From the Christian Review — Honiton Team Ministry
October 1990

The Oberammergau Passion Play 1990.

K.F.

1633 In 1633 plague was sweeping across Europe carrying off men, women and children in their thousands. The village of Oberammergau, at the foot of the Bavarian Alps remained free until, at last, one of its sons returned home carrying the infection. In desperation the Village Council met and made a solemn vow that if the village was spared the villagers would perform a mystery Play of the Passion of our Lord every ten years. Oberammergau was saved; no one there died from the plague. From that time onwards the vow has been kept and this year, once again, the Passion Play is being performed in fulfillment of it.

The villagers spend years in preparation and rehearsal. The very beautiful music was written by the village schoolmaster and the text revised. The men taking part grow hair and beards; even little children are included in the cast. This year a small black donkey carried Jesus across the stage, and a flock of doves flew up from the Temple Scene and winged away out of the theatre.

The theatre itself is very simple; the stage is open to the sky though the auditorium is covered. Many people bring rugs or cushions to make the day performance a little more comfortable.

The play consists of fourteen acts, linked and explained by a Prologue and Chorus, and interspersed by tableaux of the Old Testament. We see Jesus ride into Jerusalem, drive out the sellers from the Temple and have the last supper among his disciples. We are present at the Agony in the Garden the Trials before Herod and Pilate, even at the Crucifixion with the three bodies hanging on the crosses at Calvary. Every hammer blow of nails driven seems to be actually happening in our presence.

One could write of the reverence with which the Play is performed, the commitment of the actors from the oldest to the youngest and the beauty of the visual production and the music. Most of all, as some of the audience said as we left the theatre, "You really felt that you were there."

72

Verses

Ten Little Churchmen

Ten little churchmen went to Church when fine;
But it started raining, and then there were nine.
Nine little churchmen stayed up very late;
One overslept himself, and then there were eight.
Eight little churchmen on the road to Heaven;
One joined a bowling club, and then there were seven.
Seven little churchmen heard of Sunday 'flicks';
One thought he'd like to go and then there were six.
Six little churchmen kept the place alive;
The Vicar upset one of them and then there were five.
Five little churchmen argued more and more;
One got fed up with it and then there were four.
Four little churchmen just could not agree;
Who should take collections, and then there were three.
Three little churchmen said the service through;
Got a hymn they did'nt know and then there were two.
Two little churchmen disputed who should run
The next parochial concert and then there was one.

One faithful churchman, knowing what to do;
Got a friend to come to Church and then there were two.
Two faithful churchmen each brought one more;
So the number doubled, and then there were four.
Four sturdy churchmen simply could'nt wait;
Till they found four others, and then there were eight.
Eight eager churchmen searching round for souls.
Praying, working, witnessing, drew others in by shoals
Shoals and shoals at every service, cramming every pew.
O God, supply the grace to make this ending true.

7/7/91

Sexton

Information from Mr Sidney Middleton son of Mr E Jack Middleton who was Sexton at the time.

Vicar

During the incumbency of Rev B.A. Trim, rabbits had been a particular problem in Lupitt Churchyard and Jack had set some rabbit wires in the hope of catching some and reducing the nuisance. Said the Vicar to Jack "Middleton, have you caught many rabbits?" Sid did not remember what reply his father gave, but remembered the Vicars comment.
"Well, you've now caught the Rural Dean!"

WICK WEEK not WICK 7/2/91

I remember that when passing a new signpost at Barn Cross, recently erected, my father remarked that the Rural District Council had mis-spelt the name painted on the arm towards WEEK and which had then been spelt WICK.

This was probably nearer to the way in which locally we spoke when referring to the hamlet situated on the western slope of Dumpdon.

I am unable to give any accurate date when this occurred but think that it must have been when he drove a horse (Blackbird) and trap to church which would be early or middle 1920's as his first Austin 12 tourer car was bought late 1927 or early 1928 just after I
1927 started my three year period at Queens College Taunton from the summer period of 1927.

On thinking about this I have looked up earlier notes written and find several references to WEEK.

VOL I In VOL I and the lists refer to
P 141 the Morris Index of page 141 the name of
P 149 WEEK appears against entry no 315
1883 The Rate Book list of 1883 mentions
P 175 Stockers Week
P 177 Week and North Week
Huggins Week
179 Moore's Week P183 WEEK P 228-9
P 181 Week
1839 The Rate Book assessment list of 1839
P 285 Huggings Week
Week
North Weeks
Stockers Week
Guppy's Week
P 287 Near Week
VOL II 1910 Income Tax Assessment 1910 — 1922
P 155 Huggins
Mogriges Week
P 159 Stockers Week
Moors Week
VOL III
P 5 Week and North Week
P 74 Commons Registration Act WICK farm
VOL IV P 31 – 32 ✓

74

Bells

In Praise of Bells by John Lamb 1988

Sent by F J Sage

Excerpts

I A Ring of Bells.

P15 There is every reason to believe that more than 4,000 years ago bells were used by the Chinese in worship and as a form of communication.

P16 Exc. 28 v 33-4. Aaron's robe.

"And bells of gold between them round about:

42 BC. One of the most practical devices involving bells was used in 42 BC, at the siege of Lycia, when Brutus ordered that nets containing little bells be floated over the surface of the moat —

P17 St Agatha — martyr living in Catania, Sicily in

AD 250 AD 250 — adopted as the patron saint of both bellfounders and bellringers.

One of the earliest references to bells in Europe —

St Gregory 538-93 is made by St Gregory of Tours (538-93) a bishop and historian. He mentions small bells used on clothing and harness but also remarks on the much larger bells hanging in churches and sounded by an internal clapper.

P18 The bell in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, said to have been cast by St Patrick himself.

St Patrick 390-460 St Patrick's bell was buried with him when he died in 460.

6th C A sixth-century bell was found at Llangynnodl in Powys, and at Llangenau near Brecon, a bell of similar age, once covered in bronze has been excavated. Both are handbells —

P20 A tale of a bell is that told by the Venerable Bede

Bede AD 680 regarding the death of St Hilda of Whitby in AD 680. Just before she died says Bede, "this nun of a sudden heard the well known sound of a bell in the air, which was used to awaken and call them to prayer when anyone was taken out of this world."

C 750 By the year 750 bells had begun to be hung

St Dunstan 925 in church towers. It is known that St Dunstan (C925) was an early bellfounder. Church bells became popular about this time due to a change in the Saxon Law. It was decreed that a churl could be promoted to the rank of thane if he had an estate of 500 acres or more and a church with at least four bells on his land. Ringing of the

Curfew curfew was also made a legal requirement.

P 20 The oldest bell in a church, though undated, is almost certainly that hanging in the pretty riverside church of St Lawrence at Baversfield, Oxfordshire. It is known to have been given to the church by Sir
1219 Hugh Gargate in 1219.
P 21 The oldest church bell in England bearing positive evidence of its age is at Lissett, Yorkshire. Here we find a bell with a date in Roman numerals
1254 MCCLIIII (1254)
One of the earliest known rings of bells hung in an English church was at Broyland Abbey, Lincolnshire, where six bells were given to the
984 monks in 984. In 1091 fire destroyed abbey and bells.

2. Bellfounding and Hanging

Ropeford The first full-time established bellfounder seems
P 24 to have been Roger de Ropeford of Exeter who was
1284 working in that city in 1284. In 1970, the
1970 demolition of a church in Exeter revealed the pit
Exeter where the original bell was cast for the Norman
1150 tower of 1150.
P 25 Pixies hated the sound of bells.
At Ottery St Mary in Devon they watched and
Pixies at Ottery ordered the 'little people' to impede the mining of silver and copper — Plan no 2. Extract the dew from flowers and sprinkle it on the cooling bell metal, so causing the bells to crack. — Flowers added nectar to dew and so averted the catastrophe. Plan no 3 — carriers, led by Brother John of Exeter confused and 'pixillated' and were led accross country towards the sea. It was only when Brother John stepped on a thorn at the cliff edge and exclaimed 'God bless my soul' that the men came to their senses and discovered their danger. The bells were eventually hung in the church of St Edward the Confessor at Ottery with no further misadventures.
1454 In 1454 they struck again when a new ring of bells was due to be dedicated on Midsummers Day. When the ringers arrived — they found that the ropes had been inextricably tangled together — after prayers had been said and the power of holy water invoked were the ropes able to be separated and ringing to commence.
They would not interfere again for 500 years —
1954 In 1954 a group of Ottery parishoners resurrected

the legend, and put on a play 'the Pixies Revenge'.
1971 It lapsed in 1971 — more recently it has been revived.
P 27 The Whitechapel Bellfoundry in London established
Whitechapel by Robert Mot in 1570 — the oldest continuous
private company in the world —
Big Ben The most famous bell produced at Whitechapel
1858 is undoubtedly Big Ben — they recast in 1858.
P 29 The only other foundry casting church bells in
Taylors Britain today is Taylors of Loughborough.
1782 — the name of the present firm began in 1782.
1840 moved to Devon and Oxford — settled in Loughborough in 1840
Taylors foundry has the honour of having made the
heaviest bell in England which can be used for
82 cwt full circle ringing — the 82 cwt Emmanuel
tenor bell of Liverpool Cathedral.
74 bells Gillett and Johnson produced the 74 bell carillon
P 30 of new York's Riverside Church.

3 Bell Inscriptions

P 36 One of the longest bell inscriptions in existence.
It is found at Brixton, Devon, and recounts the
1740 history of one of the six bells. 'In the year 1740
John Lord Zealous for the promotion of Campanalogia
caused me to be fabricated and placed in this
tower. Sixty years I had the seal when I was
unfortunately broken in the year 1800. I was
cast in the furnace, refounded in London, and
returned to my former station. Reader, though
shall also know a Resurrection. May it be
unto eternal life!

4 Ringing the changes

P 44 The long tradition of ringing church bells in
Britain, dating from Saxon times, was to undergo
a fundamental change about the middle of the
seventeenth century. Many bells having been
destroyed or lost after the dissolution of the
Henry VIII monasteries by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1539,
1536-39 they were gradually being replaced when the
process was interrupted yet again by the
Cromwell Commonwealth which, under Cromwell, banned
all churches from having or ringing more than
two bells, as this was considered a form of frivolity.
Civil War After the Civil War, as bells were gradually
P 45 various bellhangers continued to experiment by
attaching the bell to a whole wheel. The result was
dramatic: it was discovered that the swing of

Changes each bell could be controlled with such precision that it could ring immediately before or immediately after its neighbour according to the amount of 'pull' exerted on the rope.

On twelve bells the possible changes run into several millions, and it has been calculated that if rung non stop by a band they would take some thirty six years to complete.

P47 The longest continuous peal by one band was rung at the Loughborough foundry campanile

40,320 July 63. in July 1963, when a band of ten rang 40,320 Eight changes in just over seventeen hours.

P57 1986 In 1986 the 'Liverpool Echo' informed its readers that a Mrs Stephanie Lindhurst-Jones was claiming unfair dismissal from her place of employment because she refused to work on Sundays. Her reason for so doing was because she was a regular Sunday service ringer at her parish church. At the industrial tribunal that was held, it was decided that this was a legitimate excuse. She was given her job back and awarded £1120 compensation.

Service ringer

5 The Common Bell

P61 King Arthur 537 One of the earliest references to ringing for a solemn occasion is in the legend that the bells at Tintagel rang for the death of King Arthur at Camlan in AD 537.

P64 The bell was tolled nine times for a man, six for a woman and three times for a child. In some churches the age of the departed was announced by the appropriate number of strokes.

P66 Sanctus Bell — Sermon bell — Curfew bell

P70 The Duke of Kent — rarely bothered to pay bills. When he died at Sidmouth, muffled bells were rung to signal the departure of the coffin for Windsor. It was also the signal for the infuriated tradesmen of Sidmouth to line the route and block the way with carts, agreeing to allow the cortege to continue only after their bills had been settled. The result was a near-riot on the road from Sidmouth to Honiton and the coffin had to be taken back to Sidmouth. There the local yeomanry were called out and later that night, under cover of darkness, the procession set out once more for Windsor. It took four days and reached Cumberland Lodge where it lay in state.

P80 One of the earliest objectors to bells, and in fact to any
form of 'noise' during a service, was the Cistercian
1146 monk Abbot Aelred who wrote in 1146 'Why such organs
and so many cymbals in the church? What with the
Noise sound of the bells, the noise of the cymbals and the
united strains of the organ pipes, the common folk
W. War II stand with wondering faces, trembling and amazed!'
P81 The advent of World War II brought about the
longest ban on ringing ever known in Britain.
P82 After Dunkirk it was confidently expected that
Dunkirk the Germans would very soon mount an invasion
of the south of England by sea and air. Great
See Vol II thought was given as to how warning of such an
P139 event might be given immediately throughout
the land. At a meeting at Tunbridge Wells
between General Ironside and General Home,
it was decided that church bells would be
Ban rung to signal an invasion, and for no other
13/6/40 reason. Accordingly on 13 June 1940, a new
See P67 Control of Noise Order came into force, and on
the following Sunday, for the first time in a
thousand years, not a single church bell was
heard in the land.

The Order — had not been thought through in detail. Who was going to ring the bells? The Home Guard volunteered to do this! — It was pointed out to them that it would be highly dangerous. Dorothy L. Sayers wrote the following letter to the Daily Telegraph.

'I have been waiting fascinated, for someone in authority to realise that to order a completely raw band to run along and ring a church bell is rather like ordering him to run along and milk a savage and reluctant cow; the net result would be much the same, except that the bell can kick much harder than the cow.'

P84 The ban was lifted for a few hours on 15 November 1942
Ban lifted to celebrate the victory at El Alamein, and also
27/5/1943 for an hour on Christmas Day that year, and then
was finally lifted on 27 May 1943.

Bishop P87 Latimer 1490–1555

6 magic bells

Bishop Latimer — 'I think that if all the bells in England should be rung together at a certain hour, there would be almost no place but some bells might be heard there, and so the devil should

have no abiding place in England.

P88 1870 There is an account in the 'Torquay Directory' as late as 1870 of the church bells being rung at Dawlish to dispel lightning and thunder!

P100 York Minster 1984 Bishop In this incident one is forcibly reminded of the view of many good people that the fire which destroyed much of the South Transept of York Minster in July 1984 was a 'rebuke' by God to the Church of England for the consecration as Bishop of Durham of Dr David Jenkins who had recently made remarks casting doubts on literal belief in the Creed.

7 The Poetry of Bells

This chapter contains many rhymes, such as Orange and Lemons — in full — 32 lines
Westminster Chimes
Lord, through this hour
Be Thou our guide
And by Thy power
No foot shall slide.
Ding dong bell — 8 lines
Longfellow in 'The golden Legend' 1851. — 27 lines
Tennyson's 'In memoriam' 4 verses of 4 lines.
" 'Crossing the Bar'
William Godwin in 'The miners dream of Home'

P113 Bunyan 1628 John Bunyan was an enthusiastic ringer at the detached tower of the parish church of Elstow, near Bedford, where he was born in 1628.

8 Ringers Verses Clergy

P116 Do not ring and run away
Leaving other folk to pray.

P130 9 Youths and Maidens

P143 Handbells 1967 10 Handbell Rafflerings
The Handbell Ringers of Great Britain were formed in 1967 at Horbury near Manchester. Some 700 Handbell teams are now part of this Association, and the size of a set of bells may be anything from one to six diatonic octaves.

11 Big Ben & Co

P157 Lutine Probably the most famous of all ships bells is the Lutine Bell which hangs in the Underwriters room at Lloyds

Bow bells — Turn again Whittington

P162 St Paul's, London — a really big bell in what was after all, the most famous cathedral in Britain. They envisaged a bell of about 14 tons.

P162 In the event enough money was raised to enable an even larger bell to be cast by Taylor's. This
16¾ ton bell weighed 16¾ tons, and was successfully cast on 23 November 1881.

The bell, named 'Great Paul' then had to be transported to London. Size — nine feet six inches at the mouth. It eventually left Loughborough
11/5/1882 on 11 May 1882 on a specially strengthened low loader hauled by a steam traction engine. Through Leicester, Kettering, Northampton, Dunstable and St Albans, 'Great Paul' travelled until it reached the steep Highgate Hill on 20 May. Here it had to stay a day whilst a second traction engine was attached to act as a brake going down the hill, but finally, on Monday 22 May, it arrived safely outside St Pauls. No bell of that size had ever been hoisted aloft before in Britain.

The Royal Engineers were called in from Woolwich Arsenal and brought equipment with them normally used for moving 35-ton cannons. All went well according to plan and in the surprisingly short time of fifteen hours Great Paul had been lifted into its tower. After more work by the bell-Ranger, the bell was ready to be tolled and the dedication service took place
3/6/1882 on 3rd June 1882.
P163 If Great Paul is the biggest bell in Britain,
Big Ben there is little doubt that Big Ben is the best loved. Probably the most famous bell in the world, it hangs in the clock tower of the Houses of Parliament at Westminster. For many people Big Ben is the clock tower, but, in fact, it is only the hour bell of the Westminster
13½ tons chimes. It weighs 13½ tons. It seems likely that Big Ben was named after Ben Caunt, a seventeen stone prize fighter famous in his day.
P166 Big Ben remains cracked to this day, and its imperfect note is known all over the world since it made its radio debut, ushering in the year
1924 1924 via the B.B.C. studios in Savoy Hill.

Liverpool Cathedral — 14¾ ton bell
York minster's 'Great Peter' 10¾ tons
Nottingham Exchange — Little John — 10½ tons
Exeter — 4 ton 'Great Peter' recast in 1676 from the original bell of 1484 dedicated to Bishop Peter Courtenay.