*fourteen*

# The Bells of St James

## Richard Edmans

The church has a fine ring of six bells and a Sanctus.

The third bell in today's ring of six is the oldest. Cast in 1605 by Robert Atton in West Street, Buckingham, it probably hung alone in the tower. A second and heavier Atton bell appeared in 1623. Then in 1652 Robert Chandler of Drayton Parslow supplied a treble bell (being lighter in weight than Atton's). This ring of three bells remained for the next 85 years and allowed limited change ringing to take place. The fourth bell arrived in 1737 and finally, in 1847, from the Whitechapel foundry came two more bells to make up the ring of six bells.

The bells are normally rung for church services, weddings and funerals. When the village had its Benefit Society the bells were rung at 5.30 am to tell the members to gather for their annual feast, usually held in early June.

During World War II it was forbidden to ring bells except as a warning of

*The bells await restoration, 1950*

invasion. This ban was lifted after the victory of El Alamein. However, during a visual inspection prior to ringing for this celebration it was discovered that the wooden bell frame was unsafe, so ringing could not take place.

In 1941 George Edmans together with other members of the village started to raise money to have the bells restored. The target was reached in 1950, and the bells were taken down and sent to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry for overhaul. The 4th was found to need recasting and the bells were all retuned. A new frame was fitted and the bells were rehung and dedicated on 16th July 1950.

A part of the old bell frame is in the church, and has the date 1616 carved into it together with the name of Odell. George Edmans made a scale model of the bell frame as it was before the rehanging. This is still in the ringing chamber.

Until the rehanging of the bells a peal had never been rung but on 16th October 1954 the first-ever peal was rung. A commemorative board in the ringing chamber gives the full details. To date, a total of ten peals has been rung.

*On Saturday 16th October 1954 a peal of 5040 Grandsire Doubles, 10 different callings, rung by the following in 3 hours and 1minute*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *T. Emery* | *Treble* | *K. Moore* | *4* |
| *E. Barrs* | *2* | *M. Jamieson* | *5* |
| *F. G. Edmans* | *3* | *R. Sirett* | *Tenor* |

*Joint Conductors Edmans and Jamieson*
*This is the first peal ever rung on the bells and the first peal by all except F. G. Edmans Captain who taught all taking part in the ring.*

Here are the details of the bells including their inscriptions.

| Bell | Diameter (inches) | Date Cast | Founder | Foundry Location | Inscription |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Treble | 32 | 1847 | C & G Mears | Whitechapel | C & G MEARS LONDINI FECERUNT 1847 |
| 2 | 33.5 | 1652 | Anthony Chandler | Drayton Parslow | 1652 CHANDLER MADE ME |
| 3 | 34.5 | 1605 | Robert Atton | Buckingham | BA. RA. 1605 |
| 4 | 37 | 1737 | Edward Hall | Buckingham | EDWARD HALL MADE ME |
| 5 | 40.5 | 1623 | Robert Atton | Buckingham | PRAYSE YE THE LORDE ALWAYSE 1623 I B G V R B |
| Tenor | 46.5 | 1847 | C & G Mears | Whitechapel | C & G MEARS FOUNDERS LONDON 1847 |
| Sanctus | 19 | 1696 | Richard Chandler III | Drayton Parslow | 1696 |

Mr Edmans at St James Church in Great Horwood

# 78-year hobby rings a bell. . .

**PENSIONER George Edmans has spent 78 years enjoying his ap-pealing hobby – and he's looking forward to many more sessions to come.**

Mr Edmans, 88, of Great Horwood, started bell ringing when he was 10.

And on Saturday he was joined by his son, a fellow bell ringer, and other family and friends to ring a quarter-peal of 1,260 changes in celebraton of his long service.

Mr Edmans, who rings every Sunday at Great Horwood Church, said: "I was only 10 when I started because the sexton was elderly and didn't want to do it anymore. He taught me to ring.

"I have been ringing on all the Royal weddings and special occasions, and I have been ringing the old year out and the new year in."

The quarter-peal team, who used the Grandsire Doubles method, comprised conductor Bill Yates, David Goodger, and Mr Edman's nephew David Moore, cousin Maurice Jamieson, and son Richard.

Stewart Deuchar, tower secretary, said: "The quarter-peal took almost 50 minutes of continuous ringing – a remarkable feat of mental and physical endurance at such an age.

"He is very well known throughout the region and has trained a great many people all over Bucks. He is a great teacher of bell ringing."

At the end Mr Edmans said: "I am just glad to show that I am still capable of doing it."

He is now looking forward to the Millennium, joining with churches across the country to ring in the new year at noon on

*28 May 1999*

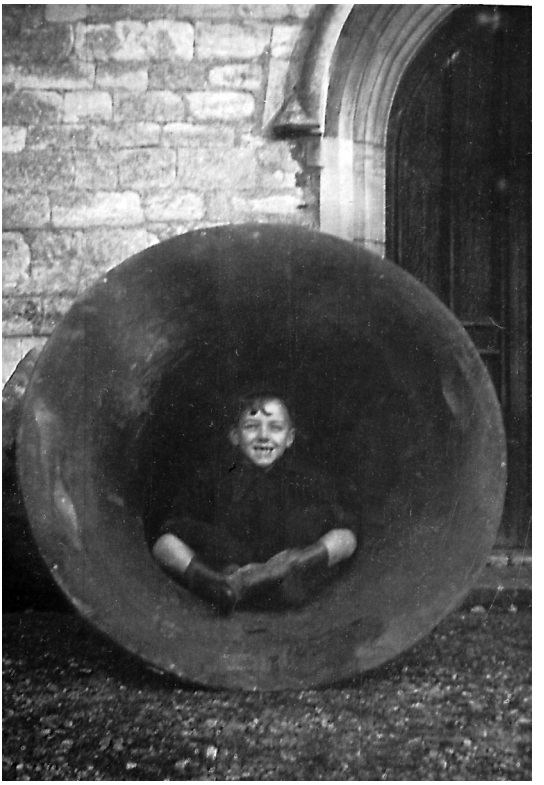
The banner of the Oxford Diocesan Guild of Church Bellringers was created in Great Horwood. The original idea came from George Edmans. In 1956 he submitted a design to the Guild. After several design changes a final version was agreed but the Guild decided that it would be too expensive for them to purchase. George then submitted a further design and said that the only cost to the Guild would be for the materials for weaving the banner itself.

The banner was eventually made in its entirety by four self-taught Great Horwood people. The woodwork was done by George Edmans who turned the bosses and made the cross. The embroidery was executed by Miss Mary Irving who was housekeeper to the then Rector, Canon Charles Last. The cord, tassels and


*The banner made in Great Horwood*

poles were donated, and the local branch of the Guild covered the £15 cost of the thread.

The banner was kept in St James Great Horwood until the death of George Edmans. It is now widely used throughout the Diocese of Oxford and was present in the church at the funeral of Maurice Jamieson.



*Richard Edmans acquiring an early taste for campanology, 1950*