

# The Battle for the Bells

After the war Joe Hardcastle found himself with his own battle: a fight to keep the Cathedral bells pealing. The bells were showing their age and it was becoming obvious to Joe that major repairs and new bells were needed. However, as the Parish Church of St. Peter moved into a new era as a cathedral, there were other things that had to take priority.



## The Silence of the Bells

On the 1st October 1919 Joe recorded in his journal that the bells were no longer in a fit state to be rung because they were unsafe. Reluctantly he decided they must fall silent. In his journal he writes with great sadness about the 'silence of the bells' and expresses unease at the possibility of not being able to keep the band of bell ringers together at such a difficult time.

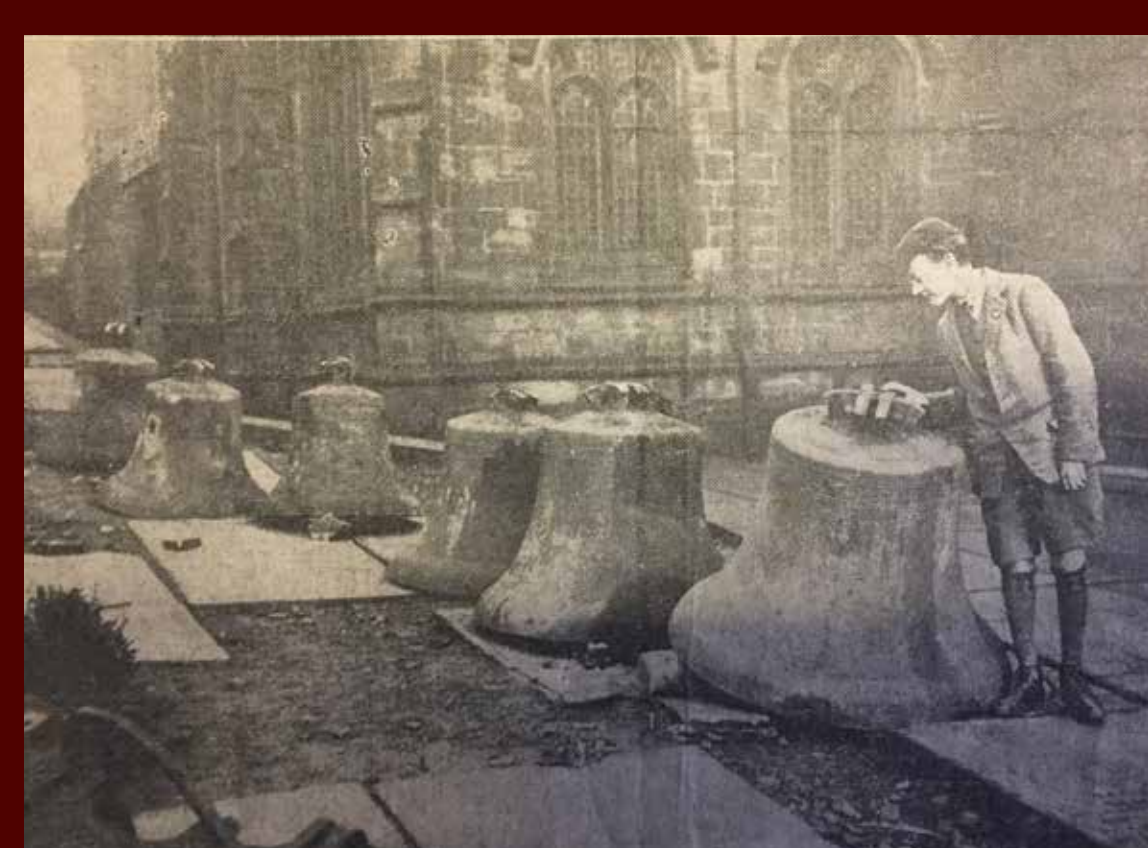
## Memorial Bells

Joe refused to give up the fight and he had an idea. The Cathedral had established a Memorial Committee, with the task of deciding upon a fitting tribute to those who had fought and died in the First World War. In November 1920 Joe (with the support of the Churchwarden Mr Edward Holdsworth) went to speak to the Memorial Committee. He suggested that money be raised for the bells to be recast as Memorial Bells that would ring out across the City as a constant reminder of sacrifice, loss, victory, peace and freedom. It was agreed that new bells would form part of the Cathedral's World War I Memorial. Joe had won his battle.

## Raising Funds for the Bells

Funds needed to be raised to pay for the WWI Memorial Bells. The bell ringers themselves donated money, as did the choir, the sidesmen and the Cathedral's Sunday school teachers. The majority of fundraisers at the Cathedral were women; 25 women are listed as key collectors for the 'Mothers' Bell'. Appeals were made in the local papers by Bradford's Lord Mayor A. Gadie for support for a bell donated by the City and an auction was held to raise money. Individuals also donated substantial amounts in memory of loved ones. For example, John Emsley and his wife Emily donated money towards the tenor bell in remembrance of their only son, Captain John Emsley, who served in the West Yorkshire Regiment and died shortly after the war ended.

## Recasting the Bells



A schoolboy poses with the old bells of Bradford Cathedral before they leave for Taylors of Loughborough in February 1921.

Joe was tasked with arranging for the bells to be recast. On the 17th February 1921, the bells were removed from the tower and left Bradford by train from the Midland Railway Station, Forster Square. Their destination was the bell foundry, Taylor and Co, based in Loughborough, Leicestershire. The total cost of the recasting was £1,500. At the time a good wage for a working man would have been about £3 a week (much less than this for a woman), so this was a very substantial sum of money. The whole amount was raised through pledges, subscriptions and donations. Each bell was inscribed with names or messages, in memory of or from individuals and the groups of people who had raised money for the re-casting.

## Welcome Home

The Memorial Bells arrived home in September 1921. Joe describes the re-dedication service in detail in his journal. It took place on the 1st October 1921. The Cathedral was full. The Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Bradford Dr Perowne presided and dedicated the Memorial Bells with the words:

*"To the glory of God and in grateful memory of those who gave their lives for King and Country and a righteous cause, I dedicate the Memorial Peal of Bells in this tower."*

According to Joe's journal this was followed by complete silence and then the bells sounded for the first time "which seemed to rivet the whole congregation to the ground for fully two minutes."



The Right Reverend Arthur Perowne D.D. Bishop of Bradford dedicated the Memorial Bells in a service on the 1st October 1921.



A sermon followed, the National Anthem was sung, and Trumpeter Mc Loughlin sounded the Last Post. The bells were rung again and a special tea was served in the school. Finally the bells were thrown open and many visitors had a go at ringing. At 7.30pm the bell ringers, friends and families retired to the Talbot Hotel to socialise, celebrate and ring hand bells late into the night.

*"This brought the proceedings to a close; a very great day in the history of the Parish Church Bell Ringers."*

Entry in Joe Hardcastle's Journal, 1st October 1921

This photograph was taken inside the Ringing Room of the Cathedral on the 1st October 1921, the day of the Memorial Bell's dedication. The text below reads:

*"The dedication was performed by the Rev. Dr. Perowne D.D. the Bishop of Bradford at a very impressive service. The illustration above shows the Ringers of the Cathedral about to ring the first "touch" on the newly cast bells."*