

HISTORY OF THE BELLS OF DEANE CHURCH

The earliest reference that exists, mentioning bells at Deane is dated 1541. Memorable as the year in which King Henry VIII, by letters patent, ordained the Chapel of Saynte Mariden.

“PATENT ROLL 33 HENRY VIII [1541] PART 8 in 27(13)”

“The king to all &c, greeting. Whereas the parochial chapel of Deane, in the diocese of West Chester, which was impropriate to the late monastery of Whalley, and is now in the right of our crown, is distant by eight miles or thereabouts from any other church or chapel, and has an ample and populous parish, chancel, vestibule, choir, nave, aisles, baptistery, belfry, bells, cemetery, alters and other marks denoting a parish churchetcetc. “

This document confirms that Deane had bells before 1541. But what size and how many is unknown.

The next date which is known can be found on the bells. Originally a ring of six bells dated 1718. No founders name is given but they are believed to be by Richard Sanders of Bromsgrove. Around the shoulder of some of these (the present 3rd, 4th, 5th and Tenor) are the names of men of Deane who were Church Wardens at the time. The name James Rothwell appears on the Tenor, he was vicar of Deane from 1712 until 1766.

The original hanging of these bells could not have been very satisfactory as an entry in the parish records of August 2nd 1723 shows that

“ye sum of £40 be collected and gathered towards ye new hanging of ye bells, and other incidental charges”

JAMES ROTHWELL VICAR

Another entry of August 7th 1724

“6 bell ropes.....00	15	06”
(this shows the cost to be 15 shillings and sixpence or as we say today 77 ½ p)		

The next item concerning bells is found August 3rd 1725

“For a new clapper for ye 5 th bell.....00	06	00”
(6 shillings or 30p)		

there does not appear to be any further references to bells until 1792 when in the church wardens accounts we find October 27th 1792

“Bill for new bell the fourth.....54	04	07
Carriage of new bell to Worsley	17	11
Fetching bell from Worsley	8	7”

Obviously the fourth bell at that time had come to grief. The replacement, the present sixth has around its shoulder

“THOS MEARS OF LEICESTER. PACK & CHAPMAN OF LONDON 1759”

This inscription is somehow inaccurate as records show that Thomas Mears did not come to the foundry at Whitechapel until 1791. Prior to this Pack and Chapman held the foundry from 1770 until 1782, when it was taken over by William Mears until 1784, followed by William and Thomas up to 1787 and finally Thomas alone. I can only surmise that the year cast on the bell is wrong. An error on the original or an error at its recasting in 1954?

From the above accounts and since railways were not then available, it is most likely that the bell was carried from London to Worsley by canal transport. No further reference can be found until 1895. But the old fifth bell must have met with an accident as the present seventh has around its shoulder

“T.H.PARRS OF LONDON FECIT 1831”

(FECIT is Latin for Made Me). Nothing is known as to why the old fifth needed replacement. From this point on, these six bells seem to have served the parish up to 1895 when all ringing had to be suspended, because in November of that year according to parish records and an article which was published in the “Bolton Chronicle” “It was found that the interior of the tower and the bell bearings were in so dilapidated condition as to interfere with further ringing until thoroughly renovated”.

Work to the rectification of these affairs was put in hand. The interior of the tower being rebuilt where necessary. The old six bells were taken down and renovated. Also at the same time it was decided to add two new trebles, thus completing the octave. All this work came to a total cost of £297:17:7. The bells being rededicated at a service on Wednesday 20th May 1896 at 7:30 in the evening, conducted by the rev’ H.S.Patterson vicar of Deane. The original frame of oak was retained, the two new bells being hung a purpose built extension. We see in this work, a move from the foundry at Whitechapel, London, as the work was entrusted to Messrs Taylor of Loughborough.

Up to this time the bells were rung from the ground floor of the tower, but earlier in 1897 a choir vestry had been formed in the base of the tower, ringing now taking place from the new first floor.

Incidentally the first ever peal on the bells was rung from the ground floor. A peal of Kent Treble Bob Major on Saturday July 25th 1896
5088 changes in 2 hours 43 minutes

The second peal to be rung was by an all local ‘Deane’ band, from the new ringing chamber. Plain Bob Major in 2 hours 57 minutes. 5040 changes on Monday March 22nd 1897.

A peal board hangs in the ringing chamber commemorating these two feats.

These eight bells served the parish for 58 years. Concern was shown during the mid 1930’s, the bearings (plain bushes at that time) were again showing signs of wear, and the bells, especially the Tenors, getting more difficult to ring. Taylor’s were again contacted and their advice was to recast the entire peal, adding metal to form a lower toned ring, and re-hang them in an entirely new metal frame.

The parochial church council and also some of the congregation, strongly objected on the grounds of the cost of the estimated £596:0:0. No action was taken apart from fitting the 7th and Tenor with new ball bearings. Nothing further was done to the bells but in 1952 the ringers were far from satisfied with the condition of the bells and framework.

Under the guidance of the then Tower Captain, Major Crook, advice was again sought from Taylor’s, who drew up a new specification to recast the bells in the same musical key ‘F[#]’, and re-hang the peal in an all steel and cast iron frame, all on ball bearings. The weight of the new Tenor was to be approximately 12 ½ cwt. The cost of this work was to be £1,400:0:0. This time the Church Council agreed to the work although no funds were available. The money was raised by subscriptions from the congregation, and individuals paying for (or giving) a bell.

The old bells were taken out of the tower in June 1954. Melted down and re-cast in early September. In the meantime the new frame was being made and alterations to the tower were in hand. The new bells, frame and fittings arrived at Deane during December 1954. At the same time a new clock was fitted in the tower and was dedicated along with the bells at a service on Saturday 12th February 1955 by the Archdeacon of Manchester, the venerable A.Selwyn Bean.

The bells are in the key of F[#].

This brings us to the present day, no major work has been needed since 1954 apart from renewing worn out bell ropes and a repair to the Tenor’s ‘Slider’, broken when the clapper fell out in 1976.

D.W.McCormick
Tower Captain 1993