

Bellringer's Celebration

A special peal was rung from Bletsoe Parish Church on Monday evening in celebration of the golden wedding of Mr. and Mrs. William G. Curtis, of 44 Bletsoe, who were married at St. Mary's Church, Northill, on 6th February 1900.

Aged 74, Mr. Curtis has been a bell-ringer since he was 15. He was sexton of the Parish Church from 1900 to 1944 and served under seven rectors. He tolled the bell at the passing of three monarchs, Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, and King George V.

From 1900 to 1920, when the new clock-movement was installed in the church tower, Mr. Curtis had the task of climbing up the tower twice daily to wind it. The new movement needs winding only three times a week.

Mr. Curtis in the belfry, where he has been a ringer since he was a boy.

By occupation a gardener, he had been employed at the Old Rectory garden for 53 years, until his retirement last month. For the past 46 years he has been a member of the Parish Council. A keen cricketer in his younger days, he is still very fond of the game.

Mrs. Curtis, who, before her marriage, was Miss Katie Little, of Ickwell, is 69 years old. A former member of the Mothers' Union, and at one time she held Girls' Friendly Society classes in her cottage.

There are two children, Mr. Stanley George Curtis, of Bletsoe, and Mr. Godfrey Cedric Curtis, of Sharnbrook, and five grandchildren.



Bedfordshire Times, 10th February 1950

News article marking Golden Wedding of William & Kate Curtis, February 1950.

EB173 (*Bedfordshire Times*)



18th century Tenor Bell from Bletsoe Church

Bletsoe originally possessed a ring of four bells cast by various bell founders, dating from the mediaeval period to the mid-17th century. In 1767 the tenor bell was re-cast by Islip Edmunds at St Neots at a cost of £39 13s 0d. In 1787 it was decided to have all the bells recast as a slightly lighter ring of five by Robert Taylor, who had by that time taken over the St Neots bell foundry. Around the same time Taylor had been commissioned to re-cast the tenor of Great Gransden for which he received £20. However, Bletsoe's old tenor seems to have been of the exact pitch and size required for Great Gransden - Taylor had the old relief inscription chiselled away and replaced by a new incised inscription, purporting himself as its maker, before sending it to Gt. Gransden. The picture shows the bell at Whitechapel Bell Foundry on 10 August 2000, being modified before re-hanging at Great Gransden. Taylor's incised inscription can just be made out between the two bands above the chalk writing. Research by Chris Pickford, the former County Archivist, uncovered this intriguing story, later published in *The Ringing World* of 26 April 1985.

EB8 (Pat Albon)