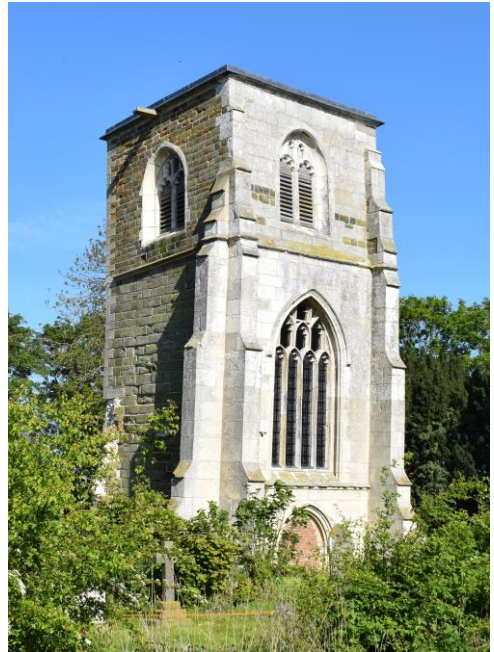


The Medieval Bells of St Peter's

The original church of Saltfleetby St Peter's on the corner of Charlesgate and Saltergate dated back to the 13th Century. It was added to over the centuries, including a magnificent 15th Century bell tower.

The tower contained three medieval bells. Of the two smaller bells, the larger one was inscribed **In amore Sanctoe Mariae** (translates as: "In the love of the Holy Mary").

The largest bell, weighing 7 hundredweight, bore the inscription: **Pura pudica pia miseris miserere Maria** Pure, ("Chaste, pious, have mercy on the poor Mary").



+ PURA · PVDICA · PIA · MISERIS · MISERERE · MARIA,

But by the 19th Century the old church was in a poor state of repair, seriously subsiding in the marsh ground and in danger of collapse. It was decided to move it to a new location, half a mile away to the current site on the corner of the Main Road and North End Lane. Reverend William R. Watson preached the last sermon at the old site on 30th April 1876. Two weeks later the Bishop of Lincoln, Rt. Rev. Christopher Wordsworth (the nephew of poet William Wordsworth) laid the foundation stone of the new building. It took 14 months for the church to be taken down brick by brick and moved to the new site, with members of the congregation volunteering their time to help. The new church was ready to be opened on 30th July 1877.



But it was an expensive project with limited funds, so the decision was made to leave the old tower where it was. There it would be used as a cemetery chapel, where the two inscribed bells remained. The smaller of these was severely damaged when someone tried to ring it by hitting it with a blacksmith's hammer. In 1908 it, and the small uninscribed bell, were recast by John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough into one new bell with the inscription **In Amore Sca Maria** ("for the love of Saint Mary") which now hangs in the bellcote of the rebuilt St. Peter's.

The largest bell was left in the old tower, where it was neglected, until being rescued in 1956. This rare pre-reformation bell, dating back about 500 years, was in danger of falling down. Therefore, the Diocese of Lincoln was keen to arrange its sale and move to the new church of St John the Baptist on the Ermine estate in Lincoln, which was still being built at the time. It was sold to Mrs Dorothy Adams in memory of her late husband, Mr Arthur Howard Adams, a former history teacher at Lincoln School who died in 1947.



£75 was paid for the bell, of which £10 was paid back as a donation towards the new church in Lincoln. As a keen naturalist Mrs Adams had frequently enjoyed visiting Saltfleetby to birdwatch at Rimac followed by a cup of tea with her family at the Prussian Queen. Their daughter, Rosalind Lucas (who was 23 at the time) travelled from Lincoln to Saltfleetby with colleagues and employees from her husband's building firm, who helped remove and transport the bell.



Measuring three feet across and weighing about 56 stone or 355kg, it was quite an undertaking! Mrs Lucas recalled that the local curate insisted on being present to supervise the move, but he did nothing but get in the way of them lowering the very heavy bell!



The bell was first sent for repair to Loughborough Bell Foundry where it was cleaned and had a new clapper fitted. It was then installed in a newly built turret at St John's, Lincoln. A dedication ceremony took place on Sunday 2nd February 1957, led by Rev. J. Hodgkinson, and the bell was tolled by the vergers Mr R. J Trett, ringing out again 80 years after the dismantling of St Peter's.

SILENT FOR 80 YEARS, BELL RINGS AGAIN

FIVE centuries ago, a bell was hung in the little tower of St. Peter's Church, Saltfleetby. It was dedicated in the name of St. Mary.

Until 1877, it called Saltfleetby folk to worship. The little church went out of service in that year, and since then, the bell has hung silently.

But this week the old bell has rung out again. It has been given a new lease of life—calling the inhabitants of a new Lincoln housing estate to church.

The bell, which is nearly three feet across and weighs 7 cwt., is now installed in a small modern belfry at the new Church of St. John the Baptist, on the Ermine Estate, Lincoln.

New clapper

It was bought and given to St. John's by Mrs. A. H. Adams, in memory of her husband, a former history master at Lincoln School.

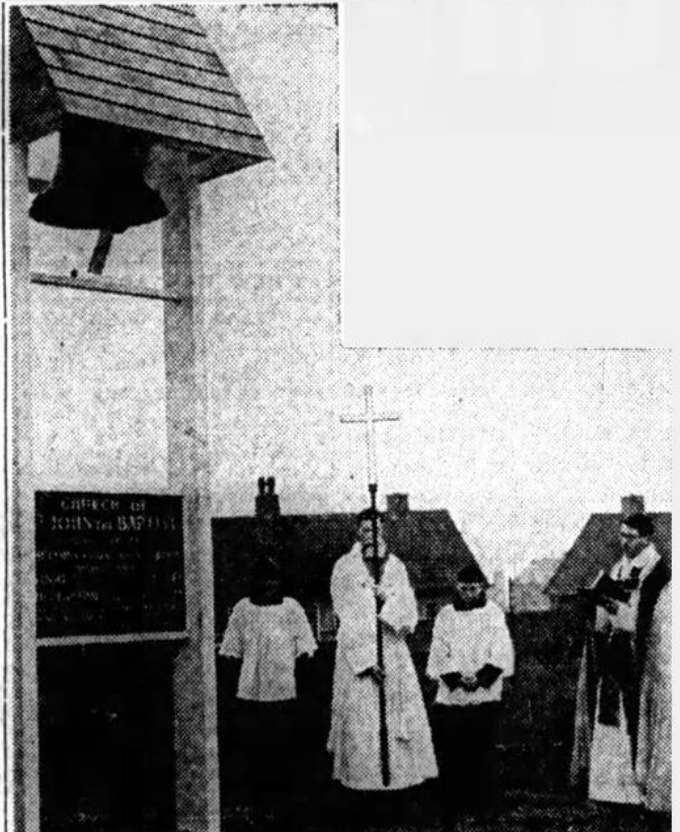
After dedicating the bell this week, the priest-in-charge, the Rev. J. Hodgkinson, told parishioners, "Now you have the best bell in Lincoln."

When the old church at Saltfleetby ceased to be used because it would cost too much to restore it, there were three bells in the belfry, two large and one small.

Later the small bell was transferred to the new St. Peter's Church in the village, but it got broken. One of the large bells was also broken when someone tried to ring it with a blacksmith's hammer, so the two were melted down and re-cast into one bell which is now in the new village church.

All this time, the other one was left hanging in the old belfry. Before being installed at Lincoln it had to be sent to a foundry for cleaning, and to have a new clapper fitted.

The priest-in-charge at the Church of St. John the Baptist, Lincoln, dedicating the 500-year-old bell.



Cutting from The Grimsby Evening Telegraph, Friday 8th February 1957

The bell remained hung outside St John's church hall, as plans for a more substantial bell tower were dropped due to lack of funds. Here it was subjected to vandalism, so in 1986 it was offered to nearby St. Nicholas Church, Newport, Lincoln, then part of the same parish. The bell was re-hung in the church tower with the original St. Nicholas Church bell beside it. It was dedicated by Bill Ind, the Bishop of Grantham, during the Patronal Festival on 11th December 1988.

Saltfleetby St Peter's historic medieval bell still rings out in the heart of Lincoln, thought to be the oldest working bell in the city!

Many thanks to Mrs Rosalind Lucas from Lincoln and her daughter-in-law Aileen Lucas from Louth for sharing photos and memories of the 1956 extrication. And thanks to Mrs Betty Brown from St. Nicholas Church, for information about the bell's move in the 1980s. Latin bell inscription from J. J. Raven, The Bells of England, originally published 1906 by E.P. Dutton.