

## The Ringing World Centenary

### The Old Bond Street Carillon



*The carillon spirelet viewed from further down Old Bond Street (Photos by the Editor)*

The celebrations for the Ringing World Centenary will include a recital on the Atkinson Carillon in Old Bond Street at 12 noon on Saturday, 26th March, given by Trevor Workman, carillonneur at Bournville, Birmingham.

This instrument is one of only 15 carillons in the British Isles, and the only one in London. It is housed in a small spirelet on the roof of No.24 Old Bond Street, which stands on the corner of Old Bond Street and Burlington Gardens. The building was designed by Vincent Harris (1876-1971), who designed a number of significant buildings in the first half of the twentieth century, including the Ministry of Defence Main Building on Whitehall. 24 Old Bond Street



*The plaque on the wall at 24 Old Bond Street*

was built as the premises of J.&E. Atkinson Ltd in 1926. The building was later taken over by J. Fox & Co. and later still became the property of the National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society Ltd, who currently let space in the building to various businesses. Most of the ground floor shop space is now occupied by Salvatore Ferragamo.

The carillon was built by Gillett and Johnston in 1927 and is a chromatic two-octave instrument of 23 bells (in carillons the two lowest semitones are often omitted) with a bass bell of 12-0-16 in G#. It is played from a clavier (a keyboard consisting of batons played with the fists and foot pedals) in the loft of the building, at the base of the spirelet. The spirelet is small, and the bell frame takes up the entire space, meaning that access for maintenance work is difficult. The constraints of space also mean that part of the linkage between the clavier and the bells runs horizontally, and this makes the action significantly heavier than it would otherwise be. As a consequence, the carillon is more difficult to play sensitively.

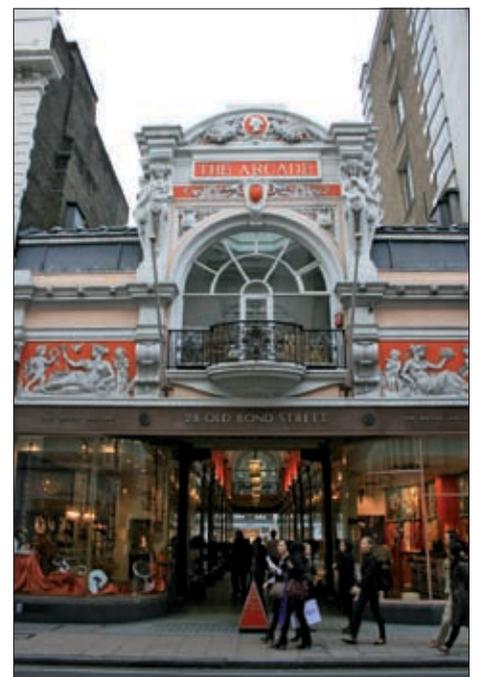
Nevertheless, the bells are of very fine tone, and are a pleasure to listen to in the street, where they can be heard very clearly.

The carillon is currently played regularly by Christina Anderson and Jonathan Galloway, usually on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons. There was formerly also an electro-pneumatic playing system, which enabled it to be played both manually from a small ivory keyboard, and automatically by pinned barrels, for use when no carillonneur was available. This system is, however, no longer used, having been disconnected some years ago.

Ringers will be familiar with the ringing-bell work of Gillett and Johnston, and the recital on the 26th will provide an



*The Atkinsons building was built in 1926 to the designs of Vincent Harris*



*The colourful arcade opposite – a good place to listen and choose luxury chocolates!*

opportunity to hear a good example of their carillon work, which was also such an important part of their output. Trevor Workman is a world-class carillonneur who has been playing the four-octave carillon at Bournville since 1965 and has given recitals on many other carillons both in Britain and abroad. This included giving the opening recital on the new carillon at York Minster in 2008. Trevor's recital will include music of a variety of styles and periods, and will therefore demonstrate to excellent effect the musical capabilities of the Atkinson Carillon.

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