

SS. Peter & Paul Church, Deddington

You have come to Deddington, perhaps you were just passing through and noticed the strong looking tower with eight pinnacles. It looks rather too massive, perhaps, but then if you had lived here in March 1635, when the former tower fell injuring the north aisle at an estimated cost of £8,250 and bringing the bells with it, I think you would not have wanted another disaster, and would be glad to see a massive tower. The former tower was surmounted by a spire, the most noted in all Oxfordshire and seen the farthest, although the towers of Bloxham, Adderbury and Kings Sutton, which were built at the same time, are themselves excellent.

After the fall of the Tower, letters patent were granted in 1636 which authorised a collection in all Churches and Chapels for raising the sum of £8,250, as it said "For repairing the tower at the Parish Church of Deddington". Some years later a question arose upon the expenditure and a petition was presented to the Council by Edward Kempster of Deddington, when it was ordered that it should be referred to the Bishop of Oxford to call the petitioner and the collector before him and examine whether the letters patent warranted the giving of any part of the money for the relief of the petitioner. The repairs however remained for a long time incomplete and in consequence of this, on January 21st 1643, the King sent an order from Oxford to the Parson, Churchwardens and others in these terms. "Whereas information is given to us that by the fall of your steeple, the bells are made unserviceable for you, till the same be rebuilt and they are new founded, we hereby require you to send the same to our magazine here in New College, the just weight and nature of them to be ascertained, to the end we may restore the same in materials or money to your Church when you shall have occasion to use the same", and so the bells became munitions of war.

According to the inscription on the smallest bell it reads Antony Bazeley, Richard Large, C.W.1649, so

Deddington did not wait long for the "ting-tang" which can only be chimed as it is hung "dead".

Six large bells which once constituted the peal seem to have been all cast at the same time. The inscription on them is "Thomas Mears, late Leicester, Pack and Chapman of London, Fecit 1791". The foundry was at Whitechapel and the firm of Mears still casts bells. The curfew which was rung at 8.0 p.m. was sounded on the fourth bell, but was discontinued on the outbreak of World War II. Two other bells by Mears have been added making a peal of eight; these were given by Mr. A. J. Morris in 1946 "to commemorate the services of the members of the Deddington Home Guard" in 1940/44, and as bells should always be named they were given the names of his two children, John and Jill.

The rebuilt tower is of four stages clasped by huge diagonal buttresses and crowned by eight pinnacles surmounted by vanes. The statues of St. Peter and St. Paul above the west door were salvaged from the debris of the old steeple, but the upper parts of these, which were medieval, were renewed in 1966 and the lower portions appear to have been replaced by 17th century workmanship.

The clock on the tower was the gift of the heirs of William Hudson, who before his death in 1832 had expressed the wish that the old Church clock should give place to a better.

Deddington is set on a hill on the busy cross roads between Banbury and Oxford and the East-West road across England. The market place is 416ft. above sea level and the measurement to the top of the tower battlements adds 86½ft. more. No wonder the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul, with its crown of vane-topped pinnacles, appears on guard at every approach, but long before there was a Church, that summit with its outcrop of hard red ironstone must have been a notable landmark lifting itself above the misty valleys of Swere and Cherewell.

Situated on important cross roads, it is not surprising that Deddington was a market town, with a horse fair