



Almondsbury Ellacombe Chimes Bicentenary

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On Saturday 26th June 2021 we celebrate the bicentenary of the first Ellacombe chimes being installed at St Marys Bitton. The celebration is planned to start in Timaru, New Zealand at 12 noon on the 25th June and over the next 17hrs working their way across the world, bells will be chimed at noon local time in each of the major time zones, arriving at their birthplace at Bitton, South Gloucestershire, at 12 noon BST on the 26th June.

The event will then cross the Atlantic and be heard across the Americas finishing in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Who is this Ellacombe and what has this got to do with Almondsbury you may ask? Well he was the curate at Bitton from 1817 until 1837 and thereafter the incumbent until 1850.

Henry Thomas Ellacombe was trained in engineering under the direction of Marc Brunel, Isambards father, at Chatham Dockyard after graduating from Oriel College Oxford in 1812. He was later ordained for the curacy at Cricklade in 1816 and came to Bitton a year later.

At St Marys in Bitton he soon became outraged by the antics of the bellringers who had 2 teams competing against each other, rarely attended church services and would ring a celebration for whoever paid them.

Ellacombe, using his engineering knowledge was able, eventually, to outwit them by installing his apparatus. This enabled all the bells to be chimed by one trusted person. As a result, he and the church wardens regained control and imposed not only authority but a set of rules that remain posted to the walls of the ringing chamber to this day.



Henry Thomas Ellacombe

St Marys, Almondsbury has a set of Ellacombe chimes. These were installed in 1903 after John Sully had finished his work on the new bellframe and bells rehung. Canon G R Wood, the vicar and his wife donated them to the church in appreciation of many happy years at Almondsbury.



During the recent Almondsbury Bells Restoration Project (ABRP) the Ellacombe chimes were restored