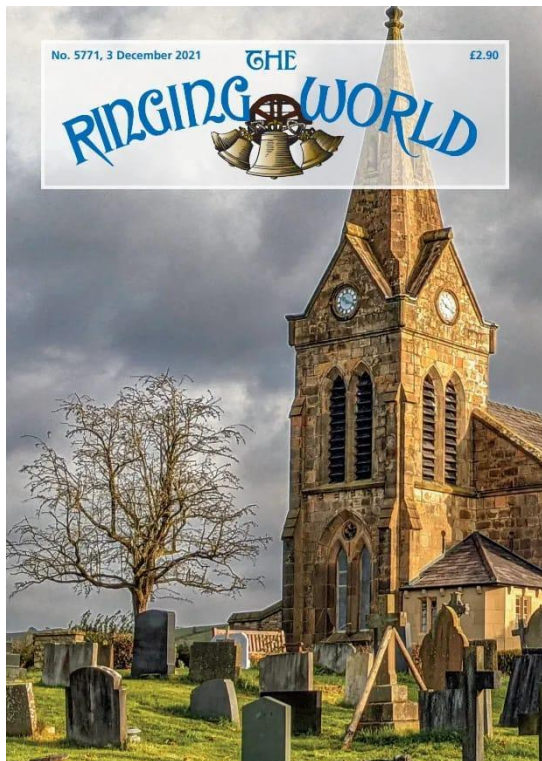




Sutton St. James

Our Bells are Famous

Mark Jacot has written an article published in the Ringing World magazine this month all about our bells, we are even on the front cover.



On The Cover

by **MARK JACOT** on 3rd Dec 2021

This week's front cover photograph was taken by **Mark Jacot**, a ringer at St James, Sutton, Cheshire. The tower houses a ring of six bells, tenor 11-3-15 in G, cast by Taylors in 1925. Mark wrote the accompanying text about the history of the church and its bells.

The church at Sutton was built in 1840, The wonderful tower and spire owe their existence to a bequest by Mrs Hannah Newbold. Mrs Newbold also owned much of the land on which the church was built. Initially, the tower housed a single bell. However, by the 1870s, the parishioners wanted a full peal of bells. Thomas Parrott, the father of the churchwarden, gave impetus to the project by

presenting the church with a new tenor bell at the cost of £120. Taylors installed a new ring of six in 1878 in a wooden frame.

There was a strong band of ringers in the tower, some of whom made regular visits to other towers, including ringing in a peal of Grandsire Caters at Manchester Cathedral in 1884. Grandsire Minor was a regular method rung locally, and the local band took part in a peal of Grandsire Major at Prestbury in 1885. The first peal on the bells was rung in 1903, including a number of the local band.

By the 1920s, there were serious problems with the bells. The tenor jumped out of its frame. In the process, it knocked a half-hundredweight piece of metal through one of the louvres

in the tower. A report was submitted by Taylors in 1924 recommending rehangng the bells in a new cast iron frame. At a meeting of the Parochial Church Council, a debate on whether to install six or eight bells came down to a casting vote by the then tower captain, Tomas Taylor. Whilst he favoured eight, he knew, as a churchwarden, that the financial support of church members was critical to the project, and they favoured six bells. As a result, we have a recast ring of six from a golden period of Taylors' history - perhaps the best six in Cheshire? Traces of foundry chalk marks inside the tenor bell states. "Tenor for eight-Sutton', so our bells were cast as the back six of an eight.

The 1930s were another strong period of ringing, including some of the peals in the race to ring the most treble dodging methods an six bells between a band from Cheshire and another group in Lincolnshire. A peal of 40 methods at Sutton in 1935 stood as the record for a short while. At the same time, the local band were regularly ringing peals, and in 1935 the first peal by an all Sunday Service band was rung. The band included Miss Millicent Fethers (later to be Mrs C W Lawton). who had already rung her first peal two years earlier at the age of 14.

Today we have an active band and are actively involved in teaching additional ringers to ensure these bells continue to ring out across the Cheshire plains for many generations to come.

As with many other towers, we were hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. As soon as we were able, we started ringing handbells on the church's steps, both to keep the band together and to welcome those that attended services. It also enabled some younger potential future ringers to get involved.

We regularly use a variety of channels to keep the parish connected to and involved in their bells, such as the village Facebook groups. This is great for snippets to explain when we are ringing and we always get lots of positive comments and support.

As soon as we could, we started ringing again, with the extractor fan on, doors open and wearing masks. We also started teaching some who had expressed interest from previous Facebook posts to learn to ring, and further posts to explain why we were ringing in the day generated more interest. So hopefully, we are well on the way to rebuilding our band for the future as a voice of the church in the community of Sutton.

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