

Account of Purley on Thames

A Bit of a Tell

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Hello again. It's good to meet you.

I hope you have enjoyed the late flourishing of the gardens and our beautiful countryside highlighted by the afternoon sun. This month the Country is commemorating the end of The Great War as it was known when I was a child. Purley will be playing its part remembering the men of Purley who died and members of our own families who gave their lives. The bells of St. Mary's will join with the national tribute in The Ringing of Bells For Peace.

St. Mary's has a ring of six bells. Originally it was five all cast in the 17th century by Elles and Francis Knight of Reading a bell founding company that can be traced to 1518. The original oak frame was also made in the early 17th century. All the bells are inscribed and dated. The treble bell is inscribed 'The Gift of John George Liebenrood of the Parish of Purley ESQr. John Sherwood Church Warden. Thos Janaway fecit. Anno Domini 1788.' Thomas Janaway gained his skills when apprenticed at the Whitechapel Foundry, the most famous bell founding company in the world and he set up on his own in the mid 1700s.

Due to various difficulties, the need for repairs and safety issues the bells were silent for most of the 20th century but in 1999 it was decided that St. Mary's bells should ring out for the Millennium and a determined effort was mounted to raise the money to make this possible. It was a very popular appeal and many people throughout the parish contributed. Boshers of Cholsey did the structural work on the tower and the foundry work on the bells was done at Whitechapel. All was ready to ring in the New Year for AD 2000 and it was a joyful Midnight Watch service. If you are interested in the bells there is much more information on the Project Purley website.

When I was very young there was a popular piece of light music titled 'Bells Across the Meadow.' Today we have the pleasure of hearing the timeless sound of St. Mary's bells drifting through the valley meadows of Purley.

Mind how you go.