

Malvern Link was originally in the parish of Leigh and developed as an outlying suburb of Malvern in the middle years of the nineteenth century. The site for a church for the district was conveyed on 27 December 1843 and the foundation stone for the building was laid on 4 March 1844. The church was designed by Harvey Eginton of Worcester and built by George Mc.Cann, a Malvern builder, for £1900. The consecration took place on 13 January 1846 and shortly afterwards the separate parish of Malvern Link was created on 7 March 1846.

The original church soon proved inadequate for the growing population of the Link, and it was enlarged by G.G. Scott in 1858-60 and by Haddon Brothers in 1873. A tower was added in 1862. The whole church was largely rebuilt to designs by F.W. Hunt in 1880-1, the work being executed by Thomas Collins of Tewkesbury at a cost of £3200. The faculty dated 10 February 1881 included provision for laying the foundations of a new tower "which it is proposed to build sometime in the future".

The building was completed with the addition of the south west porch tower, also designed by Hunt, in 1898-9. Collins & Godfrey of Tewkesbury were the builders. The tower was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Worcester on 26 September 1899. It is built of brick but faced in granite with Bath stone dressings. It has a stair turret in the south west corner giving access to the ringing room, clock room and bell chamber above.

The present bells

There is a ring of ten bells in the key of F sharp 729.5 (F# minus 24.71 cents)

Bell

Inscription

1. 796 267 / JOHN * TAYLOR * BELLFOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * 19 (*Taylor's circular mark*) 93
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD (*vine border*) / AND IN MEMORY OF / ERNEST E. BARBER
2. 796 212 / JOHN * TAYLOR * BELLFOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * 19 (*Taylor's circular mark*) 93
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD (*vine border*) / GIVEN BY THE RINGERS / AND FRIENDS / OF THIS CHURCH
3. 206 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * A.D. 1900 *
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
4. 172 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * A.D. 1900 *
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
5. 151 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * A.D. 1900 *
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
6. 143 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * LOUGHBOROUGH * LEICESTERSHIRE * A.D. 1900 * / (*vine border*)
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
7. 131 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * LEICESTERSHIRE * A.D. 1900 * / (*large vine border*)
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
8. 147 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * LEICESTERSHIRE * A.D. 1900 * / (*large vine border*)
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
9. 208 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * LEICESTERSHIRE * A.D. 1900 * / (*large vine border*)
Waist: TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AND IN MEMORY OF / ISABEL RICHARDSON / NOV. 29. 1899.
10. 175 / JOHN TAYLOR & CO. * FOUNDERS * LOUGHBOROUGH * LEICESTERSHIRE * / (*large vine border*)
Waist: IN PIAM MEMORIAM / ÆMILÆ MARTHÆ DAY / 1899.

Bell	Founder and date	Diameter	Note	Hz	Cwt.	Qrs.	Lbs.
1.	John Taylor & Co, 1993	24	A#	1830	4	0	10
2.	John Taylor & Co, 1993	25	G#	1637	4	0	20
3.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	26 ¹³ / ₁₆	F#	1459.5	5	0	3
4.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	28	F	1372	5	0	19
5.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	29 ⁷ / ₈	D#	1221	5	3	22
6.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	31 ⁵ / ₈	C#	1094	6	2	5
7.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	34 ¹ / ₂	B	973	7	3	19
8.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	35 ¹ / ₂	A#	914.5	8	1	19
9.	John Taylor & Co, 1900	39 ¹¹ / ₁₆	G#	820	11	3	8
10.	John Taylor & Co, 1899	44 ¹ / ₂	F#	729.5	16	2	3

The bells were all cast without canons and tuned on the Taylor true-harmonic system. The mouldings are 2:2-2:3:2 on all ten bells.

The bells hang in a cast iron H-frame of 1899/1900 (*Bellframes* type 8.3.C.e), originally installed by John Taylor & Co but modified in 1993 to accommodate the two additional bells. It was originally on the conventional plan (*Bellframes* layout 8.3) with bells 1 and 2 (west) and 5 and 6 (east) of the octave swinging mouth to mouth. As rearranged, some of the original frame castings have been repositioned and new fabricated steel H sections inserted to create an additional pit (for the sixth) within the space originally occupied only by bells 3 and 4 of the octave and to make three pits along the west wall for bells 1-3 of the ten.

The fittings date from 1899/1900 and 1993 and are all of Taylor type, with some later modifications to the originals. They include cast iron stocks, steel gudgeons, ball bearings of various dates (see below), wheels, Hastings stays (bells 3-10; traditional stays and sliders on 1-2) etc.

History

The daybooks of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry show that Charles and George Mears supplied two small bells for the original church in 1845. The entry states:

7 February 1845		
Malvern Link Church Committee per Revd. John King.		
To a Bell 0-3-18 ³ / ₄ @ 14d		£5.19.11.
Clapper 5s, Stock, Crane, Neck & Brasses		£1.18.0.
To a Bell 0-1-22 ¹ / ₄ @ 14d		£2.18.8.
Clapper 4s, Stock, Crane, Neck & Brasses		<u>£1.15.0.</u>
		[total] £13.0.7.

These two bells evidently remained in use through the changes to the building between 1846 and 1881. A church inventory of April 1884 mentions “two bells and bell ropes”. After the new tower was erected in 1899 the original bells were retained for future use in the proposed daughter church (the Ascension) but eventually scrapped when it was decided to install new bells there in 1902-3. Taylors’ records show that two small bells from the Ascension – one 13" weighing 0-1-21 and the other 16¹/₂" and 0-3-18 (total 1-1-11) – were taken in for recasting on 23 December 1902.

When first completed in September 1899 the new tower was equipped with one bell and a striking clock. The *Worcester Diocesan Church Calendar* for 1900 (p.201) reported that “Inside the tower provision is made for a peal of bells, towards which one tenor has been provided, cast by Mr. Taylor, of Loughborough. The clock has been made by Mr. Joyce, of Whitchurch. When the bells arrive it is proposed to have the Westminster chimes”.

As shown by its inscription, the bell was put up in memory of Emily Martha Day, the mother of the Vicar. It was given by Archibald Day of Blackheath, in memory of his wife. Taylors' records state job was completed on 21 September 1899, the dedication taking place five days later.

Very soon afterwards seven additional bells were provided to complete the ring of eight. As reported in the *Malvern Advertiser* the church meeting on 18 April 1900 registered satisfaction with the completion of the church tower and hoped that "before long a peal of eight bells would be added". In the same paper of 4 August it was reported that:

A family who desire to be anonymous have offered to give seven bells in addition to the present single bell for the tower of St. Matthias church in memory of a departed one. The septet is in course of manufacture at Taylor's foundry at Loughborough

Subsequently the paper reported a trial of the new bells on Thursday 23 August, followed by the dedication on Wednesday 26 September and the inaugural ringing on Thursday 27th. The installation of the new bells was reported in *Bell News* on 15 December 1900 with the following account of the work:

Readers of "The Bell News" may be interested to know that a fine ring of eight bells, tenor 16 cwt., by Taylors, has been hung in the above church.

Some twenty-three or twenty-four years ago the church was rebuilt, but insufficient funds were the means of a church being built without a tower. A year or two back the Vicar, the Rev. A. Day, M.A., made strenuous efforts to get a tower, and has been rewarded by the addition of a beautiful square one, which offers a grand landmark for many miles around the Malverns. A large clock bell was soon forthcoming, and shortly afterwards a lady in the district kindly offered to complete the peal, in memory of her mother (Mrs. Richardson), who at some former time was connected with the parish.

The offer was graciously accepted, the work being taken in hand immediately and satisfactorily completed by the above-named firm.

On the birthday of the benefactress the bells were formally opened by a company of Worcester ringers, assisted by the brothers Knowles, of Malvern, and pronounced to be a very musical peal. The "go" of them are excellent. They are hung in an iron frame with iron cambered stocks, with Taylor's new slide check arrangements.

It was then thought that a public striking clock would be a great boon to the district, and through the energy of Mr. W. Stallard enough money was collected for the purpose, and a good clock with the Cambridge quarters has been erected.

At the time the donors wished to remain anonymous, but it is now known that the bells were given by the Misses Richardson of Prestbury near Cheltenham in memory of their mother, Isabel Richardson. The Richardson family also gave bells at Leckhampton, Gloucestershire (1904) and at Kilburn, Yorks (1925). The seven bells of 1900 all bear identical memorial inscriptions.

In July 1937 Mears & Stainbank of Whitechapel rehung the seventh and tenor bells with new gudgeons and ball bearings at a cost of £33.10.6. The then treble (i.e. the third) was rehung on ball bearings in by the local ringers in 1970 after the gudgeon broke. In the mid-1980s Eayre & Smith rehung three more bells (now the 4th, 5th and 6th) on ball bearings one at a time, and lastly the two remaining bells (now the 7th and 8th) were put on ball bearings by Taylors in 1993. The present bearings are therefore of various dates and types. The pulleys were overhauled in about 1987, again by Eayre and Smith, and the stirrup topped clappers on bells 3-9 were re-bushed.

Plans to augment the ring to ten were drawn up in 1988 when Taylors prepared drawings for a frame with all ten bells on one level. Implementation of the scheme was delayed by other work on the church and the creation of new rooms at the back of the nave completed in 1992. The augmentation project was revived in 1993-4. It was carried out by the local ringers under the supervision of John Slater. The new steel framework was made by Hughes Fabrications in Worcester and delivered in September 1993, although the work on the frame did not start

until after the last ringing on the eight bells on 31 January 1994. The new bells were cast by Taylors on 26 November 1993 and collected from Loughborough on 28 March 1994 so that they could be displayed in the church over Easter before being raised into the tower in 4 April. The ten bells were first rung on for a try-out on 23 May 1994 and the dedication took place on 19 June.

The **clock** is positioned in an enclosed case against the east wall of the clock chamber. It is a large three-train flatbed movement with a Grimthorpe double three-legged gravity escapement. It strikes the hours and Cambridge (or Westminster) quarters and displays the time on skeleton dials on the west, south and east faces of the tower. It is signed by the makers, Joyce of Whitchurch, on the setting dial and on the cast iron bracket from which the pendulum is suspended. According to reports in the *Worcester Diocesan Church Calendar* the clock originally set up in the autumn of 1899 and the Cambridge quarters were added in August 1900. The clock is currently (2009) not in use.

Visited: CJP and Mike Chester, 29 July 2009: Thanks to David Bagley and Alan Bagworth