

## **Key dates in the history of the Bell Tower and of Evesham**

### **1513**

Clement Lichfield (as Prior) builds the St Clement chantry off the south aisle of All Saints, Evesham; having earlier built the western porch of the church (1503-9) with its unusual two facing doors.

### **1514**

Clement Lichfield becomes Abbot of Evesham.

### **c.1520**

Abbot Clement Lichfield builds the south chantry of St. Lawrence's Church.

### **1524**

John Molder bequeaths 40s. to "a newe Towre for their bells, 40s."

### **1529**

William Roff of Evesham bequeaths 3s. 4d. "to the building of the new Tower."

### **1530**

Thomas Crompe of Bretforton bequeaths 6s. 8d. "to the buyldyng of the new towre at Evesham."

### **c.1531**

Construction of the Bell Tower.

### **1532**

Agnes Joyse of Hampton bequeaths 4d. "unto the new Tower ffor one eele to be ringyng ffor my soll" [to the new Tower for one peal to be rung for my soul]. Thomas Joyse of Hampton gives 6s. 8d. "To the new towre to be rong ffor."

### **1539**

Dissolution of Evesham Abbey. The monks were singing the Magnificat when the King's men entered the abbey church and stopped the service. The monks were stopped at the verse 'Deposuit potentes' [He has put down the mighty]; which suggests a pointed humour by the King's men. Over the following years the abbey church is totally dismantled. Intriguingly, the newly-built bell tower survives. Perhaps spared because the town had subscribed to its construction; perhaps because markets ran easier with its bells tolling the time, perhaps a gift to the town from the new owner to enlist local support.

### **1538-1543**

John Leland journeys throughout England for his Itineraries. On Evesham, he says: "The towne of Evesham is meetly large and well builded with tymbre. The market-sted is fayre and large. There be divers pray streets in the towne. The market is very celebrate."

### **1546**

Abbot Clement Lichfield dies in Offenham and is buried in All Saints, Evesham. The plaque marking his grave does not mention the abbey or his rank as abbot (he is simply called 'priest' [sacerdotis]). Sir Philip Hoby, possessor of the greater portion of the abbey estate and buildings, receives letters patent conveying to him practically the whole town (in exchange for £1,067 2s. 11d.). The abbey estates stay with the Hoby family until 1609. There is tension between the fledgling town authorities and the Hoby family until the incorporation of Evesham.

### **1547**

Injunctions of Edward VI require removal of rich ornaments, vestments and stained glass from churches.

### **1580s**

Sir Thomas Hoby (brother of Sir Philip) builds the first Town Hall with two stories: an open arcade below and a large room above. The arcade is put to various uses (including a provision market) while the room is used for quarter Sessions and Assizes. By 1873 the basement of the Town Hall, "until lately an open arcade... used anciently for pitching corn and since as a butter and poultry market," is enclosed.

### **1596**

Sir Edward Hoby, with Richard Shepham and John Gilbert, conveys all his rights in Evesham (after his mother's death) to Edward Grevill. In 1603-4 Edward Grevill sells his part to John Woodward

### **1604**

First charter of the Borough of Evesham. The Vicar of All Saints, Dr Lewis Bayly, is instrumental in obtaining the charter through Prince Henry (eldest son of King James).

### **1605**

Second charter of the Borough of Evesham (now including Bengeworth): Both royal charters ignore any possible claims by the Hoby family to authority over the town. Charter can be seen in the Almonry.

### **1609**

Lady Hoby dies. Sir Edward Hoby confirms John Woodward in possession.

**1615**

Sir John Woodward (son of John Woodward) mortgages the abbey estate to Sir William Fleetwood and Sir David Fowles, two of the magistrates appointed by the second royal charter.

**1626**

Sir William Courteen acquires Sir John Woodward's interests in Evesham. In 1633 Sir William settles his interests here on his son, William, on his son's marriage to Catherine (daughter of Earl of Bridgewater).

**1631**

Biggest bell re-cast.

**1640**

Habington writes Worcestershire. He notes that the site of the abbey church was marked by a "huge deal of rubbish overgrown with grasse."

**1645**

Civil War comes to Evesham. Parliamentary forces under Colonel Edward Massie assault the town (which was held by a Royalist garrison under Colonel Robert Legge). The roundheads win the day. The base of Bell Tower is scarred by musket fire (can still be seen today).

**1655**

The Quakers (the Religious Society of Friends) comes to Evesham. Meetings initially held in Edward Pitway's house on Waterside; but in 1676 land in Cowl Street bought; in 1677 a Meeting House built.

**1663**

Starting with Rev. John Jephcott DD there is no longer a separate vicar for St Lawrence; instead there is an incumbent of All Saints with St Lawrence annexed (though both are parish churches).

**1664**

William Courteen (grandson of Sir William Courteen) sells abbey estate and all rights to Edward Rudge, merchant, of London. These possessions remain in the hands of the Rudge family. Metal from the bells of All Saints and St Lawrence removed to provide metal for a larger peal in the Bell Tower; cast by Henry Bagley of Chacombe in Northamptonshire. Vestry meeting resolves bells "shall be repaired for ever thereafter by equal charge of the whole Towne, and not by distinct parish payments."

**1665**

Constitutions of the Borough of Evesham lists fraternities of Mercers (dealers in textiles), Cordwainers (leather-workers), Cloth-workers, Glovers and Ironmongers.

**c.1670**

The Baptists come to Evesham. Preaching services initially held in private houses. In 1704 a barn on the north side of Port Street is adapted for worship; in 1722 the barn is demolished and a new Meeting House built, which burns down in 1753, is rebuilt, and in 1788 moves to Cowl Street (demolished in 1979).

**1674**

Mayor and Councillors consider a report showing that the “pinnacle and battlements on the west side of the grete tower have beene long in decay and ought to be repaired”; agree to raise a levy for the repairs.

**1684**

Francis Dineley writes Worcestershire (having visited extensively 1670-80).

**1717**

The single vane on the “Piece of Timber in the middle of the roof of the Tower” is removed; being replaced by four weathervanes added to the corner pinnacles.

**1689**

Toleration Act allows “dissenters” the right to provide their own places of worship and to meet there without fear of the law.

**1696**

A congregation (no stated denomination) meets in a barn in the High Street; about 1720 they are known as Presbyterians and shortly afterwards as Unitarians. The chapel in Oat Street is built in 1737, a gallery is added in 1820, the schoolrooms built in 1759 and enlarged to present size in 1862.

**1718**

St Lawrence, which had slowly decayed, now almost unusable in winter.

**1725**

Wesleyan Methodist movement probably founded in Evesham by Thomas Canning, headmaster of John Deacle’s charity school in Port Street. When Charles Wesley comes to Evesham in 1739 he finds a Methodist Society already in existence.

**1730**

St Lawrence is now so dilapidated that a brief is granted, and nearly £600 raised, for its

repair. A new wall is built on the northern boundary of the nave and a new roof erected. However, the roof timbers cannot support the weight and within a few years the beams gave way; leaving the church derelict.

#### **1731**

Repairs to the moon dial of the Bell Tower.

#### **1740**

The Churchwardens of St.Lawrence report at the Visitation that "The second Bell ... is Broke".

#### **1741**

A major restoration of the Bell Tower: the five smallest bells are re-cast and two new bells added to make a ring of eight. All are hung in a new wooden frame.

#### **1745**

Edward Rudge installs a new clock and set of chimes (probably made by John Steight of Pershore) replacing the original clock from the time of Abbot Clement Lichfield. The quarter boys cease to function (apparently for want of £5 worth of work).

#### **1754**

Parish Meeting unanimously agrees to "that the Jackes belonging to the Tower shall be repaired, painted, and put up again, and that both parishes pay an equal share of the Expense thereof, and also the canopy to be repaired and new painted at the like joint expense."

#### **1775**

A new clock installed by William Worton of Birmingham. Act of Enclosure awarded for 1,365 acres in Bengeworth.

#### **1776**

Act of Enclosure awarded for 1,610 acres in Great and Little Hampton.

#### **1777**

A new set of musical chimes installed (by William Worton of Birmingham).

#### **1794**

William Tindal publishes *The History and Antiquities of Evesham*. Of the Bell Tower he writes: "Both from situation and intrinsic beauty, this edifice is a great ornament to the whole vicinity."

## **1799**

Treadway Russell Nash writes *Worcestershire*. He speculates: "The tower here mentioned [the Bell Tower] was purchased by the townsmen for their own uses, and thus escaped the general wreck of the dissolution."

## **1811-1834**

Edward Rudge and his son Edward John Rudge organise a series of excavations of the abbey site. A number of items, including the base of columns and arches, are removed to the garden of Abbey Manor.

## **1820**

Edward John Rudge publishes his *A Short Account of the History and Antiquities of Evesham*. He writes: "Gardening, which has flourished here for upwards of a century, still continues to be the chief business of the place, and affords employment to great numbers of the labouring portion of the inhabitants." John Jarrett "by want of skill caused the breaking of the tenor bell".

## **1821**

Tenor bell is re-cast by Thomas Mears, of the Bellfoundry, Whitechapel, London.

## **1824**

The Evesham Town Improvement Act allows common land (mostly around Merstow Green but also on Green Hill) to be sold to provide money to pave, drain, light, police, and otherwise improve the town.

## **1831**

The *Report on the Borough of Evesham* notes 847 houses in the borough (746 in 1821) and notes: "The appearance of the Town of Evesham, as well as that of Bengeworth, is that of a flourishing and improving place. Many houses have been recently rebuilt, and several new ones added."

## **1834**

George May publishes his first *History of Evesham*.

## **1836-7**

St Lawrence's restored under the direction of the architect Harvey Eginton.

## **1845**

George May publishes an expanded *History of Evesham*. He writes: "The bell-tower, happily preserved, remains almost in that perfect state in which it passed from its founder's hand."

### **1848**

Clock is repaired by C.J. Huband; and the quarter boys are removed (now in the Almonry Museum). The quarter boys are made of oak, obscured by coats of whitewash, each standing about 3 feet 6 inches high.

### **1852**

The Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway (OW&W, sometimes known as 'oh! worse and worse'; later part of GWR) comes to Evesham, initially running a service to Stourbridge and shortly afterwards to London.

### **1856**

Workman Bridge completed; replacing an eight-arched medieval bridge. This work involves the demolition of wharves and warehouses on the Bengeworth side of the river. In May 1864 this site is presented to the town as the Workman Pleasure Grounds by Henry Workman (a month later it hosted the Evesham flower show and regatta).

### **1864**

Midland Railway (later part of the LMS) comes to Evesham; the Redditch-Evesham-Alvechurch line connects Evesham to Birmingham and Bristol.

### **1873**

Herbert New publishes the booklet *A Day at Evesham: The Visitor's Guide to its Antiquities*, and other objects of interest. He describes the town: "The streets of Evesham are regular and generally well-built. Bridge Street is almost as picturesque as an old Flemish street... Scarcely any crowded courts or alleys are to be found in the town, and the spaces enclosed by the quadrangular arrangement of the buildings are filled with gardens which impart a freshness of air in even the more populous parts of the town. No manufacturing processes injuriously affect the atmosphere. No tall chimneys rise above the houses to impair or contrast with the elegant of the Bell Tower, its companion spires of All Saints and St Lawrence, or the bright new spire of Bengeworth."

### **1874**

Significant restoration of All Saints by Frederick Preedy; re-modelling the church on Ecclesiological principles. Among the extensive work is the enlargement of the chancel, rebuilding of the north aisle, and the concreting of the floor of the Lichfield Chapel.

### **1876**

Frederick Preedy partly restores and re-roofs the Bell Tower at a cost of £530. The bells are re-hung, perhaps by Whites of Appleton. Gates under the tower removed; providing access from the park to the churchyard.

## **1877-8**

Chime mechanism and clock replaced by Gillett & Bland of Croydon. A new carillon installed which can play a different tune each day at three-hourly intervals.

## **1887**

The Roman Catholic Parish of St Mary founded; the church is a corrugated iron hut in Avon Street (previously known as Magpie Lane). In the early morning of 16th November 1907 this iron hut saw the solemnisation of the royal marriage between Princess Louise d'Orleans and Prince Charles de Bourbon-Siciles. In 1910 the church moved to High Street; the foundation stone for the new church was laid in 1911 and the church opened in 1912.

## **1898**

J.W. Taylor (junior) of Loughborough performs a detailed review of the bells, noting that the bell framework is too weak. In 1899 John Taylor & Co install an Ellacombe Chiming apparatus for £21.

## **1903**

An 'expert bellringer' writes to the *Evesham Journal* noting "...the tenors, or the three heaviest bells, have almost dropped to the floor, and are becoming absolutely useless for ringing, and the others will share the same fate."

## **1909**

Evesham Tower Bells Improvements Committee formed to raise funds for repairs. Significant local fund-raising includes £232 from an Old English Fair and £100 from a Swiss Fete.

## **1909/10**

Significant restoration of the Bell Tower. Messrs. Barwell and Co., Ltd., Birmingham cast two new treble bells at a cost of £600 (later dedicated by the Bishop of Worcester); they also re-hung the bells in a new cast-iron "H" frame upon a new floor; at a cost of £304 15s. The clock and chimes are overhauled by Messrs. J.B. Joyce & Co., of Whitchurch, Salop, at a cost of £70 (an additional £20 paid for a second barrel of seven tunes). Other work includes the restoration of the Tower's 98 steps, the screening of the Bell Chamber, fitting of wire lattice guards over the windows, and the erection of a lightning conductor.

## **1910**

E.A.B. Barnard publishes *The Tower and Bells of Evesham, 1533-1910*, noting: "Evesham now possesses the fourth peal of ten bells in the county, a peal which eminent authorities class as being one of the best in the Kingdom, the tenor bell being considered a particularly fine bell."



## **1928**

The ferro-concrete New Bridge is opened (now known as the Abbey Bridge).

## **1937**

E.A. Rosier LRIBA (of Ellery Anderson, Roiser & Falconer) writes a report detailing the deterioration of the fabric of the Bell Tower. In his 1948 addendum to this report he notes: "It is a great pity that the vaulted ceiling was not formed over the archway, possibly it could be completed at a future date and thus enhance the beauty of the Tower."

## **1947**

Bell Tower Restoration Committee formed (chaired by the then mayor, Councillor F.J. Master) to raise funds for restoration.

## **1951**

Bell Tower restored by public subscription. Fabric restored by Messrs. Espley & Co at a cost of £4,300. All ten bells re-cast (including the two 1910 bells), and two new bells added, by John Taylor & Son of Loughborough. A new clock is installed and the carillon is repaired by John Smith & Sons of Derby. The total cost is over £8,000. The Bell Tower is floodlit as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations.

## **1963**

The Evesham to Ashchurch railway is closed.

## **1976**

Walter K. Wornick of New York donates a new bell as a memorial to his father Anthony J. Wornick (1899-1975). A new ringing floor is erected through the generosity of Mr. B.C.J. Goodwin of Evesham.

## **1977**

Parish of St Lawrence is declared redundant: the church is vested in the Redundant Churches Fund (since 1994 called the Churches Conservation Trust) and on 1st January 1978 the parishes of All Saints and St Lawrence are united (to create the Parish of Evesham).

## **c.1982**

Permanent floodlighting of the Bell Tower in memory of Leonard Hanson (1911-1977) by his wife Pat.

## **1992**

An "extra treble" bell added in memory of Helen M. Wornick (1902-1980) and Robert C. Wornick (1924-1990) and Geoffrey J. Hemming (1902-1984). The latter was Ringing

Master from 1947 and largely responsible for the restoration of the bells in 1951. The new bell is dedicated by Canon A. Webb.

## **2002**

New carillon installed by Joyce of Whitchurch (part of the Smith of Derby group) with 53 pre-programmed tunes. Clock dials now driven electrically with the striking of the hour and quarter managed from a control unit.

## **2011**

Old carillon sold to the Bell Tower in Perth, Western Australia (for restoration).

## **2013**

Evesham Abbey Bell Tower Appeal was officially launched on 6th June 2014 to raise up to £500,000 to pay for urgent conservation repairs to Evesham's iconic landmark building. Fund-raising ran in parallel to the project's two phases - development and delivery - and was officially closed on 15 July 2015. The first (development) phase of the project ran from October 2013 to September 2014 and was managed by Stan Brotherton. The second and all-important delivery phase ran from April 2015 to April 2016 and was managed by Ian Povey. On 23rd April 2016 the Bell Tower was officially re-opened, even though there was still some scaffolding around its lower stages. The project itself was finalised and closed down formally in June and July 2016.

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