

WATER ORTON – St.Peter and St.Paul

Water Orton was originally a chapelry in the parish of Aston until a separate parish was created in 1871. A Chapel of Ease was erected here in the 14th century, and this stood on the site of the old churchyard in Old Church Road. The chapel was rebuilt in the early C18th. An illustration in the Aylesford Collection shows it as a simple building of chancel, nave and west tower with plain parapet and pinnacles. It was of stone with round-headed openings and a small circular window above the west door of the tower.

The old church became inadequate for the growing population, and in 1877 it was decided to build a new church. Bateman & Corser of Birmingham were the architects and the eventual cost amounted to £3885. The foundation stone was laid on 11 September 1878 and the completed church was consecrated on 7 October 1879. The new church was formally substituted for the old one by an instrument dated 18 December 1879.

The church is in a rather harsh Victorian Decorated Gothic style, rock-faced and with stone dressings. It has a north-west porch tower which originally carried a tall stone spire, demolished in 1987. There is ladder access to the clock and bells. The inside of the tower is constructed of brick.

There were two small bells in the C18th church – one now in the tower of the present church and the other (of the same date) now at Minworth. The Minworth bell was the larger of the two, and for completeness its details are given here:

Inscription

+ I WILL (*coin*) SOVND (*coin*) AND (*coin*) CALL, THE CONGREGATION /
1709 (*floral border all round*)

Bell	Founder and date	Diameter	Mouldings	Hz	Note	Cwt.	Qrs.	Lbs.
1.	Joseph Smith, 1709	18 $\frac{1}{8}$	3:2-2:3:2	1645	Ab-16	1	0	22

Shortly before the present church was completed, on 11 September 1879 the Clerk of Works was “instructed to remove one of the bells from the old church and refix the same in the new church”. It seems probable, though, that both bells were transferred from the old church to the new, complete with their old wooden frame. The old church was later demolished in 1887.

The bell now in the tower is as follows:

Inscription

+ IOHN BVRTON (*coin*) CHVRCH (*coin*) WARDEN (*coin*) 1709 (*coin*) / (*floral border all round*)

Bell	Founder and date	Diameter	Mouldings	Hz	Note	Cwt.	Qrs.	Lbs.
1.	Joseph Smith, 1709	16 $\frac{1}{4}$	2:2-2:3:2	1993.5	B+15	1	0	0*

This bell was cast in 1709 by Joseph Smith of Edgbaston, and it was the smaller of the two bells in the old church. It has a false crown inside, and it is now bolted directly to its headstock. There is a large circular pad between the bell and the stock, and it is not clear whether it retains its canons or not. It has not been quarter turned.

The bell hangs in a nineteenth century wooden frame in which there are pits for two bells swinging east-west. The existing bell occupies the southern pit. The frame is of slight construction and may well have come from the old church. It consists of sills, main braces, corner posts and long heads (i.e. *Bellframes* type 6.A).

The bell was rehung with new fittings in about 1950, but the old fittings consisting of an eighteenth century elm headstock with drive-in gudgeons, stock hoops, and a wooden bell wheel used to remain in the tower. It is now fitted with a round steel bar headstock, iron chiming lever and counterbalance, and line-shaft ball bearings – possibly by Gillett & Johnston or Charles Carr, and possibly of about 1950.

Above the bell frame are the remains of the framework for a set of eight tubular bells. Made in Coventry by Harrington, Latham & Co, these bells were originally put up at Erdington Parish Church in 1890 and removed when the new ring of eight bells was installed there in 1903-4. They were purchased by John Bagnall who gave them to Water Orton church in 1904. They were still in the tower in 1955 when repairs were contemplated. They have since been removed, possibly at about the same time as the bell now in the tower was rehung.

The clock is a two-train flatbed movement with deadbeat escapement. It shows the time on four skeleton dials and strikes the hours and a single blow at the half-hour on the bell. The setting dial is signed by “W.F. Evans & Sons / Soho Clock Factory / Birmingham”. The movement is not dated, but a tablet in the church records that the clock and memorial tablet were erected in 1920 in memory of parishioners who died in the Great War:

+ / TO THE GLORY OF GOD / AS A THANK-OFFERING FOR THE
RESTORATION OF PEACE / IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THE LOYAL
SERVICES / OF THE 73 MEN OF THIS PARISH WHO SERVED WITH H.M.
FORCES / IN THE GREAT WAR / AND IN PIOUS MEMORY OF / JOSEPH
BONEHAM / CHARLES BURTON / ARNOLD HAWKINS / SIDNEY PROSSER /
GILBERT WILLDEY / WHO NOBLY DIED FOR THEIR COUNTRY / THE PARISH
CHURCH CLOCK AND THIS TABLET WERE ERECTED / BY PARISHIONERS OF
WATER ORTON, A.D. MCMXX

In about 1999 the clock was converted to auto-wind by John Smith & Sons of Derby.

Visited: C.J.P., 30 December 1977, 10 October 1989 and 5 May 2010: