

*The  
Bells and Ringing Annals  
of Saffron Walden.*

BY THE  
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# THE BELLS AND RINGING ANNALS OF SAFFRON WALDEN.

BY THE REV G. MONTAGU BENTON, M.A.

No one can fail to be struck by the situation of the stately parish church of Saffron Walden ; and its lofty spire-crowned tower, rising above the red-roofed houses and dominating the little town, holds also a proud position in the annals of bell-ringing.

Walden church is, or was until recently, one of the thirty-six cathedrals and churches in England, possessing a ring of twelve bells.\* A subscription to obtain ten bells was proposed as long ago as 1812, but although the old seventh was recast in the following year, the scheme fell through, and it was not until 1914 that the original ring of eight was augmented by the addition of the front four bells.†

A complete account of the bells is unnecessary, since a great deal of information relating to them is to be found in Messrs. Deedes and Walters' *Church Bells of Essex* (1909). That noble monograph has been placed under contribution, but this paper may be said to embody the results of independent research, and to throw additional light on the history of the Walden bells.

The seventeenth century Wardens' accounts contain numerous entries referring to the bells, and the facts gleaned from this source are of considerable interest. The original MS. has been carefully gone through, and, apart from minor items—such as ' mending bell-clapper,' ' bell-ropes ' trussing up two bells and mending of the wheels,' ' work amongst the bells,' ' grease for the bells,' ' straps to the bells,'—the following transcript of the entries in question is complete. Notes are interspersed where requisite.

	li.	s.	d.
1624. Rec. of a Rate made for casting of a bell and dyvers Reparacions of the Church	46	2	2
Paide for casting of the brasses & mettall for the greate bell		xvij	0
Paide for carrying of the bell to casting and back againe		ij	vj

\* Two other Essex churches, Chelmsford Cathedral and Waltham Abbey, have rings of twelve, all three peals having been augmented to that number within a year.

†They were cast by Alfred Bowell, of Ipswich. Their weights range from 3 cwt. 2 qrs. to 5 cwt. 1 qr. for their inscriptions see the *Essex Review*, xxiii., p. 212. The notes are A, G, F sharp and E, while those of the old eight are D, C sharp, B, A, G, F sharp, E, and D—not as given by Messrs. Deedes and Walters.

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	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1624. Paide for casting of the bell	viiij	0	0
Paide for xxij pounder of pewter to put into the bell		xviiij	iiij
Payde for a Bawdrick for the Sausbell			vj
1625. Payde to Carder for wayte to Ivey the bell			iiij
1629. Paide to Gray the bellfounder for casting of the greate bell	xv	0	0

This was Miles Graye, of Colchester, who has been called by Canon Raven 'the prince of founders.' There were, apparently, three founders of the same name, and we may assume that this was Miles I., whose bells date from 1600 to 1648. There remain, all told, 415 bells by the Miles Graye ; 268 are by Miles I., and his son, Miles II., of which 134 are in Essex.

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1629. Paide more to him for mettall for the same bell		xv	vj
Paide more to him for casting of brasses		xvj	vj
Paid for drawing downe the greate bell		iiij	iiij
Paid to Stephen Bush to make a sled to drawe it downe withall		ij	0
Paid to Mr. Cole for making covenanute betwene the bellfounder & the Towne		1	0
Paid to Allis the carpenter for making our bell frames	xxv	0	0
1630. Rec. of a Rate made for the shoting of the greate Bell & making of the frames	xlviij	0	x
1633. Pd. to William Reeder for blockinge upp the Bells (ye tenor & treble) & putting in a peece into the stock of the tenor		4	0
1634. Payd to Miles Graye for the casting of our great Bell the 23 <sup>rd</sup> daye of October, 1634 now waying but 27 cwt & xxlbs, at 10s ye cwt	13	11	0
And there remaine in mettell wch was left of the ould Bell wch now ly in the possession of ye church just halfe a hundred and 15 lbs.--I say ½cwt. 15lbs.			

The parishioners were exceptionally unfortunate with regard to their 'great bell,' seeing that it was re-cast three times within eleven years.

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1634. Payd unto Goodman Allis the 28th daye of October, 1634, for hanging and tuneing the Bells	3	0	0
Pd. for drawing the Bell downe to Grayes and up againe to the Church		8	0
1640. Payd to William Turner for a matt to ly under the great bell ropes to keep them from tearing			4

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	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1640. Paid to William Reder . . . and his sonne in helping up with the great bell, because the gugion pin was broken and the bel fel along and broke her whele, and to raise it again and make all her woodworke againe fitting he spent that time		5	0
Paid to Thomas Reeder for 2 dayes and a halfe in the same worke about the same bell		3	8
Paid to George Gardiner and James Gardiner for helping to lift up the said bell,--they were two Or 3 howres			6
Paid to George Hull for 3 dayes worke in the same worke about the said bell, for he first borrowed timber, and after caried it againe		3	0
Paid to William Thurlow the smith for mending the gugion pin for the great bell the same time		1	8
Paid to John Ramshire the same time for makinge the head of a bolt, and for makeing the eye of an other bolt, and for mending the sheres of the third bell, and for makeing 4 keyes for bolts, and for four spiles al for the great bell the same time		1	2
Paid for nayles of 3 sorts for the whele and staves of the of the great bell and third bell			5
It. for that at the same time I spoyled [a paire of gloves]* with handling greasie timber with helping 2 dayes in the said worke I set downe		1	0
1641. Paid to Mr. Henrie Leader for certaine bel mettall left of the Almshouse bel mettall		2	0
Paid to Thomas Low for helping Georg Hull to trusse up the 4 <sup>th</sup> , 5 <sup>th</sup> , & 6 <sup>th</sup> bells, they being loese in there stocks, and keyes slipte out			10

The record of a Visitation held at Walden in 1686, states that ' there are six bells in good order.'

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1642. Paid to John Thurgar, Ropemaker, for a new roape for the fourth bell, sime it is put on the great bell, the wayt 12 pound and a quarter at 5d. the pound		5	1
Paid to Goodman Sheed of Debden, blacksmith, for mending the great bell clapper, it being broken of at the boule in the midst		12	8
1647. Payde to George Hull for mendinge the thirde bell wheele and for straw used aboute the wheele		1	6
1648. [Ditto] for 3 dayes worke and a half aboute the greate bell wheele beeing broaken a peeces		4	8
1651. Pd. for raying the great bell beeing falen downe in the fframe, & mendinge ye wheele		8	0

\* Scratched out in the original entry.

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	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1651. Pd. for mending on of ye gudging pinn for ye great bell, & keyes, & on fore locke		2	0
Pd. for mending ye great bell clapper		3	4
Paid to Goodman Raymond for mending the great bell clapper, and the 4th bell clapper	1	6	0
Paid to George Hull for carring the 4th clapper to Chesterford.			8
1652. Paid to goodman Rayment of great Chestiford for mending the great bell clapper the 10th of November		14	0
Paid to george Hull for goeing to Chesterford for goodman Rayment			8
Paid to George Hull to mend the bauldrucke			2
Paid to goodman Harvye to carry the bell-clapper to Chesterford & for bringing of it home againe		1	0
Laid out for beere for goodman Rayment when he came for the bel clapper			3
Paid for taking of the stocke of the great Bell and for mending it		8	0
1654. Spent upon the Bell founder when he cam to take the Bell to cast		8	0
Payd for drawinge the Articles		1	0
Payd to John Hodson, Bell founder, for castinge the ffit Bell and hanging the rest of the Bells	37	0	0

John Hodson and his son Christopher were famous London bell-founders, and their foundry 'is remarkable for the large number of bells that issued from it during the " close " time of the Commonwealth.' Twenty of their bells, which are 'always good,' remain in Essex. The chapel bell at St. Catharine's College, Cambridge, also by Hodson, was cast in the same year, and the following entry\* in the College accounts for 1654-5 suggests that the Walden bell was cast locally, in a temporary foundry, a not uncommon practice: ' ffor casting ye chappelbell . . . and carriage of it between this and Waldin £3 15s.'

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1663. Payd to William Raymond of Chesterforth for the great Bell clapper	2	16	0
1673. Payd for 2lb. of kyes and woorke done to the measser bell		2	0
Payd Thomas Rush ffor drillinge the meassure bell, and iarn woorke and seatinge hir up, Feby. 17th 1673	1	10	0

The word ' measser ' or 'meassure,' is very puzzling, and there seems to be nothing like it in the Dictionaries. Mr. H. B. Walters, F.S.A., whom I

\* Quoted in Raven's *Church Bells of Cambs.*, 2nd Ed., p. 89.



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		<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1709.	Paid for making the Bond at Sudbury		5	0
	Paid the Belfounder	12	0	0
	Paid Mr. Morgan for a Bell	2	15	6
	Paid for horse and expenses to Sudbury, three dayes	1	0	0
1710. Aug. 30	Charges to Sudbury when the Great Bell was run	1	0	0
	Sep. 9 Paid the Belfounder	2	10	0
1711. Sep. 10	Paid the Belfounder for Runing ye Great Bell in pt. 40 <sup>i</sup>	20	0	0
	Paid to the Belfounder	2	10	0
	Expenses to Sudbury when the Bell was run	1	0	0
1720.	Spent at ye agreem <sup>t</sup> with Thornton abt. running ye Gt. Bell		2	6
	Journey, horsehire, and expences at Sudbury when the Bell was runn	1	1	8
	Pd for drawing articles & stamppaper		6	8

An acc<sup>t</sup> of Casting the Tenor Bell & 8 pair of Bell brasses.

		<i>cwt.</i>	<i>lbs.</i>
1720. April 8 <sup>th</sup>	The weight of y <sup>e</sup> old Tenor Bell	22	49
	The old brasses	00	59
April 11 <sup>th</sup>	The weight of the New Tenor Bell	25	00
	The weight of the New brasses	00	96
		£	<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i>
	The Charges thereof		
Item.	Casting the old Tenor Bell at 20s per Hun <sup>rd</sup>	22	9 0
	2 Hund <sup>rd</sup> & an halfe & seaven p <sup>d</sup> . weight of mettle att 14 <sup>d</sup> per pound	16	14 10
	Casting the old brasses at 6 <sup>d</sup> . per pound	1	8 0
	40 pound of mettle at 14 <sup>d</sup> . per pound.	2	6 8
1722. July 27 <sup>th</sup>		<u>42</u>	<u>18 6</u>

At a vestry met at Church, August 17, 1724. It was agreed that an Addition be made to the Sts Bell for the Clock to strike on. And also that everyone shall pay five shillings that has the Great Bell rung for any Knell or Buryall.

At a vestry met at Church on Tuesday in Easter week, March 30, 1725. It was agreed that the mulct laid upon the Great Bell should be taken off, and that the money allready recd be returned, *nemine contradicente*.

		<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1733.	Paid for the Saint's bell	12	4	0
	For Caridge and portridge of the bell		17	0

This bell was the representative of the old ' saunce ' or Sanctus bell, which, in pre-Reformation days, was rung at the ' Sanctus ' in the Mass, but which is often confused with the sacring bell, rung at the Elevation of the Host.\*

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1741. Paid for the sett of matts for the Bell-solly		13	9

National and local events were celebrated in Walden, as elsewhere, by the church bells, and the entries in the Wardens' accounts, recording the payments to the ringers on these, and other, occasions, will form an interesting continuation of the extracts already given.

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1622. Spent on Ringers the 5 August		ij	0
Spent on the Ringers the vth of November †		v	0
1632. Pd to fleminge for ringinge ye 8 of clock bell		5	0

This, of course, was the Curfew, the survivor really of the Ave bell, which continued to be rung at Walden until about fifty years ago.

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1635. Spent uppon the Ringers when Kinge Charles cam to Audliend Parke to hunte		5	6
1639, Mch. 27. Pd to James Simon for bere that fleming spent amongst ringers when he had newes that the Quene [Henrietta Maria] was brought in bed		5	0
June 21. Spent that day, by advise, amongst Ringers for that there was newes sent from London by Doctor Grey y <sup>e</sup> peace was concluded betwene the King and the Scotts		2	6
1641, Nov. 25. Spent on the Ringers at Thomas Cornels by consent of Mr. Treasurer for Joy of our King's cuming home		2	6
1642. It. given to the Ringers on Whitsunday for Ringing for Joy that the Right Honorable the Countisse of Suffolk gave her gift to the Church as namely, the velvet Carpet for the Communion table and the best velvet Cushion for the Pulpit		1	6
1643. July. Payd to George Hull for ringing ye sermon bell for ye Lecture by ye consent of ye tresurer and chamberlyns		5	0

The above entry marks the advent of a Puritan lecturer, Wm. Spalden, M.A., who was licensed to lecture in the Parish Church

\* For instance, the recently published *Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Essex*, vol. i. (p. 369) errs in this respect.

† The Ringers' accounts for 1837 show the receipt of a guinea for ringing the bells on ' Nov. 5.—Powder Plot.'

at Walden once on a week-day and on every ' Lord's-day ' in the afternoon.

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1643. Paid to George Hull, October 23rd, for ringinge the Lecture bell		5	0
1644. Pd. to George Hull for ringing the Lector bell for the yeare 1643		6	8
1646. Payde to George Hull for Toulinge the bell at Ester		1	0
1647. [Ditto] at the Comunions at Ester			6
1653. Paid to the ringers for the news from the Sea		1	0
1658. Payd Thomas Husksly for beere and breade for the Ringers that day the Lord Proteckter was proclamed xxs.	1	0	0
Payd Mr. Dowtye, October 2th 1658, ffor breade and and beere for the Ringers when the Lorde Richard was proclaymed Proteckter		10	0
1660. Payd Mr. Littlechild, April 25th 1660, ffor the ringers when the Parliment begane to site		5	0
Payd more May 3th, when Charles the Second was voted King, for beer for the ringers		5	0
Payd more to Mr. Littlechild, May 12th, ffor the ringers when Charles the Second was Proclaymmed Kinge	1	0	0
1661. Payd Mr. Littlechild for breade and beere for the ringers on Crownenatione day, April 23th, 1661		10	0
Payd more at Mr. James White's		5	0
Payd more at Mr. John Bunyard's		5	0
Payd Mr. White for the Ringers when my Lord of Suffolke came downe, May 3th		3	9
Payd Mr. White ffor breade and beere for the ringers on the King's birthday, May 29, 1661*		10	0
1662. Payd Thomas Runham, junior, more for the ringers for the Queue's [Katharine of Portugal] saufe arrivale, May 18th, 1662		5	0
1663. Sermon Bell ringing at ye vissitation in May			6
1664. June 6. Given to the Ringers when Mr. fletcher [Vicar] took his possession		10	0
Spent uppon the Ringers when the Lord Chancellor was in the Towne		5	0
1665. Spent upon the ringers at the Newes of ye Duch rowting & ye day of thanckgiveing		10	0
To ye Ringers when ye King was at Audiend	1	10	0
1666. Spent upon ye Ringers when ye Earle of Ossery & others came to see ye Church		5	0
To ye Ringers when ye Earle came from Ipswitch		6	0
1668. Spent on ye Ringers 21 May, ye King being at Audley end		5	0

\* The Ringers' accounts for 1838 show the receipt of a guinea for ringing the bells on `May 29 —Restoration of King Charles.'

		<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1668.	Spent on ye Ringers 30 sept., ye King being at Audley End		5	0
	More on ye Ringers, ye Queene being there		7	6

A memorandum on the fly-leaf of the third Register book records ' That his sacred Majestie Charles the Second by ye Grace of God King of Eng. &c. came to Walden Church from Audly end, Sunday forenoone, Octbr. ye 11th, 1668.'

The Audley End estate was conveyed to Chas. II. in 1669, and the Court was established there in the following year ; it was re-conveyed to Henry the fifth Earl of Suffolk in 1701.

		<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1670.	Payd the Ringers April 12, 1670, when the Kinge came to Audliend		2	0
	Payd the Ringers when the quene came to Audliend, September 27th, 1670		3	0
	Payd them more when she came through the the Towne on the markt day		4	0
1673.	Payd Edward Barker for the Ringers uppon St. George's day, April 23th, 1673		3	6
1684. Apl.	Payd ye Ringers att the King's goeing by to Newmarket*		5	0
1685.	Spent upon the ringers when King James the second was proclaymed†	1	2	6
Apl. 23.	Spent more upon them at his Coronation		10	0
	Spent on the Ringers att the Election by order		6	0
	Paid for Ringing (the 6th of Feby. being the day wherein o <sup>r</sup> late King dyed)		6	8
1686.	Gave the Ringers when the Rebels in the west were routed		7	4
	At the late D[uke] of Monmouth's taking		8	6
1688, June 13.	Pd. Ye Ringers y <sup>t</sup> did Ring ye bells of ye thanksgiveing day for ye young Prince of Wales		8	0
1689, Apl. 20.	Pd. ye Ringers for Ringing ye bells y <sup>t</sup> day y <sup>t</sup> King William & Queene Mary were crowned		6	8
	Pd. ye Ringers for Ringing ye bells 2 dayes when ye King lay at Audley end		10	0
1691.	Spent on ye Ringers att ye hearing of ye good newes from Ireland		3	0
	Spent on ye Ringers att ye King's returne from Ireland		4	6
Oct.	Spent on ye Ringers of ye news y <sup>t</sup> Lymerrick was taken		5	0

\* Similar entries occur from time to time.

† A note in the margin states that ' this was objected agst. '

		<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1694.	Pd. the Sexton for Towling ye bell for ye Queen's Funerall.		2	0
1696, Sept. 26.	Pd. to ye Ringers when ye my L <sup>d</sup> Biskop of London came to Town		10	0
1697, Sept. 25.	Gave to the Ringers at y <sup>e</sup> first newes of ye peace		10	0
Dec. 1.	Gave to ye Ringers upon ye second newes of ye peace		7	0
	Gave to ye Ringers when ye King came bye		5	0
1698, July 30.	Gave the Ringers to Ring for joy that Sr Charles Barrington & Bullock was elected members of Parliment*		7	0
1699. Apl. 19.	Gave the Ringers when the King came by & for his Crownation day		10	0
1702.	Pd. Mr. Harris, when y <sup>e</sup> Queen [Anne] was proclaimed, ffor the Ringers		10	0
1707, Oct. 17.	Gave the Ringers when y <sup>e</sup> Queen returned from Newmarkett		8	0
1708, Oct. 17.	Gave the Ringers when Lisle was Taken		8	0
1713.	Paid to the Ringers when the Peace was Proclaimed	1	0	0
1716, Jan. 20.	Gave the Ringers on y <sup>e</sup> King's [Geo. 1.] Landing		10	0
1717, Oct. 2.	Gave the Ringers when ye King went to Newmarket		10	0
	At the Birth of a Prince pd. to Jn. Powell's		10	0
1721.	Spent with the Ringers y <sup>t</sup> came from Melford		5	0
1733, May 27.	Paid Robt. Weakling for rining att the princis weding	1	0	0
1734.	Paid Ringing for Lord Castlemane		10	0

From this point we shall practically confine our attention to the annals of the Saffron Walden Society of Ringers. The Society is said to date from 1623, and to be the oldest society of its kind in the kingdom. To say the least, this claim is open to dispute, since the only available evidence that can be adduced in its support is the fact that Thomas Turner, mercer, of Walden, by his will, † dated June 10, 1623, directed that :

. . . twentie shillings . . . be bestowed yearelye upon a Preacher which shall make a memoriall Sermon upon the daie of the yeare wherein I shalbe buried. And thirtie three shillings foure pence . . . be bestowed yearelie upon such persons which shall ring the bells of the Church of Walden upon the daie of the yeare on which I shalbe burved ; and six shillings eight pence . . . be given yearelie upon the same

\* The Ringers' accounts for 1835 show this receipt: ' Recd. of Mr. Elwes, M.P., for ringing at his election, April 30th, £3 3s.'

† P.C.C. 59 Swann.

daie to the parishe Clarke of the Towne of Walden afforesaid for the tymebeinge for his paines in preparinge the bells.\*

We learn from the Wardens' accounts how the old ringers spent their money ; for instance :

Mr. Thomas Turner's Ringing mony, 33s. 4 <i>d.</i> , thus spent at John Gamages in the year 1638, first breakefast at 2 <i>d.</i>			
a man		4	0
dinner of 20 ( <i>sic</i> ) persons at 6 <i>d.</i> a man		13	0
supper of 22 persons at 8 <i>d.</i> a man		14	8
Churchwardens' dinners the rest		1	8

A subsequent entry briefly records the items of the benefaction :

	<i>li.</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
1692. Recd ye gift of Mr. Tho. Turner to ye Ringers	1	13	4
more to ye Sexton		6	8
more to ye Minister	1	0	0

Turner's wishes, with one exception, are still carried out. He was buried, as we shall see, on June 26, but instead of that day being adhered to, as he desired, the annual commemoration has long been observed, for some unaccountable reason, on June 27. This day is known as ' Great Ringing Day,' and a memorial service† attended principally by ringers, is held in the parish church. But although Turner's memory has survived nearly three hundred years, the slab which covers his remains was ruthlessly despoiled of its brasses in the eighteenth century. The matrix, however, which proves to be still *in situ*, has been identified by means of this entry in the Burial Register :

1623. Mr. Thomas Turner under the great stone right against the dore in the North chapell ye 26 June.

We find also in Holman's MS. *Notes on Walden Church* preserved in the Colchester Museum, a description of the monument :

A description of the south (*sic*) aisle of the chancell.

In this Isle before the Doore lye 2 grave stoness of black marble, on the one effigies of a man in a dresse of the times, his hands folded, on plate of Brass this Inscript. in capitalls :

' Here lyeth interred the Body of Tho. Turner the younger, mercer, bachelor, eldest sone of Tho. Turner the eld<sup>r</sup> mercer, & one of the Assistants & treasurer of ye incorporacōn of this Towne of Walden, who in his life tyme yealded much releife to the poore, & at his Death (for contynuance of good & charitable uses) did give xx<sup>l</sup> per Annu<sup>m</sup>. for ever. He was aged 56 years. Buried ye 16 (*sic*) of June, 1623.'

\* The present value of the endowment is £5 3s. 4*d.* -£2 for the Sermon ;£2 13s. 4*d.* for the ringers; and 10s. for the steeple keeper.

† It was the writer's privilege to preach the sermon at this service in 1917 and 1920.

## 12 THE BELLS AND RINGING ANNALS OF SAFFRON WALDEN.

Round the ledge of the stone is a plate of Brasse inlaid & this Inscription beginning at the Head :  
' Seeing the mercies of the Lord are from Eternity to Eternitie I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever, I will make mention O Lord of thy Righteousness only, for the same is myne. What is longer then eternitie ? Thy large & eternall Righteousness shall largely cover thee & me alike.'

It is gratifying to be able to honour the memory of one whose name will be associated for all time with the Walden bells, by placing on record his burial place and epitaph.

No ancient ringing rules of the Walden Society appear to be extant. The earliest set that has come to light is in the possession of Mr. F. Pitstow, and is in MS. It runs as follows :

Articles of Agreement concluded upon and signed by a Society of Ringers of Walden this 27<sup>th</sup> of June, 1800.

First, we whose names are hereunto subscribed do agree to meet at the Church every Tuesday evening by a Quarter after 6 o'clock from old Michaelmas day to old Lady day, and from old Lady day to old Michaelmas day by a Quarter after 7 o'clock, and there stop and Ring a Peal or part of a Peal, unless excused by a majority of the members present, or shal for every such neglect forfeit twopence.

Secondly, the Sexton, Rich<sup>d</sup> Bush, shall raise or cause the 4th bell to be raised every Tuesday evening within the quarter of the above hours, without some sufficient cause to the contrary, or shall for every such neglect forfeit 4*d.* ; and the said Rich<sup>d</sup> Bush shall be paid one shilling per quarter for such trouble.

Thirdly, it is further agreed that upon every Ringing day the hours of meeting to ring shall be settled by a majority of the members present the meeting night before such Ringing day, and every member that is not in the sollar by a Quarter after such fixed times and [does not] stop to ring unless excused by a majority of the members, shall forfeit 4*d.* each time.

Fourthly, all moneys given for Ringing shall be equally parted in the sollar so soon as is possibly convenient, and for the social meeting together of the Society we further agree that when a guinea or above that sum is given for Ringing, that every member, whether present or absent, shall pay twopence to be spent at the Club house or other place as the members think most proper.

Fifthly, we further agree that no mortgages whatever shall be made upon the Society by any of the members without a forfeit of 5*s.* for every such offence, and if any member, or members, shall set up any reckoning to the Society [he] shall for every such offence forfeit 5*s.* each time, and we also agree that no member shall send for his beer to his house, but shall spend his 4*d.* on the club night whether present or absent.

Sixthly, and for the good credit as well as the peace and happiness of the Society, it is also agreed that if any member swears or gives the lie, either in the sollar or club room, while met for Ringing or for social converse, [he] shall for every such offence forfeit twopence.

Seventhly, we do likewise agree to meet at the Sign of the Sun on the first Thursday evening of every month and spend 4*d*, and that every member's 4*d*. shall be spent whether present or absent.

Eighthly, every member shall meet at the Church on the 26 of June by a Quarter after 6 o'clock in the evening, and from thence repair to the club house where all forfeits shall be paid and other matters settled as shall concern the Society, and any member neglecting so to do shall be adjudged unworthy and be excluded.

Lastly, and we as loving brethren considering that without a due observance of the above articles [we] cannot continue in friendship and harmony, have cheerfully subjoined our hands with a fixed purpose to observe the same.

(not signed).

Unfortunately, until within recent years, no regular records were kept by the Walden ringers, nor, with one exception, have they troubled to perpetuate their exploits by setting up peal-boards. Our knowledge, therefore, of their early performances has had to be gleaned mainly from the columns of old newspapers. The earliest record we have of a peal being rung at Walden came to light a few years ago in a collection of local news-cuttings, which the late Mr. Henry Stear subsequently purchased and presented to the Walden Museum. The name of the paper in which it appeared is not given.

Saffron Walden, January 2, 1754

To inform all real Lovers and Professors of the Art of Ringing, That the Society of young Ringers of this Town, on Tuesday the 25th of December last, being Christmas-Day, did ring the true Peal of Grandsire Triples, composed of 148 Bobs, with two Singles, which they effected in three Hours and twenty Minutes; and on Tuesday following, being New-Year's Day, they compleated the same in eight Minutes less than before (being the only Times the same has been rung there since there has been eight Bells), to the no small Mortification of their Antagonists (some of the Old Society), who, instead of Instruction, gave them all the Obstruction in their power. The Ringers which rung the same were Frederick Sell, Charles Baron, who called the Bobs, Richard Whitehand, John Banks, William Barrett, jun., Richard Bush, jun., John Clark, and John Salmon.

The above performance was a notable achievement, and, as a writer in the *Ringing World* has said, its discovery raises an interesting point. ' The composition undoubtedly must have been Holt's Original, as no other peal with only two singles had then been composed, and this was first rung and conducted by John Holt from manuscript at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1751. So far as we are aware these two peals at Saffron Walden are the first in which the conductor of this celebrated

composition rang in the peal, and if this is a fact, exceptional interest attaches to the performances.'

The *Cambridge Chronicle* for July 2, 1774, says that :

On Sunday last [June 26, 1774] was Rung at Saffron Walden, a complete peal of 5040 Grandsire Trebles (*sic*), in 3 hours and 24 minutes ; and on Monday was rung at the same place by 4 of the Walden youths, assisted by 4 from Cambridge, a complete peal of 5040 Bob Major, in 3 hours and 22 minutes.

The bells were recast by John Briant, of Hertford, in 1798, and the next peal of which we have any record was, according to the transcript of a contemporary notice made by the late Mr. S. Slater, rung in the following year. The source of this extract, however, has not been traced, so that it has been impossible to verify the date which shows a discrepancy :

On Tuesday Evening, Dec. 14, 1799 [this date was a Saturday] was rung in Saffron Walden Steeple, by the Company of Ringers of that place, a complete peal of 5040 Bob Major, in 3 hours and 22 mins. The striking was so excellent as not only to attract the musical ear, but enrapture the susceptible heart ; the performance was by a young society of not more than a year and a half's standing, and their efforts would have done credit to veterans. The peal was rung in compliment to Mr. Thos. Cornhill [Cornwell] on the occasion of bringing his Lady to St. Aylotts.

Thomas Bowtle,	Treble	Richard Bush,	5th
William Rumble,	2nd	John Bell,	6th.
John Harris,	3rd	James Bennett,	7th
Charles Pratt,	4th	William Glover,	Tenor

Conducted by James Bennett.

We now come to the nineteenth century, in the earlier years of which the following peals were rung :

Jan. 6, 1807.	Peal of Bob Major, 6832 Changes in 4 hrs. 30 min.
Dec. 15, 1813.	[On the occasion of the opening of the seventh bell]. Peal Of Bob Major, 5040 Changes, in 3 hrs. 21 min. Two of the Ringers were visitors
June 4, 1815.	Peal of Oxford Treble Bob, 6112 Changes, in 4 hrs. 2 min.
Feb. 4, 1817.	Peal of Double Norwich Court Bob, 5040 Changes, in 3 hrs. 25 min.
Feb. 21, 1826.	Peal of Grandsire Triples, 5040 Changes, in 3 hrs. 18 min.
Jan. 29, 1828.	Peal of Oxford Treble Bob, 5120 changes, in 3 hrs. 26 min.

The peals of 1807, 1815, and 1817, were composed and conducted by Richard Miller, and they are commemorated by an old peal-board in the ringing-chamber. Those of 1813, 1826 and 1828 also conducted by Miller, are recorded on the fly-leaf of his MS. Ringing-book, dated Dec. 23, 1804, in the possession of Mr.

Pitstow. Richard Miller, 'that eminent ringer ' as he was styled by a contemporary, was a farmer at Ashdon, a village four miles from Walden, and lived at, and owned, Ashdon Street Farm. His ringing career was a long one, and the high standard of efficiency reached by the Walden ringers during the first half of the last century, must have been largely due to his enthusiasm and skill. He died on 7 January 1862, at the age of 81.\*

The above peals were, so far as is known, the last rung by the company for many years ; the following extract, however, from the *Cambridge Chronicle* for Dec. 6, 1845, shows that ringing was flourishing in Walden at that date.

High Attainment in the Art of Ringing.—An extraordinary display of talent was made a few days since by the company of change ringers, of Saffron Walden, performing on their church bells 1,680 changes of Double Norwich Court Bob Major, and upwards of 1,200 changes of Superlative Surprise, performed in the following order, viz. :

Messrs. J. Bennett	1	Messrs. J. Richardson	5
John Carr	2	S. Francis	6
M. Ward	3	R. Miller	7
F. Ruse	4	J. Wright	8

Composed and Conducted by Mr. R. Miller, churchwarden [of Ashdon]. It is very singular that there are not at the present time eight persons in the metropolis to be found who are able to accomplish this very arduous task.

Soon after the above performance a period of decadence began to set in, and the company lost for a while its reputation. It was at this time that ' Squire ' Leonard Proctor made his band at Bennington (Herts) prominent by teaching them to ring peals in the Surprise Methods, and they were followed by the London ringers. Change-ringing at Walden, as generally elsewhere, continued to remain at a low ebb for several years, and its revival about fifty years ago was due to the initiation and energy of Mr. Frederick Pitstow, and his brother, the late Mr. Nathan John Pitstow.

The brothers Pitstow began their ringing career at Walden in the 'sixties, and, with an inborn enthusiasm, lost no opportunity of making themselves proficient. As Bob Minor and Bob Major

\* The Misses Miller, of Ashdon, grand-daughters of the ringer, have recently presented to the Walden belfry, through the writer, a framed " List of Small Subscriptions Presented to Mr. Richard Miller as an acknowledgment for his unremitting services, for 45 years and upwards, as a Member and Conductor of the Saffron Walden Company of Ringers." The total amount was £10 6s. On the back of the frame there is written: " Presented March 13th, 1848 by J. L. Taylor. Esq., Mayor of Saffron Walden. Names of the S. Walden Company of Ringers: Richd. Miller, Saml. Francis, David Smart, Jonathan Bennett, Matthew Ward, James Wright, William Bishop, Peter Philpott, George Bennett, James Miller, George Brand."

comprised all the change-ringing that was done locally, they used to undertake long walks to obtain the necessary practice, and often on a Sunday they walked to Stansted for a peal of Treble Bob Minor. Whenever possible they visited Bennington, as it was the only place where they could get Surprise ringing ; sometimes they met the Bennington ringers at Braughing or Sawbridgeworth for a course or two of Double Norwich or Superlative. Thus they gained an intimate knowledge of the art.

Mr. Nathan Pitstow died in 1914, at the age of 67, and a notice of him appeared in the *Ringling World* for Feb. 27, under the heading, 'The Passing of a great Composer.' There we are told that it is as a composer of bell-music that he will best be remembered although he was a ringer of no mean order—and that his name deserves to ' endure as long as peals are rung.' It is said that ' his 5088 of Superlative has become almost a classic in that method, while his variation of Thurstans' peal of Stedman Triples is almost equally well known. ' During his active ringing, career he took part in 182 peal performances, his peals covering the whole gamut from Grandsire Triples to London Major ; from Plain Bob to Stedman Cinques.

Mr. Fred Pitstow, the present master of the Walden Society, who began to ring when only fifteen years old, is one of the best known ringers in the Eastern Counties. It deserves to be recorded that within the space of a fortnight, in his younger days, he rang a peal of Cambridge at St. Giles', London; Superlative at Duffield ; London Surprise at Burton ; Stedman at Burton and Double Norwich at St. Giles',—all of them at the first attempt, and with only such practice as he was able to secure with the Bennington ringers. Unfortunately Mr. Pitstow has not kept a complete record of his peals, but they number over 200 from Maximus downward. Although not so distinguished a composer as his brother, he has peals of Surprise, Double Norwich, Treble Bob, etc., to his credit.

Mr. J. F. Penning, who joined the Walden company in 1874, also has a wide reputation, since he has composed noteworthy peals of Grandsire Triples and Bob Minor.\*

With such enthusiastic and able exponents of change-ringing among its members, the Walden company began, slowly but surely, to mount the ladder of campanological fame. The

\* Published in Snowdon's books, *Grandsire* and *Rope-sight*.

initial stage of this revival was marked by important changes in the belfry. As the staircase to the belfry was blocked up, the bells perforce were rung from the ground floor, and access to them could only be gained by ascending the staircase on the south side of the chancel arch and walking across the nave roof. A new ringing floor was therefore erected, and the lower half of the tower staircase opened out and repaired. The bells were rung from the ground for the last time on November 9, 1875 ; on the next day they were taken out, and, after necessary repairs to the wheels, etc., were refixed by Messrs. Warner and Sons. The work was completed by December 3, when the bells were rung in the evening.

At first nothing more ambitious was attempted than peals of Minor in various methods, and touches of Bob Major and Oxford Treble Bob. But on the occasion of the first illumination of the Corn Exchange clock, Feb. 12, 1878, there was rung :

Half peal of Plain Bob Triples, 2520 Changes, in 1 hr. 35 min. Composed by H. Hubbard, and Conducted by F. Pitstow. Supposed to be the first in that method over rung on the bells.

This led up to the following achievement :

Nov. 22, 1879. Peal of Kent Treble Bob, 5056 Changes, in 3 hrs. 25 min. Composed by N. J. Pitstow, and Conducted by F. Pitstow. Three of the ringers were visitors.

The above peal is noteworthy as being the first peal on eight bells rung in Walden for many years, and ' Lines ' celebrating the event were written and published at the time by Mr. J. F. Penning.

At least six peals of Kent Treble Bob Major were rung at Walden in the 'eighties. And a peal of Bob Major, composed by B. Annable, was rung on Jan. 3, 1885. In each case the ringers included visitors, and on four occasions all of them were members of the Royal Society of Cumberland Youths.

By the 'nineties the Walden Society was capable of first-class ringing, and eight tablets in the tower, commemorating the following peals, form a series of which the Society may well be proud :

- Oct. 21, 1891. Peal of Kent Treble Bob Major, 5056 Changes, in 3 hrs. 7 min. Composed and Conducted by F. Pitstow.
- Nov. 26, 1891. Peal of Double Norwich Court Bob Major, 5040 Changes, in 3 hrs. 12 min. Composed by N. J. Pitstow, and Conducted by F. Pitstow.
- Oct. 1, 1892. Thurstans' Peal of Stedman Triples, 5040 Changes, in 3 hrs. 5 min. Conducted by F. Pitstow. This was the first peal in the method rung on the bells.

18 THE BELLS AND RINGING ANNALS OF SAFFRON WALDEN.

- Feb. 27, 1893. Peal of Superlative Surprise Major, 5024 Changes, in 3 hrs. 14 min. Composed by N. J. Pitstow, and Conducted by F. Pitstow. The first in the method accomplished in Essex.
- June 23, 1894. Peal of Cambridge Surprise Major, 5056 Changes, in 3 hrs. 16 min. Composed by Chas. Middleton, and Conducted by F. Pitstow. The first peal in this intricate method rung in the Eastern Counties. Accomplished at the third attempt.
- Jan. 10, 1899. Peal of London Surprise Major, 5024 Changes, in 3 hrs. 15 min. Composed by N. J. Pitstow, and Conducted by F. Pitstow. The first peal in this most intricate of all methods rung in Essex.
- July 4, 1905. Peal of Stedman Triples, 5040 Changes, in 3 hrs. 4 min. Composed by J. J. B. Lates, and Conducted by F. Pitstow,
- Feb. 20, 1912. Peal of Cambridge Surprise Major, 5056 Changes, in 3 hrs. 17 min. Conducted by F. Pitstow.

Although a peal on the twelve bells has been attempted, it has yet to be accomplished. A peal on ten bells, however, has been effected :

- Dec 26, 1919. Peal of Stedman Caters, 5001 Changes, in 3 hrs. 25 min.  
Composed and Conducted by F. Pitstow.

In the early 'nineties, a band of lady ringers was formed in Walden, but it only existed for a few years ; the members occasionally rang for the Sunday services.

Until about forty-five years ago the bells were never rung, but only chimed, for service ; and there was a band of chimers in addition to the ringers. A chiming apparatus, by Messrs. Warner and Sons, was affixed to the bells in 1889.

With regard to ringing customs, it may be mentioned that for a Death Knell the tenor is tolled :

Thrice three tolls for a male,  
And two threes for a female.

The Pancake bell, which in mediæval times summoned the parishioners to confession as a preparation for the Lenten Fast, continued to be rung until about fifty years ago : the fifth bell was used. Old inhabitants remember seeing Sam Francis, the sexton, after ringing the bell on Shrove Tuesday, carrying home the pancakes which had been given him by various parishioners.

The Gleaning bell was formerly rung morning and evening during harvest time, but it was discontinued some years ago owing to the ringer receiving nothing for his trouble ; the sixth bell was used.

In conclusion, the writer has to thank Mr. F. Pitstow for kindly help rendered in many ways ; he is also indebted to two

other Walden ringers, Mr. J. F. Penning and Mr. F. Dench (a well-known composer) for information ; and he owes a further debt of gratitude to Mr. Theodore Slater, of Glemsford, for the loan of his father's\* valuable notes on peals rung at Walden.

\* The late Mr. Samuel Slater, of Glemsford, Suffolk, a member of a well-known ringing family, who left voluminous notes in MS. relating to the campanological annals of the Eastern Counties

