

21. December 1942.

LAYSTON CHURCH BELLS.

Dear Sir,

With reference to Mr. Hughes' examination on the 14'th inst of the bells, fittings and framework we beg to report as follows :-

THE BELLS form a ring of five, the Tenor or largest weighing about 10½ cwt. They were cast in 1633 from the metal of the four previous bells and it is thought they are the work of John Clifton who was founding here from 1632-1640. The Tenor was recast here in 1776. All are sound but the Tenor is approximately a semitone flat. It would therefore be necessary to have the bells at the Foundry to be corrected under the tuning machine. They should also be turned to bring a fresh surface of metal under the clapper.

The Edwardian Inventory of 1552 states that the steeple contained four bells.

THE FITTINGS, viz: the headstocks (cross-beams to which the bells are attached) wheels, bearings, supporting ironwork, clappers and pulleys etc: are in exceedingly poor condition and quite beyond repair.

THE BELL-FRAME is of oak and is probably of the same date as the bells (1633) It is probably a reconstruction of the former frame. It is very weak and much of the timber in bad condition. The joints in the sole plates are very poor. The West side was at some time found to be weak and has been patched with horizontal layers over the whole depth of the struts or braces. The head timbers have been wedged out to the walls on all four sides. It would be impossible to satisfactorily repair the

frame to carry the bells for ringing up.

RECOMMENDATIONS. The only way to place the bells into satisfactory "ringing" order is to rehang them with completely new fittings and framework, the frame to be bolted to a rigid foundation anchored to the four walls. The weight should also be distributed to better advantage, viz: the two heaviest bells should swing East and West which is the stronger direction of the Tower. At present four of the bells, - the Treble, third, fourth and Tenor, swing North and South.

The bells should be re-tuned and the "cast in" clapper-staples should be drilled out to allow the bells to be turned on quarter.

A new bell-chamber floor would also be necessary, and this should be below and independent of the bell-frame foundation.

The whole of this work would cost approximately £430. 0. 0. but it would not be possible to carry it out until after the war; - licences could not be obtained at present for the greater part of the materials, and labour would not be available for this kind of work.

It would however be possible, as a temporary measure, to refit the chiming hammers, fit new pulleys and ropes and connect up to the chime bracket. This would enable the bells to be sounded when permitted, and one person could operate the five bells. Three of the hammers would have to be refitted on new supports. The cost of this would be - - £ 17. 10. 0.

We shall be happy to give you any further details desired
and remain, Yours faithfully,



The Rev: F. J. Barff,
Layston Vicarage,
Buntingford, Herts.