

## GEM FROM THE ARCHIVE

## Bell inscription books, 1888–2005



Archivist **Chris Pickford** of the bell foundry John Taylor & Co explains what the company's inscription books reveal about our ancestors' lives By ROSEMARY COLLINS

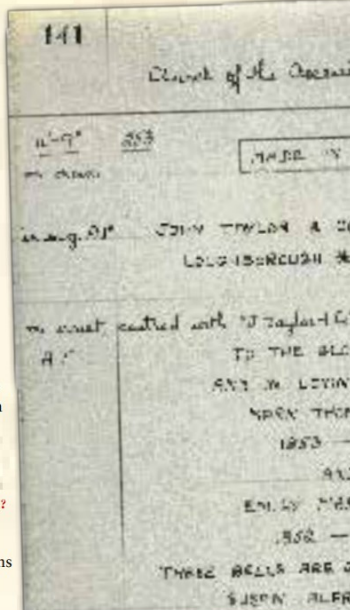
**L**ocated in Loughborough in Leicestershire, John Taylor & Co is one of the oldest bell foundries in the world and has been run by the Taylor family since 1784. The company's archive includes a set of inscription books recording the messages engraved on the countless bells that its workers have made. As archivist Chris Pickford explains, the stories

parish officials and religious verses. Towards modern times there's been a lot more use of inscriptions for commemorating things, such as families and people.

The bell founders thought it useful to keep a record of the inscriptions they cast on bells. From 1888 onwards Taylors started putting them in separate books, so from that date we've got a record of the wording that they put on all their bells, and from

customers' concerns. Very often they're fascinating glimpses of social history. The inscription books run to 21 volumes in all.

**WHAT SORT OF CUSTOMERS DOES THE COMPANY HAVE?** Church bells are the main market, for various denominations although less so the nonconformists.



Above: Volunteer Archivist Chris Pickford in conversation with *Who Do You Think You Are?* magazine



**Loughborough Bellfoundry Trust** @Lborobelltrust · Dec 25, 2019  
Merry Christmas!

We're marking [#12BellsOfChristmas](#) starting today with bell no. 1:

This is Great George being transported to [@LivCathedral](#), cast in 1940 and weighing nearly 15 tonnes.

It is larger than [#BigBen](#) and second only to Great Paul at St Paul's Cathedral in London!



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**Loughborough Bellfoundry Trust** @Lborobelltrust · Dec 26, 2019  
[#12BellsOfChristmas](#) Bell no. 2:

Great Peter was cast at Loughborough Bellfoundry in 1927 for [@York\\_Minster](#).

Weighing just under 11 tonnes, it was welcomed at the Minster with a special service in front of crowds. Watch the video of its arrival here: [taylorbells.co.uk/for-the-enthus...](http://taylorbells.co.uk/for-the-enthus...)



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Left and above: Social media engagement with photographs of our “celebrity bells” from the digital archive