	xijd.
Item more to him for ye same bell casting that ys for xiiijC xxijli and for xix pound of his stuffe at vs. viijd. the casting amounteth to 4li. xs. whereof ys paed from us	ls.
Itm to his men to bring ye bell to the church	iiijd.
Itm to make them drink that helped up and downe wth ye bell	viijd.
1575. The Chardgs of the Treble bell.	
Imprimis to Willm Knight for casting ye same bell	xls.

¹ This is a very low rate per cwt. for bell metal.

Itm paide to him for xxxiiij*li.* of mettale put into
the saide bell, over the old wayght wch was
one hundred and a halfe and xxviiij*li.* at vjd.
the pounce

xvjs. vjd.

From the last entry it appears that W. Knight added $1\frac{3}{4}$ cwt. of metal to the treble, of which the churchwardens were only prepared to pay for 33 lbs. It cannot mean that the total weight of the treble was $1\frac{3}{4}$ cwt.: a treble of this size would be quite useless for a tenor of some 35 cwt. like Kelsall, which would require a treble of 9 to 10 cwt. It is quite likely that the treble needed increasing in weight very substantially to equal the tenor in strength of tone.

Four years later the fourth, and tenor, were recast by Joseph Carter, of Reading; and, at the same time, new fittings and gear were supplied for the ring of five, which was then rehung in the existing frame. At this recasting Kelsall was deminished in weight, apparently in order that he should be more tuneful. There seems no doubt, however, that this bell was still a size too large for the others in the ring. From the churchwardens' accounts we know the weights of the third, and tenor, and we may calculate the approximate weights of the others necessary to correspond to them. Thus after the alterations in 1579 the composition of the ring was probably somewhat on these lines:

	Cwt.	qrs.	lbs.
Treble, A flat, cast by W. Knight, 1575	9	2	0#
Second, G flat, cast prior to 1493	12	2	0#
Third, F natural, cast by W. Knight, 1574	14	1	13
Fourth, E flat, cast by J. Carter, 1579	21	0	0#
Tenor, D flat, (Kelsall) ditto	34	1	10

The payments for the recasting and rehanging work in 1579 are recorded in the churchwardens' accounts, and are spread over a number of years.

1579.
The charges for stocking¹ the V bells and the
new making the wheels, the letting down two
bells and having them up again & other work.
(Price not stated).

Pd for 5 hoopes for the wheels	ijs.
Pd for a drugg ² to carry ye bells to ye founders	vjd.
Pd for bred and drink given to them that helped downe ye two bells, and did help up ye gret bell againe.	xviijd.
Pd for a plank to make plate to keep the gudgens of the bells clene ³	xviijd.

1580.
Paid to the bellfounder in part
Paid for making the two obligations
Pd for nails (duble xd) to amend the boxe⁴ of
the bell rope

xij*li.*
ijs.

jd.

¹ i.e. Making and fitting new headstocks.

² A timber carriage.

³ i.e. A plank from which to make a set of bearing cover plates.

⁴ A rope spout.

1581.

Pd for bred and beer for them wch helped down
with the bells

ixd.

Pd to Josephe Carter for the rest of casting the
two bells

vjli. xvjs.

Pd to Weston for takinge down & hanging upp
ye two bells & mending ye clockhouse

xxxixs.

Pd for bred and drink for careidg of Kelsall bell
to & fro

xvjd.

Pd for drink at the hanging of the bells

xd.

Pd for ye making ye obgacio¹ for Kelsall bell

viijd.

Pd to them that took paynes to help up ye sayd
bell

viijd.

Pd for caringe ye clapp into london street

iijd.

Pd for caringe home of ye truckes lent us to
carie or bells

iiijd.

As previously mentioned Kelsall was reduced in weight at this recasting, and in the accounts for 1582 is the following entry :

Reed of Josephe Carter bellfounder at seuerall tymes for ye rest of
ye mettall yt was left out in casteyng ye fourth bell and gret bell. vjli.

Joseph Carter received his final payments for the work the following years.

1584.

Itm payd to Joseph Carter bellfounder for the
rest of his dew for ye bell castinge

xvijs. vjd.

1585.

Paid to Carter due to him by the churchwardens
in ye yere before

vli. xiijs. iiijd.

There was evidently some very good reason for the frequent cracking of St. Lawrence's bells, but it was not until Joseph Carter, the celebrated bellfounder, was elected churchwarden in 1593 that any attempt was made to locate the source of the trouble and to effect certain very necessary reforms.

The first step was the well-known and much quoted resolution, adopted at a vestry meeting in that year, forbidding the sounding of the bells by the pernicious practice known to campanologists as "clocking," "clapping," or "clogging"; a method which has been responsible for cracking more bells than any other.²

¹ Obligation or bond.

² Clocking consists of tying a cord, or the bell rope, to the clapper, and pulling the latter against the side of the bell: a very simple, but most disastrous procedure. The clapper should always be free so that it cannot be held against the bell and so interfere with its very complex vibrations. When a bell is struck a heavy blow by the clapper, both bell and clapper should be moving in the same direction but at different speeds at the moment of impact as is the case during ringing proper. If it were desired to break up a bell, as for instance prior to recasting, the method employed would be to strike it heavy blows with a hammer while stationary. Such, in effect, is clocking which Joseph Carter was determined to suppress at St. Lawrence's Church. It is greatly to be regretted that there is not an equally efficient churchwarden in every parish to-day. I am sorry to say that clocking still persists both in Berkshire and elsewhere, but I have been fortunate in procuring its discontinuance in several instances during the survey of the bells of the county.

toling by the clapp.

Whereas there was through the slothfulness of the Sextine in times past, a kind of toling ye bell by ye clapper rope : yt was now fforbidden and taken awaye : & that the bell should be toled : as in tymes past : & not in anie fuch Idle forte.

J. Smith.¹

The sexton appears to have given the authorities a great deal of trouble about this time. In the year following he was accused of non-fulfillment of his duties as steeple-keeper, and his salary reduced accordingly.

1594.

By this account appeareth that the sextine gave over the maintaining of the tackling that belonged to the bells, as ropes, &c. and therefore bated of his receits xxij^s.

It seems likely that Kelsall had already been damaged, probably by clocking, as the following occurs in the account for 1594-5.

At this accompt also yt was agreed That our gret Bell shoud be caft againe, and not so much the Tune of the bell was cared for as to have yt A lowd bell and hard ffar. And the churchwarden, Jofeph Carter, confented and agreed, to caft yt before Midsomer ffollowing : And fo he was chofen againe Churchwarden the fecond Time. There being p^rsent—mr. ffranceys More, mr. Johnson, mr. Lydall, goodma Ruffell, the churchwardens, wth others. JOHN SMITHE, Vica. Jofeph Carter, Robert Malthus, churchwardens.

29 of December 1596. A^o 39 Reginae Eliz.

Kelsall. The accompt concerning the gret bell.

The gret Bell waied when he was firft taken downe 34 C. 38 *li*. The fame Bell hanged up againe ys increafed in mettall to 36 C. 49 *li*.

So the overplus of mettall ys 211 *li*. for wc ys allowed to Jofeph Carter, at vijd. the poud. *vjli. xvijs. jd. (sic.)* Alfo he ys allowed for the cafting of the bell by the firft bargin *vijli*. And forafmuch as yt fell out that he was inforced, by miffortune of a ffall, in the firft cafting, to caft him twife againe. Therefore there ys allowed in curtefie to the fayde Jofeph, being our neighbour, aboue his bargin of increafe xjs.

So the fomme off the whole

xvli. vijs. ijd.

The following two entries are of interest :

Ap. 16, 1599. Pd Greffin the Smith for mending the Ladie Bell clapp ijs.

Ap. 11, 1602. Item pd to Mr. Carter for heweinge the iijth bell vs.

It is surprising to find the Lady Bell mentioned by name as late as 1599. Heweing probably refers to the process of tuning by hand chipping.

The fourth bell was recast sixteen years later by Henry Knight I.

Anno 1618. Itm pd. to goodman Knight for casting of the 4 bell 6*li*. 10*s*.

Itm pd moor to him for j hundred & twenty three pound of mettell put into her, *vli* xijs. the hundred 6*li* 15*s*.

In 1646 Joseph Carter's "lowd" tenor became cracked, whether or not on this occasion through the slothfulness of the sexton we are not told. It was recast in the following year by Ellis and Francis Knight, and marks the re-opening of their foundry after an interval of four years inactivity caused by the Civil War.

¹ J. Smith was the vicar.

Anno 1647-8.

payments for repairs lvli. vijs. xjd.
 of which summe the new casting of the great
 bell cost xxvjli. vs. vjd.

It. pd to Ellys Knight & Francis Knight for cast-
 ing the greates bell as by their bill appeares xxvjli. vs. vjd.

At a vestry held at St. Lawrence, Reading, on 29th May, 1662,
 it was

“Agreed that the five bells in the steeple be made into eight tuneable Bells¹ and that the Churchwardens doe take care to see it done provided that noe tax be layd on the parishe towards the charge of altering the said Bells and provided that the Churchwardens doe bring and secure the said eight Bells in convenient tyme into the said steeple without charge to the pishe.²”

Present.

Mr THOMAS TUER, vicar.
 Dcor FFRANCIS HUNGERFORD

EDWARD DALBYE, Esq.

Mr EDWARD JOHNSON.

Mr NICHOLAS POTINGER.

GILES POCOCKE.

Mr HENRIE FFERWIN.

EDWARD KENT.

DAVID WEBB.

} Churchwardens.”

¹ The casting of five bells into eight does not imply a shortage of bell-metal ; the reason being that eight smaller sized bells were to be housed in the space previously occupied by five larger ones without spending more parish money on bell-metal.

² The first ring of eight bells to be erected in Berkshire was at the Clewer Tower in Windsor Castle. I have not yet determined the exact date of this augmentation but there is evidence that a ring of eight existed in 1650. St. Lawrence, Reading, possessed a ring of eight in 1662, Newbury in 1680, New Windsor in 1711, Wallingford in 1738, and St. Mary, Reading, in 1740. Other XVIIIth century rings of eight are to be found at Lambourne, Abingdon, Hagbourne, and Sonning.

In other parts of the country the following have been noted as the first rings of eight in their respective counties :—

1602. Bishops Cannings, Wiltshire (Walters, *Ch. Bells of Wiltshire*, 26).
 1640. (or 1648) Worcester Cathedral (Walters, *Ch. Bells of Worcestershire*, 243).

1655. Merton College & New College, Oxford (*MS. notes by the author*).

1667. Great St. Mary, Cambridge (Morris, *History and Art of Change Ringing*, 230).

1672. Horham, Suffolk (Raven, *Ch. Bells of Suffolk*, 204).

1673. Holy Cross, Shrewsbury (Walters, *Ch. Bells of Shropshire*, 359).

1675. St. Michael, Coventry (Tilley & Walters, *Ch. Bells of Warwickshire*, 147).

1676. St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich (Walters, *Ch. Bells of England*, 81).

1683. Denham, Buckinghamshire (Cocks, *Ch. Bells of Buckinghamshire*, 369).

1706. St. Mary, Monmouth (Wright, *Ch. Bells of Monmouthshire*, 68).

1723. St. Ives, Huntingdonshire (Owen, *Ch. Bells of Huntingdonshire*, 118).

1744. St. Paul, Bedford (North, *Ch. Bells of Bedfordshire*, 129).

1750. St. Mary, Brecon, Breconshire

1885. Llanbadarn Fawr, Cardiganshire } (*MS. notes by the author*).

1906. Presteign, Radnorshire (Sharpe, *Ch. Bells of Radnorshire*, 60.)

In the account for :

April 1, 1662 to Ap. 20, 1663.

Recd. of the parishioners of St. Lawrence and others towards the casting of the bells

lxj*li*. vs. i*jd*.

Whereof paid to Henry Knight Bellfounder for casting the five bells into eight bells

xliii*li*. i*js*. iii*jd*.

Item paid to John Strovd Carpenter for altering the Bells frames and making the Bell wheeles and other work about the Bells.

xxi*li*.

Item paid to William White Blacksmith for iron & worke about the Belles

xii*li*.vii*jd*.

Item pd Mr Frewin for tinn put into the Bells

vii*li* xii*js*.To Thomas Knight for opening the greate bell¹js. v*jd*.

As on previous occasions the payments for this work were spread over a number of years.

April 21, 1663—Ap. 12, 1664.

Recd. Item of the parishioners of St. Lawrence towards the casting of the Bells.

xxi*li*. iii*js*.

Payd to Henry Knight the Bellfounder for metall added to the great Bell.

v*li*.²

7 Aug. 1663.

Mem. At this meeting it is agreed that the like pfitt be allowed the church for knells on the 8th and 7th bells as was formerly for the greate Bell and 4th bells, when there were but five bells, and that the sexton shall have the pfitt of the six smaller bells, payeing for the ropes of them from time to time as occasion shall require.

30 July, 1665.

Agreed that the pfitt of the 6th Bell untill the 7th Bell be new cast be received for the use of the church in steed of ye pfitt of the 7th Bell. 1665.

It. paid Henry Knight for lvii*li*. weight of mettall to put in the two fore bellsii*li*. xvii*js*.

1666-7.

Item pd to Henry Knight for casting the seaventh Bell and other charges

xx*li*. xvs. v*jd*.

Early in the next century we find the two largest bells again cracked, and at a meeting held on September 6th, 1703, it was decided to recast the tenor.

"Agreed at this meeting that the great bell (being broke) shall be new cast at the charge of the parish and the other bells amended

Mr ABRAHAM CULVER }

FFRANCIS BINFIELD }

Churchwardens.

In the following year the seventh bell was recast.

11th February 1704. "Agreed that the 7th bell be taken down and new cast, and Samuel Knight to doe it & be paid 18*l*. for the same by the churchwardens. Samuel Knight to be at all manner of charge in taking downe & hanging up the same."

Forty-four years later the whole ring was again recast and two additional lighter bells added to make a ring of ten.³ The

¹ i.e. ringing the bell for the first time.

² This entry caused the Rev. C. Kerry to believe that the tenor was unsatisfactory, and had been recast immediately (St. Lawrence, Reading, p. 88). The present author is of the opinion that the accounts were spread over a number of years as subscriptions came in for this special object. There is no entry relating to the actual recasting of the tenor in 1664.

³ The first of this number in Berkshire. See footnote to Newbury St. Nicholas.

work was carried out by Robert Catlin, of London, who had succeeded to the foundry in Holborn established by Samuel Knight on his removal there from Reading in or about the year 1709.

Details of Ring of Ten Bells, in the key of E flat, cast in 1748.
Bell. *Inscription.* *Weight*

		<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>lbs.</i>
Treble.	RICHARD COBB ✕ CH ✕ WARDEN ✕ R ✕ C J748 ✕ ✕ ✕	4	1	2
Second.	BY ADDING TWO OUR NOTES WELL RAISE & SOUND ^E _Y GOOD SUBSCRIBERS PRAISE. J748.	5	0	7
Third.	[<i>Three scrolls</i>]. ROBERT ∴ CATLIN J748 FECIT ∴ ∴ ∴ ∴	5	3	2
Fourth.	PROSPERITY TO ALL OUR BENEFACTORS R ✕ C J748 [<i>Twelve scrolls</i>].	5	3	17
Fifth.	IMPRIMIS VENERARE DEUM MANDATA GB SERVA. QUCERES NON ALIOS UNICUS IPSE DEUS ✕ R ✕ C J748 ✕	6	3	4
Sixth.	THE REV THOMAS SHUTE D ∴ D VICAR J748 [<i>Scrolls</i>]. R ∴ C FECIT ✕ ✕ [<i>Scrolls interspersed with coins and ∴</i>].	9	0	24
Seventh.	PROSPERITY TO THIS PARISH ✕ R ✕ C FECIT J748 [<i>Scrolls</i>].	10	3	14
Eighth. ¹	[<i>Inscription not recorded</i>].	11	2	0#
Ninth.	[<i>Inscription not recorded</i>].	15	0	0#
Tenor.	JOHN RICHARDS ✕ JOHN ROSS ✕ CHURCH ✕ WARDENS ✕ ROBERT CATLIN FECIT J748 [<i>Scrolls alternating with ∴</i>].	23	0	0

Of these the second, third, fourth and fifth remain, and now form the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh of the present ring of twelve.

The sanctus bell was recast by Mears, in 1793. No record exists of its former inscription, but at this recasting it was inscribed:

THE REV. JOHN GREEN VICAR JACOB WALTER & JOHN NIALE ∴∴∴
 CH. WARDENS ∴∴∴ THOS. MEARS OF LONDON FECIT 1793.

At the same time the ninth bell was recast and this now forms the eleventh of the ring of twelve. In 1803 Mears also recast the eighth, which now forms the tenth of the present ring. The inscriptions on the recast bells are recorded on page 2.

These bells remained unaltered until 1881, when they were

¹ The weight of the eighth bell is recorded by Kerry as 11 cwt. 2 qrs. 7 lbs., and by Messrs. Taylor & Co. as 11 cwt. 1 qr. 25 lbs.

restored under the direction of the Rev. C. Kerry. The story is told in his own words :¹

"In the month of September, 1881, the author was kindly permitted by the vicar and churchwardens to undertake the restoration of the bells, then in a very deplorable condition : they had not been *rung* for several years. The tenor was cracked through the canons, and the crown had been strengthened by an iron hoop round the haunch or shoulder. The best advice having been obtained, it was deemed prudent to recast her, and a liberal response having been made by the townsmen and others for this purpose, it was thought desirable to renew the sixth also—the worst bell in the ring. With these two was sent the seventh for tuning purposes ; and this, when the stock was removed at the foundry, was found to be in precisely the same condition as the tenor, the fracture having been concealed by its beam. These three were recast, and the whole of the bearings, stocks, wheels and other fittings renewed at a cost of nearly £350.

The weights of the three old bells, with their canons were :

						<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>lbs.</i>
Sixth	..	..	..	..	..	9	0	24
Seventh	..	..	..	..	..	10	3	14
Tenor	..	..	..	..	..	23	0	0

The eighth, also sent to Loughborough for the same purpose as the seventh, weighs 11 cwt. 2 qr. 7 lbs.² The three new bells weigh³

						<i>Cwt.</i>	<i>Qrs.</i>	<i>lbs.</i>
Sixth	..	..	..	..	..	10	0	0
Seventh	..	..	..	..	..	11	2	0
Tenor	..	..	..	..	..	24	0	0

The bells were recast on Tuesday afternoon, January 10th, 1882, at the foundry of John Taylor and Co., Loughborough.

I found the three old bells of St. Lawrence in the drying chamber, or oven, broken into fragments, on some of which I recognised portions of the old inscriptions. In a short time they were wheeled near the mouth of the furnace, into which they were eventually thrown. The last I saw of our old tenor were some dullish-looking fragments gradually sinking into a seething mass of liquid metal, glowing with intense brilliancy. The opening was closed again with bricks and clay, and in about an hour or so everything was ready. The sight was very interesting. A narrow channel led from the furnace-mouth to the moulds, and in this duct were placed the iron floodgates or stops, by the regulation

¹ Kerry, *A History of the Municipal Church of St. Lawrence, Reading*, 89ff.

² This is the only record extant of the weight of the eighth bell of the ring of ten (now the tenth of the ring of twelve) before the removal of her canons, but the difference compared with that given on page 2 seems too much.

³ Obviously calculated to the nearest half hundred weight. Compare with weights of the bells on pages 1 and 2.

of which the metal was diverted into the mouths or funnels of the moulds beneath. The precise moment for tapping was one of silent anxiety. At this juncture, with Mr. Taylor's permission, I went near the furnace mouth, and offered the well-known prayer : ' Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour and further us with Thy continual help, etc.' At its conclusion many of the visitors uttered a fervent ' Amen.' In an instant the boiling liquid gushed forth, and sped hurriedly down the previously heated channel to the first ' swallow-hole,' and in a few seconds the new tenor for St. Lawrence's Church came into being in its subterraneous chamber. The first floodgate was then raised, and onward the bright stream rushed into the next mould, and so on successively until the whole were cast ; and thus, within a very few minutes was born a sisterhood of eight large bells ; three for St. Lawrence, Reading ; three for Thurstleton, Leicestershire ; and two for Baldock, in Hertfordshire."

The new bells were dedicated, and the ring of ten formally re-opened at a special service on Shrove Tuesday, 21st February, 1882.¹

Nothing more was done to the bells for almost fifty years. By this time Catlin's bell frame of 1748 had outlived its usefulness, and the bell fittings and gear were again in need of renewal. A thorough restoration was effected in 1929, and at the same time the ring was increased in number to twelve.

This augmentation was the result of the response to an appeal printed in *The Ringing World* of 20th September, 1929.

A RING OF TWELVE FOR BERKSHIRE.

£170 WANTED.

Two well-known Berkshire ringers are intent on raising the £170 necessary for providing two new bells for St. Lawrence's Church, Reading to increase them to a ring of twelve ; and so great is their faith that, as already mentioned in these columns, the order has been placed so that the work may be done while the restoration of the other ten is in hand.

The following appeal for funds has been sent out—

About two years ago the authorities of St. Lawrence's Church in Reading were made aware that their historic ring of ten bells was in need of rehanging.

As soon as they could see their way to take the matter in hand, a fund was opened and estimates were obtained for carrying out the necessary work.

Messrs. Mears and Stainbank obtained the contract to take down and tune the ten bells, recast the treble, and to rehang them with new fittings in a new cast iron and steel frame.

¹ The new tenor was rung by the Rev. Charles Kerry for its first time on Monday, 12th February 1882. He writes—"Who may ring her for the last time God only knows ; but, accidents set aside, she will no doubt hold her deserved position as one of the best bells in the county for centuries to come."

Parishioners and others especially interested in the church responded so promptly to the appeal for funds, that in three months £325 out of the £600 required has been contributed.

When the scheme was launched it was represented to the authorities by Mr. R. T. Hibbert, who, besides being Secretary for the Diocesan Guild of Church Bell Ringers, is also foreman of St. Lawrence's tower, that it was an unique opportunity for securing a ring of twelve bells for Reading, and the Archdeaconry, and County of Berkshire; such being already possessed by Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire; and that it was possible to hang the ten bells with two additional trebles on one level. He had it on the best authority that the result would rank among the best of the light rings of twelve in the country; and that, if the authorities would give him leave, he, in conjunction with the Rev. C. W. O. Jenkyn, the Master of the Diocesan Guild, would undertake to raise the additional amount required.

This representation was received with much favour. Will you then help us two Berkshire men to raise £170 in order that this Archdeaconry, and County, may possess a ring of twelve bells.

Mr. Hibbert states that in two months they had raised £180.¹

The new bells were dedicated by the Rt. Rev. Bishop Shaw, and the ring of twelve formally opened on 20th December, 1929.

A number of notable peals have been rung on these bells, details of some of which are recorded on tablets in the belfry. It is not possible on account of space to give an account of them all but the following deserve special mention.

A tablet on the north wall of the tower is inscribed:

July ye 8th 1734. / The whole peal of Grandsire Triples / 5,040 Changes was rung in / three hours & ten minutes / by them who names are / here mentioned. / Henry Samples, Treble. / Gyles Newbury, Second. / Joseph Philip, Third. / Robert Booth, Fourth. / Thomas Shurfield, Fifth. / Henry Peaty, (Bob Caller) Sixth. / John Wells, Seventh. / William Ford & Abram Bishop, Tenor. / This Board was Restored at the cost of Mr. A. Thomas, Deputy Captain, 1880.

The ringers of 1734 were doubtless justly proud of this performance, which was the first of its kind in Berkshire.²

Following the augmentation of the ring in 1748, the Reading Youths scored the first whole peal of Caters³ to be rung in Berkshire. Unfortunately this is not commemorated by a peal tablet and the record of the performers names is lost, but in the *Reading Mercury*, of November 26th, 1748 it is stated:

¹ This appeal by two well-known ringers was not a new procedure in the annals of campanology. The treble bell at Great St. Mary's, Cambridge, erected in 1770 was inscribed: THESE TWO TREBBLES TO MAKE THEM A COMPLETE PEAL (sic) OF TWELVE WAS RAISED BY SUBSCRIPTION AT THE INTEREST OF CHAS. DAY AND JOHN PARIS RINGERS OF THIS SOCIETY IN THE YEAR 1770, etc. (Lukis, *Church Bells*, 65).

² The first complete peal of Grandsire Triples had been scored at St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich, on August 26th, 1718, and is recorded on a tablet in that tower. Peal ringing was not then common.

³ Probably Grandsire Caters.

"The Reading Youths rang at St. Lawrence's Church on the ten bells cast and hung by Mr. Catlin of Shoe Lane, London, a compleat peal of 5,040 Cators, in 3 hours 29 minutes."

The first twelve-bell peal in Berkshire is commemorated by a tablet on the south wall of the belfry, inscribed :

The Ancient Society of College Youths / and / The Oxford Diocesan Guild. / On Monday, April 21st, 1930, in 3 hours and 52 minutes / A Peal of Stedman Cinques, 5019 changes, was rung / in this Tower by the following members of the two Societies. / Challis F. Winney, Treble. / William Hibbert, 2. / Wilson Rushton, 3. / Henry R. Newton, 4. / Herbert Langdon, 5. / Joseph S. Hawkins, 6. / John H. B. Hesse, 7. / William G. Whitehead, 8. / Charles S. Burden, 9. / Rev. C. W. O. Jenkyn, 10. / Richard T. Hibbert, 11. / Geoffrey C. Rice, Tenor. / Composed by C. H. Hattersley. Conducted by R. T. Hibbert. / The first peal rung on 12 bells in the County of Berks.

One other peal deserves special mention. A tablet on the east wall of the belfry is inscribed :

Oxford Diocesan Guild. / On Wednesday, February 22nd, 1933 was / rung on the Bells in this Tower in 3 hours 55 minutes : / A Peal of Grandsire Cinques, / 5169 Changes / by the following : / Richard T. Hibbert, Treble. / Stanley C. Davis, 2. / Miss Pat. Holloway, 3. / Miss Doris E. Blencowe, 4. / Henry G. Foxell, 5. / Charles H. Pullen, 6. / Edgar Humphrey, 7. / William Edwards, 8. / Leslie J. Sadler, 9. / Harry W. Smith, 10. / Edward G. Foster, 11. / William Rampton, Tenor. / Composed by Arthur Knights. Conducted by R. T. Hibbert. / This Peal was rung by twelve of the Sunday Service Ringers, being the first / peal of Grandsire Cinques by all the Band, and the first Peal of Grandsire / Cinques by the Guild, and in the Diocese of Oxford. / Rev. R. H. A. Bullock, Vicar.

Visited :

F.S., 5th June, 1943.

166.

READING.

St. Luke.

One Bell ; 24 inches diameter, strike-note F sharp, weighing 3 cwt. 0 qrs. 4 lbs., inscribed

ST. LUKE'S, READING. / JUBILEE, 1933. /

LAUS DEO.

Mr. C. F. Johnston, of Messrs. Gillett & Johnston, Ltd., states that the bell was supplied by his firm in 1933.

Mr. E. G. Foster, of Reading, states that it replaced a hemispherical bell, which in turn replaced a bell of reputed poor tone erected when the Church was built in 1883.

167.

READING.

St. Mark.

One bell ; hung for chiming in an open timber frame covered by roof only, and standing detached from the church. It was erected in 1904.

168.

READING.

St. Mary (Castle Street).

One bell ; $29\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter, strike-note C, weighing approximately 5 cwt., inscribed :

THOMAS MEARS FOUNDER LONDON 1840

The bell has canons of the normal type and is hung for ringing in an oak frame. It is fitted with an elm headstock, strap gudgeons, brass bearings and traditional-type wheel, all of which appear to be the work of Thomas Mears, in 1840. Subsequently a late XIXth century type stay and slider were added. Many Reading ringers first learned to "handle" a bell here.

Visited :

E.G.F., F.S., 31st October, 1943.

(*To be continued.*)