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**CHURCH BELLS OF
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ASTON, STEEPLE.

St. Peter.

A western tower containing a ring of six bells; tenor 40 ¼ inches diameter, in F#; and a sanctus bell, 15 inches in diameter.

<i>Bell</i>	<i>Inscription</i>	<i>Cwt</i>	<i>Qrs</i>	<i>Lbs</i>
Treble	(Several defaced letters)	5	0	0
Second	1674	5	2	0
Third	WILL WHING GILLS HANWELL C W 1700	6	1	0
Fourth	T. MEARS OF LONDON FECIT 1827	7	0	0
Fifth	HENRY MITCHIL IOHN FOX C W 1675	8	2	0
Tenor	MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON. / W. DURRAN : E. H. KING : 1879. / GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO.	11	2	2
Saunce	HENRICVS BACLEY ME FECIT 1701		3	0

The treble, second, and fifth are by Richard Keene, and similar to the third at Ambrosden : the treble appears to have been cast for some other church and, in addition to having its inscriptions defaced, has been sharpened in tone by the removal of a considerable portion of its lip. The third is by the Chandlers, similar to bells at Beckley and Kidlington ; the fourth, and tenor are from the Whitechapel foundry ; the saunce, which has false iron canons, is by Henry Bagley III.

The oak frame, originally made for four bells, was reconstructed in the seventeenth century into a five-bell frame ; and later in the same century was again altered to provide one additional pit. It follows the same plan as the bell-frame at St. Benets, Cambridge,¹ and may be a copy of it. The saunce is hung for chiming in a vertical frame in the east window of the belfry and has an elm headstock and half-wheel. The fittings of the other bells, types B and C, are by Mr. Richard White.

Ringling is conducted from a "ringers' gallery" erected in the seventeenth century by Richard Duckworth, B.D.,² the famous campanologist, and contemporary of Fabian Stedman and Anthony Wood. Duckworth, who was instituted Rector of Steeple Aston on March 30th, 1680,³ was a skilled ringer and the author of "Tintinnalugia, or The Art of Ringing," printed in London in 1668 by "W.G. for Fabian Stedman," in which the author describes him-self as "A Lover of that Art." According to Mr. J. Armiger Trollope,⁴ Stedman owned the copyright of the book and was responsible for its publication, although Duckworth was the author. Three copies of the book are known to survive ; one is in the Cambridge University Library, another in the British Museum, and

¹ According to tradition St. Benets, Cambridge, is the church most associated with Fabian Stedman; it was here that the Ancient Society of College Youths, of London, first rang Stedman's Principle; and the bells were restored in 1931 by the ringers of England as a memorial to Stedman.

² Fellow of Brasenose College, Oxford, and afterwards Vice-Principal.

³ Rev. J. T. Evans, *The Church Plate of Oxfordshire*, 1928. p. 8.

⁴ *The Ringing World*, Vol. XXXI, p. 805, Vol. XXXVII, p. 478.

the third belongs to the President of The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers ; a reprint of it was published by Harvey Reeves in 1895.

Wood says of Duckworth⁵ "he hath written *Tintinnalogia, or The Art of Ringing, etc.*, London, 1671. Instructions for hanging of Bells with all Things belonging therunto." This refers to the second edition of which the only known copy is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

Richard Duckworth died on July 19th, 1706, and a memorial tablet in his memory may be seen on the south side of the chancel in Steeple Aston church.

Visited : F.S., 25th April, 1929 ; 22nd January, 1949.

⁵ A. Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis*, 1721, p. 1132