

## EARDISLAND CHURCH BELLS.

WE are very proud of our bells, and so are our ringers, who range from Archie George, who has just completed 57 years as a ringer, to Rosemary Bray and Joyce Davies, two Leominster Grammar School girls, who were recently awarded the Certificate for Change-ringing.

We know very little of the early history of our bells. We do know, however, that they were smashed when the tower crashed down, and were re-cast in the same year - 1728 - by Abel (or Abraham) Rudhall of Gloucester, the number of bells then being five, and the cost being met by a lady of the Parish whose name unfortunately has not been recorded.

In 1906 the bells were re-hung and a treble bell added, the cost - £148 - being met by voluntary subscription, both inside and outside the Parish. A big celebration tea-party was given at Burton Court: the Weobley Bellringers rang the first peal, and were entertained by our own Ringers in the Reading Room, before the Service of Dedication. Many of our Parishioners still remember the excitement and joy of the day, and the gratification felt that the money had been collected by the effort and sacrifice of so many ordinary people "who found 12s/- a week little enough to live on!"

In 1950 it was found that the oak frame supporting the bells had decayed to an alarming extent. The bells were therefore dismantled, and for the following two years we were without the sound of either bells or church clock.

In the meantime a Restoration Fund was started, and an appeal was launched in August 1950 for money to meet necessary work on the Churchyard, the Nave roof and the bells. We were fortunate in getting three private donations, amounting in all to £760, specifically for work on the bells; and the remainder was collected largely by the effort and enthusiasm of our ringers, lead by Mr. Leslie Evans, our Ringing Master and an ex-Master of the Hereford Diocesan Guild of Bell-ringers. Leslie organised a Collective Sale of farm implements, household equipment, etc., and this realised £227; the ringers took their hand-bells round the Parish each Christmas, and collected another £100; and the remainder was met by voluntary donation.

The bells were all re-cast and hung in a cast-iron frame, two new bells being added, and the work was carried out by Messrs. Taylor of Loughborough at a cost of £1,500.4s. (Details of both old and new inscriptions on the bells are given on a following page) The bells were hallowed and dedicated by the Lord Bishop of Hereford on December 13th, 1952, the Service being conducted by the Vicar, the Revd. P.E. Rock.

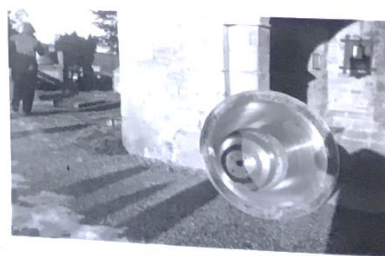
This was a great day for Eardisland, and ringers came from as far away as London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Yorkshire. An account in the "Ringing World" stated:

"The opening rounds were rung by the local band, and, as the congregation left the Church, a course of Cambridge Surprise Major was rung by the Hereford Diocesan Guild..."

To face Page 80.



Rev. P. E. Rock, Mr. L. E. Griffiths and the Bellringers,  
after the Service of Dedication,  
1952.



The Bells arrive -



The sound of the bells both inside and outside the tower is perfect, each bell being very distinct; and there is no annoyance to nearby houses, as the bells are some 12 ft. lower in the tower. An eminent visiting ringer declared that, having rung in over 3,000 towers, he has never heard a better ring of bells with a tenor weighing less than a ton. (The present tenor is 12 cwt. 2 qr. 26 lbs.) The 'go' of the bells leaves nothing to be desired: this was evident by the ease with which 87-year-old Mr. Harry Symonds, of Hereford Cathedral, rang the tenor. Ringing, which ranged from rounds to Bristol Surprise, was of a high standard and was kept up till 9 p.m. in the floodlit tower, and a very fine ring down in peal brought to an end a memorable day."

It is interesting to note that Eardisland is now the proud possessor of the only complete ring of eight bells in the County which were all cast at the same time; and the fame of our bells is spreading to such an extent that we are frequently regaled by ringers from as far away as Essex. We are told that Eardisland ringers for the past 50 years "have always had a great reputation for their accurate striking, and for raising and falling the Bells in peal." Proof of this is the fact that our ringers have won the H.T. Chandler Shield seven times out of twelve, their last win (in April, 1955) giving them the Shield outright. Our ringers, too, frequently ring at Hereford Cathedral on special occasions.

The bells are rung for Services every Sunday, and for the major Festivals of the Church. It has always been the custom, too, to ring out the Old Year and ring in the New.

Until the beginning of the Second World War the bells were tolled when anyone died: 9 strokes for a man, 6 for a woman, and 3 for a child, on each of the five heavier bells. This was followed by the tolling of the age of the person on the tenor bell, in groups of 20 strokes. The tenor bell was then raised and rung at one stroke per minute for an hour or, more recently, for half-an-hour. For this duty the Sexton received 1s/-.

For funerals the bells were 'clocked'. The tenor bell was struck every minute, and as the cortege approached the churchyard the five heavier bells were tolled. For people of importance a muffled peal was rung. Nowadays the bells are seldom rung at funerals as we have no Sexton.

Bells are still rung for weddings, on request.

The first peal of five thousand changes ever rung in the tower was on September 5th, 1908 (Grandsire Doubles). A total of 18 peals of Doubles and 5 of Minor was rung between 1908 and 1950, when the bells were taken away to be re-cast. The new octave has so far (June, 1955) been rung to 12 peals in eleven different methods, and include some very high class performances, viz:- Grandsire and Stedman Triples, Plain Bob, Kent Treble Bob, Painswick College Bob, Double Norwich Court Bob, Eardisland Delight (a new method, first rung in Eardisland tower), and Cambridge, Yorkshire, Painswick and Southwell Surprise Major.

Our handbells, eleven in number, were bought by the

Revd. R.S. Aldridge at a cost of £5. It seems always to have been the custom of the ringers to go round with the handbells at Christmas and New Year, and nowadays they are frequently invited to perform at Concerts and at private parties. A recording of the handbells was made in December, 1949, and was relayed on the Overseas Programme of the B.B.C. on Christmas Night, a description of Eardisland and its ringers appearing in the current number of "Ici Londres", the French version of our Radio Times.

Our old Churchwardens' Accounts are evidence of the activity of our ringers, for there are frequent entries for purchase of new bell-ropes. The price of a set of "5 new bell-ropes" in 1888 was £2.6s.; we are told that the present price of one bell-rope is £3.10s.! Another item, 1878, reads: "Fifteen days' work at the Church Bells, £2.12s.6d." - big money for those days.

Further evidence of the activity of Eardisland bell-ringers of the past is another entry in the Churchwardens' Accounts, this time an annual one: "John Macklen, Cross Inn; drink for ringers, 2/6d." The amount spent seems to have remained stable, but the beverage is mentioned as 'ale' in 1856 and as 'cider' in 1862.

Miss Blackmore tells rather an amusing story of a bell-ringer who married a cook at Staick House. Mr. Barker put on an excellent reception, the bells pealed out all day, and all was going well until it was found that the bridegroom was missing. A search was instituted, and the offending gentleman was finally traced to the tower, where he was blissfully ringing with the rest, oblivious to all else.



HARDISLAND BELLS.

The old inscriptions reproduced  
on the new bells.

New inscriptions.

Treble

John Taylor & Co., Founders,  
Loughborough.

In Memory of  
Edith Fanny Griffiths  
1879 - 1950

2nd

Ditto

3rd Mears & Stainbank, Founders,  
London.

Fear God, Honour the King  
R.S. Aldridge, Vicar  
P.L. Clowes } Church-  
P.W. Tuner } wardens

A.D. 1906

Recast by the Ringers

S. Daniels  
L. Evans (Master)  
A. George  
F. Harris Re-cast 1953  
P. Hunt Taylor  
P. Powles Loughborough.  
E.P. Rook  
J.D. Rook  
J. Wood

4th A. R. 1728

Prosperity to the  
Church of England

Re-cast  
Taylor  
Loughborough  
1953

5th A. R. 1728

Peace and Good  
Neighbourhood

To Commemorate the Coronation  
of H.M. Queen Elisabeth II  
2nd June 1953

Re-cast  
Taylor  
Loughborough  
1953

6th A. R. 1728

Prosperity to  
this Parish

In Memory of George Evans

Re-cast  
Taylor  
Loughborough  
1953

Tenor A. R. 1728

I to the Church  
the living call  
and to the grave  
do summon all

In Memory of Ellen Vere  
Artindale

Re-cast  
Taylor  
Loughborough  
1953