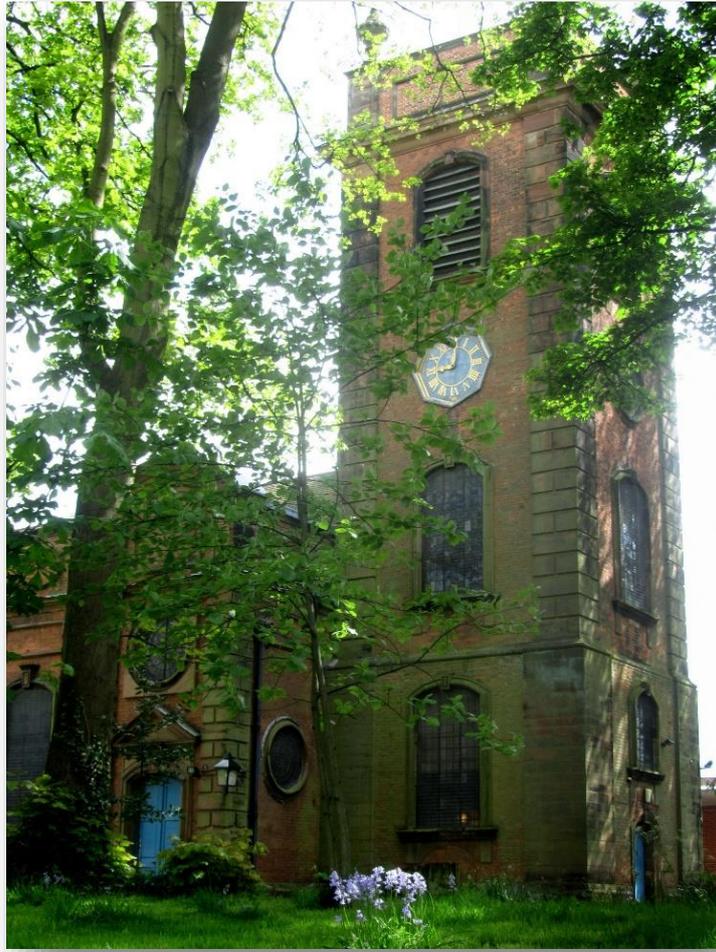


*St Mary & St Margaret  
The Parish Church of Castle Bromwich*

# CASTLE BROMWICH BELLS



**Celebrating the Restoration of Castle Bromwich Bells  
- 300 years of ringing 1717 – 2017 -  
Patrons: The Earl of Bradford and The Viscount Hereford**

**William Dargue 2017  
for the Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project**



**LOTTERY FUNDED**



**Castle Bromwich  
Bellringers**





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William Dargue 2017 Castle Bromwich Bells.

*This booklet has been adapted from William Dargue & David Adams 2004/2008 'A Brief History of Castle Bromwich and its Church' and William Dargue 'The Bells of Castle Bromwich' 2013. David Adams' illustration is used with his kind permission. Information about bellringing in general derives from the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers' Ringing Foundation's website 'Discover Bell Ringing' - [www.bellringing.org](http://www.bellringing.org); some specific information on Castle Bromwich bells is courtesy of Chris Pickford 24.07.2017 'Bells In and around Birmingham: a Survey and History'.*

St Mary & St Margaret  
Castle Bromwich Parish Church

# Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project

Registered Charity no 1155131

**Celebrating 300 years of Ringing 1717 – 2017**



## **Aim and Purpose**

The Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project was initiated in April 2013 and registered as a charity on 30 December 2013. Our objectives are to promote for the benefit of the public, the preservation, restoration, improvement and maintenance of the ring of bells at the Grade 1 listed Church of St Mary and St Margaret, Castle Bromwich in the county of West Midlands, and to establish and maintain facilities for the teaching, practice and wider public knowledge of the traditional art of bell ringing.

## **Our patrons**

The Right Honourable Richard Bridgeman, The Earl of Bradford  
The Right Honourable Sir Robin Devereux, The Viscount Hereford.

## **Trustees**

The Rector, Revd Gavin Douglas OBE

Stuart Stanton (Chair)            Dan Harris (Tower Captain)

Jean Willis (Treasurer)        William Dargue (Public relations)

On his retirement, the Rector relinquished his role as a trustee.

Churchwarden Karon Ward and Tower Captain elect Ben Sassons were subsequently co-opted.

Technical Advisor James Stanton.



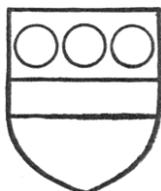
One of our patrons is The Earl of Bradford (far left), whose great great great great great great great grandfather, Sir John Bridgeman II instigated the recasting of the bells in 1717.

Our other patron is The Viscount Hereford, 16th Baronet of Castle Bromwich, whose distant ancestor had the first bells cast here in the 15th century.

***Our logo was designed by former tower captain James Stanton incorporating the arms of Sir John Bridgeman II (1667-1747) who rebuilt the church and hall and had a new ring of bells installed in 1717. The arms are used with the kind permission of Lord Bradford.***

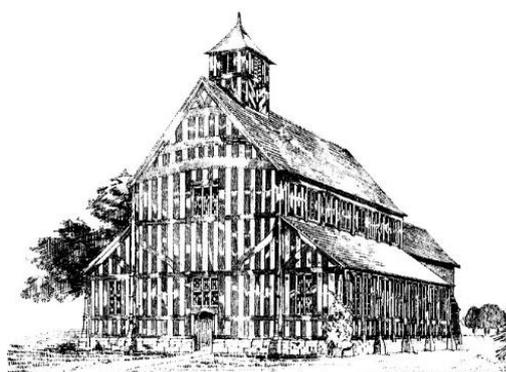
## Castle Bromwich – the manor, the church and its bells

Castle Bromwich is a pleasant residential suburb in the north of Solihull Metropolitan District Borough. Lying just beyond the eastern boundary of the City of Birmingham, it is some 7 miles from the city centre. Until the 1930s the manor of Castle Bromwich was largely rural and stretched for 3 miles from west to east, much of it on the higher ground between the valleys of the Rivers Cole and Tame. Surviving amid the 20th-century housing is the Elizabethan manor house, Castle Bromwich Hall (now a hotel), the restored Hall gardens and a unique Georgian parish church.



**Arms of Devereux**

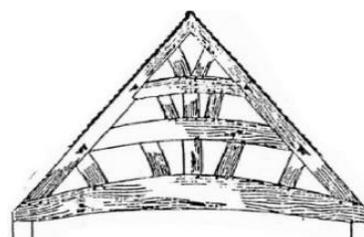
After the Norman Conquest in 1066, Castle Bromwich was a sub-manor of Aston and given to a follower of William the Conqueror. The family adopted the surname de Bromwich. A motte and bailey castle was built and a manorial chapel, a small stone building which stood on the site of the present church chancel. English monasteries and churches are known to have had bells from 7th century, though whether this was the case at Castle Bromwich is not known.



The manor passed by marriage to de la Roche and then to the Ferrers family c1345. It may have been Sir Walter Devereux who, on marrying the heiress Anne de Ferrers one hundred years later, had the great timber-framed church built here c1450.

At the west end of the massive medieval roof, which still survives within the present Georgian building, are additional strengthening beams, indicating the existence of a bellcote here.

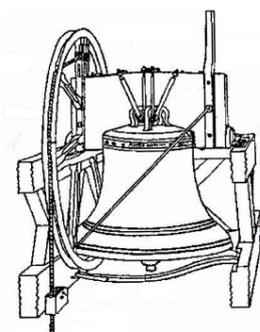
After the 12th century, the castle was abandoned and a large timber-framed manor house was built, probably on the present site of Castle Bromwich Hall. This was replaced in 1599 by Sir Edward Devereux, 2nd Viscount Hereford who built the the present Hall. He was created Baronet Devereux of Castle Bromwich by King James I in 1611.



### A new bell frame

In 1657 Joseph Hall was paid £6 to rehang the bells, for which a new bell frame was made, with a saw pit on site. The ring of three may have replaced an earlier single bell. (The churchwardens' accounts show that three bell ropes were bought in 1694.)

It may be that the bells were rehung for full-circle ringing at this time. Until the early 17th century, bells were hung for tolling. A new way of hanging bells was devised with the bell mounted on a wheel with a rope passing round it. This allowed much more control of the bell's movement and enabled the development of change ringing, which continues to this day. A clue lies in the churchwardens' accounts of 1657 which state:



***Paid John Wall for leorne (learn) for the bells 2 shillings.***

Tolling simply entails pulling a rope and letting the bell swing; full circle ringing requires a deal more skill and takes time to learn.

The date, 1657 is significant. This was when prominent London lawyer, Orlando Bridgeman bought the manor of Castle Bromwich as a wedding present for his son, Sir John Bridgeman I, who may well have had experience of new fashionable full-circle London bells. It is an early example in this area of full-circle ringing.



## The Bridgeman family

In 1657 Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Lord Keeper of the King's Great Seal, bought the manor of Castle Bromwich for his son, Sir John Bridgeman I on the occasion of his marriage. Sir John began to improve Sir Edward Devereux's Elizabethan hall in Jacobean style with the addition of a classically styled porch.

**Bridgeman  
coat-of-  
arms.**

The 1671 churchwardens' accounts give details of a bell that was taken to Lichfield to be recast - it is likely that it had cracked.

<i>Spente when we agreed with the bellfounder</i>	<b>1s.6d.</b>
<i>Spente when we toocke down the bell</i>	<b>6d.</b>
<i>Spente when we went to Leachfield the first time</i>	<b>2s.3d.</b>
<i>Given to ye bellfounders man</i>	<b>6d.</b>
<i>Spent when we brought the bell home againe</i>	<b>3s.5d.</b>
<i>Paide to the bellfounder for casting the bell</i>	<b>£5.8.0.</b>
<i>Given to his man</i>	<b>6d.</b>
<i>For carrying of the bell and fetching it home againe</i>	<b>5s.</b>
<i>Paide for 36 foote of bordes for the bell wheles</i>	<b>3s.9d.</b>
<i>For the carpenters worke and tackinge down the bell and geating it up againe</i>	<b>6s.6d.</b>

## A ring of five in 1717

Sir John Bridgeman II inherited in 1710 and continued his father's work extending the hall to its present style and size. The year 1717 saw a recasting of the bells: five new bells were made by Joseph Smith of Edgbaston at his foundry near the White Swan at Harborne using the metal from the medieval three. Smith is known for his high-quality casting and also made bells for Handsworth, Northfield and Sheldon churches.



*Left: scrolling round the sound bow photographed at Castle Bromwich c1910*  
*Right: The founder's mark of Joseph Smith.*



Whether there were inscriptions on the older bells is not known. However, the inscriptions on the 1717 bells were reproduced on the present bells which were recast in 1952:

	<b>Inscriptions (all dated 1717)</b>	<b>Diam.</b>	<b>Note</b>	<b>Cwt</b>	<b>Qrs</b>	<b>Lbs</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>John Thornton: Thomas Sadler: Trustees</b>	<b>26<sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"</b>	<b>Eb</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>John Banner: Roland Brawbridge: Trustees</b>	<b>27<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>"</b>	<b>Db</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>William Sadler: Isaac Sadler</b>	<b>28<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>"</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Iohannes Brooke: S:T:B: John Chattock: Chappell Warden</b>	<b>30<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"</b>	<b>Bb</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Sir John Bridgeman: Baronet</b>	<b>34<sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub>"</b>	<b>Ab+</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

- John Brooke, commemorated on the 4th bell, was the curate from Aston church in charge of Castle Bromwich (STB = *Sacrae Theologiae Baccalaureus*, a Latin term denoting the university degree of Bachelor of Sacred Theology).
- John Chattock, (4<sup>th</sup> bell) a wealthy local landowner and antiquarian, lived at Hay House, Hodge Hill where his family can be traced back to the 14th century.
- Sir John Bridgeman, (5<sup>th</sup> bell) lord of Castle Bromwich manor from 1710, would certainly have paid the greatest share of the cost of the new bells.
- The trustees were all substantial land-owners in and around Castle Bromwich.

## Castle Bromwich No.3 bell 1717

Remarkably, Joseph Smith's No.3 bell survives. It was not recast in 1893, as formerly believed, but hung as a clock bell at the Midland Railway Locomotive Works, now Derby College, where it still chimes the hours.



*Left: Midland Railway Locomotive Works, now Derby College  
Right: Castle Bromwich old No.3 bell inscribed William Sadler: Isaac Sadler 1717*

## A new tower?

In 1717 the churchwardens' accounts recorded:

***Payd Joseph Smith for casting the bells £12 16s. 0d.***

Another interesting entry for accounts paid that same year shows.

<b><i>Payd Richard ? for 14,000 of brick making</i></b>	<b><i>£2 16s. 0d.</i></b>
<b><i>Payd 5 Tunnes of Coles and 15 hundredweight of straw</i></b>	<b><i>6d.</i></b>
<b><i>Payd for 14,000 of brick making</i></b>	<b><i>10s. 10d.</i></b>



***David Adams' conjectural drawing of  
Castle Bromwich church in 1717***

14,000 bricks would not be sufficient to build a tower made completely of brick. However, they would provide a decent base for a bell tower, with a wooden belfry on top. It is conjectured that a new tower may have been built at the west end of the timber-framed church to house the new bells.

The later building contract of 1724 states that the builder, Thomas Clear alias Smith should *'pull or take down the old Steeple now standing upon the said Chappell'* and rehang the bells (five by that time) in the new tower. The use of the term *'steeple'* suggests something rather larger than a bellcote was in place.

As the church is now longer at the west end than the medieval building was, the bell tower would have stood roughly where the choir balcony is now. Documentary evidence gives no clue as to its location and it is unlikely that any physical evidence of its existence survives. However, five bells must have hung somewhere and the size of the medieval bellcote is unlikely to have had room to hang them.

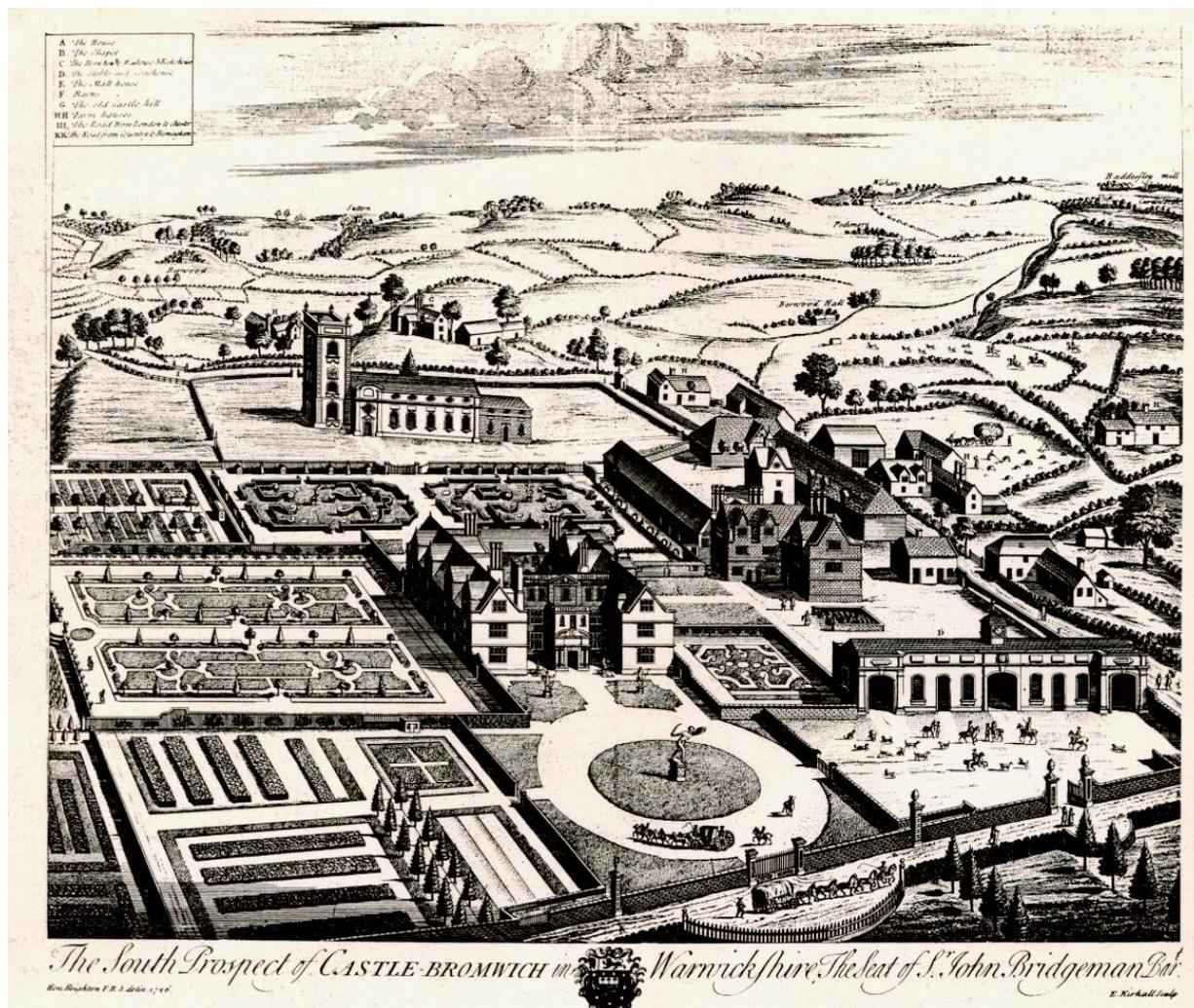
Wherever they were hung, the bells did not to stay there for long.



***Sir John Bridgeman II***

## A new church

Compared with Sir John II's newly rebuilt hall, the medieval timber-framed chapel must have seemed very old-fashioned. Sir John ordered it to be modernised in keeping with the style of his manor house. However, uniquely, instead of tearing down the old building, the architect encased both the 12<sup>th</sup>-century stone chapel and the medieval timber frame within the Renaissance-style building that stands today. It is the only such example of the encasement of a medieval timber church in the country, hence its Grade I Listed status.



**Henry Beighton's south prospect of Castle Bromwich Hall 1726. The church tower had been completed, but the rest of the rebuilding had only just got underway. Inscriptions inside the church refer to rebuilding taking place from 1726 to 1731. The chancel was rebuilt in brick, and not left in stone as shown. The Hall gardens have now been restored to the design shown here.**



**George Bridgeman  
4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bradford**

In 1762 Sir Henry Bridgeman inherited Weston Park in Shropshire by marriage and it then became the family seat. In 1815, his son Orlando was made 1st Earl of Bradford by King George III. Castle Bromwich Hall was subsequently let, until George Bridgeman, 4th Earl of Bradford moved here on his marriage to Lady Ida Lumley. He died in 1915 and she lived here until her death in 1936 with the hall remaining in the family until 1969 when it was sold.



**Lady Ida Bridgeman**

The Hall has been carefully restored and opened as a hotel in 2011.



## A new tower, but an old bell frame

Information about the bells appears annually in the churchwardens' accounts. In 1785 blacksmith John Williams was paid £5.16.5 "for new hanging the bells". It is not certain what this entailed.

Prior to major work on the bell installation, Edmund Denison Taylor of Taylor's bell foundry, Loughborough inspected the tower in 1893 and found that the five 1717 bells were hung in a frame for six. He believed the frame to be "*much older than the church and very badly decayed & rickety*". The best explanation is that the frame was brought from the medieval church and installed in the new brick tower when it was built in 1724. Unusually, this was an anti-clockwise ring.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the bellringers were paid an annual sum of 10 shillings for ringing and 5 shillings for chiming. The term 'ringing' would refer to full-circle ringing while 'chiming' would have been tolling a single bell to mark the start of services. Ringers were also paid extra for ringing for national events such as the anniversaries of the royal accession and coronation, Oak Apple Day and 5<sup>th</sup> November.

## The 19th century

In 1814 the ringers were paid 10 shillings for a year's ringing; by 1823 this had risen to 15 shillings. A payment of 5 shillings 6d was made on 27 June 1815 to celebrate Napoleon's abdication. (Bellringers now ring for the love it, though payments are made for weddings.)

Work maintaining the bells appears in the accounts: oil for the bells was bought every year; the bell clappers were rehung in 1794. Payments for bell ropes appear frequently: in 1836 five new ropes cost £1.9s.0d. More substantial work was carried out in 1819 when blacksmith James Williams made new bell wheels. Tower captains are sometimes mentioned: Thomas Davies 1836, William Cooper 1863, William Jones 1867.

In 1869 George Bridgeman, later the 4th Earl of Bradford, married Lady Ida Lumley and the couple came back to live at Castle Bromwich Hall, bringing up their eight children here. He lived here until his death in 1915; Lady Ida was the last of the Bridgeman family to live at the Hall where she died in 1936.

Lady Ida was a close friend of Princess May of Teck, the future Queen Mary. The Queen stayed with the Bridgemans on more than one occasion and her signed photograph hangs in the church vestry. Lord Bradford commissioned a sixth bell (tenor) to celebrate the royal wedding, which was cast by Charles Carr of Smethwick and inscribed: *DEO LAUS* (Praise God!)

The third bell was then a semitone too high for the ring and it was replaced, not recast as inscribed on the bell, by Carr, who also built a new oak frame to accommodate the new tenor. The old No.3 was sold to Derby Locomotive Works as mentioned earlier.

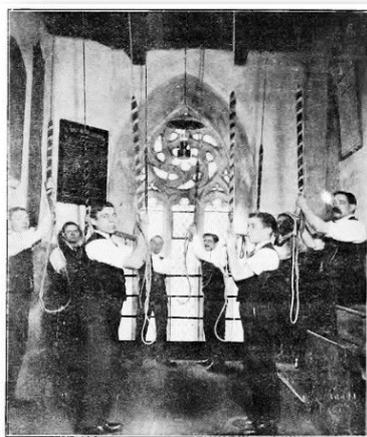


**The Duke of York & Princess May of Teck, Later King George V and Queen Mary**

	Inscription	Diam.	Cwt	Qrs	Lbs
3	Recast by Charles Carr Gold Medallists Smethwick 1893	29 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "	3	2	18
6	Deo 18 Ad 93 Laus I Celebrate the Wedding Day of George of York and Princess May	39 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "	8	2	0

## Tower captain Fred Bailey

In charge of Castle Bromwich tower after the Second World War was Fred Bailey, one of England's most notable ringers. He was one of eight brothers from a family of eleven boys, all accomplished ringers from the tiny Suffolk village of Leiston. Fred, born in 1894, was the second youngest. He learned to ring at age 14 and rang his first peal at the age of 16 - a peal is an ever-changing continuous sequence of patterns lasting approximately 3 hours.



**The Bailey brothers at St Margaret's Leiston. Fred is 3<sup>rd</sup> from the left.**



**Castle Bromwich bellringers 1906. Village blacksmith John Williams stands in the middle at the back.**

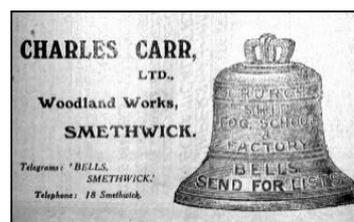
In 1911 Fred and seven of his brothers achieved a remarkable performance, unique in the annals of ringing, and likely never to be equalled. At St Margaret's church, Leiston, the brothers rang a peal of Bob Major (5024 changes) in 2 hours 51 minutes. It was and is the only time a single family of siblings has achieved this. Fred died in 1972 and is buried in the cemetery opposite our church.

## The 1936 dispute

In 1936 Taylor's, the bell founders were asked to examine the bells which were clearly felt to be unsatisfactory. Their report recommended that work

needed to be done to the fixtures and fittings, but more crucially that Carr's 1893 bells should be recast because of their *'poor tonal quality'*.

Taylor's representative, although *'unwilling to be critical of another bell maker'*, found that the lips of the bells had been pared away to achieve the correct note, producing a *'distressing musical effect'*. The 1717 bells had been chipped away inside and *'irretrievably ruined owing to unskilful tuning'*.



When the Rector, Rev Henry Forbes published the report in the parish magazine, it came to the attention of Carr's, who were understandably furious and a bad-tempered exchange of letters took place between themselves and Taylor's.

## The bells recast in 1952



The poor sound of the bells must have been a continuing cause of concern during Forbes' long incumbency (1921 - 1959). Finally in 1952, funds were raised to have the six bells recast, thanks to a legacy of Lucy, wife of Castle Bromwich blacksmith and long-time bellringer, John Williams. John died in 1926 aged 54; Lucy survived him by 23 years dying in 1949 at the age of age 78. They are buried together in the north-east corner of the churchyard.



**Recasting** The recasting was the last work undertaken by the celebrated bell-founders Gillett & Johnstone of Croydon. Our bells are noted for their fine tone and were the last cast by the company which was then in financial difficulties. At the same time a secondary metal frame was fitted above the wooden one with the intention of hanging two more bells (Our bells and fittings were numbered from 3 to 8.) But funds were never found for two new bells and this remained a six bell tower.

Unfortunately, the Parochial Church Council did not heed Taylor's 1936 recommendation to attend to Carr's fixtures and fittings. These were reused and adapted for the new ring. While the tone of the bells was now as good as any, the difficulty in the handling of the bells became notorious across the city.

Weathervanes formerly stood on the stone urns on the four corners of the tower. These were replaced after the recasting of 1952 by four of the old bell clappers dating from 1717. Three of the clappers are still in place. The fourth one fell during high winds recently, thankfully injuring no-one.



*The ringers about to ring the new bells for the first time in November 1952.*

The bells were recast by Gillett & Johnstone of Croydon in 1952 and the earlier inscriptions added.					
Inscription 1952		Diam.	Cwt	Qrs	Lbs
1	Allen Stephen Foden Verger since 1908	27"	4	1	14
2	Thomas Marshall Steere Churchwarden 1946-1951	28 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> "	4	2	16
3	Clifford John Shaw Churchwarden since 1951	29 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> "	5	0	0
4	Kenneth James Greene Churchwarden since 1952	31 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>8</sub> "	5	3	12
5	George Ernest Tomlinson Churchwarden 1949-1952	34"	7	2	16
6	Henry Nicoll Forbes Rector since 1921	38 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>8</sub> "	10	3	14

## Tower Captains



*Five tower captains all rang together in October 2013*

After serving from before World War 2, Fred Bailey, in his late 70s, passed on the role to a young Methodist lay preacher Bill Sanders. His daughter Carol succeeded him, followed by Bill Dargue, James Stanton and the current holder, Daniel Harris, all members of this church congregation and all of whom learned the art in this tower. Our captain elect is Ben Sassons. Each captain, well aware of the ambition in 1952 to augment the ring to eight and very conscious of the poor state of Carr's fixtures and Gillett's fittings, dreamed of the possibility of a full restoration.

## The Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project

In 2013, four of the senior bellringers set up a charitable trust with the ambitious intention of fully restoring the bell installation to the best of modern standards. And with the earnest hope that funds could be raised to augment the six to a full ring of eight as intended 65 years previously.

A survey by Taylor's concluded that the secondary frame installed in 1952 would not satisfactorily support two additional bells and that Carr's adapted oak frame and fittings should be replaced. A cast-iron frame was proposed which, being less bulky than the wooden one, would cater for eight bells all on the same level, a better option from a structural point of view.



*Castle Bromwich bellringers  
New Year's Day 2000*

(When the frame and belfry floor were removed in March 2017, the suspicions of inadequate workmanship were confirmed: the wooden frame was bolted to the floor in only three places and the beams supporting the floor were not fixed, but merely resting on the internal brick ledges in the tower. With a bouncing frame, it was no wonder that Castle Bromwich had a deserved reputation as a difficult ring!)

Based on an estimate for a partial restoration some years previously, the ringers expected the cost to be in the region of £30,000 - it turned out to be over £100,000. An appeal was launched and, thanks to the generosity of many individuals, local and from much further afield, donations from charities and trusts concerned with promoting heritage, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, support from a wide variety of local organisations, fund-raising activities organised by the trustees and the support of our own church congregation, the trustees raised over £100,000 to fully restore the bell installation and augment to a full ring of eight bells, finally fulfilling the hopes of two generations ago.



### New bells

Two new bells were cast in September 2016 at Taylor's bell foundry in Loughborough, a company which traces its origins back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and which casts bells in the tried-and-tested traditional way. A coach party of bellringers and church members travelled to witness the casting and were joined by our patron, Viscount Hereford. It was at once a strangely primitive and highly technological operation as a precise alloy of copper and tin was poured by hand at over 1000°C into a mould made of sand and clay loam, goats' hair and horse manure.



Bells 1 & 2 cast by John Taylor & Co, Loughborough in 2016 to a Gillett & Johnston profile					
Inscription		Diam.	Cwt	Qrs	Lbs
1	<b>Patrons:</b> <b>Richard 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bradford, Lord of the manor of Castle Bromwich;</b> <b>Robin 19<sup>th</sup> Viscount Hereford, 16<sup>th</sup> Baronet of Castle Bromwich;</b> <b>Rector: Revd Gavin Douglas OBE</b>	25.55"	4	1	9
2	<b>CBBRP Trustees: Dan Harris (Tower Captain)</b> <b>Stuart M Stanton Jean Willis William Dargue</b>	26"	4	1	11



*Far left: Treble - the patrons' bell.  
Left: No.2 - the trustees' bell*

The two new bells are the lightest of the ring and complete an octave in the key of A  $\flat$ .



### Dismantling

In March 2017, work began to dismantle the old installation with Taylor's bell hanger, Andy Odgen assisted by a team of volunteers: local residents and Birmingham bellringers. They removed literally tons of material from the tower. Weighing over one ton in total, the bells were taken down and sent to Loughborough for refurbishing. Our church tower was then strangely silent for next 6 months.

Meanwhile, at the Loughborough bell foundry, work was underway preparing the steel floor beams and casting the sections of the iron bell frame. Hand-crafted wooden bell wheels were made as well as wooden pulley blocks, stays and sliders, runners and bell ropes. The whole installation was then set up in the factory and the mechanisms tested.

### Carry on ringing!

Not only to maintain but to improve the Castle Bromwich band's standard of ringing, the team practised every week at St Paul's in the Jewellery Quarter as well as visiting local towers: St Peter & St Paul Coleshill, St Edburgha Yardley, St Peter & Paul Aston, St Giles Sheldon, St Michael Boldmere, St Peter Harborne, St Patrick Salter Street and St Barnabas Erdington. Our ringers received a warm welcome, support and encouragement at all these towers and we look forward to welcoming them to our newly restored ring in the future.



*The completed installation being set up at the Loughborough foundry for testing.*

**On display** On 29 July 2017, Taylor's bell foundry Open Day, Castle Bromwich bells were displayed in pride of place at the entrance, ready for dispatch.

**Installation** July 2017 saw the return of bell hanger Andy Ogden and our volunteers who, once again, undertook the physically demanding work of setting up new floor beams, belfry flooring and the frame ready to receive the new and the refurbished bells.



*The Blessing of the Bells – trustees and ringers with Rev Margaret MacLachlan and Rector designate, Rev Mark Hopkins*

The bells made a welcome return on 2<sup>nd</sup> August with a well-attended blessing service in church led by Rev Margaret MacLachlan and attended by the bellringers, members of the church congregation and local residents. The order of service was based on that of 1952 when the recast bells of 1717 and 1893 were dedicated by Rev Henry Forbes. By chance, a copy of the service sheet, covered in 65 years of grime, had been found in the belfry earlier in the year.

The first official ring of the bells took place on Sunday 20 August 2017 with a dedication by Rev Margaret at a service attended by Viscount and Lady Hereford, Deputy Mayor of Solihull Mike Robinson and the Lady Mayoress and councillors representing Solihull MDC and Castle Bromwich Parish Council.

*Join us!*

### Castle Bromwich bellringers

We are a mixed bunch ranging in age from 13 to 70 years old. We ring at Castle Bromwich in the English tradition every Sunday, on high days and holy days and for weddings. We ring for special occasions, Easter and Christmas and for national events such as St George's Day and the Queen's birthday. If we can find an excuse to ring, we do!



We practice on Wednesday evenings 7.30 - 9 pm and then usually go to the local pub for a pint or two, a historic part of bellringing tradition!

We welcome ringers from our own church, from other Christian traditions and local people and we're always pleased to teach both youngsters and adults this ancient skill. We're happy to welcome interested visitors and often show groups of cubs, guides, history societies, etc round the church and tower. Over the past year we welcomed over 500 people to the tower!

Castle Bromwich bellringers have rung bells in this place for over 500 years. We are the public voice of our church - and we aim to keep the bells of St Mary & St Margaret's ringing for many years into the future.

## A very brief History of Castle Bromwich bells

**Earlier than 1165**

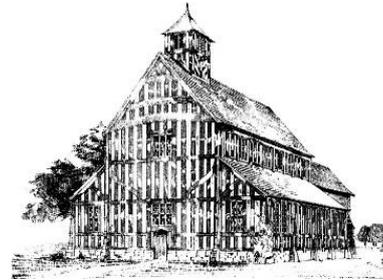
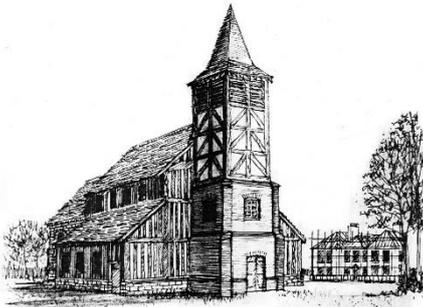
It is not known whether there was a bell on the Norman chapel.



**c1450** Probably built by Sir Walter Devereux, the medieval church had a ring of three bells.



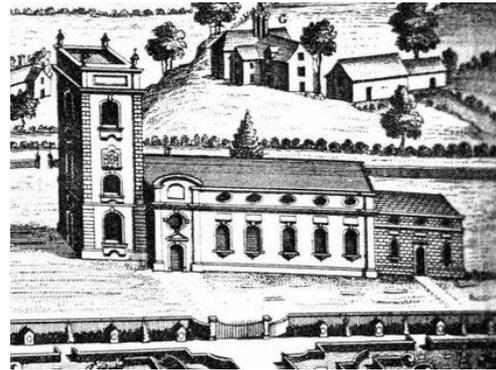
**1717** Sir John Bridgeman II had the medieval bells recast as five by Joseph Smith of Edgbaston. He may have built a new bell tower.



**1724** The five bells were hung in the newly built tower, but in the old 1717 bell frame.

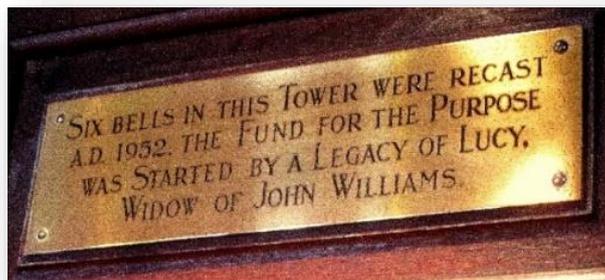


The timber-framed church was encased in brick 1726-1731.



**1893** George, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bradford had a sixth bell cast by Charles Carr of Smethwick. The third bell was also replaced and a new oak frame made.

**1952** The six bells were recast by Gillett & Johnston of Croydon and a fine-sounding ring they are!.



**1952 - 2013** Six good bells hung in the tower, but the funds were never raised to address the issues of the poor frame and fittings, nor to augment to eight bells. This six-bell tower remained a difficult ring.



**2013** The Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project was set up in 2013.

Aims: replace the inadequate frame and fittings and install a full ring of eight.



**2016 September** Two new bells were cast at Taylor's of Loughborough.



**2017 March**

**Dismantling:** Everything was removed from the bell tower and the bells went to the foundry for refurbishing.



**Installation:**



**2017 July - August**

A purpose-built steel frame was installed to support a cast-iron bell frame with all new fixtures and fittings and our peal of eight was ready to ring.



**The Trustees of the Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project gratefully acknowledge the financial support of a very generous anonymous member of our church congregation, and**

Our thanks to our patrons, the Earl of Bradford and the Viscount Hereford;

Thanks to the Earl Bradford's Castle Bromwich Parochial Charity, Robert Hall of Hall's Garden Centre at Castle Bromwich and New Oscott, Dame Mary Bridgeman Charity Trust, Castle Bromwich Parish Council, St Martin's Guild of Church Bell Ringers, Allchurches Trust Ltd, Garfield Weston Foundation, Stephen Clarke 1957 Charitable Trust, Rowlands Trust, GJW Turner Trust, CB & HH Taylor 1984 Trust, Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust, Bernard Piggott Trust, The Sharpe Trust, Rowlands Trust, Birmingham Airport Community Trust Fund;

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Thanks to the 237<sup>th</sup> Birmingham (1<sup>st</sup> Castle Bromwich) Scout Group – beavers, cubs and scouts, 1<sup>st</sup> Castle Bromwich Guides, Hodge Hill Beaver group, St Wilfred's Brownies, 234<sup>th</sup> Castle Vale Cubs, 147<sup>th</sup> Hodge Hill Brownies and St Philip's & St James' Guides and Boys' Brigade; 126<sup>th</sup> Beavers Hodge Hill, Northfield Bellringers, Somerset Bellringers, Castle Bromwich Junior School, St Bernadette's Catholic Primary School, Park Hall Academy;

Thanks to players of the National Lottery: a substantial grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund finally made this long-dreamt-of project a reality;

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And our thanks to those who gave online - B P Diskin, Selly Oak; Bernard Riches, Hockley Heath; Bob Russell, Great Yarmouth; Catherine McFarlane, Kings Heath; Christine Zagorski, Walsall; D P Carr, Paignton, Devon; David Kemp, Castle Bromwich; Derek Nicholls, Beckenham, Kent; Diana Cooke, Bridgnorth, Shropshire; Douglas Wilson, Poole, Dorset; George Daley, Birmingham; Helen Grafham; Janet McKie, Acocks Green; Jennifer Bunting, Kingston, Ontario, Canada; William Guy Fletcher, France; Jill Bradley, Tamworth; Linda Jones, Birmingham; John Last, Whitchurch, Shropshire; John Mclaughlin, Crewe, Cheshire; John Perry, Stratford-upon-Avon; Julie Martin, Canterbury; Leopoldo Garza, Sebastopol, California; Mamie Sharman; Paul Trafford, Oxford; Mandy Ross, Birmingham; Mark McGrail, Sutton Coldfield; Mary Andrews, Pinner; Max Cope, Christchurch, Dorset; Mr W E Chinn, Smethwick, Ms J Jones, Wareham, Dorset; Neil Jones, Nuneaton; Pauline Yeo, Acocks Green; Peter Jones, Ashleworth, Gloucestershire; Ray Osborne, Bromsgrove; Samantha Davidson, Stafford; Sandy Speechley, Sawtry, Huntingdon Cambridgeshire; Steve Sullivan, Redditch; William Deason, Newport, Shropshire; and to the many unknown donors who kindly gave via MyDonate online on the bellringers' website and those who contributed online via EasyFunding;

The trustees also thank a large number of people who gave help, support advice and encouragement, including our Parochial Church Council, members of our congregation, local residents and bellringers and honorary curate Rev Margaret MacLachlan, David Ward of St Nicholas church Rattlesden, Tim Davis of the Potteries Ringing Centre Trust, Stan Brotherton and Chris Povey of the Evesham Abbey Bell Tower Appeal Trust, Simon Adams of St Edburgha's Yardley, and those who volunteered with the dismantling and installation: Dave Reeves, John Kelly, Stuart Stanton, Mike Keeble, Andy Hardy, Roy Followell, Brian Hodgetts, Olly Boukley, Bill Dargue, Jean Willis, James Stanton, Dan Harris, Mitchel Parry, John Rodgers, Ed Laughton, Mat Williams, Ben Sassons and those who supplied the workers with coffee and cake.

Thanks to the staff of John Taylor & Co, Loughborough who designed, cast, handcrafted and built the new installation and to bell hanger Andrew Ogden who, with apprentice, Kit Bardsley, constructed the installation with skill, good humour and determination.

Our sincere apologies to any whose names we have inadvertently omitted.

Without your help, the Castle Bromwich Bell Restoration Project would never have taken place. **Thank you all!**



*Thank You!*